



**Paralyzed Veterans  
of America**

**Northwest Chapter**

**Volume XLVIII Issue 1**

# **NORTHWEST OUTPOST**

**October/November 2020**

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***Smoky in Seattle***



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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.

### ***Northwest Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America***

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## Matthew Mickunas “Life as Usual”



**T**he Northwest PVA Chapter sends our thoughts and prayers to any and all who may have lost a loved one or who may be ill. I hope everyone is staying safe with all the fires we are having

in Washington and the fires all throughout Oregon and California. Please contact the chapter at [www.nwpva.org](http://www.nwpva.org) or (206) 241-1843 if you need assistance. Are you having mail issues with your VA prescription medicines, gloves, or catheter refills? Please contact Seattle's HUB SCI Outpatient Clinic at (206) 764-2542 or your Medical Spoke center and speak to the Med Nurse.

The Board of Directors voted on and accepted the chapter's ballot election results from the General Membership for all Officers & Directors and ByLaw updates in August. As your newly elected Chapter President, I want to let each and every member know I am humbled and excited to serve our chapter and I empathize about what our chapter has accomplished as well as the steady upward direction we are going. I will continue to improve the quality of life for all Veterans of the United States Armed Forces and their families, and will continue to advocate for civil and disability rights for all. Please go to our chapter website at [www.nwpva.org](http://www.nwpva.org) and meet our complete Leadership Team.

"In the words, I can sum up everything I've learned about life: It goes on." – Robert Frost

One thing that makes us all equal in the world is that we all are all subject to the same scale of time. "A minute – in the literal term – is the same to you as it is to me. A day...a week...a month makes no adjustment to who we are. Time has no prejudice." – Jason Christenson

Are there days better than others? To be sure, some seem to go by in the blink of an eye, while others drag on for what feels like an eternity. One thing is certain, the days will come and they will surely go. There's nothing we can do to speed them up or prolong them. Life does, in fact go on. For each and every member of Northwest PVA, your family, friends, and caregivers, all of you have been impacted by spinal cord injury and spinal cord disease. Another perspective of that saying is this: What an example you are teaching the world about resiliency, perseverance, and resolve that, in fact, life goes on! Your willingness, as the great Teddy Roosevelt declared, to be in the arena serves as inspiration to all.

One of our Core Focus' is "Vets Serving Vets". As a Vet reaching out to our Vet's and families, I'd like to keep serving you and ensure you are safe & prepared to live life again. Let's be responsible as we phase through and into the many county modifications due to Covid. Because life will go on, and we have to keep telling ourselves and each other this every day.

Let's not continue to be closed off inside like the picture below....let's go back to the old normal. "Life as usual."

## Zoom Meeting

Audio only



With video





## Robert Clinton “Vets Serving Vets”



**W**hether you are a General Member, Associate Member, or Honorary Member of Northwest PVA, if you would like to volunteer some of your valuable time to help make the Northwest Chapter better, we greatly accept your generosity. Whatever your skill-set or passion is, we can probably put it to good use. Volunteering for something you enjoy doing makes volunteering even that much more rewarding and fun.

- Sports programs
- Serving patients or Residents meals on Special Events
- Visiting with patients\* or Residents
- Administrative details
- Various Chapter Committees
- Participate in various events, parades, expos.
- Simple advocacy.... Help spread the good word about what we are all about.

### **\* Visiting with Patients and Residents**

One of our most popular and rewarding ways to volunteer is to simply visit with our Veteran patients in the hospitals or Residents of our many State run Veterans Homes. Many may not have local family members in the area, and simply enjoy some good

friendly company. There are additional requirements that you need to fulfill in order to be allowed access to visit with patients through the Hospitals; By going to the Voluntary Service office or Residents of the Veterans Home by going to the Homes Administration office. Applying to volunteer at these types of locations may include a simple background check and an annual TB check. We understand these process's and are here to help you navigate, if this is something you would like to consider.

Once you decide you would like to donate some time to help improve lives of Veterans in your local area in Washington, Alaska, and Montana, simply download the Volunteer Application form by going to our website [www.nwpva.org](http://www.nwpva.org) and download and submit by email at [pvachnw@mindspring.com](mailto:pvachnw@mindspring.com) or mail using our contact address at the bottom of the website. Once submitted to the chapter, we will send you a Volunteer ID card with your volunteer number on it. Once you begin to volunteer, we simply ask that you track your hours and miles driven each month. Our Volunteer Coordinator will contact you and send you a simple form and talk you through how to submit by email your hours & miles report so we can submit all the fantastic hours submitted by each of you to our national office. It is pretty simple once you get the hang of it. Thank you for considering one of our Core Focuses at Northwest PVA “Vets Serving Vets”. (Due to Covid, some restrictions are in place).



Brent King

## Hunting with Heroes Casper, Wyoming Speedgoat



I applied for a hunt in Casper, WY a few years ago to hunt antelope. There is a waiting list and my number finally came up. What a spectacular group and hunting program Hunting with Heroes has established! This was the 8<sup>th</sup> annual antelope hunt they have put on. There were no glitches even in the midst of COVID19.

Each hunter has to pay their way to travel to Wyoming. Hunting with Heroes provides your room, a few meals and basic meat processing. You will arrive on a Friday to sight in your rifle, hunt on Saturday, sight see or fish on Sunday and be heading home with your antelope processed and flash frozen on Monday. All tags are donated by land owners and your guides are local volunteer hunters very familiar with antelope and the land you will be hunting.

The hospitality and interacting with a great group of fellow Veterans from all over the US is second to none. The hunting is the bonus. The Veteran that harvests the biggest buck gets their taxidermy paid for by Hunting with Heroes.

I was the only wheelchair user at this hunt. I have to give credit to one of our members, Thomas Grieb for letting me know this opportunity existed.

Hunting in vast land of sage brush desert is different. Animals seem to appear and vanish before your eyes. Since I am unable to walk, I hunted from the back seat of a crew cab F-350 with a pool noodle on the side window as a power adjustable elevation device. We studied a lot of bucks until my guide advised me that he'd shoot the buck paralleling us.

We slowly drove to the crest of a hill and my guide turned the vehicle sideways for me to take my shot. I put the scope of the 6.5 Creedmoor on the kill zone and squeezed.....nothing happened! My safety was still on! I clicked the lever to semi and took aim

again. I squeezed the trigger and smack, the 120-grain bullet connected with the speedgoat at 372 yards. He buckled, trotted 30 yds and dropped dead.

What a magnificent creature with distinct markings and horns. We field prepped the animal and off to the meat processor we drove. All 14 Vets were successful on the first day of the hunt.

So, if you want to take the time, pay for some travel and a few meals, you should apply for this fantastic hunting opportunity. I don't think you'll be disappointed!



*Brent and his Speedgoat*

# Multiple Sclerosis

By: Matthew Mickunas

**W**hat is MS? What causes it? Find answers to your MS Questions.

Multiple Sclerosis is, or MS, is a long-lasting disease that can affect your brain, spinal cord, and the optic nerves in your eyes. It can cause problems with vision, balance, muscle control, and other basic body functions. The effects are often different for everyone who has the disease. Some people have mild symptoms and don't need treatment. Others will have trouble getting around and doing daily tasks. MS happens when your immune system attacks a fatty material called myelin, which wraps around your nerve fibers to protect them. Without this outer shell, your nerves become damaged. Scar tissue may form. The damage means your brain can't send signals through your body correctly. Your nerves also don't work as they should to help you move and feel. As a result, you may have symptoms like:

- Trouble walking
- Feeling tired
- Muscle weakness or spasms
- Blurred or double vision
- Numbness and tingling
- Sexual problems
- Poor bladder or bowel control
- Pain
- Depression
- Problems focusing or remembering

Doctors still don't understand what causes multiple sclerosis. But ongoing research shows that from your genes, to where you live, to the air you breathe, there are many factors in play.

## Your Immune System Goes Awry

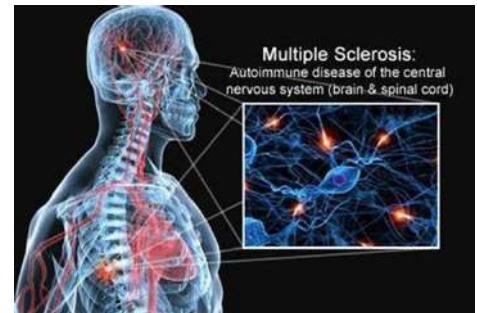
MS is an autoimmune condition. Doctors don't know why, but something tells your immune system to attack your body. With MS, the focus is on myelin, a fatty substance that covers the nerve fibers in your brain and spinal cord. Its job is to protect them like the plastic that wraps around the wires in your phone charger. When myelin is messed up, your nerves can't send messages back and forth the way they should. Without their protective coating, your nerves can get damaged, too.

- You might be more likely to get MS if you have another autoimmune condition like inflammatory bowel disease, thyroid disease, or type 1 diabetes.
- The Environment Raises Your Odds

MS is more likely to affect people who live in certain places and belong to specific ethnic groups. It's especially common in cooler climates like Scotland, Scandinavia, and throughout northern Europe – places that are farther from the equator. People who live close to the equator are least likely to get it. In the U.S., it affects white people more than other racial groups.

If you move from a place where MS is rare to a place where it's common before you're a teenager, you'll also be more likely to get it. This suggests that something about the place you live before puberty raises your odds of getting MS. It could be the amount of sunlight in a day. There's evidence that vitamin D, which your body makes when it's exposed to sunlight, helps protect you from immune-related diseases.

Are you a smoker? Then you're also more likely to get MS. And you'll probably have a worse case that pro-



gresses faster than cases for non-smokers. Quitting can slow the disease down, though, whether you do it before or after you're diagnosed. If you smoke and you have clinically isolated syndrome – a first instance of MS symptoms that lasts for about 24 hours – you have a greater chance of a second episode and an MS diagnosis.

## Is Multiple Sclerosis Hereditary?

No. You don't get it from your parents. But the risk factors could be in your genes. If your parents or siblings have it, you're far more likely to get it, too.

Researchers believe there's more than one gene that boosts your odds of getting MS. Some think you're born with something in your genes that makes you more likely to react to triggers in the world around you. Once you're exposed to it, your immune system responds. New ways to identify genes may help answer questions about the role genetics plays in MS.

## Do Sex Hormones Play a Role?

There's growing proof that hormones, including sex hormones, can affect and be affected by your immune system. For example, estrogen and progesterone, two important female sex hormones, may suppress your immune system. When these hormone levels are

(Continued on page 5)



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higher during pregnancy, women with MS tend to have less disease activity. Testosterone, the primary male hormone, may also suppress the immune response. Men's higher levels of testosterone may partly account for the fact that more than twice as many women as men have MS.

### Can Viruses Cause MS?

Some studies have shown that two viruses from the herpes family might be linked to MS triggers. Almost all people who have the disease have proteins in their spinal fluid also found in people with a nervous system disease caused by a virus. But doctors aren't sure if the virus was there before the MS, or if it caused MS, or it just happened along with it.

### Does Age Matter?

Yes. MS can happen at any age, but most people are diagnosed between 15 and 60.

### What Isn't an MS Risk Factor?

At one point, people believed each of these might cause MS. But years of research have found no links:

- Allergies
- Artificial sweeteners
- Exposure to heavy metals
- Pets
- Physical trauma

### What Are the Different Types of Multiple Sclerosis?

In some ways, each person with multiple sclerosis lives with a different illness. Although nerve damage is always a part of the disease, the pattern is unique for everyone.

Doctors have identified a few major types of MS. The categories are important, because they help predict how severe the disease can be

and how well treatment will work.

### Relapsing-Remitting Multiple Sclerosis

Most people with multiple sclerosis - around 85% - have this type. They usually have their first signs of the disease in their early 20s. After that, they have attacks of symptoms (called relapses) from time to time, followed by weeks, months, or years of recovery (called remissions). The nerves that are affected, how severe attacks are, the degree of recovery, and the time between relapses all vary widely from person to person.

Eventually, most people with relapsing-remitting MS will move on to a secondary progressive phase of MS.

### Secondary Progressive Multiple Sclerosis

After living with relapsing-remitting MS for many years, most people will get secondary progressive MS. In this type, symptoms begin a steady march without relapses or remissions. (In this way, it's like primary progressive MS.) The change typically happens between 10 and 20 years after you're diagnosed with relapsing-remitting MS.

It's unclear why the disease makes the shift. But scientists know a few things about the process:

- The older a person is when she's first diagnosed, the shorter the time she has before the disease becomes secondary progressive.
- People who don't fully recover from relapses generally move to secondary progressive MS sooner than those who do.
- The process of ongoing nerve damage changes. After the transformation, there's less inflammation and more of a slow decline in how well the nerves work.

Secondary progressive MS is tough to treat, and the disease can be hard to handle day to day. Symptoms get worse at a different rate for each person. Treatments work moderately well, but most people will have some trouble using their body like they used to.

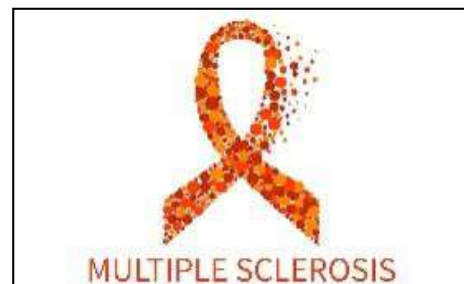
### Primary Progressive Multiple Sclerosis

In primary progressive multiple sclerosis, the disease gradually gets worse over time. There are no well-defined attacks of symptoms, and there is little or no remissions. In addition, MS treatments don't work as well with this type of MS. About 10% of people with MS have this type.

A few things make it different from other types of MS:

- People with primary progressive MS are usually older when they're diagnosed - an average age of 40.
  - Roughly equal numbers of men and women get it. In other types of the disease, women outnumber men 3 to 1.
  - It usually leads to disability earlier than the most common type, relapsing-remitting MS.
- You may have heard PPMS referred to as progressive relapsing multiple sclerosis (PRMS), but this terminology is no longer used.

References: Web MD



Weldon Lee



## A Little Talked About Secret in the VA

**F**

or those who remembered the 1950's and 1960's, The VA was one of the foremost leaders in medical Research and Development (R&D). R&D plays a vital role in the

Department of Veteran Affairs (DVAs) mission. This important program establishes the mainstay of the DVA Healthcare Administration throughout the country.

The Puget Sound Health Care System (PSHCS) affiliation with the University of Washington ensures that the professional staff and quality of care is of the highest caliber.

There are over 600 research projects ongoing. These world-class research projects have principal investigators encompassing virtually every major clinical department. Most of you know that Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) and Rehabilitation Medicine (Rehab) are the ones we at NWPVA are most familiar.

We are attempting to bring more visibility for care to the Spinal Cord Disease (SCD) veterans in our community.

At the helm of the R&D community is the Associate Chief of Staff, Dr. William A. Banks who oversees three major Divisions, five Science Core Groups and four Compliance Officers from the Hospital Directors Office. The Divisions are Projects, Human Research Protection Program, Operations, Science Core Groups and Compliance Officers.

Dr. Banks has consented to be a contributor to writing a series of articles for the NW Outpost. For those of you who wish to learn more about the R&D Program at the PSHCS, stay with us on future editions. If you wish to send questions in for either Dr. Banks or me, please contact me at my email address: [ghppr1@yahoo.com](mailto:ghppr1@yahoo.com). Please provide me with your question or comment and an email address where we can respond back to you with an answer.

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## PAYING HOMAGE TO A GREAT LADY By: Weldon Lee

**A** great woman passed on September 18, 2020. In her lifetime, she amazed naysayers by quietly, but often vociferously, with her positions on women's equality and fair treatment. Her life was filled with magnanimous accomplishments. Too many and too significant to write in this short article. Her life, like so many accomplishments made by giants in history, require reading and detailed examination of the heart and spirit.

Her name was Ruth Bader Ginsberg, wife, mother, grandmother, scholar, and most notable, a member of the coveted United States Supreme Court Justices. May we all come together to mourn the loss of such a great person, regardless of gender, race, religion, or political affiliation. She will be missed deeply! In accordance with Jewish traditional sayings, "May her life be a blessing".

Ruth Bader Ginsberg



Mar 1939 – Sep 2020



# Research at the VA–Puget Sound: The Challenge of COVID-19



Dr. William A. Banks

**W**e usually think of research as being slow, taking years, decades,

or even generations of scientists to solve a problem. But this is not always so, especially when one has a vigorous program of research and as many talented researchers as are at our VA. Our scientists quickly rose to the challenge of addressing how best to deal with COVID-19. Their response is particularly impressive when one realizes how researchers must pay for their research. They, like small businessmen, must find customers who will support their research. This support usually comes from places like the National Institutes of Health, foundations like the American Heart Association, or one of the VA's own internal funding pro-

grams. Getting a grant is a competitive business, with only about 10% of grants being funded. Scientists spend about 30% of their time trying to get or administer grants.

With these and other barriers, one is often surprised how quickly research can sometimes advance. Six months into the pandemic, the scientists at VA Puget Sound have submitted 19 separate grants, many of them already funded, that relate to COVID-19. These range from studies using worms and mice to those involving human volunteers. They include studies we have all heard about, including studying vaccines and convalescent serum, but also a lot you might not have thought about. Questions like: How does having a loved one with COVID-19 affect other members of the family, especially the care-giver or spouse? What effect do hormones have on COVID-19? Can drugs that work

against other viruses work against this virus? Can the virus get into the brain? What does smoking, drinking, having diabetes or high blood pressure or other conditions mean if I get the virus? How can we use telemedicine better during the pandemic?

As these questions are answered by the scientists at your VA, we will be increasingly better able to cope with COVID-19. We've already learned a lot of those answers, with over two dozen scientific papers already published from the VA – Puget Sound. Very importantly, since this work is done here, it is our Veterans that are the first to benefit from our new-found knowledge.

William A Banks  
Associate Chief of Staff, Research and Development  
Veterans Affairs Health Care System – Puget Sound



**Paralyzed Veterans of America**  
Northwest Chapter

## GET INVOLVED

*The mission of Paralyzed Veterans of America, Northwest Chapter is to improve the quality of life for veterans of the United States Armed Forces and others who have a spinal cord injury or dysfunction.*

**DONATE NOW**

**JOIN NOW**

**SURVEY**

**H**ello everyone, I am Matthew Mickunas, your Northwest PVA President. The Northwest PVA Chapter covers Washington, Alaska, Montana, and Members that have stayed with the Northwest Chapter throughout the nation. I have a short 10 question survey that I would like you to participate in. With this survey I hope to get a feeling on the chapter's general participation, program involvement & interest, and a secure way to obtain your current contact information. I have many of your addresses but need a good email. All I want is to be able to provide great service as we are here to serve you. For the survey, please go to our homepage @ [www.nwpva.org](http://www.nwpva.org).

## Thomas Bungert The Right Stuff



**I**t has been an unusual but productive time

still with the phased Covid restrictions with our Northwest Chapter. The Board of Directors and Staff have started to blend in together as a "Working Team" to fulfill the PVA Mission of serving Veterans with SCI, MS, and ALS disabilities. PVA National's new online membership submissions accounted for six new Northwest Chapter approvals with mission mandated injuries and diseases. Northwest PVA (NWPVA) wel-

comed those six along with the three new members recruited into the chapter by members this past two months.

Remember that recruiting members is just not the President's, Chairperson or Boards responsibility, it belongs to all of us! When you see someone using a wheelchair, walker, cane, or crutches to walk, take the time to ask if he or she is a Veteran that is unaware of what we can do for them as a member of our chapter. As a member of a Veteran Service Organization NWPVA, we can assist Veterans and their fami-

lies in many ways, including: Answering questions, advising, and educating individuals and groups on what they could be eligible for, as well as the several exciting adaptive sports and recreational programs & clinics offered. We can also help by pointing them in the direction of our local Regional PVA National Service Officers (NSO), the NSO can assist the Veteran on what benefits are available from federal, state, county, and local resources and assist the eligible Veterans in filing necessary claims and appeals.

## How to Contact Your NSO During Covid

### Jerrell Briscoe



**W**hile we continue to work through these

trying times, it has brought to our attention that there have been issues reaching your National Service Officer (NSO). First, we would like to extend our apologies in any delay to returning your calls. We continue to work from home so there are a few things we are trying to streamline, As we are using our personal phones, we are having to mask our numbers when making business calls. In doing this, when we reach

out to you our calls will show as "blocked" or some variant.

To better assist you in your needs, and to make sure that we can reach you in a timely manner, we want to outline some things that can assist in helping us connect.

- Make sure that your phone allows for blocked calls.
- Contact us via email, as we can either help you through email or set a time and date for a phone meeting.
- Contact the Seattle Regional Office @ 206-341-8210 instead of the SCI Office, during

COVID, Hospital access is limited.

- Have patience.

If you wish to contact us via email, you may do so at [jerrellb@va.gov](mailto:jerrellb@va.gov) for Veterans with the last number of their social ending 0-4 or [michaelk@pva.org](mailto:michaelk@pva.org) for those ending in 5-9. We want to thank you for your service to this country and want you to know that we are here to help in any way we can. Wishing you and your families the best

# THE SEATTLE FOUNDATION



## Our History

In the tradition of community foundations across the country, we've worked with local philanthropists since 1946.

## Where we stand

Few regions in the world can match Seattle's current growth and prosperity. But accompanying our good fortune are great challenges, including the widening disparities between rich and poor. Such inequities weaken the vibrancy of our community. Philanthropy can—and must—step in. Using our philanthropic expertise, deep roots in the community and network of partners, Seattle Foundation develops targeted strategies to quicken the pace of progress toward a stronger community for all. We are an agent of change. Every day, we convene, communicate with and catalyze our philanthropic partners to advance this ideal, uniting passion and discipline to create lasting impact.

### Increasing Nonprofit Effectiveness

Strengthening nonprofits to perform optimally so they can have more impact in the community.

## Our mission

Is to ignite powerful, rewarding philanthropy to make Greater Seattle a stronger, more vibrant community for all.





Paralyzed Veterans  
of America

## 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

September 17, 2020

Volume 26, Number 16

# COVID-19 RELIEF PACKAGES, GOVERNMENT FUNDING – WHERE THINGS STAND

Congress left town in early August without taking any action on relief packages to address the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The House-passed H.R. 6800, the HEROES Act, was sitting in the Senate when Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell unveiled on July 27 the Republicans' version of a coronavirus bill called the HEALS Act.

Like the HEROES Act, the HEALS Act contains an additional \$1,200 economic impact payment for Americans. The Senate bill would also ensure that adult dependents with disabilities and their parents and caretakers are among those eligible for these recovery rebates. The CARES Act that passed in April had denied those critical financial supports to parents with adult children living with a variety of conditions and also excluded many adult children who provide the majority of the financial support for their elderly parents.

In a letter to the House and Senate leadership, PVA urged retention of those payments in any

forthcoming COVID relief legislation and expressed support for inclusion of provisions from the HEROES Act that would allow a temporary, 25 percent increase of VA's Special Monthly Compensation (SMC)/Aid and Attendance (A&A) benefits so catastrophically disabled veterans can purchase personal protective equipment and the necessary care they need. PVA also endorsed the language in the HEROES Act that would enhance funding for Medicaid home and community-based services (HCBS).

At the same time, PVA expressed its concerns about several troubling sections in the HEALS Act. Included in that bill is language that would remove important protections for people with disabilities by limiting liability for a wide variety of unlawful conduct. Not only would the HEALS Act make devastating changes in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), but it would also strip protections from other civil rights laws such as the Genetic Information Non-discrimination Act, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as well as other health and safety laws.

The HEALS Act also contains a section that would establish so-called Rescue Committees for various federal trust funds including those for Social Security and Medicare. Recommendations from these committees would be considered under expedited procedures and could provide cover for damaging cuts in benefits. If coupled with an ill-advised payroll tax deferral that has been proposed by the President, this could drive calls for devastating reductions in economic and health care supports for millions of elderly and disabled Americans.

Following concerns about reported mail delivery delays, the House returned to Washington on Saturday, August 22, to vote on a bill that would include \$25 billion in new funding for the U.S. Postal Service and reverse changes implemented in recent weeks to mail delivery and operations. In the Senate, Majority Leader McConnell unveiled a slimmed down version of HEALS in an attempt to restart negotiations on passage of a COVID relief bill. His

*(Continued on page 13)*

(Continued from page 12)

latest legislation would add several billion dollars for Post Office funding, an additional \$300 per week unemployment compensation, another round of the Paycheck Protection Program, and funds for school reopening but also retains the damaging provisions that absolve employers and businesses from discriminatory actions under several civil rights laws, including the ADA. It's unclear whether any resolution will

be reached prior to Congress's return following Labor Day.

As for the looming end of the fiscal year, a continuing resolution (CR) to fund the federal government until after the presidential election is also being discussed. Only a handful of scheduled legislative days remain before the end of the current fiscal year on September 30 and Congress has yet to pass any of the annual funding

bills. If passed, a CR will likely maintain current year funding levels for an unspecified date after the November election or even into 2021.



## VA TO BEGIN REASSESSING POST-9/11 VETERANS AND THEIR CAREGIVERS

**O**n July 31, VA published a final rule that makes changes to VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers. A provision in the rule sets forth reassessment criteria for veterans and their caregivers who submitted a joint application that was approved by VA *before* October 1, 2020.

Between October 1, 2020, and September 30, 2021, VA will conduct the reassessment process. The reassessment will be based on the new eligibility criteria set forth in the final rule. No matter when a veteran's reassessment occurs within that year, the veteran will maintain automatic eligibility for one year – through September 30, 2021.

The assessment will be conducted by staff from the veteran's local

VA medical center, and may include a visit to his or her home. VA staff may complete visits through video conference or other available telehealth modalities.

Once the reassessment is complete, a Centralized Eligibility and Appeals Team will review and decide the veteran's eligibility beyond September 30, 2021. VA will notify veterans of their eligibility determination results in writing.

Caregiver Support program staff will contact veterans who must be reassessed for the program. In the meantime, veterans should contact their local Caregiver Support program staff if they have questions.

Also, VA is changing the way monthly stipend payments are calculated in order to make the program more consistent. VA be-

lieves that for many primary family caregivers of current participants (post-9/11), these changes will result in an increase in the stipend payment amount. For those who may receive a decrease in the monthly payment as a result of these changes, the final rule establishes a one-year transition period. No decrease will occur before October 1, 2021, unless: 1) the veteran relocates to a new address, at which point the stipend would be calculated by the new methodology or 2) the veteran is discharged or revoked from the program.



# SOCIAL SECURITY PAYROLL CONTRIBUTIONS DEFERRAL

**O**n August 8, the President directed the Secretary of the Treasury to defer Social Security contributions (i.e., payroll taxes) from September 1, 2020, until December 31, 2020, pursuant to Internal Revenue Code provisions authorizing the disregard of tax liability of taxpayers determined to be affected by federally declared disasters, terrorist attacks, or military actions. These payroll contributions are the primary funding mechanism for Social Security retirement, survivors, and disability benefits. The deferred contributions amount to about \$100 billion plus all interest earned on those deferred funds.

Because employers would still be responsible for the funds in 2021, and the government has not provided clear instructions about implementation, it is possible that employees will have double what is normally withheld for Social Security in order to pay back the deferral. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has expressed concern over this action and it is expected that many companies may simply continue to withhold the money but not transmit it to Treasury until 2021.

Meanwhile, the Administration announced in early September that it would proceed with the payroll tax deferral for federal employees and members of the military. According to the President's memorandum, the deferral follows the original August 8 order in

which employees will have their taxes deferred if they make less than \$4,000 per pay period or \$104,000 annually.

Social Security has an accumulated reserve of \$2.9 trillion. Consequently, if the deferred funds are paid back in 2021, Social Security would have lost the interest income, but all benefits will continue to be paid in full and on time.

However, the IRS code section gives the President the authority to extend the payroll contributions deferrals for up to one year under



a federally declared disaster. If no action is taken to pay back the trust funds and the deferral continues after December 31, 2020, the Chief Actuary of the Social Security Administration has estimated that Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits would end sometime—in the middle of 2021. Should that deferral be extended further or other actions taken to end payroll contributions, the retirement trust fund would be unable to pay benefits

two years later in 2023.

In a press briefing soon after the August 8 order, the President expressed an interest in permanently terminating the payroll contributions and replacing them with monies out of the government's general fund, which would require a transfer from general revenues to Social Security of over \$1 trillion every year. According to the Congressional Budget Office, that would represent about a 30 percent increase in general revenue spending over what the general fund spent in 2019. Moreover, that additional \$1 trillion would have more than doubled the FY 2019 deficit.

Proposals to permanently end Social Security's current financing would fundamentally alter this 85-year-old system of financial security for millions of Americans. Congress can act to reverse the deferral but would likely need a veto proof majority in both the House and Senate to do so.

PVA has endorsed legislation to overturn the deferral of payroll contributions and will be following developments closely to ensure that the Social Security system remains strong for the millions of Americans who rely on its critical retirement, survivor, and disability benefits.







September 28, 2020

Dear Skip,

Thank you for contacting me to express your support for H.R. 860, the Social Security 2100 Act. Serving as your representative in Congress is a tremendous privilege. Each and every letter, email, postcard and call I receive makes a difference. I want you to know that I deeply value your input, and I am glad we agree on this important issue.

Like you, I am deeply disturbed by the ongoing attacks on Social Security. As you may know, since it was signed into law 85 years ago, Social Security has helped raise more Americans out of poverty than any other government program. One in five American retirees rely on Social Security as their sole source of income. We must not only protect Social Security, we must expand it.

That is why I am a proud member of the Expand Social Security Caucus and original cosponsor of the Social Security 2100 Act (H.R. 860). If enacted, this legislation would provide a benefit increase for current and new Social Security beneficiaries, improve the cost-of-living adjustment to account for the true needs of seniors, raise the minimum benefit for employees who have worked for at least 10 years, and ensure that this bill's Social Security benefits would not be taxable or impact beneficiaries access to Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, and other federal benefit programs. I was proud to lead the Congressional Progressive Caucus to endorse the bill, and I will continue to fight to pass this necessary legislation.

Again, thank you for getting in touch with me about this important issue. If you have further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call us at 202-225-3106. Also, please sign up for my e-mail newsletter at [jayapal.house.gov/contact/newsletter](http://jayapal.house.gov/contact/newsletter), join us on Facebook at [facebook.com/RepJayapal](https://facebook.com/RepJayapal), on Twitter at [twitter.com/RepJayapal](https://twitter.com/RepJayapal) and on Instagram, at [instagram.com/RepJayapal](https://instagram.com/RepJayapal) to be the first to know about my work in Washington's 7th District and in DC.

Sincerely,

PRAMILA JAYAPAL  
Member of Congress

## COMMITTEE STUDYING WHEELCHAIR SECUREMENT SYSTEMS ON AIRPLANES CONVENES

**T**he Board, in partnership with the Transportation Research Board (TRB), is studying the feasibility of installing wheelchair securement systems on commercial aircraft as directed by Congress under the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018. A Committee of experts TRB organized to conduct this assessment held its third public meeting on August 11.

At the meeting, the Committee members received presentations from airline engineers on technical issues and aircraft interior design considerations; wheelchair manu-

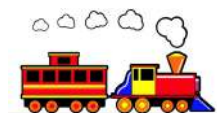
facturing and design experts; and Heather Ansley, Associate Executive Director of Government Relations, who addressed how securement systems could provide passengers with disabilities an equivalent level of service and safety in air travel. During her remarks, Ms. Ansley stated that an equal level of service would be the ability to board an aircraft in a safe, dignified manner in the way the passenger chooses, while receiving assistance as needed from trained assistants. The meeting also included a panel on the operational implications of using wheelchair securement systems, which included speakers representing airlines, flight attendants, and

contract service providers who routinely assist passengers with disabilities in the boarding process.

The Committee plans to hold its next meeting in October. Further details will be released at a later date. For further information, visit [TRB's website](#) or contact Anusha Jayasinghe of TRB at [AJayas-inghe@nas.edu](mailto:AJayas-inghe@nas.edu) or (202) 334-2401.



## PUBLIC WEIGHS IN ON UPDATES TO ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES FOR RAIL CARS



**T**he U.S. Access Board received over 200 comments from the public on its plan to update provisions for rail cars in the ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Transportation Vehicles. This feedback was provided in response to an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking the Board published in February. The comment period for the notice, which was extended 60 days due to the coronavirus pandemic, closed on July 14.

Through its notice, the Board sought input and information from the public for its use in developing

a proposal to update guidelines for vehicles used in fixed guideway systems, including rapid, light, commuter, and intercity rail. As indicated in the notice, the Board intends to update these provisions according to recommendations from its Rail Vehicles Access Advisory Committee. The Board requested feedback from the public on the Committee's recommendations, including potential impacts on vehicle design, operations, and cost, and related information such as research, data, and technologies on improved accessibility to rail vehicles. The notice also included specific questions on coverage of new and remanufactured vehicles, variable message signs, hearing

induction loops, vehicle ramps and lifts, car doors, between-car barriers, handrails and stanchions, wheelchair spaces, vertical access in bi-level cars, and other topics.

Many comments supported equipping rail cars with audio induction loops so that onboard communications are accessible to people who are hard of hearing. Commenters also addressed relief areas for service animals and improved visual display of announcements and stops, and other topics. The comments and related information are posted in the [online docket](#) (ATBCB-2020-0002) on [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov).

# VA Community Emergency Care Information for Veterans

By: Matthew Mickunas

**I**n most instances, Veterans are eligible to receive Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)-authorized emergency care at an in-network facility if VA is notified of the emergent event within 72 hours. The VA medical center (VAMC) nearest to a Veteran's emergent event can identify in-network emergency care providers. Veterans do not need to check with VA before going to an emergency department in the community or calling an ambulance. During a medical emergency, VA encourages all Veterans to seek immediate medical attention without delay. To simplify and streamline this emergency care notification process, VA established a national emergency care contact center. The Emergency Care Centralized Notification Center allows community providers to report instances of a Veteran presenting to a community emergency department. It offers simplified access to VA for care coordination, eligibility determination and payment authorization information. Centralized notification standardizes communication, documentation and collaboration between VA and community providers.

General Information: VA should be notified within 72 hours of the start of an emergent event that a Veteran has sought emergency care at an in-network facility. This notification ensures VA can authorize the care. This step also assists VA in coordinating the Veteran's transfer to a VAMC and additional care, and ensures that the requirement for VA to pay for the care are met. For each emergent episode of care, treating

community providers will receive authorization decision information and, if applicable, directions on how to submit claims. Failure to notify VA of care rendered through an in-network community facility prevents VA from authorizing the emergency treatment and prevents claims and payments from being made through one of VA's third-party administrators.

Effective June 8, 2020, VA established a national centralized notification center to simplify the emergency care notification process. The Emergency Care Centralized Notification Center allows community providers, Veterans, and representatives to report instances of a Veteran presenting to a community emergency department. It offers simplified access to VA for care coordination, eligibility determination and payment authorization information. Centralized notification standardizes communication, documentation and collaboration between VA and community providers.

General Information: Providers should report instances of a Vet-

eran presenting to a community emergency department to VA within 72 hours of the start of emergent care. It is important to notify VA within 72 hours because it allows VA to assist in coordinating care or transfer to a VA medical center. This helps ensure that administrative and clinical requirements for VA to pay for the care are met. Failure to report in a timely manner may impact a Veteran's eligibility for VA to cover the cost of emergency treatment. For each notification, the treating facility will receive authorization or eligibility information and, if applicable, direction for claim submittal.

Notification Requirements: Providers & Veterans may use either of the following centralized options to notify VA with details about Veterans receiving emergent care in the community:

1. Email: [VHAEmergencyNotification@va.gov](mailto:VHAEmergencyNotification@va.gov)
2. Phone: 844-72HRVHA (844-724-7842)

References: VA.gov





# Partnering to Provide Access and Opportunity For all Sportsmen

By: Brent King



**B**eing in a wheelchair or using another assistive device can definitely be a deterrent, but it doesn't have to mean the end of your hunting days. The Inland Northwest Wildlife Council (INWC) has partnered with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and the Colville National Forest (CNF), as well as Hancock Forest Management (HFM) to ensure that everyone who wants to hunt can hunt.

The INWC is a group of sportsmen and women dedicated to conservation and habitat improvement in the Inland Northwest. They have been partnering with WDFW since the founding of their organization back in 1951. Members coordinate with WDFW on projects ranging from teaching kids to fish, to building wildlife viewing blinds, installing and fixing fences on WDFW lands, planting native species to restore traditional habitat, lake clean ups, road-kill recovery and butchering to donate meat to homeless shelters and food banks, and lobbying and legislation work to promote decisions that will preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife and ecosystems, while providing sustainable fishing, hunting, and other recreation opportunities.

With fall and hunting seasons here, INWC is working to get more people out into the woods and into the harvest of deer, elk or other game animals. About a decade ago, INWC members had a vision of providing better hunting opportunities for disabled hunters, specifically those in

wheelchairs. Volunteers got together and built a handful of wheelchair hunting platforms with ramps and install them in the Colville National Forest and on Inland Empire Paper Company land in northeast Washington. Over the years, volunteers checked and maintained them each year.

In 2018, INWC members decided more platforms were needed and coordinated with WDFW staff to put another at the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area, in the Rustler's Gulch Unit. Roles were reversed not too long later when WDFW staff decided another platform would be optimal and reached out to INWC to see if they would be willing to build and install one at the Sherman Creek Unit near Kettle Falls. They were, of course.

In 2019, an INWC member learned that a Central Valley High School student in Spokane Valley was looking for an Eagle Scout project and reached out to see if he would be interested in building another hunting platform. He was, and members helped him and other scouts install it at Squirrel Meadows in the Colville National Forest not long after.

Two original ramps have since been refurbished and deployed to new locations at HFM property at Blanchard Hump (soon), and the upper side of the Rustler's Gulch Unit of the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area where they are more accessible to people in wheelchairs.

And the INWC folks aren't done yet. They are currently building two additional accessible hunter platforms,

funded through a grant from WDFW, to be placed soon on Aladdin Mountain, west of Lone, within the Colville National Forest's Disabled Hunter ADA Program area. When complete, that will make a total of ten ADA accessible hunting platforms installed by INWC members around northeast Washington, all inside gated areas reserved for disabled hunters so they don't have to compete with able-bodied hunters.

WDFW is extremely appreciative of the efforts of Inland Northwest Wildlife Council members to ensure that disabled hunters still have a chance to take something home to their freezer. If you are disabled, are a companion to a disabled hunter, or know one, more information on how hunting programs for those with disabilities, as well as how to access one of these ADA accessible hunting platforms, is on the WDFW's Diversity, Civil Rights, and ADA Accessibility page. The INWC also has an ADA program that works with private landowners and government organizations to provide land access for hundreds of hunters with disabilities and an annual open house that showcases adaptive hunting and fishing equipment available to those with disabilities.

You can visit their website at <https://www.inwec.org/disabled-access-committee/>

They can also be reached by calling their office at 509-487-8552, or by email: [thewildlifecouncil@gmail.com](mailto:thewildlifecouncil@gmail.com)

# Russ Norris Adapt Training-SITSTRONG



**W**hile we may not be able to provide our regular in-person adaptive sports programs just yet, your Sports Director is working hard to provide a variety of sports and recreation activities that you can participate in virtually. Please check back frequently as we will be adding new events and programs throughout the year on our website at: [www.nwpva.org](http://www.nwpva.org).

## SITSTRONG Live Workout Program

### for Wheelchair Users

PVA is excited to be partnering with ADAPT Advanced to offer another session of their new virtual SITSTRONG live workout program; which are exclusively free for PVA members. SITSTRONG virtual exercise classes will take place Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 1:30 pm EST. The 'women's only' class

will be held at 2:00 pm EST on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

REGISTER for classes: [adapttraining.clickfunnels.com/optin1588620857017](http://adapttraining.clickfunnels.com/optin1588620857017)

### SITSTRONG WORKOUT CLASS

#### SCHEDULE:

Classes held M/W/F  
Co-ed chair-based class - 1:30 PM EST  
Women's chair-based class - 2:00 PM EST

### Cycling Spin Classes:

Join us for our virtual spin classes hosted by PVA handcycling. All classes take place via Zoom video conferencing and are led by a guest instructor. **To sign up, email** [handcycling@pva.org](mailto:handcycling@pva.org).  
**Monday & Friday:** 5-7 pm EDT  
**Tuesday & Thursday:** 9-11 am EDT  
**Wednesday & Saturday:** 12-2 pm EDT

### E-Sports

Join our E-Sports team as we meet to hang out and play video games together! Experienced instructor Travis Greaves will act as coach and team member, walking all levels of players through improving their game.

Please email: [TravisG@pva.org](mailto:TravisG@pva.org) for details  
Thursday: 2 PM EST  
**Registration link:** [eventbrite.com/e/pva-e-sports-practice-tickets-116737439825](https://eventbrite.com/e/pva-e-sports-practice-tickets-116737439825)

### Book Club

All are invited to join us at our monthly PVA Virtual Book Club discussions. Books are selected randomly per attendees recommendations, and lively discussions are held via Zoom every four weeks. It's a fun way to connect virtually!

For questions, please email: [MaryH@pva.org](mailto:MaryH@pva.org)



ADA accessible hunting platforms

# October

4th World Animal Day

5th World Habitat Day

13th U.S. Navy Birthday

31st Halloween



# November

1st Daylight Saving Time Ends

3rd Election Day



*"If you choose not to decide, you still have made a choice", RUSH*

10th U.S. Marine Corps Birthday

11th Veterans Day

26th Thanksgiving Day



**N**ow when you shop at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com), your purchases will support **Paralyzed Veterans of America Northwest Chapter**.

## 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 to generate AmazonSmile donations

The AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price from your eligible smile.amazon.com purchases. Tens of millions of products are eligible for donations. You will see eligible products marked "Eligible for AmazonSmile donation" on their smile.amazon.com product detail pages.

## Which products on AmazonSmile are eligible for charitable donations?

Tens of millions of products on AmazonSmile are eligible for donations. You will see eligible products marked "Eligible for AmazonSmile donation" on their product detail pages. Recurring Subscribe-and-Save purchases and subscription renewals are not currently eligible.

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

On your first visit to 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.

By: Matthew Mickunas

**amazon smile**  
You shop. Amazon gives.

New Amazon Program Enables Shoppers  
to Easily Donate to Their Favorite Nonprofits



## Put your voting plan in place: By PVA National Staff

**V**oting is one of our most important civil rights, but paralyzed veterans and other people living with disabilities are faced with accessibility challenges. Paralyzed Veterans of America wants to ensure you have all the information you need to cast your vote safely and securely by helping you make your voting access plan. Now more than ever, it is important that veterans and all people living with disabilities are electing state, local and national officials that represent issues that are important to the disability and veteran communities. Your vote counts and is important. As a result of COVID-19, it is expected that voting locations could

change, be reduced in number or have longer wait times due to extra cleaning and distancing precautions. Make a voting access plan now so you can vote through your preferred method and feel at ease and confident your vote will count.

Understand your state's laws and the voting options available to you by reviewing the website below and clicking through to your state voting website. Each state has different voting methods available to residents. Be sure to check the deadline for each voting method and plan ahead. There are 40 states that have enacted early voting for the 2020 presidential election. The website below includes information on the time

period and deadlines for which early voting begins from state to state. This page provides a state-by-state comparison of policies on early voting options. Voters should check with their local elections office or district clerk to find specific days and times that polling places are open since there may be fewer locations offered in some states this year. If you choose to vote in-person, you may find your polling location by inputting your zip code or address. This information can be found through state websites linked below. For the complete plan and information please go to:

<https://www.pva.org/about-us/vote/>

## Find wheelchair accessible places with Google Maps By: Matthew Mickunas

**G**oogle has announced the deployment of a particularly useful functionality in its web mapping service, which will make it much easier for wheelchair users to see accessibility information.

The new feature is very easy to use. Once the "Accessible Places" option is activated in the mobile application's settings, Google Maps will display wheelchair icons to indicate locations with disabled access. Clicking on the icon will bring up further information about accessible seating, toilets, and parking.

Google already has information on wheelchair accessibility for more than 15 million locations around the world, mainly thanks to the participation of contributing Internet users, and it is this information that can now be permanently displayed in Maps. It should be noted that anyone can contribute information on disabled access to the service directly from an Android or iOS smartphone.

To take advantage of the new functionality, download the latest version of Google Maps, go to settings, accessibility, and activate

"Accessible Places". The new feature is rolled out for both Android and iOS in Australia, Japan, the UK, and the US. Other countries will soon follow.

According to Google, almost 130 million people worldwide rely on wheelchairs to get around.

References: Google



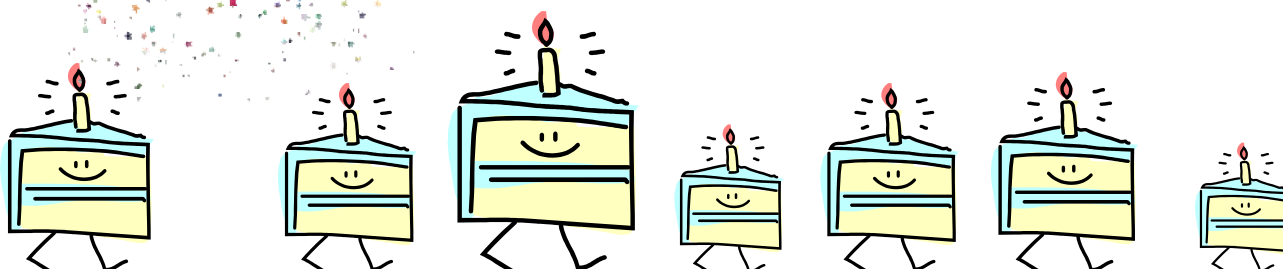
# Happy Birthday!

## October

|                         |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Henry Burton.....4th    | James Bledsoe.....14th   |
| Louis Perkins.....5th   | Owen Day.....16th        |
| Charles Thibodeau..5th  | George Lantz.....19th    |
| Fredrick Margiotta..6th | Anton Riksem.....20th    |
| Victor Searles.....6th  | Larry Howard.....21st    |
| Peter Laserinko.....7th | Harry Hansen.....21st    |
| John Gallaher.....10th  | Duane Caseday.....21st   |
| Thomas Bungert..10th    | Ellis McVea, Jr.....22nd |
| Donald Jacobs.....12th  | Kevin McMains.....24th   |
| Matthew Harbin...12th   | Ranulf Muir.....26th     |
| Brent King.....12th     | Harry Blackburn.....29th |
| Anthony Chiodo....13th  | John Parker.....30th     |

## November

|                            |                          |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| William Lambirth.....2nd   | Caesar Fittante.....17th |
| Thomas Myers.....4th       | Glenn Haley.....17th     |
| Anthony Popp.....4th       | Robert Royal.....17th    |
| Robert Owens.....4th       | Jacob Lietz.....18th     |
| Pat Bean.....5th           | Charles Ingalls.....19th |
| Hank Hom.....5th           | Glen Foster.....21st     |
| Rafael Ramirez.....5th     | Stephen Morris.....21st  |
| Daniel Schultz.....5th     | Kenneth Hartz.....22nd   |
| Ernest Hume.....8th        | Dale Schinman.....22nd   |
| Frederick Morris.....8th   | Brett Hike.....22nd      |
| Charles Salley, Jr.....9th | Jon Rubin.....24th       |
| Juliana Schroeder.....9th  | Sean Halsted.....24th    |
| Fredrick Brooking....10th  | Patrick Ball.....27th    |
| Anthony Orofino.....11th   | Andrew Bechtle.....27th  |
| Steven Larsen.....11th     | John Bannecker.....28th  |
| Chris Hansen.....15th      | Lora Sprague.....28th    |
| Cassandra Anctil.....15th  | Michael Hunter.....29th  |



**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 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.careasy.org/HOME.html>



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