



## NEWS RELEASE

**Contact:** David E. Autry  
(202) 314-5219

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Although Late, Veterans Welcome Funding Increase Approved by House-Senate Conference**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 9—The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) congratulates the House and Senate conferees who last night approved the Fiscal Year 2010 Consolidated Appropriations Bill which includes \$109.6 billion for 2010 projects and programs crucial for our nation's veterans and their families, plus \$48.2 billion in advance appropriations for veterans medical care during fiscal year 2011.

“The conference report, which could go before the House of Representatives as early as this week, provides the vital funding needed to care for our nation's veterans in 2010 and 2011,” said DAV National Legislative Director Joseph A. Violante. “The importance of this funding cannot be understated as thousands of our nation's servicemembers are being deployed to Afghanistan beginning this month.”

“Thanks to the wisdom of our elected representatives, the Department of Veterans Affairs will be prepared to meet the needs of our nation's veterans when they return home from Iraq and Afghanistan,” said DAV's National Commander Roberto “Bobby” Barrera. “It is regrettable that it took Congress 10 weeks into the new fiscal year to pass the 2010 Consolidated Appropriations Bill.”

Commander Barrera praised the conferees for their bipartisan commitment to America's veterans by approving \$747 million more than the administration requested for VA funding. The funding includes \$56.6 billion for mandatory veterans benefits programs and \$53 billion for discretionary funding, primarily VA health care. The total discretionary funding is \$5.4 billion above 2009 funding. “As the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan continue, the VA health care system will be stressed to meet the needs of sick and disabled veterans returning home,” said Barrera. “They will desperately need excellent health care and the benefits they have earned in the defense of our nation.”

The Consolidated Appropriations Bill authorizes funding for several new programs designed to support our nation's veterans, including renovating surplus VA buildings for use as housing for homeless veterans, increasing the number of VA outpatient clinics in rural areas where veterans do not have ready access to VA hospitals and funding to treat more than 6.1 million patients in 2010, including veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. It is estimated that next year, compared to 2008, VA medical centers will see a 61 percent increase in patients who served in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2008.

The conferees appropriated \$4.6 billion for mental health care to treat the psychological wounds of returning combat veterans, including post-traumatic stress disorder. The legislation also includes \$1.7 billion to hire about 1,200 additional claims processors to address the backlog of benefits claims and to reduce processing time for new claims. The VA estimates that nearly 397,000 claims are currently pending and awaiting adjudication.

“The members of Congress should be congratulated for their visionary work in approving 2010 funding, and having the wisdom and foresight to provide advance VA health funding for 2011,” said Violante. “Without question the VA appropriations process will no longer be subject to the whims of partisan politics and delays. Our nation's veterans will significantly benefit from the work accomplished by the conferees.”

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](http://www.dav.org).