

WHEELS IN MOTION

November 2022



**Paralyzed Veterans of America
Central Florida Chapter
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November Board Meeting is a **Zoom/Hybrid** - November 10th 10:30 AM

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Mission Statement

Paralyzed Veterans of America Central Florida, is a congressionally chartered veteran's service organization that provides a platform of advocacy, education and research, communication, adaptive sports and recreation for veterans paralyzed as a result of spinal cord injury or dysfunction, in an effort to afford them with the highest quality of healthcare and life experiences.

Paralyzed Veterans Disaster Relief Grant

Earnest Hill, Sr. National Service Officer

As the month of September 2022 came to a close, the state of Florida suffered a major Hurricane known as Hurricane Ian. Hurricane Ian affected the lives of families from Southwestern, Central and Northeastern Florida. There has been major damage to property, infrastructure, and loss of life. Due to this occurrence, I wanted to inform PVA members of the Veterans Disaster Relief Grant that is offered to give some financial assistance to those who qualify.

The Veterans Disaster Relief Grant is to be utilized when a veteran suffers demonstrable losses after a natural disaster. Veterans can file for financial assistance for the grant fund. The grant fund is up to a maximum of \$1,500 and is available to any veteran, or the veteran's family. The fund was established to give veterans and their families a jumpstart towards the road to recovery whether that means replacing loss of clothing; purchasing food; or repairing a damaged roof; or other needs that you may have.

In order to qualify for the distribution of the relief funds, you must comply and meet the following accountability procedures:

1. Funds will only be provided to PVA members.
2. A maximum of \$1,500 per individual or family will be granted. Each application must be evaluated for need. A maximum disbursement will not be made in all cases.
3. Funds can only be used for the following:
 - a. Transportation.
 - b. Temporary Shelter.
 - c. Food.
 - d. Modifications for accessibility.
 - e. Prosthetics appliances.
 - f. Medical supplies.

The funds will not be provided if other assistance has been provided to pay for the items in the request (i.e., insurance, FEMA, etc.). Funds will not be approved to cleanup, fix, or replace damages that are not related to your primary dwelling.

All applications will be received by the PVA Chapter or National Service Office. Once an application is received, it will be reviewed by the Chapter President or designated person and the National Service Officer (NSO). All applications require the approval of the Chapter President or designated person, and the NSO.

Once the application is approved, it will be faxed to the Associated Executive Director of the Veterans Benefits Department for final approval. Accompanying your application, you will also need to include all estimates and receipts. Disbursement exceeding \$1,000 must have verification that the assistance required is valid. (i.e., inspection by PVA, etc.).

In some cases where the Chapter and the NSO disagree on approval, the application will be faxed to the Associate Executive Director of the Benefits Department for their final decision.

If you would like to discuss the application process, or receive the application, please contact your local Chapter or any PVA Service Office for further assistance.



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Chapter President

Steve Kirk

We Floridians are mostly transplants, myself included. However, once we are here, the state seems to transform us into a hardier stock. An example of what I'm talking about would be Wilma Rudolph who was born in Brentwood TN, then transplanted to Florida.

No one would have guessed that Wilma Rudolph would be known as the fastest runner in the world by age 20

— most doctors believed she'd never even walk as an adult. After contracting scarlet fever, pneumonia, and polio when she was young, Rudolph lost much of her mobility, then slowly recovered with the help of leg braces she wore for several years. By the time she was nine years old, the determined future athlete had regained her ability to walk and began playing basketball; in high school, she was scouted by coaches for her speed on the court. One of those coaches invited Rudolph to train at Tennessee State University, where she refined her high-speed sprinting skills. She and her track teammates made two trips to the

Olympics — first in 1956, when she was still in high school, and again in 1960. It was at the 1960 Games in Rome that Rudolph claimed three gold medals in track-and-field: one each in the 100-meter and 200-meter races, and another in the 4x100-meter relay. She became the first U.S. woman to do so at a single Olympics, simultaneously breaking three world records for speed. Rudolph retired from sports two years later but took up coaching and became a goodwill ambassador to French West Africa. Her Olympic achievements helped pave the

way for the black female athletes who would eventually break her records

As an Olympic champion in the early 1960s, Rudolph was among the most highly visible black women in America and abroad. She became a role model for black and female athletes and her Olympic successes helped elevate women's track and field in the United States.

Rudolph is also regarded as a civil rights and women's rights pioneer.

In 1962 Rudolph retired from competition at the peak of her athletic career as the world record-holder in the 100- and 200-meter individual events and the 4 × 100-meter relays. After competing in the 1960 Summer Olympics, the 1963 graduate of Tennessee State University became an educator and coach. Rudolph died of brain and throat cancer in 1994, and her achievements are memorialized in a variety of tributes,



including a U.S. postage stamp, documentary films, and a made-for-television movie, as well as in numerous publications, especially books for young readers. Here in Florida we just had a huge hurricane come through causing a lot of devastation. As we always do, we will fight back, and restore the community to something even better. Our deepest sympathies goes out to those who lost family and friends.

Steve Kirk



Executive Director

John DeMauro

Included in this article are excerpts from an article in the Washington Post on September 12, 2022 written by Amanda Morris. Amanda Morris is a disability reporter for The Washington Post.

Traveling by way of air is getting more and more difficult for all those traveling. It is especially difficult for those in the disabled community and those traveling in wheelchairs. This past summer one of our chapter members (flying home from the National Wheelchair Games) arrived at the Orlando International Airport. His flight was a late flight and the last leg of the plane and its crew for the day. Upon his arrival, there was no one available at the gate to assist in his transfer from his seat to an aisle chair and then to his wheelchair. He ended up sitting in the plane (along with the crew, who could not leave until the final passenger deplaned) for over an hour waiting for someone to come into the plane to assist him. In addition to him being delayed for so long, he also had to deal with the embarrassment of feeling he was the reason for the crew to be delayed (which were nearly as frustrated as he was). Although the chapter had called ahead of time and informed the airline that our members who were in wheelchairs would be traveling. Preparation for their arrival in Orlando, on the last leg of a round trip fare, was not made. The airline claimed it was not their responsibility to do so but the responsibility of the airport. Either way, our member sat on a plane for over an hour, after arriving at the gate and after every other passenger was long gone. Even though calling ahead seems to give a traveler in a wheelchair some comfort, it is not always enough.

Morris wrote in the Washington Post When Rep. Jim Langevin (D-R.I.) made plans to travel to military

bases in Italy last month, the Defense Department called ahead to make sure his power wheelchair would be permitted on the flight. But Langevin, who is a quadriplegic, never made it past the check-in counter. When airline staff learned that his wheelchair used lithium-ion batteries — a lighter weight, more durable type of battery — they refused to let him bring it on the flight. Although federal and international aviation officials have ruled that the batteries can be transported safely, Lufthansa employees at Boston Logan International Airport wrongly cited safety concerns that the battery could overheat and catch on fire. A growing number of people with disabilities, who use mobility devices powered by lithium ion batteries, are traveling. The new battery is a boon to people who use power wheelchairs and other mobility devices because the lightweight and high-energy capacity means customers can more easily transport their chairs, and often go farther on a single charge and with more time between charges. However, people with disabilities say flying with a wheelchair powered by the new battery can be unpredictable. They say airlines often impose additional restrictions on the batteries, and individual employees sometimes enforce rules incorrectly and inconsistently. Travelers have shared stories of stressful arguments with airline workers, embarrassment in front of other passengers and, like Langevin, being forced to cancel plans. “I’m angry, and I find it outrageous that they can just make up their own rules and basically ignore what’s been approved by the [Federal Aviation Administration],” Langevin said. In addition to showing airline employees a letter from his wheelchair’s manufacturer stating that the chair met federal and international aviation safety requirements, he still was not allowed on the flight.

Carlos Araujo, 59, of San Clemente, Calif., was looking forward to going to Cancún in the spring with his wife to celebrate their 31st anniversary. Though Araujo has multiple sclerosis, his foldable, lightweight wheelchair would allow him to tour famous Mayan ruins such as Chichen Itza alongside his wife, and could easily be lifted and stored in the trunk of most vehicles, he said. Before his flight from Tijuana, Araujo contacted Volaris, the Mexican airline, and received emails assuring that he would be allowed to check his wheelchair, per airline policy. Yet, when Araujo arrived at the airport, Volaris employees refused, even after he shared the email from the customer service staff and a letter from the manufacturer showing that the chair met federal and international aviation standards. After four hours of arguing with staff, Araujo missed his flight.

It's unclear how common it is for passengers to experience issues with lithium batteries, but in 2018, the most recent year data are available, passengers filed 310 disability-related complaints with the Transportation Department about air carriers refusing to let them board. Of those, 44 were marked as related to paraplegics, quadriplegics, other types of wheelchair users and other assistive-device users. Some wheelchair users say they always feel anxiety about whether they'll be allowed to fly. Tracey Mendenhall Porreca, 58, of Delta Junction, Alaska, said she has argued with airline workers about whether her wheelchair is safe to be on a plane.

Three years ago, Mendenhall Porreca said a gate agent initially stopped her from boarding an American Airlines flight on the way back from Chattanooga, Tenn., even though she had flown there with the same airline. "I understand why these rules are in place. My frustration comes from the lack of education and the lack of training, especially on the part of the airlines," she said. American Airlines said it updated its lithium battery procedures for mobility devices in 2021, and its policies are fully aligned with FAA regulations.

Aviation rules require that batteries attached to wheelchairs in the cargo hold be protected with a case or covering. Under certain conditions, batteries may need to be removed and placed in carry-on luggage,

as long as they are under a specified energy limit. Solving the problem represents a significant quality-of-life issue for people who use power wheelchairs. Wheelchairs have been getting heavier, in part because manufacturers use cheaper lead acid batteries, which can weigh 100 pounds or more, about twice as much as lithium batteries, said Rory Cooper, founder and director of the human engineering research laboratories at the University of Pittsburgh, which tests and designs mobility devices for different manufacturers. Some wheelchairs now weigh more than 400 pounds. Even though the lithium-battery-powered devices cost about three times more and often aren't covered by insurance, consumer demand for them is growing and expected to keep rising, said Brad Peterson, vice president of sales for Amylior, a Canadian-based maker of power wheelchairs.

Anna Ward, 25, of Cambridge, England, switched to a wheelchair with a lithium-ion battery because her old one was bulky and weighed about 182 pounds. Her new chair folds up and weighs about 55 pounds. She booked a flight with Ryanair from London to Milan in July, checked their wheelchair policy and emailed customer service to confirm that she could bring a spare battery on the flight. But when she tried to get on the plane, special-assistance employees with ABM, a third-party contractor, refused to let her board. Ward showed the email confirmation from Ryanair's customer service team but said the employees only relented once she threatened legal action. The flight was delayed by an hour as a result. "I get on the plane and literally someone goes, 'Oh, that's why we're late,' and I just sat there, crying," she said. "This has been the most humiliating journey of my life," she added. PVA has been working with the airlines for years, trying to get them to recognize the problems our members and others requiring wheelchairs for their mobility. We have also been working with Congress in an effort to get laws passed that will protect our members and the disabled community. For more information on Accessible Air Travel for People With Disabilities go to PVA.org and click on Veterans and Disability Advocacy and then scroll down and click on Air Travel Accessibility.

John DeMauro



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Washington Update

VA ANNOUNCES COMING EXPANSION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE CAREGIVER PROGRAM

VA is set to begin Phase 2 of the expansion of the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) on October 1. This phase will open the PCAFC to all eligible veterans who served after May 7, 1975, and before September 11, 2001. This final expansion will make certain service-disabled veterans, regardless of era served, eligible to apply for the PCAFC. For more information about the PCAFC, please click [here](#). If you need assistance in applying for the program or have questions, please contact your PVA service officer.

NATIONAL STRATEGY TO SUPPORT FAMILY CAREGIVERS

On September 21, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, through its Administration for Community Living (ACL), released the 2022 National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers. Approximately 53 million Americans serve as family caregivers providing a wide array of assistance to loved ones who need help as they age or due to a disability or chronic condition. According to the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, five million of those individuals are caregivers to veterans. The work of caregivers enables millions of older adults and people with disabilities to remain in their communities and the value of their supports represents roughly \$470 billion a year in direct care services.

The national strategy was developed jointly by the RAISE Act Family Caregiving Advisory Council and the Advisory Council to Support Grandparents Raising Grandchildren. The advisory councils were created in 2018 with the aim of bringing greater attention to the challenges facing caregivers, exploring the programs available to support them, identifying steps for improving financial and workplace protections for caregivers, and promoting better and more consistent research and data collection.

The national strategy highlights nearly 350 actions the federal government will take to support family caregivers in the coming year and more than 150 actions that can be adopted at other levels of government and across the private sector to build a system to support family caregivers. The VA was among 15 federal agencies contributing to the strategy. Actions the VA has committed to undertake include:

Development of a survey tool by VA's Caregivers Support Program (CSP) to conduct a needs assessment for providers and practitioners to help identify and bridge gaps in existing services and resources.

- Action by VA's Office of Mental Health Operations and Suicide Prevention and CSP to connect veterans and caregivers with resources related to the Compact Act and increase skills of family caregivers of veterans with behavioral health challenges.
- Expansion of the Veteran Directed Care program in partnership with ACL and local Area Agencies on Aging to 70 additional sites to increase services to both veterans and their caregivers.
- Increased communication to enhance awareness of respite services that are available to veterans and caregivers in partnership with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation and CareLinx.
- Implementation by CSP of financial and legal services support for veterans and caregivers who participate in VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers.

Veterans are also a focus of the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy's (ODEP) plans for implementing the national caregiver strategy. ODEP intends, through its technical assistance centers, to provide targeted technical assistance to state governments on state-level planning to support employed family caregivers, including family caregivers for veterans, to achieve the goal of incorporating employment concerns in local family caregiving strategies in Fiscal Years 2022-2025.

The strategy will be open for public comment for 60 days beginning on October 1. Subscribe to ACL Updates to receive a reminder and a link to the comment portal.

CONGRESS APPROVES VA COLA BILL

Congress recently passed H.R. 7846, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) Act of 2022, which requires the VA to increase rates for disability compensation, additional compensation for dependents, the clothing allowance for certain disabled veterans, and dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) for surviving spouses and children. It directs the VA to increase payment amounts for these benefits by the same percentage as the cost-of-living increase in benefits for Social Security recipients which will be effective on December 1, 2022. The annual Social Security cost-of-living adjustment is dictated by the consumer price index, which measures the rate of inflation in the U.S. The figure used to determine next year's COLA is expected to be announced in mid-to-late October and it may be the biggest increase seen in many years.

Activities Director

David Rountree



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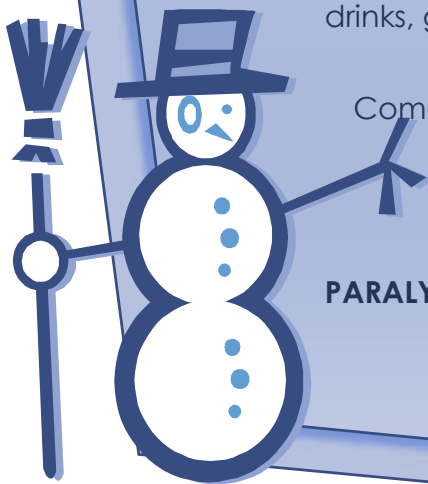
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National Service Officer

Todd A Jones

Don't Make These Mistakes When Filing A VA

Disability Claim

At Paralyzed Veterans of America, we know that the VA Disability Claims process can be very confusing and frustrating, so we are here to assist veterans in navigating through the VA Claims process. We specialize in assisting veterans with Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries and veterans with Brain and Spinal Cord Diseases. We are able to assist any veteran who needs help making their way through the claims process with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Discussed below are some of the most common mistakes veterans can avoid when filing a VA disability claim.

1. Not Filing a VA Claim Right Away

One of the most common mistakes we have seen when filing a claim, is veterans not filing a VA claim right away. There is no statute of limitations for eligible veterans to file a claim for VA Disability Compensation Benefits. If you have been speculating if you are eligible to file a claim or are waiting to see if your symptoms of mental health improve, or perhaps your medical condition has improved, not filing a disability claim right away could potentially reduce your medical benefits and compensation. Therefore, the steps you must take in preparing your claim are to obtain a diagnosis; supporting medical evidence; a Disability Benefits Questionnaire; a Nexus Statement; and promptly file your claim.

If a veteran receives an award either through their first decision or on appeal, the benefits will be paid to them retroactively from the date the veteran's original claim was filed, or the date of their diagnosis.

2. Giving Up on Your Disability Claim

As mentioned above, the VA Claims process is slow and complicated. In addition, some veterans have financial hardships that they may be going through while waiting on a disability rating. Sometimes it may seem like it would just be easier to give up. Most of the time, a finding of service connection is also required to be able to secure other VA benefits such as healthcare. It is best to continue with your disability compensation claim and continue to obtain as much supporting evidence as possible, to improve your chances of receiving a positive decision on your claim. The more compelling and supportive the evidence, the better your chances are of a claim being granted.

3. Failing to Learn How The VA Disability Process Works

In many cases, veterans believe that all that is required is to fill out a VA form, send it to the VA and wait for a check to arrive in the mail. The process that the VA uses to decide new claims is much more complicated. The VA will only award disability benefits when a veteran can prove that they are eligible to receive VA benefits. A veteran must have a current disability, have proof that something happened to

them while in service, have medical evidence linking their disability to something that happened while in service and supporting evidence indicating the severity of their condition. It is noteworthy that proving these points is extremely difficult. This is why the VA denies so many claims. If you are relying on the VA to prove and grant your claim, your chance for a grant is greatly diminished. In order to have the best chance of a disability grant, you must fully develop your own claim. Therefore, it is important that you obtain your diagnosis, provide the VA with compelling medical evidence to support your claim and get a strong Nexus Statement to link your disability to your military service.

4. Not Filing For Secondary Conditions

Many veterans do not realize that they may be entitled to benefits for disabilities that are secondary to their already service-connected disability. This happens when a service-connected injury or illness causes a new disabling condition or aggravates a non-service-connected disability. A great example to help understand this is when a veteran has a service-connected illness of diabetes, that can later lead to other illnesses. Even if the secondary illness does not develop until years later, benefits may still be available if there is medical evidence or a medical opinion to help establish the service-connection. If you need to obtain medical evidence, be sure to schedule an exam with a medical professional. Filing for secondary conditions can increase your overall VA disability rating.

5. Failing to Obtain Compelling Medical Evidence And A Nexus Statement

As discussed above, one of the biggest reasons why the VA will deny a claim is the lack of medical records or supporting medical evidence linking a service member's disability to their active-duty military service. Just lay evidence claiming that the issue is related to service on their own, will not suffice. You will need compelling medical treatment records to support your claim as well. If your disability claim contains a written opinion from a medical expert or professional linking the disability to service, it can make a huge difference in the outcome of the claim.

In conclusion, there are many mistakes that can be made when filing a claim for VA Disability Benefits. There is an abundance of information and knowledge behind these claims and knowing what to do and what not to do will give every veteran a more favorable outcome. It all begins when you decide to file a claim. Remember, you cannot receive benefits if you do not file a claim.

6. Need Help With Your VA Disability Claim?

Contact one of your local PVA National Service Officers. Do not wait any longer if your VA disability claim has been denied. From the C&P exam to the appeals process, our team is very knowledgeable about the VA claims process. Although PVA specializes in Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries and Brain and Spinal Cord Diseases, we have experience with all types of other cases such as Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Agent Orange, MST, Depression and many more. PVA will also assist family members who have lost their veteran spouses with DIC (Death Benefits) claims. We are here to help you throughout the claims process and to obtain the best possible outcome in your quest for VA Disability Benefits.

Todd Jones



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Origins of English Idioms

Idioms are short phrases that often make no literal sense but are nonetheless usually understood by the native speakers of a language. They can be quirky, playful, and sometimes even strange, but the most charming thing about them is their specificity of culture — like an inside joke shared by millions. Someone still learning English might be baffled to hear that they'd been “let off the hook,” though almost anyone raised in an English-speaking community would understand the meaning. Over time, the original context of the phrase is usually lost, but the words find new meaning in their idiomatic form. Take, for instance, being let off the hook. Dating back to the 18th century, the phrase evokes the image of a worm on the end of a fishing line. If it can wiggle itself off the hook, it can avoid being eaten by a fish. Likewise, a child caught stealing a cookie might beg and plead themselves out of being reprimanded, thereby getting themselves off the hook. Here are the little-known origin stories behind eight other common English idioms.

“Wear Your Heart on Your Sleeve”

To wear your heart on your sleeve is to be honest and open about your feelings. The phrase is generally believed to have originated in the Middle Ages. It was the custom then for jousting knights to wear some sort of insignia on their arm that indicated the ladies for whom they were hoping to triumph, thus proclaiming their love to the world.

“Pardon My French”

In England, in the early 1800s, people would “beg pardon” for using French words in conversation. Forgiveness was requested in these instances because most people did not speak French, and furthermore, the Napoleonic Wars had left a residue of animosity between the two countries. By the mid-1800s, the phrase had evolved to refer to swear words specifically. It's worth noting that the Cambridge dictionary defines the idiom as something to be said when *pretending* to be sorry for offensive language.

“The Best Thing Since Sliced Bread”

In 1928, when inventor Otto Frederick Rohwedder of Davenport, Iowa, first released his bread loaf-slicing invention, the advertisement claimed it was “the greatest forward step in the baking industry since bread was wrapped.” Riffing on the theme, customers began to compare all later inventions to his, and the modern idiom evolved from there.

“With Flying Colors”

This idiom dates back to the Age of Exploration, the period when European explorers first set off across the seas. If a captain had been successful in his venture, he would order the crew to fly their country's flag (or “colors”) to announce their victory before arriving back at the home port. Originally, the phrase “with flying colors” simply meant that a mission had been completed without disaster, but over the centuries, the idiom came to signify great success.

“Apple of My Eye”

To be the apple of someone's eye is to be their most adored companion, but what exactly is an eye apple? This idiom is one of the oldest in the English language, traced back to the ninth century. Back then, it was assumed that the pupil of the eye was a round, solid object, and it was often compared to an apple, as apples were a commonly known round object. The delicate nature of sight (and its tendency to fade with age) made vision precious and over the years the phrase “apple of my eye” came to be used in reference to anything or anyone a person held dear.

“Head Over Heels”

If one stops to think about it, being “head over heels” is actually how most humans spend their days. So how did this common, everyday state of being come to signify romance? In the 1300s, the phrase “head over heels” was used more literally to describe someone tumbling through a handstand or cartwheel, but by the 1800s writers had begun to use the phrase idiomatically to describe someone who had fallen hopelessly in love.

“Buttering Up”

To butter someone up is to beguile them, or to lavish them with praise to get what you want. The idiom evolved from the very literal buttering that takes place as part of the Hindu tradition of throwing balls of clarified butter (called ghee) at the statues of deities. In exchange for the offering, it was thought that buttered-up gods would reward the faithful with a good harvest.

“Cutting the Mustard”

There is much speculation regarding the origin of this idiom, but the most reputable sources trace its usage from the late 1600s when the phrase “keen as mustard” was used to describe someone of high standards. Combined with “cutting,” which is often used in place of “exhibiting” (think: cutting a fine figure), and you get the modern, idiomatic equivalent of “exhibiting high standards.”



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