



 **Pushing
Access
Forward**

**2022
LEGISLATIVE
PRIORITIES**



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For 75 years, PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA—the nation’s premier nonprofit of choice for disabled veterans, their families and caregivers, has led the fight for accessibility and provided a full-circle of support for America’s heroes throughout their lives—from the point of injury or diagnosis, to finding adaptive vehicles, accessible homes and meaningful careers, and throughout all the other milestones of life. With offices inside every Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) spinal cord injury and disorder (SCI/D) center across the U.S., PVA is unparalleled. Staffed with licensed architects, medical professionals, legal experts, and leaders in research and education, PVA fights to help all those with an SCI/D or disease, like MS and ALS, get the help they deserve to live full and more independent lives.

For these veterans to thrive, they must have access to high-quality, comprehensive health care and timely, accurate delivery of all earned benefits. They must also have equity of access to the opportunities and freedoms available to all Americans.

Protect Access to VA’s Specialized Health Care Services



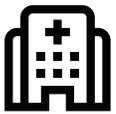
System Access

Congress must preserve access to VA’s specialized services, including its SCI/D system of care, and provide funding to ensure the system continues meeting the needs of SCI/D veterans.



Staffing

VA must have the authority to provide additional pay, compensation, and retention incentives to make it more attractive to health care and related support professionals.



Infrastructure

VA must receive funding for maintaining and expanding its health care infrastructure, including specialty facility-based long-term care that is in line with its actual needs. VA must also have the ability to hire additional staff to manage the construction process and implement needed reforms.

Expand Access to VA Long-Term Services and Supports



Facility-Based Long-Term Care

VA must adequately assess the number of veterans who need facility-based long-term care and receive funding to provide a safe margin of specialty VA long-term care capacity for veterans with SCI/D.



Home and Community-Based Services and Caregiver Supports

Veterans with catastrophic disabilities must have access to a full range of supports and services that allow them to remain independent in their homes and communities. VA must expand access to its Veteran Directed Care program and ensure its Homemaker and Home Health Aide program provides the level of support veterans require to live full, productive lives.

Congress must continue strong oversight of VA’s implementation of the expansion of its Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers. Eligibility determinations must be consistent and the appeals process fair. Final expansion of the program to all eras of eligible veterans must not be delayed beyond October 1, 2022.

VA must work with other federal agencies and Congress to ensure veterans have access to home care workers by increasing pay and providing incentives for workers to provide these important services. Veterans with catastrophic disabilities must also receive payment for their caregivers even when the veteran is hospitalized due to the type of assistance these veterans need, even in acute care settings, and to make sure they have assistance following discharge.

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Improve VA Health Care Services and Benefits for Catastrophically Disabled Veterans and their Survivors



Assisted Reproductive Technologies

Congress must repeal VA's ban on IVF and authorize VA to provide assisted reproductive technology, including IVF, surrogacy, and gamete donation at VA for any veterans enrolled in VA health care.



Survivor Benefits

Congress should increase the rate of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) for surviving dependents, and lower the threshold of eligibility to allow more survivors to receive this benefit who currently do not meet the requirements. Congress must also ensure survivors of veterans who die from ALS receive full benefits, including access to the additional DIC benefit.



Adapted Automobile Benefits

Congress must increase the number of times eligible veterans can access the Automobile Allowance Grant, ensure veterans receive appropriate Automotive Adaptive Equipment (AAE) reimbursements, and authorize veterans who have non-service-connected catastrophic disabilities to receive the same type of AAE as veterans whose disabilities are service-connected.



Home Modification Grants

Congress must raise the rate of funding available through VA's Home Improvements and Structural Alterations grant program to improve access to housing adaptations for all catastrophically disabled veterans.

Increase Access to VA Health Care and Benefits for Women Veterans with SCI/D



Health Care

VA must fully meet the needs of women veterans with catastrophic disabilities and consider their unique needs in developing programs and providing services targeted to the broader women veteran population; and when necessary, implement additional training to VA staff to ensure standards of care align with the needs of severely disabled women veterans.



Benefits

Veterans with catastrophic disabilities who have experienced military sexual trauma (MST) must have access to the services and benefits needed to address MST-related issues and have assurance that any issues related to their catastrophic disabilities are considered when evaluating MST claims and the provision of related services.

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Protect the Civil Rights of People with Disabilities



Improve Access to Air Travel

Congress must make systemic changes to improve air travel for people with disabilities, particularly wheelchairs users, by reforming the Air Carrier Access Act to add standards for aircraft accessibility and improve enforcement of the law.



Increase Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance

Congress must support increased compliance with the ADA by improving tax incentives that help businesses remove access barriers and increasing funding for the Department of Justice's (DOJ) ADA mediation program. DOJ must investigate more individual complaints and issue long-overdue regulations governing non-fixed equipment and furniture, including hotel bed height and medical equipment.

Strengthen and Enhance Social Security Benefits



Congress must strengthen and enhance the Social Security system without harming beneficiaries by improving benefits for low- and middle-income beneficiaries; eliminating the five-month waiting period for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI); replacing the abrupt termination of SSDI benefits with a phased reduction as earnings rise; offering caregivers credits under Social Security; and ending pension penalties for public servants.

Increase Employment Prospects for Veterans with Disabilities



Congress must protect and strengthen employment rights for veterans with disabilities through tax incentives for employers; enhanced entrepreneurship opportunities; and improvements to federal hiring and promotions. Congress must also increase oversight of VA's Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) program, ensuring severely disabled veterans are not unjustly denied access to VR&E's critical benefits.



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