



COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Norm Dicks, *Democratic Ranking Member*

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Rep. Norm Dicks' Statement on the FY2012 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs Appropriations Bill

WASHINGTON- House Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Rep. Norm Dicks made the following comments following release of the FY2012 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill text:

“Yesterday the Republican Majority released their Subcommittee Allocations for the FY2012 fiscal year. If enacted, this extreme budget would be a severe setback for economic growth by shedding more government jobs and put further pressure on state and local governments. Rather than presenting a reasonable budget that continues the momentum of our economic recovery, Republicans have decided to double-down on their bogus ‘cut and grow’ economic theory.

“Today the Republican Majority released their bill text for Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations. This bill has a strong reputation for common ground as members traditionally work together to fund construction of military facilities and the quality of life of veterans and military families.

“Unfortunately, the Majority has decided to include political provisions that unnecessarily complicate consideration of the bill. However, I’m committed to working with my colleagues throughout the appropriations process to respectfully work out these differences. I’m confident that the committee will eventually report a bipartisan bill that adequately provides for our troops, veterans and military families.”

Below is a brief summary of funding levels and other key provisions in the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs Bill:

Total Allocation: \$72.5 billion | **-\$615 million** below FY2011 Enacted | **-\$1.25 billion** below the President’s FY2012 Request.

Military Construction: Funded at \$14.0 billion, **-\$2.6 billion** below the FY2011 enacted level and **-\$752 million** below the President’s Request. The subcommittee cut funding for several projects that were ahead of need.

School Construction: Includes \$483,302,000 for construction and replacement of Department of Defense Education Activity schools. A total of 15 schools, six schools in the United States and nine schools at overseas installations, will be refurbished with this funding.

Medical Facility Construction: The Committee recommendation includes \$1,115,842,000 for medical facility construction including funding for phase I of the Rhine Ordnance Barrack Medical Center Replacement in Landstuhl, Germany, which receives many of our wounded troops before they return home.

Veterans Affairs: Funded at \$58.3 billion, -\$1.85 billion above the FY2011 enacted level and -\$476 million below the President's Request. Most of this funding is for veteran's medical services. The recommendation provides full funding of \$69.5 billion for the mandatory VA programs providing compensation and pensions, educational benefits, vocational rehabilitation, life insurance and housing loan programs.

Administrative Expenses: Reduces by -\$129 million administrative expenses for the Veterans Benefits Administration as requested in the President's budget, with the exception of personnel levels for disability claims processing which receives an increase in funding.

Committee Bid Savings Notification: In an effort to control construction expenditures in the same way as the Military Construction portion of the bill, the bill includes language requiring the VA to notify the Committee of any bid savings greater than \$5 million and forbids any change in scope of a construction project.

Guantanamo: Includes a provision that prohibits funds from being used on facilities that would house detainees from Guantanamo.

Arlington National Cemetery: Funded at \$45.8 million which is \$700 thousand more than the FY2011 appropriation and the same as the budget request.

Unnecessary Political Provisions: The bill contains several provisions that politicize the bill and complicate passage including a divisive restriction on implementation of Davis Bacon wage requirements; and a redundant measure on E-Verify employment verification.

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