

Veterans Groups Say \$103 Billion in Funding Needed for FY20

Amount needed to implement the VA MISSION Act, maintain VA's programs and services

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WASHINGTON — In advance of the Administration's budget request for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 and advance appropriations for FY 2021, the three coauthors of [*The Independent Budget \(IB\)*](#) — Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S., Disabled American Veterans, and Paralyzed Veterans of America — today recommend a total of \$103.3 billion to ensure the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) begins to fully and faithfully implement the VA MISSION Act of 2018, make needed improvements, and is able to timely deliver benefits and services to ill and injured veterans, their families and survivors. This is the first time the *IB*'s recommended budget has topped the \$100 billion mark, and represents a 17 percent increase over current FY 2019 funding.

Implementing the VA MISSION Act this fiscal year will require significantly more resources than have been provided through regular appropriations, and is the main reason why medical care appropriations for FYs 2020 and 2021 need to be increased. The law, which changes how VA provides health services for veterans in the community, is projected to increase veterans' enrollment in the VA health care system, and increase veterans' utilization and reliance on VA as a direct provider of care.

Other highlights from *The Independent Budget* funding recommendations for FY 2020 include:

- \$70 billion for veterans medical care funding, a \$3.5 billion increase over FY 2019;
- \$18 billion for medical community care funding, nearly doubling the FY 2019 appropriation;
- \$6.1 billion for information technology (IT), \$1 billion more than FY 2019 funding level; and
- \$2.7 billion for VA major and minor construction programs to repair, renovate, expand and replace VA's aging infrastructure, a \$1.8 billion increase over FY 2019.

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“We appreciate that Congress remains committed to doing the right thing and has continued to provide increases in appropriations dollars,” the three *IB* coauthors state. “However, the serious access problems in the health care system identified in 2014, and the enactment of the VA MISSION Act to provide greater access to community care through an integrated, high performing network, as well as improve and expand other VA programs and services — has created a financial obligation that, absent sufficient resources to fully and faithfully enact this legislation, could erode efforts to reform and modernize the VA health care system.”

The *IB* recommends \$18.1 billion for the Medical Community Care account for FY 2020, which includes \$8.5 billion to meet related requirements in the VA MISSION Act, including replacing the Veterans Choice Program with the new Veterans Community Care Program by the start of FY 2020, and implementing the new Urgent Care benefit and Veteran Care agreements.

Additionally, the *IB* is calling for a \$1 billion increase in IT funding over FY 2019, citing concerns with VA’s ability to deliver timely, effective and efficient IT solutions that can sustain current operations delivering benefits and services to veterans, support continuous improvements in benefits and services to veterans, and facilitate initiatives that position the agency to be on the leading edge of technology to care for our nation’s veterans, their families and survivors.

Finally, the *IB* recommends \$2.8 billion for VA’s major construction programs, including \$1 billion to remedy critical seismic deficiencies. To view the full budget report, please visit independentbudget.org.