



Washington Update

Check out the [PVAAction Force](#) page to view legislative campaigns and a list of key legislation.

SHUTDOWN ENDS, FOR NOW

Congress finally reached an agreement on a continuing resolution that ends the longest government shutdown in the nation's history. The bill, which was signed by the President, temporarily funds much of the government through January 30, 2026, and provides full-year funding for the Department of Agriculture, the legislative branch, military construction, and the VA. It also extends authorities for key veteran-related programs, such as allowing them to transport individuals to and from medical facilities or help with specially adapted housing for disabled veterans residing temporarily in housing owned by a family member. Other provisions in the bill prohibit reductions in the staffing, hours of operation, or services of the Veterans Crisis Line, and require the VA to maintain staffing levels that "facilitate the department's own goal" for timely benefits claims and health care appointments.

The bill provides \$122.3 billion for VA healthcare and \$271 billion for benefits in fiscal year (FY) 2026, while allocating another \$122.3 billion in advance appropriations for FY 2027. Specific amounts for some areas of interest for PVA members are as follows:

- Women Veterans: \$1.43 billion
- Community Care: \$38.7 billion
- Neurology Centers of Excellence: \$80 million

- Mental Health: \$18.9 billion, with \$3.7 billion of that amount going towards suicide prevention
- National Veterans Sports Programs: \$29.1 million, which includes \$16 million for adaptive sports programs
- Medical & Prosthetic Research: \$945 million
- VA Electronic Health Record Modernization Project: \$3.4 billion
- Major Construction Projects: \$1.4 billion
- Minor Construction Projects: \$350 million
- Toxic Exposure Fund: \$46.7 billion

While the specter of another shutdown for parts of the government remains beyond January, Senate appropriators are preparing another set of full-year funding bills to cover other federal agencies. And, if their success in reaching agreement on funding legislation continues, Congress could complete the rest of the full-year funding bills before the current funding resolution expires.

HVAC DEMOCRATS HOLD ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION WITH VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS ON VA BENEFITS

On November 5, House Veterans' Affairs Committee Ranking Member Mark Takano (D-CA) held a round table discussion titled, "Protecting the Promise: The Past, Present and Future of Veterans' Benefits." Attending the



event were several veterans service organizations, including PVA, VFW, DAV, the American Legion, and Wounded Warrior Project. National President Robert Thomas, Jr. represented PVA during the discussion.

The round table discussion focused on the VA's disability compensation system and led to a frank discussion about recent Washington Post articles that unfairly attacked disabled veterans who receive benefits. During the event, President Thomas noted that being disabled is expensive and that special monthly compensation should be increased. He also highlighted that insufficient compensation and pension exams are a problem that lead to unnecessary churn in the system. President Thomas ended his comments about the disability compensation system by saying, "Don't blow it up, tune it up!" To watch the roundtable, click [here](#).

PVA PARTICIPATES IN HVAC REPUBLICAN ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION ON VA DISABILITY BENEFITS

On November 13, PVA participated in a closed-door round table discussion that focused on veteran disability benefits. Hosted by the House Veterans' Affairs Committee (HVAC) majority, several veterans service organizations participated in the discussion, including VFW, DAV, the American Legion, Wounded Warrior Project, Vietnam Veterans of America, and a handful of others.

PVA stressed the importance of having complex claims be supported by medical evidence provided from a VA provider. PVA also highlighted that many veterans have episodic disabilities that could impact their quality of life in such a way that traditional compensation and pension examinations may not appropriately reflect. Participating organizations agreed that while the VA could improve oversight of contract examinations, and that increased training was necessary to improve outcomes, there was no need to overhaul the entire disability rating schedule.

PVA SUBMITS COMMENTS ON RESEARCH NEEDED FOR NATIONWIDE AV DEPLOYMENT

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) issued a [Request for Information](#) (RFI) on additional research needed for nationwide deployment of autonomous vehicles (AV). The RFI requested comments to inform DOT on national research to support AV deployment, safe operation, and public acceptance. PVA submitted [comments](#) outlining research to ensure the safety of pedestrians who use wheelchairs or scooters and the need for wheelchair accessible AVs.

PVA advocated for additional research specifically ensuring AV technology detects pedestrians who use wheelchairs or scooters and respond accordingly to avoid pedestrian fatalities. PVA also called on DOT to create and maintain a government and public database with any traffic accidents that involve a pedestrian that uses a mobility device. Furthermore, PVA urged DOT to conduct additional research on wheelchair securement systems, necessary for large-scale nationwide deployment of wheelchair accessible AVs.

SENATE COMMITTEE EXAMINES TRANSITION PROGRAMS FOR VETERANS

On November 12, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee held a hearing to examine programs around the country to help servicemembers transition from the military back into the private sector. Witnesses from the George W. Bush Institute, Combined Arms, the D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University, Student Veterans of America, Hiring Our Heroes, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, and Yale University discussed ways veterans could best achieve sustained success through some of these programs after their time of service to the nation.

"Each veteran is a significant asset to our country, hugely important to their families and the communities in which they live and ultimately, to the nation," said Committee Chairman, Senator Jerry Moran (R-KS). "What has arisen over a period of time in our country is often other veterans, but certainly other citizens, who rise to the occasion to make certain that



veterans' needs are being met. I want to thank those that are doing that every day, including individuals and organizations in Kansas and across the country."

Topics touched on during the hearing included ways the VA and organizations represented at the hearing make veterans aware of the benefits and services they offer, how to eliminate barriers to these benefits and services, and methods for using the data to better match veterans with open positions in the private sector. A recording of the hearing and witness statements can be found [here](#).

SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING HOLDS HEARING ON THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT

On November 5, the Senate Special Committee on Aging held a hearing titled, "Renewing Our Commitment: How the Older Americans Act Uplifts Families Living with Aging-Related Diseases."

The Older Americans Act is a federal law that funds a nationwide network of programs and services that help older adults live with independence and dignity. The law helps fund programs based on nutrition, supportive services, caregiver supports, elder rights, community service employment for low-income older adults, programs focused on health, chronic disease and falls prevention. Aging veterans may need access to local resources in their communities that are likely funded, in part, by the Older Americans Act. The Older Americans Act is due to be reauthorized. PVA will monitor its progress.

You can watch the hearing [here](#).

DOT CLARIFIES THAT AIRLINES MUST CONTINUE TO REPAIR OR REPLACE DAMAGED WHEELCHAIRS AND SCOOTERS

On October 3, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) issued a notice of enforcement discretion stating that DOT is delaying enforcement of certain provisions of the final rule, "Ensuring Safe Accommodations for Air Travelers with Disabilities Using Wheelchairs." The rule, published in December 2024, expanded the rights of

passengers who fly with wheelchairs and scooters. Recently, DOT clarified, by updating its website, that an airline is still responsible for repairing or replacing damaged wheelchairs and scooters.

Specifically, the website states that, "The temporary pause in the standard used to determine an airline's liability for damaged wheelchairs does not negate the airline's responsibility to care for a passenger's assistive device or the airline's responsibility to pay for damage when it is the airline's fault. An airline remains responsible for paying to repair or replace a wheelchair or scooter up to the original purchase price of the device if the airline damaged the device." Exceptions include pre-existing damage to the mobility device; passenger negligence, including improper labeling or instructions; or false allegations. Furthermore, DOT clarified that it will continue to enforce an airline's liability for damaged wheelchairs as it did prior to the enforcement delay.

If you are a wheelchair or scooter user and experience issues while flying, especially an airline damaging your mobility device or difficulties with aisle chair transfers, please contact Danica Gonzalves, PVA Senior Advocacy Attorney, at DanicaG@PVA.org.

NEWS OF NOTE

Veterans COLA Bill Advances in the Senate

On November 9, the Senate passed the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2025 (S. 2392), which will increase certain VA benefits by 2.8 percent, including disability compensation, clothing allowances, and dependency and indemnity compensation for surviving spouses and children. The increase, which goes into effect on December 1, is reflective of the effects of inflation and is identical to the increase for Social Security recipients announced last month. The legislation passed unanimously and now heads to the House of Representatives for further consideration.



States Issue Disability Parking Placards and Permits to Expectant Mothers

Some states are considering, and in some cases, passing laws that issue temporary disability parking placards and permits to expectant mothers. These permits allow expectant mothers to park in accessible parking spaces reserved for people with disabilities. For example, Florida passed a law that offers temporary disability parking permits to expectant mothers at any point during the pregnancy. The permit is valid for up to one year. However, on October 27, a federal lawsuit was filed alleging that the law infringes on the rights of people with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Florida is not the only state that provides expectant mothers disability parking placards. In Illinois, an expectant mother in her third trimester can obtain a parking placard that is valid for 90 days. Similar bills were introduced in New Mexico, Montana, and Arkansas, but were not passed. However, Ohio is still considering a bill that would allow expectant mothers to receive a removable windshield placard so they may park in the disability parking spaces. The permit would be valid for one year. The bill is currently pending before a state House Committee.

SURVEYS & COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

REMINDER: Survey for Project Focused on Improving the Airport Journey of Wheelchair Users

InterVISTAS is currently collaborating with Indiana University – Bloomington (IUB) to collect information on the air travel experiences of people with disabilities. Funded by the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, this project strives to identify ways to enhance the air travel experiences of individuals using wheelchairs. PVA is a member of the panel overseeing this project.

How to Participate:

1. **Register:** Please first [complete the screening survey](#). This will only take 5 minutes.

2. **Survey:** Once registered, eligible participants (those aged 18 or older, living with a disability that requires the use of a wheelchair, and currently residing in the U.S.) will receive a link to the full online survey.

Your Privacy Matters: Participation in the survey is entirely voluntary. All information you provide will be kept strictly confidential.

Have Questions? Please contact the research team at:

- Email: travelX@iu.edu
- Phone: 812-855-9037

The survey will close once researchers have reached the target number of completed responses.

Veterans' Committee Activities

Please visit the [House](#) and [Senate](#) Veterans' Affairs Committee webpages for information on previous and upcoming hearings and markups.