The Issue:
The Automobile Adaptive Equipment (AAE) Handbook and Directives are outdated. The Handbook was written in 2000, and the Reimbursable Amount for Automobile Adaptive Equipment Directive was written in 2011. A lack of training, combined with uncorrelated and conflicting information sent to VA field offices by the Veterans Benefits Administration and the Veterans Health Administration, has resulted in disabled veterans not receiving reimbursement for standard AAE that they have received in the past. This has caused a hardship on those disabled veterans who are dependent on AAE for mobility.

Paralyzed Veterans and other veterans service organizations (VSOs) have met with VA many times in the last two years to provide recommendations as to how to improve the provision of AAE, offer to provide guidance, and help to rewrite the Directives and suggest methods to incorporate new technology into AAE. At this point, VA has refused to accept help and has refused to include VSOs in the development of rewriting the AAE Directive.

Paralyzed Veterans’ Position:
AAE is essential to the mobility and health of disabled veterans. AAE has forced its way to the top group of priorities that must be addressed by VA. Congress must ensure that VA quickly proceeds with updating and rewriting the AAE Directive by establishing a task force of VA and VSO experts to rewrite the AAE, review recommendations for reimbursement of AAE, and develop a process to conduct a yearly review and update of the AAE Directive.

While Congress has not changed the law, VA has gotten more restrictive. VHA Directive 2011-046 states Power Steering is a standard item that would not be reimbursable after December 31, 2016. This could be an ominous portent of all standard equipment in the VA rewrite of AAE.
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carlh@buckeyepva.org
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douglasb@buckeyepva.org
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pauls@buckeyepva.org
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hollyk@buckeyepva.org

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curtisf@buckeyepva.org

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carlh@buckeyepva.org

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sharonm@buckeyepva.org

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dougb@buckeyepva.org

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dougb@buckeyepva.org

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hollyk@buckeyepva.org
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scottl@buckeyepva.org

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aarons@pva.org
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Volunteer Liaison Officer
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carlh@buckeyepva.org
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dougb@buckeyepva.org
Curtis Fatyol, CHL-Dayton
curtisf@buckeyepva.org
Sylvester Cooper, CHL-Cincinnati

Mission Statement
The Paralyzed Veterans of America, Buckeye Chapter strives to improve the quality of life of honorably discharged veterans who have spinal cord injury, dysfunction or illness including but not limited to multiple sclerosis and ALS (Lou Gehrig’s disease) through advocacy, medical research, sports and recreation, education and communication.

DISCLAIMER
The Buckeye Banner is a publication of the Buckeye Chapter, PVA and is meant to inform its readers of Chapter activities, legislation, and other matters of concern to veterans and/or members of the disability community. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of BPVA, its Officers, Board Members, the Editor or production staff.

REV 12/17

WELCOME
NEW MEMBERS!
Timothy Houston
Ronald Kay
Joseph Myers
Samuel Johnson Jr
President’s Report

Welcome to Spring everyone! But I question this as snow is falling outside my window as I write.

In March, Doug Beckley (Government Relations Director), Sharon Moster (Executive Director), and I attended PVA’s 2018 Advocacy/Legislation Training Seminar in Arlington, Virginia. There, PVA national government relations staff updated attendees on bills and issues on the federal level before going to Capitol Hill. We met with our Ohio senators and sixteen representatives and/or their staff to discuss important issues that could affect veterans, as well as others with disabilities. You will find these issues posted on the chapter’s website, www.buckeyepva.org, under the Advocacy/Legislation tab and titled, 2018 Point Papers. Take the time to read over these issues, they may affect you.

The annual “Good Food, Great Cause” fundraising event was held at Parma Tavern on March 10. It was another great success with good food, nice raffle prizes, a healthy 50/50 pot, as well as a great number of supporters. Just like last year, to involve all chapter members in this fundraiser, the office sent five raffle tickets asking to buy/sell them for $5 each or 5 tickets for $20. I personally thank all members who stepped up and bought or sold tickets. We look forward to more members coming on board to help the chapter next year. A heartfelt THANK YOU goes out to the staff, volunteers, members, and all supporters for making this event so successful! This year marks the 72nd anniversary for the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) organization. The month of April is recognized as Paralyzed Veterans of America Awareness Month (PAM). Throughout the month of April the chapter will have representatives at many locations with displays and pamphlets that will help educate the public about PVA’s mission of service to its members, as well as the disabled community. Take time to get involved. We are always in need of volunteers to pass on our mission. Please call the chapter office at (800) 248-2548 to sign up for a location and time.

As many of you know, the chapter, along with the help of SPIRE Institute will be hosting the 7th Annual Buckeye Wheelchair Games this year on April 20 - 21. All the events are held under one roof, except for bowling which will be at Scores Fun Center in Painesville. Events include air guns, track and field events, 9-ball, slalom, weightlifting, swimming, table tennis and boccia. If you are not participating, come out to SPIRE and cheer on the athletes and see what this is all about. You never know, you may get hooked to join in next year! SPIRE Institute is located off I-90 in Geneva, Ohio.

This is an election year for nine BPVA chapter directors. You will find the timeline information in this issue of the Banner on page 5. Please read and note what the responsibilities are to be a chapter director, as this is a job that should not be taken lightly. If you have any questions, please feel free to talk with any of the officers or directors.

As always your concerns, issues, or ideas of how we may make our chapter better are always welcome. Contact the chapter office, stop by the VA chapter office on the 6th floor or email: carlh@buckeyepva.org.
Executive Director’s Message

Spring has Sprung! At least I hope it has. What a busy winter we had in with the Buckeye Chapter.

As most of you know, our All You Can Eat fundraiser was a huge success largely because of the members that participated. Your support was outstanding and we all thank you.

I attended the Government Relations Advocacy Seminar in Washington D.C. in March along with Carl Harris and Doug Beckley. We met with many representatives and our two Senators – Portman and Brown. Please see the photos of these visits on page 18 of this newsletter. Hopefully, our members will have some benefit from this trip.

The Buckeye Wheelchair Games are fast approaching. Scheduled for April 19-21 at SPIRE Institute in Geneva, Ohio. While registration is closed, please feel free to come and watch your fellow members participate. If you would like to attend the Awards Banquet on Saturday, April 21, I still have a few spaces left. Please call the chapter office for reservations at (800) 248-2548. The cost is $30.00. Payment will be required at the time of reservation by credit card.

I think things are going to warm up soon, so enjoy the change of seasons.

As always, please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns. My email is: sharonm@buckeyepva.org

Proud of our Members

Longtime BPVA member Blaine Denious and his wife, Helen were recently invited to the 46th annual Accent on Excellence Awards by their good friend, Tim Dimoff, President & CEO of SACS Consulting & Investigative Services. These awards recognized 24 extremely successful business people for their professional achievements and community contributions.

The Executive of the Year Award was given to Jim Tressel, President of Youngstown State University and former Ohio State Football Coach.

Honorees were applauded for their achievements and a standing ovation was given to Coach Tressel, who gave a very inspiring talk. Unexpectedly, Tim recognized Blaine for his good works for the last 40 years with veterans and the disabled community. Everyone stood and clapped for quite a while. The overwhelming recognition and appreciation was very touching.

“When the event concluded and all were leaving, Coach Tressel wanted to meet Blaine and came over to our table. We've included a picture. For sure, he has always been one of Blaine's biggest heroes,” said Helen.
Chapter Elections Coming Up

Chapter elections are coming up! Elections for the Board of Directors of Paralyzed Veterans of America, Buckeye Chapter, Inc. (Buckeye PVA) will be held this year. All nine positions are open for election.

Any member in good standing may run for office, but you must be certified prior to appearing on the ballot. Certification is simple and mainly requires submitting your DD 214 to National PVA. Contact Doug Beckley for help (dougb@buckeyepva.org).

Nominations are being accepted by mail this year. If you are interested in helping the chapter continue to improve our services to SCI/D veterans, please consider entering your name into nomination by notifying the office and submitting a brief biography (300 words or less). We have members all over Ohio and your bio will help them learn something about you before voting.

Director of Buckeye PVA is a volunteer position. A board member may be reimbursed for properly approved travel and expenses. There are generally twelve meetings per year and all members are expected to attend each meeting. If you live outside the Cleveland area, some of these meetings can be attended by teleconference. You will also be asked to work on various committees and chapter functions as needs arise. Access to an internet-enabled computer is necessary since the board does much of its communication by email. A BuckeyePVA.org email account will be provided to each board member. Contact any current officer or member of the board if you have questions concerning board responsibilities.

Dates to Remember for Chapter Elections:

May 7, 2018 – Deadline for submitting nominations & biographies.

June, 2018 – General Membership meeting, announcement of nominees.

Early July, 2018 – Ballots will be sent out.

August 1, 2018 – Ballot return must be postmarked by this date. No exceptions.

September, 2018 - Annual General Membership meeting to announce results.

September, 2018 – BOD meeting with old and new BOD members.

October 1, 2018 – New board takes over.
We Proudly Support the
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BUCKEYE CHAPTER

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ANNUAL AIR RIFLE & AIR PISTOL PROGRAM
Mid-Atlantic Air Rifle Tournament
March 7-8, 2018
Richmond, VA
Wisconsin Air Rifle Tournament
March 23-25, 2018
Milwaukee, WI
Buckeye Air Rifle Tournament
April 20-21, 2018
Geneva, OH
*Indicates combined events
PARALYZED VETERANS NATIONAL SHOOTING SPORTS CIRCUIT
Florida Gulf Coast Shooting Sports Tournament
March 1-3, 2018
Odessa, FL
Nevada Shooting Sports Tournament
March 16-18, 2018
Pistol & Rifle Tournament - March 16
Las Vegas, NV
Cal-Diego Shooting Sports Tournament & Cal-Diego Rifle/Pistol
March 23-25, 2018
Pistol & Rifle Tournament - March 23
Redlands, CA
Vaughan Shooting Sports Tournament
April 20-22, 2018
Edwardsville, IL
Minnesota Shooting Sports Tournament
May 18-20, 2018
Minneapolis, MN
Lone Star Shooting Sports Tournament
June 22-24, 2018
Waxahachie, TX
Iowa Shooting Sports Tournament & Pistol Tournament
June 15-17, 2018
Pistol Event - June 15, 2018
Cedar Rapids, IA

ANNUAL PARALYZED VETERANS/BASS TOUR
Florida Gulf Coast Bass Tournament
April 6-8, 2018
Kissimmee, FL
KY-IN Bass Tournament
May 4-6, 2018
Kuttawa, KY
National Bass Tournament
June 1-3, 2018
Marbury, MD
Mid-Atlantic Bass Tournament
June 8-10, 2018
Richmond, VA

ANNUAL PARALYZED VETERANS/NWPA BILLIARDS TOURNAMENT SERIES
Mid-Atlantic Billiards Tournament
March 23-25, 2018
Mililithian, VA
Mid-America Billiards Tournament
April 20-22, 2018
Oklahoma City, OK
Mountain States Billiards Tournament
June 29-30, 2018
Fountain, CO
Buckeye Billiards Tournament
June 22-23, 2018
Wickliffe, OH
**Non-sanctioned events

BOCCIA
Cal-Diego Boccia Tournament
Feb. 22-23, 2018
San Diego, CA

ANNUAL PARALYZED VETERANS/AWBA BOWLING TOURNAMENT SERIES
Florida Gulf Coast Bowling Tournament
Feb. 23-25, 2018
Tampa, FL
Mid-America Bowling Tournament
April 12-15, 2018
Shawnee, OK
Vaughan Bowling Tournament
May 3-6, 2018
Woodridge, IL

PARALYZED VETERANS RACING
Top End Euro-American HC Championship
Feb. 3-4, 2018
Clermont, FL
Valley of the Sun
Feb. 16-18, 2018
Phoenix, AZ
One City Marathon
March 4, 2018
Newport News, VA
Off-Road Spring Expo
April 13-15, 2018
Chesterfield, VA
Paralyzed Veterans of America Learn to Race Camp
April 17-20, 2018
Gettysburg, PA
Blue and Gray
April 21-22, 2018
Gettysburg, PA
Redlands Cycling Classic
May 2-6, 2018
Redlands, CA
Pittsburgh Marathon
May 6, 2018
Pittsburgh, PA
Clocktower Classic
May 2018
Rome, GA
Wichita Omnium
May 2018
Wichita, KS
Para-Cycling Nationals
June 13-14, 2018
Augusta, GA
Tennessee Paracycling Open
June 16-17, 2018
Knoxville, TN
Paralyzed Veterans of America Racing MIni-Camp
June 19-28, 2018
Delafiel, WI
Tour De Nez
June 23, 2018
Reno, NV
Tour of America’s Dairylands
June 22-24, 2018
Milwaukee, WI
Treasure Valley Grand Prix
July 7-8, 2018
Nampa, ID
National Veterans Wheelchair Games
July 30, 2018
Orlando, FL
Paralyzed Veterans of America Racing Hi Performance Off Road Camp
Aug. 19-24, 2018
Crested Butte, CO
Off Road Handcycling Championships
Aug. 24-26, 2018
Crested Butte, CO
Pensacola Cycling Classic
Sept. 15-16, 2018
Pensacola, FL
Air Force Marathon
Sept. 15, 2018
Dayton, OH
Off-Road Fall Expo
Sept. 29-30, 2018
Chesterfield, VA
Army Ten Miler
Oct. 7, 2018
Washington, D.C.
Marine Corps Marathon
Oct. 28, 2018
Washington, D.C.

38TH NYWG
July 30-Aug. 4, 2018
Orlando, FL
For more information, visit: pva.org/sports
Buckeye PVA sponsored the Cleveland VA Creative Art and Crafts Show in February. We want to thank all those veterans that exhibited their skills in the creative art displays and the two live performances by David Nau and Josh Maley. Live recordings of Dave can be heard at: ohiouwheelchair.com, click on the “Dave” link on the bottom left. We truly have many talented and gifted members.

Recreation therapist, Nikki Zillich is leading a Buckeye Wheelchair Team made up of 24 members, to Snowmass Village, Colorado from April 1 - 6. The team will participate in the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic for a fun time of downhill skiing, cross country skiing, snowmobiling, scuba diving, rock climbing and more. Anyone interested in going next year, look for applications in September. Take a look at an awesome video showing the activities available: wintersportsclinic.org. It’s a great time if you love the snow.

The Buckeye Wheelchair Games are right around the corner, April 19-21 at SPIRE Institute in Geneva, Ohio. If you are not registered, it’s too late this year, but you can always come on out to cheer the veterans on at bowling, track, billiards, air rifle, swimming, field events and table tennis.

The National Veterans Wheelchair Games are in Orlando, Florida this year July 29 - August 4. Next year, they will be in Louisville, Kentucky.

This year they are going to have a team event which will possibly include kayaking, track, shooting, weightlifting and cycling. Stay tuned for more information. The Buckeye Team may need your skills to put a team together. Keep checking the website for more information. They will be using the app on your cell phone and tablet to keep up with changes.

If you plan to drive to the Games, please put this information in writing telling us which airport you would have left from in an email or letter to the BPVA office so no airline ticket is purchased for you. We will be able to process a gas reimbursement when you get back and verify you drove up to the cost of an airline ticket.
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The Issue:
Paralyzed Veterans believes it is time to improve benefits for the most severely disabled veterans, particularly with regards to the rates of Special Monthly Compensation (SMC).

There is a well-established shortfall in the rates of SMC paid to the most severely disabled veterans that VA serves. SMC represents payments for “quality of life” issues, such as the loss of an eye or limb, the inability to naturally control bowel and bladder function, the inability to achieve sexual satisfaction, or the need to rely on others for the activities of daily life, like bathing or eating. To be clear, given the extreme nature of the disabilities incurred by most veterans in receipt of SMC, Paralyzed Veterans does not believe that a veteran can be totally compensated for the impact on quality of life; however, SMC does at least offset some of the loss of quality of life. Many severely injured veterans do not have the means to function independently and need intensive care on a daily basis. Many veterans spend more on daily home-based care than they are receiving in SMC benefits.

One of the most important SMC benefits is Aid and Attendance. Paralyzed Veterans recommends that Aid and Attendance benefits be appropriately increased. Attendant care is very expensive and often the Aid and Attendance benefits provided to eligible veterans do not cover this cost. Many of our members who pay for full-time attendant care incur costs that far exceed the amount they receive as SMC-Aid and Attendant beneficiaries at the R2 compensation level (the highest rate available). Ultimately, they are forced to progressively sacrifice their standard of living in order to meet the rising cost of necessary care. As the veteran is forced to dedicate more and more of his or her monthly compensation to supplement the shortfalls in the Aid and Attendance benefit, it slowly erodes the veteran’s overall quality of life.

Another concern is the improper interpretation of the Automobile Adaptive Equipment (AAE) rules by VA. A lack of training, combined with uncorrelated and conflicting information sent to VA field offices by the Veterans Benefits Administration and the Veterans Health Administration, has resulted in disabled veterans not receiving reimbursement for standard AAE that they have received in the past.

VA is also currently undergoing rule changes that will impact veterans’ access to prosthetics devices. These devices are critical to the health and well-being of disabled veterans. It is imperative that VA ensure adequate and proper access to prosthetics as it considers any future rule changes.

Paralyzed Veterans’ Position:
Congress needs to improve benefits for the most severely disabled veterans, to include increasing the rates of SMC, as well as Aid and Attendance benefits, maintaining appropriate AAE reimbursement, and ensuring access to prosthetics as VA considers rule changes.
Free Rides

February 28, 2018 was a gray day outside the Greens Mall in Beaver Creek, Ohio. Inside at 10:00 am, the sounds of laughter and vision of many smiles lit up the day as the AMBUCS organization presented therapy tricycles to several veterans and children with disabilities.

AMBUCS has provided more than 30,000 Amtrykes to people with disabilities across America. With more than 15 models, each with a myriad of adaptation choices that truly make it possible for nearly everyone to experience the fun and freedom of riding, regardless of ability-from age 2 to 102!

To find out more about AMBUCS, view their website at www.ambucs.org.

Free Rides

by Curtis Fatyol
Dayton CHL

Paralyzed Veterans of America, Buckeye Chapter has available an Emergency Assistance Program. This program helps members of the Buckeye Chapter who may find themselves in financial distress causing possible eviction from their homes, disconnection of utilities or the inability to pay for food.

Members must be in good standing for a minimum of 90 days prior to qualifying for consideration. Application for help is limited to twice yearly or up to a maximum of $500 per year. This is a confidential process.

Payments must be made directly to the vendor. Please contact the Chapter office for more details. (800) 248-2548; (216) 731-1017.
Mileage Reimbursement

Who is eligible to participate in the program?
Must be a BPVA Member in good standing for a minimum of 90 days to participate. The Committee has the option to make exceptions for extenuating circumstances.

What is the acceptable time period before the program becomes available for use?
The BPVA Member must be hospitalized for a minimum of one week.

What is the acceptable distance for mileage reimbursement?
The mileage reimbursement will be given to visitors for travel to a VA hospital in the State of Ohio for the wellbeing of members who are hospitalized. Beginning and ending travel must be in the State of Ohio.

How much is the reimbursement?
Reimbursement will be at a rate of .20 per mile. Mileage will be determined via MapQuest based on the submission of the visitor of the beginning and ending address. Chapter will reimburse up to 2 trips per month with a $2,000 cap per year.

Reimbursement request containing the name of the member, name and address of the visitor, the date of visitation and the origin of the trip must be submitted by the 20th of the following month, with payment at the end of month. Request for reimbursement will only be valid for one calendar month following travel.

How will reimbursement be paid?
Reimbursements will be via check.

What locations are included in the program?
Reimbursement will be for Ohio VA hospitals only.

For more information contact the Chapter Office at 800-248-2548.
Buckeye Banner

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April 2018 -
Paralyzed Veterans Awareness Month

April 19 - 21, 2018 -
Buckeye Wheelchair Games, Geneva, OH

June 22 - 23, 2018 -
Annual 8-ball Billiards Tournament, Wickliffe Lanes in Wickliffe, OH

July 30 – August 4, 2018 -
National Veterans Wheelchair Games, Orlando, FL

August 27, 2018 -
Annual Golf Outing Fundraiser, Windmill Lakes Golf Course, Ravenna, OH

*Dates are subject to change.
Please watch the Buckeye website www.buckeyepva.org and future Banners for updates and more information.

It’s Time to Clean &
Help a Worthwhile Cause!

The Paralyzed Veterans of America, Buckeye Chapter is committed to making life better for veterans affected by spinal cord injury or disease. Through our efforts we have been able to make a positive impact on the lives of veterans in our community.
Your financial support can help us make a significant difference in the lives of veterans. To show our appreciation, with each $50.00 donation we will send you a package of high-quality trash bags.
Sizes available: 16, 33, 40, and 60 gallon.

To make a donation, you may call, mail a check or use our online form.
Paralyzed Veterans of America, Buckeye Chapter
26250 Euclid Ave, Suite 115, Euclid, Ohio 44132
Phone: (216) 731-1017 or (800) 248-2548
www.buckeyepva.org
### Member Birthdays - April and May

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<td>Herbert McKinley</td>
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Many turned out for the 11th Annual Art Festival at the Cleveland VA. This event showcases the talents of veterans who exhibit their skills in the creative art displays and live performances. We truly have many talented and gifted members.

The art festival opened with live performances from Josh Maley and Dave Nau with his band, Cripple Creek.

Our 2018 emcee, Desiree Douglas.

Nicole Zillich, event coordinator.

The Best of Show Judge’s Choice was *Trixie 68* by S. Hines. Denise Cooper presented the awards.

The Best of Show People’s Choice with to *Untitled Diptych* by Christi Bird.
BPVA Visits Capitol Hill
Congress Targets Safety Net Programs

**The Issue:**
With passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, Congressional leaders announced plans to move on to making significant changes to Medicare and Medicaid in 2018. Since the tax bill will add between $500 million and $1.5 trillion to the deficit, many policymakers now contend that spending in federal benefit programs such as Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security must be reined in.

Specific proposals contained in Congressional budget plans for 2018 include raising the Medicare eligibility age from 65 to 67, raising Medicare premiums, and converting Medicare to a voucher program. Medicaid cuts of $1 trillion are assumed to come from turning Medicaid into a block grant program and ending the Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act. The House and Senate budget resolutions also assume over $5 billion in cuts to Social Security. These programs provide a basic level of economic security and health care protection on which millions of veterans with disabilities and their families depend.

Of the nation’s 20 million veterans, 9 million are enrolled in the VA health care system. While most veterans with significant disabilities rely predominantly on the VA, many veterans and their families also utilize Medicare, Medicaid, and private health insurance through TRICARE and civilian health systems. Essential benefits requirements and elimination of lifetime caps and pre-existing condition exclusions have extended private health insurance coverage for millions of people with disabilities. In Medicaid, programs such as Community First Choice and Money Follows the Person promote living in the community and avoid institutionalization for people with disabilities. Faced with smaller Medicaid budgets under changes assumed in the House budget instructions, states could be forced to eliminate these optional services.

Almost all of those 20 million veterans have earned the right to benefits under Social Security and Medicare. Indeed, in 2016, over 9.2 million veterans received Social Security benefits – either retirement or disability - accounting for 18 percent of all adult beneficiaries. Proposals to shrink benefits under these programs or reduce services through damaging cuts in Social Security’s administrative expenses threaten not only these veterans but their families or their survivors.

**Paralyzed Veterans’ Position:**
Paralyzed Veterans opposes any efforts that would undermine insurance protections in the private market that could make it hard for veterans and people with disabilities to obtain affordable, quality health care coverage. Paralyzed Veterans supports removing the institutional bias of Medicaid but opposes block grants, per capita caps or other measures that would radically restructure the program.

Paralyzed Veterans acknowledges that steps must be taken to ensure the long term solvency of the Medicare and Social Security trust funds. There are numerous reforms that can be made to modernize, strengthen and enhance Medicare and Social Security without damaging these vital safety net benefits.
Government Relations Report

Buckeye PVA Chapter representatives go to Capital Hill!

During the week of March 5, 2018, representatives from the Buckeye Chapter joined other PVA chapters and national PVA staff for four days of training and visits on Capitol Hill. We were there to let our representatives know about the issues of concern of PVA and all people with disabilities.

Priority number one - Protection of Specialized Services.

Specialized services are part of the core mission and responsibility of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). VHA’s specialized services that include spinal cord injury/disease, blind rehabilitation, poly-trauma, and mental health are of paramount importance due to the inability to replicate their comprehensive approach in the private sector. These specialized services must be strengthened and sustained within the VHA through allocation of appropriate resources and not subject to defunding.

VHA has not maintained its capacity nor mission to provide for the unique health-care needs of catastrophically disabled veterans. Reductions in both inpatient beds and staff in Spinal Cord Injury/Disease acute and extended care settings have been continuously reported throughout the system of care. Some political leaders advocate providing health care to veterans by contracting for services in the community. This would move veterans out of the “veteran-centric” care environment which is only found within VHA, lead to a diminution of existing services, and increase health care costs in the federal budget.

In addition, for veterans who do receive care in the community, they are not protected under 38 U.S.C. 1151. If medical malpractice occurs during outsourced care, the veteran must pursue standard legal remedies unlike similarly-situated veterans who are privy to VA’s non-adversarial process.

Priority number two - Expansion of the Caregiver Program.

The current VA Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers is only available to a veteran seriously injured due to military service on or after September 11, 2001. Congress must eliminate the unjust date of injury requirement and include “service-connected illness” as a criterion for the program. Doing so will give the majority of veterans’ caregivers access to critically needed support services.

Caregivers are the most important component of rehabilitation and eventual recovery for veterans with catastrophic injuries. Their well-being directly impacts the care veterans receive. There is no reasonable justification that can be provided as to why pre-9/11 veterans with service-connected injuries or illnesses should be excluded from the caregiver program.

The program currently provides respite care, a monthly stipend, paid travel expenses to attend the veteran’s medical appointments, and healthcare through CHAMPVA. Without these services, caregivers are likely to exhaust their savings, experience burnout, or suffer their own injury or illness. This means the veteran is more likely to be placed in an institutional setting that is far more costly to the taxpayer. Both the exclusion of “serious illnesses and diseases,” and the use of the “date of injury” as eligibility requirements for such an important benefit are unjust. As a result, the veteran suffers.

As the largest cohort of veterans (Vietnam era) ages, the demand for long-term care resources will continue to grow significantly. Catastrophically injured veterans will require the most intensive and expensive institutional care. By providing their caregivers the means to care for them at home, with family, they will live more normal lives while also delaying the costs of institutional care. Paralyzed Veterans urges Congress to pass legislation that would open eligibility earlier than September 11, 2001, and also include as eligible those veterans whose catastrophic illnesses are a result of service.

Priority number three - Air Carrier Access Act.

Over 30 years ago, President Ronald Reagan signed the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA). The ACAA prohibits discrimination based on disability in air travel. Despite progress, too many travelers with disabilities still encounter significant barriers, such as damaged assistive devices, delayed assistance, and lack of seating accommodations.
Access for people with disabilities must move into the 21st century to ensure that all are able to compete in today’s job market and enjoy opportunities available to other Americans.

To address disability-related complaints under the ACAA, passengers with disabilities may file a complaint with the specific airline or the Department of Transportation (DOT). In 2016, passengers filed 32,445 disability-related complaints as reported by 184 domestic and foreign air carriers, which represents a nearly five percent increase over 2015. Top complaints with U.S. carriers for passengers with paraplegia or quadriplegia include failure to provide passenger assistance and appropriate seating accommodations. That same year, passengers also filed 862 disability-related complaints directly with DOT.

Many of the difficulties that travelers with disabilities encounter in air travel are not sufficiently addressed by the ACAA and its implementing regulations. Damaged assistive devices, inadequate training for airline and contractor personnel, and inaccessible airplanes result in missed flights, injuries, and delays that lead to lost time and missed opportunities for people with disabilities. Enforcement of ACAA protections is limited to administrative action and civil fines. Unlike most other civil rights laws, the ACAA lacks a guaranteed private right of action, which means people with disabilities receive limited redress of their grievances.

Member call to Action!!!!
We need your help in stopping the roll back of Persons with Disabilities Civil Rights. Call your Senators and tell them to oppose any legislation that would require Notification prior to filing a law suit for a violation of the ADA.

ADA Education and Reform Act (H.R. 620)
- H.R. 620 would require a person with a disability to send a letter of notification detailing a business’s specific ADA violations, regardless of the business’s size.
- As amended by the House, the business would then have 60 days to respond and another 60 days to fix -or “cure”- the problem or, in some cases, make only “substantial progress.”
- The business could only be sued if it failed to acknowledge the notification or make a sufficient amount of progress in removing the barrier.

Status of H.R. 620
- The legislation passed out of the House on February 15.
- The vote was 225-192, with 19 Republicans voting against H.R. 620. Twelve Democrats, 6 from California, voted for its passage.
- It’s now up to the Senate to stop this legislation from becoming law.

Place a call about H.R. 620 to your senators and explain that PVA opposes ADA notification legislation, including H.R. 620.

What points should you make?
- Public accommodations/businesses have had 28 years to comply with the ADA. We need to focus on increasing compliance, not tearing it down.
- Free technical assistance is available through the ADA National Network. Businesses can also take advantages of tax incentives.
- H.R. 620 rolls back the clock and puts the burden on people with disabilities to enforce their rights.
- If passed, businesses would have no incentive to proactively make their businesses compliant with the ADA.

Specific Response to Notification
- A notification requirement would only serve to remove all incentive for businesses to comply with Title III ADA requirements.
- If a notification requirement, such as that laid out in H.R. 620, became law, a business could simply employ a “wait and see” approach and continue to violate the law without any real fear of consequences.
- Covered entities should continuously evaluate their businesses for appropriate access under the ADA and not wait to receive notification before acting to make them fully accessible.
What is RAMP?

This past summer, after months of meetings, hearings, and deliberations, Congress passed a law referred to as the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017. This law is designed to overhaul the VA benefits appeals process. The new appeals system is scheduled to go into effect as early as February 2019. In the interim, the VA has created the Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP), which is designed to allow certain claimants to participate in aspects of the new appeals process immediately. Thousands of veterans have already received letters from the VA inviting them to participate in RAMP. Unfortunately, there is a great deal of confusion and uncertainty among both claimants and representatives as to whether they should participate in this program.

VA is sending letters to many veterans whose claims are on appeal, encouraging those veterans to “opt in” to RAMP. If you receive one of these letters, we encourage you to contact your service officer, so he or she can help you determine whether opting in is in your best interest in your case. In most cases, staying in the current “Legacy” process, may be best.

This new law will bring many changes to the VA adjudication system. VA is still working on creating all the new rules and policies that will apply to claims and appeals, so there are still many unanswered questions about how the new system will work. We will stay on top of these changes as they come, so we can continue to provide the best representation possible to our clients.

If you have any questions, contact one of your Service Officers:
Aaron Stevens
(216) 791-3800 x4159

Michael Yaskowiak
(800) 795-3623

Greater Cincinnati including Dayton, Donate Today

Greater Cincinnati including Dayton, give G.I.V.E. a try and support veterans through a donation. Through the Paralyzed Veterans of America's G.I.V.E. (Goods Inspiring Veterans Everywhere) clothing donation program, service never goes out of style.

Your generous donations of clothes, small appliances, and gently used household goods help improve the lives of severely injured veterans and strengthens the fabric of our community. Plus, your donations are tax deductible – a receipt will be issued upon pickup/drop off.

In Ohio, this service is only available in the Greater Cincinnati/Dayton area, but is expanding to different locations. Stay tuned for an area near you!

To donate, call (314) 416-1300 or visit the website for more information: www.pva.org/ways-to-give/give/give-clothing
Connect With What Matters

Being there makes a difference

It could be a simple trip to the mall, a ride to the movies or just a visit to a friend’s home. The little things in life can make a big difference. It’s why MobilityWorks has been helping veterans connect with who and what matters most since 1997. Veterans have unique needs so we treat each of them as individuals. First of all, we listen. Then, we work together to find the best solution.

MobilityWorks considers it a privilege to help our nation’s veterans. Every day we work with local VISNs and service organizations to make the process of securing accessible vehicles, lifts and driving equipment for veterans as easy as possible.

MobilityWorks has more than 50 locations across the country with the largest selection of accessible vehicles and adaptive solutions:

- Minivans, full-size vans and trucks
- The latest in adaptive technology
- Complete maintenance and service
- Rental vans — veterans receive a 10% discount

MobilityWorks is committed to serving you. Contact us today so we can evaluate your needs and find a solution that best fits your lifestyle.

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For more information, call (800) 248-2548 or visit www.buckeyepva.org

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