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FY2018 MILCON-VA APPROPRIATIONS BILL APPROVED WITH BIPARTISAN COMMITTEE SUPPORT

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Senate Committee on Appropriations today approved the [FY2018 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies \(MilCon-VA\) Appropriations Bill](#), providing record-level funding to improve programs for veterans and investing in critical infrastructure for U.S. military personnel and their families.

The bill is the first of the dozen FY2018 appropriations bills to come before the committee. Approved unanimously (31-0), the bill provides critical funding for veterans health care, veterans benefits, medical and prosthetic research, the National Cemetery Administration, information technology, and the VA Inspector General.

The bill includes \$88.9 billion in FY2018 discretionary funding, \$6.1 billion above the FY2017 level. This funding includes \$78.4 billion, a \$4.0 billion increase over FY2017, for U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs programs. The bill also fulfills mandatory funding requirements, including veteran disability compensation programs for 4.6 million veterans.

Military construction funding is increased by \$1.8 billion over the FY2017 enacted level, with \$9.5 billion provided to support family housing, construction of important national defense facilities, and military hospitals. It also funds critical overseas facility investments.

“A new Congress creates opportunities to focus on how best to improve the health and well-being of current members of the military, veterans, and their families. This bill would provide funding to address those pressing needs,” said **Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Thad Cochran (R-Miss.)**. “I commend Senator Moran, as well as Ranking Member Schatz, for their work on this important bipartisan legislation.”

“This bill reflects our commitment to our servicemembers, both past and present, with investments in infrastructure at home and overseas along with funding to honor the lives of those who have defended our nation,” said **U.S. Senator Jerry Moran (R-Kan.)**, chairman of the Senate MilCon-VA Appropriations Subcommittee.

“This bill provides funds to prevent veteran suicide, address opioid addiction nationwide, increase rural access to healthcare, eliminate the claims backlog and support innovative medical research. We propose increased oversight of the Veterans Health Administration and the Army Corps of Engineers to prevent cost overruns for facility construction and improve accountability,” **Moran** said. “Our bill also keeps Americans safe from terrorists by continuing the prohibition of the modification or construction of any facilities on U.S. soil to house detainees currently held at Guantanamo Bay and supports our NATO allies against Russian aggression.”

Bill Highlights:

Military Construction – \$9.5 billion to fund 214 military construction projects, which is \$1.8 billion above the FY2017 level and \$246 million below the budget request. This includes funds for large and small construction and renovation projects on military bases within the United States and around the globe.

- **European Reassurance Initiative** – \$307 million to fund construction projects in support of U.S. allies through the European Reassurance Initiative.
- **Overseas Contingency Operations** – \$331 million for construction projects in direct support of military operations in the Middle East.
- **Military Family Housing** – \$1.4 billion for construction, operation and maintenance of military family housing, which is \$133 million above the FY2017 level. The bill includes construction funding for eight (8) family housing projects.
- **Military Medical Facilities** – \$556 million for construction or alteration of military medical facilities. This funding will allow for continued support and care for 9.8 million eligible beneficiaries, including wounded U.S. troops abroad.
- **DoD Education Facilities** – \$249 million for essential safety improvements and infrastructure work at four overseas military schools.
- **Guard and Reserve** – \$575 million to support the construction needs of National Guard and Reserve forces.
- **NATO Security Investment Program** – \$154 million to provide infrastructure for training, deterrence, and the NATO Alliance’s response to challenges posed by Russia and threats from the Middle East and North Africa.

Veterans Affairs (VA) – The legislation includes a record level of \$78.4 billion in discretionary funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs, an increase of \$4.0 billion above the FY2017 level. These resources will provide the healthcare, benefits and memorial services earned by U.S. servicemembers and veterans.

As requested by the administration, the measure makes an additional \$2.9 billion in medical care funding available in FY2018 to improve access to care, and to support additional health care services including hepatitis C treatments, opioid addiction treatments, veterans’ caregiver services, and homeless veterans’ assistance. This amount is in addition to FY2018 medical care advance funding provided last year.

- **VA Medical Care** – \$70.1 billion to support medical treatment and healthcare for approximately 9.2 million enrolled patients in FY2018. The bill includes: \$5.5 billion to care for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans; \$840 million for the essential Caregivers Program; \$722 million for important medical and prosthetic research; \$525 million for health care specifically for women veterans; \$316 million for traumatic brain injury treatment; and \$270 million for rural health initiatives.
- **Disability Claims Processing** – \$38 million for the paperless claims processing system, \$115 million for digital scanning of health records, and \$27 million for centralized mail. To prompt greater national and regional progress in reducing VA claims backlogs, the bill maintains strict reporting requirements.
- **Construction** – \$855 million for major and minor construction associated with VA hospital replacement, correction of seismic deficiencies, scores of projects to improve access to VA health care, and the VA’s National Cemeteries. The bill also includes an additional \$20 million in construction grants for State Extended Care Facilities.
- **VA Mandatory Funding** – The bill fulfills mandatory funding requirements such as: veteran disability compensation programs for 4.6 million veterans and 420,000 survivors; education benefits for nearly one million veterans; guaranteed home loans for 519,000 veterans; and vocational rehabilitation and employment training for more than 145,000 veterans.
- **Advance Appropriations** – \$70.7 billion in FY2019 advance discretionary funding for veteran health care, and \$107.7 billion in FY2019 advance mandatory funding for veterans benefits.

Related Agencies – The legislation also includes \$258 million in funding for:

- **American Battle Monuments Commission** – \$79.0 million
- **U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims** – \$33.6 million
- **Arlington National Cemetery** – \$81.0 million
- **Armed Forces Retirement Home** – \$64.3 million

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