

501(C)(3) Veterans Non-Profit



**KEN NESS
PVA NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT**

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Ken Ness, PVA-Wisconsin Chapter member and President, was re-elected PVA National Vice President for his third term in May 2023, during the organization’s 77th Annual Convention. He previously served as a Vice President from 2019–2021.

Ness grew up in Fairmont, Minnesota. During his high school years, he was very active in a number of sports and musical endeavors. Upon graduation, he accepted a nomination and a spot in the Class of 1978 at the U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, CO. During his freshman year at the Academy Ness sustained a broken neck in a wrestling

accident and was immediately paralyzed from the neck down. Ness spent the next 51 weeks in two different hospitals, the last one being a VA hospital that had a Spinal Cord Injury Center, located in Milwaukee, WI. During this time he underwent multiple types of rehabilitation and medical procedures, and a restorative operation.

When Ness was finally discharged from the hospital he resumed his college career at Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI, and graduated with a BA degree. He then received a JD degree from the Marquette Law School. During this time frame, he also attended and completed law studies at both Oxford University and the University of Wisconsin Law School. Subsequently, Ness went back to law school at DePaul University Law School, Chicago, IL, and earned a second, specialized law degree, a Master’s in Taxation.

Ness has had a varied employment history. He was a Federal Projects Intern for three years when he was employed by U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson, he clerked for an appellate judge for a year, he was an adjunct professor at Cardinal Stritch University in the Master's programs in both Business and Health Care Management for 10 years, and he has been an attorney in the private sector for over 4 decades. He has also authored or edited a number of legal books for publishers in the legal field.

His involvement with PVA began over 40 years ago when he assisted in founding PVA's Wisconsin Chapter. Since that chapter's beginning, Ness has served as its legal counsel and has held a number of executive positions. At the PVA National level, Ness has been actively involved for over 15 years as a National Vice President, a Research Foundation BOD member, a National Director, and has been a member of a number of PVA Committees.

Ness passionately believes that PVA has the ability to improve the lives of all individuals with disabilities, their caregivers, their families, and their communities. "PVA has done tremendous things for me and assisted in numerous areas of my life, even when I was totally unaware of the benefits being bestowed," says Ness. "For example, when I was in the hospital, I was the benefactor of various spinal cord medical procedures that had been researched and promoted by PVA, and that had been adopted as the best clinical and treatment practices by health care professionals. These practices improved my medical care and my chances for the best possible recovery. I was, and still am, very fortunate to benefit from what PVA does. Because of this, I am totally committed to helping others - all Veterans and all civilians - gain as much benefit from PVA as possible."

Ness points to a variety of departments at PVA that can assist others. "PVA's Government Relations department has achieved numerous legislative and legal victories on behalf of the disabled community. This department is currently working on, among other things, trying to establish laws and guidelines that will allow the disabled to travel on all types of transportation more easily and safely. PVA's architectural team has assisted in establishing basic building design standards both for public buildings and private residences. In the medical field, PVA sends out teams of professionals on an annual basis to do site visits that ensure quality of care, helps establish medical care and practice standards, and has its own Research Foundation and Education Foundation. PVA has a long-established program designed to assist its members in finding employment opportunities that meet their needs. PVA's highly-recognized adaptive sports and recreation department encourages individuals to become more active physically, socially, and mentally, through national athletic competitions, and a number of adaptive programs locally across the United States."

Ness highlights that "This organization helps many people, well beyond the lives of our members. For example, PVA research-funded efforts help everyone - not just paralyzed Veterans, not just Veterans, not just disabled individuals - everyone. For example, when even minor architectural barriers are removed, that becomes a tremendous benefit when you or a relative has a hip operation, or begins to walk with more difficulty. Additionally, these changes help caregivers who are assisting anyone with a mobility disability."

"It is because of all of this tapped and untapped potential that PVA has to aid others, and make their lives distinctly and in sometimes dramatically different, that I am extremely grateful to have been elected to the office of Vice President. I truly believe that we should do everything within our power to try and improve the lives of everyone who is disabled. PVA can dramatically impact the lives of countless individuals, and help them have a better day and an easier road in their journey through life and all of its challenges."