

# Veterans Service Organizations Issue The Independent Budget Policy Agenda for 116th Congress

## VA MISSION Act implementation identified as top priority

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**WASHINGTON** — Today, DAV, Paralyzed Veterans of America and Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States released [The Independent Budget Veterans Agenda for the 116th Congress](#) which contains policy recommendations to ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs remains fully-funded and capable of carrying out its mission to serve veterans and their families both now and in the future. The Independent Budget is a roadmap for the 116th Congress, the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Administration to navigate critical veteran issues. It includes detailed recommendations in the areas of benefits, health care, infrastructure, education, employment, training and memorial concerns facing veterans and their families. For over 30 years, the three partnering organizations have co-authored The Independent Budget.

The Independent Budget sets full and faithful implementation of the VA MISSION Act as the critical issue for the 116th Congress. This historic legislation supported by DAV, Paralyzed Veterans of America and VFW, along with more than 30 additional veterans service organizations, reforms the way in which veterans access care in their community, invests in VA's capacity to provide care at its health care facilities, calls for assessment and modernization of VA infrastructure, and corrects the inequity of the VA Caregiver Support Program. The groups see proper implementation of this Act as central to ensuring all enrolled veterans have timely access to quality care and that the VA health care system remains strong.

“One of our key legislative concerns is ensuring that veterans who were exposed to dangerous toxic chemicals and other environment hazards during their service receive full compensation and other earned benefits,” said DAV National Commander Dennis R. Nixon. Citing Blue Water Navy veterans exposed to Agent Orange and veterans of all eras and

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conflicts exposed to burn pits, Nixon added, “It adds insult to serious injury to deny the long-term, adverse health effects that result from these exposures while veterans continue to suffer and die. These benefits are earned through service and it is unjust to require veterans — or their survivors — to sacrifice more after all they have already given for the nation.”

Paralyzed Veterans of America focused their efforts on health care review. The organization has a unique perspective from working daily inside all VA Spinal Cord Injury and Disorder centers across the country. “It is imperative to provide veterans better comprehensive mental health care including suicide and substance abuse prevention programs,” said David Zurfluh, national president of Paralyzed Veterans of America. “Veterans who are seriously ill also deserve expanded support for their caregivers,” Zurfluh added.

“Ensuring veterans are able to achieve their post-military educational goals has never been more important, so the Independent Budget VSOs will hold VA and Congress accountable for the proper implementation of the Forever GI Bill,” said VFW National Commander B.J. Lawrence. “We also recognize the need to perpetuate the memory of our fallen and will fight to ensure all veterans have access to memorial benefits that honor their service to America.”

The Independent Budget Veterans Agenda is being delivered to VA and Congressional leaders and is now available for the public to read at [independentbudget.org](https://independentbudget.org).

#### **About The Independent Budget Authors:**

[DAV](https://dav.org) empowers veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. It is dedicated to a single purpose: Fulfilling our promises to the men and women who served. DAV does this by ensuring that veterans and their families can access the full range of benefits available to them; fighting for the interests of America’s injured heroes on Capitol Hill; providing employment resources to veterans and their families and educating the public about the great sacrifices and needs of veterans transitioning back to civilian life. DAV, a non-profit organization with more than 1 million members, was founded in 1920 and chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1932. Learn more at [dav.org](https://dav.org).

[Paralyzed Veterans of America](https://pva.org) is the only congressionally chartered veterans service organization dedicated solely for the benefit and representation of veterans with spinal cord injury or disease. For more than 70 years, the organization has ensured that veterans receive the benefits earned through service to our nation; monitored their care in VA spinal cord injury units; and funded research and education in the search for a cure and improved care for individuals with paralysis. With more than 70 offices and 33 chapters, Paralyzed Veterans of America serves veterans, their families and their caregivers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Learn more at [pva.org](https://pva.org).

[The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.](https://vfw.org) is the nation’s largest and oldest major war veterans organization. Founded in 1899, the congressionally-chartered VFW is comprised entirely of eligible veterans and military service members from the active, Guard and Reserve forces. With 1.6 million VFW and Auxiliary members located in more than 6,200 Posts worldwide, the nonprofit veterans service organization is proud to proclaim “NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS” than the VFW, which is dedicated to veterans’ service, legislative advocacy, and military and community service programs. For more information or to join, visit our website at [vfw.org](https://vfw.org).