



THE AMERICAN LEGION
Veterans Strengthening America

WASHINGTON OFFICE

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June 4, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
568 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority leader
2433 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Speaker Johnson and Leader Jeffries,

As the House deliberates on the FY25 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, I wish to convey The American Legion's gratitude and stance regarding this important appropriations legislation. On behalf of our 1.5 million dues-paying members, I am pleased to support this draft legislation and urge the House to pass it with consideration of the following items:

We applaud Congress for their allocation of \$337.4 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs, which is \$75.5 million above the FY25 Budget Request and \$30.2 billion above the FY24 enacted level. In addition, we laud the full funding of the Veterans Health Administration and the advanced funding for the Toxic Exposures Fund. This level of funding will ensure the continued care that our veterans have earned and provide the support programs that allow veterans to make our society even stronger.

One of the highlights of this appropriations bill is the full funding of the homeless assistance programs, substance use disorder programs, and the opioid prevention and treatment program. These initiatives provide the support veterans need to right their own ship and return to safe and productive lives.

The American Legion applauds the committee's full funding of women's gender-specific care. The \$1.3 billion in funding for programmatic efforts to deliver care for women veterans allows for several key solutions, such as training more providers to serve in rural and underserved communities and recruiting clinical leaders and highly specialized gynecologists for surgery and treating complex health conditions. These solutions are essential to ensuring comprehensive health care for women patients. We proudly advocate that there should be a women's primary care provider at every VA community-based outpatient clinic, and all VA medical centers should have a gynecologist on staff, even if only part-time.

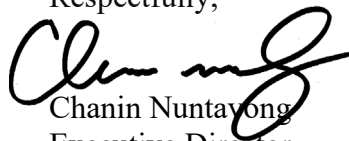
Improving military quality of life is a core mission of the American Legion, which is why we are disappointed to see year-over-year reductions to the Department of Defense military construction and family housing budget. We urge Congress to restore full funding of this essential program before the legislation reaches the President's desk. Adequate funding of appropriate housing underpins the recruiting and retention of a ready and skilled military force and must be included in this budget.

We also ask the House to adopt Congressman Nunn's amendment, "Expresses the sense of Congress that the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) serves a critical purpose in assisting Veterans transition to civilian life and should be utilized to its fullest extent to prevent substance abuse, encourage employment, and foster fellowship among transitioning veterans." Time and again we have seen that successful transition programs ensure good jobs, successful completion of education and training programs, and adequate income for veterans. These are essential to continued success after leaving military service, and we urge the inclusion of this amendment in the final bill.

And while we understand the budget process is not easy, this important legislation is specifically in support of our brave servicemembers who have selflessly served this nation. Their service can never be understated or fully repaid. Therefore, it is vital to ensure adequate funding for Arlington National Cemetery, the American Battle Monuments Commission, and the Armed Forces Retirement Home to honor and remember our veterans. We thank Congress for the increased funding above the President's budget request, however we urge Congress to remedy the reduction from last year's funding levels and ensure adequate funding of these programs.

Thank you for your continued leadership and action in support of our nation's servicemembers and veterans as you work towards passing the FY25 budget.

Respectfully,



Chanin Nuntayong
Executive Director
Government Affairs