



New England Chapter

New England Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America
1208 VFW Parkway, Suite 301 • West Roxbury, MA 02132
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December 3, 2021

The Honorable John C. Velis, Senate Chair
The Honorable Paul McMurtry, House Chair
Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs
State House, 24 Beacon Street
Boston MA, 02133

Chairman Velis and Chairman McMurtry:

On behalf of the New England Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America, I write in support of three bills that are before your committee: An Act relative to parking at certain airports; An Act relative to 100% disabled veteran recreation; and, An Act relative to emergency medical transportation provided to veterans.

Paralyzed Veterans of America was founded in 1946 by a band of service members who came home from World War II with spinal cord injuries. They returned to a grateful nation, but also to a world with few solutions to the major challenges they faced. These wounded heroes made the decision not just to live, but *to live with dignity as contributors to society*. Since PVA's founding, we have been on a mission to change lives and build brighter futures for our catastrophically injured heroes – to empower these brave men and women to regain what they fought for: their freedom and independence.

As you determine which bills to favorably report from your committee, I ask you to consider the daily challenges faced by these veterans who gave so much to protect our Nation's way of life. The bills we support will greatly help overcome these challenges and assist in providing the freedom and independence they deserve.

The New England Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America respectfully requests your consideration to favorably report the following pieces of legislation:

An Act relative to parking at certain airports

Our Chapter supports H. 3684, An Act relative to parking at certain airports. We believe parking at airports should be both free and accessible for disabled veterans.

Last year, a Paralyzed Veterans of America survey found that our members face many accessibility challenges in their communities. Parking, unsurprisingly, was one of the biggest issues. In 2018, a similar [Accessible Parking Coalition survey](#) found that:

- 96% say parking availability is important to leading an independent life
- Over 50% have decided not to make a trip because of concerns about finding parking.
- Members indicated that finding accessible parking at airports was among their top parking challenges.



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Our members here in New England experience significant challenges when parking at airports. Often our members have extreme difficulty finding parking and when they do, its frequently a long distance from their original destination causing additional challenges such as delays and the ability to safely navigate to a path to their destination. Additionally, as 100% disabled veterans many live on fixed incomes finding it a struggle to cover the cost of parking which hindering their independence and ability to access their communities.

It's our understanding that this bill has been re-introduced in the state of Massachusetts several times. We urge you to please take action and help our disabled veterans travel the country they served to protect with greater access and dignity.

An Act relative to 100% disabled veteran recreation

Our Chapter also fully supports H. 3636, An Act relative to 100% Disabled Veteran Recreation. Any Massachusetts resident who is a 100 percent disabled veteran should be entitled to any hunting or fishing license offered by the Commonwealth without fee or cost.

The New England Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America provides our members and disabled veterans with many opportunities to participate in high quality sports and recreation activities. We have found participation in adaptive sports and recreational activities provides immeasurable benefits for veterans. For example, sports and recreation activities helps improve self-esteem, encourages good mental and physical health, and promotes camaraderie among peers. The more barriers that can be removed to accessing recreational opportunities, the more likely they are to participate. Our sporting events, particularly fishing, attracts hundreds of disabled veterans each year throughout New England.

An Act relative to emergency medical transportation provided to veterans.

Finally, our Chapter also urges favorable consideration of H.3696, An Act relative to emergency medical transportation provided to veterans. We believe our disabled veterans have earned the benefit to receive full reimbursement of expenses for emergency medical transportation services to local hospitals or veteran's affairs hospitals. No veteran should have to hesitate to call for emergency services because of the prohibitive costs associated with getting medical care.

Our Chapter, and the paralyzed veterans that we represent, would greatly appreciate your support and consideration as you review these bills. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns please feel free to contact me directly via email at michael@newenglandpva.org or 857-229-8825, or certainly reach out to our Government Relations Director, Kristen McCone Gordon, at kristen@newenglandpva.org.

Respectfully,

Michael G. Negrete
Chapter President and Paralyzed Veteran
United States Marine Corps and Coast Guard Veteran