



THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

MARK TAKANO, CHAIRMAN

House Democrats Prioritize Veterans in FY 2023 Consolidated Appropriations bill

The [Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2023 Consolidated Appropriations bill](#) contains big wins for veterans and **provides \$300 billion in funding – including \$134.7 billion in discretionary funding – for veterans programs for fiscal year (FY) 2023, a \$22.5 billion increase** over FY 2022. This is demonstrative of House Democrats' commitment to honoring the sacrifices veterans have made on behalf of our country, and lives up to our promises to support them and their families by acknowledging the true cost of war.

America's veterans need lawmakers who are doing more than simply saying "thank you for your service" and instead are backing up their words with action – throughout this Congress Democrats have delivered. As the 117th Congress draws to a close, House Democrats remain firm on our promise to care for those who have served, as well as their families, caregivers, and survivors.

Americans and our nation's veterans need leaders in Congress willing to work together to pass long-term spending bills rather than a Congress that kicks the funding can down the road. This ensures that veterans' care and benefits are not undercut and that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) can plan for and improve care and service delivery.

SERVING VETERANS – BY THE NUMBERS

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Consolidated Appropriations bill provides **\$134.7 billion** in discretionary funding for veterans programs, a **\$22.5 billion increase** over FY 2022.

IMPROVING VA HEALTHCARE

Provides **\$118.7 billion** for Veterans Medical Care to meet veterans' comprehensive health care needs, including:

- **\$13.9 billion** for mental healthcare to provide treatment and support for the 2 million veterans receiving mental health services. Of this, **\$498 million** will be appropriated for suicide prevention outreach.
- **\$840.5 million** for women's health, to help VA deliver gender-specific healthcare services, as well as retrofit its facilities to create a more welcoming environment
- **\$183.3 million** for substance use disorder programs
- **\$663 million** for opioid abuse prevention

- **\$2.7 billion** for Homeless Assistance Programs to better reach homeless veterans

STRENGTHENING BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION

- **\$3.9 billion** for administering benefits, including disability compensation and burial benefits, to more than 6 million veterans and their survivors. These funds will help VA handle the expected increase in the number and scope of claims associated with the Honoring our PACT Act while also addressing its claims backlog.
- The bill also includes:
 - **\$430 million** for the National Cemetery Administration
 - **\$285 million** for the Board of Veterans' Appeals
 - **\$50 million** for grants to State and Tribal cemeteries

HONORING OUR PACT WITH TOXIC-EXPOSED VETERANS

- **\$5 billion** to the Cost of War Toxic Exposure Fund to ensure that the PACT Act continues to be implemented at VA and that the 3.5 million newly eligible veterans and others can get the care and benefits they have earned.

ENDING AND PREVENTING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

- **\$2.7 billion** to end and prevent veteran homelessness, an increase of 25% from Fiscal Year 2022. This funding will support the continued expansion of the Supportive Services for Veterans Families Program Shallow Subsidy Initiative.
- **\$50 million** to support more HUD-VASH vouchers and an additional **\$10 million** to be allocated to administrative costs associated with the HUD-VASH program, such as landlord incentives and security deposits for veteran leases
- **\$7.5 million** for rental assistance as part of the Tribal HUD-VASH program

PROTECTING VA'S RESEARCH ENTERPRISE

- **\$916 million** for VA's intramural research program, an increase of 4% over current funding.

PROMOTING GOOD GOVERNMENT AND MODERNIZING VA

- **\$5.8 billion** for VA information technology systems, including **\$1.759 billion** in funding for the Electronic Health Record Modernization program, including restrictions and reporting requirements on the program to ensure system stability as well as requirements for the VA to ensure patient safety concerns are addressed before any future go-lives – a direct result of the Committee's extensive oversight.

SUPPORTING RELATED AGENCIES

- **\$442.7 million** in discretionary appropriations for related agencies, an increase of \$8.5 million above the fiscal year 2022 enacted level and \$700,000 above the President's budget request. Of this amount, the bill includes:
 - **\$156 million** for Arlington National Cemetery
 - **\$87.5 million** for the American Battle Monuments Commission
 - **\$152 million** for the Armed Forces Retirement Home
 - **\$46.9 million** for the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims

LEGISLATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The FY 2023 Consolidated Appropriations bill also includes numerous provisions individually championed by Members of the 117th Congress, many of whom serve as members of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Those provisions are highlighted below:

IMPROVING VA HEALTHCARE

- [Chairman Takano's REMOVE Copays Act \(H.R. 7589\)](#), which will eliminate copays for every veterans' first three mental health outpatient appointments each year.
- [Chairman Mark Takano's STRONG Veterans Act \(H.R. 6411\)](#), the signature bipartisan, bicameral mental health and suicide prevention package for veterans in the 117th Congress, which will mandate:
 - increased hiring and training of mental healthcare providers - (Post-9/11 Veterans' Mental Health Care Improvement Act, [S. 3293](#), Sens. Tester and Sen. Moran)
 - culturally competent mental healthcare and suicide prevention for Native veterans and communities (American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans Mental Health Act, [H.R. 912](#), Rep. Brownley; and VA Governors Challenge Expansion, [H.R. 5317](#) Chairman Takano)
 - review and revamping of the Veterans Crisis Line (REACH for Veterans Act, [H.R. 5073](#), Rep. Delgado)
 - Expansion of VA's peer support program (VA Peer Specialist Act, [H.R. 4575](#), Rep. Peters)
 - Review of VA's justice outreach program (Veterans Justice Outreach Improvement Act, [H.R. 5529](#), Rep. Miller-Meeks)
 - Expansion of eligibility at Vet Centers (Student Veterans Counseling Centers Eligibility Act, [H. R. 4233](#), Rep. Murphy's; Expanding the Families of Veterans Access to Mental Health Services Act, [H.R. 5029](#), Rep. Rouzer)
 - Cutting-edge research to identify how best to help veterans thrive (Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL) Assessment Act, [H.R. 5516](#), Rep. Ellzey;

Post-9/11 Veterans' Mental Health Care Improvement Act, [S. 3293](#), Sens. Tester and Moran)

- [H.R. 4624](#) – the Guaranteeing Healthcare Access to Personnel Who Served Act (Rep. Bergman, Rep. Bost, and Rep. Panetta), which, among other things, requires VA to:
 - create an appointment self-scheduling pilot to enable veterans to schedule their own appointments with VA providers and community providers;
 - ensure community providers can meet the same access standards it applies when determining whether veterans are eligible for community care referrals; and
 - develop a strategic plan for ensuring continuity of care for veterans, through the use of in-house or community care, during a VA realignment.
- [H.R. 217](#) – the Improving Confidence in Veterans' Care Act (Rep. Cloud), which requires VA to improve credentialing of healthcare providers and training for employees involved in oversight of VA provider clinical competency.
- [H.R. 2775](#) – the VA Quality Health Care Accountability and Transparency Act (Rep. Gallego), which requires VA to review data that is publicly available on its website, and to consult with Veterans Service Organizations, veterans, and caregivers to gather insights about modifications that could help improve users' understanding and use of the data.
- [H.R. 4880](#) – the Veterans Prostate Cancer Treatment and Research Act (Rep. Dunn, Rep. Slotkin, Rep. Allred, and Rep. Murphy), which requires VA to improve its diagnosis, treatment, and research of prostate cancer and collaborate with other government agencies, such as the National Institutes of Health and Department of Defense.
- [H.R. 5562](#) – the WWII Veterans Hospital and Medical Eligibility Act (Rep. Harder), which expands eligibility for hospital care, medical services, and nursing home care for World War II veterans.
- [H.R. 7158](#) – the Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act (Rep. Higgins and Rep. Brownley), which authorizes VA to enter into contracts to pay for certain veterans with service-connected disabilities and require nursing home care to be placed in medical foster homes at their request
- [H.R. 6332](#) – the Planning for Aging Veterans Act of 2021 (Rep. Kilmer), which will ensure that VA improves oversight of State Veterans Homes, develops a strategy and improvements for long-term care of aging veterans, and supports aging veterans at risk of homelessness.

STRENGTHENING ACCESS TO BENEFITS

- [H.R. 4772](#) – the Mark O'Brien VA Clothing Allowance Improvement Act, (Rep. Mike Levin), which improves VA's process for clothing allowance claims, by streamlining yearly applications and allowing for continuous payments.
- [H.R. 746](#) – the Ensuring Survivor Benefits during COVID-19 Act (Rep. Davidson and Rep. Trahan), which requires VA to get a medical opinion to determine if a service-connected disability was the principal or contributory cause of death in situations where a veteran's death certificate identifies COVID-19 as the principal or contributory cause of death.

PROMOTING GOOD GOVERNMENT AND MODERNIZING VA

- [H.R. 2250](#) – the Department of Veterans Affairs Information Technology Act of 2022 (Rep. Rosendale, Rep. Mrvan, Rep. Banks), which requires VA to produce information on cost, schedule and performance of IT projects and provide a program management team to ensure success of large projects in the future.

PROTECTING VA'S RESEARCH ENTERPRISE

- [H.R. 5721](#) – the VIPER Act (Chairman Takano), which strengthens VA's Office of Research and Development and enables it to hire and retain more world-class scientists to focus on issues of often unique concern to veterans.

TREATING VETERANS, THEIR FAMILIES, AND VA EMPLOYEES FAIRLY

- [H.R. 2935](#) – the VA Beneficiary Debt Collection Improvement Act (Rep. Pappas), which reforms VA's debt collection process; requires VA to include more detailed explanations in its debt collection notices regarding veterans' rights to dispute overpayments and request waivers of indebtedness; and prevents VA from collecting on debts for 90 days after notification, unless such a delay would negatively affect the veteran.
- [H.R. 2704](#) – the Improving VA Accountability to Prevent Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Act of 2021 (Rep. Pappas), which will improve equal employment opportunity functions at VA by clarifying the role of VA's Equal Employment Opportunity Director and VA facility Equal Employment Opportunity staff, requiring managers to report instances of harassment to the Office of Resolution Management; and mandating additional annual training for all VA staff on sexual harassment and employment discrimination.
- [H.R. 2726](#) – the VA FOIA Reform Act (Rep. Gallego), which requires VA to establish and implement a plan for reducing its backlog of requests under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA); request that the Office of Government Information Services of the National Archives and Records Administration conduct an assessment of the VA's compliance with FOIA; and submit an annual report on its FOIA compliance efforts and make such reports available on its website.
- [H.R. 2082](#) – the VA Supply Chain Resiliency Act (Rep. Bost, Rep. Pappas, and Rep. Mann), which requires VA to submit a report describing the items and quantities of items that are critical with respect to VA's ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic and future epidemics, pandemics, emergencies, and natural disasters; and to better coordinate its supply chain logistics with that of the Defense Logistics Agency.
- [H.R. 2429](#) – the VA Police Improvement and Accountability Act (Rep. Kathleen Rice), which requires VA to:
 - provide VA employees and members of the public with contact information relating to arrest, ticketing, detainment, use of force, or other police matters;
 - issue body worn cameras for its police officers; and

- establish policies and procedures related to the accountability and staffing of its police force.

ENDING AND PREVENTING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

- [H.R. 5301](#) (Rep. Ritchie Torres), which requires VA to provide training and technical assistance to entities that provide services to veterans at risk of, experiencing, or transitioning out of homelessness. It also removes caps on funding for VA's Homeless Program Office to provide technical support and training to participants in the Supportive Services for Veterans Families Program and Grant Per Diem recipients.
- [H.R. 5470](#) – the HOMES for our Veterans Act of 2021 (Rep. Strickland), which improves grants that allow transitional housing facilities to make necessary infrastructure investments and convert from congregate to individual housing models. Specifically, it removes the matching grants requirement for VA capital grants for at least five years following enactment, at which point the Secretary will have the option to require matching funds up to 30% of the cost of a project. In addition, it removes real property or equipment disposition requirements for past, present, and future grantees.
- [H.R. 6810](#) – the Housing our Veterans Act (Rep. Vicente Gonzalez), which mandates a GAO study on the availability of affordable housing for veterans and the impact this availability has on veterans transitioning out of temporary housing provided by VA.
- [H.R. 5025](#) (Rep. Neguse), which makes the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) offered through the Department of Labor permanent, helping connect homeless veterans with meaningful long-term employment. Among other things, it increases minimum authorized appropriations to **\$60 million** annually, expands technical assistance and support to the whole grant and contract process, and directs the Secretary of Labor to emphasize outreach and technical assistance in states that do not currently have any HVRP programs.
- [H.R. 1257](#) – the Homeless Veterans CREDIT Act (Rep. Pallone), which directs VA to study the efficacy and barriers to credit and financial counseling for homeless and unstably housed veterans, and to provide recommendations for improvements to these services. It authorizes the Secretary to enter into a contract with an outside organization to conduct the study and requires them to submit an interim and final report to Congress on the study findings.
- [H.R. 2878](#) – the Native VetSuccess at Tribal Colleges and Universities Pilot Program Act (Rep. Gallego), which reauthorizes and amends a VA program allowing the Secretary to sell, lease, rent, or donate a home repossessed due to VA Home Loan default to an entity providing services to at-risk or homeless veterans for the purpose of providing shelter or permanent housing for homeless veterans and their families.

IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS, TRANSITION ASSISTANCE, AND THE VA HOME LOAN GUARANTY PROGRAM

- [H.R. 2878](#) – the Native VetSuccess at Tribal Colleges and Universities Pilot Program Act (Rep. Gallego), which requires VA to carry out a pilot program to assess the feasibility and

advisability of expanding the VetSuccess on Campus program — which provides on-campus benefits assistance and counseling — to tribal colleges and universities.

- [H.R. 147](#) – the BRAVE Act (Rep. Norcross), which requires the Department of Labor (DOL) to provide information concerning apprenticeship programs during Transition Assistance Program classes and to include information regarding apprenticeships on their website.
- [H.R. 5151](#) – the Col. James Floyd Turner IV U.S.M.C. GI Bill Transfer Act of 2021 (Rep. Bilirakis and Rep. Crist), which provides for transfer of Post-9/11 GI Bill when a veteran dies after approval of transfer but before transferring entire entitlement.
- [H.R. 5603](#) – the Protections for Student Veterans Act (Rep. Underwood), which prevents colleges and universities from failing or taking punitive action against a student using educational benefits who is forced to withdraw from courses in order to meet National Guard or Reserve obligations. The bill also requires educational institutions to refund all money, including housing and administrative costs, to a student forced to withdraw due to National Guard or Reserve obligations.
- [H.R. 2167](#) – the GI Bill National Emergency Extended Deadline Act (Rep. Sherrill), which:
 - extends the time limitation for using educational assistance under the Montgomery GI Bill and the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and for eligibility under the Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) program, when educational institutions are temporarily or permanently closed due to an emergency situation or another reason that prevents an individual from participating; and
 - requires VA to disapprove of courses of education provided by public institutions of higher learning that charge higher tuition and fees than in-state tuition for individuals who are entitled to educational assistance under the Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance program, and makes adjustments to the time limitation for using educational assistance under this program.
- [H.R. 4657](#) – the Veteran Home Energy Savings Act (Rep. Mike Levin), which will help incentivize the purchase of energy efficient homes and establish an advisory group of industry professionals and VSOs. Among other things, it amends the VA Home Loan Guarantee Program's Energy Efficient Mortgage process to adjust the residual income of a veteran a lender considers.