



U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

PRESS RELEASE

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Fiscal 2008 Military Construction/VA Funding Bill Now Available Online

WASHINGTON, D.C.... Senate legislation, which offers substantial investments in health care for America's veterans, including for the unique needs of servicemen and women returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, is now available online. The legislation, S.1645, provides \$64.7 billion for U.S. veterans and for military construction projects.

"The VA has consistently underestimated the resources necessary to meet the growing needs of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, resulting in dangerous budget shortfalls that have imperiled the availability of quality health care for all veterans," said Senator Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. "This Congress will not allow history to repeat itself. This funding bill provides the resources needed to improve and strengthen health care for our brave veterans, and wisely directs key investments to areas in the greatest need."

"Taking care of our veterans and military families is a top priority and this legislation clearly reflects that," said Senator Jack Reed, D-R.I., a former Army Ranger and Acting Chairman of the Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs. "If the Administration and others believe this bill invests too much in our veterans and troops, I think they are sorely mistaken. We have to meet our veterans' health care needs now and in the future, and this bill brings us closer to where we need to be to provide adequate care for all the veterans who need it. The bill will also boost military construction and help improve the quality of life for more of our military families."

"It is our duty to those who have served our country to make sure the VA is robustly funded, and this bill addresses the needs of our veterans," Senator Tim Johnson, D-S.D., Chairman of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Subcommittee, said. "In this time of war, we can not afford to slow military construction projects, and I am glad to see we have moved forward so swiftly on this bill. Our military's preparedness will certainly benefit from the committee's timely efforts, as well as our veterans."

The bill addresses key shortcomings in our veterans' health care system by: increasing critical investments in medical services, which include treatment of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans; funding new claims processors to address the VA's backlog, and investing in VA repair and maintenance needs to prevent a Walter Reed type situation in the VA system.

The Senate bill also addresses key quality of life needs for U.S. troops and their families. Military construction receives a significant funding boost, including for the Guard and Reserves, who are shouldering a significant burden of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The President's budget request severely underfunds most of the guard and reserve forces. The bill also fully funds BRAC and the President's "Grow the Force" initiative.

Follow this link to the Senate military construction and VA funding legislation, through the Library of Congress:

<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d110:S.1645:>

Follow this link to the committee report to accompany the legislation, through the Library of Congress:

http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/useftp.cgi?IPAddress=162.140.64.21&filename=sr085.pdf&directory=/diskb/wais/data/110_cong_reports

For an update on each of the Fiscal 2008 appropriations bills, visit this Library of Congress web page: <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/approp/app08.html>

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