

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 28, 2009

Veterans Groups Praise the 2010 Budget Conference Agreement

Dear Democratic Colleague:

On Monday, the conferees on the FY 2010 budget resolution (S. Con. Res. 13) reached an agreement that we urge you to support. It builds on steps Congress has taken since 2007 to provide significant funding increases so that veterans receive the excellent health care and benefits they have earned through their service.

The 2010 budget agreement provides an 11.7 percent funding increase for veterans' health care and other services. The budget expands health care eligibility and research. In addition, the budget agreement allows Congress to provide funding for VA medical care a year in advance.

Veterans groups are praising this budget. Raymond E. Dempsey, National Commander of Disabled American Veterans, said: "The spending blueprint lawmakers are expected to ratify this week is good news for our nation's veterans. Not only does it provide a record increase for [VA], it clears the way for much-needed legislation to ensure sufficient, timely and predictable funding for veterans health care." Robert E. Wallace, Executive Director of Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, said: "I would like to offer the VFW's strongest possible support for the conference agreement for the FY 2010 budget. . . We strongly encourage all in Congress to follow your lead and adopt this conference report."

Attached are a budget fact sheet and statements we received from some veterans groups. These groups are joined by many other veterans groups who have expressed support for the funding level in this budget and for ensuring timely and predictable funding for veterans' health care.

We urge you to support the budget agreement. If you have any questions or concerns about it, please feel free to contact us or the Budget Committee staff at x6-7200.

Sincerely,



John M. Spratt, Jr.
Chairman
Committee on the Budget



Chet Edwards
Chairman
Subcommittee on Military Construction and
Veterans Affairs
Committee on Appropriations



John Spratt,
Chairman

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

207 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515 (202) 226-7200 ★ www.budget.house.gov

April 27, 2009

2010 Budget Conference Agreement Honors Our Veterans

Our budget honors our veterans by providing an 11.7 percent increase for veterans' health care and other services. In addition, the conference agreement on the budget allows Congress to provide funding for VA medical care a year in advance.

Honors our Veterans by Providing an 11.7 Percent Funding Increase — The budget builds on the President's request by providing \$53.4 billion in appropriated funding for veterans' programs for 2010, which is \$5.6 billion (11.7 percent) more than the 2009 level. Over five years, the conference agreement increases funding for veterans' programs by more than \$27 billion.

Expands Health Care Eligibility and Research — The conference agreement supports the President's budget by ending the Bush Administration's ban on enrolling modest-income veterans for VA health care. It also provides more funding than 2009 for VA to research and treat mental health, post-traumatic stress disorder, and traumatic brain injury.

Affirms VA's Current Billing Policy — Our budget affirms and assumes VA's current policy of paying for the treatment of veterans' service-connected conditions and billing private insurance companies only for the treatment of conditions that are not related to a veteran's military service.

Under Republican Rule Veterans' Programs Were Squeezed — The previous Administration and House Republicans proposed increasing fees on veterans, placed a ban on enrolling new Priority 8 veterans for VA-provided health care, and proposed inadequate budgets that squeezed veterans programs. For example, President Bush's final budget cut veterans' funding by nearly \$20 billion over five years.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

April 28, 2009

The Honorable Kent Conrad
Chairman
Senate Committee on the Budget
SD-624 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John M. Spratt
Chairman
House Committee on the Budget
207 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Spratt and Conrad:

On behalf of the 2.2 million men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. and its Auxiliaries, I would like to offer the VFW's strongest possible support for the conference agreement for the FY 2010 budget. The VFW salutes your strong leadership in quickly coming to an agreement, especially one that makes so many meaningful and valuable improvements to the Department of Veterans Affairs. We strongly encourage all in Congress to follow your lead and adopt this conference report.

The VFW is delighted to see that the agreement includes the language from the Inhofe/Akaka amendment that would allow Congress to fund the veterans' health care system on an advanced basis. An advanced appropriation for veterans' medical care is among the VFW's highest priorities, and we sincerely appreciate that you brought this excellent proposal forward.

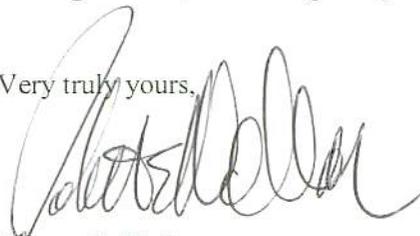
The VFW is pleased with the other aspects of the conference agreement, as well. It provides \$53.4 billion for veterans programs without collections. Although this number is below what we have recommended in the *Independent Budget*, when third-party collections are included, the total budget authority surpasses our recommendations.

Overall, this is a \$5.6 billion increase over the 2009 level, which is an 11.7 percent increase in discretionary funding. We salute these efforts.

It is clear that the two of you understand the commitment this nation owes to those who have worn the uniform in its defense. We thank you for your leadership on this most important issue.

We stand ready to work with you to ensure passage of this conference agreement, and we urge all your colleagues to support it.

Very truly yours,



Robert E. Wallace
Executive Director

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NEWS RELEASE

Contact: David E. Autry
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 28, 2009

Budget Plan Welcome News for Veterans

WASHINGTON, April 28—“The spending blueprint lawmakers are expected to ratify this week is good news for our nation’s veterans,” said Disabled American Veterans National Commander Raymond E. Dempsey. “Not only does it provide a record increase for the Department of Veterans Affairs, it clears the way for much-needed legislation to ensure sufficient, timely and predictable funding for veterans health care.”

The House-Senate conference agreement provides \$53.4 billion in appropriations for the VA, 11.7 percent above the 2009 level. In addition to a \$5.6 billion increase for vital veterans programs, it would allow Congress to fund veterans medical care one year in advance. So, in addition to funding the VA’s three medical care accounts in the fiscal year 2010 appropriations bill, Congress could also set the level of funding to become available at the start of the 2011 fiscal year.

Bipartisan legislation to provide advance appropriations for veterans health care, a top priority for the DAV, has been introduced in both the House and Senate. An important provision in the budget agreement removes a procedural barrier to its enactment.

The Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act (S. 423/H.R. 1016) would end funding delays that have plagued the VA when Congress has failed to pass appropriations bills on time. The legislation also would add needed transparency to the process as the Government Accountability Office would review and report on the VA’s annual budget request.

“This budget agreement signals that veterans are indeed a national priority” said Commander Dempsey. “And enacting the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act would ensure that veterans, particularly sick and disabled veterans, have access to quality and timely health care.”

The DAV and the eight other members of the Partnership for Veterans Health Care Budget Reform, along with a growing coalition of military and veterans groups, former VA officials and hospital directors, and an overwhelming majority of American voters, all support legislation to approve VA’s health care funding one year in advance.

The Partnership for Veterans Health Care Budget Reform, which worked closely with the bill sponsors in drafting the legislation, is comprised of AMVETS, Blinded Veterans Association, Disabled American Veterans, Jewish War Veterans, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Paralyzed Veterans of America, The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and Vietnam Veterans of America.

The 1.2 million-member Disabled American Veterans, a non-profit organization founded in 1920 and chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1932, represents this nation’s disabled veterans. It is dedicated to a single purpose: building better lives for our nation’s disabled veterans and their families. For more information, visit the organization’s Web site, www.dav.org.

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The
American
Legion



FOR THE AMERICAN LEGION

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April 28, 2009

The Honorable John M. Spratt, Jr., Chairman
Committee on Budget
United States House of Representatives
207 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6065

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The American Legion applauds the Conference Committee for the Budget Resolution FY 2010 recommendation for \$53.4 billion in discretionary funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). This represents an increase of \$5.6 billion above the current funding level for the VA (excluding emergency funding).

This additional funding would allow VA to enrollment of new Priority Group 8 veterans. More importantly, The American Legion fully supports timely, predictable and sufficient funding by allowing Congress to provide advance appropriations for VA medical care for FY 2011.

As a nation at war, this funding will help cover the ongoing cost of war to care for the men and women of the United States Armed Forces and their families. Your recommendations closely parallel the views and estimates submitted by The American Legion earlier this year.

Thank you for allowing The American Legion's participation in the Federal budget process.

Sincerely,

Steve Robertson, Director
National Legislative Commission

CC: Representative Paul Ryan