

RT '26

Rollin' Times from the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America

2026 National Veterans Wheelchair Games Detroit



Summer Edition 2026

About this Issue:

Relive the excitement of the 2026 National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Detroit and Team Michigan's incredible showing! MPVA is also on the move, learn about our new Chapter headquarters in Brighton!

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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.

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 Veterans of America*

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The Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America (MPVA) is a chapter of the 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.
- 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 Brighton, Michigan. Our service officers are based out of the McNamara Federal Building in Downtown Detroit.

The Ad Agency

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President's Report

By: Scot Severn, President, MPVA

Taking Michigan's Voice to Capitol Hill



In June, MPVA Sports Director Ray Brown and I traveled to Washington, D.C., to represent our Chapter at Paralyzed Veterans of America's 2026 Advocacy Legislation Seminar.

We joined roughly 150 PVA Chapter leaders and caregivers from across the country for a day of training on PVA's legislative priorities before taking those issues directly to Congress through nearly 300 meetings on Capitol Hill.

Advocating for Veterans

Among the issues discussed was the Take Care of America's Veterans Act, a legislative package containing several provisions affecting veterans' benefits. PVA supports provisions that would improve benefits for veterans with spinal cord injuries and diseases such as ALS and MS, as well as their families, caregivers and survivors. Those provisions include improvements affecting veterans receiving Special Monthly Compensation,



President Scot Severn and Director Ray Brown meet with U.S. Rep. Tom Barrett during PVA Advocacy Week in Washington, D.C.

At the same time, PVA opposes provisions that would reduce earned disability compensation for veterans with service-connected sleep apnea and tinnitus to fund other veterans' benefits.

It is an important distinction: PVA supports expanding benefits for veterans with catastrophic disabilities, but not by reducing benefits earned by other veterans.

Michigan on Capitol Hill

Armed with the information and training provided by PVA, Ray and I met with members of Michigan's congressional delegation and their staffs to discuss these and other issues affecting paralyzed veterans and people with disabilities.

It was a tiring and hot week in our nation's capital, but it was also an opportunity to make sure Michigan PVA members had a voice on Capitol Hill. We hope we represented our Chapter and its members well.

Recognizing a Disability Rights Advocate

During the week, PVA presented Congressman

Steny Hoyer of Maryland with its 2026 Gordon H. Mansfield Congressional Leadership Award. Congressman Hoyer was recognized for his longstanding work on disability rights, including his role in passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 and the Help America Vote Act of 2002. The award recognizes congressional leadership and support for PVA's priorities in veterans' health care, benefits and disability civil rights.



President Scot Severn and Director Ray Brown discuss issues important to veterans with U.S. Rep. Debbie Dingell on Capitol Hill.

For Ray and me, Advocacy Week was another reminder of an important part of PVA's mission: making sure the voices of paralyzed veterans are heard by those making decisions in Washington.





Executive Director's Report

By: Brian VanSingel, Executive Director, MPVA

Article — A New Home for MPVA

On October 1, Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America will officially open the doors to our new Chapter headquarters in Brighton. After eight years at our current location in Plymouth, this move provides an opportunity to make MPVA more visible, accessible and connected to the veterans and communities we serve.

Our current office has served MPVA well since 2018, but our needs have changed over time. The new headquarters will create a more visible and accessible presence in the community, with direct access from outside and prominent signage on the building and along the road. The new setting will make MPVA easier to find and provide greater opportunities for members, community partners and other veterans to visit, connect with the Chapter and become more involved. Simply put, it will be much easier to stop in and say hello.

Our new location puts MPVA near the intersection of I-96 and U.S. 23, providing convenient highway access from communities throughout Southeast and Mid-Michigan. For many of our members, the new location will make visiting the Chapter headquarters more convenient.

We are also excited about joining a community with a strong commitment to veterans. Nearly 10,000 veterans call Livingston County home, supported by a dedicated county Veteran Services Department, wheelchair-accessible veteran transportation and a local VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic. These resources create opportunities for MPVA to build partnerships, increase awareness of our programs and services, and connect with veterans who may benefit from what our Chapter and PVA have to offer.

Our new headquarters will provide a more practical and efficient space designed around MPVA's current needs, allowing us to remain focused on what matters most: our members, our programs and our mission.

When you're in the area, stop in, say hello and see our new home!



OUR NEW CHAPTER HEADQUARTERS ADDRESS:

Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America

2148 Pless Drive, Suite A

Brighton, MI 48114

MPVA Veterans Day Bowling Event

MPVA Members & Guests Invited

Monday, November 2nd

11:00am – 2:00pm

Gerlach's Bowling Center

151 N. Court St., Lapeer, MI 48446

Bowling at 11am with lunch following at 12pm

Call 248-476-9000 to RSVP





Sports & Recreation

By: Ray Brown, MPVA Sports Director

Taking a Swing at Adaptive Golf

This past July, MPVA was proud to sponsor an adaptive golf outing hosted by Wheelin Team 457 in North Branch, Michigan. MPVA President Scot Severn and yours truly had the opportunity to hit the course and take part in this annual event. Events like this are a great reminder of how far adaptive golf has come and the opportunities the sport can provide for veterans with disabilities.

Opening the Course to Everyone

Golf has traditionally presented challenges for individuals with disabilities, from uneven terrain and inaccessible courses to conventional equipment. Today, improvements in accessibility and adaptive equipment are helping change the game.

Single-rider adaptive golf carts can provide greater mobility and, in some cases, a supported standing position for a swing. Other equipment allows golfers to play from a seated position, while modified clubs and grips can be tailored to an individual's needs.

More Than a Game

For veterans, adaptive golf can offer benefits that go well beyond a scorecard. The sport can help improve balance, coordination, upper-body strength and mobility while getting veterans back into the community and enjoying some friendly competition.

PVA has long been a leader in expanding accessibility. In 1990, PVA helped lead the fight for passage of the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**, the landmark civil rights law that opened doors and expanded access for millions of Americans with disabilities.

PVA has also helped expand opportunities through



adaptive golf. The Paralyzed Veterans Golf Open, launched in 2007, showcases adaptive golf while supporting PVA's veteran employment and career programs.

That's what makes local events like this one so important. They give veterans and others with disabilities the opportunity to get on the course, experience adaptive sports and enjoy the camaraderie that comes with them.

Special thanks to our Chapter for continuing to sponsor opportunities like this.

Cause this is how we roll.



Guest Article

By: MPVA Member, Brandon Simmons

Rolling Detroit: Putting the People Mover to the Accessibility Test



In July, Detroit hosted the National Veterans Wheelchair Games. As a brand-new MPVA member, having joined last December, this was my first opportunity to experience the Games.

Living with Multiple Sclerosis for 25 years, using a scooter on and off for a decade, and navigating life full-time in a wheelchair for the last five years have taught me to look at travel through a specific lens: accessibility.

In June, I joined representatives from MPVA and the

Detroit VA for an accessibility tour of the Detroit People Mover hosted by the Detroit Transportation Corporation. Our goal was simple: experience the system firsthand and see how well it would work for veterans and other visitors using wheelchairs and mobility devices. Here is my take on the experience: the good, the fast, and a few of the hiccups.

The Good News: *Speed, Cost, and Kindness*

Let's start with the best parts. First, the People Mover is free to ride. There are no tickets, fares, or passes to

worry about. Second, it is fast. The elevated rail system makes a loop through downtown Detroit in roughly 15 minutes, providing a convenient way to move between many of the city's major destinations.

During our tour, the People Mover staff were friendly, welcoming, and genuinely helpful.

Navigating the Hiccups

Like anything else in life, a few things require a bit of strategy:

Heavy Doors: While there is a designated wheelchair entrance, the doors are a bit heavy and do not feature an automatic push-button. Depending on your mobility, you may need a hand getting in and out of the station.

Tight Spaces: Once you're on board, there isn't a whole lot of extra room inside the cars. It's a bit tight, but as wheelchair users, we know how to adapt. We can definitely figure it out.

Don't Sweat the Timing: If you are worried about the doors closing on you while boarding, don't be. There is plenty of time to get onto the train. And if the doors encounter you or your chair while closing, they are designed to bounce right back open.

Going Solo? Don't Worry.

If you are traveling to Detroit by yourself, don't let the heavy doors or tight layout discourage you. The Motor City has a lot of heart, and during my experience, there were folks around who were more than willing to step up and lend a hand when needed.

Between the speed of the loop, the direct stop at the convention center, and the helpfulness of others we encountered, the People Mover is a solid option for getting around downtown Detroit. Based on my experience, I highly recommend considering it as a viable transportation option the next time you visit the Motor City.



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By: Stephanie Strickland, Senior National Service Officer

How to Acquire a Military Discharge Upgrade

Getting a military discharge upgraded is difficult but possible, requiring compelling evidence of impropriety, inequity, or post-service rehabilitation. Success depends on demonstrating that the original discharge was improper, that others with similar misconduct received more favorable outcomes, or that you have shown consistently positive conduct and achievement since leaving service.

1. Punitive Discharges: (Handed Down by a Court-Martial). These are the most severe classifications and follow a finding of guilt for serious military offenses.

Dishonorable Discharge: The most severe discharge possible. It is reserved for serious crimes and acts as the equivalent of a felony conviction in civilian life.

Bad Conduct Discharge: (BCD): Also known as a punitive discharge, it is usually handed down by a Special or General Court-Martial for less severe but still substantial offenses (e.g., insubordination, petty theft). While not as harsh as a Dishonorable Discharge, it still strips away most VA benefits.

2. Administrative Discharges: (Separation by Command). These are generally “less favorable” or “bad paper” statuses, but they do not require a criminal conviction in a military court.

Other Than Honorable (OTH): The least favorable administrative discharge. It is issued when a service member's behavior represents a significant departure from military conduct, such as a drug-related incident or civilian misdemeanor. It disqualifies the individual from automatic VA benefits.

General (Under Honorable Conditions): Given when a service member's performance is satisfactory but falls short of the standards required for an Honorable Discharge. It is typically related to minor misconduct or failing to meet service obligations.

Honorable: The highest level of discharge, awarded for excellent military service. It qualifies the veteran for all available benefits and is highly respected in the civilian job market.

Types of Arguments for Upgrades:

- **Impropriety:** The discharge was improperly based on military regulations at the time.
- **Inequity:** Others who committed similar misconduct received more favorable outcomes.
- **Clemency:** You have demonstrated exceptional positive conduct, character, and rehabilitation since your discharge, demonstrating you are a changed person.

Key Steps to Increase Your Chances of Success:

1. **Gather Your Records:** Request and obtain your complete military and medical records to support your claim.
2. **Determine the Correct Board:** Apply to the Discharge Review Board (DRB) for upgrades within 15 years of discharge, or the Board for Correction of Military Records (BCMR) for broader record corrections for upgrades more than 15 years after discharge.

3. Gather Supporting Documents:

Collect evidence such as:

- Statements from former supervisors.
- Medical reports showing conditions like PTSD or mental health issues that contributed to misconduct.
- Evidence of positive post-service conduct and achievements, such as employment, education, and community involvement.

4. **Submit Your Application:** Complete and sign DD Form 293, the “Application for the Review of Discharge or Dismissal,” or, complete and sign DD Form 149, the “Application for Correction of Military Records,” and mail it to the correct military component.

5. **Consider Legal Assistance:** It is highly recommended to seek counsel from a veteran’s organization or an attorney experienced in discharge upgrade cases to help build a comprehensive and compelling package.

What to Expect:

- **Delays:** The process can take 6 to 12 months.
- **Strict Deadlines:** The 15-year deadline for DRB applications is strictly enforced.
- **Focus on In-Service Conduct (for DRB):** The DRB primarily evaluates conduct while in the military, though recent guidance allows for consideration of positive post-discharge conduct for clemency purposes.
- **Broad Scope (for BCMR):** The BCMR can consider a wider range of issues and is not bound by the same time limits.

Lastly, remember to submit the completed packet directly to the address specified on the form for your specific branch of service. If you have any questions regarding the content of this article, please contact your local National Service Officer.





Sports & Recreation

By: Coach Phil Chester

Home Court Advantage: Team Michigan Shines at the 2026 NVWG



No flying. No long drives. This year, the National Veterans Wheelchair Games came to us!

On July 9, Team Michigan arrived in Detroit ready for the 2026 National Veterans Wheelchair Games. This year's Games were held at Huntington Place, still known to many longtime Michiganders as Cobo Hall. And Team Michigan showed up in a big way.

28 Athletes Strong: Twenty-eight athletes represented Michigan this year. Yup, 28! That's quite a jump from our usual team of around five. With the help and support of the Detroit VA and VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System, we were able to welcome many new athletes to the team. Once the competition began, our athletes gave it everything they had, and it definitely showed.

58 Medals for Team Michigan: By the end of the Games, Team Michigan had accumulated an incredible **58 medals: 26 Gold, 25 Silver and 7 Bronze.** What a GREAT showing! More important than the medal count was seeing so many Michigan veterans competing and experiencing the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, many for the first time.

Next Stop: Orlando! To everyone who competed with us in Detroit, and to anyone thinking about joining Team Michigan, I encourage you to keep it going. Mark your calendars for July 14–19, 2027, when the National Veterans Wheelchair Games head to Orlando, Florida. Keep training, keep having fun, and before you know it, we'll see you in Orlando!





On September 2, MPVA members, their families and community partners gathered in Novi for a special evening at the Michigan State Fair. It was a great opportunity to reconnect with familiar faces, meet new ones and enjoy everything the fair had to offer.

MPVA members and guests received complimentary admission and unlimited rides throughout the evening, giving children and adults alike plenty of opportunities to take in the sights, sounds and excitement of the fair. From the rides and attractions to simply spending time together, there was something for everyone to enjoy.

MPVA extends a special thank-you to the Michigan State Fair for welcoming our Chapter, members, families and community partners. We appreciate their continued support and for making it another memorable evening at the fair.





AJ Walker, ARC^{EX} User,
US Navy Veteran

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