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March 2008

# The Advocacy Bulletin

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

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## UPCOMING EVENTS...

APRIL 13-19, 2008



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## PVA AWARENESS WEEK ☆ APRIL 13-19, 2008

Please join us as we raise community awareness of veterans with disabilities and PVA's mission. The following events will be held throughout the region.

April 14	MSCPVA Open House	11:00 am - 1:00 pm
April 15	National Service Office Open House	10:00 am - 12:00 pm
	Montana Visitor Booth at Ft. Harrison VAMC	10:00 am - 2:00 pm
April 16	Pizza Party at Denver VAMC, floor 5 South	12:00 pm - 1:00 pm
	MSCPVA Poker League at the Chapter office	5:00 pm - 8:00 pm
April 17	Colorado Visitor Booth at Denver VAMC	1:00 pm - 3:00 pm
April 18	Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon at the Chapter	12:30 pm - 2:00 pm

## NATIONAL UPDATE



### **PVA National President Presents Annual Testimony**

On March 6, Randy L. Pleva, Sr., National President of Paralyzed Veterans of America, presented PVA's annual testimony before a joint hearing of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs. This was President Pleva's fourth year testifying on behalf of PVA and America's veterans.

As an aside from his written testimony, President Pleva told the members that he was 17 years old when he joined the United States Marine Corps, and like all service members, he was willing to fight for, and give his all for his country. President Pleva continued to discuss the sacrifices made by our service men and women and asked the members of Congress that when making legislative decisions, to remember that a veteran is a veteran.

In President Pleva's written remarks, he discussed the recommendation of *The Independent Budget (IB)* for FY 2009. The *IB* recommends an increase of \$3.7 billion over the FY 2008 operating budget for health care, and approximately \$1.6 billion above the Administration's FY 2009 request. President Pleva's full written remarks were submitted for the record.

### **PVA Chapter Representatives Visit Capitol Hill**

In early March, dozens of representatives from several of the PVA chapters across the country traveled to Washington, DC. During this year's Advocacy/Legislation Seminar, we had the opportunity to hear from Deputy Secretary of Veterans' Affairs, Gordon Mansfield, and several key members of Congress and staff from the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees. In addition, I met with 14 Rocky Mt. region Congressional offices to discuss veterans' and disability issues. MSCPVA urges members of Congress to pass the following imperative pieces of legislation before the end of the 110th Congress:

- H.R. 3195/S. 1881 - ADA Restoration Act
- H.R. 2943 - Benefit Rating Acceleration For Veteran Entitlements (BRAVE) Act
- H.R. 4202 - Inclusive Home Design Act
- H.R. 1370 - Disabled Veterans Sports and Special Events Promotion Act of 2007
- H.R. 4255 - U.S. Olympic Committee Paralympic Program Act of 2007
- S. 2625 - Fairness in Housing for Disabled Veterans Act (incorporated into S. 2684)

## **REGIONAL UPDATE**

### **ECHCS and MSCPVA Host Kick-off Party for 2010 Games**

On March 27, the Eastern Colorado Health Care System (ECHCS) and MSCPVA celebrated during the Kick-off party for the 30th National Veterans' Wheelchair Games, which will be held in Denver July 4-9, 2010. Those who attended the Kick-off party included NVWG athletes, Denver Nuggets Community Ambassadors Mark Randall and Ervin Johnson, Dinger, the Colorado Rockies' mascot, and VHA and PVA leadership, members and staff. The 2010 Games in Denver will be *Games with Heart...A Mile High!*



### **VA to Pilot Remote Benefits Delivery Program in Rural Montana**

MSCPVA is pleased that the VA will now be able to better serve veterans living in rural areas of Montana by providing easier access to benefits information and assistance through an innovative, first-of-its-kind remote benefits delivery pilot program. The pilot program will use video conferencing technology and staffing support to dispense the information. Veterans who do not live near Fort Harrison VA regional benefits office will now be able to visit the Valley Veterans Service Center (VVSC) in Hamilton, MT to receive face-to-face assistance. VVSC will schedule appointments with veterans on Fridays during normal business hours.

### **Funds Approved for a New Veterans Nursing Home in Ogden, Utah**

On March 18, Governor Huntsman, Jr. signed a bill appropriating funds to construct a veterans' nursing home in Ogden, UT. The new home will bring the number of beds available for veterans in the state's two homes up to 200. However, the bill specifies the Federal government must reimburse the state at least 65% of its investment before another facility may be funded. Veterans' advocates are now turning their attention to getting funding for another home, likely in Washington County. MSCPVA urges the Utah State Legislature to reconsider the wait-for-payback provision and address the growing need for a veterans' nursing home in southern Utah.

### **Wyoming State Legislature Works to Benefit Veterans**

This month, the Wyoming State Legislature passed two bills that will benefit many veterans in the state. Firstly, the Legislature appropriated \$848,000 to address mental health and substance abuse problems of returning military personnel, and their families, who participated in the current conflict. The act will go into effect July 1, 2008. Secondly, veterans who have been residents for at least three years and served during WWII, the Korean War, and/or the Vietnam War may be eligible for a property tax exemption.



*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 Local Legislative News page of our website at [www.mscpva.org](http://www.mscpva.org).*

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

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*The Mt. States Chapter of 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 neurological disease. 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 Mountain region of Colorado, Montana, Utah and Wyoming.*