



# COMMITTEE *on* APPROPRIATIONS

## CHAIRMAN PATRICK LEAHY

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### Contact:

Jay Tilton, Senate Appropriations:

(202) 224-2667

Whitney Potter, Senator Heinrich:

[press@heinrich.senate.gov](mailto:press@heinrich.senate.gov)

### SUMMARY

#### MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES FISCAL YEAR 2023 APPROPRIATIONS BILL

*Chairman's Mark: July 28, 2022*

**Washington, D.C.** – The Committee provided \$317 billion in total funding for fiscal year 2023, including \$152 billion in discretionary funding, \$24.5 billion more than fiscal year 2022.

**U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.)**, Chair of the Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, said:

*“This bill takes a bipartisan approach to improve the readiness and quality of life for servicemembers in uniform, and enables the Department of Veterans Affairs to care for our nation’s veterans. The bill provides a significant increase in funding for military construction and family housing, and supports the Department of Defense’s efforts to address market volatility while investing in critical infrastructure to support servicemembers, their families, and DoD requirements around the world. It also provides a groundbreaking investment in VA healthcare and research, and funds VA’s efforts to improve infrastructure and modernize the disability claims process.”*

**U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.)**, Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, said:

*“This bill invests in the women and men and their families who serve this country. It provides the resources needed to provide health care to our nation’s veterans. It sets an historic level of funding for prosthetic and medical research, provides resources to address PFAS contamination, and it funds the Cost of War Toxic Exposure Fund to support veterans who were exposed to toxic substances during their service. This is a strong bill that supports our veterans, our servicemembers, and their families.”*

### **Key Points & Highlights** –

**Military Construction:** This bill provides \$16.645 billion for Military Construction and Family Housing, which is \$1.745 billion above fiscal year 2022. This significant increase will resource the Department to address critical infrastructure requirements that contribute to long-term operational readiness as well as quality of life for servicemembers and their families. It will also

provide over \$1 billion in funding to address project cost growth due to construction market volatility. The bill funds 297 major construction projects and provides \$2.3 billion for family housing construction and operations and maintenance.

Key areas of military construction and family housing funding in the bill include:

- Operational, Training, and Support Facilities – \$10 billion for planning, design and construction of infrastructure that supports base operations. This includes funding for airfield improvements, training ranges, maintenance shops and hangars, National Guard Readiness Centers, and facilities supporting United States European and Indo-Pacific Command. Of this amount, \$1.2 billion is for projects supporting the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program.
- Energy Resilience – \$553.3 million for the Energy Resilience and Conservation Investment Program. This funds 20 energy and water projects to modernize electrical infrastructure, construct new power generation plants and microgrids, and improve water distribution and storage facilities. Additionally, it provides more than \$200 million in planning and design funding which will enable DoD to develop more than 100 future energy and water resilience projects.
- Climate Adaptation – \$40 million for planning and design and minor construction for the services to enhance Military Installation Resilience, with a particular focus on climate resilience, given the enormous fiscal and operational cost of natural disasters to DoD infrastructure. This builds on the \$210 million appropriated for this purpose over the past three years and will better resource DoD to plan for, and mitigate, the consequences of climate change and extreme weather events.
- Quality of Life Facilities – Recognizing the importance of quality living and educational facilities, as well as access to medical care and on-base childcare, for servicemembers and their families, the bill fully funds the request for quality of life facilities and further funds numerous projects identified on the services unfunded priorities lists.
  - \$225 million for child development centers;
  - \$554 million for troop and family housing;
  - \$503 million for medical facilities;
  - \$151 million for schools.
- Laboratory Infrastructure – \$120 million to improve DoD science and technology, and research, development, testing, and evaluation infrastructure. DoD laboratories provide critical research and testing capabilities and this funding will allow DoD to address its most pressing lab infrastructure needs.
- Base Closure and Realignment – \$297 million for environmental remediation at bases closed through the BRAC process. In addition to ordnance and hazardous material removal, this will provide for testing, monitoring, and remedial activities related to PFAS contamination.

**Department of Veterans Affairs:** The bill provides VA with \$299.9 billion in fiscal year 2023, \$30.6 billion above fiscal year 2022, including \$165 billion in mandatory spending and \$135 billion in discretionary spending. In addition, the bill provides advanced appropriations for fiscal year 2024, including \$128.1 billion for veterans medical care and \$155.4 billion for veterans benefits. This provides VA with resources needed to provide health care to over 9.2 million enrolled veterans, including deferred care from the COVID-19 pandemic, disability compensation benefits to over 6 million veterans and their survivors, and pension benefits for nearly 277,000 veterans and their survivors.

- VA Medical Care – The bill provides \$118.7 billion, \$21.7 billion more than fiscal year 2022 enacted, a 22 percent increase, to provide essential health services for veterans, and support the Department in addressing the demands of the pandemic, including vaccinations and deferred care. As proposed in the President’s budget, this critical healthcare funding is considered as a separate discretionary funding category. The bill includes funding for priorities such as:
  - Rural Health – \$337 million, \$10 million more than fiscal year 2022. These funds will support improved access to care, including expanded access to transportation and telehealth.
  - Caregivers Program – \$1.9 billion, \$526 million more than fiscal year 2022, consistent with the need identified given recent changes in program implementation, and VA’s efforts to implement the program consistent with Congressional intent.
  - Women’s Health – \$911 million, \$71 million more than fiscal year 2022, for gender-specific healthcare services, as well as the program office, initiatives, and improvements to healthcare facilities.
  - Veteran Homelessness Prevention – \$2.7 billion, \$541 million more than in fiscal year 2022. These funds will support critical services and housing assistance for veterans and their families experiencing housing insecurity, many as a result of the pandemic.
  - Mental Health – \$13.9 billion, \$742 million more than in fiscal year 2022. This includes nearly \$500 million for suicide prevention outreach.
- Medical and Prosthetics Research – The bill makes a historic level of investment into research of \$916 million, \$34 million more than fiscal year 2022. This supports ongoing and new research in areas such as toxic exposures, traumatic brain injury, and precision oncology.
- Infrastructure – The bill strengthens VA’s infrastructure by including \$1.4 billion for major construction, \$626 million for minor construction, and \$150 million for the State Veterans Home Construction Grant Program, which provides expansion and enhancements to state homes where veterans live. The bill does not fund the Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) efforts, or provide funding for VA recommendations to the AIR Commission.

- Cost of War Toxic Exposures Fund – The bill includes \$1.4 billion for the Cost of War Toxic Exposures Fund, created by the Senate-passed Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act. This funding will be used for the expanded healthcare and benefit authorities and eligibilities that were enhanced by the PACT Act, in support of veterans who were exposed to toxic substances during the course of their service.
- Benefits Program Administration – The bill provides \$3.9 billion, \$409 million over fiscal year 2022 enacted. This increase will support additional claims processors and initiatives to address the existing claims backlog, including investments in automation and claims modernization.
- Information Technology – The bill provides \$5.8 billion for information technology systems, in addition to \$1.8 billion to continue the Department’s work to roll out the electronic health record to facilities across the country.

### **Related Agencies**

The bill funds four small but important independent agencies: The American Battle Monuments Commission; the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims; Arlington National Cemetery; and the Armed Forces Retirement Home.

- American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) operates and maintains 26 military cemeteries as well as 32 memorials, markers, and monuments that honor the service and sacrifice of American military personnel, including those that are laid to rest overseas. The bill provides \$86.8 million for ABMC activities.
- U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC) is the arbitrator of disability eligibility decisions by the VA Board of Appeals. The bill provides \$46.9 million for CAVC, which is \$5 million more than fiscal year 2022 enacted, and funds the addition of 17 personnel to support the Court’s increased caseload.
- Arlington National Cemetery (ANC) serves as a national military cemetery as well as a host of roughly 3.5 million visitors each year. The bill funds ANC at \$156 million, for operations as well as the next phase of construction for the Southern Expansion project, which will provide additional burial space to ensure the viability of the cemetery into the 2060s, as well as design for improvements to Memorial Avenue.
- Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH) operates and maintains two historic campuses, in Washington D.C. and Gulfport, Mississippi, which provide healthcare and residential services to elderly veterans and their spouses. The bill funds AFRH at \$152.4 million, including \$77 million in funding for necessary housing construction at the Washington D.C. campus.

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