

# Gateway Gazette

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September/October 2021





Gateway Chapter

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**NEED TO UPDATE  
YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION?**

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**DO YOU WANT TO RECEIVE  
YOUR NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL?**

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Contact us at one of the following:

Gateway Chapter PVA  
1311 Lindbergh Plaza Center  
St. Louis, MO 63132

314.427.0393 or 800.426.4058  
Fax 314.427.4183

[info@gatewaypva.org](mailto:info@gatewaypva.org)

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The material contained herein expresses the opinions of the writer and not necessarily the opinions of the editor or the Gateway Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America. All material in the Gazette may be reprinted unless specifically prohibited. Readers are encouraged to submit their articles to [info@gatewaypva.org](mailto:info@gatewaypva.org) or via US mail at the address shown above.

**VETERANS WITH SPINAL CORD INJURY OR DISEASE, LIVING LIFE TO THE FULLEST**

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John Vasel, Transportation  
Martha Rampani, Transportation

## Kansas City Service Office

4801 Linwood Blvd, Rm. M1-566  
Kansas City, MO 64128  
(816) 922-2882 or (800) 795-3612  
Fax: (816) 922-3369

Brent Follas, Senior National Service Officer  
Lena Oliver, Secretary II

## St. Louis Service Office

9700 Page Blvd. Suite 101, Room 1-114  
St. Louis, MO 63132  
Office: (314)253-4480 or (800)795-3614  
Fax: (314) 253-4170

Vacant, National Service Officer  
Susan White, Accredited Administrator

## Jefferson Barracks VA Medical Center

JB SCI, Room 2S25  
#1 Jefferson Barracks Drive  
St. Louis, MO 63125  
Office: (314) 894-6467 or (866) 328-2670  
Fax: (314) 894-6465  
Rodney Harris, Senior Benefits Advocate

## PVA National Liaison VP

Josue Cordova



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Stanley D. Brown

## National Veterans Wheelchair Games August 7-9, New York City

LaRoy Smith, Larry Porter, and I just returned from the reduced National Veterans Wheelchair Games in New York City. We were all part of the first group, which were mainly quads. I know LaRoy received five gold and two silver medals. I got a few but mainly because I was in the novice category. New York, well, is New York. It is a nice place to visit a few days but you would not want to live there, especially in a wheelchair on limited income. I was last there 45 years ago, upright in the Army and visiting from West Point where I was working "cheating scandal" cases. Most of the Games events were held in the hotel but the motor rally was held on the High Line, which was 1.45 miles of trails/boards on a converted above ground train track in midtown Manhattan. LaRoy and my picture is above at one of the stops on the trail. I also had the time and transportation to visit the 9-11 site and museum (free admission for veterans). It was the second most moving museum, next to the Holocaust museum in DC, I have ever seen. Southwest did a number on my chair returning home. In spite of giving instructions to the cargo people at LaGuardia, they took the back off the wheelchair and put it on its side for the cargo hold.

## Veterans Directed Care Program

This program began in 2009 and allows veterans, both service and nonservice connected, to hire their own attendants for payment by the VA agency administering the program. I have been using the program for several years and it has saved me over \$30,000 a year. The program is not

offered at every VA Medical Center and not offered to all our members. Recently the St. Louis area administering agency was changed from GT Independence out of Chicago to Delta Center, an ILC out of St. Charles. The transition was not smooth and several members have had problems. At our most recent "management" meeting, the problems were promised to be solved at a joint zoom meeting with me, the VA, Delta Center, and Aging Ahead (another civilian intermediary in the process). We should shortly be able to go online and see our used hours spreadsheet to compare with our own records, payment problems should be reduced, and approval can be granted for hours worked over 40 in a given week. Contact me if you have any problems with the "new and improved" services.

## VA COVID Update

The St. Louis VA Medical Center Director reports that we have lost 75 veterans to the disease, there are currently two COVID inpatients at John Cochran and no COVID inpatients at Jefferson Barracks. The SCI seven bed acute care is now open after being used for almost a year for COVID patients. There is no news on the VA doing another booster vaccine for COVID. I have asked that question twice of management, without any

response, but did corner the VA Medical Center Director in New York City and he told me once the FDC approved the booster, he thought the vaccine would be available in the fall. We are still waiting on VA guidance.

## New Bowling Alley is Complete

We lost our bowling alley when the gym was demolished to make room for the expanded Jefferson Barracks Cemetery. Jim Donahue, a retired Air Force Colonel and retired VCS CEO, headed up the committee to fund some new lanes at the newly built recreation center at Jefferson Barracks (adjacent to the SCI unit, accessible over an indoor bridge from Building 52). Funding and plans began back in 2013. Everything in the four-lane bowling alley is new to include guiderails for blind and visually impaired veterans. The total cost was over \$700,000. A picture can be seen below. The recreation building and the alley, along with all of Jefferson Barracks, remains closed to all but appointments for the near future.



# FROM THE DESK OF GATEWAY CHAPTER'S **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Chris Blanchard

## **ACCESSIBLE HOME MODIFICATION GRANT**

The Gateway Chapter's Accessible Home Modification grant is available to all Gateway members at \$10,000 for non-service connected, and \$7,500 for service connected. This grant is available year round, and can be used once every ten years.

A member must first obtain two quotes from reputable contractors for the accessibility work on their home. An application for this grant can be found on the Chapter website ([www.gatewaypva.org](http://www.gatewaypva.org)) under the "Forms" tab. If one of the quotes is from a family member who is a contractor, that contractor must be accredited by the Better Business Bureau and have a recorded performance bond.

The two quotes must be obtained and presented to the Gateway Board of Directors for approval prior to any work being started. The quotes must be for the same scope of accessibility work on your home.

Photos of work before and after must be submitted to the Chapter by either the member or the vendor. Lien waivers must also be submitted to the Chapter.

Funds will be paid directly to the approved contractor after successful completion of the work. Members must sign and return the "Statement of Satisfaction" form to the Chapter before the funds are sent. This can also be found under the "Forms" tab on the Chapter website.

The Accessible Home Modification grant is available only after a member has

exhausted all other available VA funding. Be sure to NOT have the work done prior to the Board approval, members will not be reimbursed after the fact.

## **KANSAS CITY CHIEFS TICKETS GIVEAWAY**

The Gateway Chapter has eight Kansas City Chiefs games available to win by lottery method for Kansas City area Members (two tickets per game). Members can win up to two total games. Members can put their name "in the hat" for more than the allowed amount to win.

Per the KC Chiefs, tickets are solely digital. You MUST have the Kansas City Chiefs app on your phone.

Please email Amber at [amber@gatewaypva.org](mailto:amber@gatewaypva.org) or myself at [chris@gatewaypva.org](mailto:chris@gatewaypva.org) with the games you are interested in by end of business on September 17, 2021. Please also include your phone number and the email that you have registered your Kansas City Chiefs app with. Available games are below:

Sep. 26 vs Chargers  
Oct. 10 vs Bills  
Nov. 1 vs Giants  
Nov. 7 vs Packers  
Nov. 21 vs Cowboys  
Dec. 5 vs Broncos  
Dec. 12 vs Raiders  
Dec. 26 vs Steelers



# Veteran Readiness and Employment and other Education and Employment Opportunities

by Brent Follas, Senior NSO

You may receive Chapter 31 benefits, also known as, Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) (Formerly known as Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment) services to help with job training, employment accommodations, resume development, and job seeking skills coaching. Other services may be provided to assist Veterans and Servicemembers in starting their own businesses or independent living services for those who are severely disabled and unable to work in traditional employment. VA's Education and Career Counseling program is a great opportunity for Veterans and Servicemembers to get personalized counseling and support to help guide their career paths, ensure the most effective use of their VA benefits, and achieve their goals. If you have a service-connected disability that limits your ability to work or prevents you from working, this can help you explore employment options and address training needs. In some cases, your family members may also qualify for certain benefits.

## Eligibility

You may be eligible for VR&E benefits and services if you're a Veteran, and you meet all of the requirements listed below.

All of these must be true. You:

- Didn't receive a dishonorable discharge, and
- Have a service-connected disability rating of at least 10% from VA

Depending on your needs and goals, services may include:

- A complete evaluation to determine your abilities, skills, and interests for employment
- Professional or vocational counseling and rehabilitation planning for employment services

- Employment services such as job training, resume development, and other work-readiness support
- Help finding and keeping a job, including the use of special employer incentives and job accommodations
- On-the-job training (OJT), apprenticeships, and non-paid work experiences
- Post-secondary training at a college, vocational, technical, or business school
- Supportive rehabilitation services including case management, counseling, and medical referrals
- Independent living services if you're unable to work due to the severity of your disabilities

You can apply by mail, in person at a VA Regional Office or with a trained professional, such as, a Paralyzed Veterans of America, National Service Officer. Fill out an Application for Vocational Rehabilitation for Claimants with Service-Connected Disabilities (VA Form 28-1900).

After you apply, a meeting will be scheduled for you with a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) to find out if you have an employment handicap and if you're eligible for VR&E benefits and services. You have an employment handicap if your service-connected disability limits your ability to prepare for, obtain, and maintain suitable employment (a job that doesn't make your disability worse, is stable, and matches your abilities, aptitudes, and interests).

After an entitlement decision is made, you and your counselor will work together to develop a rehabilitation plan. This plan outlines the rehabilitation and other services that VR&E will provide.

If you disagree with a decision on your application for VR&E services and benefits, you can request a decision

continued on page 12

# We proudly support Gateway PVA



If you have a **service-connected disability**, you may qualify for VA funding assistance for wheelchair accessible vehicles or driving modifications. If your current mobility is more than two years old, you may even qualify for a brand new conversion.

## St. Louis North

9389 Natural Bridge Rd.  
St. Louis, MO 63134  
Local: (314) 989-1010  
Toll-Free: 877.501.8267

## St. Louis South

980 S. Highway Drive  
Fenton, MO 63026  
Local: (314) 292-5150  
Toll-Free: 877.501.8267



**We're here to help!**

**Call us today or stop by and take a test drive.**



*Proud Supporters of the*



**Paralyzed Veterans  
of America**



# TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR HEALTH!

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

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- UNINTERRUPTED SLEEP



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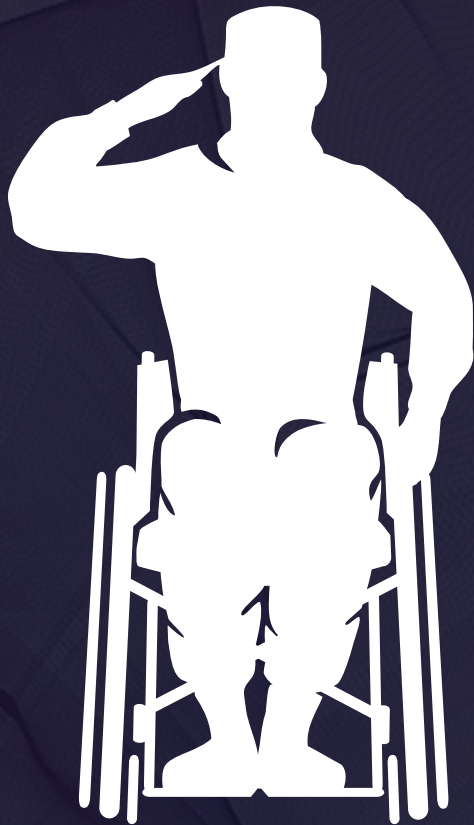


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WEB: [WWW.PRO-BED.COM](http://WWW.PRO-BED.COM)





# GATEWAY G.I.

## WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Jack King  
Robert Morgan  
Russell O'Bannon  
Joseph Williams

## MISSING IN ACTION

Have you seen or know the whereabouts of these members? They are in danger of being dropped from the PVA roster. Please contact the Gateway office with current contact information for the following members:

Ronnie Anderson  
Amos Brown  
Steven Cathey  
Nelson Donovan  
Jarid Hill  
Kevin Jackson  
Davett Jones  
Robert Melchior  
Jerold Reynolds  
Joseph Roberts  
Laurice Sappington  
Willis Walker

## IN MEMORY OF

Randy Rains of Liberal, MO	11/13/2019
Neal Barnes of Kansas City, MO	08/16/2020
Gary Hurd of Warrensburg, MO	01/27/2021
Stephen Snider of Lees Summit, MO	02/06/2021
William Deubler of Sedalia, MO	05/26/2021
Clarence Geiger of Cape Girardeau, MO	05/28/2021
William Chase of Marine, IL	06/06/2021
Michael Rhodes of Beecher City, IL	06/21/2021
Wilfred Benware of Brighton, IL	07/02/2021



# GENERAL INFORMATION



## SEPTEMBER

SEPTEMBER 6  
OFFICE CLOSED

SEPTEMBER 12 at 9am  
3rd Annual GPVA 5k/Run/Walk/Roll  
Tower Grove Park  
20 points for members

SEPTEMBER 14 at 11:30am  
Board of Directors meeting  
Via Zoom - contact office for link  
15 points for nonBOD members

SEPTEMBER 16 at 1:30pm  
Quarterly membership meeting  
Via Zoom - contact office for link  
15 points for members



## OCTOBER

OCTOBER 5 at 10:00am  
25th Annual Jack Buck/GPVA Golf Tournament  
The Landings at Spirit Golf Club  
20 points for members

OCTOBER 11  
OFFICE CLOSED

OCTOBER 12 at 11:30am  
Board of Directors meeting  
Via Zoom - contact office for link  
15 points for nonBOD members

80 South Hwy Drive  
Valley, Park, MO 63088  
866-327-1600



12950 Koch Lane  
Breese, IL 62230  
877-526-4131

BraunAbility Chrysler Pacifica



VMI Toyota Sienna



Authorized  
BraunAbility,  
VMI & ATC  
dealer at both  
locations



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- BraunAbility, VMI, & ATC Mobility Conversions
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- BraunAbility Turny EVO Seating
- Hand Controls & More



**MO and IL Locations to better serve those who served!  
Ask a mobility specialist about VA funding options for  
qualified conversions and equipment**

# Rentals, Leasing, and Financing Available



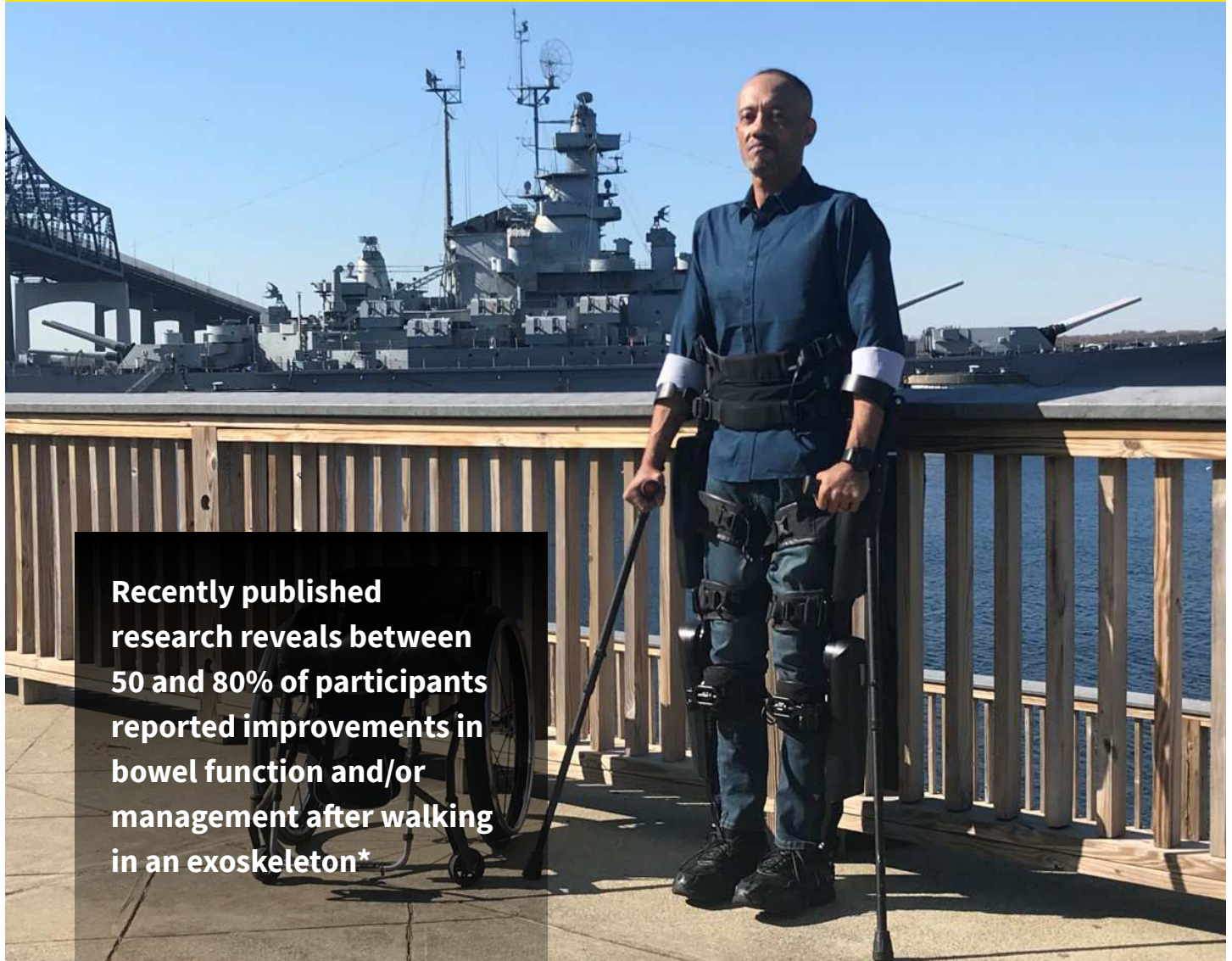
QAP Certified

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





# Want To Improve Your Bowel Function?



**Recently published research reveals between 50 and 80% of participants reported improvements in bowel function and/or management after walking in an exoskeleton\***

**Did you know Paralyzed US Veterans May be Eligible for a ReWalk Personal Exoskeleton?**

**Contact ReWalk for more Information:  
[rewalk.com/contact](https://rewalk.com/contact) or  
**508.251.1154** option 2**

\*Chun A, et al. Changes in bowel function following exoskeletal-assisted walking in persons with spinal cord injury: an observational pilot study. Spinal Cord. 2020;58(4):459-466.



# Veteran Readiness and Employment and other Education and Employment Opportunities

by Brent Follas, Senior National Service Officer

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review. You can also manage any review requests or appeals you already filed.

## VR&E Independent Living track

If your service-connected disability limits your ability to perform activities of daily living (like bathing, dressing, accessing the community, and interacting with others) and you can't return to work right away, you may qualify for independent living services through the Independent Living track. You may also receive these services as you work to find a job if that's a goal you and your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) have created. In both cases, your VRC can help you restore your daily-living activities.

Special Note: If you are entitled to the Specially Adaptive Housing Grant (SAH) or other housing grant you can apply for VR&E and use the Independent Living Grant together, as long as you are eligible.

All of these must be true:

- You have a serious employment handicap (SEH), and
- Your disabilities prevent you from looking for or returning to work, and
- You're in need of services to live as independently as possible

Please note: Having an employment handicap means your service-connected disability limits your ability to prepare for, obtain, and maintain suitable employment (a job that doesn't make your disability worse, is stable, and matches your abilities, aptitudes, and interests).

Depending on your needs, services may include:

- Evaluation and counseling to identify your needs and goals
- Referral to support resources
- Evaluation to see if you're eligible for the VR&E home adaptation grant. This grant is part of your rehabilitation plan to improve accessibility features in your home.
- Guidance to help you understand if you're eligible for our adaptive-housing programs. These programs can help you make changes to your home—like widening doorways or adding ramps—so you can live more independently.

These services generally last up to 24 months. In some cases, you may be able to use services for longer than this.

## Veterans Career Program

Don't forget Paralyzed Veterans of America's Veterans Career Program, formerly known as PAVE, program which provides FREE employment support and vocational counseling assistance to ALL veterans, transitioning service members, spouses, and caregivers.

Leveraging a high-touch approach, our Employment Analysts and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors will work with you on your path toward a meaningful career. Our team also has expertise in helping veterans overcome employment barriers and other obstacles at all stages.

Whether you need help with job search and networking strategies or with obtaining necessary accommodations at work, the Veterans Career Program is always a click or a phone call away. Go to [www.pva.org](http://www.pva.org) or contact your local National Service Officer for more information. We are a partner for life.

## Jacqueline Black, PT, ATP

I'd like to share some updates on our St. Louis SCI/D Center OT/PT staffing. We have shifted one of our wonderful Occupational Therapists, Cassy Cook, to focus primarily on serving our outpatient veterans for OT needs. Cassy works Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, and she also covers the outpatient SCI/D Annual Evaluation clinics on Tuesdays and Thursdays. We hope this allows both our inpatient and outpatient veterans to get more focused services. We look forward to future additions to our exceptional Occupational Therapy team.

Our PT staff has grown over the past two years. We have added two Physical Therapy Assistants (PTA)- Stephanie Albers, PTA, and Lars Lifrak, PTA. Stephanie will focus on managing SCI equipment needs, including wheelchair repairs. She also serves as our primary liaison between the veteran, the therapy team, Prosthetics, and equipment manufacturers. Our goal is to provide improved efficiency in managing equipment needs for our veterans. Lars will focus on supporting the PT inpatient rehabilitation programming. Lars and Stephanie both have

experience with the VA Research study on the ReWalk, and they have also both been active members of the SCI VVC Wellness programming prior to their move to the clinical side. We have also added a wonderful PT, Meredith Whitehead. Meredith may be new to the VA, but she is not new to SCI- she came to us with many years of SCI and neurologic experience. Her focus is covering JC 7B inpatient unit, SCI/D Outpatients at JC, and 2 JC Neurology clinics- namely Multiple Sclerosis Clinic and ALS Clinics.

I have really enjoyed seeing the daily updates from the National Veterans Wheelchair Games in NYC. Many thanks to PVA and VA for your outstanding work in implementing a strong safety plan to support this event. Kudos to Charley Wright for traveling as a coach to support our Gateway Athletes, and to Jody Paniagua for supporting the National Medical Team and Classification. We look forward to hearing all about your exciting week! If you have questions, concerns, or kudos- please contact me at [Jacqueline.black@va.gov](mailto:Jacqueline.black@va.gov) or 314-939-8711.

## Golf Tournament

Tuesday, October 5, 2021, is our 25th Jack Buck/GPVA Golf Tournament fundraiser. This event is our biggest fundraiser of the year and we usually net after expenses \$70,000-\$100,000. The tournament again this year will be held in far West St. Louis County, at the Landings at Spirit Golf Course.

It is most important that we get as many members as possible there to be seen by the golfers who are participating in the tournament and staying for the auction. Please try to arrive by 10 AM, stay for a free lunch, stay a little to mingle, and earn 20 sports points for attending a Gateway Chapter fundraiser.

We still need teams and sponsorships. Additionally we need auction items for both our silent and live auction. Solicit your local merchants or restaurants that you frequent. You can email or call the office if you would like us to send you our solicitation letter and registration form.

The address for the golf course is:

**The Landings at Spirit Golf Club  
180 N Eatherton Road  
Chesterfield, MO 63005**

## **HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE APPROVES VA SPENDING BILL**

On June 30, the House Appropriations Committee approved the VA appropriations bill for FY 2022 and FY 2023 advance appropriations by a vote of 33-24. No significant changes were made to the bill that was approved by a voice vote on June 25 by the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations. The bill provides a total of \$113.1 billion in discretionary appropriations for VA, an increase of \$8.7 billion above the 2021 enacted level, and \$176.4 million above the President's budget request. More information about the bill's VA provisions is available at <https://appropriations.house.gov/news/press-releases/appropriations-committee-releases-fiscal-year-2022-military-construction>

## **HVAC EXAMINES VETERANS BILLS**

On July 14, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee (HVAC), Subcommittee on Health held a hearing to examine pending bills addressing a wide range of veterans-related issues. PVA submitted a statement for the record on 11 bills for the hearing. A couple of bills of note include the VIPER Act of 2021 and legislation addressing VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC). The VIPER Act would exclude VA's research activities from the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act in the same manner that the National Institutes of Health receives for sponsored research. PVA strongly supports the elimination of this obstacle to critical biomedical research. The legislation would also authorize additional resources to help address long-standing infrastructure needs for research labs and facilities, including repairs for life-safety deficiencies to ensure VA researchers can perform their work in safe workspaces.

The PCAFC legislation would prohibit the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) from reviewing VA decisions on program applications. It would also give VA the authority to begin the second phase of the PCAFC expansion sooner. Finally, it would direct VA to provide Congress quarterly reports about denials of PCAFC applications based on the "best medical interest" criteria. PVA expressed concerns with efforts to limit appeals of program denials. We also noted that although we appreciated the effort to move up the start date of the second phase, as written, VA could announce the start date on September 30,

2022, so no actual acceleration would take place.

A recording of the hearing is available at <https://veterans.house.gov/events/hearings/07/07/2021/subcommittee-on-health-legislative-hearing>

## **HVAC EXAMINES VA APPEALS PROCESS**

The Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 (AMA) (P.L. 115-55) created a new decision review process for claims and appeals. Veterans who appeal directly to BVA now have three lanes to choose from: Direct Review, Evidence Submission, or a hearing with a Veterans Law Judge. On July 13, the HVAC, Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs held a hearing to examine VA's efforts to implement the Act and modernize the appeals process. VA has made significant progress in recent years, reducing the legacy claims backlog (pre-February 19, 2019, process) from a high of 472,000 appeals in November 2017 to fewer than 135,000 today. In discussions leading up to the passage of the AMA, VA promised Congress they would resolve these claims by the end of 2022.

During the hearing, VA officials informed the Subcommittee that the department would not be able to resolve them all until sometime in 2023 due to unavoidable delays caused by the pandemic. By the end of 2023, they believe their entire focus will be on newer appeals. However, VA recently announced plans to automatically review claims from veterans who previously filed and were denied benefits for one of three presumptive conditions associated with Agent Orange: bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism. Representatives from the Government Accountability Office and veterans service organizations warned Congress this is likely to generate a lot more work for the Veterans Benefits Administration and BVA. Neither handles workload surges well and without a plan to handle them, the list of hearing backlogs will once again grow over time. Additional subjects discussed during the hearing included the telehearing environment, improved training for VA employees to ensure better comprehension and execution of AMA procedures, and the adequacy of VA information technology to support the claims and appeals process.

You can view the hearing at <https://veterans.house.gov/events/hearings/va-appeals-program-examining-the-state-of-modernization-efforts>

# Getting Paralyzed Veterans Walking Again with Indego®



New VA Program offers eligible veterans an Indego® Exoskeleton at no cost.

## What is Indego?

A robotic device that enables veterans to walk again.

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Indego can currently be used with spinal cord injury levels of T3 to L5 in community or home settings.

## Free Indego Webinars

During the first Thursday of every month you can join a free live webinar to learn more about the Indego and hear from a veteran who owns a device already.



Contact us today to reserve your spot or find out if you are eligible to receive an Indego exoskeleton at no cost.

Email: [support.indego@parker.com](mailto:support.indego@parker.com)

Phone: 844-846-3346



Watch Marine Veteran Steve Holbert's story at [www.indego.com/veterans](http://www.indego.com/veterans)





1311 Lindbergh Plaza Center  
Saint Louis, MO 63132

Gateway Chapter

Current Resident or



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**Paralyzed Veterans  
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