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June 2008

The Advocacy Bulletin

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

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The Powder Horn
Sheridan, WY

UPCOMING EVENTS...

You're Invited to Join us!

Annual PVA Membership & VA Appreciation Picnic

July 13, 2008 ☆ 11:00am - 3:00pm

Cherry Creek Yacht & Marina Club

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NATIONAL UPDATE

ADA Amendments Act of 2008

During the last week of June, the House of Representatives passed the long awaited for legislation, the *ADA Amendments Act of 2008*. This bipartisan bill will restore protections under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and reverse restrictive judicial decisions that have left people with disabilities unprotected from job discrimination.

The *ADA Amendments Act of 2008* is the product of meaningful negotiations and discussions with experts in the disability community, business and employer groups, Members of Congress, and congressional staff. The ADA has transformed the nation since its enactment in 1990. The ADA was intended to protect people with disabilities from discrimination at work and in public life.

Unfortunately, court decisions over the last decade have excluded individuals who should have been covered under the ADA. These judicial restrictions block people with conditions such as epilepsy, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, cancer, heart disease and bipolar disorder from seeking protections against employment discrimination under the ADA.

The *ADA Amendments Act of 2008* will re-establish these protections. This legislation is supported by over 40 national disability organizations – including Paralyzed Veterans of America – and many key business associations such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, the Society for Human Resource Management, and the HR Policy Association.

The *ADA Amendments Act of 2008* will:

- Amend the current Americans with Disabilities Act so that the effects of “mitigating measures” could not be used in determining whether an individual is disabled.
- Makes it clear that Congress intended the ADA’s coverage to be broad, to cover anyone who faces unfair discrimination because of a disability.
- Clarifies the current requirement that an impairment substantially limit a major life activity in order to be considered a disability. The legislation provides a reasonable standard that will give clarity to employers and access to protections to workers with disabilities.



The PVA Mtn. States Chapter would like to thank all of the 402 Members of Congress who voted in favor of this important legislation, but especially the following representatives from the Rocky Mtn. region:

Rob Bishop (UT)	Ed Perlmutter (CO)
Diana DeGette (CO)	Dennis Rehberg (MT)
Doug Lamborn (CO)	John Salazar (CO)
Jim Matheson (UT)	Mark Udall (CO)
Marilyn Musgrave (CO)	

MSCPVA strongly urges the Senate to follow the House’s lead and overwhelmingly support and pass the *ADA Amendments Act of 2008*.

**Disclaimer:*

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

REGIONAL UPDATE

Denver's VA Replacement Facility at Fitzsimons

Over the last two months PVA, along with several other Colorado veterans service organizations (VSO), have sat on the sidelines as the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Rocky Mtn. Network (VISN 19) have drafted and redrafted multiple plans for Denver's VA replacement facility. This approach has caused an increasing distrust of the VA for not involving the veteran community in the development of a new plan.



Even though some issues have been addressed, a main concern throughout each plan are the details for a Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) Center. Prior to the announcement in April that the VA partnered with the University of Colorado Hospital (UCH), the plan (Project Eagle) included a 30-bed, comprehensive SCI Center for Denver. Since then, the plan has changed from an eight (8) bed SCI/D inpatient clinic and outpatient program, to a 17-20 bed SCI Center, to the current plan of a 30 bed SCI Center split in two buildings.

Although MSCPVA has been advocating for 30 beds, having them split among two buildings is not practical. The VISN leadership suggested they are trying to align Denver's plan to resemble the new SCI Centers in Milwaukee and Minneapolis. However, both those new SCI Centers are in one location and follow the VA's own handbook and guidelines. Denver's plan does not.

There are specific concerns regarding the management and staffing of a split SCI Center. For example, how will doctors make their rounds when their patients move from the UCH bed tower to the VA's Ambulatory Care Center (ACC)? Having a specialized care service, such as a SCI Center that requires SCI trained and dedicated physicians and nurses, split in two locations is not feasible, cost effective, nor will it allow for maximum staff utilization.

It is apparent that the VA is attempting to redesign their model for providing health care to veterans. Unfortunately, if it does not look or operate like a SCI Center then it is difficult for PVA to support the plan. Although we commend the VA for finding innovative ways to expand rural health care, when it comes to a SCI Center MSCPVA prefers status quo.



On June 10, the United Veterans Committee of Colorado unanimously supported a resolution stating the new plan is significantly lacking in details and was crafted without any input from the VSOs that represent Colorado's more than 460,000 veterans. The PVA Mtn. States Chapter will continue to the work with all the stakeholders throughout this process in order to address the concerns of the veteran community.



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

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[We're on the web!
www.mscpva.org **]**

The Mountain States Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America (MSCPVA) is a Congressionally chartered, veterans' service organization specializing in assisting and promoting a full lifestyle for veterans affected by spinal cord injury or dysfunction. The Paralyzed Veterans of America was formed in 1946. MSCPVA is one of 34 chapters, which received its charter in 1955, and has continuously strived to service its members located in the Rocky Mtn. region of Colorado, Montana, Utah and Wyoming.

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