



U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, June 28, 2011

MilCon/VA Subcommittee Approves FY2012 Spending Bill

Washington, DC— U.S. Senator Tim Johnson (D-SD) today announced subcommittee approval of the FY2012 Senate Military Construction, Veterans Affairs (VA) and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

Johnson, Chairman of the subcommittee, announced \$142 billion in total funding, including \$72 billion in discretionary funding. This is \$618 million below the FY11 enacted level, excluding overseas contingency operations, and \$1.25 billion below the budget request. Military Construction funding is \$13.7 billion, \$1 billion below the budget request. VA discretionary funding is \$58.6 billion, \$2.3 billion over current funding. The bill also includes \$52.5 billion in FY 13 advance appropriations for veterans medical care. One of the very few areas in which the bill provides an increase is for VA medical research, which is \$72 million over the budget request to maintain funding at the current level.

“This bill is a disciplined and fiscally responsible effort to meet the needs of our troops in this difficult budget climate,” said Johnson. “It also responds to the growing needs of our nation’s veterans including those returning from the front lines.”

“We had to make some tough calls to achieve bringing the bill in \$618 million below current funding and \$1.25 billion below the budget request,” said Johnson. “My top priority as always was to protect and support our veterans. Since no military construction funding for overseas contingencies was requested, there is none in the bill.

A summary of the bill follows:

SUMMARY
SENATE MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS AFFAIRS AND RELATED AGENCIES
FY 2012 APPROPRIATIONS BILL
(Subcommittee Mark)

Overview

Total funding for Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies is \$142.029 billion for fiscal year 2012, including \$72.53 billion in discretionary funding and \$69.5 billion in mandatory funding.

Discretionary funding is \$1.255 billion below the President's budget request and \$617.98 million below the FY11 enacted level.

The bill provides \$13.7 billion for military construction and family housing, \$1.049 billion below the budget request; \$58.6 billion in discretionary funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2012, \$181 million below the budget request; and \$221.4 million for related agencies, a \$25 million decrease from the request. No funding was requested or is provided in the bill for military construction related to Overseas Contingency Operations.

Major Policy Items

On top of the \$58.6 billion provided in fiscal year 2012 for the Department of Veterans Affairs, the recommendation also includes \$52.54 billion in advance appropriations for veterans medical care in fiscal year 2013. This is \$1.93 billion above the fiscal year 2012 level and equal to the budget request. This funding will ensure a stable and uninterrupted source of funding for medical care for veterans.

Title I – Military Construction and Family Housing

The bill provides \$13.7 billion for military construction and family housing, \$1.049 billion below the budget request and \$2.87 billion below the FY2011 enacted level, due primarily to the completion of the BRAC 2005 construction phase in fiscal year 2011.

Highlights

Active and reserve component military construction: \$11.1 billion to fund military construction projects worldwide, including operational, training, and research facilities, readiness centers, barracks, schools, hospitals, and clinics. The recommendation is \$1.049 billion below the President's request for active components and equal to the request of \$1.2 billion for reserve components.

Family Housing: \$1.69 billion as requested for family housing construction and privatization projects. The 2012 budget request for family housing is \$125.2 million below the fiscal year 2011 enacted level, reflecting the progress toward completion of the privatization effort and subsequent reductions in operating expenses.

Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC): \$258.8 million for BRAC 2005 and \$323.5 million for BRAC 1990, as requested. The BRAC 2005 request is \$1.9 billion below the fiscal year 2011 enacted level, reflecting the scheduled completion of the BRAC 2005 construction program in 2011.

NATO Security Investment Program (NSIP): \$272.6 million as requested to fund the U.S. share of joint U.S.-NATO military facilities.

Energy Conservation Investment Program (ECIP): \$135 million as requested plus \$10 million for planning and design to accelerate the Defense Department's efforts to improve energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas production on military installations.

Title II -- Department of Veterans Affairs

The bill provides \$58.6 billion in discretionary funding for fiscal year 2012, \$181.7 million under the President's request, and \$69.5 billion in mandatory funding, equal to the request. Total funding for the Medical Care accounts for fiscal year 2012 is \$50.611 billion, which includes a \$2.588 billion increase over the fiscal year 2011 enacted level for the Medical Services account.

The budget submission included a request for an additional \$240 million in FY12 for the establishment of a contingency fund in the event the current economic climate results in a spike in demand for veterans healthcare. While the recommendation does not fund the contingency fund, the Department has \$664 million associated with pay raises from FY 11 and 12 which should be used for increased demand. Additionally, the VA's budget submission for the FY 13 advance appropriation estimated a \$500 million carryover from FY 12 to FY 13. The Committee believes that the VA should utilize the resources it has rather than create a contingency fund.

Highlights

Rural Health: Building on the Rural Health Initiative launched by the Committee in fiscal year 2009 to close gaps in VA service in rural and remote areas, the bill provides \$250 million as requested for medical care, including telehealth and mobile clinics, for veterans in rural and highly rural areas, including Native American populations.

Homeless Veterans Programs: \$4.9 billion for health care and support services for homeless veterans. This includes \$939 million in direct programs to assist homeless veterans, including \$202 million for the HUD-VASH program and \$224 for the Homeless Grant Per Diem Program.

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans: \$2.99 billion as requested to meet the health care needs of veterans who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, a \$594 million increase over last year. The VA estimates that the number of OEF/OIF veterans in its health care system will reach 536,451 in 2012, a 105.5% increase since 2008. This funding includes research and treatment programs for mental health issues, including Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Caregivers: The bill includes a total of \$208 million for implementation of the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010.

Women Veterans Programs: \$270 million as requested to meet the unique needs of women veterans.

Medical and Prosthetic Research: \$581 million, an increase of \$72 million over the budget request, for research in a number of areas, including mental health, TBI, spinal cord injury, burn injury, polytrauma injuries, and sensory loss.

Long Term Care: \$6.9 billion for long term care for the Nation's aging veterans as well as severely wounded combat veterans from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The funding includes both institutional and home based care programs. The bill provides \$85 million for grants for the construction of State extended care facilities.

Native American Veterans: \$52 million for collaborative efforts and sharing arrangements with the Indian Health Service to ensure that Native American veterans receive the care which they have earned.

Information Technology (IT): \$3.16 billion for IT projects, equal to the request, to develop electronic health care records, paperless claims systems, and seamless integration of medical and service records with the Department of Defense.

Office of Inspector General (IG): The bill includes \$112.3 million for the IG's office. This is \$3.0 million over the President's request and \$3.6 million over the fiscal year 2011 enacted level. With the growth the VA has seen over the past six years, the Committee has included this increase to ensure robust oversight by the IG.

Title III – Related Agencies

The bill provides a total of \$231.4 million for related agencies. This includes:

American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC): \$77.1 million, equal to the request, to support the operations and activities of the ABMC.

U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims: \$30.8 million, \$25 million below the request. The Committee did not recommend initial funding for a new courthouse for the Court due to uncertainties surrounding the total cost of the project and the availability of the preferred site for the project.

Arlington National Cemetery: \$45.8 million, equal to the request.

Armed Forces Retirement Home: \$67.7 million as requested for operations and maintenance.

Note: The FY 2012 budget submission did not request any military construction funding for Overseas Contingency Operations.