



# Out Front

Michael G. Negrete, Chapter President

First, if you haven't already received or seen the notice, the Chapter office has temporarily closed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and Massachusetts Governor Baker's declaration of a State of Emergency. With this closure though, our staff is working remotely and still committed to meeting the continued needs of the membership. If you have an immediate need, with which the Chapter can assist, please continue to call the office number 800-660-1181, as calls are either being re-routed or you may leave a voicemail.

If you feel ill or require VA services otherwise, all VA Healthcare facilities are asking patients to call first, before attempting to arrive in person. Regardless of where you receive your care in New England, the VA Boston Healthcare System can provide you with guidance before visiting any VA facility or community care provider. Their direct number is (617) 232-9500. As this pandemic is a fluid situation, please keep an eye on your email's inbox for any other news related to the Chapter and/or PVA and any scheduled activities.

Moving on with just quick note - we had another successful Advocacy and Legislative Seminar, having met with 21 of our 33 New England Congressional offices. That's 2 more than last year! Kristen McCone Gordon, our new Government Relations Director, was able to attend the entire week, getting an immediate and educational immersion into the legislative priorities of PVA and then presenting them in a meaningful way to our Congressional leaders. Just having been hired 3 days prior, she did an impressive job, and will continue to be asset to our Chapter. Please see page 4 to read "From the Hill" for her first-hand experience of PVA's Ad/Leg Seminar and visit to the "Hill".

In the last 3 month's we've hired a new Executive Director and Govt. Relations Director, but the Chapter still has a great need for volunteers. Volunteers are an invaluable part of the Chapter - from helping in the office or with patient activities, participating on the Board, to simply sharing their personal stories with someone. If you have an interest in volunteering, no matter what it might be, please give Mark Murphy a call.

Michael G. Negrete  
President and Paralyzed Veteran

## From the Director's Desk

Mark Murphy, Chapter Executive Director

I shared with you last month how much I was looking forward to the annual 2020 PVA Advocacy/Legislation Seminar in Washington, D.C. I am happy to report that I was not disappointed as we had an incredible week full of solid advocacy work from our NEPVA delegation. This was my first time attending the seminar, and I was struck by the great work PVA is doing to raise so many important issues that impact our members, especially their focus on strengthening and improving the VA health care system and services. Pushing Congress to protect access to specialized services within the VA, including the spinal cord injury/disorder system of care, is of paramount importance today. Additionally, Congress needs to ensure that VA's health care system can effectively meet its staffing requirements.



We had an opportunity to meet several legislators from across New England, including Senator Shaheen and Senator Hassan from New Hampshire. One of Senator Shaheen's staff members shared with our group that NEPVA's past visits to their office, particularly from Michael and Terry Negrete, have resulted in the Senator signing on to meaningful legislation that supports disabled veterans and their families. This is proof positive that these in person meetings are invaluable to furthering NEPVA's mission and legislative priorities, and that we are making a difference.

I was delighted that our new Government Relations Director, Kristen McCone Gordon, was able to join us for the entire the week on Capitol Hill. We are fortunate to have Kristen on our staff as she brings many gifts and vast experience to this role, and we are excited about her plans to grow our legislative reach here at home in New England. Welcome Kristen!

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the feelings of uncertainty we are all facing as a result of the pandemic of Coronavirus. On that note, I came across this quote recently by the famous Dutch watchmaker and writer Corrie ten Boom: "Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength." These words were encouraging to me, so I thought I would share them with you in the hopes that it might offer you some strength with all that is happening throughout the world today.

Mark Murphy  
Executive Director