



## DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

### Funding Highlights:

- Provides \$63.5 billion in discretionary funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs, an 8.5 percent increase over the 2012 enacted level, to provide needed care and other benefits to veterans and their families. In addition, the Budget includes \$3.1 billion in estimated medical care collections, for a total budget authority of approximately \$66.5 billion.
- Includes \$54.6 billion for veterans' medical care, supporting continuing improvements in the delivery of mental health care, the development of telehealth technologies, specialized care for women veterans, and benefits for veterans' caregivers.
- Requests \$55.6 billion in 2015 advance appropriations for medical care programs, to ensure continuity of veterans' health care services.
- Provides \$1.4 billion to support the Administration's ongoing efforts to combat veteran homelessness.
- Invests \$586 million for medical and prosthetic research efforts to advance the care and quality of life for veterans.
- Provides \$799 million to ensure timely activation of new and renovated medical facilities already under construction.
- Improves the Department's efficiency by investing \$136 million in a Veterans Claims Intake Program, continuing to implement the paperless claims system, and undertaking additional efforts to provide faster and more accurate benefits claims processing and improve veterans' access to benefits information.
- Provides \$104 million through a new Transition Assistance Program called "Transition GPS" to help separating military servicemembers better transition to civilian life.
- Supports three new national cemeteries for veterans in Florida and Nebraska.

Our Nation has a solemn obligation to take care of our veterans and to honor them for their service and sacrifice on behalf of the United States. To deliver on this commitment, the 2014 President's Budget provides \$63.5 billion in discretionary funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), an 8.5 percent increase above the 2012 enacted level. In addition, the

Budget includes \$3.1 billion in estimated medical care collections, for a total budget authority of approximately \$66.5 billion. This funding will continue to drive improvements in efficiency and responsiveness at VA, enabling the Department to better serve veterans and their families at a time when much is being asked of our men and women in uniform. The Budget supports efforts to ensure we meet the needs of today's veteran population, and invests in the continued modernization of VA to meet 21<sup>st</sup> Century challenges.

### ***Sustains and Strengthens Services for Veterans***

**Protects Critical Funding for VA Medical Care.** The Budget provides \$54.6 billion for VA medical care, a 7.9 percent increase above the 2012 enacted level, to provide high-quality and timely health care services to veterans and other eligible beneficiaries. These services include innovative programs to educate and support veterans' caregivers, enhance veterans' access to care via telehealth technologies, and support the provision of equitable, high-quality care for women veterans in a sensitive and safe environment. In addition, the Budget proposes \$55.6 billion in advance appropriations for the VA medical care program in 2015, which will provide timely and predictable funding for VA's medical care to prevent our veterans from being adversely affected by appropriations delays.

**Strengthens Mental Health Care Services.** The Budget provides nearly \$7 billion, a 15.4 percent increase above the 2012 enacted level, to continue VA's focus on expanding and transforming mental health services for veterans to ensure accessible and patient-centered care, including treatment for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Military Sexual Trauma. This funding will allow VA to continue its collaborative efforts with the Departments of Defense (DOD) and Health and Human Services, as directed in the President's executive order on veterans' mental health, to help veterans receive timely access to mental health services, including through enhanced partnerships with community providers.

**Combats Veteran Homelessness.** The Budget invests \$1.4 billion to provide VA services for homeless and at-risk veterans. These funds will help combat veterans' homelessness through collaborative partnerships with local governments, non-profit organizations, and the Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Justice, and Labor.

**Supports Medical and Prosthetic Research.** As part of the largest integrated health care system in the United States, the VA research program benefits from clinical care and research occurring together, allowing discoveries to be directly coordinated with the care of veterans. In particular, the Budget includes \$586 million in funds for medical and prosthetic research.

**Activates New and Improved Health Care Facilities.** The Budget includes \$799 million to help VA provide the best possible specialized care for veterans in new or renovated facilities. These funds will support the staff and equipment at VA facilities across the Nation, including improved polytrauma and spinal cord injury units.

**Improves Health Care Delivery for Our Nation's Veterans.** The Budget includes funding for VA to further assess and develop efficiencies and successful practices by analyzing the delivery and reimbursement of health care within other Federal health programs, such as Defense Health Programs and Medicare. This assessment will help to drive future innovation as VA strives to continually improve health outcomes, quality of care, and access to services while responsibly managing public resources.

**Continues Implementation of the Paperless Claims System.** The Budget includes \$136 million for a Veterans Claims Intake Program that will allow VA to directly receive and convert paper evidence, such as medical records, into a digital format for increased efficiency in claims processing. The Budget also supports transformation initiatives, including the continued development of a digital, near-paperless environment that allows for greater exchange of information and increased transparency for

veterans. Specifically, the Budget includes \$155 million for the Veterans Benefit Management System, designed to reduce the processing time and the claims backlog, facilitate quality improvements through rules-based calculators that provide claims processors better capabilities to assign accurate service-connected evaluation, and automate claims tracking. These overall efforts support VA's pursuit of eliminating the claims backlog and achieving VA's goal of processing all claims within 125 days with 98 percent accuracy in 2015.

**Supports Veteran Employment and Transition Assistance.** The Budget provides \$104 million to help our Nation's servicemembers transition to civilian life after over 10 years of war. The Budget supports the enhancement of the inter-agency Transition Assistance Program, designed by the Veterans Employment Initiative Task Force, by creating a new program called Transition GPS (Goals, Plans, Success). The Transition GPS program will help separating servicemembers prepare for their civilian life by providing pre-separation assessments and individual counseling, a five-day core curriculum, an additional curriculum tailored to the servicemembers' individual career goals, and a capstone event to verify that transitioning servicemembers have met certain standards that show they are ready for their civilian careers. For example, Transition GPS will provide servicemembers with comprehensive benefits briefings, additional training on VA education programs, and facilitated access to other government agencies

to ensure that servicemembers can fully utilize available education and employment services as they prepare to separate.

**Improves Access to Comprehensive Services and Benefits.** The Budget supports VA's efforts to ensure consistent, personalized, and accurate information about services and benefits, especially in the delivery of compensation and pension claims processing. In order to improve the speed, effectiveness, and efficiency of benefits service delivery, the joint DOD/VA eBenefits web portal provides veterans with the critical self-service capabilities to manage their VA, military and personal information, apply online for benefits, and check the status of a claim.

**Expands Access to National Veterans Cemeteries.** In 2011, VA reduced the population threshold used to determine where new national veterans cemeteries should be built from 170,000 to 80,000 veterans living within 75 miles of a potential location. Under this lower threshold, VA will develop five new cemeteries, providing a nearby national cemetery option to at least 550,000 additional veterans and resulting in 94 percent of all veterans having a veterans cemetery burial option within a reasonable distance from their homes. The Budget provides funding to construct and open the first three of these five new national cemeteries which would be located in St. Augustine, Florida, Tallahassee, Florida, and Omaha, Nebraska.