WHO WE ARE

Paralyzed Veterans of America is the only nonprofit Veteran Service Organization dedicated solely to helping Veterans with spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI/D), and diseases, like MS and ALS. Our work impacts every aspect of a Veteran's life journey. From Day One of their injury or diagnosis.

PVA's mission is to help every Veteran – regardless of age, branch, or conflict – regain what they fought for: their freedom and independence. Here are our accomplishments in fiscal year 2023.

MESSAGE FROM THE
Robert L. Thomas, Jr.
National President and
Chairman of the Board

It is an honor to be Paralyzed Veterans of America's new National President. As a U.S. Army Veteran and long-time PVA member, I know its impact firsthand. PVA was there for me from day one following my diving accident more than 30 years ago and has remained by my side ever since.

For more than 75 years PVA has served Veterans with spinal cord injuries, like myself, as well as Veterans with spinal cord diseases, like MS and ALS, and all people with disabilities - comforting them on their worst day, helping them heal, empowering them in their communities, and advocating on their behalf throughout their lives.

Growing up on Cleveland’s East side and living with paralysis has taught me a lot about integrity, resiliency, and empathy. These values drive my dedication to PVA and shape my vision for our future.

America’s Veterans are the backbone of this nation - having sacrificed their lives and time away from their loved ones. They put their bodies on the line to serve and protect us, and they deserve to live with opportunities, independence, and dignity now that they are home.

Every day, I am inspired by PVA’s 33 chapters and 230+ employees across the U.S. who work hard every day toward that mission – but we cannot succeed without the help of our community partners and supporters.

I look forward to working with you as PVA fights to help even more Veterans live productive, independent lives free from barriers.

MESSAGE FROM THE
Carl Blake
CEO

This year, PVA accomplished so much to support paralyzed Veterans and people with disabilities. These achievements were made possible by our partnerships with the Department of Veterans Affairs and other federal agencies, generous partners and supporters, and dedicated staff.

We expanded our membership, attracting nearly 650 new Veterans with MS and ALS. We made major strides on Capitol Hill. In April, President Biden signed an Executive Order prioritizing caregivers, which, thanks to PVA, includes home-based care for Veterans. Another win was our impact on air travel, with the Department of Transportation’s “Airlines Passengers with Disabilities Bill of Rights,” which PVA helped develop, as well as a feature on this effort in The New York Times.

We also returned to hosting our signature in-person events and debuted new programming. We presented The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC, with our prestigious Barrier-Free America Award for its commitment to and work on accessible design, hosted 900+ medical professionals and partners at our Healthcare Summit + Expo, and hosted nearly 50 women Veterans with disabilities at our Empowerment Retreat designed exclusively for them. We also launched a Health & Wellness program and self-employment workshop – collectively reaching hundreds of Veterans across the country.

These achievements are just the beginning. We continue to build on that momentum and important work with our supporters to ensure the unique needs of Veterans remain at the forefront.

Lastly, I extend a warm welcome to Robert Thomas as PVA’s new National President and look forward to another productive year with him at the helm.
AT BEDSIDE

Meeting at Bedside

PVA employs 69 National Service Officers, who work inside VA SCI/D Medical Centers and VA Regional Offices throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. From Day One of a Veteran’s injury or diagnosis, they meet them at bedside, and help them secure their earned benefits, including grants that help them modify their homes and cars. PVA provides nonstop training for NSOs, directors, administrative staff, and others through our Continuing Education Program, so these advocates stay up-to-date on VA statutes and regulations, and SCI-related issues.

23K+
New claims filed

$230.5M+
New annual and retroactive payments to Veterans and their families secured

$39M+
In auto & automobile adaptive equipment grants facilitated

$29.9M+
In specially adapted housing grants facilitated
**KEY IMPACT**

We are the go-to nonprofit of choice for Veterans with spinal cord diseases. We represent 75% of Veterans with ALS and about 8,000 surviving spouses of Veterans with ALS. Additionally, one in four PVA members suffers from MS. Since we expanded our membership to include all Veterans with MS, we gained 400 new members and created an MS Committee, which acts as a voice on legislative issues and serves as an expert resource for all Veterans living with the disease.

\[\text{“From Day One, PVA helped me with my earned benefits and the support that makes my life more independent and accessible.”}\]

Marco, U.S. Army Veteran

**Securing Specialized Care**

We are the only VSO given unprecedented, exclusive access inside all of VA's 25 SCI/D Medical Centers, where our licensed nurses, administrators, physicians, architects, and Field Advisory Committee made up of PVA members conduct annual site visits. Through collaboration with all clinicians involved in care including VA medical center leadership, physicians, nurses, and therapists, we address areas of concern, share best practices, and provide recommendations for improvement. This access is critical to ensuring all Veterans - regardless of gender - receive the best health care possible at facilities that are wholly accessible.
Site visits conducted (5 virtual, 15 in-person)

Significant VA SCI/D design, construction, and renovation projects

New major VA SCI/D facilities (consulted on design and construction): San Diego, Dallas, Tampa, and St. Louis

**KEY IMPACT**

In FY 2023, 86% of PVA's 297 written recommendations for improvements at VA hospitals were received favorably. We advocated for Wi-Fi at all 25 VA SCI/D Medical Centers to ensure catastrophically Injured Veterans, who often spend many months in VA hospitals, have access to the internet to pay their bills, keep in touch with loved ones, and enjoy entertainment. As a result of our efforts, the VA has now instituted a new nationwide protocol to ensure this connectivity across all their SCI/D touchpoints.

During a PVA site visit in 2019, we toured the Women's Health Clinic at the Richmond VA and found it was too small for wheelchair users to fully navigate and lacked required overhead ceiling lifts in the exam rooms. We issued a report to help designers improve accessibility for the growing number of female Veterans, which resulted in a new women's clinic that recently opened.

"PVA came out for design meetings, and provided input and collaborated with the architects on the design of the building and other things, such as parking spaces. It's important to collaborate, and I feel like PVA has been a good advocate for us."

Cynthia Abair, Associate Director of the VA San Diego Health Care System

**DURING RECOVERY**

*Promoting Healing Through Activity*

We offer a variety of free adaptive sporting and recreation opportunities. We also continue to introduce new programs – both in-person and virtually – that help thousands of Veterans across the country improve their physical and mental health. These offerings enable Veterans with mobility issues to grow physically stronger and more confident, and provide them with opportunities to travel and build relationships. Our new year-round Health & Wellness Program exclusively for Veterans, their families and caregivers, is comprised of virtual courses focused on movement and mindfulness.
2.3K+
Total participants

399
Sports and recreation opportunities offered

150+
Hosted Annual Wheelchair Rugby Invitational Tournament: 152 athletes; 15 teams; 48 games

300+
Co-presented the Annual National Veterans Wheelchair Games alongside the VA: 300+ Athletes; 20+ Sporting Events

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**KEY IMPACT**

We worked with the Professional Disc Golf Association to adopt rules and regulations to make the sport of disc golf more inclusive around the world. We also introduced 4 women-only online programs (yoga, mobility, strength training, and fitness coaching).

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"Getting involved with adaptive sports and PVA changed my life."

Karla, U.S. Air Force Veteran
Empowering with Education

We use our expertise to provide continual training to healthcare professionals through specialized medical publications and an annual Healthcare Summit. We also educate Veterans, people with disabilities, and the general public on everything from important legislative actions, public awareness campaigns, and accessibility issues.

$94K+
In four education grants awarded

665
Hosted Annual Healthcare Summit + Expo: 665 attendees; 309 Clinicians; 200 lodging scholarships to clinicians awarded

200
Nearly 200 members subscribed to our female-only PVA Women Empowered Facebook Group

60K+
In circulation of two monthly magazines in both print and digital formats, including: PN Magazine (for better wheelchair living) and Sports & Spokes (for wheelchair sports and recreation)

Launched our #JustPlaneWrong digital campaign inviting social media influencers to join PVA in raising awareness about the dangers and challenges of inaccessible air travel.

KEY IMPACT
We hosted our fourth annual Women Veterans Empowerment Retreat for nearly 50 women Veterans and 11 caregivers. Attendees gathered for educational sessions and interactive programs to support and advocate for their own physical, financial, and emotional health.

“I like that PVA has made a network for women to come together because we are an underserved population.”
Candice, U.S. Army Veteran

IN THE COMMUNITY

Creating Accessible Homes and Communities

We believe in access for everyone, everywhere – so we fight for accessible communities and transportation options that guarantee when Veterans return home, they can live comfortably in their communities. This means giving them the tools they need to have accessible homes, drive their own vehicles, and live a well-rounded life – just like everyone else.

50
Pro bono architectural consultations completed about modifications to homes, workplaces, retail spaces, and public buildings

400+
Attendees at our 8 seminars on accessible home design

11.5
Years is the average life of a modified vehicle, which costs tens of thousands of dollars to replace. We led the charge in the development and passage of the Veterans Auto and Education Improvement Act, which helps Veterans maintain safe and accessible vehicles

DOT Secretary Pete Buttigieg cited one of PVA National President Charles Brown's flight experiences as an example of why they will work to allow wheelchair users to remain in their chairs during air travel. We were also heavily involved in the development of the U.S. Department of Transportation's "Airline Passengers with Disabilities Bill of Rights."
KEY IMPACT

We presented the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts with the 2022 PVA Barrier-Free America Award — one of PVA’s most prestigious honors — for its holistic approach to accessible design. In collaboration with PVA, virtually every touchpoint throughout the 17-acre, 1.5 million square foot national landmark is fully accessible to staff, performers, and patrons.

“We believe that all persons have the right to experience and engage with the arts... it is an immense honor to receive this award and we continue to value our longstanding relationship with PVA.”

Deborah F. Rutter, President of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

MEDIA COVERAGE THAT LEADS

The New York Times

THE NEW YORK TIMES

What Flying Is Like for Passengers Who Use Wheelchairs
Published Aug. 8, 2022

The Hill

THE HILL

Support home and community-based services before more veterans, caregivers are left feeling abandoned
Fighting for Disability Civil Rights

We meet regularly with federal government leadership, members of Congress and cabinet secretaries, and testify on Capitol Hill on topics like accessible transportation, adaptive vehicles, housing modifications, and disability employment incentives. We also send out legislative alerts and petitions in our effort to make sure paralyzed Veterans and all Americans with disabilities can live an independent life free of barriers.
12
Congressional testimonies before the House and Senate

5K+
Individuals participated in our national grassroots advocacy network, PVAction Force, and took 7K+ actions in support of our legislative efforts

135
Hosted 2023 Advocacy Legislation Seminar: 135 attendees – 70+ representatives from 32 PVA chapters – secured over 325 meetings on Capitol Hill

6
PVA legislative policy priorities released that inform and focus our advocacy efforts throughout the current Congressional session

Presented then-Congressman Jim Langevin (D-RI) with the Gordon H. Mansfield Congressional Leadership Award in honor of his leadership and support of people with disabilities.

KEY IMPACT
According to the Journal of Military, Veterans and Family Health, women veterans and women in uniform are more at risk for breast cancer than their civilian counterparts, with incidence rates falling between 20-40%, compared to 12% in civilian women. We were instrumental in the passage of the Making Advances in Mammography and Medical Options for Veterans Act, which ensures accessible mammography services within the VA and community care, as well as best practices for screening.

“For generations, PVA has been a leading voice for paralyzed Veterans and as chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, I am grateful to have you [PVA] as partners in the fight to ensure all Veterans have access to the care and benefits that they have earned.”

Senator Jon Tester (D-Mont.)

Establishing Meaningful Careers

We provide free employment support and vocational counseling to all Veterans, transitioning service members, spouses and caregivers. We guide them toward meaningful careers and stay with them through job, education, and lifestyle changes, with an expertise in placing those with disabilities. We also provide the guidance and tools they need to build successful businesses.
223
Clients placed: 173 paid employment; 40 education/training; 10 volunteer

$70K
Nearly $70K is average salary of a Veteran placed by PVA, which is 35% above the Veteran national average

82
Veterans Career Live sessions online completed

KEY IMPACT

Our Disabled Veterans Self-Employment Pilot Program gave Veterans with disabilities training, counseling, and access to capital for their business ideas over a series of eight sessions. We had 72 applicants for 15 spots, and awarded two Veterans $2,500 each to start their small business.

“It’s been a great experience working with the PVA Veterans Career Program. I’ve learned valuable job related skills, regained a lot of confidence, and after many years have reentered the workforce.”

Brian, U.S. Navy Veteran
AND BEYOND

*Increasing Quality of Life*

We fund research grants and fellowships for researchers seeking a cure for paralysis and improvements in quality of life. We also fund research projects and support breakthroughs that prolong the life of those with SCI/D, MS, and ALS.
Grant awarded to Neuroscience and Regeneration Research Center at Yale University, for continuing to conduct cutting-edge research into spinal cord injury, MS and neuropathic pain

**$100K**
Grant awarded to Human Engineering Research Laboratory at University of Pittsburgh, for continuing to develop new assistive technology devices for mobility

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**KEY IMPACT**

As a result of Dr. Piera Pasinelli's research, that began through a PVA fellowship, the FDA approved a medication called Qalsody aimed at slowing the progression of ALS. This drug is a major scientific advancement as it is the fourth approved therapy to target a genetic cause of ALS.

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"Out of all the organizations I belong to, PVA did the most for me to help improve my quality of life."

Mike, U.S. Marine Corps Veteran

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**Representing Before the High Courts**

We employ a team of six licensed lawyers and legal professionals who provide free counsel and legal representation to PVA members and their family members, and other Veterans with disabilities before the VA and the federal courts. We also represent all Veterans and non-veterans with disabilities in broad impact appeals before the federal courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court. These cases involve entitlement to VA veterans benefits and healthcare, accessibility, and enforcement of the civil rights of those with disabilities.
Veteran and family member clients represented through legal briefs, written presentations, personal hearings, and oral arguments before the VA and the federal courts

Veterans represented in federal court appeals of denied VA benefits, with a 95% favorable decision rating

VA decisions on appeal received, with a 72.9% favorable decision rating

Private attorneys who have volunteered to represent Veterans without charge before the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veteran Claims mentored (as part of the Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program)

KEY IMPACT

PVA appealed the VA's continued failure to decide a Veteran's claim for benefits for approximately 25 years, despite repeated claims. PVA appealed the VA's inaction to the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, which denied the appeal, finding that it did not have jurisdiction to decide the case for lack of a final VA denial of the claim. PVA then appealed that denial to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, which reversed the Veterans Courts denial and held that the VA cannot simply ignore a veteran's claim and that the Veterans Court has jurisdiction to force the VA to decide the claim. This case demonstrates PVA's effectiveness at securing court decisions that benefit not only the Veteran on appeal, but also Veterans in similar situations and opens the door to ensure that all Veterans do not encounter continued VA inaction.
"It took 9 years, 5 months, and 25 days to win. I'm just so grateful for everything PVA did for me because if they hadn't taken me on and believed in me, I would have never won this case. I tell everybody who is having issues with VA benefits to go to PVA."

Judith, surviving spouse and PVA client

Supporting Veterans, Families & Caregivers

Our commitment to Veterans extends to their families and caregivers, because a full system of support is crucial to care. We offer educational scholarships to children of our members, emergency relief funds after natural disasters, and help secure additional benefits and continued support for dependents after death.
Six full-time student scholarships awarded

$97K+
In disaster relief fund payments distributed

Our "A Day in the Life" video spotlights the importance of caregivers and the Elizabeth Dole Home and Community Based Services for Veterans and Caregivers Act (H.R. 542/S. 141)

KEY IMPACT
On April 18, 2023, we sat front and center as President Biden signed an Executive Order expanding access to affordable, high-quality care and providing support for care workers and family caregivers

"PVA is like the Marines of VSO's - first ones in, last ones out."
Troy, U.S. Marine Corps Veteran

FINANCIALS
PVA membership is free, and we do not charge Veterans for our services. Our work relies on the generosity of individuals, organizations, and corporations to support our programs.

FY23 Financial Summary
Thank You

We extend our deepest gratitude to all of our members, staff, volunteers, partners, and supporters for helping us with our very important mission: making sure our nation's paralyzed Veterans, their families and caregivers receive the benefits they earned, the specialized, quality medical care they require, the rehabilitation and educational tools they need; the accessible transportation and communities they want; the jobs they yearn for; and the support they deserve – From Day One.