

September 2024

NATIONAL VETERANS WHEELCHAIR GAMES NEW ORLEANS 2024

See pics on page 10





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**Paralyzed Veterans of America
Central Florida Chapter
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September Board Meeting is a **Zoom** - September 12th 10:30 AM

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Website: pvacf.org
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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.



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Chapter President

Steve Kirk

For the most part, America's 63 national parks are named not after people, but after the cities and towns where they are located or the geographical features in and around the parks. Only one U.S. national park is named after a person. Theodore Roosevelt National Park is located in the badlands of western North Dakota. The park covers over 70,000 acres of land in three sections: the North Unit, the South Unit, and the Elkhorn Ranch Unit. The Little Missouri River flows through all three units of the park. The park is home to a wide variety of Great Plains wildlife, including bison, coyotes, cougars, mustang horses, badgers, elk, bighorn sheep, white-tailed deer, mule deer, pronghorn, prairie dogs, and at least 186 species of birds including golden eagles, sharp-tailed grouse, and wild turkeys. All three park visitor centers are wheelchair accessible, as is the Maltese Cross Cabin. The South Unit's Cottonwood Campground has four accessible campsites and two restrooms that meet ADA access requirements. The Roundup Horse Camp also has accessible restrooms and a picnic pavilion. The North Unit's Juniper Campground has two accessible sites and two restrooms meeting ADA requirements. The group campsite also has accessible restrooms. Picnic areas in both the North and South Unit have accessible restrooms and pavilions.

Florida has three of the 63 National Parks. Almost 70 miles (113 km) west of Key West lies the remote Dry Tortugas National Park. This 100-square mile park is mostly open water with seven small islands. Accessible only by boat or seaplane, the park is known the world over as the home of magnificent Fort Jefferson, picturesque blue waters, superlative coral reefs and marine life, and a vast assortment of bird life that frequents the area. Fort Jackson is accessible for those in wheelchairs on the first tier and brick walkways outside the fort. However, the second and third floors are not wheelchair accessible.

Within sight of Miami, yet worlds away, Biscayne National Park protects a rare combination of aquamarine waters, emerald islands, and fish-bejeweled coral reefs. Evidence of 10,000 years of human history is here too; from prehistoric tribes to shipwrecks, and pineapple farmers to presidents. For many, the park is a boating, fishing, and diving destination, while others enjoy a warm breeze and peaceful scenery. The scenic boardwalk overlooking Biscayne Bay is accessible by wheelchair and other mobility devices. There are 4 designated handicap parking spaces available. Wheelchair accessible picnic tables are located throughout the grounds and ADA compliant restrooms are located at the Dante Fascell visitor center.

Everglades National Park protects an unparalleled landscape that provides important habitat for numerous rare and endangered species like the manatee, American crocodile, and the elusive Florida panther. A great way to experience the Everglades is to do so on one of the many accessible trails. These have a firm and stable surface which can be paved or a boardwalk. The trails that are wheelchair accessible and less than 3/4 of a mile in distance are Anhinga Trail, Gumbo Limbo Trail, Pineland Trail, Pa-hay-okee Overlook Trail, Mahogany Hammock Trail, West Lake Trail, and Bobcat Boardwalk Trail.

On the following days entrance fees are free in all National Parks; in January, January 15, Martin Luther King Day. In April, the first day of National Park Week. In June, June 19th, Juneteenth National Independence Day. In August, August 4th, The Anniversary of the Great American Outdoors Act. In September, September 28th, National Public Lands Day and in November Veterans Day.



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Executive Director

John DeMauro



As you are reading this article; the chapter is entering its final month of the 2023/2024 fiscal year. The chapter is here to serve its membership and has a lot to offer. In the area of adaptive sports; we directly or indirectly offer air rifle, air pistol, archery, bowling, bocchia, field events, fishing, golf, handcycling, hunting, scuba diving, tennis, pickleball, wheelchair basketball and soon to come wheelchair softball. We have recently had discussions with Florida Adaptive Sports about partnering with them in offering these and other adaptive sport activities to our members and others within the disabled community. We work together with Move United and Brookes Rehab Center. If you have an interest or a question about our sports program reach out to the Chapter Sports Director Roger Sack at rogers@pvacf.org. In the area of recreation: we offer gambling, I-rock simulated racing, billiards, table tennis, karaoke, and soon to come board games, and cards. If you have an interest or want to share an idea about recreation, reach out to the Chapter Director of Recreation David Rountree at davidr@pvacf.org. In the area of advocacy; we advocate both in Washington DC and with our local and state governments. Each month look to the Chapter Director of Government Relations Tim Wolfe's article to learn more about what we are doing in this area. If you have an interest in working with advocacy reach out to Tim at Timw@pvacf.org

Our Chapter sponsors the Paralyzed Veterans of America Central Florida Endowment Fund at Seminole State College. This Endowment provides scholarships to veterans attending Seminole State College. The endowment has over \$40,000 in it and it currently generates enough to fund two \$1,000 scholarships per year. Preference is given to

disabled veterans with this program. A chapter board member sits on the selection committee as well as the Chapter Executive Director. Our Chapter also offers scholarships to chapter members and spouses to help in the cost of furthering their education. If you have any questions about this program, please contact the office.

Additionally, the chapter has a Refurbished Equipment Exchange Program (REEP) in which we receive durable medical equipment and redistribute it to those in need in our community. Through this program we have given away over three million dollars' worth of durable medical equipment and supplies to both veterans and civilians alike. With the help of the Harper Family Foundation, AGED, Naelson Investments and other individual donors, the chapter just completed the construction of a 2400 square foot warehouse to house this program. The Harper Family Foundation also annually contributes toward the budget of this program.

Each of these programs is offered to our membership at no cost to them or their caregivers. Non-members and other disabled veterans pay little if anything to participate.

We encourage our members to get involved in something we are offering and if there were something you would like to see us do or offer, please let us know. This is YOUR chapter and all we do is for YOU!

John DeMauro

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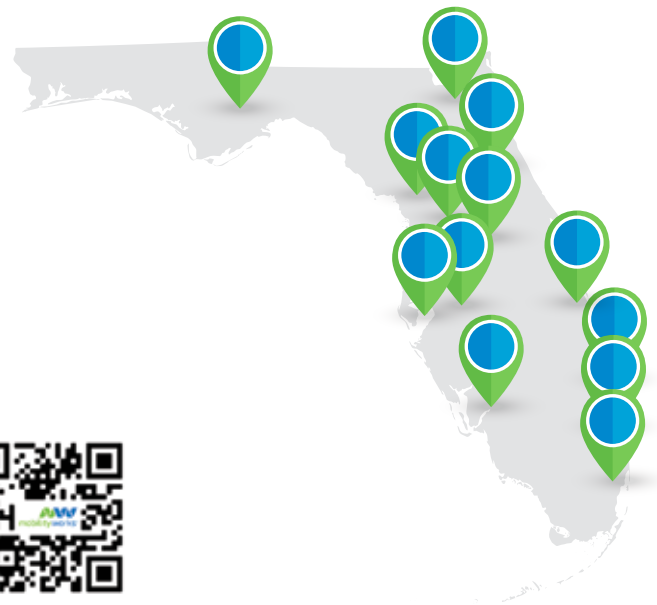


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2024



WHEELCHAIR GAMES





Government Relations

Tim Wolfe

We welcome Jeremy Villaneva to our PVA Legislative Team. He is a former Marine, former NSO of over 10 years, worked with the DAV and the Wounded Warrior Project.

HR 8371: The Senator Elizabeth Dole Omnibus Bill showed signs of breaking down on both sides of the of the aisle, and in both the House and Senate. There was a media blitz that included Senator Dole, Veteran Service Organizations, and addressing Congress during Advocacy in June, but all efforts resulted in a deadlock. Politics is the driving force holding this bill up. Both the Democrats and Republicans are standing steadfast with their leadership preventing this bill from moving anywhere before the holidays.

The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) included some of PVA's Priorities. They were looking positive in the Senate, but likely to be passed on to the next Congress. The priorities were:

- Eliminate the 65% cap on the Dole Act
- The ALS DIC Kicker
- Major Richard Star Act (Concurrent Receipt)

The VA Fiscal Year 24 (FY) Budget came up short by \$2.8 Billion dollars for benefits coming up in late September. The new fiscal year begins in October, so there should be no impact on veterans.

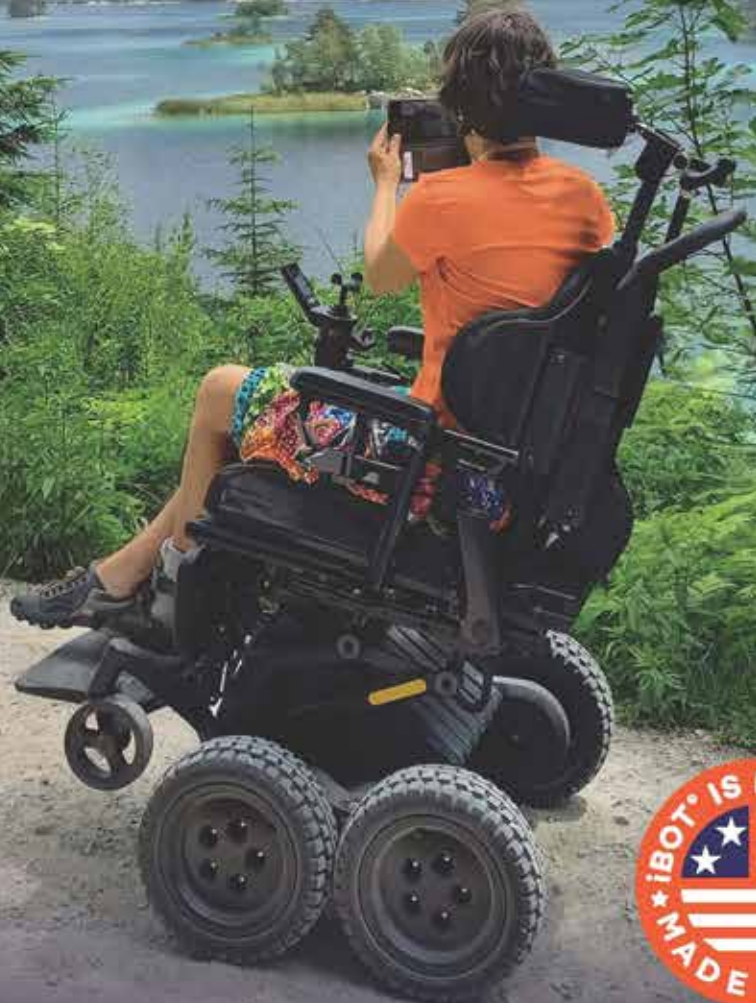
The VA Fiscal Year 25 (FY) undershot their ask to Congress by \$24 Billion dollars. VA claims a rise in prosthetics for this miscalculation before the budget was approved. It's unknown if the Independent Budget that PVA and other VSOs provide were considered when the VA proposed their budget. It was brought up during the monthly ACGRD meeting that prosthetics has issued incorrect, or broken items to veterans, and when the veteran contacts prosthetics they inform them to just keep it or throw it away. If this happens, please let me or the chapter know, so we can forward these incidents of waste to PVA national. These items should have warranties or be returnable.

Tim Wolfe

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