



Veterans Groups Urge Congress to Strengthen VA Budget

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Four of the nation's leading veterans service organizations — AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. — are expressing their concerns with the President's Budget for Fiscal Year 2015, which proposes \$68.4 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs. The groups, who coauthor of *The Independent Budget (IB)*, a comprehensive budget and policy document, now look to Congress to correct the funding deficiencies and to reconsider the recommendations outlined in the *IB* — which calls for \$72.9 billion to sufficiently meet veterans' health care and benefits needs.

Of great concern to the veterans groups is the serious underfunding of VA construction accounts. The President's budget for construction is approximately \$2.75 billion less than what the *IB* recommends.

"While we appreciate the increases offered by the Administration's Budget for FY 2015 and for advance appropriations for FY 2016, particularly with regards to health care and benefits services, we have concerns that the serious lack of commitment to infrastructure funding to support the system will undermine the VA's ability to deliver those services," said *The Independent Budget* authors. "We now look to Congress to correct the funding deficiencies."

The President's budget proposes \$61.9 billion for total medical care for FY 2016 advance appropriations and \$589 million for medical and prosthetic research. While *The Independent Budget* recommends \$62.4 billion for total medical care for FY 2016 advance appropriations and \$611 million for medical and prosthetic research.

Additionally the President's overall budget request for VA is approximately \$4.5 billion less than what the *IB* recommends for overall discretionary spending for FY 2015.

This marks the 28th year that *The Independent Budget* has been developed by AMVETS, DAV, Paralyzed Veterans and VFW. The document is written by veterans for veterans detailing funding requirements for VA. *The Independent Budget* aims to present a full picture of veterans' needs—and how government can meet these needs.

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The full recommendations of *The Independent Budget* can be viewed at www.independentbudget.org.