



PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA
Michigan Chapter
Chartered by United States Congress



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April 2, 2015

Mayor Christopher Taylor
Larcom City Hall, third floor
301 E. Huron Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Dear Mayor Taylor

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America (MPVA) to support the Pedestrian Safety & Access Task Force recommendation that business and residential property owners have 24 hours to clear **all** snow and ice off their sidewalks. This will ensure that **all** pedestrians and people with disabilities have a safe environment to navigate on.

Ann Arbor currently has an ordinance that allows owners of residential and business properties off the hook if snow, slush or ice of less than one inch thick falls, or lays, on the sidewalk. Enforcing such a policy is nearly impossible to govern as residents can always argue that they “assumed” they had less than an inch of snow/ice on their property.

In a community that values walkability, this is a problem. It’s a problem for students walking to school, it’s a problem for residents who rely on the bus and must walk along the busy roads to get to their bus stop, older adults who no longer drive and it’s a problem for people with disabilities who are dependent on the use of a wheelchair for mobility.

It is important that Ann Arbor set priorities and expectations by passing a snow ordinance where all snow and ice have to be removed in a reasonable time after snow has stopped falling. An effective snow removal policy involves all segments of the community; government, business and residents.

Ann Arbor should use public information campaigns and social media to communicate about snow removal requirements, develop strategies to enforce ordinances, and develop citizen assistance programs to help residents in need.

WHO IS PVA?

The Paralyzed Veterans of America was founded in 1947 to address the needs and concerns of veterans who have sustained an injury or disease of the spinal cord. PVA is devoting its life and effort to enhancing the quality of life for these veterans and other persons with disabilities by administering programs in research, wheelchair sports, legislation and advocating for improved civil rights for persons with a disability regardless of race, creed or color.

Good communication initiatives and social-awareness campaigns can help spread the word as to why it is important for property owners to clear snow from sidewalks. Property owners should be reminded that most trips begin by walking. Clear and unobstructed sidewalks are important to ensuring safety to pedestrians. The elderly, people with disabilities, children and no-car households are impacted and at risk of injury on snowy/icy walkways.

The goal is to promote the understanding that walking is not just a recreational or fair weather activity. Winter maintenance of pedestrian walkway is essential to ensure public safety, provide pedestrian access and connectivity, support healthy communities, safeguard public assets, and ensure compliance with America with Disabilities Act.

The simple act of removing snow from sidewalks and intersections is as much a safety issue as it is a matter of being good neighbors. Community's best survive when everyone has an invested interest in achieving positive outcomes.

Sincerely,

Michael F Harris

Michael F Harris, Executive Director, MPVA

CC: Ann Arbor City Council