

FY2016 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Bill Omnibus Agreement Summary

Highlights of the FY2016 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Bill:

Military Construction

The agreement provides \$8.2 billion for military construction projects, \$1.6 billion above the enacted FY2015 level and \$267 million below the President's request. The legislation recommends funds for construction and renovation projects to ensure military readiness and quality of life on military bases within the United States and around the globe, including military family housing, military family support services, hospital and health facilities construction, and important overseas investments.

- **Missile Defense** – \$220 million provided to fully fund construction of the second Aegis Ashore missile defense site in Redzikowo, Poland.
- **Military Family Housing** – \$1.4 billion to fund construction, operation and maintenance of military family housing for FY2016, \$214 million above the FY2015 level. These resources will continue to provide quality housing for the nearly 1.4 million military families currently served by the program.
- **Military Medical Facilities** – \$628 million for construction and alterations for new or existing military medical facilities, an increase of \$142 million above the FY2015 enacted level. This funding will allow for continued support and care for 9.8 million eligible beneficiaries, including our wounded troops abroad.
- **Department of Defense (DoD) Education Facilities** – \$334 million for essential safety improvements and infrastructure work at 10 DOD school facilities located within the United States and overseas.
- **Guard and Reserve** – \$653 million to support the construction needs of the Guard and Reserve, \$226 million above the FY2015 enacted level.
- **NATO Security Investment Program (NSIP)** – \$135 million for infrastructure to meet wartime, crisis, peace support and deterrence operations, and training requirements. The funds will support responses to international threats and challenges originating from Russia, the Middle East and North Africa.

Department of Veterans Affairs

The bill provides \$163 billion in total discretionary and mandatory funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), more than has ever been appropriated for the VA. Discretionary funding for the VA totals \$71.4 billion, \$6.5 billion or 9.8 percent over the FY2015 enacted level, and \$1.3 billion above the President's request. The bill makes an additional \$2.5 billion in FY2016

available to improve patient access to care, and to support additional health care services including hepatitis C treatments, veterans' caregiver services, and homeless veterans' assistance. Overall VA funding will provide for health care, benefit claims processing, medical and prosthetic research, information technology, and VA National Cemeteries.

- **Medical Care** – \$61.1 billion to support treatment and care for approximately 6.9 million patients in FY2016. The bill outlines: \$1.5 billion for groundbreaking new hepatitis C treatments; \$446 million for health care specifically for women veterans; \$4.9 billion to care for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans; \$232 million for traumatic brain injury treatment; and \$270 million for rural health initiatives.
- **Medical Research** – \$631 million for medical and prosthetic research.
- **Electronic Health Record** – \$233 million for continued modernization of the VA electronic health record system. The bill includes language restricting the use of this funding until the VA demonstrates functional improvements in the interoperability of a system to seamlessly exchange veterans' medical data among the VA, DOD, and the private sector.
- **Disability Claims Processing Backlog** – \$290 million for the paperless claims processing system, \$141 million for digital scanning of health records, and \$26 million for centralized mail. To prompt greater national and regional progress in reducing VA claims backlogs, the bill maintains strict reporting requirements.
- **Construction** – Nearly \$1.7 billion for major and minor construction associated with VA hospital replacement and continued correction of seismic safety issues and deficiencies.
- **Construction Oversight** – The bill prohibits the VA from embarking on major medical facility construction until it enters into an agreement designating a non-VA Federal entity, such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as the design and construction agent to manage VA major construction projects.
- **VA Mandatory Funding** – The bill fulfills mandatory funding requirements such as: veteran disability compensation programs for 4.7 million veterans and their survivors; education benefits for nearly 1.2 million veterans; guaranteed home loans for 431,000 veterans; and vocational rehabilitation and employment training for more than 137,000 veterans.
- **Advance Appropriations** – \$63 billion in advance FY2017 funding for veterans' medical programs, the same level as the President's request, to support VA medical services, medical support and compliance, medical facilities, and access to medical care for veterans. The bill for the first time also includes \$103 billion in advance funding for VA mandatory benefit programs.

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