

# *House Appropriations Committee*

*Chairman Hal Rogers*

Website address: <http://appropriations.house.gov/>

## **FY 2014 Omnibus – Military Construction/Veterans Affairs** **Appropriations**

*Legislation includes funding for key infrastructure projects and veterans claims processing*

The fiscal year 2014 Omnibus includes funding for key military infrastructure projects to support our troops and their families at home and abroad. It also includes increased funding to meet our obligations to our nation's veterans – including helping to reduce the claims backlog at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Military Construction/Veterans Affairs portion of the Omnibus discretionary total is \$73.3 billion – \$1.4 billion above the enacted fiscal year 2013 level. However, the bill also seeks to save taxpayer dollars wherever possible, without impacting critical programs for our military or veterans. For example, the legislation includes rescissions of unused, unobligated funds from previous years, and does not provide funding for several proposed military construction projects that are not justified at this time.

**Military Construction** – The bill provides \$9.8 billion for military construction projects – a decrease of \$817 million below the enacted fiscal year 2013 level. These programs include large and small construction and rehabilitation projects on military bases in the U.S. and overseas that support our troops and their families.

- **Military Family Housing** – The bill provides \$1.5 billion to fund construction, operation, and maintenance of military family housing for fiscal year 2014. This is \$133 million below the enacted fiscal year 2013 level, a result of savings from the privatization of family housing. The funding will ensure quality housing is continued for 1,231,044 military families whose loved ones are serving the country.
- **Military Medical Facilities** – The bill includes \$796 million for construction and alterations for new or existing military medical facilities. These facilities support and care for 9.8 million eligible beneficiaries, including our wounded troops abroad.
- **Department of Defense (DoD) Education Facilities** – The bill includes \$798 million for essential safety improvements and infrastructure work at 17 DoD Education Activities facilities located within the U.S. and overseas. This funding will help address health, safety, and efficiency problems at these facilities for military children and families.
- **Guard and Reserve** – The bill includes \$665.8 million for construction or alteration of Guard and Reserve facilities in 25 states.

**Veterans Affairs (VA)** – The legislation includes a total of \$147.9 billion in both discretionary and mandatory funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs. This funding will help provide our nation’s veterans with the services and care they have earned from their dedicated service to the country. Discretionary funding for VA programs in the agreement is \$63.2 billion – \$2.3 billion above the enacted fiscal year 2013 level.

- **VA Medical Services** – The agreement funds VA medical services at \$43.6 billion – providing for approximately 6.5 million patients to be treated in fiscal year 2014. Some of these funds include: \$7.2 billion in mental health care services; \$103 million in suicide prevention activities; \$246 million for traumatic brain injury treatment; \$6.2 billion in homeless veterans treatment, services, housing, and job training; and \$250 million in rural health initiatives.
- **DoD-VA Electronic Health Record** – The agreement ensures that the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs are developing electronic health records that will seamlessly transfer medical information between the two agencies, providing \$323 million for these efforts within the VA. The legislation also includes language to ensure the VA creates a truly interoperable, working system – in a timely and cost-effective fashion – to help prevent unnecessary mistakes or delays in veterans’ medical care.
- **Disability Claims Processing Backlog** – The legislation includes a major crosscutting initiative that will help the VA meet its goal of ending the disability compensation claims backlog by 2015. This includes:
  - \$140 million – an increase of \$20 million above the President’s request and \$26 million above the fiscal year 2013 enacted level – for information technology upgrades at regional offices to manage the improved paperless claims processing system;
  - \$90 million for potential overtime, and \$10 million for additional training for claims processors;
  - \$88 million – a \$13 million increase above the President’s request – for the Board of Veterans Appeals to address the growing appeals backlog;
  - Provisions directing audits to assess performance and rigorous public monthly reporting requirements to track the performance of each regional office on claims processing.
- **Construction** – Minor Construction within the VA is funded at \$715 million – the same as the President’s request and \$108 million above the fiscal year 2013 enacted level. This will allow the VA to make progress on hundreds of projects, including the construction or renovation of health clinics and nursing homes. In addition, the agreement provides an additional \$85 million for non-recurring maintenance for medical facilities beyond the \$710 million already provided in advance for fiscal year 2014.
- **VA Mandatory Funding** – The agreement fulfills mandatory funding requirements such as: veteran disability compensation programs for 4.2 million veterans and their survivors; post-9-11 GI bill education benefits for more than 764,000 veterans; and vocational rehabilitation and employment training for more than 175,000 veterans.
- **Oversight** – The legislation includes provisions to increase oversight of taxpayer dollars at the VA, including requiring the agency to report on construction expenditures and savings, forbidding changes in the scope of construction projects, and restricting the agency from taking certain spending actions without notifying Congress.

**Advance Appropriations for Veterans Medical Programs** – The agreement contains \$55.6 billion in advance fiscal year 2015 funding for the VA – the same level provided in the House budget resolution. This funding will provide for medical services, medical support and compliance, and medical facilities, and ensure that our veterans have continued, full access to their medical care.

#####