

# DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

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## LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

February 2009

### **ADVANCE APPROPRIATIONS LEGISLATION INTRODUCED**

On Thursday, February 12, 2009, the Chairmen of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees held a joint press conference announcing the introduction of the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act, H.R. 1016 and S. 423. These bills would:

- Authorize Congress to appropriate funding for veterans' medical care one year in advance
- Provide greater transparency to VA's internal budget process, ensuring approval of sufficient funding
- Require the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to audit and report to Congress VA's formulation of its VA health care budget

The DAV believes a change is warranted and long overdue to sustain a stable and viable health care system. Any reform must include sufficiency, timeliness, and predictability of VA health care funding. For the past decade, the Partnership for Veterans Health Care Budget Reform – a coalition of nine veteran service organizations including DAV, with a combined membership of 8 million veterans – fully endorsed veterans health care budget reform. We fully support the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act, H.R. 1016 and S. 423.

This legislation also is supported by The Military Coalition, comprised of 35 organizations representing the uniformed services and their families and by the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE).

The DAV believes this legislation proposes a reasonable solution to achieve sufficient, timely, and predictable funding.

### **THE INDEPENDENT BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2010 RELEASED**

On February 2, 2009, the four organizations that make up *The Independent Budget* (IB), DAV, AMVETS, Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) and Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW), published its fiscal year (FY) 2010 budget recommendations for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Our recommendations include \$47.13 billion for the Veterans Health Administration, \$6.17 billion over the FY 2009 appropriation level. Specifically, we have recommended:

- \$36.6 billion for medical services, \$5.6 billion above the FY 2009 level
- \$4.59 billion for medical support and compliance, \$140 million above the FY 2009 level
- \$5.40 billion for medical facilities, \$370 million over last year's level
- \$575 million for medical and prosthetic research, an increase of \$65 million

For General Operating expenses, we have recommended \$1.98 billion, an increase of \$180 million. This number includes \$1.63 billion for the Veterans Benefits Administration, an increase of \$160 million. We also recommend \$292 million for the National Cemetery Administration, an increase of \$62 million.

For major construction, we recommend \$1.12 billion and \$827 million for minor construction, an increase of \$200 million and \$85 million, respectively.

The total discretionary budget authority recommendation is \$54.63 billion. This is \$4.48 billion above the FY 2009 appropriations level, including collections.

### **STIMULUS BILL PROVISIONS**

H.R. 1, the American Recover and Reinvestment Act of 2009, contains provisions important to elderly, sick and disabled veterans. The stimulus bill approved an "Economic Recover Payment" to certain individual veterans – primarily those in receipt of disability compensation or nonservice-connected VA pension – of \$250. The U.S. Treasury and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs are directed by the Act to identify recipients and make payments directly to them within 120 days of approval of the Act by the President. Application by individual veterans is not necessary for disabled veterans to receive this one-time payment.

H.R. 1 also provides over \$1.4 billion in new funding for a variety of VA programs, especially VA health care-related facilities, as follows:

- \$1 billion for maintenance improvements and upgrades to VA health care facilities
- \$150 million in VA grant funds for State Veterans Home construction and restoration needs
- \$200 million to improve disability claims processing and information technology in the VBA; and
- \$50 million to restore and provide better upkeep for VA's closed national cemeteries.

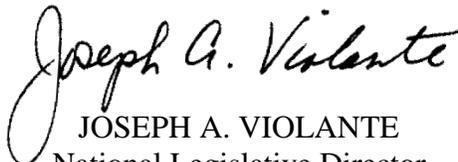
### **2009 MID-WINTER CONFERENCE**

The legislative presentation of National Commander Raymond E. Dempsey to a joint session of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees will be held **at 2:00 p.m. in the Caucus Room, Room 345 of the Cannon House Office Building, on Tuesday, February 24, 2009**. The Commander's presentation is the centerpiece of the Mid-Winter Conference.

In addition to the Commander's presentation, the Conference will once again hold informative seminars on legislation, membership, voluntary service, and communications. For more information, see our DAV website, at [www.dav.org](http://www.dav.org). We are hopeful that you will participate in all of these seminars.

Remember, one of the most effective forms of lobbying is a personal visit to the office of your elected officials. Tuesday morning and late afternoon have been set aside to allow you to visit with your members of Congress and their staffs. Talking points on topics important to disabled veterans are available online at <http://www.dav.org/news/documents/2009TalkingPoints.pdf>, and copies will be available in the hotel on Sunday, February 22, 2009, for presentation to your elected officials.

As always, thank you for your interest in the legislative activities of the DAV. I look forward to seeing each of your state delegations at Mid-Winter.

  
JOSEPH A. VIOLANTE  
National Legislative Director

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