

# RT '15

Rollin' Times from the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America



Board Member, Robert Vance, enjoys the newly opened, fully accessible, park in Novi at MPVA's Awareness Day.





PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA  
**MICHIGAN CHAPTER**



## About this Issue:

The MPVA held their Annual Awareness Day this past April at the Novi Civic Center and enjoyed the launch of a fully accessible new park located in Novi! See the President's Article for more details!

### MPVA Officers and Directors

President..... Kevin G. Elya	Director..... John Dusa
Vice President..... David Peck	Director..... Teresa Kamphorst
Secretary..... Clark Shuler	Director..... Scot Severn
Treasurer..... Timothy Agajeenian	Director..... Bob Vance

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### Disclaimer:

The Rollin' Times is a publication of the Michigan Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America. It is designed to inform the members of the PVA and other interested parties on veterans' issues, legislation, legal decisions, medical technology and other matters deemed to be relevant to the disability community.

The contents of this publication do not always reflect the views or policies of Michigan PVA, and no endorsement or approval is made or should be inferred with respect to products or services advertised herein. Consult an appropriate professional before making use of any product or service mentioned.

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## Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America

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Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America (MPVA) is one of 34 member chapters of Washington, D.C.-based Paralyzed Veterans of America. A Congressionally chartered veterans service organization, MPVA has been assisting veterans with spinal cord injuries or diseases, including Multiple Sclerosis and ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, better known as Lou Gehrig's Disease), in Michigan since 1961.

MPVA programs include:

- Veterans' Benefits
- Wheelchair Sports and Recreation
- Spinal Cord Injury Research
- Equipment Donation
- Advocacy to eliminate architectural barriers and protect civil rights for persons with disabilities
- Referral Services for assistive devices, housing, employment and transportation
- Literature on a variety of topics including self-care, independent living, and disability rights.
- The Pump Guide: an online directory of gas stations throughout Michigan that will pump gas at the self-serve price for persons with disabilities.
- MPVA is a nonprofit organization and receives no federal funding. MPVA relies on grants, sponsorships, and private and corporate donations to support its programs.

The MPVA headquarters is in Novi, Michigan. Our service officers are based out of the McNamara Federal Building in Downtown Detroit.

*The Ad Agency*

Design & Art Production 734-678-7928



# President's Report

By Kevin G. Elya, President, MPVA

## MPVA Awareness Day a Huge Success!

In April, the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America (MPVA) celebrated Paralyzed Veterans Awareness Month with our national office and the other 34 PVA Chapters across the country. We highlighted the challenges veterans with spinal cord injury/disease (SCI/D) face and educating the public about the programs, services and support the MPVA provides to those injured veterans and their families.

PVA Awareness Month was created with the hope of sharing the mission of service and its countless accomplishments with our nation's citizens. Many Americans are unaware of the PVA's existence or the organization's important contributions to the disability community. While we have Chapters and Service Offices across the nation, PVA is much smaller than most veterans' service organizations because of its stringent membership criteria.

PVA Awareness Month is our opportunity to let Americans know we are here and continuing to serve! This is achieved by planning activities throughout the month to educate the public about MPVA and to demonstrate how we "make a difference" in the lives of paralyzed veterans and others with disabilities.

The MPVA will be making financial donations to the Detroit, Ann Arbor, Battle Creek, Saginaw and Iron Mountain VA Medical Centers in support of their VA Volunteer Services program. The Grand Rapids and D.J. Jacobetti State Home for Veterans will receive financial contributions for their member services program. We are honored to make these donation to such worthy programs because their work is a priceless asset to our nation's veterans and to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

We were extraordinarily lucky to have such beautiful weather for this year's MPVA Awareness Day held on April 24, 2015. Because we had outgrown the MPVA Chapter office, this year's Awareness Day was held at the spacious Novi Civic Center. The additional space allowed people to freely move about without having to encounter barriers and increase the number of vendors displaying their products. We want to thank the City of Novi for allowing us to use their facility.

A ribbon cutting ceremony took place in recognition of the grand opening of the Power Park Adaptive Playground. The fully-accessible playground provides the opportunity for all kids to play with its inclusively designed ramps, bridges, and transfer stations. We want to thank the Novi Department of Parks & Recreation for allowing the MPVA to review the playground architectural drawings prior to construction to ensure that it was built in compliance with federal accessibility guidelines.

MPVA members, community leaders and the attending public had an opportunity to compare and review independent and assisted living products and services. This was a chance for us to honor all those who have contributed to MPVA successes. These individuals have committed their time, talents, and money to allow us to accomplish our mission.

Due to the generous support of the MPVA staff, volunteers and sponsors, this year's Awareness Day was a huge success. Everyone's contribution truly made a difference and I cannot thank those who came out to support the day enough.

At this time, however, I would like to especially thank the list of sponsors who came out that day

and supported the MPVA's mission: **Brain Injury Association of Michigan, Camp Liberty, Creative Mobility Group, Detroit VA Sleep Research Lab, DTE Energy, Eisenhower Center, Foundation for American Veterans, Fusion Medical, Gresham Driving Aids, Helping Hand Home Health Care, Peer Support, Pete Monismith, Providence Hospital, Robin Bennett, Strength Training & Recovery, The Standing Company, Transitions**

**Remodeling, Wheelchair Getaways, White Horse Therapy, Wright and Filippis**

*Please see the inside back cover of this issue which features photos of the MPVA's 2015 Annual Awareness Day.*



MPVA Vice President, David Peck, takes a moment to pose on the flight deck at USS Midway in San Diego at the National PVA Directors Convention this past May.



# Executive Director's Report

By Mike Harris, Executive Director, MPVA

## MPVA Opposes Senate Bill 248

In 1972, Governor William Milliken championed the enactment of our state's no-fault auto insurance system. If you have a catastrophic accident in Michigan, your medical expenses, wage loss, replacement services, and damages caused to other people's property are covered. These benefits are paid out of the Michigan Catastrophic Claims Association (MCCA); a private, nonprofit, association.

As of 2014/15, insurance companies collect approximately \$186 per vehicle (including tax) to cover catastrophic claims. Under Michigan No-Fault, the insurer pays the claim and is reimbursed by the MCCA for medical costs exceeding \$535,000. There is currently around \$20 billion in the MCCA.

Yet, in 2011 and 2013, Governor Rick Snyder's proposed no-fault reforms failed to garner the necessary legislative support. Similar efforts to restrict this coverage took place in both 1992 and 1994 via a statewide vote.

Now, we have another proposal to restrict coverage without any assurances that it will save taxpayers and motorists money. Most importantly, this proposal will also threaten motorists' assurance of care should they be catastrophically injured.

This plan, entitled Senate Bill 248, would drastically change the state's auto no-fault law by cutting reimbursements to medical providers. It passed through the Senate on April 16, 2015 after just one hearing. One week later, the House Insurance Committee approved its version of the bill on a party line vote, despite strong objection from health care providers, legal experts and consumer advocates.

Those in objection site the following issues, saying that the bill will:

- Create an auto insurance fraud prevention authority
- Investigate everyone but not insurance companies

- Create an entirely new catastrophic claims system
- Impose a \$15 per-hour limit for in-home provided care regardless of the skill level required to safely care for the auto accident survivor
- Apply a "Workers Compensation" fee for health care provided under the auto no-fault system, despite the fact that workers compensation is not designed to address catastrophic injuries

This no-fault bill is a massive handout to insurance companies at the expense of motorists and patients. It will do nothing to ensure payer relief. We should not be sacrificing the care of those seriously injured just to cushion insurance company profits.

Senate Bill 248 includes provisions to reduce insurance premiums by \$100 per year, per vehicle, but only for two years. This provision does not address the current excessively high rates paid by urban drivers, particularly those in Detroit, who pay some of the highest premiums in the state.

Senate Bill 248 also designates a \$150,000 appropriation. This makes the bill referendum-proof because voters cannot vote on appropriations; an absurdity considering that voters have rejected changes to our no-fault system at the ballot box twice before.

While we always hope that we will not be severely injured in an accident while driving a vehicle, or riding as a passenger, there is the possibility that it could happen. Therefore, deliberately drafting a bill that influences our current auto-no fault system, and writing it in a manner that eliminates the challenge of that legislation, is a slap in the face to each person who pays insurance. The fact that this was allowed to happen disappoints me more than the actual statute being proposed on Michigan no-fault.

Many may not realize that our service men and women make up a large portion of those injured in

...continued on page 8

# FIREWORKS-FREE FOURTH



For our veterans and others who prefer a quieter way to celebrate the Fourth of July, the following Michigan State Parks are located away from community fireworks shows:

- Bewabic State Park (Iron Co.)
- Brighton Recreation Area-Bishop Lake Campground (Livingston Co.)
- Cheboygan State Park (Cheboygan Co.)
- Craig Lake State Park (Baraga Co.)
- Hayes State Park (Lenawee Co.)
- Lake Hudson State Park (Lenawee Co.)
- Leelanau State Park (Leelanau Co.)
- Menominee River State Recreation Area (Dickinson Co.)
- Orchard Beach State Park (Manistee Co.)
- Rifle River Recreation Area (Ogemaw Co.)
- Sleepy Hollow State Park (Clinton Co.)
- Wells State Park (Menominee Co.)



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For more details, visit  
[Michigan.gov/recreationpassport](http://Michigan.gov/recreationpassport).



\*Ground-level fireworks such as sparklers, fountains and other novelties will still be permitted.



# Guest Article

By: Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA)

## Summer Recreation Opportunities Abound for Michigan Veterans

**A**s summer gets into swing, there are many ways to enjoy all Michigan has to offer, and veterans have access to especially unique opportunities throughout the state.

Although there are many programs and organizations looking to serve veterans, one of the biggest challenges is getting information out about all that is available, says Scott Fraser of Team River Runner.

Team River Runner, with chapters in Battle Creek and Marquette, hosts kayaking and fishing outings for disabled veterans. However, Fraser says that all veterans whether physically disabled, experiencing stress or readjusting to life at home, can benefit from recreational programs.

Fraser is also involved with Heroes on the Water (HOW), an organization that provides recreational therapy with certified instructors through water sports.

BAD CO, which stands for Behavioral Advancement Despite Common Obstacles, is a group of recent combat veterans that aims to help with readjustment through group experiences. Activities include hiking, biking, paint ball, rock climbing and attending sporting events.

Other organizations serving veterans through recreation include Team Red, White and Blue, a national organization with several chapters throughout Michigan; and Freedom's Finest Outdoors, a local non-profit organization. Based in Lansing, Freedom's Finest Outdoors provides archery, golf, hunting and camping among its many activities and events.

The State of Michigan offers disabled veterans hunting and fishing licenses at no cost, as well as free access to state parks. For veterans who are interested, the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA) and the DNR are hosting quieter celebrations at several state parks this Fourth of July. These parks are away from community fireworks displays, but sparklers and other small novelty fireworks will be allowed. Twelve state parks will participate in the Fireworks-Free Fourth celebration, including:

- Bewabic State Park (Iron County)
- Brighton Recreation Area-Bishop Lake Camp (Livingston County)
- Cheboygan State Park (Cheboygan County)
- Craig Lake State Park (Baraga County)
- Hayes State Park (Lenawee County)
- Lake Hudson Recreation Area (Lenawee County)
- Leelanau State Park (Leelanau County)
- Menominee River State Recreation Area (Dickinson County)
- Orchard Beach State Park (Manistee County)
- Rifle River Recreation Area (Ogemaw County)
- Sleepy Hollow State Park (Clinton County)
- Wells State Park (Menominee County)

For more information on recreational opportunities open to veterans in Michigan, call 800-MICH-VET (800-642-4838) or visit [MichiganVeterans.com](http://MichiganVeterans.com).



...continued from page 5

auto-related accidents. The MPVA's membership consists of a vast majority of automobile, non-service related, spinal cord injuries. The Personal Injury Protection (PIP) coverage provided by Michigan No-Fault has been a tremendous help to our members. This coverage has benefited us in dealing with the many physical, psychological, and financial aspects of this life-altering condition.

To dismantle Michigan No-Fault insurance for some possible cost savings would be devastating for our members and for those who will be injured in weeks, months and years to come. The fact that your insurance company cannot abandon you in your time of need is what makes Michigan's insurance system the best in the country.

It is very easy to go through millions of dollars in medical expenses, and hundreds of thousands in out-of-pocket expenses when the unthinkable occurs. This is why we have an insurance system that acts as a safety net in these times of need. Repealing our

state's no-fault system would have a profound impact on countless Michigan families, businesses, medical providers, jobs, and the overall quality of medical care in our state.

The insurance industry would have everyone believe that the only way to reduce costs is by cutting personal injury benefits which ultimately pushes their expenses onto Medicaid, and restricting accident victim's rights. MPVA believes there are better solutions.

The MPVA believes that the Michigan No-Fault system provides the best insurance value in the country and needs to be maintained. Since the early 1990's insurance companies have been attempting to impose strict controls, reduce benefits and promote other reforms that would eliminate no-fault as it is known in Michigan today.

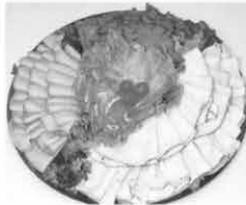
We strongly encourage everyone to contact their Representative in the Michigan House and let them know how you feel about Senate Bill 248's proposed No Fault changes!



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# Government Relations & Advocacy

By: Mike Harris

## PVA Advocacy & Legislative Training Conference

In March, I attend the PVA Advocacy & Legislative Conference in Washington D.C. The primary focus of the seminar was to further educate attendees on the current and future issues facing both the veteran and disability communities.

The conference provided opportunities to hear from PVA national staff, representatives from federal agencies, and other nonprofit organizations. The first day focused on disability advocacy. The issues covered included Social Security, air travel and the Air Carrier Access Act, and the continued challenges with implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

On day two, we focused on veterans-specific concerns. The issues included implementation of P.L. 113-146, the “Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act” (that includes the “Choice” program); prosthetics; protection of specialized services; expansion of the Comprehensive Family Caregiver program in the VA; and beneficiary travel for non-service connected catastrophically disabled veterans. Attendees also heard from staff members representing the majority and minority sides of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans’ Affairs.

Unfortunately, bad weather led to the postponement of PVA’s annual testimony by National President, Al Kovach, Jr., to a joint hearing of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans’ Affairs. However, I was able to spend one full day on Capitol Hill meeting with representatives from the Michigan Congressional Delegation to discuss PVA’s legislative priorities for the 114th Congress.

Despite challenges from the weather, the week proved

to be a successful opportunity to advocate for the wide-ranging issues. The concern that dominated my conversations with legislators this year was the timely delivery of prosthetics devices.

### Timely Delivery of Prosthetic Services

The VA Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service (PSAS) has created a prosthetics and surgical products contracting center within the VA Office of Acquisition and Logistics that is responsible for ordering prosthetic devices that cost \$3,000 or more. This change has resulted in delayed delivery of prosthetic devices, the reduction of quality service delivery for disabled veterans, and prolonged hospital stays for veterans waiting for prosthetic equipment that they need to safely move forward in the rehabilitation process.

The implementation of the warrant transition process has led to an increasing number of veterans languishing in hospitals as in-patients, or confined to their homes without their much needed prosthetic equipment. The VA is not communicating effectively with veterans and stakeholders in the veteran community to learn of the various ways that this change is impacting veterans and the delivery of their care. PVA believes that the order and delivery of prosthetic devices requires more attention than it is currently receiving, and we recommend increased Congressional oversight to bring attention to the negative outcomes that have resulted from this change, and identify ways to address the issues.

Although the warrant transition involves a small percentage of the total workload for VHA, this change includes critical prosthetic devices, such as: artificial limbs, wheelchairs, and surgical implants. Delays in these procurements prove costly to both

the government, in terms of unnecessarily extended hospital stays while awaiting equipment, and veterans' loss of personal independence and quality of life.

The majority of durable medical equipment used by paralyzed veterans exceeds the \$3,000 threshold. Therefore, it only makes sense to increase that amount to \$15,000. The issues that dominated my conversation with legislators this year was the timely delivery of prosthetics devices and the inclusion of reproductive services in VA health care.

Paralyzed Veterans' national office staff is closely following the changes within VA prosthetics and working with VA leadership to ensure that the current changes do not negatively impact veterans. Prosthetics is one of the most important elements of providing disabled veterans quality of life. The Paralyzed Veterans of America will work to make certain that veterans are provided with quality prosthetic devices that meet their needs in a timely manner.



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Paralyzed Veterans  
of America

By: Dan Meckel, National Service Officer

## VA CHANGES ON CLAIMS AND APPEALS THAT YOU NEED TO BE AWARE OF

Starting on March 24, 2015, a veteran and survivors who wish to file a claim for compensation, pension and survivors benefits will be required to use standardized forms to receive a faster more accurate decision on claims and also to file for an appeal.

The idea behind using the standardized forms is to enable claimants to clearly identify the symptoms or conditions for which they are seeking while helping to ensure VA receives the information needed to process their claims. The claims can be both online (via eBenefits) and in paper form to the VA.

The forms was created to streamline the process and make it easier for the veteran to file a claim and be more clear about the specific claims be filed while allowing VA to be able to know exactly what it is the veteran is requesting without any ambiguity. Therefore making the process faster and eliminating the need for VA to either overlook a claim because the intent of the veteran was not clear or the need to go back to the veteran continuously to obtain clarification.

- Veterans may file disability compensation claims online through eBenefits, or by submitting VA Form 21-526EZ, Application for Disability Compensation and Related Benefits.
- Wartime Veterans may file for needs-based pension using VA Form 21-527EZ, Application for Pension.
- Survivors filing claims for dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC), survivors' pension, and accrued benefits must complete VA Form 21-534EZ, Application for DIC, Death Pension, and/or Accrued Benefits.

- Veterans and Survivors who need additional time to gather the information needed to support their claims may use the optional intent to file process. Submission of the new VA Form 21-0966, Intent to File a Claim for Compensation and/or Pension, or Survivors Pension and/or DIC, protects the claimant's effective date while allowing the claimant up to 1 year to collect supporting information and submit the appropriate application form. (see our fact sheet on the intent to file process)

Finally, for veterans wanting to file a notice of disagreement after March 24, 2015, will need to express their disagreement by completing and submitting VA Form 21-0958, Notice of Disagreement. Veterans and their representatives were previously allowed to use the form on an optional basis. However, veterans must now use this form whenever VA provides it to them along with the decision on their disability claim. Veterans and Survivors are not required to use a standardized notice of disagreement form for pension or survivors benefits at this time.

If you have any questions or concerns about what forms you need to use to file a claim or pursue and appeal, please contact your local service officer. Veterans may also download the forms from [www.va.gov/vaforms/](http://www.va.gov/vaforms/) or call 800-827-1000 to have the correct form sent to their home.



# Picture Perfect

**RT '11**  
*Rollin' Times from the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America*



Staff Sgt. Kenneth Hubbard and his young daughter join him for the last few steps of a 23 mile march he did with Sgt. First Class Jason Holley and Sgt. First Class Russell Tansey in order to raise funds for the MPVA.

July/August 2011

**RT '11**  
*Rollin' Times from the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America*



Michael Harris, MPVA Executive Director, takes a moment to reflect at Oakland Hills Memorial Garden's POW/MIA Memorial site. National POW/MIA Recognition Day is on September 16, 2011.

September/October 2011

**RT '14**  
*Rollin' Times from the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America*



MPVA Vice President, David Peck, takes a moment to test drive an Action Track wheelchair at MPVA's Annual Awareness Day this past spring.

Summer Edition 2014

# The Ad Agency

**RT '12**  
*Rollin' Times from the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America*



MPVA Board Director, Teresa Kampowski, gets a golf lesson from Scott Millman of The Simple World of Golf at MPVA's Open House on April 12, 2012.

May/June 2012

**RT '12**  
*Rollin' Times from the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America*



Staff Sgt. Kenneth Hubbard is joined by his daughter, Ali, as he finishes a 23 mile march he completed in support of the MPVA on May 49, 2012.

July/August 2012

**RT '12**  
*Rollin' Times from the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America*



Scott Severin, MPVA Sports Director, wins bronze medal in 2012 Paralympic Games. *Way County of Ohio Park, Ohio - Summer Invitational*

November/December 2012

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**RT '13**  
*Rollin' Times from the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America*



Melissa Stockwell, 2012 Salute to Veterans Gala Keynote Speaker, shares her compelling story.

Photo Courtesy of Bill Lynn

January/February 2013

**RT '13**  
*Rollin' Times from the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America*



This photo was captured by Brenda Wheeler, MPVA Administrative Assistant, while vacationing this past winter at The Horroass Springs Wildlife Park in Florida. The park acts as a rehabilitation center for injured or disabled animals that would not be able to survive in the wild.

March/April 2013

**RT '13**  
*Rollin' Times from the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America*



MPVA Members take time out from playing baseball to present the Plymouth Miracle League with a donation while sharing their outstanding facility during the MPVA's 2013 Membership Picnic.

September/October 2013



# Sports & Recreation

By: Mike Harris

## MPVA Host Successful Wheelchair Lacrosse Clinic



**P**aralyzed Veterans of America, teaming up with Wheelchair Lacrosse USA, Oakland County Parks & Recreation hosted a wheelchair lacrosse clinic for some local wheelchair athletes. During the clinic, May 16-17, 2015, approximately 20 participants learned the basics of wheelchair lacrosse from Wheelchair Lacrosse USA.

Formed in 2009, wheelchair lacrosse has quickly gained support across the country. It is a sport that involves a unique combination of speed, skill, agility, grace, teamwork, and finesse.

The motivation behind the clinic was to create interest within the disability community for wheelchair

lacrosse so the sport can grow. Similar to its field counterpart, wheelchair lacrosse calls for players to swing sticks, poke check each other and slam into each other to force possession of the ball.

Lacrosse does not require too much expensive equipment to play. All you need is a stick, a helmet and some padding. When establishing the rules for wheelchair lacrosse the goal was to keep it as possible to its able-bodied counterpart. The wheelchair version makes only a few modifications, from being played on a hockey rink versus a field to using a no-bounce ball, but all the rules for the game remain the same.

After two days of learning everything about the game, including wheelchair mobility passing and catching, and team defensive and offensive strategy, attendees strapped on their helmets, pads and gloves and broke out into two teams and played a full scrimmage.

We would like to thank Wheelchair Lacrosse USA for donating the gear to accommodate five players. The goal going forward is to partner with Oakland County Parks & Recreation to start a wheelchair lacrosse league.

I want to personally thank Sandy Dorey of Oakland County Parks and Recreation as well as for her time and resources to making the wheelchair lacrosse clinic a huge success.





## 2015 AWARENESS DAY





MICHIGAN PARALYZED  
VETERANS OF AMERICA  
A Member Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America  
40550 Grand River Avenue  
Novi, MI 48375

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Summer Edition 2015

## Valuable Dates for 2015:

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### **Independence Day**

Office Closed July 3rd in observation of holiday



### **MPVA Membership Picnic**

Saturday, July 18th  
10:00 AM-1:30 PM  
Plymouth Miracle League Field  
357 Theodore  
Plymouth, MI 48170  
Bring your baseball glove to play  
from 10 AM-12 PM!  
Lunch from Delilah's Deli served at Noon!



### **Membership Meeting**

**Thursday, August 27th**  
**Counting of Ballots**  
**Luncheon begins at 12:00 Noon and**  
**meeting begins at 1:00 PM**