

VFW Pleased with VA Budget Increase

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WASHINGTON — The nation's largest organization of combat veterans is very pleased with the administration's fiscal year 2010 budget request for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"This is a very good budget," said Glen M. Gardner Jr., the national commander of the 2.2 million-member Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. and its Auxiliaries.

President Obama proposed VA receive \$55.9 billion in discretionary funding, a total that exceeds last year's appropriation by more than \$5.7 billion, or 11 percent. The amount also exceeds the \$54.6 billion recommendation made by the Independent Budget, which the VFW coauthors with AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, and Paralyzed Veterans of America.

In budget details released today, the funding would enable 500,000 more Category 8 veterans to enroll in the VA system by 2013, increase medical research, provide more specialized care and services for women veterans, and improve access to care issues, especially for rural veterans. The budget would also increase long-term care services, expand inpatient and outpatient mental health services, improve homelessness programs, and hire more doctors, nurses and specialists. In addition, the budget contains more than \$1.9 billion to support 12 medical facility construction projects.

Gardner said Obama pledged he would take care of America's veterans on the campaign trail and in his inauguration speech. "This budget means the president is serious about ensuring our nation keeps her sacred promise with our veterans."

With the president's budget in-hand, the onus now shifts to Congress to pass the appropriation before the government's new fiscal year begins Oct. 1.

"This budget gives VA Secretary Eric Shinseki and his staff the funding to transform the VA into a true 21st century organization," said Gardner. "The VFW urges Congress to appropriate the funding quickly yet responsibly."

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