



ABOUT US: UNITED SPINAL ASSOCIATION



"CHANGE IS DIFFICULT. THE OPPONENT IS THE STATUS QUO. WE MUST EDUCATE, EMPOWER, AND MOTIVATE THOSE SEEKING JUSTICE AND EQUALITY TO HELP US HELP THEM."

**JAMES WEISMAN
GENERAL COUNSEL
FORMER UNITED SPINAL PRESIDENT & CEO (2015-2020)**

OUR MISSION

United Spinal Association is a national 501(c) (3) nonprofit membership organization dedicated to empowering people with spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI/D), including veterans, to live successful and fulfilling lives.

Directed by people with disabilities, United Spinal Association works to overcome the stigma of disability and remove physical barriers to inclusion for wheelchair users. We are united in our belief that businesses, people with disabilities and society all benefit from providing equal opportunity to pursue passions, employment, and recreational opportunities. Our goal is to actively support people with SCI/D through valuable programs and services that maximize independence and create opportunities to become leaders, advocates, and innovators.



WHO ARE WE?

United Spinal has over **75** years of experience educating and empowering over **2** million individuals with SCI/D to achieve and maintain the highest levels of independence, health and personal fulfillment.

60,000

MEMBERS

45

CHAPTERS

185

SUPPORT
GROUPS

1,200+

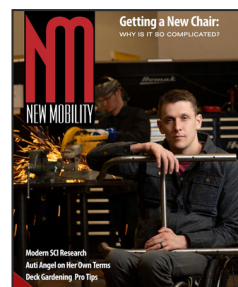
REGISTERED
ADVOCATES

United Spinal has more than **100** rehabilitation facility and hospital partners nationwide, including **14** distinguished Spinal Cord Injury Model System Centers that support innovative projects and research in the field of SCI/D. United Spinal Association is a VA-accredited veterans service organization (VSO) serving veterans with disabilities of all kinds.

United Spinal has a social media reach of **1 million impressions.**

- [United Spinal Association Facebook](#)
- [United Spinal Association Advocacy Network Facebook](#)
- [United Spinal Association Instagram](#)
- [United Spinal Association Twitter](#)
- [United Spinal Association LinkedIn](#)

New Mobility is United Spinal's membership magazine covering Spinal Cord Injury and Disease, health, travel, recreation, advocacy, relationships, employment, humor, the arts, lifestyles and much more. New Mobility is available in both print and digital form with **98,000** readers to date. [Click here to visit the New Mobility website.](#)



OUR IMPACT

We believe no person should be excluded from opportunity based on their disability. Our goal is to provide people living with SCI/D programs and services that maximize their independence and enable them to remain active in their communities.

United Spinal transforms the lives of people with SCI/D by:

Advocating for greater access to healthcare, mobility equipment, public transportation, rehabilitation, community services and supports, and the built environment

Empowering our members with resources, one-on-one assistance, and peer support

Promoting independence through employment opportunities and community integration

United Spinal is actively committed to advocating for greater civil rights and independence for people with disabilities, including access to healthcare, employment, technology, emergency preparedness, improving enforcement of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), ensuring adequate access to transportation, and amending Medicare rules that restrict many individuals to their homes and nursing facilities.





United Spinal is also a Department of Veterans Affairs–accredited veterans service organization (VSO) and its VetsFirst program serves veterans, including disabled veterans, and their eligible family members in obtaining the benefits they are entitled to, deserve and need from healthcare, including mental health resources, to employment, as well as adaptive housing and adaptive transportation. [Click here to visit the VetsFirst website.](#)



Founded by World War II veterans, United Spinal saw great impact expansion early on under the 32-year leadership of veteran James J. Peters. To Jim Peters, 'life in a wheelchair' meant a life devoted to demanding recognition and respect for veterans with disabilities. His advocacy furthered healthcare, research, education, transportation, housing and related legislation.

In 1970, Peters exposed the awful conditions that our Vietnam veterans with spinal cord injuries faced at the Bronx VA Medical Center through a cover story he convinced Life magazine to run. The national outrage that was sparked from this story helped to convince Congress to take action and build a brand new facility with a focus on spinal cord injuries. The hospital was renamed in 2005 in honor of Peters and his years of dedication to ensure quality healthcare for all veterans. [Click here for more information on the James J. Peters VA Medical Center \(Bronx, NY\).](#)



VetsFirst advocates nationally for all generations of veterans, including individuals living with post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injuries.

In addition to providing individual support and counseling services, VetsFirst offers timely news and information across the spectrum of issues presently impacting the veterans community, including state benefits, separating from the military, as well as exclusive feature stories on military healthcare and VA funding and compensation.

United Spinal is a VA-accredited veterans service organization and we strive to ensure the organization remains an instrument for veterans rather than an institution.

Ask VetsFirst is a free support service for Veterans and their family members. You can find Knowledge Books on a wide range of veterans issues and topics. You can also submit a request to have one of our counselors answer your questions. [Click here to Ask VetsFirst.](#)

Veterans Knowledge Books

- [Veterans Guide to VA Healthcare](#)
- [Veterans Guide to VA Claim Filing](#)
- [Veterans Employment and Education](#)
- [VA Commonly Used Forms](#)
- [Veterans Spinal Cord Injury System](#)
- [VA Prosthetics](#)

If you have questions regarding your **Veterans Benefits** or benefits that your family members may be entitled to, VetsFirst can help you. [Click here for the Veterans Guide to VA Benefits.](#)



Roll on Capitol Hill is United Spinal's annual signature policy event that supports key advocacy priorities for our membership and the broader disability community, including veterans, to ensure that legislators include wheelchair users and all people with disabilities in policy debates on Capitol Hill. The event strengthens the voice of our community and ensures all people with disabilities are engaged in policies that impact their quality of life and independence.

Our Roll on Capitol Hill takes place every year in June when we bring in advocates from across the country to meet with legislators to discuss critical issues that impact our community. [Click here to visit our website for more information.](#)

Components of the Roll include an Education Day, Monday, when we explain the issues we are going to address with guest speakers and allot time for questions to prep for our Hill Day the next day, Tuesday. Our Hill Day is followed by a Congressional Reception where we present awards to Congressional champions and advocates. We invite the broader disability community to attend this event with the United Spinal community.

"Last year was my first ROCH. I was very nervous about it but the Advocacy and Policy team did an excellent job of preparing all of us and making everyone feel prepared and at ease."

— Rebecca MacTaggart (PA), United Spinal Advocate & Government Relations Coordinator

Why We Roll:

- To preserve and enhance disability rights
- To make all transportation accessible
- To improve community supports and services
- To improve public accessibility
- To secure significant funding for Spinal Cord Injury Model Systems
- To ensure accessible affordable healthcare, broadband and expanded telehealth access
- To secure and improve veterans' benefits and services
- To preserve the rights guaranteed by the Americans with Disabilities Act
- To secure appropriate medical equipment, supplies, pharmaceuticals, wheelchairs and assistive technologies
- To increase access to employment for the disability community



What we are Fighting For: United Spinal's Roll on Capitol Hill has been able to increase the number of participants and outreach because advocates can engage both in-person and virtually.

The Government Relations and Advocacy and Policy teams are working hard with you to fight for better access to **employment, healthcare, transportation, technology, emergency preparedness**, and as always advocating for **equal access to the built environment, protecting disability rights** and **preserving disability benefits**.

Employment

United Spinal supports policies that empower individuals living with a disability in establishing their independence through gainful employment. Individuals with disabilities must have equal access and opportunity to competitive, integrated employment, and self-sufficiency through improved income security, separate from the need for community supports and services or benefits.

Healthcare

Access to Quality Affordable Healthcare: United Spinal supports policies that promote affordable quality healthcare, including non-discrimination provisions and consumer protections as we expand the use of telehealth.

Transportation

United Spinal supports policies that promote universally designed accessible vehicles, planes, buses, trains, including autonomous and electric vehicles. We also support policies that allow for multimodal options in accessible transportation to include all underserved populations.



Emergency Preparedness

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted people living with disabilities. Emergency preparedness is a key priority for our community and related challenges impact our members' health, employment, and well-being.

Technology

Living and Thriving in the Digital World

So that everyone can live and thrive in the digital world, United Spinal supports policies that increase access to and use of the digital world through a sustained federal investment to ensure deployment and maintenance of a high capacity, secure and reliable 5G broadband national network. The national network must be accessible, affordable, adoptable, and usable for all Americans.

To achieve our digital world goals, United Spinal is working to put the broadband programs and dollars contained in the newly enacted Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to work for everyone, especially those of us in the disability community.

Disability Rights

United Spinal Association opposes any discrimination against individuals with disabilities and any restrictions of disability rights or access to the built environment. Without protections provided through laws such as, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act, the Fair Housing Act, and other similar laws, individuals with disabilities are restricted from participating fully in society and living active, productive, and independent lives.

Click below for more information on:

[What We Are Fighting For](#)
[Virtual Advocacy](#)



"When I became aware of the mission of Roll on Capitol Hill, which is to facilitate change, social equality, and actively pursue disability rights for persons with Spinal Cord Injury and [disorders] (SCI/D) it intrigued me and I knew I needed to be a part [of it]. As a leader in my community, joining Roll on Capitol Hill has been a powerful and fulfilling experience in my journey as an advocate and living with with a disability. I've learned not only how to be an Advocate, but an Activist."

— Shannon Minnick (MD), United Spinal Advocate & Deputy Director of Independence Now



"Attending ROCH in the past proves that we all have a voice and that each one of us has the power to change policies that affect our lives. Having spoken with legislators on issues that affect the independence and quality of life that people with spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI/D) is empowering and inspiring."

— Kim Harrison (FL), United Spinal Advocate & Northern Florida State Advocacy Coordinator

"I've met so many amazing individuals with spinal cord injuries and disorders from across the country. We unite to impact change and fight for disability rights. That's what makes Roll on Capitol Hill so rewarding."

— Richard Bagby (VA), United Spinal Advocate



"ROCH gave me an opportunity to learn and practice how to advocate for myself and my community. At first I was intimidated because I am not an expert at policy and legislation but my fear quickly disappeared as my peers and I talked to our representatives and shared our stories. Turns out the people in office are just people like us and sometimes they are not aware of the issues and are really receptive to learn and help. This event made me more confident in participating and making change."

— Reveca Torres (IL), United Spinal Advocate & Founder of BACKBONES

"The Roll on Capitol Hill is a powerful opportunity as a United Spinal Association member to make a real difference and meet with your Federal representatives to discuss and promote legislative issues that will dramatically impact your life and the lives of others with disabilities. How we ROLL is our way of life, and it is time for our voices to be heard."

— Bill Bogdan (IL), United Spinal Advocate & Disability Liaison, Illinois Secretary of State's Office

