



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Highlights:

- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides veterans of the Armed Forces and their survivors with a wide variety of benefits including but not limited to healthcare, mental health services, homelessness programs, service-connected disability compensation, readjustment counseling, vocational rehabilitation, education, and home loan guaranties.
- The Budget provides resources to implement a multi-faceted strategy to modernize and transform VA to meet a growing demand for access to healthcare, improve the timeliness and effectiveness of non-medical benefit delivery, and promote internal accountability to reduce waste, fraud, and abuse.
- The Budget requests \$83.1 billion for VA, an \$8.7 billion, or 11.7-percent increase from the 2017 enacted level. In addition, \$75.6 billion is requested for advance medical care appropriations for 2020 to ensure the Department has the resources to continue providing high-quality medical services to veterans. In addition, the Budget also requests new legislative authorities and \$122.7 billion in mandatory budget authority, including \$121 billion in 2020 advance appropriations, for other veteran and survivor benefits.

The President's 2019 Budget:

VA fulfills President Lincoln's promise to care for America's veterans, their families, and survivors—men and women who have responded when their Nation needed help. The Budget would provide the resources for the Nation to meet its obligations to those who have served in the Armed Forces. With this funding, VA would: deliver premier care through one of the largest integrated healthcare systems in the United States to approximately 9.3 million enrollees; deliver compensation benefits to approximately 4.9 million veterans and 432,000 survivors; administer pension benefits for approximately 469,000 veterans and their survivors; provide servicemember and veteran group life insurance plans to approximately six million enrollees; provide educational assistance to slightly more than 950,000 beneficiaries; manage a home mortgage program with slightly more than 3.1 million active loans,

"As Commander-in-Chief, I will not accept substandard service for our great veterans."

President Donald J. Trump
March 17, 2017

guaranteed by VA; and provide memorial and burial benefits to approximately 141,000 veterans and their family members in 2019.

Agency Reforms

Improves Veteran Experience. The Budget focuses on four priorities to enhance veterans' quality of life and demonstrate the Administration's commitment to a better future. These priorities include: a greater focus on identifying at-risk veterans and providing them targeted interventions to prevent suicide; enhancing healthcare in the community; simplifying access to and knowledge of non-medical benefits; and implementing a new appeals framework. These objectives are essential to VA's efforts to enrich veterans' experiences and become the service provider of choice.

In addition, the Budget supports initiatives to modernize and reform VA:

- \$4.2 billion to leverage emerging technology, modernize and maintain infrastructure, and provide greater choices and benefits to veterans;
- \$172 million for the Office of the Inspector General to strengthen accountability, promote transparency, and reduce waste, fraud, and abuse; and
- in 2019 VA will continue implementing a long-term strategic plan that would further streamline service delivery, improve the efficiency of the Federal Government, and ensure that veterans are receiving the benefits they need.

Veterans Health Administration

Improves Veterans' Access to Medical Care. The Budget provides \$70.7 billion, a 9.6-percent increase above the 2017 enacted level, to provide high-quality healthcare services to veterans and eligible beneficiaries. The Budget also proposes \$75.6 billion in advance appropriations for VA medical care programs in 2020, a 6.9-percent increase above the 2019 request. In addition, \$11.9 billion

"I intend to build a system that puts veterans first and allows them to get the best possible health care and services wherever they may be—in VA or in the community."

David Shulkin
Secretary
February 1, 2017

would be used to enhance and expand veterans' access to high-quality community care, by consolidating multiple community care programs, including the Veterans Choice Program, into one unified program. This new program, the Veteran Coordinated Access & Rewarding Experiences program, would place the veteran and his or her physician at the center of the decision-making process and offer options for veterans to use a network of walk-in clinics for minor illnesses and injuries. Overall, the Budget is designed to improve veterans' experiences with and access to healthcare, building on the best features of VA's existing community care programs and strengthening VA's ability to furnish care in its own facilities.

Combats the Opioid Epidemic. Fighting the opioid epidemic is a top priority of this Administration, and VA is at the forefront of combatting this public health emergency. The Budget provides \$381 million in critical investments to reduce over-reliance on opioids for pain management and to promote the safe and effective use of opioid therapy. Funding supports multidisciplinary approaches in opioid prevention and treatment, including investments in: provider training to assess risk and manage treatment; mental health outpatient and residential treatment programs; opioid

overdose, recognition, rescue and response training programs; medication assisted therapy for opioid use disorders; patient advocacy; and distribution of naloxone kits.

Provides Critical Funding for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention. The Budget provides slightly more than \$8.6 billion to expand and transform VA’s focus on mental health services to ensure veterans receive timely and appropriate care that is tailored to the unique needs of each person. As part of its effort, VA is focusing on earlier identification and intervention for at-risk veterans to link them with the health services they need. VA would also continue to provide emergent mental healthcare treatment for veterans with other-than-honorable discharges. Suicide prevention is VA’s number one clinical priority, and the Budget supports VA’s efforts across five key domains: improve transition; know all veterans; partner across communities; reduce easy access to dangerous substances and objects; and improve access to care.

Continues Efforts to End Veteran Homelessness. The Budget supports VA’s commitment to ending veteran homelessness by sustaining funding levels and providing opportunities to improve the targeting of intervention for veterans impacted by homelessness. Specifically, the Budget requests \$1.8 billion for veteran homelessness programs including Supportive Services for Veteran Families and VA’s component of the Department of Housing and Urban Development—VA Supportive Housing Program. These programs provide critical wrap-around care to help address and prevent veteran homelessness.

Veterans Benefits Administration and Board of Veterans Appeals

Streamlines Delivery of Veteran Benefits. VA provides veterans and eligible dependents with benefits including disability compensation, pension, GI Bill, educational assistance, vocational rehabilitation, and home loan guaranties among others. The Budget invests \$2.9 billion, a 1-percent increase from the 2017 enacted level for these programs. These benefits directly support the economic security of veterans and their families, and reflect a greater commitment to a better future.

Modernizes the Claims Appeals Process. Of the amount requested, \$183.5 million is for the Board of Veterans Appeals and related information technology (IT) initiatives to enhance ongoing efforts to reduce the pending appeals inventory and modernize VA’s appeal process by establishing a new framework that is designed to provide quicker decisions on appeals for the veteran. The new framework would provide veterans with choices to obtain resolution of their appeals based on the option that best serves the individual veteran’s circumstances. The new options are designed to improve the timeliness of appeals decisions.

“This is about making benefits work better for veterans and transforming the Department of Veterans Affairs to do better for years, and for generations [of] future veterans.”

David Shulkin
Secretary
November 6, 2017

Enhances and Expands Access to Post-9/11 GI Bill Education Benefits. The Budget complements and supports continued implementation of the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017 (the “Forever GI Bill”) which represents one of the most sweeping changes to the Post-9/11 GI Bill since its inception, expanding access to veterans and eligible dependents. In addition to the benefit payments, requested funding would also fund IT investments to effectively implement all provisions of the new law.

National Cemetery Administration

Increases Access to Burial and Memorial Benefits. The Budget includes \$315.8 million, a 10.4-percent increase from the 2017 enacted level, to expand veteran access to memorial benefits, deliver premier service to veterans' families, and provide perpetual care for slightly more than 3.8 million gravesites. The National Cemetery Administration consistently receives high satisfaction ratings from veterans and their families for the care of VA cemeteries as National Shrines. In addition to sustaining 139 cemeteries and 33 other sites, the Budget supports the initial activation of nine new cemeteries in California, Idaho, Indiana, Maine, New York (two), North Dakota, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. In 2019, VA anticipates providing slightly more than 141,000 interments for veterans and family members.

Infrastructure Revitalization

Provides Critical Funding for Construction and Modernization of VA Facilities. The Budget provides \$1.8 billion for 91 major and minor construction projects including new medical care facilities, national cemeteries, and projects at regional offices. The Budget also provides \$1.4 billion for non-recurring maintenance projects to maintain and modernize medical facilities. These investments enhance the safety and security of VA facilities and help VA programs and services keep pace with modern technologies.

- Approximately \$1.1 billion funds major construction projects, including construction of a community living center and domiciliary at Canandaigua, New York; construction of a facility that would specialize in spinal cord injuries at Dallas, Texas; and expansion of four national cemeteries that would provide slightly more than 80,000 new gravesites. This funding also includes \$400 million to address critical seismic issues at VA facilities.
- In addition, \$707 million funds minor construction projects, including corrections and additions to Veterans Health Administration facilities, gravesite expansions at national cemeteries, and renovations at regional offices.
- VA would use the \$1.4 billion in funding for non-recurring maintenance to address infrastructure needs in its medical facilities.

Invests in IT Infrastructure to Improve Services. The Budget provides \$4.2 billion for the Office of Information Technology. Of this amount, \$204 million would support recapitalizing VA's legacy IT systems with new enterprise and business-line specific IT solutions to better support veteran focused initiatives. These investments are essential to better integrate processes, adopt modern technology solutions, improve security, and reduce long-term sustainment costs. In support of VA's goal to provide a comprehensive source to simplify veterans' access to and understanding of their benefits and services available to them, the Budget includes funding for a Navigator interface to navigate veterans to those entities best equipped to meet their needs. In addition to the amount requested for enterprise-wide IT infrastructure enhancements, \$1.2 billion is included in a separate budget account for the acquisition of a replacement Electronic Health Records system. This is a substantive investment for this critical initiative, which would help facilitate a seamless transition for servicemembers as they leave the Armed Forces.