



Northwest Chapter

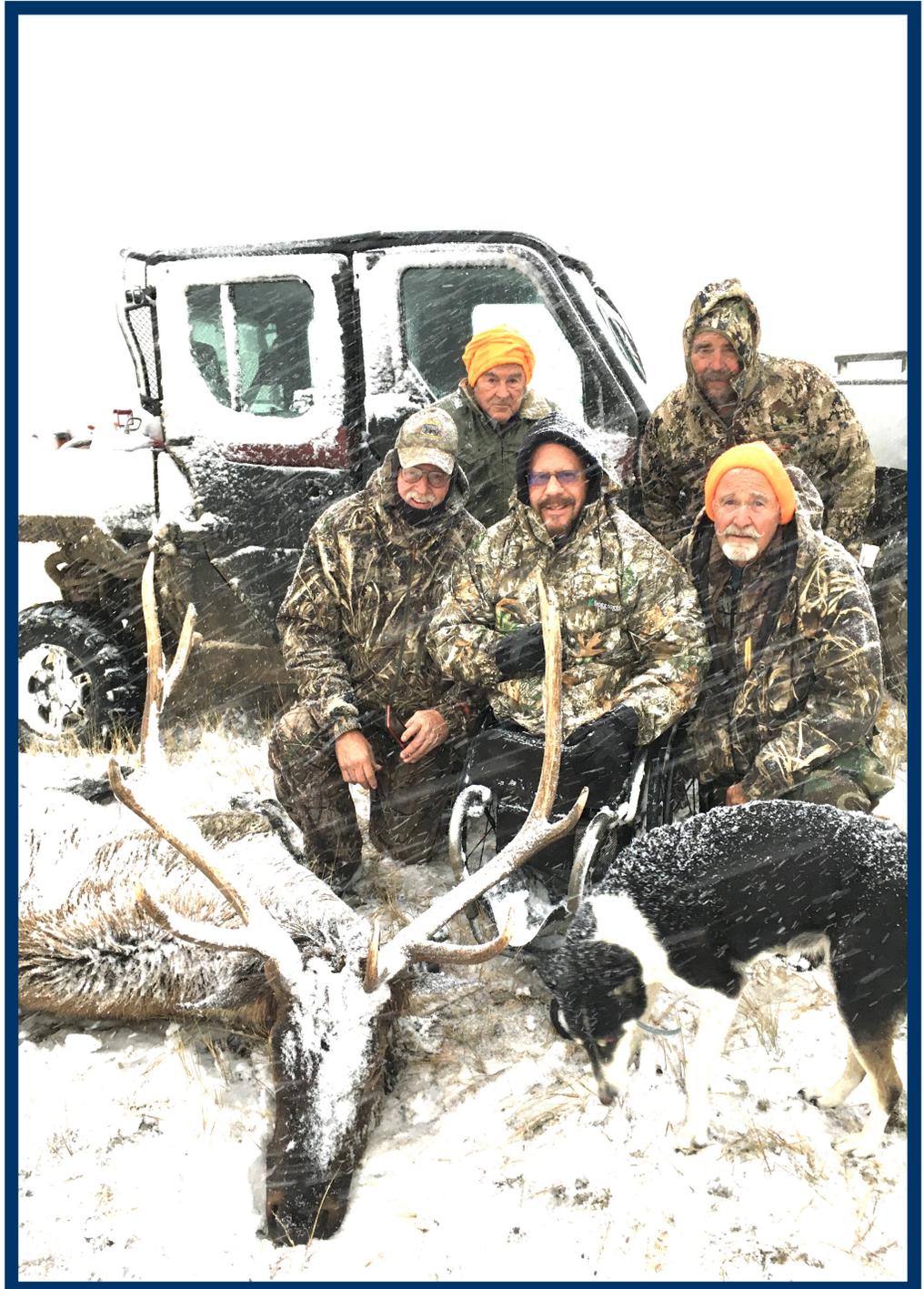
Volume XLIV Issue 2

# NORTHWEST OUTPOST

December 2021/January 2022

*Inside this issue:*

<i>President's Column</i>	4
<i>Volunteer News</i>	5
<i>The Story of Kelly</i>	6
<i>Executive Director's Column</i>	8
<i>Washington Update</i>	12
<i>Events Calendar</i>	16
<i>Birthdays</i>	18



*Hunting With Heroes Wyoming Elk Hunt*



## PVA National Service Officers

**Senior NSO**

**Michael Killen**  
 michaelk@pva.org  
 SCI Office  
 Room 1-B-163  
 206-768-5415

**Dan Stewart**  
**NSO Candidate**  
 915 Second Avenue  
 Room 1054  
 Seattle, WA 98174  
 206-341-8210

## Northwest PVA Leadership

Matthew Mickunas-President  
 Robert Clinton-Vice President  
 Andrew Bechtle-Secretary  
 Aaron Hastings-Treasurer  
 Matthew Mickunas-National Director  
 David Zurfluh-Immediate National  
 Past President & BOD  
 Terry Chenowith-BOD  
 Joe Sapienza-BOD  
 Michael Partridge-BOD  
 Thomas Bungert-BOD  
 Russ Norris-BOD  
 Fred Margiotta-BOD  
 Tracy Storms-BOD  
 Victor Tran-BOD

## Northwest PVA Appointees

Sports Director-Russ Norris  
 Government Relations Director-  
 David Zurfluh  
 Legislative Director-Mike Partridge  
 Membership Officer & Advocacy/AB  
 Coordinator-Thomas Bungert  
 Volunteer Coordinator-Robert Clinton  
 Outpost Editor-Lisa Lawrence

## Northwest PVA Staff

Executive Director-Brent King  
 Office Manager-Lisa Lawrence

# *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.*

## *Northwest Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America*

*616 SW 152nd Street, Suite B*

*Burien, WA 98166*

*206-241-1843*

*1-800-336-9782*

*Fax: 206-433-0749*

*E-mail: [pvachnw@mindspring.com](mailto:pvachnw@mindspring.com)*

*Web site: [www.nwpva.org](http://www.nwpva.org)*

# **m&bility** *Roadside Assistance*™

SCAN HERE FOR  
COVERAGE OPTIONS



## **INNOVATING ACCESSIBLE ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE SINCE 2013!**

**INCLUSIVE  
ROADSIDE  
ASSISTANCE**



**MOBILITY  
SOLUTIONS  
ASSISTANT**

APP & PERSONAL CONCIERGE



**ALL INCLUDED  
IN A MONTHLY  
SUBSCRIPTION.**

**ADAPTIVE MONTHLY™  
STARTING AT**

**\$14.99 PER MONTH**

[www.mobilityroadsideassistance.com](http://www.mobilityroadsideassistance.com) • (877) 246-0979

## Matthew Mickunas



**N**orthwest Chapter has been proudly serving Veterans and their families since its inception on May 23, 1977. I am proud to be a Member of the Northwest Chapter and look forward to our Chapters 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary a little more than five years from now. We are rapidly approaching two years of the world dealing with a pandemic unlike anything we've seen in over a century. This worldwide event has created multiple issues that are difficult to overcome and that are creating lasting effects. I am impressed by the resiliency that I see in so many areas. In times such as these, we all do our best to survive, we look after our families, and provide support to loved ones. I hope many of you and your family have successfully received all your Covid & Flu vaccinations, begin planning and looking forward to getting out again to your favorite restaurant, visit local park, beach, or entertainment outing in a safe environment.

All events will hopefully be opening in the near future and I must say it has been one of the toughest challenges this nation has endured in a long time. We must keep our family & extended family, colleagues, friends, all our active-duty and Veterans, and all our communities in prayer who have lost loved ones. We are continuously partnering with the VA & SCI Unit Staff to provide SCI inpatients housed on the unit with their needs even though the SCI Unit remains restricted mostly to VA medical personal. We are still providing a change of food intake routine by delivering hot delicious pizza once a month, to the inpatients and Staff on the SCI Unit and ensuring they are kept up to date by providing them with a Northwest Chapter newsletter at bedside.

During the pandemic time I would've speculated that donations to charitable organizations including organizations such as PVA may have seen a decrease in response to our fund raising activities. This has proved not to be the case. Although we do appear divided in many areas, people are still interested in the well-being of Veterans. PVA, Northwest Chapter, has continued to benefit from the generosity of the community and individuals as we progressed through this stressful and difficult time. The organizations that have donated to Northwest PVA in the past have continued to do so, individuals and their families have done so as well. We have organizations that have been consistent supporters of our Veterans, and we had individuals that have openly and privately supported our Veterans. To all those who continue to support the Northwest Chapter, I would like to say thank you. Without you, our goals would be much more difficult to obtain.

The 41st National Veterans Wheelchair Games is in Tempe, AZ and is fast approaching 7-12 July 2022. Please email or call the Chapter office for information on sponsorship opportunities.



# Robert Clinton 18th Year of Boo in Burien



**O**n October 30th Boo in Burien returned after a pause last year due to Covid. The participation was amazing and our wonderful long time volunteers were at the chapter office to support the event, as they have been for 18 years. Thank you Anisa and Jessica for your help once again. We have watched you grow from adorable little girls to beautiful young women. We would also like to thank Joe Areyano of Olympic Landscape for his very generous donation of over 1000 “full size” candy bars to give out to the crowd. Word on the streets of Burien was NWPVA was the best stop in town!



Trick-or-treaters with volunteers Anisa Lawrence, & Joe Areyano



Volunteer Jessica Perez with trick-or-treaters

## The Story of “Kelly” by: Robert Clinton

**I**t was the second day of the National Veterans Wheelchair Games when I got the call I had been waiting for, but certainly did not expect to get right then! It was Christine Shaffer, Consumer Affairs, America’sVetDogs (AVD)! After four and a half years, she was calling to invite me to New York to begin training to pick up my new service dog.

I was in line to take my turn heaving the shot put. My head was spinning, what appointments did I have scheduled, I needed to let my wife know, she planned to travel with me to welcome this new member of our family, her schedule would be turned upside down too, after all this time it was really happening, this new member of our family was on its way. It was like after a four-and-a-half-year pregnancy, the new baby was on its way – ready or not. But of course, this was not a real baby, and we could say no, so I told Christine, whom I had been talking to for some time, that I would have to talk to my wife before I could formally accept and would call her back in the next day or so. But, by the time I threw the shot, a respectable distance, but not far enough to be anywhere near a medal contender, I had made up my mind, NO MORE WAITING. I would be coming back to New York in just three weeks to get my service dog.

Now, let me tell you about all that I went through to get my new buddy. It was April 2017, when my application to receive a dog from America’s Vet Dogs was accepted, this was after an application process that required me to fill out a lengthy application, undergo an initial physical with regular updates, submit a video of my home including a fenced outdoors area where my dog would be able to safely “take a break.” Check. Now I was in a line, *only* two or three years long, before I would be jetting to Smith Town on Long Island, New York for two weeks of training to pick up my new service dog, especially selected and trained to meet my needs. The time passed slowly, it seemed that each time I heard from someone at AVD it was only an annual check in or reminding me it was time to update my physical. It was Thanksgiving 2019, on one of my frequent calls back to New York, “how am I doing, am I getting close, it’s been more than three years?” Finally, the answer was “your next up for one of the first classes of 2020.”

You know what happened then, Covid 19! So, the first class of 2020 I could attend turned out to be almost two years later. So, it was on the evening of September 3, 2021, a year, and a half later I boarded a JetBlue flight for JFK airport, travel flawlessly arranged by AVD including extra leg room which would be vital to accommodate my 6’2” legs and my new service dog on the return trip. By this time my wife had decided not to travel with me, the Delta variant and constant news stories had convinced her not to risk exposure, so I was on my own.

I arrived in the wee hours of Saturday morning and met Kim Stasheff the head trainer for my training class. As we made the two-hour drive to Smith Town, Kim explained what I could expect during the next 12 days, Breakfast would be served at 0730, I would meet my classmates and each of us would be introduced to our new dog shortly after that. Classes would be held daily in person and virtually. We would be taking field trips to include, a pet store, supermarket, and public park, and airport, all designed to provide more and more distractions for our dogs and challenges for us as handlers. Lunch at 1200, more classes, various guest speakers including a veterinarian, then dinner at 1700.

We arrived at AVD headquarters located on beautiful park-like grounds in historic Smith Town, which houses the Visitors Center, Administrative Offices Training School, and Kennels and got right down to business. After

*(Continued on page 7)*

(Continued from page 6)

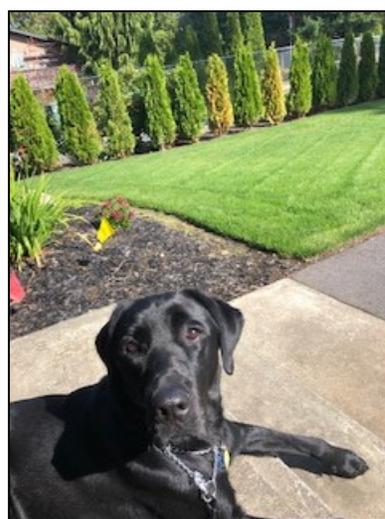
settling into our assigned rooms, complete with a snack basket and a Kurek coffee maker and enjoying our first socially distant lunch, it was the time we had all been waiting for, as Kim called our names, she got to me, Robert Clinton; “Kelly,” a male black lab, born, 11/22/2019. As “Kelly” was brought to me, I am ashamed to say I kind of forgot all the details, it was love at first sight. Fortunately, AVD had anticipated this and gave me a whole volume of information about “Kelly” including medical, birth, and license information as part of graduation day paperwork.

As the days progressed each completely filled, kind of reminded me of basic training, (sorry Marines, in the Air Force we went to class when you went to PT) the sound of Kim’s voice outside my door, its 0630, time to feed and take your dog out for a bathroom break, breakfast at 0700. Everyday a new challenge, but as the days progressed it got easier and before we knew it graduation day! With little fanfare the 12 of us went our separate ways, I am ashamed to admit that now a little over a month later I remember the names of the dogs, “Evelyn,” “Hero,” Comet, better than their human partners.

Back at JFK Kim was able to accompany me to the gate, we moved through security and were comfortably seated at the gate a full hour before departure, unfortunately that’s not the end of the story, after almost four hours of delays and facing a 5-hour or more flight to Seattle, I was worried that “Kelly” would need a break. I found a pet rest area at the end of the pier on which our gate was located, well it looked a lot closer on the airport map and “Kelly” it turned out, was very fussy about where he would pee, not where all those other “common” dogs go and the smell of urine is just too strong, so it took “Prince Kelly” a good 15 minutes to find just the right place, so by the time we got back to the gate the aircraft doors were closed and it was backing away from the gate.

Well, end of story for now, no more drama, great flight home, JetBlue was great, rebooked us on the next flight home to Seattle, again, extra legroom, “Kelly” slept through the flight, loaded into our car perfectly using the command “kennel” he jumped right in. We’re still working on keeping him lying down on the backseat floor boards, just wants to stand up and look out. As they said at school, “no matter how well trained, they are still dogs.”

So far, we have found that Kelly is more work than help. Like a toddler, always under foot, interested in everything you do, must be fed on time, must have regular bathroom breaks, but on the upside, he is always there for you, always listens to you, always your BEST FRIEND.



Brent King



## Hunting With Heroes Wyoming Elk Hunt

**O**n August 23<sup>rd</sup> I received an email that my name had been drawn for an elk hunt in Buffalo, WY. Hunting with Heroes Wyoming chooses one Disabled Veteran a year for an all-inclusive guided elk hunt. You hunt in cooperation with WY Game and Fish allowing this hunter hunt 5 days prior to the opening of modern firearm season.

Within a few days the lead volunteer on my hunt had called me and told me what paperwork to fill out and get sent to get my license and tag sent to me on time. The bull elk hunt included room, food, tag, license, two guides, three volunteer helpers, meat processing and a taxidermy mount. I just had to get myself to Buffalo and back by driving or flying there.

I chose to drive the 10.5 hours from Spokane to Buffalo and take two days doing it. Once I arrived, I checked into my room and went to dinner with the crew.

This group volunteer their time to take us Veterans hunting in many Wyoming Chapters each year. The prerequisite for this elk hunt is to harvest an antelope in a previous year first. You must be at least 50% service connected for the majority of the hunts they provide and 100% service connected for the elk hunt that I was drawn for this year. They average 250 hunts a year for Veterans and have been in operation for 9 years now.

My first day out on the vast acreage we had permission to hunt on was absolutely amazing. I saw a few elk the first day, but we did not get within range to take any shots. I was set up with my .308 Winchester Model 70 and a tripod shooting from a brand-new smooth riding Polaris Ranger side-by-side that seated six. In the two days of hunting, we covered a couple hundred miles.

The second day it began snowing and the wind was picking up along with quite a bit of fog settling in. Early in the morning we saw a smaller herd with a few bulls in amongst the group. They had me attempt a shot at 550 yards on a huge bull elk. It was moving fast and far off; my bullet did not make contact with the beast.

Later afternoon we saw a large herd that was moving toward a field to graze, so we got into position and just waited for them to come into range. We sat for three plus hours and 180 plus herd started to appear one by one. There were many bull elk mixed in amongst the herd. Getting one to be open and clear with nothing in front of or behind him became the obstacle.

Finally, a nice 6x6 bull elk at three hundred yards was standing alone and I was told to take him. I took a nice steady aim using the tripod and gently squeezed off a round. The distinct loud smack and the elk doubling over told us I made contact. The guide said it's foggy, put another one in him. So, I squeezed off the second round and he dropped in his tracks. That was an amazing adrenaline moment for sure.

*(Continued on page 9)*

Everyone was so happy that their efforts paid off in helping me harvest my first bull elk in my lifetime. One of the volunteers stated I was a delight to hunt with and that he had not heard me complain about a single thing. It was just starting to become a blizzard snowing, so I stated the weather kind of sucks! The crew began gutting the beast, loaded him and took him off to be processed on October 11<sup>th</sup>. The next day on October 12<sup>th</sup>, it was my birthday and we just sat around the hotel with sixteen inches of fresh snow outside. We even had birthday cake that one of the volunteer's wife made for me.

On the October 13<sup>th</sup> my 250 lbs. of meat was packaged, frozen and in an ice chest with dry ice ready for me to drive home.

I cannot thank Hunting With Heroes Wyoming enough. If anyone that is eligible wants to sign up for this hunt, please check out their website soon. [www.huntingwithheroes.org](http://www.huntingwithheroes.org). If you need any help on filling at the application or any questions, please contact me at [Bkinghomes@gmail.com](mailto:Bkinghomes@gmail.com). I would be happy to help or point you in the right direction.



*Buffalo , Wyoming*

# TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR HEALTH!

- Eliminate sleep deprivation
- Prevent pneumonia and other respiratory problems
- Prevent painful and life-threatening pressure injuries (bed sores)

**VOICE CONTROL  
OPTION AVAILABLE!**

The Freedom Bed is the most advanced patient positioning system on the market, providing:

- ✓ AUTOMATED BODY ROTATION
- ✓ PROGRAMMABLE TIMES & ANGLES
- ✓ SMOOTH AND SILENT OPERATION
- ✓ UNINTERRUPTED SLEEP



HEAD & LEG ELEVATION

LATERAL ROTATION



One of our representatives will be pleased to explain the features and benefits of **THE FREEDOM BED**, our value-added programs and services offered.

**VA FSS CONTRACT: #36F79720D0184**

CALL TOLL FREE: 800.816.8243  
EMAIL: [INFO@PRO-BED.COM](mailto:INFO@PRO-BED.COM)  
WEB: [WWW.PRO-BED.COM](http://WWW.PRO-BED.COM)

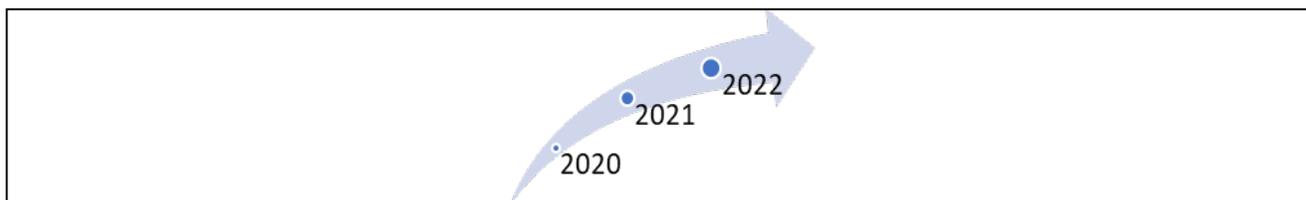


**PRO BED**  
Medical USA Inc.



## 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  
Mobility Roadside Assistance  
Ability Center  
Schwab Charitable Fund  
TCC Version  
Benevity  
Frontstream  
Employee Giving Program (KCEGP)  
Morgan Stanley  
The Blackbaud Giving Fund  
Others First  
Charities Aid Foundation of America  
Olympic Landscape

Z-Man Trust  
Jeannette Postnikoff Trust  
Henry Baird  
COSTCO  
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.*

Written and produced by Paralyzed Veterans of America - Government Relations Department

Issue #19, Volume #27

November 12, 2021

## LEGISLATION TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO VA HOUSING MODIFICATIONS INTRODUCED

**V**A's Home and Improvements and Structural Alterations (HISA) grants help veterans and service members make medically necessary improvements and structural alterations to their primary residence. This includes improving the entrance or exit from their homes, restoring their accessibility to the kitchen or bathroom, and making necessary repairs or upgrades to plumbing or electrical systems due to installation of home medical equipment like a dialysis machine.

A lifetime HISA benefit is worth up to \$6,800 for veterans with service-connected conditions rated 50 percent or more disabling (combined) and \$2,000 for veterans who have a non-service-connected condition. These rates have not changed in nearly a dozen years even though the cost of home modifications and labor have risen more than 40 percent during the past 10 years alone. Instead of covering the cost of needed modifications, HISA grants now just "contribute" towards them.

On November 2, Representative Al Lawson (D-FL) and 42 bipartisan cosponsors introduced H.R. 5819, the Autonomy for Disabled Veterans Act, which would raise HISA rates and tie them to a formula that raises rates annually. Specifically, the legislation would increase the life time grant rate for service-connected veterans to \$10,000 and non-service-connected veterans to \$5,000. It would also tie the grant to the Consumer Price Index to ensure that it better meets the needs of veterans moving forward.

## SOCIAL SECURITY 2100: A SACRED TRUST ACT INTRODUCED

**O**n October 26, the long awaited, revised version of the Social Security 2100 Act was introduced by Chairman of the House Ways and Means Social Security Subcommittee, John Larson (D-CT), and 193 original cosponsors. Now called the Social Security 2100: A Sacred Trust Act, H.R. 5723, the new bill includes many of the critical improvements in Social Security benefits that were contained in the previous version. A Senate companion bill, S. 3071, was introduced the same day by Senators Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and Chris Van Hollen (D-MD). The new version also features additional provisions that would remove a major work disincentive for beneficiaries of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and penalty offsets for recipients of public pensions.

## BUILD BACK BETTER RETAINS PROVISIONS IMPORTANT TO VETERANS, AGING, AND DISABILITY COMMUNITIES

**T**he latest Build Back Better proposal, while considerably pared back in scope, retains a number of provisions important to the veterans, disability, and aging communities:

\$5 billion to improve health care delivery for veterans by modernizing VA health care facilities, leasing medical facilities, and speeding up claims processing.

\$150 billion for Home and Community Based Services expansion under Medicaid along with \$20 million in funding through the Administration for Community Living to support a national technical assistance center for supporting direct care workforce recruitment, education and training, retention, career advancement, and for supporting family caregivers and care-

giving activities.

\$ 5 million for the Lifespan Respite Care Program in addition to amounts otherwise available for fiscal year 2022 and \$40 million for the National Family Caregiver Program's activities of national significance to fund "initiatives to address the behavioral health needs of unpaid caregivers of older individuals and older relative caregivers."

Authorizing Medicare to negotiate prescription drug prices on the costliest medicines, extending the American Rescue Plan's expanded Premium Tax Credit for Marketplace coverage, and increasing access to affordable hearing coverage under Medicare.

Directing a portion of the funding for apprenticeship programs to-

ward serving individuals with disabilities.

Designating \$450 billion for project rental assistance for supportive housing for persons with disabilities.

A HUD grant program that includes funds to make pre-occupancy home modifications to accommodate qualified homebuyers or members of their household with disabilities.

A Small Business Administration program to support startup businesses owned or controlled by individuals with a disability.

Funding to upgrade the accessibility of bus or rail public transportation services for persons with disabilities, including individuals who use wheelchairs.

*(Continued from page 12)*

The legislation would establish a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) that better reflects the expenses of older Americans and people with disabilities and a minimum benefit to ensure no one retires into poverty. It would also raise the income thresholds for taxation of Social Security benefits to \$35,000 (single) and \$50,000 (married) and extend the life of the trust funds by four years and close more than half of the program's long-term (75-year) shortfall. In addition, the Social Security 2100: A Sacred Trust Act would finally end the five-month waiting period for all those who qualify for SSDI and replace the so-called "cash cliff" with a gradual reduction in benefits. The waiting period imposes severe economic hardship on many beneficiaries and the abrupt termination of SSDI benefits once someone crosses an earnings threshold has been a longstanding work disincentive. Another new provision would repeal benefit offsets in the law that penalize many people who receive retirement income from public service. Over 30 percent of veterans with significant service-connected disabilities work in local, state, or federal positions and often face these pension offset.



## News Of Note

### Jobs Report for People with Disabilities Reflects Gains

In October, the major employment indicators for people with disabilities reached their highest recorded levels since September 2008, when reporting for this cohort was begun by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), according to the National Trends in Disability Employment – Monthly Update (nTIDE), issued by Kessler Foundation and the University of New Hampshire’s Institute on Disability (UNH-IOD). Substantial gains were reflected in year-to-year comparisons, as well as for month-to-month data. Read the nTIDE report [here](#).

### Justice Department Files Lawsuit Against the State of Texas to Protect Voting Rights

The U.S. Justice Department has filed a lawsuit against the State of

Texas and the Texas Secretary of State over certain restrictive voting procedures imposed by Texas Senate Bill 1, which was signed into law in September 2021. The United States’ complaint contends, in part, that Senate Bill 1 violates Section 208 of the Voting Rights Act by improperly restricting what assistance in the polling booth voters who have a disability or are unable to read or write can receive. The complaint alleges that Senate Bill 1 harms those voters by barring their assistants from providing necessary help, including answering basic questions, responding to requests to clarify ballot translations or confirming that voters with visual impairments have marked a ballot as intended. The complaint asks the court to prohibit Texas from enforcing these requirements.

### PVA JOINS IATA MOBILITY AIDS ACTION GROUP

On November 2, PVA participated in the first meeting of the International Air Transport Association’s (IATA) Mobility Aids Action Group. The action group is a gathering of airlines, airports, aircraft manufacturers, mobility aid manufacturers, and users of mobility devices to make improvements in mishandling of mobility aids when traveling by air. The group will be meeting on a regular basis for the next year to review the whole issue of how/why mobility aids get mishandled when they are transported by air, taking into account the entire travel process, work already underway by the Canadian Transportation Agency, the U.S. Department of Transportation, the EU Commission, and others. The goal is to provide concrete recommendations to IATA’s Accessibility Working Group on how to address wheelchair and scooter damage.

---

## PROTECTION OF SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS RESTORATION ACT REINTRODUCED

**O**n November 4, Representatives Raúl M. Grijalva (D-AZ) and John B. Larson (D-CT), Chair of the House Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Social Security, reintroduced the Protection of Social Security Benefits Restoration Act, H.R. 5866. This legislation would restore federal protections for Social Security benefits to prevent the federal government from garnishing them for the repayment of all non-tax federal debt—such as student loans. Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR), Chairman of the Senate Committee on Finance, introduced companion legislation (S. 3177) in the Senate.

According to a September 2016 GAO report, the number of retirees and people with disabilities whose Social Security benefits were seized by the government to pay off student loans increased more than fivefold between 2002 and 2016. While the Department of Education put a pause on collecting student loan payments due to the pandemic, the department is prepared to resume them at the end of January, including those for seniors. In addition to protecting Social Security benefits, the bill also protects railroad retirement and black lung benefits.

## Early SCI Times By: Ed Bell

**O**n a Sunday night 39 years ago today I was just now receiving my 1st dose of morphine after being shot at about 4:00 in the afternoon. Up until now they just had to let me moan, yell and occasionally screamed till I passed out from pain. Even then there was no relief from the pain as they would wake me up for fear I might code on them. They couldn't give me any pain killers for fear my lungs would stop working so I just had to let me suffer. The doctor and nurses would apologize before they would do unspeakable things to me. I remember seeing nurses crying while caring for me. I remember asking if they were going to have to cut off my new cowboy boots like they were my clothes. My boots were spared but I never walked in them again. My ER doc would apologize before he would do his procedures on me. He would say, "I'm sorry Mr. Bell but this is going to hurt a lot. Take deep breaths and stay with me buddy". I remember everything until I received my 1st dose of morphine which was about this time of night. It was a long time to hurt but just the beginning of the pain I was about to experience.

After I blacked out from my first dose of morphine they transferred my paralyzed naked body onto a hard, narrow rotating "bed" frame. My head was in a heavy metal cable traction device that screwed into my skull. Yes I was wide awake when those screws went in and no there was not any pain medication for that procedure. I was totally immobilized. I could only move my eyes and I had slight movement in my left arm but no sensation in my hands. I was a total quadriplegic at the time. The bed was designed to sandwich me between boards. The nurses would flip me to my stomach or to back. The rotation was to help prevent pneumonia and bed sores. For the 1st week or so they rotated me every 15 minutes round the clock nonstop. Each rotation was an unbearable amount of pain. The pulverized bones in my spine ground together like a handful of gravel on the raw broken nerves of my shattered spine. The nerve pain from my severed spine felt like I someone had peeled all of my skin off of my entire body and dipped me in rubbing alcohol. The pain was incredibly bad at sudden loud noises or a sudden bright light. The lights and sounds were kept low in my room to help reduce pain. The medical staff tried their best to be quiet. Occasionally a nurse or housekeeper would forget and flip on the lights or worse a medical procedure required brighter light. I would just scream in pain. It was an ungodly pain.

This is common with newly injured quadriplegic. In my rotating Stryker bed I had two positions. Is staring at the ceiling or staring at the floor. The hours I spent looking at the floor I can remember splitting up my own blood from the impact of the bullet as it grazed the top of my lungs. Days later my lungs would collapse and required life saving chest tubes. Both of my eyes turned black like I'd been punched by a prize fighter do to the bullet's powerful impact. I ate and drank through a tube in my nose that ran down the back of my throat. My mouth became as dry as an old leather saddle. A young nurse came in one day and swabbed my mouth with a sponge with mouthwash on it. I was prohibited from drinking. The sensation of that sweet cool liquid on my dry cracked tongue was THE most pleasurable physical experience I have EVER experienced in my life. I thought about the Bible story, Lazareth and the rich man. How the rich man begged for someone to dip their finger in water to cool his tongue from the torment of hell. This was my new life for the next few months. Surviving the gunshot wounds, not dying from pneumonia, not getting bad pressure sores from the bed.

This was the new beginning of my journey, the new me. Saying goodbye to the old me as I slowly learned how to be a new me. As bad as the physical experience was the mental head game was the hardest. This journey started 39 years ago. **Never give up. Never be a victim. Always choose to be a survivor.**



# December

7th Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day

21st Winter Begins

*Merry Christmas*

25th



# January

1st New Years Day

17th Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

20th BOD/General Membership Meeting  
1:00 PM-Chapter Office

## PVA Member, Navy Veteran

**N**ow that Brian is working he has found new motivation and confidence in himself. <https://www.pva.org/hero-stories/brian-mclaren/>

For PVA Member and U.S. Navy Veteran Brian McLaren, returning to work was a daunting prospect. Brian had been out of the workplace for 10 years when he took that first step of exploring a career by reaching out to PVA’s Veterans Career Program. PVA Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Joel Hoots, M.S., CRC, and Brian spent several months discussing whether education or paid employment was the right next step. Ultimately, Brian decided that an entry level job would be the best option for him.

Together, Brian and Joel worked through some of Brian’s concerns about returning to work. After learning more about his rights in the workplace, how to discuss workplace accommodations with an employer, and the skills he would bring to the workplace, Brian began to have more confidence in himself and his abilities. Brian initially dealt with some job rejection and turned down some jobs that he didn’t feel would be a good fit. Eventually Brian decided to “go for it” and accepted a job working in a shop at his local community airport. Now that Brian is working he has found new motivation and confidence in himself.



(Continued on page 17)

(Continued from page 16)

“It’s been a great experience working with the PVA Veterans Career Program. I’ve learned valuable job-related skills, regained a lot of confidence, and now after many years have reentered the workforce. Thank you, PVA!”. Joel will continue to work with Brian, guiding him through the career development process as his confidence and interests continue to grow.

*If you, your spouse, or caregiver, are interested in career support including paid employment, education, or volunteer opportunities please visit [pva.org/Veteranscareerprogram](http://pva.org/Veteranscareerprogram) or email [Veteranscareerprogram@pva.org](mailto:Veteranscareerprogram@pva.org) for more information*

---

## Supporting Northwest PVA Veterans Through Amazon Smile

### What is AmazonSmile?

AmazonSmile is a simple way for you to support your favorite charitable organization every time you shop, at no cost to you. AmazonSmile is available at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) on your web browser and can be activated in the Amazon Shopping app for iOS and Android phones. When you shop at AmazonSmile, you’ll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added benefit that AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of your eligible purchases to the charitable organization of your choice. You can choose from over one million organizations to support.

### Can I use my existing Amazon.com account on AmazonSmile?

Yes, you use the same account on Amazon.com and AmazonSmile. Your shopping cart, Wish List, wedding or baby registry, and other account settings are also the same.

### How do I select a charitable organization to support when shopping on AmazonSmile?

On your first visit to [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com), you need to select a charitable organization to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. We will remember your selection, and then every eligible purchase you make through AmazonSmile will result in a donation. AmazonSmile will occasionally contact you about donation amounts disbursed to your chosen charity or about the program.

Place: **Northwest Paralyzed Veterans of America** when you search for a charity.



# Happy Birthday!

## December

Kenneth West	Sheri Pedersen
Harry Parmer	Chris Arrow Top Knot
Paul Chiaravalle	Daniel Dudek
Dean Korn	Tracy Reddick Storms
Craig Bollinger	Kristina Sawycky
Roger VanBuren	Christopher Dotur
Tim Gardipee	Jonathan Whitlow
Jack Karnes	Ross Ries
Gregory Choinere	Jack Dalbey
Terry McManus	

## January

Delton Yada	Donald Hansen
James Luco	Charles Mitchell
Melvin Roberts	Yasmean Stewart
John Bartle	Warren Collver
Richard Collier	Anthony Lansing
Keith Clark	Sylvester Tucker
Terry Lee	Charles Gorr
Leonard Wagner	David Lockett
Donald Waddell	Susan Hicks
Rod Smith	James Sternola
Gregory Schilieve	Keith Sekora
Lawrence Muckley	Kevin Mays
Michael Partridge	James Prince
Barrie Muller	Anthony Davis
Cathy Bourget	Hermes Rodriguez
Roger Sudberry	



**Paralyzed Veterans  
of America**

Vehicle Donation Program

**P**aralyzed Veterans of America has been on a mission to change lives and build brighter futures for our seriously injured heroes—to empower these brave men and women with what they need to achieve the things they fought for: freedom and independence. They returned to a grateful nation, but also to a world with few solutions to challenges they faced. They made a decision not just to live, but to live with dignity as contributors to society. They created Paralyzed Veterans of America, an organization dedicated to veterans service, medical research and civil rights for people with disabilities.

Have an old car taking up space in your driveway? Donate it to Paralyzed Veterans of America! Call us: 877-900-8387. <https://pva.careeasy.org/HOME.html>



# SERVING VETERANS SINCE 1982



We offer a comprehensive line of mobility products including new and used wheelchair accessible vans, lifts, hand controls and mobility aids.

Our certified mobility consultants are trained to help you discover the right solution for your specific needs.

## NEED SERVICE?

Our certified technicians have more than **78 years** of combined knowledge and experience.

We service **ALL** mobility vehicles and equipment.

## SALES | SERVICE | RENTALS

### SUMNER

6015 160<sup>th</sup> Ave East  
Sumner, WA 98203  
253-863-4744

### REDMOND

14640 NE 91<sup>st</sup> Street  
Redmond, WA 98052  
425-406-8484

### EVERETT

7202 Evergreen Way  
Everett, WA 98203  
425-353-6563

Check out our inventory at  
[kerseymobility.com](http://kerseymobility.com)



VMI Chrysler Pacifica



VMI Honda Odyssey



VMI Toyota Sienna



Northwest Chapter  
Paralyzed Veterans of America  
616 SW 152nd Street, Suite B  
Burien, Washington 98166  
206-241-1843 1-800-336-9782

Address Service Requested

Northwest Outpost

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Seahurst, WA 98062  
Permit #75



**HELPING OUR  
SOLDIERS  
MAINTAIN THEIR  
FREEDOM!**

**FAMILY OWNED & OPERATED FOR OVER 30 YEARS**

**Over 70 fully equipped new and  
pre-owned vans for the disabled in stock.**

- Wheelchair Lifts
- Portable Ramps
- Hand Controls
- Transfer Seats



**We have the largest inventory of wheelchair accessible vans in the Pacific  
Northwest with two indoor locations in Woodinville and Tacoma!**

CHRYSLER



[www.absolutemobilitycenter.com](http://www.absolutemobilitycenter.com)

Toll Free (800) 376-VANS | Woodinville (425) 481-6546 | Tacoma (253) 267-5280