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April 2008

# The Advocacy Bulletin

A publication of the Mtn. States Chapter  
Paralyzed Veterans of America

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*Bryce Canyon, UT*

## UPCOMING EVENTS...

### *Memorial Day Celebration*

May 24, 2008

10:00 AM - City & County of Denver's Parade

11:00 AM - Memorial Day Tribute at CO Veterans Monument

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## NATIONAL UPDATE

### **PVA Teams Up With Rebuilding Together®**

PVA has teamed up with Rebuilding Together®, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving housing for impoverished and disabled Americans. There are two programs that impact PVA members. The first program is “Serving those who Served”, which provides accessible housing for OIF/OEF active duty or veterans with mobility, blindness, deafness and/or TBI injuries. The other program is “Heroes at Home”, which serves low income veterans with housing needs, including home repairs and modifications. PVA has agreed to provide Rebuilding Together® staff with referrals for potential beneficiaries of their programs. If you know of veterans that may benefit, please contact me at lholman@mscpva.org or at (303)597-0038.

### **Stadium Victory For Paralyzed Veterans**

The Paralyzed Veterans of America Michigan Chapter has won a ground breaking victory to make stadiums accessible for people with disabilities. The PVA Michigan Chapter sued the University of Michigan in federal court regarding its renovations, which were not compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines. The University settled the suit by more than tripling the number of wheelchair accessible seats. We urge all stadiums in America that are inaccessible to follow this example and make their venues more barrier-free.

### **PVA Testifies on Paralympics & Wheelchair Recreation**

Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) testified before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity. The hearing focused on Paralympic programs managed by the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) and how they are assisting service members and veterans to heal from the wounds of war. Perhaps no veterans' service organization understands the importance of sports as a rehabilitation tool more than PVA.



Since its founding in 1946, PVA has recognized the important role that sports and recreation play in the spinal cord injury rehabilitation process. As such, PVA is a co-presenter of the National Veterans Wheelchair Games. PVA also conducts a Shooting Sports Program and Boating and Fishing Program, as well as sponsors tournament series with the National Wheelchair Pool Players' Association and the American Wheelchair Bowling Association.

In the past five years, PVA has also conducted significant outreach at Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitals. However, PVA expressed particular concern about the VA-USOC Paralympic Military Program. Specifically, we hope that direct health care dollars will not be diverted to fund this program. PVA also stressed hopes that this arrangement will not impact the memorandum of understanding between VA and PVA to support sports and recreation opportunities for severely disabled veterans. Finally, PVA believes that it is critically important to remove barriers to participation in sports and recreation events.

*\*Disclaimer:*

*All information contained in this bulletin is taken from publicly available media and information sources.*

## **PVA Testifies on Various Pending Legislation**

In mid-April, the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity held hearings to review a variety of pending legislation. Below is a list of several bills and PVA's position.

- H.R. 3298, the 21st Century Servicemembers Protection Act - **SUPPORT**
- H.R. 3393, the Reservist Access to Justice Act of 2007 - **SUPPORT**
- H.R. 3467, the Second Chance for America's Veterans Act - **SUPPORT**
- H.R. 3681, the Veterans Benefits Awareness Act of 2007 - **SUPPORT**
- H.R. 3889, Longitudinal Study of VA Voc Rehab - **SUPPORT**
- H.R. 4539, the Dept. of Veterans Affairs Loans Guaranty Cost Reduction Act - **SUPPORT**
- H.R. 4883, amendments to the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act - **SUPPORT**
- H.R. 4915, the Veterans Access to Local Options for Recovery Act - **OPPOSE**
- H.R. 5664, Specially Adapted Housing - *Can support only if changed to reflect actual intent*
- H.R. 5684, the Veterans Education Improvement Act of 2008 - **SUPPORT**
- H.R. 5622, the Veterans Timely Access to Health Care Act - **OPPOSE**

## **DOT Sponsors Hearing on Passenger Vessels**

On April 8-9, PVA staff participated in a public hearing on the Department of Transportation's proposed rules (NPRM) applying the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to passenger vessels. A passenger vessel is defined as "any ship, boat or other craft used as a conveyance on water...which accepts passengers for hire..." Small boat operators expressed concerns about requirements for training, assistance in boarding (particularly whether hand-carrying is permitted), and weight limitations. The proposed regulation prohibits hand-carrying of a passenger as a means of assistance in boarding a vessel. PVA supports this provision as a general rule. In cases where no other means is available, we suggest that the rule be modified to state that hand-carrying is never required, rather than never permitted. In these cases, hand-carrying could be performed only with the full informed consent of the person to be carried or his/her guardian, and basic training in appropriate procedures must be provided.

## **REGIONAL UPDATE**

### **Colorado Veterans' Property Tax Exemption**

In 2006 when Referendum E was adopted by voters, the provision did not include language that extended the property tax exemption to veterans' surviving spouses. MSCPVA was pleased to see that a bill was introduced during the 2008 legislature that would have dealt with this oversight. Although we are disappointed SCR 001 was defeated, we realize there was support for the veteran surviving spouse portion of the bill and are optimistic this important issue will be readdressed.



If you would like further information on issues presented in this Bulletin, please contact me at [lholman@mscpva.org](mailto:lholman@mscpva.org). This bulletin is also available on the Advocacy page of our website at [www.mscpva.org](http://www.mscpva.org).

***Laura J. Holman, Government Relations Director***