



DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

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NEWS RELEASE

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Senate Sends VA Health Care Funding Reform Bill to White House

Long-Awaited Victory for Veterans Nears

WASHINGTON, Oct. 14 — The U.S. Senate gave final approval Tuesday to legislation that will finally reform the budget and appropriations process for the Department of Veterans Affairs' medical care programs, ensuring veterans receive the health care they have earned in a timely manner

The Senate's unanimous approval comes on the heels of a 419-1 vote in the House last week, passing H.R. 1016, the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act.

The bill is now headed to the White House. President Obama voiced support for this landmark legislation and is expected to sign it into law.

“With the support of Congress, we now are on the brink of a long-overdue victory that will help ensure timely access to medical care for the men and women who have served, are serving and will serve in defense of our nation,” said DAV National Commander Roberto Barrera. “For two decades, the Disabled American Veterans and other veterans service organizations have worked to reform the budget and appropriations process to ensure that veterans receive the health care they have earned in a timely manner.”

The Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act authorizes Congress to approve veterans medical care funding one year in advance to better meet the anticipated demand for veterans health care services. The advanced funding will give the Department of Veterans Affairs up to a full year to plan for the most effective and efficient way of delivering medical care. Additionally, this would require the Government Accountability Office to audit the budget development process to ensure that sufficient funds are included.

“This legislation will help every disabled veteran and every future disabled veteran,” said Commander Barrera. “This is happening because so many of DAV's members and supporters have stepped up and called on Congress to put an end to chronic lapses in budgets almost every year for decades. We stood up for veterans together, and veterans and their families are going to benefit.”

Commander Barrera expressed DAV's gratitude to several Senators who played leading roles in getting the legislation approved.

“This was truly a bipartisan effort in the Senate, led by the very able Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Senator Dan Akaka, who drafted and sponsored the legislation in the Senate. His dogged determination and skillful leadership proved to be central to passing advance appropriations legislation,” Barrera said. “Senator Akaka has proven time and again that he is a true champion for all of America's

veterans, one who we can rely on to aggressively fight for our interests in Congress, and we are grateful for all that he has done for veterans, especially disabled veterans.”

“Senator Richard Burr, the Ranking Member of the Veterans’ Affairs Committee, played an important role throughout this legislative process. His insightful contributions strengthened the bill, and his steadfast support was absolutely essential to moving this legislation through the Senate,” Barrera said.

“Senator Olympia Snowe was a crucial supporter of advance appropriations from the very beginning. Her dedication to working in a bipartisan manner for the benefit of veterans helped lead to over half the Senate cosponsoring the legislation,” Commander Barrera said.

“Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Tim Johnson laid the groundwork for this historic victory with his sponsorship of veterans funding reform legislation dating back to 2002. He has consistently worked to increase funding levels for veterans health care programs and unselfishly put his full support behind advance appropriations legislation when it was needed,” Barrera said.

“One of the most pivotal moments leading to this legislative victory was the inclusion of advance appropriations language in the budget resolution earlier this year. Veterans have Senator Jim Inhofe to thank for offering that amendment which protected advance appropriations in the budget. His forceful advocacy of advance appropriations at that crucial moment was essential to the ultimate approval of advance appropriations this year,” Commander Barrera said.

“Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad also played a key role when he supported the advance appropriations amendment in the budget, and later worked out an agreement with the House to retain the advance appropriations legislation in the final budget resolution. Senator Conrad continues to be a strong voice for veterans in the Senate,” said Barrera.

The 1.2 million-member Disabled American Veterans, a non-profit organization founded in 1920 and chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1932, represents this nation’s disabled veterans. It is dedicated to a single purpose: building better lives for our nation’s disabled veterans and their families. More information is available at www.dav.org.

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