VFW Calls VA Budget Proposal a Good Start

VFW is appreciative of the fiscal year 2013 budget President Obama proposed

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WASHINGTON — The national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is appreciative of the fiscal year 2013 budget President Obama proposed Monday for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

“The VFW appreciates the proposed increase because it recognizes that the proper care and treatment of wounded, ill and injured veterans are ongoing costs of war," said Richard L. DeNoyer, who leads the 2 million-member VFW and its Auxiliaries. “We remain concerned, however, that the amount is not enough for the VA to maintain much less improve all the programs and services on their watch, especially knowing the Defense Department plans to shrink the size of the military, which will directly increase the number of veterans seeking VA care and services.”

The proposed VA budget for FY 2013 is $140.3 billion, of which $76.3 billion is for mandatory benefits such as disability compensation and pension. The remaining $64 billion is in discretionary funding, primarily for the Veterans Health Administration, which represents a 4.5-percent increase over FY 2012 funding, but falls more than $4 billion short of the amount recommended by *The Independent Budget*, which the VFW co-authors with AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans and Paralyzed Veterans of America.

The VFW national commander said there are budget highlights that continue to elevate the importance of healthcare, mental health programs, women veterans, reducing the VA claims backlog and ending veterans’ homelessness. But he will still ask both House and Senate Committees on Veterans Affairs to substantially plus-up the miniscule $1.6 million increase in medical and prosthetic research, and return major construction funding to an amount

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that is forward focused instead of an afterthought.

“A record 240 troops lost one limb or more in Afghanistan last year,” said DeNoyer, a retired Marine and Vietnam combat veteran from Middleton, Mass. “They will require a lifetime of care, and it shouldn’t be in VA medical facilities that average more than 60 years old,” he said.

“A nation that creates veterans has a sacred responsibility to care for them when they return home wounded, ill and injured. The VFW looks forward to working with the Administration and Congress in the coming days and months to ensure that America keeps that promise.”