



NEWS RELEASE

Administration's Budget Affirms Commitment to Veterans, Say *The Independent Budget* Coauthors

WASHINGTON—The Disabled American Veterans and the other coauthors of *The Independent Budget (IB)*—AMVETS, Paralyzed Veterans of America and Veterans of Foreign Wars who collectively represent millions of veterans—are applauding the Administration's recently released Budget Request for FY 2011. The budget request includes significant funding increases for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care and benefits, and for the first time, advance appropriation recommendations for the VA FY 2012 budget.

The Administration's budget announcement coincides with the publication of the 24th Edition of the *IB*, a full picture of veterans' health care and benefits needs and funding recommendations for VA, by veterans for veterans. The *IB* can be viewed at www.independentbudget.org.

The *IB* has always been an important road map for administrations and Congress. The coauthors are very pleased that the President's FY 2011 budget represents real continuing progress on delivering sufficient, timely and predictable funding for VA health care, a key goal of the *IB* over the years. This progress means that VA will get its health care funding on time and America's veterans are more likely to get quality medical treatment in a timely manner.

Released Monday, the President's budget for FY 2011 provides nearly \$60.3 billion in discretionary funding for VA, almost \$4.2 billion above the FY 2010 appropriated level.

The President in his State of the Union address January 27 unveiled a proposal to freeze most nondefense discretionary spending for three years beginning in 2011. The coauthors of *The IB* are pleased that the President's FY 2011 Budget confirms that health care and benefits programs administered by VA will not be impacted by this freeze.

The Administration's budget includes nearly \$51.5 billion for medical care programs for FY 2011, an increase of \$5.0 billion over the FY 2010 appropriated level. The *IB* recommends approximately \$52.0 billion for medical care programs. The budget request includes advance appropriations recommendations of \$54.3 billion for medical care programs for FY 2012.

The budget also contains a significant increase in funding for the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), the VA agency charged with providing compensation and benefits to veterans. The President's budget recommends \$2.1 billion for VBA, an increase of \$460 million over the FY 2010 appropriated level. This funding increase reflects a real commitment toward bringing down the massive claims backlog and providing timely, accurate education benefits to service members and veterans eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

The IB coauthors do have concerns, however, with the level of funding recommended for construction projects and grants, biomedical research, and information technology. With VA facing a massive backlog of important construction requirements and states becoming ever more reliant on VA to contribute to the funding for construction of state extended care facilities, now is not the time to reduce this critical funding. The VA's research program, funded only at the rate of inflation, is an important VA link with academic medicine and cutting-edge technologies, and will make major contributions to restoring the health of wounded veterans returning from service in Iraq and Afghanistan. Likewise, there are a number of critical information technology initiatives for next-generation VA health and benefits systems that need to be addressed. Nevertheless, with \$3.3 billion requested VA should still be able to maintain a steady information technology development program in 2011 that will enable a 21st century VA to fully automate its GI Bill benefits system, replace its aging *VistA* computerized patient care record, and create a seamless electronic record for military members entering the VA system.

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