



2024

ANNUAL REPORT





ABOUT PVA

More than **300,000** people live with a spinal cord injury in the U.S. – **42,000 of them are Veterans**. Spinal cord injuries and diseases (SCI/D), including MS and ALS, can turn a life upside down – and the resulting challenges can threaten to prevent paralyzed Veterans from participating in many aspects of life. Paralyzed Veterans of America is a partner for these Veterans and all people with disabilities, providing a comprehensive, holistic approach to addressing their unique needs.

Founded and led by Veterans since 1946, PVA provides services to Veterans free of charge representing all ages, all branches, and across all conflicts. To help disabled Veterans lead independent, healthy, and productive lives, PVA focuses on the **whole Veteran** – their physical health, financial security, societal needs, and mental well-being.

These are our accomplishments in Fiscal Year 2024.

“This is probably the first time I’ve ever seen an organization that has a 360 program for you — mental, physical, everything.”

Kerry,
U.S. Army Veteran,
PVA Texas Chapter

“PVA is critical in my ability to thrive.”

John,
U.S. Coast Guard Veteran,
PVA Mountain States Chapter

MESSAGE FROM THE

NATIONAL PRESIDENT & CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD



Robert L. Thomas, Jr.,
National President & Chairman of the Board,
U.S. Army Veteran

As another year comes to a close, I'm honored to have continued leading Paralyzed Veterans of America in advancing our mission and serving our incredible members – Veterans with spinal cord injuries and diseases, like MS and ALS. Since our founding in 1946, PVA has remained dedicated to helping our brave men and women regain their freedom and independence.

While I have been a PVA member for over 30 years, serving as National President has shown me that there is no “one size fits all” approach to helping disabled Veterans lead healthy, productive lives. Each Veteran has unique needs, dreams, and goals that require an intentional, tailored plan. That's why **PVA focuses on the whole Veteran**, from their physical health and financial security to their societal needs and mental well-being.

PVA staff are comprised of dedicated experts in various fields, like medical services, architecture, sports and recreation, government relations, and more. Each department works collectively, providing a comprehensive, holistic approach to caring for our members. PVA's 33 Chapters magnify these efforts by delivering high-touch services to local members across the nation, their families, and caregivers.

The team has worked tirelessly to break down barriers and open doors for Veterans – yet we know there is still more work to be done. PVA's resolve to create a more inclusive, accessible world has never been stronger, and we are actively taking steps to build on the successes we saw this year.

Thank you for joining us on this journey. Together, with the support of community partners, like you, we're working towards a future that honors all Veterans.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Carl Blake,
Chief Executive Officer,
U.S. Army Veteran

I'm proud to reflect on what Paralyzed Veterans of America has achieved over the last year, thanks to our partnerships, generous supporters, and dedicated staff.

Veterans with spinal cord injuries and diseases, like MS and ALS, depend on VA's SCI/D system of care, and PVA ensures it is not only protected but also continues to grow. Our efforts to support the construction of two state-of-the-art VA SCI/D facilities in Dallas and San Diego showcase that dedication.

In Portland, the National Veterans Wheelchair Games returned to in-person Opening and Closing ceremonies—a significant milestone since the pandemic. Additionally, we held our Annual Advocacy Legislation Seminar in June for the first time, as well as our first-ever SCI/D-focused testimony – something PVA fervently advocated for.

We honored Nationals Park with our Barrier-Free America Award for paving the

way for other accessible stadiums in Major League Baseball. Meanwhile, our relationship with the Kennedy Center continued to flourish as PVA consulted on renovations of their Concert Hall.

We maintained strong connections with SCI/D clinicians by hosting our annual Healthcare Summit + Expo, which featured a keynote address by world-renowned surgeon/researcher Dr. Brian Kwon. We continued critical work to protect caregivers and advanced accessibility in air travel, including requirements for accessible in-flight bathrooms in large single-aisle aircraft and the passage of the FAA Reauthorization Act.

This year, we also celebrated inclusivity of women Veterans at our Gala; made history with the election of Tammy Jones as our first female National Senior Vice President; hosted another impactful Women Veterans Empowerment Retreat; and successfully pushed for IVF expansion.

Our collective efforts are transforming lives, and I look forward to what we'll accomplish together over the next year.

PHYSICAL

The most immediate need after a spinal cord injury or disease is access to expert medical care for stabilization, recovery, and rehabilitation. After service to our country, Veterans deserve the highest quality, specialized health care and rehab opportunities so they can improve their physical function and build an independent future.

INVESTING IN
QUALITY SCI/D CARE

WE GET RESULTS

SPORTS & RECREATION



INVESTING IN QUALITY SCI/D CARE

PVA is the only Veteran Service Organization (VSO) given exclusive access inside all 25 Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) SCI/D Medical Centers. Our team of licensed nurses, administrators, physicians, architects, and a Field Advisory Committee made up of PVA members conduct site visits to make sure that every facility is fully accessible and has adequate staffing, funding, behavioral health support, and bed and program availability.

23

PVA site visits conducted of VA SCI/D Medical Centers

269

PVA recommendations for clinical and architectural changes requested

86%

Acceptance rate by VA leadership

*For example, PVA urged the VHA to exempt SCI/D centers from the facility-wide hiring pause to ensure that Veterans with SCI/D had adequate staffing to meet their needs. In a VA memo, Dr. Shereef Elnahal, Under Secretary for Health, concurred with that guidance.



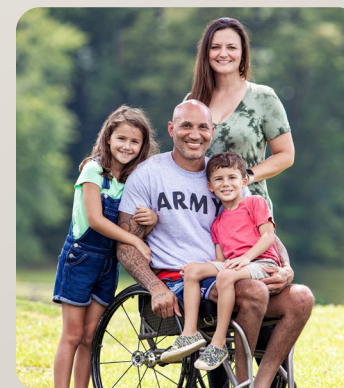
ARCHITECTURAL SUPPORT

The U.S. has a severe shortage of long-term care facilities for our SCI/D Veterans – an average of less than 4 Veterans per state nationally. PVA provides free architectural consultations and support on the construction and renovation of SCI/D units in the VA health care system to help expand the system.

PVA architects consulted on the construction of VA's new SCI/D Center in San Diego, CA, which will open for patient use in April 2025. This facility will be able to **care for 20 vulnerable long-term care Veterans**. PVA has also been an integral part of the planning process for the new state-of-the-art long-term-care center in Dallas, TX, which will open for patient use in March 2027 and **care for 30 of our most vulnerable spinal cord injured Veterans** with a plan to double the capacity in the near future.



Veterans with SCI/D cannot receive equal care in a non-SCI/D unit of a VA hospital or in a community hospital due to the highly specialized training of SCI/D care providers. PVA continues to go before Congress and demand they provide adequate funding and address critical staffing deficiencies at VA medical centers across the country.



"The lives of Veterans with SCI/D depend on having access to VA-provided care through VA's SCI/D system. It's not just acute care post-injury or diagnosis that we depend on, it's also the lifelong care that allows us to remain in our homes, to work and volunteer, and live in our communities with our families."

Robert Thomas,
PVA President

SPORTS & RECREATION

Physical activity is more than just exercise— it is a pathway to recovery, empowerment, and renewed purpose. PVA offers a wide range of adaptive sports and recreation programs to help Veterans regain their strength and independence, as well as build their self-esteem. Veterans have options ranging from basketball, billiards, bocchia, bowling, paracycling, pickleball, trapshooting, wheelchair rugby, bass fishing, and air guns, as well as 11 online programs. By presenting a spectrum of choices, both in-person and online, PVA ensures that all Veterans have access to activities that suit their interests and physical needs.



PVA publishes Sports N Spokes Magazine since 1975, focusing on Wheelchair Sports and Recreation

13,798 Readership 9,260 Circulation

1500+ Participants from all 50 states, plus DC and Puerto Rico 48 Total adaptive sports and recreation programs offered

Co-Presented the 42nd Annual National Veterans Wheelchair Games with the Department of Veterans Affairs – Portland, OR

368 Veteran athletes 90 Novice athletes 47 Female athletes 20+ Adaptive sporting events

Pickleball was introduced as an official medal event.



7th Annual PVA Wheelchair Rugby Invitational

18 Teams 3 Divisions 13 States across the nation

“Adaptive sports have helped me with my confidence. I thought I couldn’t do certain things and found out that I could. That has helped with everyday life.”

Jerry, U.S. Air Force Veteran, PVA Wisconsin Chapter

FINANCIAL

The cost of medical treatments, rehabilitation, and adaptive equipment can be substantial and ongoing for life. This financial strain can be exacerbated by challenges Veterans face as they transition to civilian life, and the impact their injury may have on their employment.

- FIGHTING FOR EARNED BENEFITS
- WE GET RESULTS
- CAREER SUPPORT



FIGHTING FOR EARNED BENEFITS

PVA employs 70 national service officers (NSO) throughout the U.S., who are Veterans themselves and experts in obtaining VA benefits. PVA invests in their annual continuing education so they are always up-to-date on the latest in VA and PVA services. These professionals go above and beyond for the Veterans, dependents, and survivors they serve.

A PVA NSO recently worked with a Veteran with MS for about 8 months, and was able to secure nearly \$60,000 in retroactive benefits for him, plus monthly earned benefits that he was unable to obtain prior to consulting with PVA.



"PVA was influential in completing my paperwork, so I could get the medications, wheelchairs, and equipment I needed."

David,
U.S. Army Veteran,
PVA Florida Gulf Coast Chapter

ANNUAL & RETROACTIVE BENEFITS \$264+ million

Helped Veterans and their families find financial stability through benefits earned through service.

AUTOMOBILE GRANTS & ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT \$54+ million

Helped Veterans adapt their vehicles so they can get to work, the doctor, and important events.

SPECIALLY ADAPTED HOUSING \$34+ million

Helped Veterans stay in their homes and live comfortably, accommodating their disability.

ANNUAL CLOTHING ALLOWANCE \$428,000+

Helped Veterans and their families find financial stability through benefits earned through service.

WE GET RESULTS

Benefits Successes

\$7 million

Recovered for Veterans in FY24 by PVA's General Counsel National Appeals Office and NSO's

\$500,000

To a Veteran who incurred additional disability under VA care

\$128,000

To a Veteran who had been deemed unemployable as a result of a service-connected disability

100%

Favorable decision rating With Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims

87%

Favorable decision rating Board of Veterans' Appeals



Expanding Modified Vehicle Grants

On Nov. 15, 2023, PVA presented the Honorable Mike Bost with the 2023 Gordon H. Mansfield Congressional Leadership Award. As former chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, Bost was instrumental in the passage of several pieces of legislation important to PVA members, like the Veterans Auto and Education Improvement Act of 2022. This bill provides additional automobile allowances to eligible Veterans. He also played a key role in ending the requirement for disabled Veterans to unnecessarily reapply for VA clothing allowances year over year, thereby demonstrating his commitment to ensuring Veterans get the benefits they earned.

CAREER SUPPORT

PVA's Veterans Career Program offers one-on-one career support to PVA members, their families and caregivers, and all Veterans with disabilities. The program assists with everything from resume development and job search support to networking and more. We also guide Veterans to paid employment (both part-time or full-time), educational and training opportunities, and even volunteer opportunities.



"PVA has profoundly impacted my life. Their exceptional counseling and commitment to empowering disabled Veterans is unparalleled. I am confident that their guidance will help me achieve my goals and make a meaningful impact."

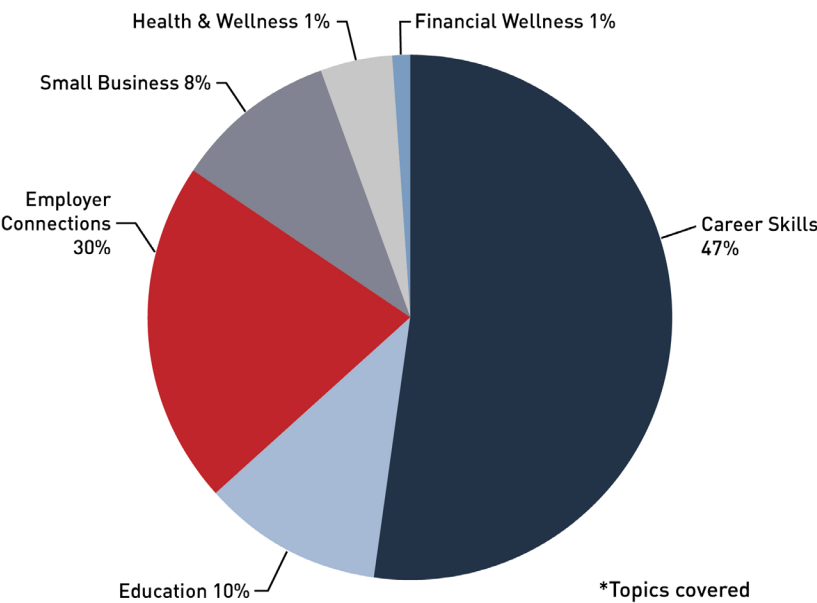
Rose,
U.S. Army Veteran

CAREER SUPPORT (CONTINUED)

To expand access to career resources, our convenient Veterans Career Live (VCL) sessions enable Veterans to attend online seminars on a variety of topics at a time and location convenient to them, as well as browse recordings of previous sessions.

The average salary for our clients placed in full time employment was **\$69,257**, the national average for a Veteran is \$51,900

In FY24, we held 90 Veterans Career Live sessions with 1900+ participants. These sessions enable Veterans to access timely, relevant career information from any device.



According to a report by the National Disability Institute, 74% of people with disabilities do not participate in the labor force for multiple reasons, including discrimination and lack of accommodations.

In 2023, PVA launched a Self-Employment Program to meet this need, offering personalized business counseling and access to start-up capital to start their own business. The 10-week program is exclusively designed for disabled Veterans, their spouses, and adult children, with caregivers to be added in FY 25. To date, PVA has awarded \$10,000 in start-up grants, including one to U.S. Navy Veteran Lonn Cunningham, who created a device to help people fish with only one arm.

"I'm so blown away by how much I've learned in this class. My purpose for [starting this business] is so that I will be able to take care of my loved ones."

Lonn Cunningham,
U.S. Navy Veteran,
PVA Iowa Chapter

SOCIETAL

Maintaining a dignified life with rich experiences is important for a sense of independence and belonging. A Veteran's community should be fully accessible to allow them to participate in all of life's offerings, and they should never feel alone in their circumstances.

- HELPING VETERANS WITH DISABILITIES ACCESS THEIR COMMUNITIES
- IMPROVING AIR TRAVEL FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
- SUPPORTING WOMEN VETERANS
- CELEBRATING INCLUSIVITY
- WOMEN VETERANS EMPOWERMENT RETREAT



HELPING VETERANS WITH DISABILITIES ACCESS THEIR COMMUNITIES

PVA is the only VSO in the country that has on-staff licensed architects. They review plans, provide free consultation, and speak about accessible design at conferences across America. They also recognize exemplary accessible architectural design projects as part of PVA's Barrier-Free America Award.

Our 2024 winner is Major League Baseball's Nationals Ballpark in Washington, D.C. Through collaboration between PVA architects, ballpark's management, and the project design team, Nationals Park now proudly provides a great experience for all baseball fans, boasting approximately 750 wheelchair and companion seats, accessible seating in 79 luxury suites, and clear access from parking, to concessions, to the stands.

PVA's in-house Architecture Team improved accessibility across America through:

60

Consultations with individuals and families

250

Attendees at our accessible home design workshops

35

Consultations on large design and construction projects

"We are honored. Accessibility has been a priority ... this recognition is a testament to our staff's dedication and commitment to creating an inclusive environment for all."

Frank Gambino,
Senior Vice President &
General Manager of Nationals Park

In FY24, PVA staff also consulted with long-time partner, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, on their Concert Hall renovation in Washington, DC. The largest performance space at the Kennedy Center, the goal of the renovation will be accessible seating on all levels, as well as access to the stage and improved accessibility in the "back of house" for theater cast and crew with disabilities.



"The Kennedy Center prioritizes accessibility across the board. It's saying, 'We actually value these human beings enough to want them to be a part of our community. And therefore we're going to remove these barriers so that they have that access.'"

Regan Linton,
Actor/Writer/Director



"I used to complain that I didn't feel like I was a productive member of society anymore, and PVA definitely gives you that back, where you can be an active member in your community."

Tonya,
U.S. Air Force Veteran,
PVA Texas Chapter

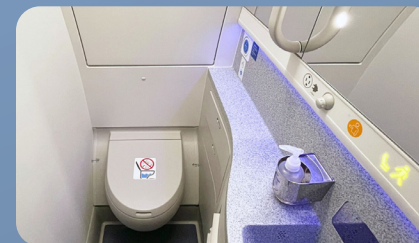


"I had no idea of what the regs were for ADA bathrooms. [PVA] was fantastic about getting back to me and explaining things in detail, providing diagrams, just making it easy to understand."

Alan Butzer,
Owner of Tub Town

CAREER SUPPORT

For more than 35 years, PVA has led the fight for air travel accessibility. In FY24, PVA's efforts paid off with monumental improvements.



Accessible In-Flight Bathrooms Ahead

On July 26, 2023, the Department of Transportation released the long-awaited rule that larger single-aisle aircraft will be required to have a wheelchair accessible lavatory.



Progress Toward Safe Travel

On February 29, 2024 DOT announced a proposed rulemaking on ensuring safe accommodations for wheelchair users in air travel at a White House meeting featuring Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, Senator Tammy Duckworth, & PVA CEO Carl Blake.



Passage of FAA Reauthorization

On May 15, 2024, PVA applauded the move toward greater aircraft and airport accessibility, which includes increasing training requirements for airline personnel and their contractors who assist wheelchair users and others with assistive devices.



"Today is a significant step forward in our efforts to improve the safety and dignity of the air travel experience for the disability community, especially our members – U.S. military veterans with catastrophic injuries or illnesses, such as MS and ALS – who fought for, and earned, the right to fly."

Heather Ansley,
PVA Chief Policy Officer



On July 11, 2023, PVA Chief Policy Officer Heather Ansley was one of five disability civil rights leaders to join Vice President Kamala Harris and Department of Transportation (DOT) Secretary Pete Buttigieg for an event at the White House about recent efforts to improve accessibility across the nation's transportation system.

SUPPORTING WOMEN VETERANS



There are **over 2 million women Veterans today**, and that number is consistently rising. These women often feel isolated, not only from the entire Veteran population, but also from each other. PVA is a lifeline for women Veterans, working to ensure they have quality health care, resources, and social support, so they can thrive.

At our Annual Convention, PVA elected our first female National Senior Vice President, U.S. Air Force Veteran and Texas Chapter member Tammy Jones. Jones previously served as a PVA national vice president for six years. Her election reaffirms PVA's commitment to diversity, inclusivity, and advancing the rights of women Veterans nationwide.

CELEBRATING INCLUSIVITY

PVA's **Igniting Change Gala** celebrated women Veterans and innovators who strive to create an inclusive world in the areas of accessibility, employment, and medical care. The evening featured renowned sports anchor Hannah Storm; award-winning country music artist Martina McBride; former NASA Astronaut Wendy Lawrence; and sports pioneer Bonnie-Jill Laflin, among others. PVA also presented its 2024 Inclusivity Award to Target Corporation, its 2024 Disability Inclusion Award to L'Oreal USA, and honored other notable partners who work to create an inclusive world.



WOMEN VETERANS EMPOWERMENT RETREAT

PVA's Women Veterans Empowerment Retreat is an all-expenses-paid, multi-day event that focuses on the holistic well-being of women Veterans with disabilities. Designed to educate and connect women Veterans, the Retreat includes empowerment sessions, networking circles, morning yoga, meditation, and more – all hosted in an inclusive, supportive environment.

Impact of WVER on attendees
Three months post-Retreat
% of attendees



78%
Felt a significant impact on their life

72%
Were still in contact with another woman they met

68%
Were more involved in their Chapter and/or other PVA programs

5

Years of hosting this life-changing event

3

Days focused on honing leadership skills, resiliency, and advocacy

Nearly 50

Female Veterans in attendance

MENTAL

When a Veteran becomes educated about their SCI/D and learns how to advocate for themselves and others, it builds confidence, and plays a crucial role in fostering mental well-being. Strong family, caregiver, and peer support systems are vital for achieving independence and long-term mental health.

HEALTHCARE SUMMIT + EXPO

PVA IS A VOICE FOR VETERANS

PVA'S FOUNDATION WORK

SUPPORTING CAREGIVERS



HEALTHCARE SUMMIT + EXPO

At one of the most sought-after conferences on SCI/D, PVA advances clinical knowledge by bringing together physicians, nurses, psychologists, social workers, therapists, researchers, pharmacists, dietitians, and educators. These professionals present best practices and evidence-based models, share experiences and challenges with fellow peers, and exchange knowledge that advances care.



824
Total Attendees

663
Clinicians and Attendees from over 100 Acute Care and Rehabilitation Hospitals

90
Speakers

71
Exhibitors

60
Breakout Sessions

"We are making a difference! [Veterans] with SCI/D are just like you and me. They have dreams and goals and things they love to do – just because they're in a chair doesn't change that."

Dr. Dianna Neal,
MD, Staff Physician, SCI/D Outpatient Clinic, Augusta, GA

PVA IS A VOICE FOR VETERANS

PVA is a consistent presence on Capitol Hill, working with policymakers to implement legislation and protect services that improve the lives of Veterans, their families, and caregivers.

PVA hosted **its first-ever Advocacy Legislation Seminar in June**. Roughly 125 leaders from PVA Chapters around the country convened in Washington, D.C. to receive first-class training and hands-on practice in preparation for congressional meetings on the Hill later that week. In addition to those visits, PVA leaders testified in a hearing titled, **"Meeting the Needs of the SCI/D Veteran Community"** - something PVA fervently advocated for.

12
Testimonies on Capitol Hill fighting for VA's SCI/D system of care, women Veterans, and other policy priorities

7
Webinars hosted about the importance of advocacy, finding resources, voting, and more



"PVA does a great job keeping the family unit a family unit. They don't just offer Veterans things without asking family members or friends to come join. They're building families, they're building communities, and they're building connections"

Michael,
U.S. Air Force Veteran,
PVA Member-at-Large



2,850
Messages sent to Congress via PVA VoterVoice

300+
New advocates joined PVAction Force, our national grassroots advocacy network

~12,000
People fighting for Veterans issues, 3.5% increase

PVA'S FOUNDATION WORK

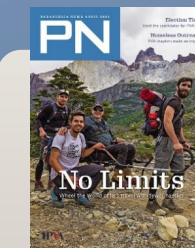
PVA's commitment to understanding SCI/D and improving the lives of those living with SCI/D is best exemplified by PVA's Research Foundation and Education Foundation. While one is devoted to supporting innovative research and the other to developing SCI/D educational materials, both provide grants to professionals to help the field of SCI/D.

\$1+ Million

6 Research Grants awarded this year towards expanding SCI/D research (\$55 Million since 1976)

\$350,000

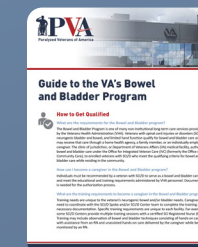
6 Education grants awarded this year towards SCI/D continuing education projects, professional development programs, and conferences (nearly \$11 Million since 1986)



PN Magazine – Now in its 78th year, PN, the official publication of PVA, is a national, monthly magazine that covers news, health, research, lifestyle and issues of interest and concern to Veterans and others with spinal cord injury and disease.

26,910
Readership

17,140
Circulation



Setting the Gold Standard

PVA produces downloadable Clinical Practice Guidelines with help from the Consortium of Spinal Cord Medicine, a 23-member group funded and administered by PVA. Each publication is developed and written by a panel of experts then published and distributed to help address SCI/D.

SUPPORTING CAREGIVERS

PVA recognizes the daily love, commitment, and sacrifice caregivers provide to our Veterans, and is working to ensure they have the resources and support they need.

Honoring the Voices of Caregivers

On Nov. 15, 2023, PVA presented the Honorable Mike Bost with the 2023 Gordon H. Mansfield Congressional Leadership Award. As former chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, Bost was instrumental in the passage of several pieces of legislation important to PVA members, like the Veterans Auto and Education Improvement Act of 2022. This bill provides additional automobile allowances to eligible Veterans. He also played a key role in ending the requirement for disabled Veterans to unnecessarily reapply for VA clothing allowances year over year, thereby demonstrating his commitment to ensuring Veterans get the benefits they earned.



"My journey alongside my husband, a disabled veteran, has fueled my lifelong commitment to supporting [those] who care for America's ill and injured Veterans. Through the Elizabeth Dole Foundation and collaborative efforts with organizations, like PVA, we honor their sacrifices to ensure they receive the recognition and support they deserve."

Senator Elizabeth Dole



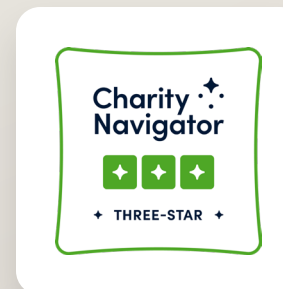
In June 2024, PVA joined a press conference with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation and seven Veterans groups, urging the passage of the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act.



"Caregivers are essential in the lives of paralyzed and disabled Veterans and deserve our utmost respect. They help our heroes get out of bed in the morning and go through their daily tasks. They provide invaluable emotional and physical support."

Charles,
U.S. Marine Corps Veteran,
PVA Florida Chapter

FINANCIALS



THANK YOU

We extend our deepest gratitude to all of our members, staff, volunteers, partners, and supporters. Your collaboration is vital as we build a more inclusive future for paralyzed Veterans, their families, and caregivers.

If you believe that Veterans deserve the benefits they earned through service to our nation; specialized, quality health care; accessible homes, vehicles, and communities; meaningful careers, and more, we invite you to join us as we build opportunities for the **whole Veteran** and give them the comprehensive lifetime support they need to live healthy, independent, and productive lives.

Learn more at PVA.org



