



COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Congresswoman Nita Lowey (D-NY), Ranking Member

2015 Omnibus Appropriations Act

Division I: Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies

2014 enacted level:	\$73.2 billion
2015 base budget request:	\$71.9 billion
2015 Omnibus base:	\$71.8 billion
2015 OCO:	\$221 million

Highlights and key points:

- \$6.5 billion for Military Construction projects, which is \$3.2 billion less than the 2014 enacted level, including:
 - \$1.1 billion for Family Housing construction, which is \$325 million less than the 2014 enacted level.
 - \$315 million for the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) account, which is \$45 million more than the fiscal year 2015 budget request.
 - \$205.2 million in rescissions from prior Appropriations Acts due to savings on projects.
 - \$221 million for Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) and the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI).
- \$65 billion in discretionary funding for Veterans Affairs, which is \$1.7 billion more than the 2014 enacted level, including:
 - As authorized by Congress in 2009, VA medical services accounts are provided funding one year in advance. The agreement includes the budget request for fiscal year 2016 advance funding of \$58.6 billion.
 - The agreement includes an additional \$40 million, above the budget request, to hire additional claims and support personnel at the regional offices; to expand the Veterans Claims Intake Program records scanning system; and to implement the centralized mail initiative.
 - \$3.9 billion for information technology systems, which is \$200 million more than the 2014 enacted level.
 - \$588.9 million for prosthetic research, which is \$3.2 million above the 2014 enacted level.

Policy Issues

- The agreement creates the authority to provide advance appropriations for three mandatory VA programs within the Veterans Benefits Administration – Compensation and Pensions, Readjustment Benefits, and Veterans Insurance and Indemnities.
- The agreement continues to provide tools and resources to address the backlog of veterans disability claims by increasing personnel, enhancing training and quality oversight, and strengthening accountability.

- The agreement continues the requirement first enacted for fiscal year 2014 to provide rigorous, publicly available Web-based monthly reports to the Committees on performance measures for each regional office, including the number of backlogged claims, the average number of days to complete a claim, and error rates.
- The agreement continues the practice of restricting VA's obligation of information technology funds until the VA reports detailed plans on budget, timeline, and testing to ensure reliable interoperability between current and future Electronic Health Records (EHR) systems between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense.
- The agreement clarifies that the payment rates used by the VA for VA medical care in the State of Alaska and in those States with an all-payer model agreement under the Social Security Act that became effective on January 1, 2014, should also be used in implementation of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014.