



# DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

807 Maine Ave., SW ■ Washington, D.C. 20024-2410 ■ Phone (202) 554-3501 ■ Fax (202) 554-3581

---

## LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

June 2012

### **Fiscal Year 2013 Appropriations Acts**

As we have reported in prior Legislative Bulletins, we are following the VA appropriations process very closely. On May 31 the full House approved VA's appropriation for Fiscal Year (FY) 2013, H.R. 5854, by a roll call vote of 407-12. The bill was referred to the Senate, but is not expected to be passed by the Senate in its current form. The final legislative text of the House bill matched the levels approved for VA by the Appropriations Committee earlier in May.

The only significant amendment approved by the House during final consideration is a one-year ban on payment of Senior Executive Service (SES) performance bonuses during FY 2013. Given VA's significant disability claims backlog and the reported difficulties in VA mental health and other health care programs, DAV had expressed our concern to Congress about VA's SES bonus practices, but took no formal position on this amendment prior to the vote. Nevertheless, we are concerned that only VA and DOD executives would be subjected to this one-year restriction.

Through introduction of S. 3215 on May 22, the Senate has taken up VA funding with its version of VA's appropriation for next year. No activity on this measure has yet occurred. The Senate bill closely matches the President's budget proposal from February, but, of interest to our members, the Senate bill contained legislative language to clarify and modify Congressional intent on VA's reimbursement of care for service-connected veterans in state veterans homes. However, this language was not included in the House-passed bill. Also, neither the House nor Senate versions of this bill include the President's earlier funding proposal to stimulate veterans employment, but both of them include advance appropriations for VA health care in FY 2014.

While the overall funding levels in both bills are generous given the state of the federal deficit and the long-term U.S. debt, both bills fall short of VA's real budgetary needs as projected by the FY 2013 *Independent Budget* (IB). Most of the shortage is in VA's construction and facility maintenance accounts.

We will continue to keep you updated on developments on the VA budgetary front as the year progresses.

### **"SERVICE" Documentary Screening**

On June 19, 2012, DAV sponsored a special screening of the documentary, "SERVICE: When Women Come Marching Home." The event included a panel discussion with seven of the eight women featured in the film. It was hosted by Senator Patty Murray, Chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, and co-hosted by Senators Susan Collins, Amy Klobuchar and Lisa Murkowski. "SERVICE" portrays the courage of women veterans as they transition from active duty to civilian lives. We learn about their physical and invisible injuries and the challenges they face to receive benefits and care. It follows them through the small and large accomplishments they work so

relentlessly to achieve. The screening was attended by over 160 participants, including congressional staff, as well as VA and Department of Defense employees.

### **Pending Legislation**

**H.R. 4288**, the Commercial Drivers Licenses for Veterans Act, introduced by Representative Janice Hahn of California, would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide grants to states to assist veterans who were trained to drive large vehicles while serving in the Armed Forces in obtaining, upon their discharge or release from active duty service, state commercial driver's licenses. DAV Resolution No. 216 supports simplified licensure and certification processes for veterans leaving the military and entering civilian jobs.

**H.R. 4246**, the VA Enrollment Act, introduced by Representative Peter DeFazio of Oregon, would amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the expansion of eligibility for veteran reimbursement for emergency treatment provided in non-VA facilities. This bill is in line with DAV Resolution No. 204.

**H.R. 4299**, the Quality Housing for Veterans Act, introduced by Representative Jerry McNerney of California, would amend title 38, United States Code, to extend the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide specially adapted housing assistance to individuals residing temporarily in housing owned by a family member. This bill is in line with DAV Resolution No. 216.

**H.R. 4072**, the Consolidating Veteran Employment Services for Improved Performance Act of 2012, introduced by House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Jeff Miller, transfers, as of October 1, 2013, to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs specified veterans-related programs of the Department of Labor, including: (1) job counseling, training, employment and placement services; (2) administration of employment and reemployment rights of members of the reserves; and (3) homeless veterans reintegration programs. It directs the President, for FY 2014 and thereafter, to include in the budget request funding for the VA for such functions.

The bill also establishes a Deputy Under Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training, to formulate all VA policies and procedures with respect to veterans' employment, unemployment, and training programs.

In addition, it consolidates provisions establishing VA disabled veterans' outreach program specialists and local veterans' employment representatives into a single provision establishing veteran employment specialists, which shall perform both tasks. It provides similar eligibility and reporting requirements for such specialists.

This bill is in alignment with DAV's Statement of Policy, Resolution No. 001.

**H.R. 5712**, the Veterans Jobs Act of 2012, introduced by Representative Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin, would authorize the Secretary of Labor to establish a pilot program to have community business leaders mentor members of the Armed Forces under the Transition Assistance Program. This bill is in line with Resolution No. 001, our Statement of Policy.

**H.R. 5833**, the Veterans Burial Benefits Improvement Act of 2012, introduced by Representative Shelley Berkley of Nevada, would amend title 38, United States Code, to increase burial benefits for veterans. The bill is in line with DAV Resolution No. 030.

**S. 2246**, the TAP Modernization Act of 2012, introduced by Senator John Boozman of Arkansas, would direct the Secretary of Labor to provide off-base transition training. This bill is in line with DAV Resolution No. 217.

### **Hearings**

All DAV testimony can be read in full on our website, at:  
<http://www.dav.org/voters/Testimony.aspx>.

On April 16, 2012, DAV testified before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health concerning seven bills under consideration.

On April 18, 2012, DAV testified before the House Veterans' Affairs Committee concerning the role of veterans service organizations in the claims process.

On May 8, 2012, DAV testified before the House Veterans' Affairs Committee concerning mental health staffing and quality of care issues

On May 16, 2012, DAV testified before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health concerning prosthetics issues.

On June 6, 2012, DAV testified before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs concerning seven bills under consideration.

On June 19, 2012, DAV testified at a hearing before the House Veterans' Affairs Committee concerning VBA claims processing transformation initiatives. The focus of the hearing was on the progress of VBA's claims processing transformation initiatives, especially the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS), which is to be a modernized, paperless system, now in its third year of development. With the next phase of implementation to 12 VA Regional Offices beyond the four pilot locations, DAV's testimony drove home our serious concerns about VSOs still not being able to access the VBMS and the VA still without a long-term solution for scanning and digitizing paper claims, especially legacy claims, into the VBMS.

### **Resolution Writing Webinar Held**

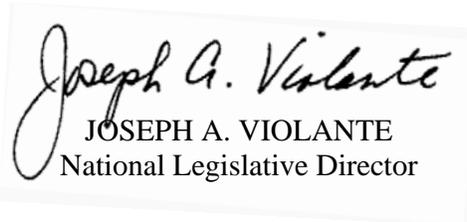
On May 22, 2012, in an effort to promote participation of DAV members, chapters, and state departments in the organization's annual legislative program, the legislative department held a Web-based seminar about the resolution process and guidelines on the proper development, construction, and drafting of a resolution. The Webinar was appreciated by those in attendance. The presentation given at the Webinar will be available as a handout at National Convention. The legislative staff will hold future Webinars on this subject. In the meantime, the

staff continues to be available to answer your questions on the resolution process and the proper composition of resolutions.

### **Conclusion**

To ensure the successful enactment of the legislation that we support, our DAV and Auxiliary members must become active members of DAV's grassroots—DAV Commander's Action Network (CAN)—and all of us must do our part to let our elected officials know about our support for legislation that builds better lives for our nation's service-disabled veterans, their families and their survivors. Please make a pledge to redouble your efforts to communicate our concerns to your elected officials. Your efforts and actions are a key to our success.

Thank you for again for your continuing support for DAV's programs of service.



JOSEPH A. VIOLANTE  
National Legislative Director

JAV:lmb