

The Fiscal Year 2016 VA Budget

The following is provided to illustrate the chronological order of events for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2016. Additionally, this handout provides comparisons against the Independent Budget Veteran Service Organizations (IBVSOs) budget recommendations, the President's budget request and the budget proposed for the VA by Congress.

2 February 2015, President's Budget Request released

Administration Requests \$168 billion in total VA spending

- **\$73.3 billion in discretionary spending**
- **\$94.7 billion in mandatory spending**

25 March 2015, the House Budget Resolution for Fiscal Year 2016, H. Con. Res. 27, introduced by House Budget Committee Chairman Tom Price passes.

27 March 2015, the Senate Budget Resolution, S. Con. Res. 11, introduced by Senate Budget Committee Chairman Mike Enzi, passes.

- \$1.017 trillion spending cap on Federal spending

24 April 2015, Congressman Charlie Dent, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs introduces the Mil-Con VA Funding Bill Introduced 24 April 2015. It passes the House 30 April 2015.

H.R. 2029

Military Construction and Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2016

VA Funding Levels in H.R. 2029: \$165.5 billion

- \$71.0 billion in discretionary spending
- \$94.5 billion in mandatory spending
- **-\$2.5 billion less overall than PBR in discretionary spending**

27 April 2015, DAV and the Independent Budget (IB) partners issue a letter expressing concerns with inadequate VA funding proposed within H.R. 2029. DAV and the IB VSO's recommend that Congress should at least fund the VA to levels requested by the President. This letter was addressed to The Honorable John Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives and The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader of the House of Representatives.

28 April 2015, Executive office of the President, Office of Management and Budget (OMB), issues a statement strongly opposing House passage of H.R. 2029. OMB cites that H.R. 2029 fails to fully fund critical priorities, including veterans' medical care and military and VA construction. This statement goes on to say that if the President were presented with H.R. 2029, his senior advisors would recommend that he veto the bill.

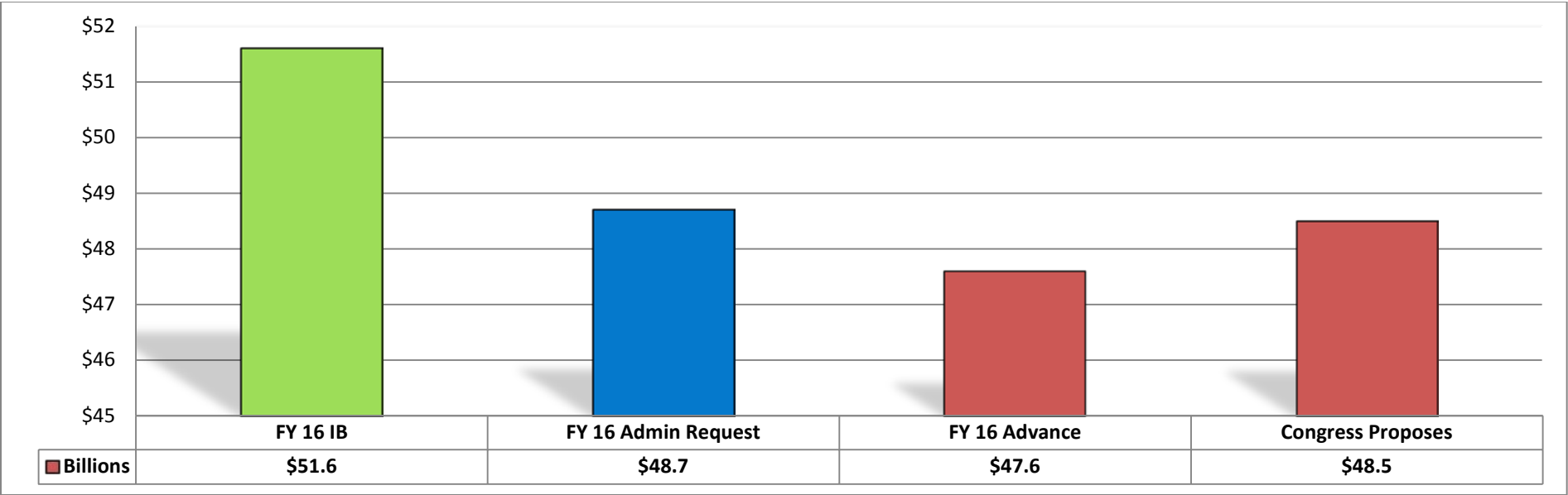
The Fiscal Year 2016 VA Budget
Medical Services

FY 2016 Enacted Advance Appropriations \$47.6 billion

FY 2016 IB Recommendation \$51.6 billion

FY 2016 Revised Administration Request \$48.7 billion (\$2.9 billion less than the IB)

Congress Proposes \$48.5 billion (\$3.1 billion less than the IB)



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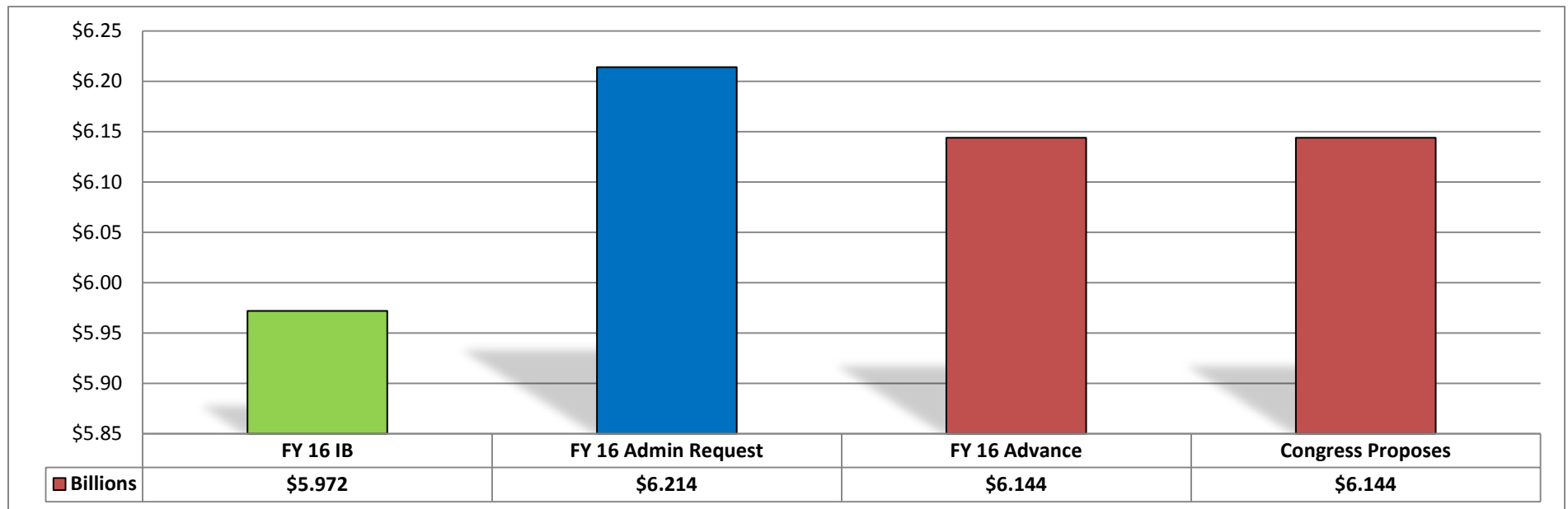
Medical Support and Compliance

FY 2016 Enacted Advance Appropriations \$6.144 billion

FY 2016 IB Recommendation \$5.972 billion

FY 2016 Revised Administration Request \$6.214 billion (\$242 million more than the IB)

Congress Proposes \$6.144 billion (\$172 million more than the IB)



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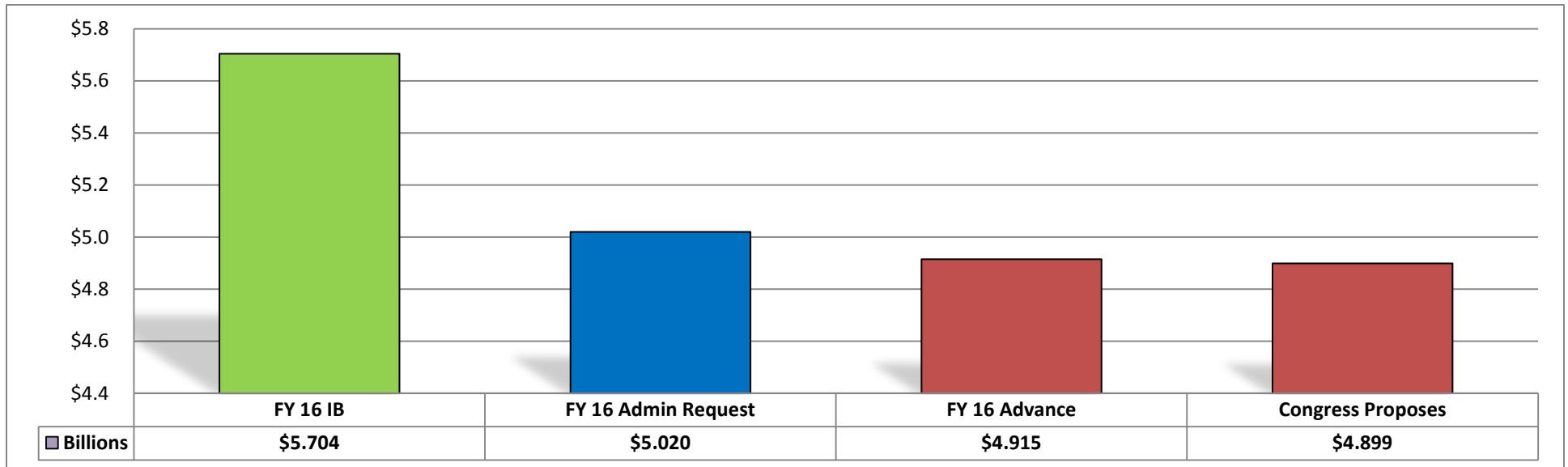
Medical Facilities

FY 2016 Enacted Advance Appropriations \$4.915 billion

FY 2016 IB Recommendation \$5.704 billion

FY 2016 Revised Administration Request \$5.020 billion **(\$684 million less than the IB)**

HR 2029 Proposes \$4.899 billion **(\$805 million less than the IB)**



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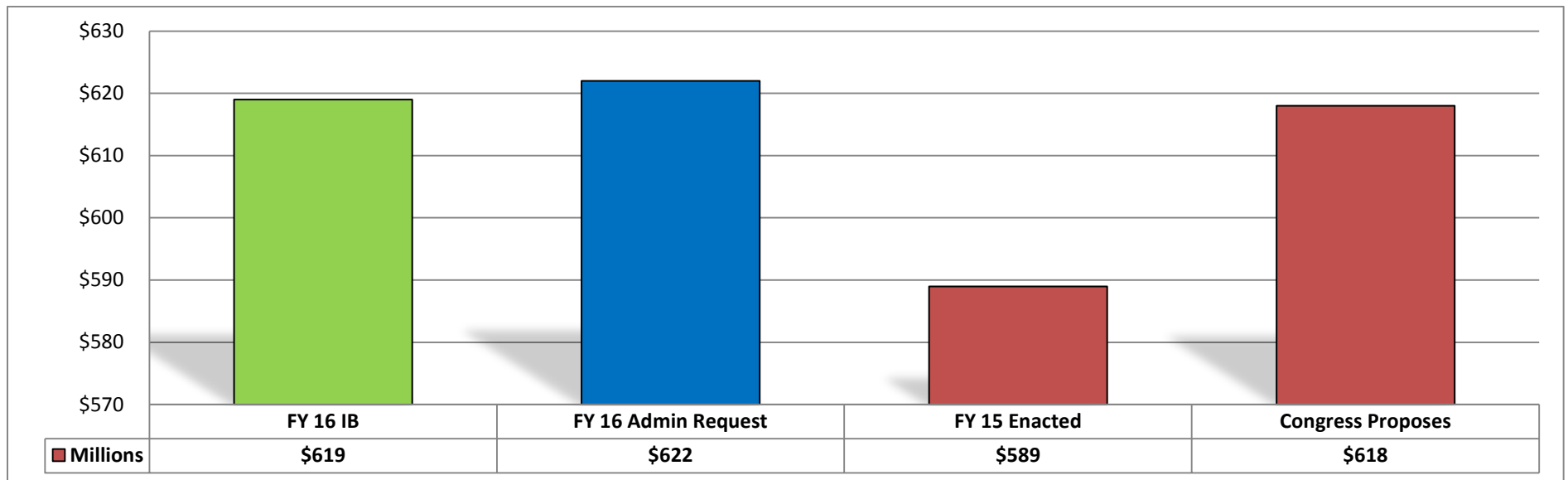
Medical and Prosthetic Research

FY 2015 Enacted Final Appropriation \$589 million

FY 2016 IB Recommendation \$619 million

FY 2016 Administration Request \$622 million (\$3 million more than the IB)

HR 2029 Proposes \$618 (\$1 million more than the IB)



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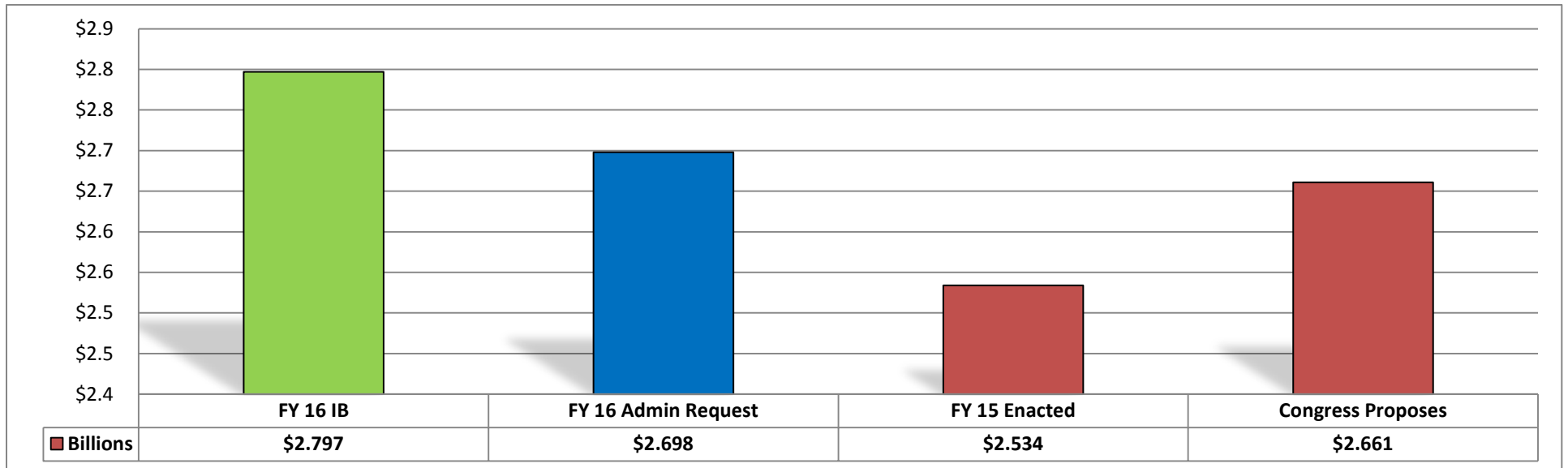
General Operating Expenses (GOE)/Veterans Benefits Administration

FY 2015 Enacted Final Appropriation \$2.534 billion

FY 2016 IB Recommendation \$2.797 billion

FY 2016 Administration Request \$2.698 billion **(\$99 million less than the IB)**

HR 2029 Proposes \$2.661 billion **(\$136 million less than the IB)**



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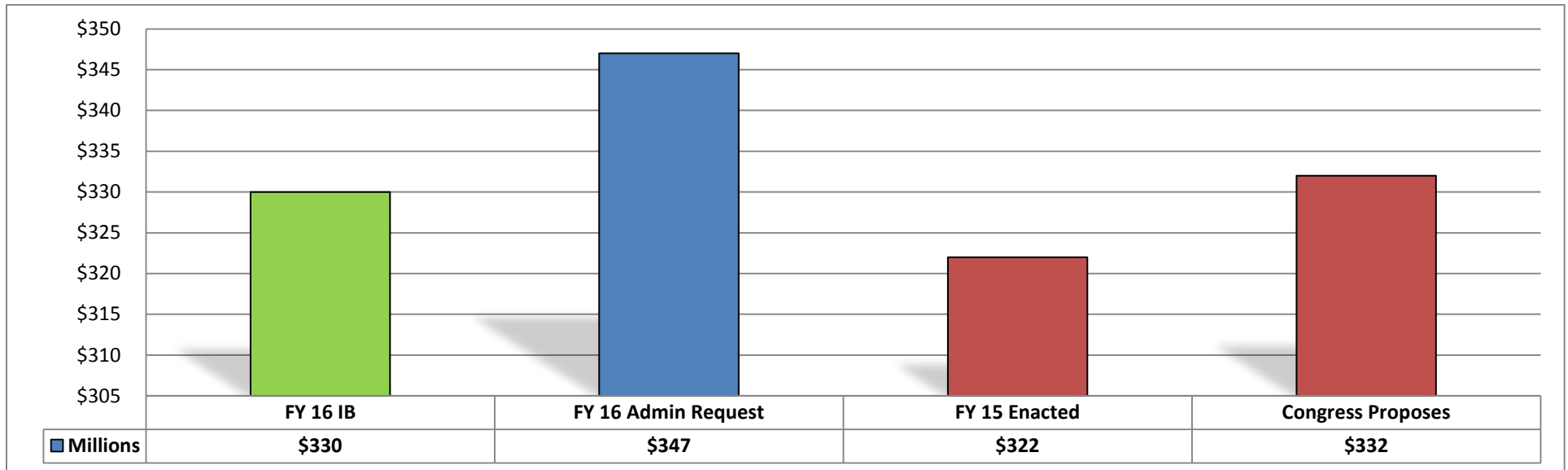
General Administration

FY 2015 Enacted Final Appropriation \$322 million

FY 2016 IB Recommendation \$330 million

FY 2016 Administration Request \$347 million (\$17 million more than the IB)

HR 2029 Proposes \$332 million (\$2 million less than the IB)



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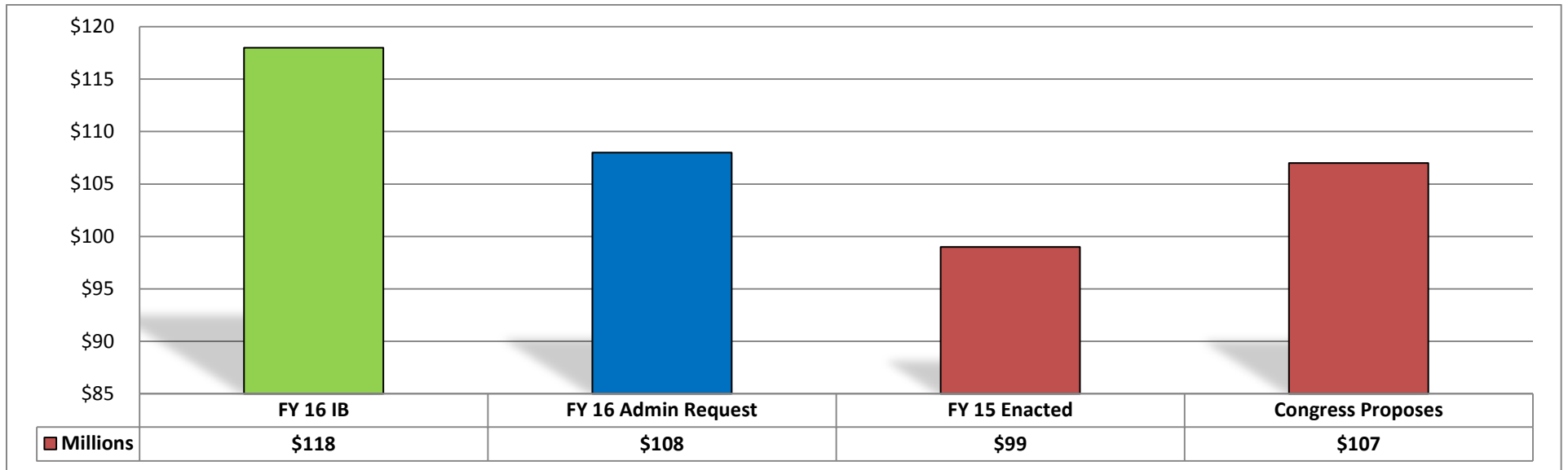
Board of Veterans' Appeals

FY 2015 Enacted Final Appropriation \$99 million

FY 2016 IB Recommendation \$118 million

FY 2016 Administration Request \$108 million (**\$10 million less than the IB**)

HR 2029 Proposes \$107 million (**\$11 million less than the IB**)



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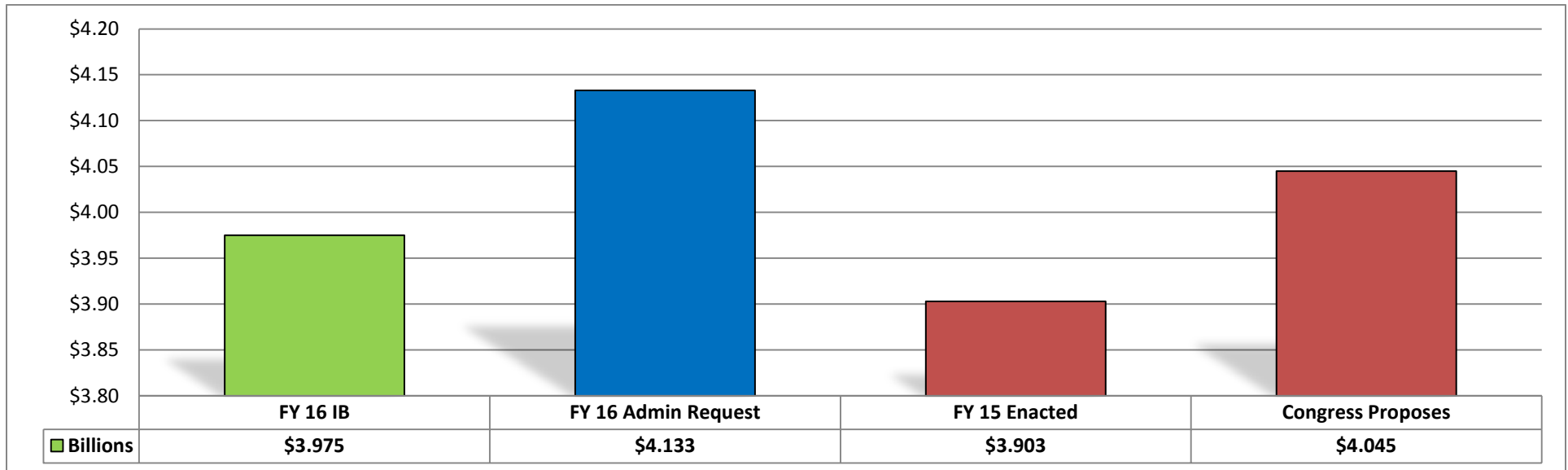
Information Technology

FY 2015 Enacted Final Appropriation \$3.903 billion

FY 2016 IB Recommendation \$3.975 billion

FY 2016 Administration Request \$4.133 billion **(\$158 million more than the IB)**

HR 2029 Proposes \$4.045 billion **(\$70 million more than the IB)**



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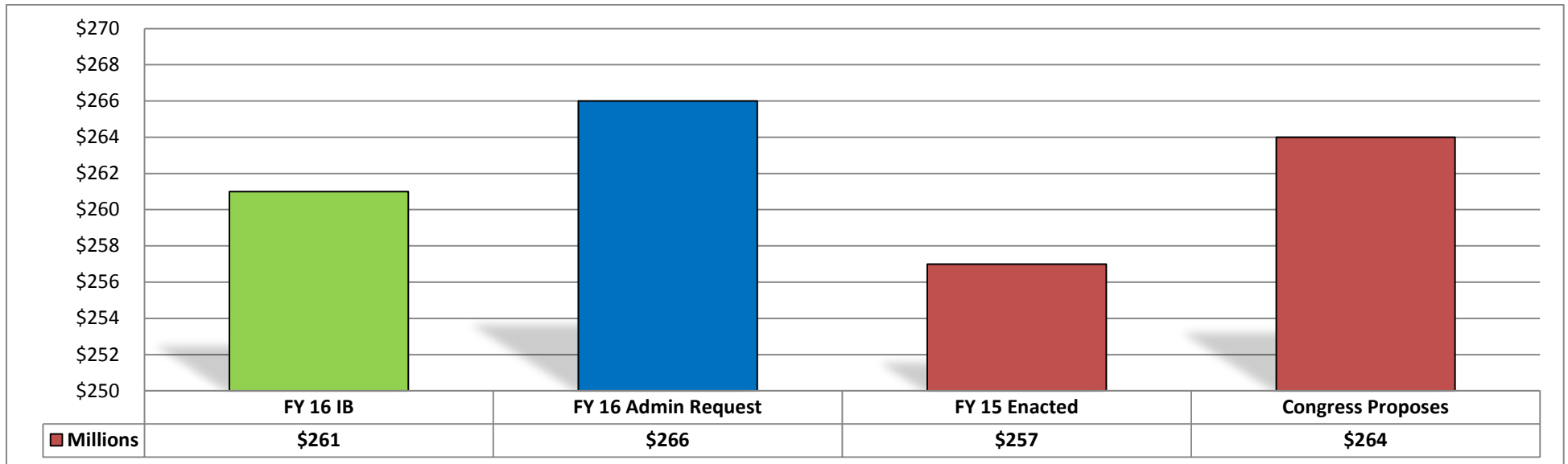
National Cemetery Administration

FY 2015 Enacted Final Appropriation \$257 million

FY 2016 IB Recommendation \$261 million

FY 2016 Administration Request \$266 million (\$5 more than the IB)

HR 2029 Proposes \$ 264 million (\$3 million less than the IB)



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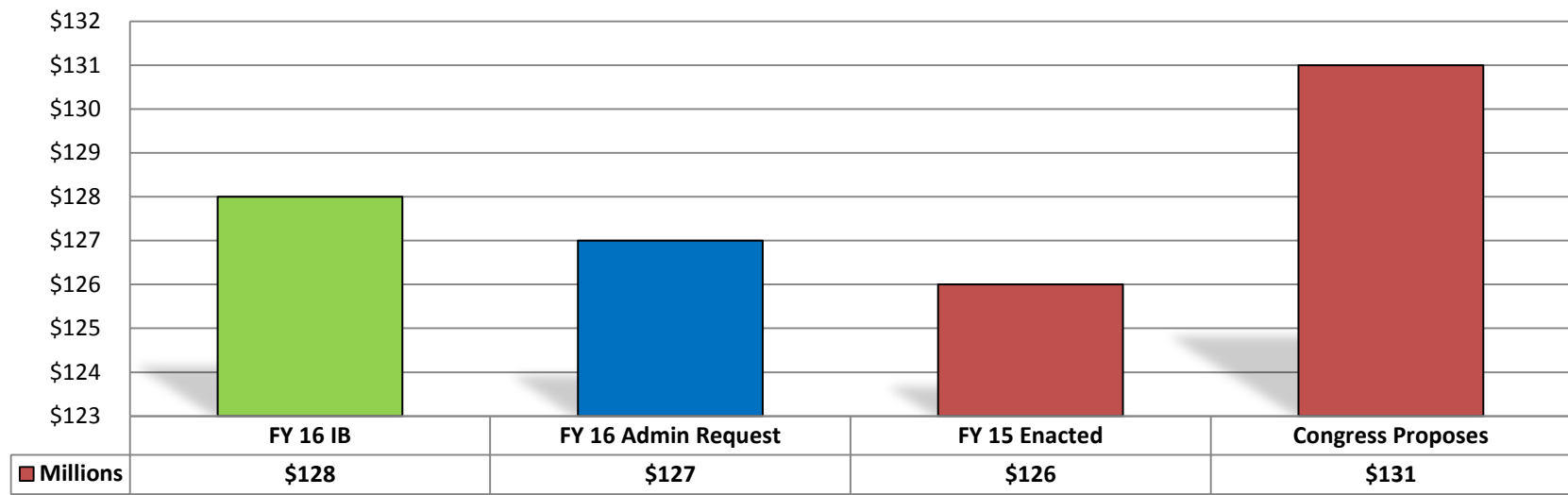
Office of the Inspector General

FY 2015 Enacted Final Appropriation \$126 million

FY 2016 IB Recommendation \$128 million

FY 2016 Administration Request \$127 million **(\$1 million less than the IB)**

HR 2029 Proposes \$131 million **(\$3 million less than the IB)**



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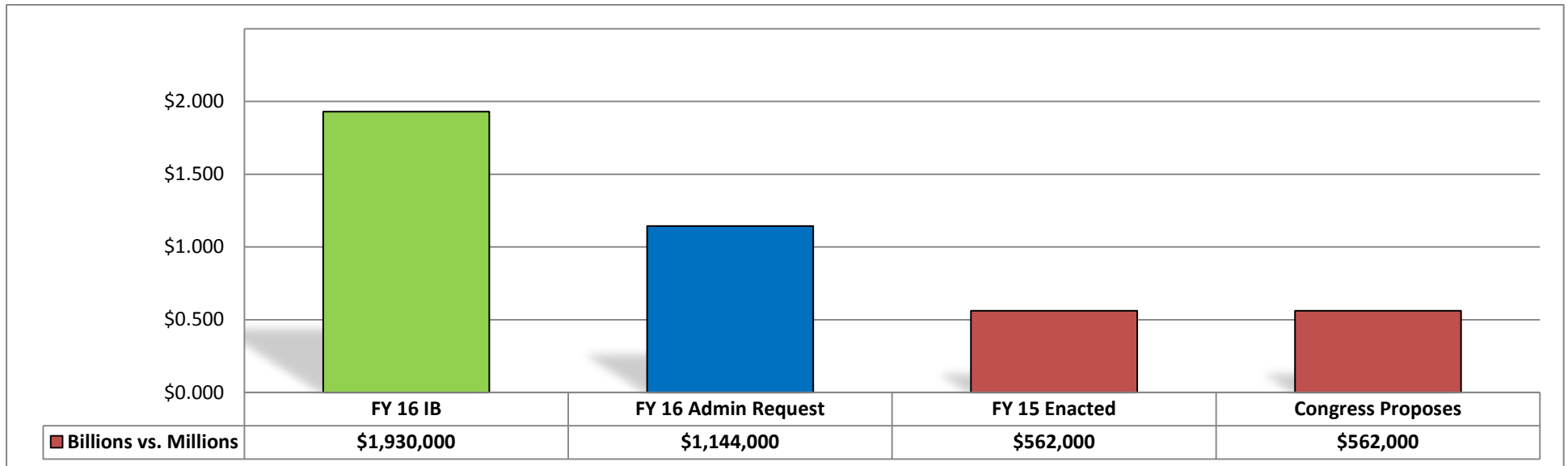
Major Construction

FY 2015 Enacted Final Appropriation \$562 million

FY 2016 IB Recommendation \$1.930 billion

FY 2016 Administration Request \$1.140 billion **(\$790 million less than the IB)**

HR 2029 Proposes \$562,000 million **(\$1.4 billion less than the IB)**



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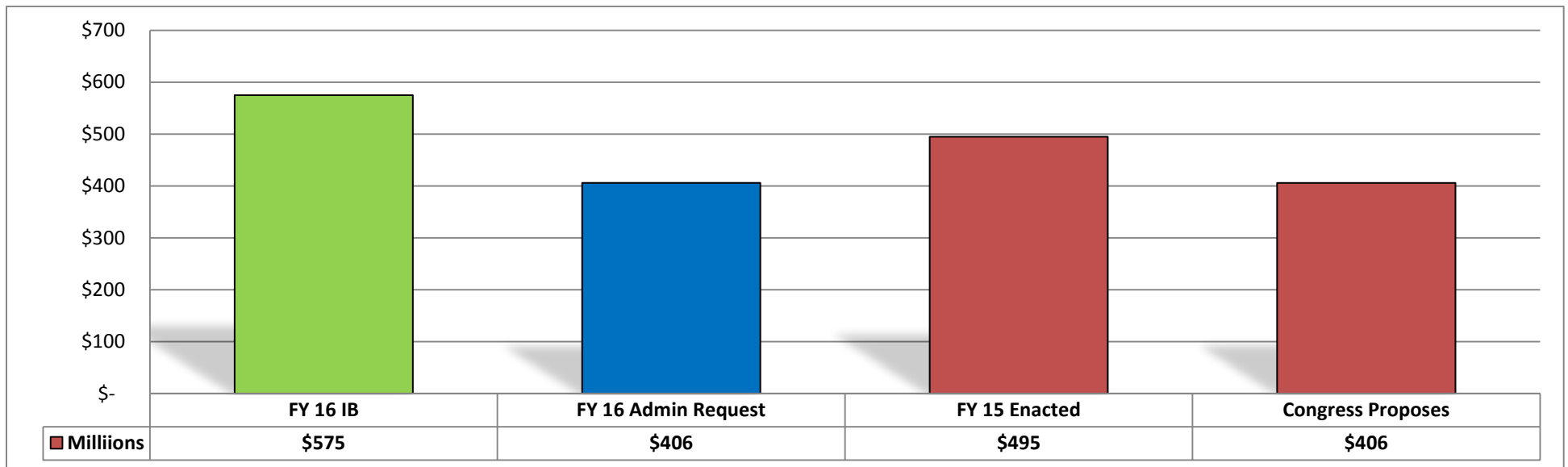
Minor Construction

FY 2015 Enacted Final Appropriation \$495 million

FY 2016 IB Recommendation \$575 million

FY 2016 Administration Request \$406 million (**\$169 million less than the IB**)

HR 2029 Proposes \$406 million (**\$169 million less than the IB**)



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Grants for State Extended-Care Facilities

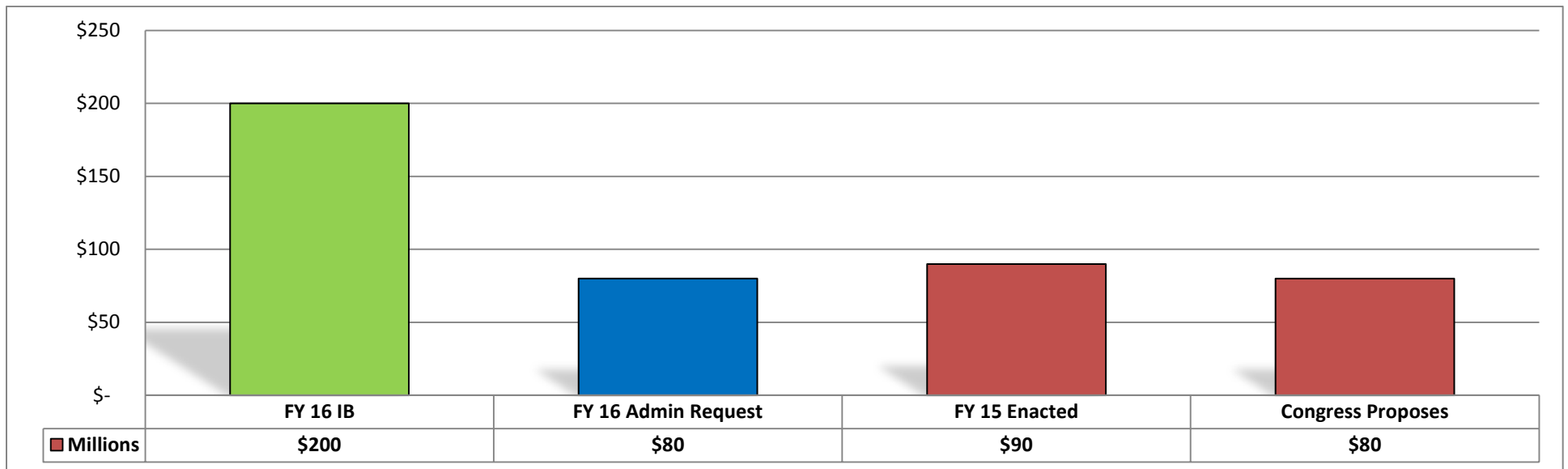
(State Home Construction Grants)

FY 2015 Enacted Final Appropriation \$90 million

FY 2016 IB Recommendation \$200 million

FY 2016 Administration Request \$80 million (**\$120 million less than the IB**)

HR 2029 \$80 million (**\$120 million less than the IB**)



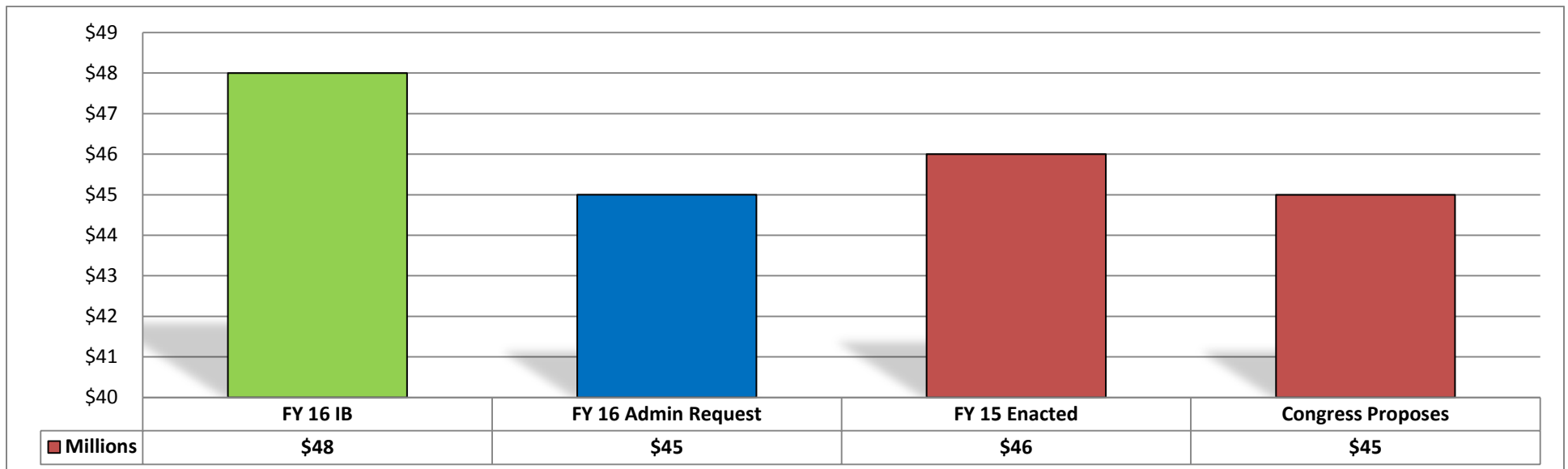
The Fiscal Year 2016 VA Budget
Grants for State Veterans Cemeteries

FY 2015 Enacted Final Appropriation \$46 million

FY 2016 IB Recommendation \$48 million

FY 2016 Administration Request \$45 million **(\$3 million less than the IB)**

HR 2029 \$45 million **(\$3 million less than the IB)**



The Fully Developed Appeals Pilot Program

While the Department of Veterans Affairs has made significant progress in reducing the claims backlog, DAV has remained concerned with another equally important part of benefits adjudication—the appeals process. On January 22, 2015, DAV testified before the House Disability and Memorial Affairs (DAMA) Subcommittee, to address concerns plaguing the appeals process and to also offer solutions. During our 2015 Mid-winter conference, we encouraged our DAV members to ask their members of Congress to support this proposal.

DAV believes that accuracy, timeliness, clarity and credibility of decisions made in claims can have a direct relationship on the appeals rate and backlog. It is our view that veterans (and their representatives) who receive rating decisions in a reasonable and predictable timeframe with understandable and correct decisions are less likely to appeal. As we and others have said for years, the most important principle of claims processing, and therefore the key to appeals as well, is *getting each claim done right the first time*.

As the volume of submitted and decided claims grows, so does the volume of appeals. According to Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA) data, the number of appealed claims decisions, those for which a Notice of Disagreement (NOD) is filed, has continued to average around 11 to 12 percent of the total number of claims decided. While VBA's pending claims inventory has come down, the appeals backlog has gone up. In part, this is a function of the volume of rating decisions issued resulting in a proportionately increasing number of appeals filed. However, it is also partially the result of VBA's "all-hands-on-deck" approach to reducing the claims backlog that has diverted VBA employees to appeals-related work, but whose primary function is to process claims.

DAV has recommended to Congress that VBA strengthen its Decision Review Officer (DRO) program, be provided with adequate resources to process appeals, improve the rating board notification letters, and create a voluntary Fully Developed Appeals (FDA) Pilot Program. Within this FDA Pilot Program, appellants could elect to voluntarily bypass several current processing steps in exchange for faster decisions.


The FDA would also allow veterans to retain the ability to submit additional evidence, along with any arguments in support of their appeals, at the time they voluntarily elected to enter the FDA program. Veterans who voluntarily enter the FDA program would retain the right to *opt out* at any time, thereby preserving their rights under the standard appeal process. The FDA concept was modeled on the existing and highly successful Fully Developed Claims program that allows veterans to take on the responsibility for gathering their private evidence in exchange for faster rating decisions.


In response to collaborative efforts between DAV, other veteran service organization, VA, Congress and other stakeholders, H.R. 800, the Express Appeals Act, was introduced in the House. The bill has been approved at the Subcommittee level soon will be considered by the full committee.


In order to make the FDA a reality, additional grassroots support is needed. Please continue to contact your elected officials to ensure their support of this initiative.


PENDING LEGISLATION


Benefits


H.R. 517: To establish a task force to evaluate the backlog of appeals to claims submitted to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.  [Click Here](#)


H.R. 675: Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2015
To increase, effective as of December 1, 2015, the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans, and for other purposes. 
[Click Here](#)


H.R. 800: Express Appeals Act
To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to provide veterans the option of using an alternative appeals process to more quickly determine claims for disability compensation.  [Click Here](#)

H.R. 1292: Disabled Veterans Commissary and Exchange Store Benefits Act
To amend title 10, United States Code, to extend military commissary and exchange store privileges to veterans with a compensable service-connected disability and to their dependents.  [Click Here](#)

H.R. 1331: Quicker Veterans Benefits Delivery Act of 2015
To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the treatment of medical evidence provided by non-Department of Veterans Affairs medical professionals in support of claims for disability compensation under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.  [Click Here](#)

H.R. 1379: To amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Board of Veterans' Appeals to develop evidence in appeal cases, and for other purposes.  [Click Here](#)

H.R. 1414: Pay as You Rate Act
To direct the Secretary to make interim payments of disability compensation benefits for certain claims for such compensation prior to the adjudication of such claims, and for other purposes.  [Click Here](#)

H.R. 1594: Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act
To amend title 10, United States Code, to repeal the requirement for reduction of survivor annuities under the Survivor Benefit Plan for military surviving spouses to offset the receipt of veterans dependency and indemnity compensation.  [Click Here](#)

H.R. 2264: To amend title 10, United States Code, to establish a space-available transportation priority for veterans of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected, permanent disability rated as total. ✓ [Click Here](#)

S. 241: Military Family Relief Act of 2015

A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the payment of temporary compensation to a surviving spouse of a veteran upon the death of the veteran, and for other purposes. ✓ [Click Here](#)

S. 666: Quicker Veterans Benefits Delivery Act of 2015

A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the treatment of medical evidence provided by non-Department of Veterans Affairs medical professionals in support of claims for disability compensation under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes. ✓ [Click Here](#)

S. 1493: Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2015

A bill to provide for an increase, effective December 1, 2015, in the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans, and for other purposes. ✓ [Click Here](#)

Caregiver

H.R. 1899: Caregivers Expansion and Improvement Act of 2015

To amend title 38, United States Code, to extend to all veterans with a serious service-connected injury eligibility to participate in the family caregiver services program. ✓ [Click Here](#)

H.R. 1969: Military and Veteran Caregiver Services Improvement Act of 2015

To expand eligibility for the program of comprehensive assistance for family caregivers of the Department of Veterans Affairs, to expand benefits available to participants under such program, to enhance special compensation for members of the uniformed services who require assistance in everyday life, and for other purposes. ✓ [Click Here](#)

H.R. 2894: CARE for All Veterans Act

To expand eligibility for the program of comprehensive assistance for family caregivers of the Department of Veterans Affairs. ✓ [Click Here](#)

S. 657: Caregivers Expansion and Improvement Act of 2015

A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend to all veterans with a serious service-connected injury eligibility to participate in the family caregiver services program. ✓ [Click Here](#)

S. 1085: Military and Veteran Caregiver Services Improvement Act of 2015

A bill to expand eligibility for the program of comprehensive assistance for family caregivers of the Department of Veterans Affairs, to expand benefits available to

participants under such program, to enhance special compensation for members of the uniformed services who require assistance in everyday life, and for other purposes. ✓
[Click Here](#)

Concurrent Receipt

H.R. 303: Retired Pay Restoration Act

To amend title 10, United States Code, to permit additional retired members of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs for their disability and either retired pay by reason of their years of military service or combat-related special compensation. ✓ [Click Here](#)

H.R. 333: Disabled Veterans Tax Termination Act

To amend title 10, United States Code, to permit retired members of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability rated less than 50 percent to receive concurrent payment of both retired pay and veterans' disability compensation, to extend eligibility for concurrent receipt to chapter 61 disability retirees with less than 20 years of service, and for other purposes. ✓ [Click Here](#)

S. 271: Retired Pay Restoration Act of 2015

A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to permit certain retired members of the uniformed services who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs for their disability and either retired pay by reason of their years of military service or Combat-Related Special Compensation, and for other purposes. ✓ [Click Here](#)

Education and Employment

H.R. 145: To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to make permanent the work opportunity tax credit and to allow the transfer of such credit in the case of contracted veterans. ✓ [Click Here](#)

H.R. 341: To amend title 38, United States Code, to require States to recognize the military experience of veterans when issuing licenses and credentials to veterans, and for other purposes. ✓ [Click Here](#)

H.R. 344: To provide for the establishment of a pilot program to encourage the employment of veterans in manufacturing positions. ✓ [Click Here](#)

H.R. 356: Wounded Warrior Employment Improvement Act

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to develop and publish an action plan for improving the vocational rehabilitation services and assistance provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs. ⊕ [Click Here](#)

H.R. 366: Putting Our Veterans Back to Work Act of 2015

To reauthorize the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, to provide assistance to small businesses owned by veterans, to improve enforcement of employment and reemployment rights of members of the uniformed services, and for other purposes. ✓

[Click Here](#)

H.R. 1581: Veterans Education Tax Security Act of 2015' or the `VETS Act of 2015

To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exclude from gross income the discharge of certain student loans of deceased or disabled veterans. ✓ [Click Here](#)

S. 242: Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act of 2015

A bill to amend title 5, United States Code, to provide leave to any new Federal employee who is a veteran with a service-connected disability rated at 30 percent or more for purposes of undergoing medical treatment for such disability, and for other purposes. ✓ [Click Here](#)

Health Care

H.R. 421: Classified Veterans Access to Care Act

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the mental health treatment provided by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to veterans who served in classified missions. ✓

[Click Here](#)

H.R. 444: Expanding Care for Veterans Act

To expand the research and education on and delivery of complementary and alternative medicine to veterans, and for other purposes. ✓ [Click Here](#)

H.R. 1055: Comprehensive Dental Reform Act of 2015

To improve access to oral health care for vulnerable and underserved populations. ⊕

[Click Here](#)

H.R. 1096: Real Choice for Veterans Act

To amend the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 to clarify the distance requirements regarding the eligibility of certain veterans to receive medical care and services from non-Department of Veterans Affairs facilities. ✓ [Click Here](#)


H.R. 1170: Chiropractic Care Available to All Veterans Act

To amend the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Programs Enhancement Act of 2001 and title 38, United States Code, to require the provision of chiropractic care and services to veterans at all Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers and to expand access to such care and services. ✓ [Click Here](#)


H.R. 1319: Ask Veterans Act

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct annual surveys of veterans on experiences obtaining hospital care and medical services from medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes. ⊕ [Click Here](#)


H.R. 1356: Women Veterans Access to Quality Care Act of 2015

To improve the provision of health care for women veterans by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.  [Click Here](#)


H.R. 1607: Ruth Moore Act of 2015

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the disability compensation evaluation procedure of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for veterans with mental health conditions related to military sexual trauma, and for other purposes.  [Click Here](#)


S. 398: Chiropractic Care Available to All Veterans Act of 2015

A bill to amend the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Programs Enhancement Act of 2001 and title 38, United States Code, to require the provision of chiropractic care and services to veterans at all Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers and to expand access to such care and services, and for other purposes.  [Click Here](#)


S. 570: Comprehensive Dental Reform Act of 2015

A bill to improve access to oral health care for vulnerable and underserved populations.  [Click Here](#)


S. 714: Frontline Mental Health Provider Training Act

A bill to require the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to jointly conduct a pilot program to assess the feasibility and advisability of expanding the use by the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs of physician assistants specializing in psychiatric medicine, and for other purposes.  [Click Here](#)


S. 715: Military and Veterans Mental Health Provider Assessment Act of 2015

A bill to improve the provision of mental health care to members of the Armed Forces and veterans from the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.  [Click Here](#)

S. 739: Veterans Access to Extended Care Act of 2015

A bill to modify the treatment of agreements entered into by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish nursing home care, adult day health care, or other extended care services, and for other purposes.  [Click Here](#)

S. 865: Ruth Moore Act of 2015

A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the disability compensation evaluation procedure of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for veterans with mental health conditions related to military sexual trauma, and for other purposes.  [Click Here](#)

Homeless Veterans

H.R. 474: Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Programs Reauthorization Act of 2015

To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for a five-year extension to the homeless veterans reintegration programs and to provide clarification regarding eligibility for services under such programs. ✓ [Click Here](#)

S. 223: A bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a pilot program on awarding grants for provision of furniture, household items, and other assistance to homeless veterans to facilitate their transition into permanent housing, and for other purposes. ✓ [Click Here](#)

S. 425: Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Programs Reauthorization Act of 2015

A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for a five-year extension to the homeless veterans reintegration programs and to provide clarification regarding eligibility for services under such programs. ✓ [Click Here](#)

S. 684: Homeless Veterans Prevention Act of 2015

A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the provision of services for homeless veterans, and for other purposes. ✓ [Click Here](#)

Miscellaneous

S. 296: Veterans Small Business Opportunity and Protection Act of 2015

A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to enhance treatment of certain small business concerns for purposes of Department of Veterans Affairs contracting goals and preferences, and for other purposes. ✓ [Click Here](#)


Women Veterans


H.R. 1496: To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the access to child care for certain veterans receiving health care at a facility of the Department of Veterans Affairs. ✓ [Click Here](#)


H.R. 1575: To amend title 38, United States Code, to make permanent the pilot program on counseling in retreat settings for women veterans newly separated from service in the Armed Forces. ✓ [Click Here](#)


H.R. 1948: Veterans' Access to Child Care Act

To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide child care assistance to veterans receiving certain medical services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs. ✓ [Click Here](#)

H.R. 2054: To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for increased access to Department of Veterans Affairs medical care for women veterans. 
[Click Here](#)

H.R. 2915: Female Veteran Suicide Prevention Act
To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to identify mental health care and suicide prevention programs and metrics that are effective in treating women veterans as part of the evaluation of such programs by the Secretary.  [Click Here](#)

S. 469: Women Veterans and Families Health Services Act of 2015
A bill to improve the reproductive assistance provided by the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs to severely wounded, ill, or injured members of the Armed Forces, veterans, and their spouses or partners, and for other purposes. 
[Click Here](#)

S. 471: Women Veterans Access to Quality Care Act of 2015
A bill to improve the provision of health care for women veterans by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.  [Click Here](#)

Improving Services for Women Veterans

Serving in record numbers, women make up 15 percent of the active duty force and 18 percent of the Guard and reserve forces. Over 160 women service members have made the ultimate sacrifice in combat deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan and over a thousand have been injured or wounded. Since 2000, the number of women veterans using VA health care has more than doubled, and their enrollment in VA's health care system is increasing faster than their male counterparts. Although VA has made concerted efforts to ramp up services to meet the increasing demand it has struggled to meet the unique health care and support needs of women coming to VA for care.

VA acknowledges the need for cultural changes to ensure women feel welcome at VA facilities, and to improve, tailor and expand health care services to comprehensively care for women veteran's gender specific needs. DAV is helping to foster greater awareness of the unique needs of women veterans and is working cooperatively with VA officials through our legislative, communications and Foundation resources; providing testimony before Congress; and conducting a variety of forums and discussion groups in Washington, D.C.

On September 24, 2014, DAV released its landmark study; *Women Veterans: The Long Journey Home*. The report provides a comprehensive assessment of existing federal services available for veterans and highlights gaps for women across the federal landscape including: health care, specialized mental health and homeless services, transition assistance programs, housing options, community support services, employment and efforts to eradicate sexual assault. The report reveals that while the number of women who volunteer to defend our nation is increasing dramatically—they currently do not have to same opportunities for a successful transition in a system with policies and programs that have focused on and designed primarily for men.

In April 2015, the House and Senate Veterans Affairs' Committees held hearings on women veterans and DAV's report. During those hearings DAV called on Congress to implement provisions of our report by Memorial Day 2016. A number of bills seeking to improve services for women veterans have been introduced by Congress and are supported by DAV including:

- **S. 469**—the Women Veterans and Families Health Services Act of 2015
- **S. 471/H.R. 1356**—the Women Veterans Access to Quality Care Act
- **H.R. 1496**—a bill to improve access to child care for veterans receiving VA health care
- **H.R. 1575**—a bill to make permanent the pilot program on counseling in retreat settings for women veterans newly separated from service in the Armed Forces
- **H.R. 1948**—the Veterans' Access to Child Care Act
- **H.R. 2054**—a bill to increase access to VA medical care for women veterans
- **H.R. 2915**—the Female Veterans Suicide Prevention Act

DAV continues our determined advocacy to ensure women's experiences and sacrifices in serving our nation in uniform are properly recognized and that gaps in federal programs are appropriately closed to ensure that the unique needs of women veterans are being met.