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## **BILL SUMMARY: Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Fiscal Year 2024 Appropriations Bill**

*Legislation keeps our promise to veterans by fully funding veterans' medical care and benefits, strengthens our national security, and delivers record investments in veterans' mental health, ending veteran homelessness, and women veterans' health*

*Rejects extreme partisan riders that would deny veterans access to abortion care and more*

**Washington, D.C.** – The Fiscal Year 2024 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act provides the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and related agencies \$135.25 billion in non-defense discretionary funding, as well as \$172.5 billion in mandatory funding, to fulfill our nation's obligations to our veterans. The bill also provides advance appropriations for our veterans in fiscal year 2025, including \$112.6 billion for veterans' medical care and \$195.8 billion for veterans benefits. In addition, the bill includes \$18.7 billion in defense spending for military construction and family housing for fiscal year 2024—an increase of \$2 billion over the President's budget request—to upgrade and modernize critical infrastructure and support military families.

**“This bill honors the sacred obligation we have to take care of our veterans when they come home by fully funding veterans' medical care and benefits and delivering essential resources VA needs to operate. Of critical importance to me, we make record investments in women veterans' health care, mental health services for our veterans, and resources to help end veteran homelessness—longtime priorities of mine,”** said Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee and Chair of the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Subcommittee. **“As I have said many times: our most important military asset isn't our weapons or equipment—it is the brave men and women who sacrifice greatly to keep**

**our country safe. That's why I worked hard to ensure this bill supports our servicemembers and military families with new investments in military housing, child care centers, and more. This bill helps ensure our military infrastructure is built for the future—with critical new investments in the Indo Pacific, funding to improve resiliency in the face of new climate-related threats, and more.”**

### **Key Points & Highlights – Department of Veterans Affairs**

***Keeps our sacred promise to veterans by fully funding veterans' medical care and benefits, and fully funding VA programs.***

**VA Medical Care:** Consistent with the agreement made in passing the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023, the bill provides \$121.011 billion for VA medical care in fiscal year 2024, a \$2.3 billion increase over fiscal year 2023, to provide essential health services for more than 9.1 million veterans. This is in addition to funding previously appropriated to the Cost of War Toxic Exposures Fund to cover the cost of health care related to toxic exposures. This bill funds critical priorities including:

- **Rural Health** – \$343 million, \$5 million more than fiscal year 2023, to support improved access to care, including expanded access to transportation and telehealth.
- **Caregivers** – \$2.4 billion, \$556 million more than fiscal year 2023, to help VA implement this critical program and extend legacy participant eligibility and benefits through 2025.
- **Women's Health** – \$990 million, \$150 million more than fiscal year 2023, for gender-specific health care services, as well as initiatives and improvements to healthcare facilities.
- **Veteran Homelessness Prevention** – \$3.1 billion, \$418 million more than in fiscal year 2023, to support critical services and housing assistance for veterans and their families experiencing housing insecurity.
- **Mental Health** – \$16.2 billion, \$2.3 billion more than in fiscal year 2023, to get veterans the mental health services they deserve. This includes \$559 million for suicide prevention outreach.
- **Child Care** – \$23 million to expand the Child Care Pilot Program to eliminate barriers for veterans in need of child care while attending medical appointments.

**Benefits Administration:** The bill provides \$3.9 billion, a \$36 million increase over fiscal year 2023, to administer benefits, including disability compensation benefits to 6.6 million veterans and their survivors. These funds will support VA's efforts to support increases in the number and scope of claims while decreasing the claims backlog. This amount is supported by additional funding previously appropriated to the Cost of War Toxic Exposures Fund to enhance VA's ability to process veteran claims related to toxic exposures.

**Medical and Prosthetics Research:** The bill provides \$943 million for medical and prosthetics research, \$27 million more than fiscal year 2023. This supports ongoing and new research in areas such as traumatic brain injury and precision oncology and is augmented by additional funding for research into toxic exposures in the Toxic Exposures Fund.

**Infrastructure:** The bill strengthens VA's infrastructure by providing \$1.7 billion for major and minor construction, \$92 million over the President's budget request, and by providing \$646 million for construction from the Recurring Expenses Transformation Fund. The bill further provides \$171 million for construction of state extended care facilities, \$7 million over the President's budget request, and \$60 million for construction of state, territory, and Tribal veterans cemeteries.

**Information Technology:** The bill provides \$6.4 billion for information technology systems. In addition, the bill provides \$1.3 billion in funding for the Electronic Health Record Modernization effort, \$529 million below the President's budget request, reflective of the Department's decision to reset the program, including halting additional deployments to prioritize improvements at the sites that currently use the new system.

**Honoring Our PACT Act:** The Fiscal Responsibility Act provided full funding for the Toxic Exposures Fund for fiscal years 2024 and 2025.

### **Key Points & Highlights – Military Construction**

***Strengthens our national security by delivering critical funding level to modernize critical military infrastructure and build our presence in key regions around the world, and supports servicemembers and military families.***

**Strengthening National Security:** The bill provides a historic level of funding for roughly 300 military construction and family housing projects, as well as for minor construction and design accounts. These projects support operational requirements by providing new training and maintenance facilities, modernizing infrastructure enabling the Nuclear Triad, and supporting new aircraft beddowns. The bill includes nearly \$2.5 billion in support of the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Plan, for projects at each of the four public shipyards.

**Critical Overseas Infrastructure:** Building on efforts in recent years to prioritize supporting our posture in the Pacific, the bill includes more than \$1.8 billion for 25 projects in the Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) theater that support the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, as well as \$131 million above the budget request for INDOPACOM planning and design and minor construction. Additionally, recognizing the importance of infrastructure to a sustained and capable U.S. and allied military presence in Europe, the bill includes over \$300 million for projects and accounts that support the European Deterrence Initiative. The bill also provides \$293 million for the NATO Security Investment Program, fully funding the U.S. cost share for NATO military construction projects.

**Supporting Our Servicemembers and Military Families:** The bill provides roughly \$2 billion for family housing construction and funding to maintain and upgrade existing units, as well as to strengthen oversight of privatized housing. This includes \$320 million to revitalize five privatized housing projects—ensuring their future financial health and enabling additional repairs and renovations—and \$449 million for six government-owned family housing projects. It also provides \$662 million for the design and construction of more than a dozen barracks to reduce the housing deficit for unaccompanied troops. The bill further includes \$277 million for six new child development centers (CDCs), as well as \$59.5 million above the request for the design of additional CDCs to expand access to child care for military families.

**Installation and Energy Resilience:** The bill builds on prior investments to ensure our bases and infrastructure are resilient. It includes \$30 million for planning and design and minor construction for Military Installation Resilience, which enables the Department of Defense to develop and construct projects that help address facility and installation vulnerabilities, particularly related to climate-driven threats. It also includes \$634 million for the Energy Resilience and Conservation Investment Program.

**Recovering from Natural Disasters:** The bill provides \$150 million for the Air Force to continue to rebuild facilities damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Michael.

### **Key Points & Highlights – Related Agencies**

**Arlington National Cemetery:** This bill reflects Congress’ unwavering support for Arlington National Cemetery and its future as an active cemetery. In addition to providing \$99.8 million for operations costs, which is \$6.5 million more than fiscal year 2023, it also includes \$88.6 million for the Southern Expansion construction project.

**American Battle Monuments Commission:** Recognizing the important mission of the American Battle Monuments Commission, the bill provides \$158.6 million for operations and maintenance, which includes funding for three capital improvement projects, such as to complete design and construction of the Honolulu Interpretive Center.

**Armed Forces Retirement Home:** The bill provides a total of \$77 million, which funds operations and maintenance activities at the Armed Forces Retirement Home campuses in Washington, D.C., and Gulfport, Mississippi.

**Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims:** This bill provides \$47.2 million for the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, \$300,000 over fiscal year 2023. This increase supports the court’s capacity to adjudicate appeals in a timely manner.

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