



House Approves Advance Appropriations for VA

VFW urges Senate to follow suit

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WASHINGTON — A top priority for America's largest organization of combat veterans moved closer to becoming reality today when the U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly approved H.R. 3082, the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act, by a vote of 414-3. The fiscal year 2010 funding package includes advanced appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs for FY 2011, which means Congress is serious about ending years of late funding for the federal government's second largest agency.

"This is a huge step forward for disabled veterans, and the historic funding increases the House provides will dramatically improve the healthcare programs our nation delivers to her defenders," said Glen M. Gardner Jr., a Vietnam veteran from Round Rock, Texas, who is the national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.

"We have to thank House leadership from both sides of the aisle for making this happen, especially Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Chet Edwards (D-Texas) for spearheading the legislation," he said.

The VFW has been championing advanced appropriations after years of late funding for the VA. Records show that the VA received only three on-time budgets in the past 20 years — in 1994, 1996 and 2008 — with the average delay being 54 days after the federal government began its new fiscal year Oct. 1. Twice the VA would be funded in February — 135 and 140 days late, respectively.

According to Gardner, the track record of funding the VA almost two months into a new fiscal year is no way for any business to run efficiently, much less the one federal agency that is tasked with caring for America's heroes. He said late funding impacts everything from research and planning to equipment and facility upgrades, as well as medical professional hiring programs.

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"The advanced appropriations issue has always been about doing what's right to properly care for our nation's defenders," he said. "The Senate knows this, and the VFW is hopeful that they will follow suit and adopt the advanced funding requirement and budget increases in their own MilCon/VA funding package."

Gardner is now asking his entire membership of almost 2.2 million VFW and Auxiliary members to contact their senators and urge them to vote for S. 1407. To contact a member of the U.S. Senate, go to: <http://capwiz.com/vfw/dbq/officials/>.