Spring 2023

# The SUNSHINE

The Official Publication of The Paralyzed Veterans of America • Florida Chapter



#### **INSIDE THE ISSUE**

President's Message3
Calendar of Events4
Vice President's Message5
Scuba Diving for Paralyzed Veterans6
Classified Ads7-8
Is Keto Good for MS Patients?9
Sports Report
Clubhouse Birthdays 11
Wheelchair Repair 14
Chapter Article March 202316-17



#### Florida Chapter

#### **Paralyzed Veterans of America Florida Chapter**

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Phone: 954-565-8885 or 800-683-2001

FAX: 954-565-8843 Email: PVAF@aol.com WEB: www.pvaf.com

Have you moved or are you planning a move? If you are reading this Newsletter and it was not mailed to you, please call us or e-mail your updated address and contact information: (954) 565-8885 pvaf@aol.com

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Sports	Jose Gonzalez
VAVAS, Miami	
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Raul Acosta, NSO Miami VA Health Care Center 1201 North West 16th Street, Room 1C-139

Miami, Florida 33125

305-575-7180 or 800-795-3591

Fax: 305-575-7181

#### **PVA SERVICE OFFICE**

VA Regional Office P.O. Box 1437 St. Petersburg, Florida 33731-9968 727-319-7470 or 800-795-3594

## President's Message

Juan Perez PVAF Chapter President

The year 2022 ended beautifully with over 200 people attending our Christmas Luncheon at the Miami VAMC SCI/D unit courtyard. The event was filled with good food, lost of laughter and fun! Thanks to all who volunteered to make the event memorable. Their smile and attentiveness helped to make our veterans feel special, appreciated and joyful.



Our Super Bowl party at the Miami VA SCI/D Dayroom stared out the New Year right. Many patients and other members attended to cheer on their favorite team. They munched on chicken wings, sandwiches and other goodies provided by PVAF and all accounts had and enjoyable time.

The PVA Annual Site Visit at the Miami VA Medical Center took place on January 18th and January 19th. I represented our Chapter along with our NSO Raul Acosta and I am happy to say that everything went extremely well. The SCI/D Unit looked great and the VA Staff did a good job putting it all together. On the day preceding the Visit some of our members met with team to discuss issues concerning them.

Paralyzed Veterans of America Awareness Month begins the first of April. We have sent requests for proclamation to several municipalities in our area and already received a few in the nail. I will be attending some City Commission Meeting to received proclamations as other members of our Board of Directors will also be doing. Our Chapter will also be participating in this year's Mercedes Corporate Run in downtown Miami along with staff from the Miami VA Medical Center on April 27, 2023. Every year tens of thousands of people participate in this Run and it affords a great opportunity to spread awareness. The Miami VA provides bus transportation for our athletes that will be hand cycling in the event so those of you who would like to be a part of its are encouraged to be at the SCI/D parking lot early afternoon to board the bus as it is next to impossible to find parking at the venue. Parking at the Miami VA and the train is another option for getting there.

This year, we will be having our elections for the Board of Directors for the Paralyzed Veterans of America Florida Chapter. We encourage our members to run for the Board so we can have diversity in leadership. President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary. There are six directors' positions for a Board of Directors. If you are interested in participating in any of these positions please let us know. If you plan on running for a position is March 09, 2023. In order to be placed on the ballot you will have to have your certification of membership completed by this date. For any assistance with this please free to contact the Chapter office (954) 565-8885 or email me pvaf@aol.com.

Remember for sports we have the bowling team that meets on Fridays. We are asking our membership that if you moved to please contact the office with your current address.

I sincerely thank our entire member and it is always an honor to be your PVAF President.

Juan Perez President PVAF





#### **Calendar of Events 2023**

#### **March 2023**

March 02, 2023

Pizza Ďay Miami VA

#### March 09, 2023

General Membership Meetng Miami VA Medical Center VA Auditorium

#### March 21, 2023

BOD Meeting PVAF Office

#### **April 2023**

April 06, 2023

Pizza Day Miami VA

#### **April 18, 2023**

BOD Meeting PVAF Office

#### **May 2023**

May 04, 2023

Pizza Day Miami VA

#### May 16, 2023

BOD Meeting PVAF Office

#### Visit us on the web @WWW.PVAFL.ORG

#### **Membership Report**

As of March 31, 2023 PVA Florida Chapter membership consists of 352 regular Members & 122 Associates Members:

PVA Florida Chapter welcomes new member:

#### The Sunshine

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First Nation Group	8
Mobility Works	12
Mobius Mobility	18
Ocean Conversions and Mobility	23
Rollx Vans	24

#### **VA Facilities**

#### **Veterans Health Administration**

Toll-Free Hotline (medical care) 1-877-222-8387

#### **VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg**

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#### **VA Insurance Center**

(VA Insurance) PO Box 42954 Philadelphia, PA 19101 1-800-669-8477

#### **VA Health Administrative Center:**

(CHAMPVA and Spina Bida health care) CHAMPVA inquiries: PO Box 65023, Denver, CO 80206-5023 CHAMPVA claims: PO Box 65024, Denver, CO 80206-5024 Spina Bida inquiries and claims: PO Box 65025, Denver, CO 80206-5025 1-800-733-8387

#### **VA Loan Guaranty Eligibility Center**

(Certificates of eligibility) PO Box 20729 Winston Salem, NC 27120 1-888-244-6711

#### **National Cemetery Administration**

Office of Memorial Programs:
(Headstones & markers)
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20420
1-800-697-6947
Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) Unit
Chicago VA Regional Office
1-800-829-4833

#### **Miami VA Health Care Medical Center:**

1201 NW 16 Street Miami, FL 33125 1-888-276-1785

#### **VA Outpatient Clinic**

9800 West Commercial Blvd. Sunrise, FL 33351 Phone: (954) 475-5500

#### **VA Medical Center**

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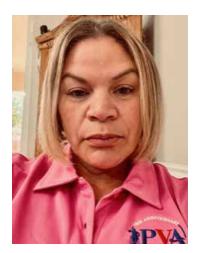
### **Vice President**

#### Maria M. Miranda Benitez

Dear fellow veterans and PVA members.

I hope that you are all well, and are ready for the amazing events that the PVAF and PVA will be hosting this spring/summer. We invite you and your families to enjoy the events we are planning, such as sporting events, and fun outdoor activities! We would love to hear any suggestions you or your loved ones may have, and encourage you to reach out via email with any ideas for new events we can incorporate into our schedule.

A lot has been going on over the past few months. We have gone through an audit and an inspection, we have participated in sporting events and competitions, took part in the Advocacy Seminar, made a visit to Capitol Hill, as well as having made sure that our members are well taken care of. As we continue to move forward, the Paralyzed Veterans of America Florida Chapter will continue to ensure that our SCI/D patients and SCI/D clinics are well maintained and looked after.



Our Advocacy Director, Redzuan Razak, was unable to attend the Advocacy Seminar due to an illness, and we all hope that he is feeling better; however, I had the privilege of not only attending the Advocacy Seminar, but visiting Capitol Hill as well. Gathering with the other chapter members, and learning how we interact with the senators and congressmen was a very humbling and amazing experience. All three Florida chapters worked together to advocate for our members, and I would like to thank John DeMauro and Timothy Wolfe from PVA Central Florida, as well as Angel Overly and David Christopher from PVA Gulf Coast Chapter for their combined efforts. Together, we learned about the new laws that are currently on the floor that directly affect our community, that our elected representatives will be voting on. We were able to voice our views on this potential legislation and let our representatives know why these matters were of the utmost importance to us, as PVA members. This is the most humbling experience I have ever had in my life, not just because we were talking with Senator Rick Scott, but rather, because I was able to play a part in representing the community at large, and conveyed what is important to SCI/D patients, SCI/D clinics, to the VA Hospital, and the VA staff. There is so much that we as SCI/D patients, and as veterans are still fighting for. I implore each of you to call or email your congressmen and senators and cosponsor the following acts, and let them know that if they truly want to support members of the PVA, they should vote in favor of:

- \*Elizabeth Dole Home and Community Based Services for Veterans and Caregivers Act (H.R. 542/S. 141)
- \*VA CAREERS ACT (S. 10)
- \*BUILD for Veterans Act (S. 42)
- \*Justice for ALS Veterans Act
- \*Major Richard Star Act (S. 344)
- \*Air Carrier Access Amendments Act (H.R. /S. 545)
- \*Stop the Wait Act (H.R. 833/S. 320)

In sports, we team up with Miami-Dade County to bring you the following spring events!

Mondays: Wheelchair softball at Tamiami Park on Miracle Field at 10:00 AM.

Tuesdays: Archery at Camp Matecumbe from 10 AM to 12 PM, also at Camp Matecumbe is Pickleball from 12 PM to 2 PM. Boccia at Sunrise Center from 1 PM to 3 PM.

Wednesdays: Trapshooting at Trail Glades Range from 10 AM to 12 PM.

Fridays: Bowling at AMF Bowling, Pembroke Pines from 3 PM to 6 PM.

On March 3rd and 4th, we teamed up with the VA Hospital for some of our veterans to receive wheelchair lacrosse lessons at Miami Roller Rink at 3:50 PM. On March 14th we had over ten veterans attend a scuba diving certification class at Pompey Park in Delray. Let's go outside, let's get together, and let's enjoy each other's company. Greatness has no age!

Maria M. Miranda Vice President Paralyzed Veterans of America Florida Chapter







## Scuba Diving for Paralyzed Veterans

Raul Acosta

My name is Raul Acosta, and I am a National Service Officer (NSO) at Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) located in Miami, Florida. As your local NSO, I would like to share with you some of the initiatives PVA and PVAF have been following this past year. In collaboration with our VA staff and support from our local PVAF Chapter, we have been able to allow our chapter members to fulfill one of their goals to learn, or to continue to scuba dive. It had been brought to our attention that many veterans are Scuba Certified, however many lack the support of having a buddy diver or the safety of knowing who they are partnering up with when wanting to scuba dive. Through the partnerships between our Miami VA and outside non-profit organizations such as Life Waters, we have been able to educate staff and increase the confidence or our scubility divers. This increases the amount of PVA members who dive and maintains their active dive status, preventing any need for refresher courses which can be a financial burden for many of our veterans. This past year, we completed a total of three dives to support that mission and increase our veteran's dives.

Scuba diving has been recognized as a great therapeutic modality within the veteran community. It has been helpful in decreasing stress, anxiety, and providing an overall sense or calmness, adding more physical and mental health benefits to disabled veterans by being submerged in open waters.

The last time the PVA Chapter supported scuba diving for its veterans, the location for the dive was at Conch Republic Divers out of Tavernier, located in the Florida Keys. As per the accounts of our chapter members the abundance of sea life and calmness of the water was amazing thanks to a multidisciplinary team of scuba divers which included Medical Doctors, Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, Recreational Therapist, Nurses, and of course volunteers. I personally had the pleasure of interviewing one of our very own veterans who caught the scuba diving bug and immediately got hooked into this new diving adventure. That diver accounted his diving experience and expressed how he experienced seeing nurse sharks and how "they're like puppy dogs, rolling over to get belly rubs, it was an amazing thing to witness".

Every dive is a new experience and a new challenge for our PVA members and PVA is proud to provide veterans with the resources and opportunities to challenge themselves and advance their diving skills, creating long-term camaraderie with others, which is all part of the PVAF chapters mission.





## **Classified Ads**

Spokesman classified section is provided at no cost to PVAF members. Please call Juan Perez by the first of the month prior to publication if you would like to advertise with us: (954) 565-8885.

If you are interested in ensuring quality health care, wheelchair sports, recreation, advocacy, ADA education and helping to improve the lives of t hose with SCI/D call today to Become a PVAF Associate Member! (954) 565-8885





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# Is a Keto Diet a Good Diet for MS Patients?

Yira M Rojas MSN Nurse Educator for the Nursing Development and Professional Team Miami VA Healthcare System 2/15/23

A keto diet comprises of foods that are low in starch like vegetables, low-sugar fruits and has adequate amount of meat and seafood with high fat content. One could also eat healthy fat like avocado and cook with coconut oil. This author recently read an article found in UVAToday titled Ketogenic Diet Shows Major Benefits for Multiple Sclerosis and summarizes that Multiple sclerosis patients who assume a ketogenic diet may see health improvements on multiple fronts, recent study co-authored Josh Barney University of Virginia (UVA) Health, disclose: Patients with relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis who adopted a high-fat, low-carbohydrate ketogenic diet saw significant improvements in their MS. It was noted that a reduction in neurological disability like fatigue and depression. A ketogenic diet can heighten overall quality of life, the study finds.

The ketogenic diet is widespread for weight loss and amongst those who wish to improve their health. The study consisted of 65 volunteers with relapsing-remitting MS, which is an inflammatory condition in which the immune system attacks the myelin that is the protective layer around nerves which causes a communication problem between the brain and the spinal cord. The article states: "The ketogenic diet mimics the body's fasting state. To do this, it cuts carbohydrates dramatically and replaces them with healthy fats and protein. As a result, the body relies on fat as a primary energy source (as opposed to carbs/sugars). A person on a ketogenic diet, for example, might eat a hamburger with no bun and a side of brussels sprouts with bacon. The traditional side of french fries would not be allowed - while fries are high in fat, they're also loaded with carbohydrates, which are used as sugars by the body. Consuming excess carbs would defeat the point of keto, which is to minimize the body's sugar reserves" (Barney, 2023).

Summary of the new study showed that 80% of patient with MS who adhered to the ketogenic diet for six months loss body fat and reported substantial improvements in fatigue and depression. Dr. Brenton reported that a patient on this diet were timed for six minutes. The patient walked faster and farther as compared to the prior to the diet. There was also a "reductions in total body fat and enhanced fine motor speed, as well as improved fatigue, depression and quality of life scores and beneficial changes in inflammatory blood markers" (Barney, 2023). Their findings concluded that the ketogenic diet is safe in the short-term and can potentially be effective in improving MS-related symptoms.

Dr. Brenton states, that research on the ketogenic diet validates the possibility of nutritional variations in patients with MS but also the possible benefits that could arise from a diet change. To find information on the data gathered during this research, the article stated, the researcherswill present their findings at the American Academy of Neurology's 74th annual meeting in April in Seattle. They also plan to submit the results to a peer-reviewed journal. The research team consisted of Brenton, Diana Lehner-Gulotta, Emma Woolbright, Rachael Coleman, Mark Conaway, Brenda Banwell, Christina Bergqvist and Myla Goldman. To keep up with the latest medical research news from UVA, subscribe to the Making of Medicine blog. Media Contact Josh Barney UVA Health jdb9a@virginia.edu 434-906-8864 Article Information March 2, 2022 /content/ketogenic-diet-shows-major-benefits-multiple-sclerosis.

### **SPORTS REPORT**

Hello everyone here are the event's that we have for your enjoyment!!!!

We team up with Miami Dade County to bring you these event!!

MONDAY we have Wheelchair Softball at Tamiami Park on Miracle Field at 10 am.

<u>TUESDAY</u> we have Archery at Camp Matecumbe form 10am to 12pm And also at Camp Matecumbe they will have Pickleball from 12pm to 2pm Also we have have Boccia at Sunrise center from 1pm to 3pm

**WEDNESDAY** we have Trapshooting at trail glades range from 10am to 12pm

FRIDAY we have bowling at AMF Bowling Pembroke Pines from 3pm to 6pm

MARCH 3RD AND 4TH we team up with the Va hospital for some of our veterans to learn Wheelchair Lacrosse lessons at Miami Roller Rink from 10am to 4pm both day's.

<u>MARCH 14TH</u> we will have over 10 veterans trying to get there scuba diving certificate class will be held at Pompey Park in Delray

JULY 3RD The National Veterans Wheelchair Games will be held in Portland, Oregon

-10th registration is open until April 5th. We are planning to take about 20 veterans so far.







### **PVA Florida Clubhouse Birthdays**

PVAF, Improving the Lives of Those with Spinal Cord Injury and Disease

#### **March Birthday**

Charles W. Dawson March 01
James M. Geoghegan March 01
James Bayonne March 01
Jack Richman March 03
John K. Davis March 03
Zabariel Moss March 03
Ronnie R. Bell March 04
Donald K. Brewster March 09
Francisco A. Abreu March 09
Frank Bonna March 10
Daniel B. Evans March 10
Nicholas D. Berger March 12
Albert C. Banfe, Jr March 13
Ronald McGinnis March 13
Rosalind S. Russell March 13
Steven Holloway, Jr March 13
Norris A. Daughtry March 15
James J. Hutson March 16
Robert H. Goldman March 16
Arthur Chaykin March 18
Gena S. Chavis March 18
Joe P. Buscher March 21
Eric N. Zimmerman March 22
Runar G. Polluson March 22
Dallas F. Lutz March 25
Frank M. Casey March 25
Charles Alston March 28
Philip L. Cohen March 28
Gregory L. Walsh March 28
Raymond S. Carroll March 29
Donald M. McCormack . March 29
Paul R. DeNardis March 29
Gerardo B. Couzo March 29
Rhett C. Chalk March 31

#### **April Birthday**

7 tp Dirtiiday	
Noel W. Burns	
Edward Gay	
Eliseo A. DeMorizi	April 04
Leo E. Myzick	April 04
William E. Owens	April 05
Julia A. Torres	
Randall T. Derais	
Rickey W. Johnson	April 08
Henry McDuffie	April 09
Donald R. Thomas	April 09
Thomas J. Franklin	April 12
Francis Wenke	April 12
Walter L. Bembry	April 13
Carl D. Domenici	April 13
Gregory M. Risko	April 15
Jesus M. Sanchez	
Isabel P. Saavedra	
Salvatore Albani	•
Morton Binder	•
John E. Engel	
Lawrence C. Holland	
George V. Warren	
Benjamin F. Bowers	
Lorene Price	
Edward A. Quinto	
Anthony C. Smith	
Brad W. Cotton	April 21
Lawrence R. Hawkins	
Richard A. Raines	
Harvey T. Horvitz	
Anita Miller	
Jean Augustin	
Robert Bibeau	
Jason Picaro	
Thomas W. Ohlson	
Edward Toro	
Lawara 1010	, \pi ii 2 /

#### **May Birthday**

Roberta J. Unzicker	-
Fernando Del Busto	
Leo L. Maniace	. May 03
Carlos Perez	. May 03
Charles Holt	
Johnnie Shinhoster, Jr	. May 06
Joseph A. Del Vecchio	. May 07
Claude Williams	. May 08
Alan F. Troop	
Gregory D. Leathers	. May 08
Robert D. Luiz	. May 09
lan Vaquero	. May 09
William L. Rambo	.May 10
Robert L. DeLong	. May 10
Maria R. Perez	. May 12
Juan C. Zambrana	. May 13
Nury Carvajal	.May 14
Juanita E. Doering	. May 15
James P. Weist	
Howard Axler	.May 16
Larry L. Moreland	
John D. Anderson	
Robert G. Robles	. May 19
James Kirkland	
Gerald D. Ellis	
Troy D. Conquest	. May 20
Frederick V. Pearce	
John D. DelColle	
James F. Gunn	
Steven E. Rothstein	
John B. Glass	. May 24
John H. Pera	. May 25
Gary M. Pearce	
Gary David	
Bridget M. Roberts	
Karen L. Blue	
luan P Soto	-

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## **Wheelchair Repairs**

As SCI veterans we are largely dependent upon our prosthetic equipment to take care of even the most mundane tasks. This is especially true with our wheelchairs. The major problem with being so dependent on our wheelchairs is that if our equipment fails, then we become completely disabled in the purest of sense. Therefore, if we find ourselves facing equipment failure, it is imperative that we get our wheelchair repaired as quickly as possible.

Because SCI veterans are so dependent upon their wheelchairs, they are entitled to a primary wheelchair and a backup wheelchair because of the potential for equipment failure. Therefore, it is in the veterans best interest to discuss obtaining a backup wheelchair with his/her Primary Care Provider (PCP). This backup wheelchair should be of equal quality to your primary chair for those times when the primary chair is being repaired or is otherwise unavailable.

The Veteran's Health Administration (VHA) uses a Hub and Spoke model to serve our SCI veterans. In Florida there are two Hub facilities. These facilities are located in the cities of Tampa and Miami. There are also six Spoke facilities in Florida which are located in Bay Pines, West Palm, Orlando, Viera, Gainesville and Lake City. Each individual facility processes prosthetic repairs differently. VHA generally requires that everything be initiated by the patient's PCP. In some instances, the veteran can initiate the consult by going directly to the vendor and having the vendor contact the VA Facility, however, that is not the preferred method and if the veteran chooses this method, it may quickly become a very frustrating experience. Both Miami and Tampa are Hub facilities and have wheelchair repair technicians on site, to make it possible for the veteran to go directly to the technicians for any minor repairs. Please keep in mind that these facilities generally prefer for the veteran to use a contracted vendor to complete the repairs and for extensive repairs, the onsite technician at the facility will assign the repair to a vendor.







# Chapter Article for March 2023 Pact Act

On August 10, 2022 the SFC Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxins Act of 2022, also referred to as the PACT Act became law. This law was passed to allow veterans who had served in Southwest Asia and other theatres to register with their VAMC, receive treatment, and file claims due to their exposure to toxins from burn pits and oil well fires during Gulf War and Global War on Terror military service. There was also a provision for Vietnam Veterans in which service connection would be granted for hypertension and for Monoclonal Gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS, a blood disorder), if they served in Vietnam and were exposed to Agent Orange.

The VA also expanded the areas in which Agent Orange exposure would be conceded to include the following:

- Thailand at any United States or Royal Thai base during the period beginning January 9,1962 to June 30, 1976, regardless of where on the base you were located or what military job specialty you performed.
- •Laos during the period beginning December 1, 1965 to September 30, 1969.
- •Cambodia at Mimot or Krek, Kampong Cham Province, during the period beginning April 16, 1969, to April 30, 1969.
- •Guam or American Samoa, or in the territorial waters thereof, during the period beginning January 9, 1962, to July 31, 1980.
- •Johnston Atoll, or on a ship that called at Johnston Atoll, during the period beginning January 1, 1972, to September 30, 1977.

Many Vietnam veterans have previously been denied service connection for Agent Orange presumptives because the requirements to concede exposure outside of Vietnam proper had been more rigid. Contrasting with what occurred in the case of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus in which the VA had to pay retroactive benefits back to the original date of claim under Nehmer, veterans can only get service connected for hypertension or MGUS effective August 10, 2022, the date of the law. What we did not know is whether vets who served in the listed areas can be granted service connection for other Agent Orange presumptives such as Prostate Cancer or other conditions. This also means that if a vet passed from a condition due to hypertension prior to the date of this law, we do not know whether his or her surviving spouse would be entitled to receive Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, Service connected burial grant or Dependents Educational Assistance. There is a likelihood that some legal entity may file a lawsuit to attach Nehmer provisions to Hypertension and MGUS. Until that happens we need to operate in the legal environment that we currently find ourselves and secure the maximum benefits possible for our Members and clients.

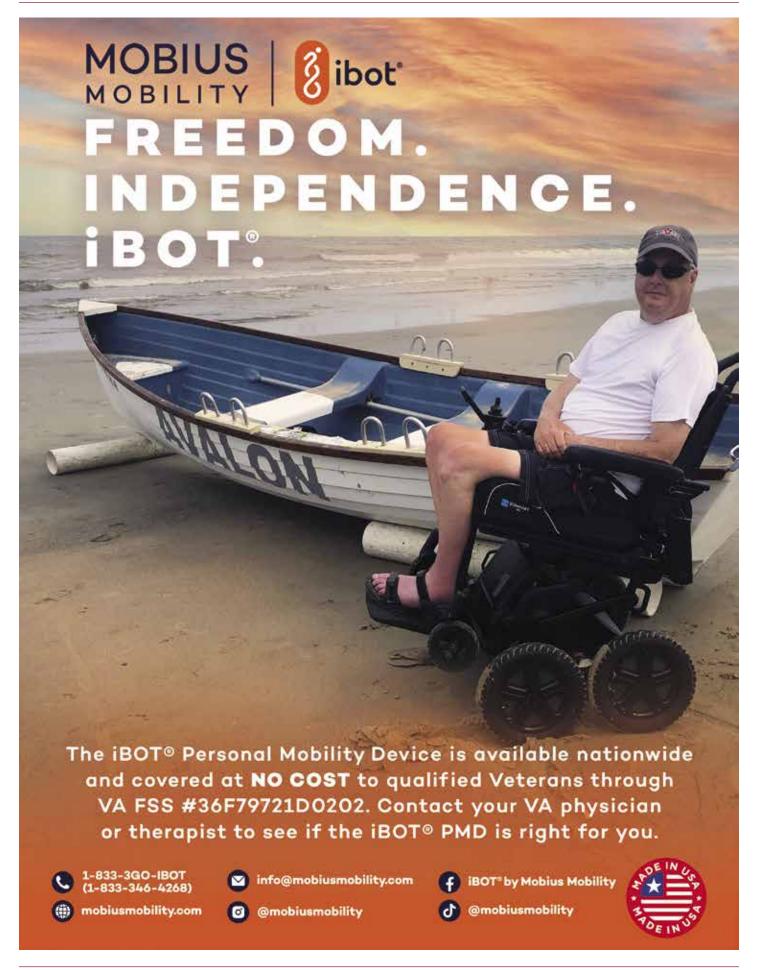
The VA has sent out invitational letters to Vietnam Veterans who would potentially benefit from this law. VA will send out a separate letter to Gulf War and Global War on Terrorism veterans who served in Southwest Asia and other enumerated theaters to have them register with their VAMC's, seek treatment and potentially file claims for conditions due to their exposure to toxins from burn pits and oil well fires. There are many conditions VA will accept as presumptives to include:

- Brain cancer
- Gastrointestinal cancer of any type
- Glioblastoma
- Head cancer of any type
- Kidney cancer
- Lymphatic cancer of any type
- Lymphoma of any type
- Melanoma
- Neck cancer
- Pancreatic Cancer
- Reproductive cancer of any type
- Squamous cell carcinoma of the larynx
- Squamous cell cancer of the trachea
- Adenocarcinoma of the trachea
- Salivary gland-type tumors of the lung
- Sarcomatoid carcinoma of the lung
- Typical and atypical carcinoid of the lung
- Respiratory (breathing-related) cancer of any type

Non-cancers include Asthma that was diagnosed after service, Chronic bronchitis; Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD); Chronic rhinitis; Chronic sinusitis; Constrictive bronchiolitis or Obliterative bronchiolitis; Emphysema; Granulomatous disease; Interstitial lung disease (ILD); Pleuritis; and Pulmonary fibrosis. Veterans who have potential claims they wish to file should contact their nearest Paralyzed Veterans of America National Service Officer for assistance and advice.











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