

**COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**STATEMENT OF CORRINE BROWN,
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER**

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Budget Request for fiscal Year 2016

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February 11, 2014

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary McDonald, I want to welcome you this morning. I look forward to hearing how this budget request will meet the needs of our veterans.

The President has proposed a large increase for VA. For FY 2016 the President has proposed nearly an 8 percent increase in funding for VA health care, personnel, construction, research, and claims processors.

Given this large request, I look forward to our discussion today, and how it will assist our work as a Committee to make sure that this proposed budget gives you the dollars you need, but also assures us here in Congress that every dollar you receive will be spent wisely.

I certainly wish that my bill, H.R. 216, the Department of Veterans Affairs Budget Planning Reform Act of 2015, was the law of the land. It is an important tool to assist us, and you, in matching resources to the needs of our veterans and ensuring we are planning for the future to make sure we don't let down our veterans.

Mr. Secretary, the first question I will ask is does your proposed budget give you all the dollars you need to fix the problems you face, meet the goals of the initiatives the Department has laid out?

Keeping in mind the funding provided by the Choice Act, I hope that we can discuss whether you have enough resources to ensure that veterans do not face intolerable delays in getting access to health care. I hope we can discuss how you are looking down the road to ensure that veterans have access to VA care in the future.

I always hear from my veterans how they prefer VA care when it is available – I hope that we are going to all work together to make sure that this health care our veterans prefer is available to them when they need it.

This is the first year that VA benefit programs are to be funded under advance appropriations. Now veterans won't have to worry as much if we here in Congress can't do our job.

Finally, I want to hear about your reform and reorganization efforts, and how this budget request will support these efforts. I also want to hear about how you are making progress in your efforts to reform and reinvigorate the VA.

Too often, all we hear about is the problems VA is having – I would like us to also consider what we can do to fix these problems and to point out what VA is getting right.

I am pleased with this budget request, and hope that these dollars can fix what is wrong and strengthen what is right with the VA.

Thank you Mr. Chairman and I yield back the balance of my time.