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BILL SUMMARY: Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Fiscal Year 2024 Appropriations Bill

Legislation keeps our promise to veterans by fully funding veterans' medical care and benefits, strengthens our national security, and supports servicemembers and military families

Washington, D.C. – The Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Act fiscal year 2024 appropriations bill provides the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and related agencies \$135.3 billion in non-defense discretionary funding, as well as \$161.7 billion in mandatory funding, to fulfill our nation's obligations to our veterans. The bill further provides advance appropriations for our veterans in fiscal year 2025, including \$112.6 billion for veterans' medical care and \$193 billion for veterans benefits. The bill also includes \$19.1 billion in defense spending for military construction and family housing this year—an increase of \$70 million over fiscal year 2023—to upgrade and modernize critical infrastructure and support military families.

“We have an obligation to take care of our veterans when they come home—and a responsibility to ensure we have the world-class military infrastructure we need to support our servicemembers and keep our nation safe. Despite working under challenging circumstances, we’ve put together a strong, bipartisan bill to fund VA and military construction,” said Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee and Chair of the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Subcommittee. **“This bill will help construct everything from housing to child care centers for our servicemembers and military families, make critical upgrades to installations, and strengthen our presence in key regions around the world. It also ensures we keep our promises to the men and women who have served our country by fully funding VA and veterans’ medical care and benefits. Our legislation will increase funding for mental health and suicide prevention programs for veterans, get women veterans the medical care they need, support the expansion of the caregivers program, and so much more.”**

Key Points & Highlights – Department of Veterans Affairs

Keeps our sacred promise to veterans by fully funding veterans' medical care and benefits, and fully funding VA programs.

VA Medical Care: Consistent with the agreement made in passing the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023, the bill provides \$121.011 billion for VA medical care in fiscal year 2024, a \$2.3 billion increase over fiscal year 2023, to provide essential health services for more than 9.1 million veterans. This is in addition to funding previously appropriated to the Cost of War Toxic Exposures Fund to cover the cost of health care related to toxic exposures. This bill funds critical priorities including:

- **Rural Health** – \$347 million, \$10 million more than fiscal year 2023, to support improved access to care, including expanded access to transportation and telehealth.
- **Caregivers** – \$2.4 billion, \$556 million more than fiscal year 2023, to help VA implement this critical program and extend legacy participant eligibility and benefits through 2025.
- **Women's Health** – \$1.3 billion, \$439 million more than fiscal year 2023, for gender-specific health care services, as well as initiatives and improvements to healthcare facilities.
- **Veteran Homelessness Prevention** – \$3.1 billion, \$418 million more than in fiscal year 2023, to support critical services and housing assistance for veterans and their families experiencing housing insecurity.
- **Mental Health** – \$16.2 billion, \$2.3 billion more than in fiscal year 2023, to get veterans the mental health services they deserve. This includes \$559 million for suicide prevention outreach.
- **Child Care** – \$23 million to expand the Child Care Pilot Program to eliminate barriers for veterans in need of child care while attending medical appointments.

Benefits Administration: The bill provides \$3.9 billion, a \$36 million increase over fiscal year 2023, and equal to the President's budget request, to administer benefits, including disability compensation benefits to 6.6 million veterans and their survivors. These funds will support VA's effort to support increases in the number and scope of claims, while decreasing the claims backlog. This amount is supported by additional funding previously appropriated to the Cost of War Toxic Exposures Fund to enhance VA's ability to process veteran claims related to toxic exposures.

Medical and Prosthetics Research: The bill provides \$938 million for this fiscal year, \$22 million more than fiscal year 2023. This supports ongoing and new research in areas such as traumatic brain injury and precision oncology, and is augmented by additional funding for research into toxic exposures in the Toxic Exposures Fund.

Infrastructure: The bill strengthens VA's infrastructure by providing \$1.6 billion for major and minor construction, \$1 billion over the President's budget request for Medical facilities, and \$600 million in funding for construction from the Recurring Expenses Transformation Fund. The bill further provides \$164 million for construction of State

extended care facilities, and \$60 million for construction of state, territory, and tribal veterans cemeteries.

Information Technology: The bill provides \$6.4 billion in funding for information technology systems. In addition, the bill provides \$1.3 billion in funding for the Electronic Health Record Modernization effort, \$529 million below the President's budget request, reflective of the Department's decision to reset the program, including halting additional deployments to prioritize improvements at the sites that currently use the new system.

Honoring Our PACT Act: The Fiscal Responsibility Act provided full funding for the Toxic Exposures Fund for fiscal years 2024 and 2025.

Key Points & Highlights – Military Construction

Strengthens our national security by delivering a historic funding level to modernize critical military infrastructure and build our presence in key regions around the world, and supports servicemembers and military families.

Strengthening National Security: The bill provides a historic level of funding for roughly 300 military construction and family housing projects, as well as for minor construction and design accounts. These projects support operational requirements by providing new training and maintenance facilities, modernizing infrastructure enabling the Nuclear Triad, and supporting new aircraft beddowns. The bill includes nearly \$2.5 billion in support of the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Plan, for projects at each of the four public shipyards. In addition to family housing construction, the bill also provides funding to maintain existing units and to provide for privatized housing oversight, as well as for unaccompanied troop housing.

Critical Overseas Infrastructure: To build on efforts in recent years to prioritize funding supporting our posture in the Pacific, the bill includes more than \$1.8 billion for 25 projects in the Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) theater that support the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, as well as \$112 million above the budget request for INDOPACOM planning and design and minor construction. Additionally, recognizing the importance of infrastructure to a sustained and capable U.S. and allied military presence in Europe, the bill includes over \$300 million for projects and accounts that support the European Deterrence Initiative. The bill also provides \$293 million for the NATO Security Investment Program, fully funding the U.S. cost share for NATO military construction projects.

Supporting Our Servicemembers and Military Families: The bill provides over \$1.9 billion in funding for family housing construction and funding to maintain and upgrade existing units, as well as to strengthen oversight of privatized housing. This includes \$320 million to revitalize five privatized housing projects, ensuring their future financial health, enabling additional repairs and renovations. It also provides \$469 million for the construction of seven barracks to reduce the housing deficit for

unaccompanied troops. The bill further includes \$241 million for five new child development centers (CDCs), as well as \$45 million above the request for the design of additional CDCs to expand access to child care for military families.

Installation and Energy Resilience: The bill builds on prior investments to ensure our bases and infrastructure are resilient. It includes \$30 million for planning and design and minor construction for Military Installation Resilience, which enables DOD to develop and construct projects that help address facility and installation vulnerabilities, particularly related to climate-driven threats. It also includes \$634 million for the Energy Resilience and Conservation Investment Program.

Recovering from Natural Disasters: The bill provides \$150 million for the Air Force to continue to rebuild facilities damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Michael.

Congressionally Directed Spending: The bill provides \$1.3 billion for 125 projects in 31 states included primarily at the request of Senators. This includes funding for child development centers, force protection infrastructure such as entry control points and fire stations, and training and maintenance facilities.

Key Points & Highlights – Related Agencies

Arlington National Cemetery: This bill reflects Congress' unwavering support for Arlington National Cemetery, and an investment in its future as an active cemetery. In addition to providing \$99.8 million for operations costs, which is \$6.5 million more than fiscal year 2023, it also includes \$88.6 million for the Southern Expansion construction project.

American Battle Monuments Commission: Recognizing the important mission of the American Battle Monuments Commission, the bill provides \$158.6 million for operations and maintenance, which includes funding for three capital improvement projects, such as to complete design and construction of the Honolulu Interpretive Center.

Armed Forces Retirement Home: The bill provides a total of \$77 million, which funds operations and maintenance activities at the Armed Forces Retirement Home campuses in Washington, D.C., and Gulfport, Mississippi.

Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims: This bill provides \$47.2 million for the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, which is \$300 million above fiscal year 2023. This increase supports the court's capacity to adjudicate appeals in a timely manner.

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