



COMMITTEE *on* APPROPRIATIONS

VICE CHAIRMAN PATRICK LEAHY

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SUMMARY

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES FISCAL YEAR 2020 APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Washington, D.C. – The bill provides \$92.2 billion for Veterans programs and agencies, over \$5 billion more than fiscal year 2019 enacted levels. It further provides \$17.5 billion for military construction programs, including for overseas contingency operations, by the Military Services. This amount is \$74 million above the President’s budget request for Military Construction, and includes \$6.2 billion in funding dedicated to address the impacts of natural disasters on military installations across the country.

Key Points & Highlights –

Key areas of military construction funding provided in this agreement:

Border Wall Backfill: The agreement does not include funding to support construction of the border wall, or backfill the \$3.6 billion in military construction projects the president cancelled this year to pay for his wall. As of November 22, the Department of Defense had only expended \$2 million of the \$3.6 billion the President stole, so he has the ability to return a significant portion of the funds appropriated back to the projects they originally supported. On December 10, a federal court issued an injunction blocking the use of military construction funds for border wall construction on the basis that the emergency proclamation was illegal and no funds can be spent while that decision is being litigated.

Installation Recovery from Natural Disasters: The agreement provides \$6.2 billion to help military installations across the United States recover from natural disasters in the past year, such as Hurricanes Michael and Florence, floods, tornadoes, and earthquakes. Bases in California, Nebraska, North Carolina and Florida have been heavily damaged or destroyed by these natural disasters. Funding provided in this agreement is in addition to the \$1.6 billion provided by Congress in June and is \$4.2 billion more than was requested by the Trump administration.

Military Installation Resilience: Recognizing the tremendous cost in taxpayer dollars, time, and Department of Defense operational capabilities, of increasingly intense natural disasters, the agreement provides \$75 million above the President’s budget request to allow the services to plan and design modern facilities that are more resilient and capable of withstanding extreme

weather. Military infrastructure is the foundation of our ability to keep our country safe, and as a January 2019 DoD report noted, installations are increasingly more vulnerable due to climate change.

Privatized Housing Oversight:

The agreement includes an increase of \$140.8 million above the President’s budget request for the Military Services to increase staffing to improve responsiveness and oversight for privatized housing programs, for a total of \$204 million. This will allow the services to hire more personnel to manage the privatized housing programs on military bases and track current and future issues that may affect military families.

PFAS Clean-up: The Base Realignment and Closure account within this bill provides an additional \$60 million above the President’s budget request to allow the services to better tackle hazards associated with perfluorinated chemicals on installations that have been previously closed or realigned. This will provide additional funds for the services to continue sampling and monitoring, treatment, and other mitigation efforts currently underway.

Energy Security and Efficiency: In this agreement, Congress provides \$233 million for projects in the Energy Resilience and Conservation Investment Program (ERCIP), which is \$83 million above the President’s budget request. ERCIP projects are consistently underfunded but provide critical improvements to energy security on military installations, while often increasing opportunities for bases to develop and use more reliable and clean energy sources. The increased funding will allow for construction of new smart grid systems and the replacement of aging and obsolete substations and HVAC systems.

Key areas of funding for veterans and their families:

Women Veterans Healthcare:

The agreement provides \$585 million in dedicated funding for women’s healthcare in VA. This is over \$89.5 million over fiscal year 2019, and \$38 million over President’s budget request level. Because women are the fastest growing population of veterans, these funding levels allow for VA to hire additional women primary care providers and psychologists for women veteran clinics, employees for women-specific services, and women peer support specialists.

VA Medical Research:

The agreement rejects the President’s proposed cuts to VA Medical & Prosthetic research, and provides \$800 million in funding for this purpose. This is \$38 million above the President’s budget request, and \$21 million above fiscal year 2019 funding levels. This program provides critical research funding for VA, including into the impacts of burn pits, developing novel approaches to restoring veterans with amputation, central nervous system injuries, loss of sight or hearing, and other physical and cognitive impairments so that veterans can live full and productive lives.

VA Healthcare:

The bill fully funds VA requirements for implementing the MISSION Act to expand community care options for veterans, as well as provides \$1.5 billion over fiscal year 2019 enacted levels for healthcare delivered at VA facilities across the country. It further provides increases over the President's budget request to programs serving homeless veterans, telehealth initiatives, mental health, opioid prevention, and rural health programs.

Key areas of funding for small but critical related agencies:

- This agreement reflects Congress' unwavering support for Arlington National Cemetery (ANC), and provides \$10 million above the President's budget request, for a total of \$80.8 million, to ensure that ANC is adequately staffed and has the resources needed to continue to provide its critical mission to our servicemembers and their families.
- Congress provided \$11 million above the President's request for the Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH), to allow AFRH to fix several of its most pressing infrastructure projects, such as roofing and electrical systems for facilities that house and support veterans on its Washington campus.

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