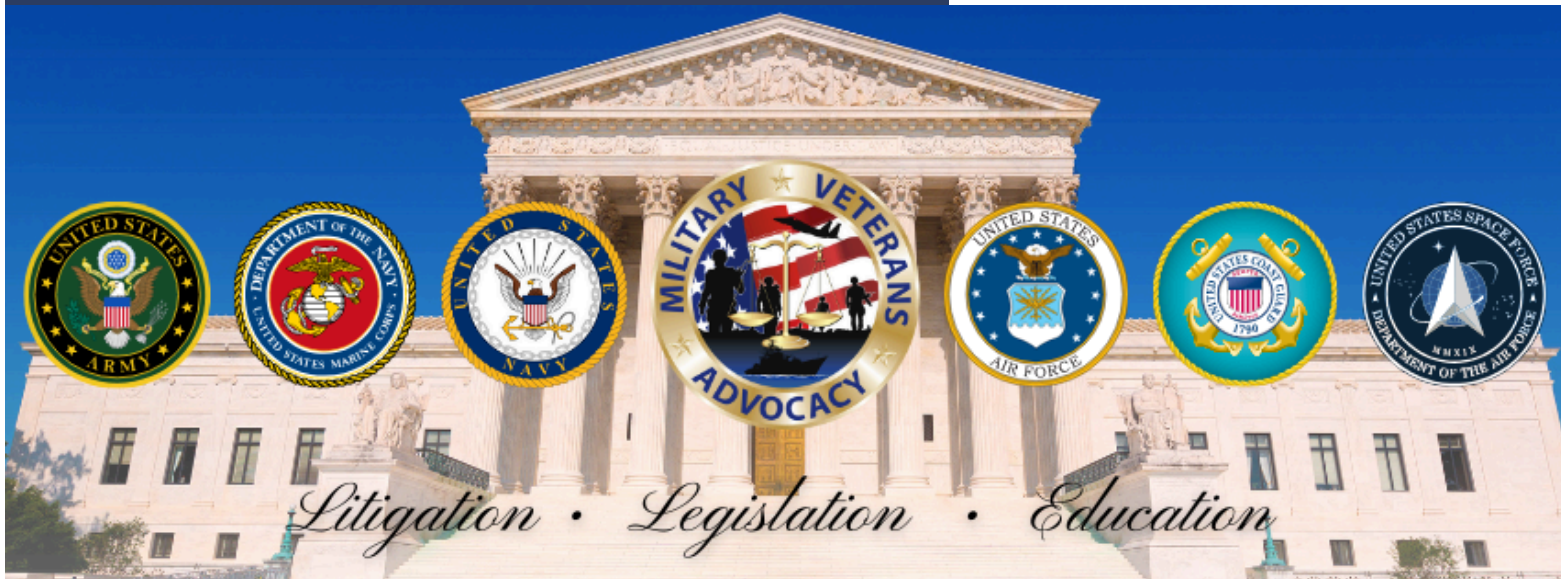


VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

WWW.MILITARYVETERANSADVOCACY.ORG



Winter 2025

VA Announces Largest Health Care Reorganization in 30 Years

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has announced a sweeping reorganization of its Veterans Health Administration (VHA), marking the most significant structural change to VA health care since the 1990s.

The plan is designed to reduce bureaucracy, clarify leadership roles, and create more consistent health care delivery across the country.

What's Changing

Under the proposal, the VA will:

- **Consolidate regional health networks:** The current 18 Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) will be reduced to five large regions, each reporting directly to the VA Under Secretary for Health.

**Fighting for
Veterans Benefits**

Military-Veterans Advocacy® is a non-profit tax exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. We depend on grants and individual contributions to provide our services to military and veterans. A contribution to Military-Veterans Advocacy is tax deductible. Our tax identification number is 38 - 3890520. To review the IRS tax free determination please go to "About" and IRS Tax Determination." To review the most current annual Financial Statement please go to "About" and "Financial Statements"

- **Restructure central leadership:** The VHA Chief Operating Officer position will be eliminated, with responsibilities redistributed to streamline decision-making.
- **Clarify authority and accountability:** VA leadership says the changes will reduce overlapping responsibilities between national, regional, and local offices — allowing clinicians to focus on care while leadership focuses on policy and execution.

VA officials have emphasized that this is not a workforce reduction and is intended to simplify administration rather than cut services.

The reorganization will be phased in over the next 18–24 months, with additional details expected in early 2026.

Why This Matters to Veterans

While structural changes can sound abstract, they often have very real consequences for veterans seeking care. How the VA organizes leadership and decision-making affects:

- Consistency of care between VA medical centers
- Speed of policy implementation

- **Responsiveness to local needs**
- **Accountability when things go wrong**

Historically, administrative complexity within the VA has contributed to delays, confusion, and uneven access to care — especially for veterans navigating appeals, specialty referrals, or complex medical conditions.

Any effort to reduce redundancy and improve clarity could benefit veterans — but only if it is implemented carefully and transparently.



Why We're Watching Closely

At Military Veterans Advocacy, we know that systemic changes don't automatically translate into better outcomes for veterans. We will be watching closely to ensure that:

- Veterans' access to timely, quality care is not disrupted during the transition

- Regional consolidation does not weaken local oversight or responsiveness
- Veterans' rights and due process are protected as policies shift

Structural reform must always serve the veteran – not the bureaucracy.

As more details emerge, MVA will continue to monitor the rollout and advocate for reforms that strengthen care, accountability, and fairness across the VA system.

EARLY BIRD
Membership

Join MVA for 2026 for just \$35!

Effective January 1, 2026, the annual membership rate will increase to \$40.

GOOD THRU
DECEMBER 31, 2025

JOIN TODAY!

Join by visiting our website:
www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org

MILITARY VETERANS ADVOCACY

Message from the Chairman

Aloha!

This is my final message as Chairman of Military-Veterans Advocacy, Inc.

It's been a very fast year. It has been my privilege to serve as Chairman of the Board this year. As I said at the Annual Meeting, I've learned a lot over the years from the people on this Board.

We had a big round of fiscal belt tightening in the final few months of this year. Most of that was driven by a significant drop-off in membership and donations. We adopted a budget for next year that represents a significant limitation on our ability to provide services, provide education, and



advocate for legislation.

We adopted a budget for next year that represents a significant limitation on our ability to provide services, provide education, and advocate for legislation.

I would also like to acknowledge our new member of the Board of Directors, Benjamin Krause, Esq. Ben is a VA accredited attorney and the founder of DisabledVeterans.org. He is also the country's leading expert on VA's Vocational Readiness and Employment program. We will benefit greatly from having his knowledge on our Board. Public Accountant, I fully expect a laser focus on fiscal discipline and fundraising to support our many programs.

I am not going anywhere too far away, though. I will be Vice Chairman next year under another giant of a man: James A. Kuiken, SgtMaj, USMC (Ret.). I believe Jim will guide Military-Veterans Advocacy to new heights. I also believe he will lead us to new strategic partnerships to better our organization.

To restore our programs and provide our previous level of services, restoring the previous level of donations and fundraising is essential. If Military-Veterans Advocacy has helped you to receive your VA benefits, or we have helped you in another way, or you wish to acknowledge John Wells or Jim Kuiken or our "Hope" for the Future, please consider donating to MVA.

Bryan

Chairman, Military-Veterans Advocacy, Inc., Departing



Let's Connect



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Executive Director's Report

For the first time since the shutdown, Military Veterans Advocacy (MVA) sent a delegation to Washington, D.C., to advance our legislative agenda.

During our visit, we met with senior congressional staff on both sides of Capitol Hill, as well as Congress's newest member, Representative Matt Van Epps of Tennessee. We also attended a Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing and submitted written comments regarding the use of Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy in the treatment of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

Our meetings with committee staff were highly productive, and our recommendations were well received. That positive response was echoed by the Speaker's Office and the staffs of several Members of Congress we visited.

Looking ahead, 2026 promises to be an exciting and impactful year for MVA. We are deeply grateful for your continued prayers and financial support. On behalf of our Board of Directors, I wish you and your families a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year.

John B. Wells, Commander, USN (Ret.)
Executive Director



On our most recent trip to Washington D.C., we met with Representative Matt Van Epps, Tennessee's 7th District to discuss the 2026 MVA Legislative agenda.



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A Year of Persistence and Purpose

Sgt. Major Jim Kuiken (USMC - Retired) Director, Native & Indigenous American Veteran Outreach

2025 is certainly a year to remember. Congress remained out of session for extended periods, and ongoing rancor among Representatives often stalled progress—frequently shutting down any hope of bipartisan sponsorship, even on non-controversial legislation intended to support our veterans.



But Military Veterans Advocacy went to Capitol Hill anyway.

Even when few, if

any, other VSOs were present, the MVA team showed up. We attended committee meetings and hearings, spoke directly with Representatives and Senators in hallways, dining areas, and during informal conversations at the Capitol Hill Club. While we were not successful in advancing every proposed bill, one thing was clear: they saw us, they heard us, and our voices were present.

Despite political headwinds, we made meaningful progress advancing draft legislation and gaining support for the use of Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy to treat Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), PTSD, and physical wounds. We also re-briefed the Blue Water Navy issue—often mistakenly



Susie Says

A Christmas Story

Between the government shutdown and the holidays, there hasn't been any movement on legislative issues. Work on the upcoming bills will begin after the New Year.

In the meantime, I wanted to share a Christmas memory—one that has stayed close to my heart for decades. Ernie and I were living in Yokosuka, Japan. The year before, he had been deployed on a carrier, and we spent Christmas apart. Knowing how difficult the holidays can be without your loved ones, Ernie visited the barracks and invited anyone who couldn't make it home to the States to spend Christmas with us.

Our apartment was tiny—so small that we ended up sitting on the floor because there weren't enough chairs. But no one cared. We filled that little space with Christmas carols, laughter, and the smell of fresh cookies. I had a tiny oven that held only six cookies at a time, so baking enough for everyone took all day, but it was worth every minute. The guys brought snacks to share, and before long, it felt like family had gathered—just a different kind of

viewed as resolved—by highlighting the more than 90,000 veterans still fighting for benefits, including submariners, sailors, and Marines exposed during that era.

In addition, we continued advocacy around burn pits, Agent Orange exposure, and toxic exposure in Guam, Okinawa, Panama, and other locations that remain insufficiently covered, even after the passage of the PACT Act.

The list is long—but what matters most is this: our effort has not slowed. We remain laser-focused on serving the United States military, veterans, and their families.



Looking Ahead to 2026

As we enter 2026, MVA is not only continuing this work—we are doubling down. Our mission remains clear: to serve, advocate, and fight for veterans and their families with renewed focus and determination.

In accordance with our By-Laws, MVA begins the year with a new slate of Board Members. Updated Board information will be posted on the MVA website in the coming weeks. For now, I am honored to introduce the 2026 Board of Directors:

- Jim Kuiken, Sergeant Major, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.) – Chairman
Also serving as Director of Native and Indigenous American Veterans Outreach
- Brian Lewis – Vice Chairman, Director of Litigation
- John B. Wells – Treasurer, Executive Director & Secretary
- Mike Kvintus – Social Media Director
- Mike Yates – Social Media Director
- Susie Belanger – Co-Legislative Director
- Jackie Bloom – Co-Legislative Director
- Cheryl Cox – Board Member at Large
- Jimmie Scott – Board Member at Large
- Tony West – Board Member at Large
- Sean Gill – Board Member at Large
- Wesley McCauley – Board Member at Large
- Ben Krause – Board Member at Large
- Pam Arnell – Board Member at Large

Strategic Focus Areas for the Year Ahead

While advocacy before Congress remains central to our mission, the Board will also focus on several key areas essential to MVA's growth and impact:

Membership

We will prioritize expanding and re-engaging our membership and will be calling oncurrent, former, and prospective members to help strengthen our community.

Sponsorship & Strategic Partnerships

We are actively pursuing strategic partners, sponsors, and major donors to ensure long-term sustainability and expanded reach.

Communication & Participation — *This is Paramount*

Clear, consistent communication between Board Members, MVA Members, and leadership is essential. Members must know what MVA is doing. The Board must understand the concerns of our members. And everyone must remain aligned on what MVA stands for—and what we are fighting for.

A Commitment to Serve

Every Board Member, staff member, and contractor is committed to serving our members, the American military, veterans, and their families. We ask each MVA member to communicate openly, share concerns, and actively support the organization so that we can continue—and expand—our work on behalf of those who have served.

Together, we will grow MVA’s impact and ensure no veteran is left behind.

Respectfully,

Jim Kuiken
Sergeant Major, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.)
Chairman of the Board
Military Veterans Advocacy



Cont. from Susie Says

family, brought together by service and circumstance.

At one point, Ernie’s Commanding Officer and his wife stopped by to thank us for opening our home. I’ll never forget that small gesture of appreciation.

We even had a little real Christmas tree—only about three feet tall. After the holidays, I planted it outside and often wondered how tall it eventually grew.

It remains one of the best Christmases we ever had.