



# *Washington Update*

Check out the [PVAAction Force](#) page to view legislative campaigns and a list of key legislation.

## **CONGRESS PASSES FULL-YEAR CR FOR FY 2025**

On March 14, President Trump signed the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (H.R. 1968). This law funds the federal government through September 30. The continuing resolution (CR) includes an additional \$6 billion for the VA's Toxic Exposure Fund (TEF) to address the shortfall for VA health care for fiscal year (FY) 2025. However, the CR cuts \$800 million from VA facility construction. In addition, the law cuts \$859 million from the Department of Defense budget for the congressionally-directed medical research program, which will affect research related to spinal cord injuries and disorders, such as MS and ALS.

Although the bill includes VA's advance appropriation for FY 2026, the bill did not include \$22.8 billion in funding for the TEF. This sets up a potential shortfall in VA's health care accounts in FY 2026. PVA will continue to closely monitor VA funding to highlight any deficiencies in funding for programs and services focused on paralyzed veterans.

## **PVA NATIONAL PRESIDENT ROBERT THOMAS, JR. TESTIFIES BEFORE CONGRESS**

On March 4, PVA National President Robert Thomas, Jr.

testified before a joint session of the Senate and House Veterans' Affairs Committees regarding PVA's public policy priorities. President Thomas stressed the importance of restoring VA's specialized care services, which are in dire need of adequate funding and staffing, and the vital role that VA-provided care and life-sustaining research play in the lives of PVA members. He also unveiled [PVA's 2025 Policy Priorities](#), which will guide our advocacy efforts throughout the year. The two-panel hearing lasted nearly three hours. You can watch a recording of the hearing [here](#). President Thomas's oral statement begins at the 1:59:00 mark. His full written statement is located [here](#).

While in Washington, D.C., President Thomas and other members of PVA's Executive Committee met with Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Jerry Moran (R-KS) and Ranking Member Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Mike Bost (R-IL) and Ranking Member Mark Takano (D-CA). During their visits, PVA leaders expressed concerns about the status of the VA's spinal cord injuries and disorders system of care and the effects of current efforts to reduce the size of the federal government. PVA leaders also discussed the importance of long-term services and supports for veterans with catastrophic disabilities and the need for Congress to ensure proper implementation of the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act (P.L. 118-210).



On March 6, President Thomas, National Treasurer Tom Wheaton, and National Vice President Anne Robinson attended an event officially unveiling Capitol Hill's first accessible drop off/pick up zone on the House side. PVA's role in the creation of the zone was reiterated during the curb-side briefing that included Committee on House Administration Chairman Bryan Steil (R-WI), Ranking Member Joseph Morelle (D-NY), Subcommittee on Modernization Chairwoman Stephanie Bice (R-OK), Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-MD), and leaders from the office of the Architect of the Capitol. CEO Carl Blake also participated in the event.

### **EO SUBCOMMITTEE HOLDS HEARING ON PENDING LEGISLATION**

The Economic Opportunity (EO) Subcommittee for the House Veterans' Affairs Committee held a pending legislation hearing on March 11. Julie Howell, Associate Legislative Director, testified on behalf of PVA.

The bills discussed encompassed several pieces of legislation related to VA education benefits and the Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) program, as well as H.R. 1364, the Automotive Support Services to Improve Safe Transportation (ASSIST) Act, which was the biggest priority bill for PVA. The legislation was introduced by Rep. Tom Barrett (R-MI) and Rep. Maggie Goodlander (D-NH).

The ASSIST Act provides a technical fix to the Veterans Auto and Education Improvement Act of 2022 (P.L. 117-333), which allowed catastrophically disabled veterans to receive an additional auto grant and codified certain vehicle adaptations. The ASSIST Act will address issues related to VA approving necessary adaptations for veterans as part of the medical benefits package.

You can watch the hearing [here](#). If you would like to express your support for the ASSIST Act, you can sign our PVAction Force alert [here](#).

### **HOUSE COMMITTEE HOLDS HEARING ON WIOA**

On March 5, the House Education and Workforce

Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development held a hearing titled, "Strengthening WIOA (Work Innovation and Opportunity Act): Improving Outcomes for America's Workforce." Last Congress, there was broad bipartisan support for the reauthorization of WIOA, which provides career services to individuals looking to return to the workforce, or who are seeking additional training for new employment. While the reauthorization did not pass, efforts are continuing in this Congress to make improvements to WIOA.

The subcommittee discussed the need for improved data and transparency, how artificial intelligence might impact the labor market and overall workforce, and the need to make improvements around coordination with providers and local education providers.

You can watch the hearing [here](#).

### **SVAC HOLDS LEGISLATIVE HEARING**

On March 11, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC) conducted a committee hearing to consider 15 pending pieces of legislation, including the PVA-supported Caring for Survivors Act (S. 611), Improving Veteran Access to Care Act (S. 601), Ensuring VetSuccess on Campus Act (S. 610), and the Love Lives on Act (S. 410). PVA submitted a statement for the record. Representatives from the VA, The American Legion, the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars testified during the hearing. To watch the hearing, please click [here](#).

### **HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE HOLDS LEGISLATIVE HEARING**

On March 11, the Health Subcommittee of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee held a hearing on pending legislation. PVA submitted a statement for the record. The hearing addressed several pieces of health-related legislation, including the draft bill, the Veterans Supporting Prosthetics Opportunities and Recreational Therapy (SPORT) Act, which would add "adaptive prostheses and terminal devices for sports and other recreational activities" to the statute governing which

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equipment and aids that the VA is allowed to grant veterans.

Also included in the hearing was H.R. 217, the Communities Helping Invest through Property and Improvements Needed or CHIP IN for Veterans Act. The Communities Helping Invest through Property and Improvements Needed for Veterans Act of 2016 (P.L. 114-294), often referred to as the “CHIP IN” Act, authorized the VA to carry out a pilot program under which it may accept up to five donations from nonfederal entities of existing facilities, land, or a facility to be constructed by the donor on real property of the VA. Increasing investment in VA’s infrastructure, particularly facilities that support specialized health care services, is a crucial priority for paralyzed veterans. PVA supports this bill, which would make the CHIP IN pilot program permanent, thus, increasing the availability of health care services to veterans.

You can watch the hearing [here](#).

#### INTRODUCTION OF THE JUSTICE FOR ALS VETERANS ACT

On February 26, Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) reintroduced the Justice for ALS Veterans Act in the Senate and the next day Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Co-Chair of the ALS Caucus, reintroduced the bill in the House of Representatives. Veterans are twice as likely to develop ALS compared to the general population, leading it to be a presumptive condition for all veterans regardless of where they served.

Under current law, survivors of veterans who had a disability rating of 100 percent for at least eight continuous years before death receive an additional monthly stipend from the VA. However, with an average life expectancy of only three to five years after diagnosis, ALS veterans often do not survive long enough to meet this requirement—leaving their families without this crucial benefit.

The Justice for ALS Veterans Act (H.R. 1685/ S. 749) would eliminate this unfair restriction and ensure that all families of veterans who pass away from ALS receive this financial support, regardless of the duration of the

veterans’ illness. To read more about this bill, please click [here](#). If you would like to express your support for the legislation, you can sign our PVAction Force alert [here](#).

#### NEWS OF NOTE

##### Bipartisan Credit for Caring Act Introduced

On March 11, Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) and Sen. Michael Bennet (D-CO) [reintroduced](#) the PVA-supported [Credit for Caring Act](#) (H.R. 2036/S. 925). This bill would provide eligible and working family caregivers with a federal, non-refundable tax credit for up to \$5,000. The bill would also apply to family caregiving expenses greater than \$2,000. Examples of caregiving-related expenses include home modifications, respite care, home care aides, and adult day care. Family caregivers of all ages, regardless of whether they live with their care recipient, could be eligible for the tax credit.

##### Voting Rights Advancement Act Reintroduced

On March 5, Rep. Terri Sewell (D-AL) reintroduced [the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act](#) (H.R. 14). This bill would establish a framework to determine which states and localities have had a recent history of discrimination. Those states and localities would then be required to pre-clear new voting laws with the Department of Justice. PVA supports the passage of this bill.

##### Work Opportunity Tax Credit Act Re-introduced

On February 10, Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-LA) and Sen. Maggie Hassan (D-NH) reintroduced the [Opportunity Tax Credit Act](#). The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a federal tax credit available to employers who hire and employ individuals from groups that have faced significant barriers to employment. Among other things, this bill would update the WOTC, increase the current credit percentage from 40 percent to 60 percent of qualified wages, and add a second level of credit for employees who work 400 or more hours.



## DOL Secretary Confirmed

Former Rep. Lori Chavez-DeRemer has been confirmed by the Senate to be the Secretary for the Department of Labor (DOL). Secretary Chavez-DeRemer will oversee the department which is home to DOL's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS). DOLVETS has a particular mission dedicated to veteran employment.

## ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS, SURVEYS, & COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

### Invitation to Participate in University of Illinois at Chicago Research Study on Air Travel and People with Disabilities

Are you a person with a spinal cord injury who has experience traveling by air? If you are 18 years old or older, you are invited to take part in a University of Illinois at Chicago research study to better understand your air travel experiences, accessibility needs, and barriers to safe and accessible travel. This knowledge will be used to create recommendations for airline and airport personnel training, as well as information resources to facilitate a safe and pleasant travel experience. Your participation would require taking part in a 60-minute interview via phone or a teleconferencing platform (Zoom). You will be compensated \$50 for your time. If you are interested in participating or would like more information, please contact the research assistant for this project at [accesstofly@uic.edu](mailto:accesstofly@uic.edu).

### PVA Needs You – Sign Today!

Over the last couple of years, we have seen VA health care staffing shortages, a lack of investment in infrastructure, and an overall growing trend towards care in the community. In light of our ongoing concerns about changes at the VA, we created an online petition to quantify the need to improve funding and support of the VA's spinal cord injuries and disorders system of care. Over 2,500 individuals have already signed the petition. Click [here](#) to sign your name and show your support. We need veterans, caregivers, and supporters to sign!

Please also take a look at our [2025 PVA Policy Priorities](#) and the issues important to our members. If you are interested in more ways to extend your advocacy efforts, click [here](#) to view our current campaigns on bills we support on our advocacy platform, PVAAction Force. We continue to add more campaigns as additional bills are introduced.

### REMINDER: Survey to Assess Accessibility During the 2024 General Election

PVA National is conducting a survey on accessible voting. The study aims to learn more about the voting experience of people with disabilities in the 2024 general election. The feedback received from this survey will inform our advocacy on how to educate members as they face accessibility barriers in voting. This information will provide valuable insight and guide preparation for future webinars and other resources related to voting accessibility. To take the survey, please click [here](#).

### Veterans' Committee Activities

Please visit the [House](#) and [Senate](#) Veterans' Affairs Committee webpages for information on previous and upcoming hearings and markups.