

VFW DAV and PVA Release Independent Budget Recommendations for the Department of Veterans Affairs

The veterans service organizations call on Congress to fully support our nation's veterans

Feb 22, 2024

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Leading veterans service organizations, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), [Disabled American Veterans \(DAV\)](#) and [Paralyzed Veterans of America \(PVA\)](#), today released [***The Independent Budget Recommendations for the Department of Veterans Affairs for Fiscal Years 2025 and 2026***](#). The report serves as a comprehensive roadmap to ensure VA is fully funded and capable of carrying out its mission to serve veterans and their families, both now and in the future.

The Independent Budget's (IB) recommendations, coupled with the Administration's FY 2025 budget proposal, still yet to be released, will be used to guide Congress with its spending decisions for the coming year. By law, the President is required to submit a budget proposal to Congress no later than the first Monday in February, but that deadline has been routinely missed over the past two decades. Furthermore, Congress has failed to pass a full-year federal budget for FY 2024, which began last October 1st, requiring passage of a series of continuing resolutions that will run out in March.

“Not having a timely budget for one of the most complex federal government agencies is detrimental to the safety and well-being of all those who fought for this country – especially to those with catastrophic injuries and illnesses,” said Carl Blake, chief executive officer of PVA. “Not only that, it causes major problems that could set back years of progress and, most importantly, produces undue anxiety for countless veterans, their families, and survivors. Although VA is largely protected from government shutdowns thanks to its advance appropriations, the use of continuing resolutions only exacerbates this problem, by hampering VA's ability to focus on meeting the ever-increasing demand for care and

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111
Office 816.756.3390
Fax 816.968.1157

WASHINGTON OFFICE

200 Maryland Ave., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
Office 202.543.2239
Fax 202.543.6719

info@vfw.org
www.vfw.org

benefits. Our veterans depend on timely passage of this budget, and we urge Congress to allot the necessary funding to fully support America's veterans and their families.”

For fiscal year 2025, the IB veterans service organizations (IBVSOs) are recommending \$151.8 billion for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) to ensure that all veterans choosing VA for their care receive timely and high-quality medical services. The IB report details specific funding levels and targeted increases for VHA programs, including a \$2.8 billion increase to fill clinical and support care vacancies across VHA; a \$1 billion boost in long-term care to account for the increasing number of aging veterans and their need for essential services; and a \$2.3 billion increase to meet the needs of veterans newly enrolled in the healthcare system, to include those who moved to higher priority groups due to their PACT Act eligibility. The IB recommendations also call for a \$340 million plus-up in dental care to begin expanding this critical service to all enrolled veterans, as well as a \$100 million increase for virtual health care to provide veterans additional options and access, when and where they need it.

“Thanks to enactment of the PACT Act, millions more veterans are now eligible to receive care and benefits as a result of their toxic wounds,” said Randy Reese, executive director of DAV Washington Headquarters. “Our nation has a continuing obligation to provide these and all veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors with convenient and timely access to the health care and benefits they have earned. This year’s IB recommendations serve as a blueprint for Congress and the Administration to ensure that VA has sufficient funding to meet these needs. In an increasingly challenging fiscal and political environment, the IBVSOs have made thoughtful recommendations based on existing data and historical trends to ensure the needs of our nation’s wounded, ill, and injured veterans are properly met.”

For the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), the IBVSOs recommend a total of \$6.2 billion for fiscal year 2025—an increase of roughly \$500 million over the projected FY 2024 appropriations from all sources—and \$333 million for the Board of Veterans’ Appeals (BVA). The IBVSO recommendations include a \$130 million increase for VBA to expand overtime work to reduce the claims backlog of non-PACT Act-related claims; a \$40 million increase to hire more technical support for the Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) program; and a \$70 million plus-up to help both VBA and BVA develop new IT systems, reprogram existing ones, and create more digital tools to increase efficiency and productivity.

“While this year’s Independent Budget is once again complete, it is now imperative that Congress and VA work together, along with veterans service organizations and other stakeholders, to make the needs and interests of all veterans a top priority,” said Ryan Gallucci, executive director of the VFW Washington Office. “We have co-authored this report and offered budgetary recommendations to ensure the timely delivery of specialized

health care and earned benefits for the men and women who served.”

The IBVSOs continue to believe VA infrastructure projects, particularly those that will mitigate serious safety risks to veterans and employees, must be fully funded. To accomplish this, the IBVSOs believe Congress must significantly increase funding for VA’s major and minor construction programs, and recommend a total of \$6.1 billion for FY 2025. With over \$130 billion in backlogged infrastructure projects, this recommendation would begin to set VA on a path to meet current and future construction needs and make the necessary repairs and maintenance on existing projects. In order to increase VA’s ability to manage this larger volume of infrastructure projects, the IBVSOs are calling for VA to increase construction management personnel at every VA medical center across the nation.

To view The IB’s full budget recommendations, please visit independentbudget.org.

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About DAV

DAV empowers veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. It is dedicated to a single purpose: keeping our promises to America’s veterans. DAV does this by ensuring that veterans and their families can access the full range of benefits available to them; fighting for the interests of America’s injured heroes on Capitol Hill; linking veterans and their families to employment resources; and educating the public about the great sacrifices and needs of veterans transitioning back to civilian life. DAV, a non-profit organization with more than one million members, was founded in 1920 and chartered by the U. S. Congress in 1932. Learn more at [DAV.org](https://davy.org).

About Paralyzed Veterans of America

Paralyzed Veterans of America is a 501(c)(3) non-profit and the only congressionally chartered veterans service organization dedicated solely for the benefit and representation of veterans with spinal cord injury or diseases. The organization ensures veterans receive the benefits earned through service to our nation; monitors their care in VA spinal cord injury units; and funds research and education in the search for a cure and improved care for individuals with paralysis.

As a life-long partner and advocate for veterans and all people with disabilities, PVA also develops training and career services, works to ensure accessibility in public buildings and spaces, and provides health and rehabilitation opportunities through sports and recreation. With more than 70 offices and 33 chapters, Paralyzed Veterans of America serves veterans, their families, and their caregivers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Learn more at [PVA.org](https://pva.org).