



Northwest Chapter

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NORTHWEST OUTPOST

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Inside this issue:

<i>President's Column</i>	3
<i>The History of Women As Veterans</i>	4
<i>Vice President's Column</i>	8
<i>Executive Director's Column</i>	10
<i>NWPVA Chapter Picnic</i>	12
<i>Washington Update</i>	14
<i>Events Calendar</i>	16
<i>Birthdays</i>	18



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Our Mission

The Paralyzed Veterans of America, a congressionally chartered veterans service organization founded in 1946, has developed a unique expertise on a wide variety of issues involving the special needs of our members-veterans of the armed forces who have experienced spinal cord injury or dysfunction.

PVA will use that expertise to be the leading advocate for:

- Quality health care for our members,
- Research and education addressing spinal cord injury and dysfunction,
- Benefits available as a result of our members' military service,
- Civil rights and opportunities which maximize the independence of our members.

To enable PVA to continue to honor this commitment, we must recruit and retain members who have the experience, energy, dedication, and passion necessary to manage the organization and ensure adequate resources to sustain the programs essential for PVA to achieve its mission.

The Northwest Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America (NWPVA) a member chapter of **Paralyzed Veterans of America** accomplishes it's mission by coordinated efforts through programs that:

- Provide opportunities for health promotion, recreation, employment, sports and recreation, service and camaraderie for paralyzed veterans;
- Elevate society's information level about the attitudinal, physical and legal barriers that confront persons with disabilities in order to influence the removal of those barriers;
- Advocate for and monitor the delivery of high quality and appropriate health care benefits and service;
- Cooperate with and seek the support of other groups and individuals that share NWPVA's objective;
- Educate the public with the current and ongoing needs and current and past contributions of America's veterans.

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Matthew Mickunas 75th Annual Convention



Downtown “Old Vegas Strip” in Las Vegas was this year’s meeting point for PVA’s 75th Annual Convention. Your Northwest Chapter was represented in attendance by National Director, Michael Partridge and Chapter President, Matthew Mickunas. Long hours in discussions were met before voting on resolutions that changed PVA’s policy and structure. Emotions were present as several dedicated Members & Non-Members were recognized for rewards announced by the Executive Council. Elections trailed the end of the annual conference, one of our very own, David Zurfluh handed over the National Presidential responsibilities to now National President, Charles Brown. David will maintain the position as Immediate Past National President with some responsibilities to PVA Nationally. Please don’t let your guard down with Covid and ensure you and others around maintain safe. Please watch out for upcoming events on the Northwest’s website (www.nwpva.org) and in this bi-monthly Outpost edition, it would sure be wonderful to see more of our General Membership coming out to join in with program events and just have some fun. We are always in need of your help in volunteering; Help out within the Chapter with program events, social events, and supportive committee rolls, also volunteer at your local VA Facility, they are now cranking up the VA Volunteer Services’ process now that the Covid crisis is nearing an end.

From my Jun/July Column; A new report released by the U.S. Census Bureau shows that while the overall population of veterans is declining, the number of female veterans is on the rise and Post 9-11 Veterans have the highest rate of service connected disability compared to any other group of Veterans. Since the time of the All-Volunteer Force, the number of women serving in the military has grown. Ultimately, these women make the transition from Service Member to Veteran. In 2015, women comprised 9.4 percent of the total Veteran population in the United States. By 2043, women are projected to make up 16.3 percent of all living Veterans. Please see my story in this issue “The History of Women Veterans”, it will give you a glimpse on women as Veterans who have served in the US military.



The History of Women as Veterans

Women who have served in the U.S. military are often referred to as “invisible Veterans” because their service contributions until the 1970s went largely unrecognized by politicians, the media, academia, and the general public. Because of their quasi-military status, the early female pioneers in the military volunteered to wear the uniforms, submit themselves to military rules, and risk their lives in service to their country, all without the same benefits and protections of the men with whom they served. Even though women have been officially serving in the military since the creation of the Army Nurse Corps in 1901, they have not always been considered qualified for Veteran status in terms of receiving benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Even after women were granted Veterans status there were still issues of access, exclusion, and improper management of health care.



The situation for women improved somewhat after World War I and again after World War II. It was not until well after World War II, however, that women who served in the military began to officially be recognized as Veterans. To reduce the possibility of postwar depression brought about by an estimated 15 million discharged male and female service members being unemployed, the National Resources Planning Board, a White House agency, recommended a series of programs for education and training. The American Legion then designed the main features of what became the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 and pushed it through Congress. The President signed the bill into law on June 22, 1944. The G.I. Bill established a variety of benefits for World War II Veterans and future generations of Veterans, such as home and business loans, unemployment compensation, and financial support for education and vocational training. The G.I. Bill allowed millions of Veterans to pursue higher education and other training opportunities to which many otherwise would not have had access. The goal of the G.I. Bill was to avoid the mishaps of World War I by giving Veterans greater opportunities to assimilate into civilian life following their military obligation.

Unlike male Veterans, World War II women Veterans faced barriers in accessing the G.I. Bill many did not know they were eligible for these benefits. In addition, the social and cultural norms after the war discouraged women from the workplace and encouraged them to be focused on their role in the home as mothers, wives, and homemakers. Of the estimated 350,000 women Veterans who served in the Armed Forces at that time and were eligible for all GI Bill rights, it is unclear how many women Veterans actually used various parts of the G.I. Bill. One woman Veteran who benefited from the G.I. Bill said, “I first heard about the G.I. Bill when I was being mustered out. They were talking about the advantage of being discharged, because so many of the people were unhappy

(Continued from page 4)

to be leaving, but at the end of the war, all the women were being discharged so I didn't know if they just thought it would soften the blow or what. But then I realized the G.I. Bill was legitimate, that you could actually go to college and have your tuition and books paid for. Even the fact that you got some extra money didn't seem to make much of an imprint. But the fact that you got your tuition and books which is a big item. So that was my plan to use that. Without the G.I. Bill I couldn't have possibly had a college degree." Many other women Veterans, however, were unaware of their eligibility or made no claim to it even if they went to school.

The establishment of the G.I. Bill in 1944 was fundamental in creating education benefits for those who have served this nation, a goal that continues as a high priority today. Since 1944, Congress has continued to create education programs in order to reflect the changing times of service and to better serve the needs of current Veterans. After the establishment of the All-Volunteer Force in 1973, the G.I. Bill transformed from a reward for fulfilling obligated service to an incentive for voluntary service. The current generation of women Veterans is more aware of their Veteran status and the range of benefits they are entitled to, including education benefits under the G.I. Bill. In the late 1970s and early 1980s many of the contributions made by women in World War II (such as WAACs, WACs, WAVES, and WASPs) were formally recognized through laws that granted these women with Veteran status for their time in service. This opened the doors for women to take advantage of programs, opportunities, and benefits from the Federal and state governments, including VA, and Veteran service organizations. Women's official recognition as Veterans did not equate with easy or guaranteed access to these benefits.

Women Veterans still grappled with obtaining needed-services from institutions that were built around and dominated by males. Data on women who served in the military were scarce in the decades after World War II. The 1980 decennial census marked the first time that information on women Veterans was ever captured in a large national survey. Prior to 1980, the census questionnaire only asked about the military service of men. At the time of the 1980 decennial census, women made up just over 2 percent of the Veteran population. Today, that proportion has increased to over 9 percent. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the Federal government and especially VA began to take actions to understand how they could better serve women Veterans. A 1982 report from the General Accounting Office (GAO) attempted to identify actions to ensure that women Veterans had equal access to VA benefits. Their results indicated that: (1) women did not have equal access to VA benefits, (2) women treated in VA facilities did not receive complete physical examinations, (3) VA was not providing gynecological care, and (4) women Veterans were not adequately informed of their benefits under the law. Many women at this time were unaware that they even had access to VA benefits. A study done in 1985 by VA found that 57 percent of women Veterans who were eligible for VA benefits did not know that they were eligible.

The Advisory Committee on Women Veterans (ACWV) was established and chartered in 1983 (by Public Law 98-160). The ACWV was created to assess the needs of women Veterans, with respect to VA programs such as compensation, rehabilitation, outreach, and health care. The Committee reviews VA's programs, activities, research projects, and other initiatives designed to meet the needs of women Veterans; Provides advice and makes recommendations to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, on ways to improve, modify, and affect change in programs and services for women Veterans; and follows up on all those recommendations. The ACWV submits a report to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and Congress every two years. In 1991, Congress tasked the GAO to follow up on their 1982 report by assessing the then-current state of VA health care for women. Based on GAO recommendations in their 1992 report entitled "VA HEALTH CARE FOR WOMEN: Despite Progress, Improvements Needed", VA worked to ensure greater accessibility for women's health and allowed treatment for PTSD to include care for sexual trauma associated with military duty. Recognizing that not all Veterans who were eligible to use health care services and other readjustment benefits were taking advantage of the programs, Congress passed legislation to create specific offices within VA to address the concerns of these groups. In 1991, VA created the position of Chief Minority National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics Affairs Officer (CMAO) that defined Veteran minority group members as Asian, Black, Hispanic, American Indian or Alaska Na-

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tive, Pacific Islander, or female. In 1993, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs separated the CMAO's responsibilities into two different programs to address specific needs: The Women Veterans' Program Office and the Minority Veterans' Program Office. One year later, in November 1994, Public Law 103-446 established the Center for Women Veterans (CWV) to oversee VA's administration of health care and benefits services for women as well as programs for women Veterans.

The Center's current mission is to "monitor and coordinate VA's administration of health care and benefits services, and programs for women Veterans, serve as an advocate for a cultural transformation (both within VA and in the general public) in recognizing the service and contributions of women Veterans and women in the military, and raise awareness of the responsibility to treat women Veterans with dignity and respect." The Director of the Center for Women Veterans is the primary advisor to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on all matters relating to women Veterans, including policies, legislation, programs, issues, and initiatives. The Director is also the Designated Federal Officer for the Advisory Committee on Women Veterans. The Center for Women Veterans held first National Summit on Women Veterans Issues in Washington, D.C., in 1996, which created the opportunity for greater communication between women Veterans, policymakers, and VA.



In 2000, for the first time, VA allocated funds (\$3 million) to support programs specifically for women Veterans who were homeless. Three-year demonstration programs were designed at 11 locations across the country. In the same year, the Veterans Benefits and Health Care Improvement Act of 2000, PL 106-419, authorized Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) for women Veterans with a service-connected hysterectomy and/or mastectomy or loss of creative organ. Additionally, it provided benefits for children with birth defects born to women Vietnam Veterans. Over the past 40 years, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has introduced initiatives designed to improve health care access and quality of care for women Veterans. In 2008, VHA's Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group (WVHSHG) began a five-year plan to redesign the nation health care delivery system for women. A fundamental component of this plan was ensuring all women Veterans had access to comprehensive primary care from skilled women's health providers.

Another major part of this redesign was identifying the need for detailed data on women Veterans that could be used to inform policy and planning. The WVHSHG partnered with the Center for Health Care Evaluation at the VA Palo Alto Health Care System to develop the first in a series of VHA Sourcebooks to describe the charac-

(Continued on page 7)

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teristics of women Veteran VHA patients and their health care. Several highlights from Volume III of the VHA Sourcebook are presented in this report (see the section titled 'Utilization of the Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits and Services'). In late 2009, The Department of Veterans Affairs has made ending homelessness for Veterans a strategic initiative and offers several programs for homeless Veterans. It was unclear whether these programs have the capacity to meet the housing needs of all homeless women Veterans and their families. In 2011, GAO investigated the homelessness of women Veterans and found that they face barriers when accessing and using Veteran housing, including lack of awareness of these programs, lack of referrals for temporary housing while awaiting placement in housing, limited housing for women and children, and concerns about personal safety. One Homeless woman Veteran stated, "I found myself sleeping out there on the streets...If it wasn't for a couple of Veterans that were out there that told me about this place, I'd still be out there...I was stopped by a couple of cops. They said...there are lots of places for Veterans. I asked where; they couldn't tell me." VA concurred with GAO's recommendations. Both the services required by women Veterans and the issues they face after their return to civilian life are different than those of their male counterparts. The changing demographics of the women entering, and ultimately leaving, the Armed Forces also have an impact on the kinds of services they will require in the future. As more and more women move into the ranks of Veterans, it becomes important to investigate their post-military outcomes. Who are women Veterans and how are they different from their non-Veteran counterparts? How do women Veterans use the benefits and services provided by VA? Finally, what future challenges does VA face when it comes to women Veterans?

*Reference: National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics



Robert Clinton Adaptive Sports & Recreation



Many veterans may have received an email from Anne Peterson early in July about a cycling program hosted by Outdoors for All (OFA) sponsored by the National VA Adaptive Sport and Recreation Program whose mission is to support veteran participation in a variety of adaptive sports. There is no cost to veterans who participate in OFA programs which include downhill skiing, cross country skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, cycling, kayaking, hiking, rock climbing, yoga, and more! Plus, they have a bike rental program; any veteran can borrow a bike/trike/handcycle from their fleet for FREE! All OFA programs are hosted by Recreation Therapists and are designed to accommodate a broad range of individual skill levels; the focus is inclusive, adaptive recreation for all.

While I have not yet participated in any OFA events, I would like to share my recent wonderful experience with Outdoors for All when I met with Anne Peterson, VA Recreational Therapist at the OFA campus located at 6344 NE 74th St., Seattle, on the west side of Lake Washington to try out a different design of hand cycle as my current cycle is hard for me to get in and out of and wanted to explore alternative designs. We were met there by Alecia McConnell and Lars, who showed me around their facility; a myriad of cycles of all types lined the walls, two wheels, three wheels, four wheels in all the colors of a Seattle sunset, but before I had to make a choice, I was shown outside to what looked like a brand new cherry red three wheel hand tricycle with an upright seat all set up waiting for me to mount up and go, but when you have MS nothing is easy! After several tries, I was finally able to slide out of my wheelchair, over the arm rests and onto the trike.

Once firmly on the chair and accompanied by two OFA staff I started out on a ride around OFA's Campus which is located on the grounds of a WWII Air Force Base. The trike performed beautifully, braking like an old fashion one-speed, pushing backward on the hand-crank pedals. The ride around the old base made me feel exhilarated, not nearly so handicapped which is what I love so much about adaptive sports! Come on everyone, sign up for everything, especially one of the cycling events listed below. You won't be sorry you did!

Any interested veteran can email Alecia (contact information below) to confirm their spot in the program or to inquire of other recreation program availability. They have road bikes & hybrids, and mountain bikes for all events. Equipment availability is based on sizes and first come, first served. You can bring your own bike/trike/handcycle OR they also have options for those needing standard 2-wheeled bikes, hand cycles, and recumbents. Again, your participation is FREE, just let her know you are a veteran!

At each session, they will offer introductory coaching and riding techniques based on terrain, and group goals. **Individuals need to provide their own transportation, snacks/water, and appropriate clothing.** Group sizes cannot exceed 6 individuals in each group.

Contact Alecia at aleciam@outdoorsforall.org to reserve your spot! Please let me know if you will be attending (and are confirmed to attend) the August 5th event, as Anne will be going!



Up Coming Outdoors for All Events

Date	Sport	Location	Time	Expectations
August 5 th	Cycling	Chehalis Western Trail 67th Ave SE, Olympia, WA 98513	10am- 2pm	We'll offer two ride groups-faster & moderate paces. Faster: 14-16mph; and riding 15-20 miles total Moderate: 10-12 mph; and riding 8-12 miles total
August 12 th	Mountain Biking	Duthie Hill Mountain Bike Park 26100-26156 SE Issaquah-Fall City Rd Issaquah, WA 98029	10am- 1pm	We'll offer small group mountain bike lessons to individuals interested in learning single track mountain biking. Requirement: must have previous cycling or biking experience. Mountain biking requires a high degree of agility and fitness. Must be capable of riding uphill for 1-3 miles at a 3mph pace without stopping.
August 19 th	Cycling	Foothills Trail-East Puyallup Trailhead 13810 80th Street in East Puyallup	10am- 2pm	We'll offer two ride groups-faster & moderate paces. Faster: 14-16mph; and riding 15-20 miles total Moderate: 10-12 mph; and riding 8-12 miles total
August 26 th	Mountain Biking	Duthie Hill Mountain Bike Park 26100-26156 SE Issaquah-Fall City Rd Issaquah, WA 98029	10am- 1pm	We'll offer small group mountain bike lessons to individuals interested in learning single track mountain biking. Requirement: must have previous cycling or biking experience. Mountain biking requires a high degree of agility and fitness. Must be capable of riding uphill for 1-3 miles at a 3mph pace without stopping.



Volunteer Program Report By: Robert Clinton

I am proud to announce that our ranks of “Outstanding Volunteers” grew again in June with the addition of Vince Weber of Maple Valley, who joins Dee Anne Cooper and Tracy Storms as our newest volunteers. We appreciate their support of PVA and willingness to sign on to our shared commitment to improve the lives of our fellow members and all veterans living with the challenges of not just living with but thriving despite the everyday ordeals of living with Spinal Cord Injury and disease (SCI/D).

Volunteer hours for June total 291 this the second highest for 2021. May came in higher at 343 thanks to Matt Mickunas, and Mike Partridge’s weeklong attendance at the PVA National Convention in Las Vegas, bringing our chapter’s total hours so far in 2021 to 1582. Congratulations to everyone, keep up the good work and let us keep up the momentum through the end of the year, remember if you need help, just contact Bob: bclinton.va@gmail.com or (202) 255-7891.

Finally, it is my turn to ask for help. I try to accommodate all the different ways members send me their Volunteer Time Sheet, in standard .pdf format, sending a picture which is often in different formats depending on your phone and/or carrier. I can read and save the time sheets in all these formats but often need to transfer the data to the standard PVA form. This is no problem just time consuming. So, my ask, PLEASE send me your Volunteer Time Sheet by the date requested, every hour counts, and I don’t want to miss yours.



Northwest Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America (NWPVA) Executive Director and Army Veteran Brent King, presents a special tribute to Mann-Grandstaff VAMC leadership and staff.

Brent King NWPVA Honors Spokane VA By: Bret Bowers



The Pacific Northwest Chapter Executive Director of Paralyzed Veterans of America, Army Veteran Brent King honored leadership and staff at Spokane's Mann-Grandstaff VAMC with a special, personal tribute during the annual "VA2k Walk & Roll" this Spring.

And, King's kind gesture is something all of Spokane's VA employees say they're proud to wear and share for others to see. Brent King "pinned" each medical center leadership member with a custom-designed lapel/lanyard pin depicting VHA's 75-years in service - culminating with the COVID-19 outbreak and a worldwide pandemic. He also purchased 1,400 more – to ensure every medical center employee is thanked and recognized.

"In the military, the National Defense Medal is issued to every member of the Armed Forces during times of war. Clearly Spokane VA has been at war with COVID-19 that has the potential to kill Veterans - and this VA team has demonstrated courage under a 'virus fire' that threatened to overrun the perimeter of the delivery of the health care system," said King.

"Spokane VA staff has stood tall even when exhausted. They have fought the war in the hospital, and their families borne the burden of their of their sacrifice too... and now the Spokane VA has joined our Veteran ranks... as the tip of the spear."

Nearly 100 VA staff and Veterans participated in the VA2k, which in addition to a health and wellness event with a (2k) walk around the medical center campus, also raises donations for homeless Veterans in-need. Volunteers from the American Red Cross helped register staff and document donations during the event. Each VA staff member who participated received their new MGVAMC pin upon registration. MGVAMC's Nutrition and Food Service and Health & Wellness team members organized the VA2k event, which had a lower turnout in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Event organizer Lori Ruckhaber, a Registered Dietician at VA, injected a new way to get staff moving – even well before the VA2k in 2021. She created a Stair Step Challenge whereby staff are credited with their trips up/down the 8-floor stairwell inside the main hospital. She also "crowned" the winners in multiple categories with special awards for their efforts. "It's all about proper nutrition and exercise," she says. After the VA2k she recognized more than a dozen VA staff in both group and individual categories. In all, they combined to take 17,339,531 (8,669 miles!) steps during the month of May! "Way to Step it Up VA!" she smiled.

Veteran King meanwhile, remains a staunch advocate for his fellow disabled/amputee Veterans. He's been doing so, ever since he helped make the 2009 National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Spokane a monumental success. A large, print mural of Brent King is posted outside the main entrance to the Executive Suite at the medical center, while the original painting was given to former VA Secretary Eric Shinseki, General, US Army Retired.

With many VA staff working from home (teleworking), the majority of Mann-Grandstaff VAMC employees have not yet received their special pin from PVA. Leadership reassures everyone that the kindness of PVA and Veteran Brent King will not be overlooked.

All employees will receive their commemorative pin either through a future staff meeting, an Employee Awards ceremony, or at the upcoming All-Employee picnic at MGVAMC.

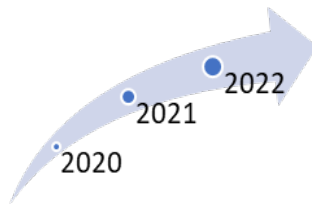


NWPVA Team For The National Veterans Wheelchair Games



We Salute You!

A special thank you to all our donors who continue to make the programs at Paralyzed Veterans of America, Northwest Chapter thrive and grow stronger.



The Seattle Foundation
Absolute Mobility Center
Jeannette Postnikoff Trust
Schwab Charitable Fund
TCC Version
Benevity
Frontstream
Employee Giving Program (KCEGP)
Morgan Stanley
The Blackbaud Giving Fund
Others First
Charities Aid Foundation of America
COSTCO.

Z-Man Trust
Kersey Mobility for Life
Henry Baird
Target
Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund
Verizon Foundation
VFW
Boeing
Dorothy Waugh (Ernie's Mom)
Robert Powers
King County
Amazon





Washington Update

Recent news regarding legislation and regulatory actions affecting veterans and people with disabilities.

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HVAC EXAMINES VETERANS BILLS

On July 14, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee (HVAC), Subcommittee on Health held a hearing to examine pending bills addressing a wide range of veterans-related issues. PVA submitted a statement for the record on 11 bills for the hearing. A couple of bills of note include the VIPER Act of 2021 and legislation addressing VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC). The VIPER Act would exclude VA's research activities from the requirements of the Paperwork Reduc-

tion Act in the same manner that the National Institutes of Health receives for sponsored research. PVA strongly supports the elimination of this obstacle to critical biomedical research. The legislation would also authorize additional resources to help address longstanding infrastructure needs for research labs and facilities, including repairs for life-safety deficiencies to ensure VA researchers can perform their work in safe workspaces.

The PCAFC legislation would prohibit the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) from reviewing VA de-

cisions on program applications. It would also give VA the authority to begin the second phase of the PCAFC expansion sooner. Finally, it would direct VA to provide Congress quarterly reports about denials of PCAFC applications based on the "best medical interest" criteria. PVA expressed concerns with efforts to limit appeals of program denials. We also noted that although we appreciated the effort to move up the start date of the second phase, as written, VA could announce the start date on September 30, 2022, so no actual acceleration would take place.

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE APPROVES VA SPENDING BILL

On June 30, the House Appropriations Committee approved the VA appropriations bill for FY 2022 and FY 2023 advance appropriations by a vote of 33-24. No significant changes were made to the bill that was approved by a voice vote on June 25 by the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations. The bill provides a total of \$113.1 billion in discretionary appropriations for VA, an increase of \$8.7 billion above the 2021 enacted level, and \$176.4 million above the President's budget request.

HVAC EXAMINES VA APPEALS PROCESS

The Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 (AMA) (P.L. 115-55) created a new decision review process for claims and appeals. Veterans who appeal directly to BVA now have three lanes to choose from: Direct Review, Evidence Submission, or a hearing with a Veterans Law Judge. On July 13, the HVAC, Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs held a hearing to examine VA's efforts to implement the Act and modernize the appeals process. VA has made significant progress in recent years, reducing the legacy claims backlog (pre-February 19, 2019, process) from a high of 472,000 ap-

peals in November 2017 to fewer than 135,000 today. In discussions leading up to the passage of the AMA, VA promised Congress they would resolve these claims by the end of 2022.

During the hearing, VA officials informed the Subcommittee that the department would not be able to resolve them all until sometime in 2023 due to unavoidable delays caused by the pandemic. By the end of 2023, they believe their entire focus will be on newer appeals. However, VA recently announced plans to automatically review claims from veterans who previously filed and were denied benefits for one of three presumptive conditions associated with Agent Orange: bladder cancer,

hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism. Representatives from the Government Accountability Office and veterans service organizations warned Congress this is likely to generate a lot more work for the Veterans Benefits Administration and BVA. Neither handles workload surges well and without a plan to handle them, the list of hearing backlogs will once again grow over time. Additional subjects discussed during the hearing included the tele-hearing environment, improved training for VA employees to ensure better comprehension and execution of AMA procedures, and the adequacy of VA information technology to support the claims and appeals process.

NEWS OF NOTE

Executive Order Issued for Federal Workforce on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility

On June 25, President Biden signed an Executive Order calling for the federal government – as part of a larger effort to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in its workforce – to become a model employer of people with disabilities. The Executive Order directs key agencies, including the Department of Labor and the U.S. Access Board, to coordinate across the federal government to ensure that all federal workplaces and technologies are fully accessible; improve the process for requesting reasonable

accommodations; and ensure that all federal employees understand their rights to request reasonable accommodations. The Executive Order also directs a review of Schedule A Hiring Authority for individuals with disabilities to assess opportunities to enhance employment opportunities and financial security for employees with disabilities. The Executive Order also directs the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Labor to take steps to expand the use of the Workforce Recruitment Program for college students and recent graduates with disabilities.

Fair COLA for Seniors Act Introduced

On July 1, Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA) introduced the Fair COLA for Seniors Act of 2021 (H.R. 4315). This legislation, which PVA supports, would require using the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly (CPI-E) when calculating cost of living adjustments (COLAs) for federal retirement programs. The proposed index would adjust the benefits programs such as Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, civil service retirement, military retirement, veterans' pension and compensation, and other retirement programs. The bill has been referred to Ways and Means, Veterans' Affairs, Oversight and Reform, and Armed Services Committees.

August

5th - 8th Traveling Wall
Enumclaw, WA

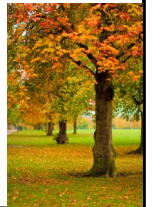
8th -13th National Veterans Wheelchair
Games
NYC, NY

September

6th Labor Day

11th Patriot Day

22nd Autumn Begins



The Traveling Wall, Vietnam Memorial is coming to Enumclaw August 5 thru August 8, 2021. The Moving Wall, a half-size replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial that travels the country, will be on display at the soccer fields, between Sunrise and Southwood schools. A special ceremony will take place at 10 am on Saturday, August 7, national Purple Heart day to dedicate the city of Enumclaw a Purple Heart city.

The Moving Wall is open 24 hours a day throughout the exhibit. The wall has traveled from late April through November each year for more than 30 years.



NATIONAL VETERANS
**WHEELCHAIR
GAMES**

40th Anniversary

• **NYC** •

AUG 8-13
2021



Paralyzed Veterans
of America



VA | U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

WheelchairGames.org

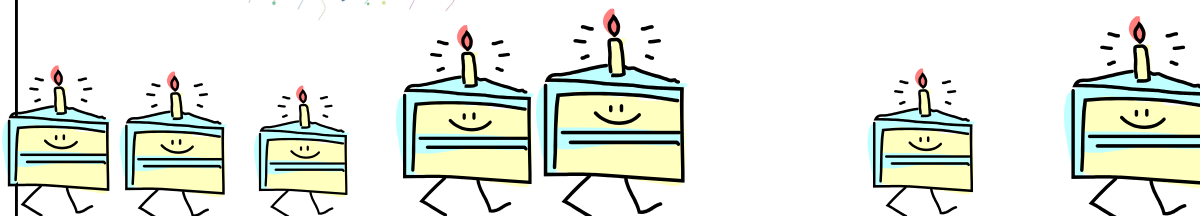
Happy Birthday!

August

Howard Burkett	Elizabeth Burris
James Warnken	Douglas Booth
Henry Benavidez	Robert Rosenberger
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