



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

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Want to Follow the Status of Priority Issues Between Updates?
Visit [PVA's VoterVoice Portal](#) to view our latest alerts and a list of key legislation and its status.

UPDATE ON VA COMPREHENSIVE FAMILY CAREGIVER EXPANSION

The rollout of the expansion of VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) began on October 1, 2020. As of April 2021, VA reports having received over 70,000 applications. VA has acted on over 40,000 of those applications and 30,000 were pending further action. Of those reviewed, VA has approved 5,000 applicants and denied 38,000.

VA has provided several reasons for the denials. Some of the reasons given for denials at the time of intake are listed below:

- 7,500 applications or 19 percent were denied because they did not have a singular or combined VA disability rating of 70 percent or greater.
- 5,800 applications or 15 percent were denied because their serious injury was not within the current eligibility dates (on or before May 7, 1975, and on or after September 11, 2001).
- 400 applications or one percent were denied because the individual does not receive care at home or will not do so if VA designates a Family Caregiver.

VA provided some of the following reasons for denying applications based on assessment of the veteran by VA's Centralized Eligibility and Appeals Team (CEAT):

- 12,100 applications or 31 percent were denied because the veteran did not require personal services for six months due to activities of daily living or supervision, protection or instruction needs.

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- 2,900 applications or seven percent were denied because participation in the PCAFC was deemed not in the veteran's best interest.
 - 1,800 applications or four percent were denied because the veteran did not require personal care services that would be provided by the Family Caregiver or such services would be simultaneously and regularly provided by or through others.
 - 60 applications or one percent were denied because the caregiver was assessed to be not capable nor willing to provide the personal care services.

We will continue to closely follow the implementation of the expansion of VA's PCAFC. If you have specific questions about your application, please contact your National Service Officer for assistance.

PVA GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND THE ANITA BLOOM WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH COMMITTEE HOST ADVOCACY WEBINAR

On April 27, PVA's Government Relations Department and the Anita Bloom Women Veterans Health Committee co-hosted a webinar entitled, "The Power of Veteran Voices: Influencing Change at the Local, State, and National Level." The purpose of the webinar was to inform PVA women members about becoming involved in advocacy and to educate all PVA members about the unique issues faced by women veterans. To start the webinar, Associate Legislative Director Maureen Elias gave an update on PVA's women veterans legislative priorities and discussed new legislation that would expand access to Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART), including IVF. Following her presentation, Maureen led a panel of PVA members Kerry Reyna, Teresa Gaspar, and PVA National Vice President Tammy Jones where they shared their experiences of advocating at the local, state, and national level. Anita Bloom Committee co-chair Anne Robinson ended the webinar with an update on activities of the Committee. You may view the webinar after registering [here](#). To advocate for expanded access to ART, please click [here](#).

NEWS ITEMS OF NOTE

- Reeve Foundation Summit 2021

The Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation held its second annual Summit in late April. A virtual conference, the event featured keynotes and conversations with numerous leaders and advocates within the disability movement; sessions on the latest in spinal cord injury (SCI) research; and workshops focused on travel, education and employment, caregiving, the intersection of race and disability, and other topics important to people living with SCI. In an opening plenary, long-time advocate Judy Heumann spoke of the need for reinvigorating knowledge of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 saying that people with disabilities "may be aware of these laws today but they don't really understand their rights under the law." Broadway star and actress Ali Stroker was interviewed by Will Reeve, son of the Foundation's

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founders, and shared her experiences growing up with an SCI that she acquired in a car accident at age two. In a session on the new world of remote work, Michael Sanders with the National Telecommuting Institute (NTI) spoke with two nonprofit representatives about their organizations' partnerships with NTI's remote employment program, NTI@Home. A workshop on travel for people with disabilities featured a discussion of accessibility in cruising with Ron Pettit from Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines and tips for finding accessible hotel rooms from Katie Murphy and Cecilia Rider, recreation therapists with the Shepherd Center. Panelists in a forum entitled, "Black Lives Living with Paralysis," related the double burden that many people of color with disabilities bear in dealing with denial of services or employment or in encounters with law enforcement. Information about the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation can be found [here](#).

- Senate Finance Committee Examines SSA Service Delivery During Pandemic

On April 29, the Senate Finance Committee conducted a hearing looking into the ways in which COVID-19 hindered the Social Security Administration (SSA) in delivering services to claimants and beneficiaries. Witnesses included Grace Kim, Deputy Commissioner, Operations for SSA; Peggy Murphy with the National Council of Social Security Management Associations; Kascadare Causeya, Program Manager for Central City Concern in Portland, OR; and Tara Dawson McGuinness with New Practice Lab, New America. The recording of the hearing can be found [here](#).

- RAISE Family Caregiving Advisory Council Virtual Full Council Meeting

The Administration for Community Living held the eighth Full Council Meeting of the RAISE Family Caregiving Advisory Council on April 28, 2021. The agenda and recording of the meeting can be found [here](#).

HEARINGS/SURVEYS/WEBINARS

- Survey: Accessible COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution

The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies is conducting a survey to find where people with disabilities continue to face barriers in accessing the COVID-19 vaccine. The survey should take only about 10 minutes and will assist the Partnership in identifying strategies for equitable access to the COVID-19 vaccine for people with disabilities. If an alternative format is needed, please contact Priya Penner at p.penner@disasterstrategies.org. To access the survey, please click [here](#).

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- House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Hearings and Markups
 - On May 4, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee held a legislative markup. The markup is available for viewing [here](#).
 - On May 5, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee held a hearing on several pending bills. A number of the bills addressed toxic exposures. PVA submitted a statement for the record. You can watch the hearing [here](#).
 - On May 6, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held a hearing entitled, "Transforming the VA Workforce: Assessing Progress on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiatives." The hearing is available for viewing [here](#).
 - On May 12, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity held a hearing entitled, "Military Transition During the COVID-19 Pandemic". This hearing is available for viewing [here](#).
 - On May 12, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee held a hearing entitled, "Supporting Disabled Veterans: The State of Claims Processing During and After COVID-19." PVA submitted a statement for the record. This hearing is available for viewing [here](#).

- Upcoming Disability Webinars

The Mid-Atlantic ADA Center and TransCen will present a webinar entitled, "Fair Housing Act: Frequently Asked Questions," on Tuesday, May 18 from 2:00-3:30 PM ET. The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Fair Housing Act are both federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination against people with disabilities, and are frequently confused with each other. This presentation will help to clarify the difference between the two laws, and address ten frequently asked questions about accessibility and the fair housing rights of people with disabilities in private housing. Topics to be covered will include requesting a reasonable accommodation or modification, assistance animals, accessibility requirements under the Fair Housing Act. There is no charge to access the event and it will be recorded for later viewing. To register, click [here](#).

TransCen is also hosting a webinar series entitled, "Customized Employment 101." This webinar series is designed to advance the belief that competitive integrated employment for people with significant disabilities is achievable. Work is a central part of adult life, often consuming as much as half of one's waking hours. Having a job contributes to meaningful, productive lives, especially for people with disabilities. Customized employment is a strategy that provides job seekers with disabilities options for employment beyond "off the shelf" jobs. This approach to employment offers individuals previously thought to be unemployable, opportunities to obtain integrated employment. In this series, participants will learn strategies to effectively discover a job seeker's skills and talents and how to engage employers to develop employment opportunities. To

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register for the series, which costs \$45 per session, please click [here](#). The series dates and titles are below:

- Series Schedule
 - Webinar 1: Discovery and Assessment—May 18 from 2:00 - 3:30 PM ET
 - Webinar 2: Job Development and Employer Engagement—May 25 from 2:00-3:30 PM ET
 - Webinar 3: Job Coaching and Workplace Supports—June 1 from 2:00 - 3:30 PM ET