



COMMITTEE *on* APPROPRIATIONS

VICE CHAIRMAN PATRICK LEAHY

For Immediate Release:
December 21, 2020

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SUMMARY

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND RELATED AGENCIES FISCAL YEAR 2021 APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Washington, D.C. – The Military Construction, Department of Veterans Affairs and Related agencies fiscal year 2021 appropriations bill provides \$104.4 billion in discretionary dollars for Veterans programs and agencies, over \$12.5 billion more than fiscal year 2020 enacted levels. It further provides \$8.4 billion for military construction programs, including for overseas contingency operations, by the Military Services. This amount is \$250 million more than the President’s budget request for Military Construction. For the related agencies, the bill provides \$278 million, which is \$23 million more than the President’s budget request.

Key Points & Highlights

Key areas of military construction funding provided in this bill:

Child Development Centers

The bill includes more than \$200 million for the construction of four unfunded child development centers at installations around the country. Increasing childcare capacity and updating deteriorating facilities is critical to improving quality of life for service members and their families.

Privatized Housing Oversight

The bill includes an increase of \$60 million more than the fiscal year 2021 budget request for the military services to increase staffing to improve responsiveness and oversight for privatized housing programs. Over the past two years Congress has provided more than \$200 million more than the President’s request to ensure military families in privatized housing have access to the resources needed. 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.

Military Installation Resilience

Recognizing the tremendous cost in taxpayer dollars, time, and Department of Defense operational capabilities, of increasingly intense natural disasters, the bill provides \$15 million more than 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 country's ability to keep our country safe and, as a January 2019 DoD report noted, installations are increasingly more vulnerable due to climate change. This funding will be used to update mapping and modeling tools to improve project siting and design and fund engineering plans for high priority construction projects that improve resilience.

PFOS/PFOA

Within the Base Closure Account, the bill includes \$100 million more than the President's request to assist the services in addressing PFOS/PFOA 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, remediation, and other mitigation efforts currently underway.

Key areas of funding for veterans and their families:

VA Healthcare

The bill provides \$2.7 billion more than fiscal year 2020 enacted levels for healthcare delivered at VA facilities across the country. The bill fully funds the \$16 billion request for MISSION Act community care, which is \$3.4 billion more than fiscal year 2020 levels, and the bill provides \$16.3 billion advanced for MISSION Act in fiscal year 2022. The bill includes \$1.2 billion for continued implementation of the Caregivers Program, \$485 million over fiscal year 2020 enacted levels. It further provides increases over the President's budget request to programs serving homeless veterans, mental health, and rural health programs.

VA Medical Research

The bill rejects the President's proposed cuts to VA Medical & Prosthetic research, and provides \$815 million in funding for this purpose. This is \$28 million more than the President's budget request, and \$15 million more than fiscal year 2020 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.

Women Veterans Healthcare

The bill provides \$660 million in dedicated funding for women veterans healthcare in VA. This is \$76 million more than fiscal year 2020, and \$38 million more than President's budget request. 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 Electronic Health Record

The bill fully funds the requirements for VA to continue to roll out the electronic health record at nine additional VA medical facilities across the country. The bill includes \$2.6 billion to modernize the Department's antiquated health records and allow for interoperability, which is \$1.18 billion over fiscal year 2020 enacted funding levels.

VA COVID Response

The bill provides VA with transfer authorities to allow the Department to mitigate COVID backlogs in disability claims and appeals, as well as memorial ceremonies and the processing of education benefits. The bill includes expanded authority to provide funding to states for COVID-related construction at State Veterans Homes as well as \$100 million in additional funding for State Veterans Homes to address COVID among their residents.

Key areas of funding for small but critical related agencies:

- This bill reflects Congress' unwavering support for Arlington National Cemetery (ANC), and provides \$9 million more than the President's budget request, for a total of \$84.1 million, to ensure that ANC is adequately staffed and has the resources needed to continue to provide its critical mission to our service members and their families.
- Congress provided \$5 million more than the President's request for the Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH), to allow AFRH to address several of its most pressing infrastructure projects, such as water and electrical infrastructure at facilities that house and support veterans and their spouses on its Washington campus.

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