



# Washington Update

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

## PVA TO TESTIFY BEFORE HVAC ON MAY 20

On May 20, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee (HVAC) will hold a hearing to examine 23 pieces of pending veterans-related legislation. This hearing is a continuation of a March 18 hearing where VA was the only witness. Some of the bills focus on VA benefits and services, while others are related to the efforts to reauthorize key VA programs on a regular basis. National Legislative Director Morgan Brown will testify for PVA.

The hearing will be televised/recorded. You can view it [here](#).

## HOUSE VOTE ON KEY BENEFITS BILL EXPECTED SOON

Severely disabled veterans and their survivors depend on federal benefits that recognize both the economic and non-economic consequences of service-connected disabilities. Yet these benefits, particularly Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC), have not kept pace with the realities faced by those who rely on them the most.

SMC is one of the most important ancillary benefits provided to veterans with profound service-connected disabilities. Unlike other forms of compensation, SMC acknowledges non-economic factors, such as personal hardship, profound functional loss, and lifelong social

inadaptability. While no benefit can fully compensate for these life-altering disabilities, SMC is essential to offsetting some portion of the daily challenges these veterans endure.

Meanwhile, DIC serves as a safeguard for survivors, helping ensure that the death of a service-disabled veteran does not lead to financial devastation. Currently, the base rate for DIC is just \$1,699.36 per month, with modest adjustments for dependents. Since 1993, DIC has seen only minimal increases, leaving many surviving spouses struggling to maintain economic stability after their loved one passes.

During the week of May 18, the House is expected to vote on the **Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act (H.R. 6047)**, which would increase SMC rates for categories R1, R2, and T, as well as the monthly rate of DIC. These changes would represent the most significant improvements to survivor benefits and high-level SMC rates in decades.

Considerable opposition to the bill still exists, so it is extremely important that your representative hears from you. Send them a written message by clicking [here](#).



## OVERVIEW OF PVA PRIORITY LEGISLATION IN PREPARATION FOR ADVOCACY/LEGISLATION SEMINAR IN JUNE

PVA's 2026 Advocacy/Legislation Seminar is barely three weeks away! Nearly two dozen bills have been introduced in the 119th Congress that directly correlate with our legislative priorities. On May 7, PVA's Government Relations Team briefed attendees on many key legislative priorities that could come up during their Hill visits. Below are the bills that we addressed that are PVA priorities but that likely won't be in line for action in June. We will address the key bills that are likely to see action later in May.

**H.R. 2055/S. 611, the Caring for Survivors Act.** This legislation would increase the amount paid in Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, or DIC, to 55 percent of the total compensation paid to the surviving spouse of a totally disabled veteran. It also shortens the DIC waiting period from 10 years to 5 years with a graduated scale.

**H.R. 2102/S. 1032, the Major Richard Star Act.** There are approximately 50,000 medically retired, combat injured veterans subject to retirement offset from their VA disability payments. This legislation would allow those veterans who are Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) eligible to receive concurrent receipt, or their full military retirement and their full VA disability payment.

**H.R. 1288/S. 599, the Driver Reimbursement Increase for Veteran Equity (DRIVE) Act.** The DRIVE Act would increase the VA reimbursement rate for mileage and other travel expenses. The current rate is \$0.41 and this legislation would raise it to \$0.70. It would also tie future increases to what federal employees receive for mileage reimbursement.

**H.R. 2036/S. 925, the Credit for Caring Act.** The Credit for Caring Act would create a new, nonrefundable tax credit of up to \$5,000 for working family caregivers to help address the significant financial impact of caregiving.

**H.R. 8490/S. 4396, the Social Security Caregiver Credit Act.** This legislation would allow eligible caregivers to

earn Social Security credits for up to five years while providing unpaid care to a dependent child under 12, an aging parent, a spouse, or a family member with a disability. Participation in the VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers would not affect eligibility for earning credits.

**H.R. 2576/S. 1245, the Servicemembers and Veterans Empowerment and Support Act.** This bill would expand evidentiary support for the survivors of Military Sexual Trauma (MST), modernize language for a digital age, allow non-Department of Defense evidence to support a claim, authorize Guard and Reservists to access VA mental health support, and allow a veteran to request their compensation and pension exam be done by a VA provider.

**H.R. 2245/S. 1644, the Autonomy for Disabled Veterans Act and H.R. 3309, the Autonomy for All Disabled Veterans Act.** These bills would increase the grant amount for VA's Home Improvements and Structural Alterations (HISA) grant program. They would also tie the grant to an inflationary index, so the amount will increase automatically without needing congressional approval.

**H.R. 220, the Veterans Infertility Treatment Act.** This measure would increase access to infertility care, including assisted reproductive technology, such as in vitro fertilization (IVF), in VA's medical benefits package. It would also eliminate the need to prove direct service connection for infertility, as well as codifying recent changes authorizing the use of donated genetic material.

**H.R. 7411/S. 3395, the Mammography Access for Veteran's Act of 2025.** This legislation builds off the success of the MAMMO Act (P.L. 117-135), by permanently authorizing the mammography telescreening pilot program. It also would require VA to offer either a telescreening mammography program, a full-service in-house mammography program, or a mobile mammography program in each state.

You can find additional information on these bills and many others by visiting [PVAAction Force](#). Even if you're not joining us in Washington, D.C. for this year's

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Advocacy/Legislation Seminar, you can still participate by using this site to send messages to your elected officials, urging them to support these bills.

### **SVAC CONSIDERS WIDE-RANGE OF VETERANS-RELATED BILLS**

On April 29, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC) held a hearing to examine 25 pieces of legislation that covered a wide array of veterans' issues, including health care delivery, appointment scheduling, and apprenticeships through the GI Bill. Most importantly, the committee considered three bills addressing some of PVA's top legislative priorities. These bills included **S. 749, the Justice for ALS Veterans Act**, which would allow the surviving spouse of a veteran who dies from ALS to be eligible for additional Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) known as the "DIC Kicker." Currently, a veteran must be rated totally disabled for a continuous period of at least eight years to be eligible for the kicker. Unfortunately, many ALS veterans do not live the full eight years needed to receive the additional amount. This legislation would ensure their surviving spouses are eligible for it.

The committee also considered **S. 3988, the Veterans Spinal Trauma Access to New Devices (STAND) Act**, which would require the VA to offer annual preventative health evaluations for veterans with spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI/D). It would also ensure veterans are evaluated for advanced assistive technologies and require the VA to report to Congress on the utilization and outcomes of their use. Lastly, it directs the VA to consult with specialists, clinicians, medical device manufacturers and veteran organizations, like PVA, to ensure the department's policies reflect advancements in SCI/D care.

Finally, the committee considered **S. 3647, the Disabled Veterans Dignity Act**. This legislation would codify VA's Bowel and Bladder program; modernize its processes, training, and procedures; and clarify participation criteria, reimbursement rates, and frequency. It also provides a pathway for reconsideration in the event a veteran's request for participation in the program is denied.

Timely reimbursement and the tax treatment of payments are the chief complaints of PVA members who must rely on bowel and bladder care to meet their needs. We believe the bill will help improve the timeliness of payments, but it does not address the taxation issue. In a statement for the record, we urged the committee to work with the House to address it.

You can watch a recording of the hearing [here](#), and read PVA's statement for the record once the official summary of the hearing is published.

### **DOL VETS HOLDS VETERAN ROUNDTABLE**

On May 13, PVA participated in a roundtable hosted by the Department of Labor's (DOL) Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS), along with other veterans and military service organizations. Most of the discussion centered around the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and the Employment Navigator and Partnership Program (ENPP). The ENPP is currently at only 50 military installations but there are hopes of expanding it to many more in the coming years. ENPP is an initiative designed to help transitioning service members and their spouses achieve their employment and training needs as they leave the military. The ENPP provides one-on-one assistance and employment-focused counseling, as well as connecting participants to partner organizations for additional employment services and resources.

As often happens in discussions related to transition, very little time was spent on the needs of disabled veterans. PVA raised the issue and stressed the need for additional improvements and attention to the unemployment rate of disabled veterans. We also discussed the need for additional local resources to help veterans find meaningful and suitable employment that allows them financial independence and a high quality of life.

DOL's Office of Disability Employment Policy also gave a quick brief on their role and work with DOL VETS. Part of their brief included information about the Veterans Accommodations Toolkit, which provides workplace

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resources for disabled veterans. There are other toolkits available on the [website](#) as well.

### **HHS DELAYS COMPLIANCE DATES FOR WEB USER RULE**

On May 7, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) [announced](#) an [Interim Final Rule](#) (IFR) delaying the deadlines for recipients of federal financial assistance to comply with its 2024 web accessibility rule. The compliance date for recipients with 15 or more employees was extended from May 11, 2026, to May 11, 2027. The compliance date for recipients with fewer than 15 employees was extended from May 10, 2027, to May 10, 2028.

In 2024, the Department published the final rule, [Nondiscrimination on the Bases of Disability in Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance](#) requiring recipients of federal funds to make their websites, mobile applications and any programs delivered through kiosks accessible to individuals with disabilities. The rule adopts the standards from the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA. The rule also permits alternative methods of achieving accessibility, provided those methods offer an equal or greater level of access than WCAG 2.1 Level AA. In the announcement, HHS states that the IFR is in response to concerns that a significant number of recipients of federal financial assistance, such as community health centers, large and small hospitals, and primary care centers, among other recipients, would not be able to meet the upcoming deadlines. HHS also states that the extension aligns with the Department of Justice's [parallel rulemaking](#) for Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

### **NEWS OF NOTE**

#### **Senate Appropriations Subcommittee Holds VA Budget Hearing**

On April 30, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies held a hearing to review the President's fiscal year 2027 VA budget request. VA Secretary Doug Collins

testified at the hearing, which focused on how VA plans to execute a proposed \$488 billion total budget. Lines of questioning centered on workforce capacity; infrastructure investment, including construction funding; and VA's ability to manage rising demand, particularly in the context of recent workforce reductions and a plan for a smaller workforce under the proposed budget. You can watch the hearing [here](#).

#### **VA Announces Nearly \$600 Million for Facility Improvements**

On May 11, the VA announced the approval of \$596 million for infrastructure improvements for the non-recurring maintenance fund for the second quarter of fiscal year 2026. This is a portion of the record \$4.8 billion in non-recurring maintenance funds that had been previously earmarked for the department.

Non-recurring maintenance funds can be used by VA medical facilities for significant maintenance, replacements, and upgrades needed to maintain and improve operational capability and health care delivery. There are 56 projects focused on Electronic Health Records Management, nine of which are spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI/D) hub or spoke sites. Among the list of facilities receiving funds in the second quarter was the VA medical center in Palo Alto, California, which will be used to renovate building 7 for SCI/D, and a Physical Therapy/Occupational Therapy gym relocation project in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The complete list of projects can be found [here](#).

### **SURVEYS AND COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES**

#### **REMINDER: FAA Survey for People with Disabilities About Aircraft Evacuation**

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has launched a survey to gather feedback from passengers with disabilities regarding aircraft evacuations. The lack of research into the evacuation process for passengers with disabilities in air travel is a source of significant concern. Please provide FAA with your feedback [here](#).

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## Veterans' Committee Activities

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

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