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MEMORANDUM

TO: DAV Departments and Chapters

FROM: Garry J. Augustine, Executive Director, Washington Headquarters

SUBJ: **IMPORTANT NEWS ON PROTECTING VETERANS BENEFITS**

Date: December 15, 2014

After a year-long campaign by DAV and our VSO coalition partners, I am very pleased to let you know that we have achieved an important breakthrough to protect veterans benefits against any future government shutdowns or budget stalemates. Last week, Senate and House appropriations leaders agreed to include advance appropriations for veterans benefit payments as part of the omnibus appropriations agreement that was passed by the House on Thursday, December 11, 2014, by a vote of 219 to 206, and it passed the Senate on Saturday, December 13, by a vote of 56 to 40.

When this legislation is signed by the President later this week, veterans, their families and survivors will have new assurance that mandatory VA benefits will be paid on time without having to worry about them getting caught up in future political or partisan battles over federal spending. With passage of this legislation, Congress will be authorized to appropriate these funds a year in advance, thereby ensuring that veterans, family members and survivors will no longer need to worry whether a government shutdown will cut off their disability compensation, pension, DIC, GI Bill or other mandatory benefits payments.

This historic agreement was made possible because of the work done by you and DAV's many other leaders, members and supporters. Beginning with the government shutdown last year, we organized and mobilized a campaign to pass legislation to ensure that veterans benefits were never again threatened by partisan politics or unrelated budget battles. This past February many of you joined us on Capitol Hill for *Operation: Keep the Promise*, as we increased the pressure on Congress to pass legislation to protect our benefits. Our recent Change.org petition calling for action before the end of the year gathered support from more than 38,000 signers in just two weeks, primarily thanks to the support of DAV members.

Building on this tremendous base of nationwide support, we held a remarkable series of meetings two weeks ago with top Senate and House leaders, including Senate Appropriations Chairwoman Barbara Mikulski (MD), House Veterans' Affairs Chairman Jeff Miller (FL), House Veterans' Affairs Committee Ranking Member Mike Michaud (ME), and the staffs of Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (NV), House Speaker John Boehner (OH), Senate Veterans' Affairs

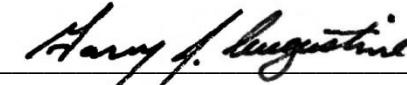
Committee Chairman Bernie Sanders (VT), Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Ranking Member Richard Burr (NC), and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (KY).

Consequently, Senator Mikulski agreed to include the advance appropriations provision in the omnibus bill provided we were able to get letters signed by Senators Sanders and Burr and Congressmen Miller and Michaud, formally supporting the inclusion of this authorizing language in the omnibus appropriations bill. With our VSO colleagues, we were able to get that done in just over 24 hours. Chairman Miller then worked with House leadership to get them onboard, and Chairman Sanders' staff helped build support on the Senate side. Senator Reid's office was also active in working to fulfill the promise he made in October to schedule a vote on advance appropriations legislation this year. Senators Begich and Boozman, the Senate co-sponsors of advance appropriations, also actively worked to get this bill enacted.

You can learn more about this legislation and how we were able to get Congress to adopt it by reading the [statement from National Commander Ron Hope](#) that was released last week.

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have been working in the trenches to make this victory possible. The support you provide, whether from emails, phone calls or visits to your Senators and Representatives, stands behind all of our successes.

On behalf of our entire DAV team, I want to thank you for helping us keep the promise to the men and women who served, and I wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and Happy Holiday season.



GARRY J. AUGUSTINE
Executive Director
Washington Headquarters

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