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# News Release

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## VA Researcher to Receive Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medal

**WASHINGTON** – Today the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that [Rory A. Cooper](#), founder and director of the [Human Engineering Research Laboratories](#), a collaboration between the VA's Pittsburgh Health Care System and the University of Pittsburgh, will receive a Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medal at a ceremony today in Washington, D.C.

The awards — known as the Sammys — are given by the nonprofit Partnership for Public Service to recognize the accomplishments of federal civil servants. Cooper is the recipient of the Science and Environment Medal.

“Rory’s research on wheelchair technology has helped transform the lives of millions of disabled Veterans,” said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. “I’m thrilled that the Partnership for Public Service is recognizing him for a career filled with incredible passion and ingenuity.”

Cooper is being honored for his work designing innovative wheelchairs and other assistive technologies, which have markedly improved the mobility and quality of life for hundreds of thousands of Veterans and other people with disabilities. He led innovations that include a wheelchair with robotic arms and hands that can grasp, personal vehicles enabling people to access terrain that could not be handled by normal wheelchairs, and manual wheelchairs with more comfortable and adjustable seats.

Cooper, an Army Veteran injured while serving, has dedicated his career to improving the mobility and quality of life for people with disabilities. Cooper and his team are credited with 25 patents that have advanced wheelchair technology.

A selection committee that included leaders from government, business, the nonprofit community, academia, and the entertainment and news media selected Cooper and six other winners, from 26 finalists and more than 440 nominees.

The awards ceremony will be streamed live this evening beginning at 6:30 p.m. (EST) and can be viewed on the [Partnership for Public Service’s Facebook page](#).

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