



### Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies

The fiscal year 2024 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, together with funds provided in the fiscal year 2023 bill and the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 (FRA), provides \$346.7 billion for fiscal year 2024, an increase of \$24 billion – over 7 percent – above fiscal year 2023. Of this amount, discretionary funding for programs such as veterans’ health care and military construction totals \$153.9 billion, a decrease of \$248 million below fiscal year 2023. The bill also provides advance funding of \$308 billion for fiscal year 2025, and when combined with amounts provided for the Costs of War Toxic Exposures Fund in the FRA fully meets today’s estimates for the fiscal year 2025 needs of veterans medical care.

The legislation:

- Supports our veterans with investments in health care, including targeted investments that advance women's health, mental health, and homelessness assistance.
- Rebuilds our infrastructure with strong investments to plan, design, and construct critical facilities on military installations, including family housing, barracks, and child development centers, and build, repair, and retrofit Veterans Affairs facilities.
- Ensures veterans receive the compensation and benefits that they have earned.
- Protects our national security with investments to respond to the challenges posed by Russian and Chinese aggression.
- Confronts the climate crisis with increased climate change and resiliency funding to help military installations adapt to rising sea levels and worsening natural disasters.
- Responds to natural disasters by providing funding for recovery and rebuilding of damaged installations.
- Remediate harmful substances and chemicals leaked into the land and water sources.

This legislation **rejects** poison pill riders in the House bill including policies aimed at:

- Prohibiting VA from implementing its interim final rule to provide abortions and abortion counseling.
- Prohibiting the promotion or advancement of Critical Race Theory.

- Prohibiting the implementation of three executive orders related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Limiting the ability to fly flags at VA facilities, aimed to eliminate the use of pride flags.
- Prohibiting surgical procedures or hormone therapies for gender-affirming care.
- Creating a license for people and organizations to discriminate against LGBTQI+ people under the guise of religious liberty and preventing the federal government from adequately responding.
- Prohibiting the enforcement of any COVID-19 mask mandate.
- Prohibiting COVID-19 vaccination requirements for health care personnel.
- Prohibiting the installment of VA's new, more inclusive motto.
- Prohibiting the use of funds to carry out President Biden's executive orders related to climate change.
- Prohibiting the administration, implementation, or enforcement of Executive Order 14057, "Catalyzing Clean Energy Industries and Jobs through Federal Sustainability".

### **Bill Summary**

**Military Construction** – The bill provides a total of \$18.7 billion for military construction, which is \$2 billion above the President's budget request. Of this amount, the bill includes:

- \$336 million for **Child Development Centers**, of which \$59.5 million is for planning and design for future facilities, and in total is \$96 million above the fiscal year 2023 budget request. The funds will support increased capacity and better facilities for the 1.6 million children of active duty servicemembers worldwide.
- \$2 billion for **Family Housing**, \$30 million above the budget request. Within this amount, an additional \$30 million is to increase oversight of Department of Defense (DOD)-owned and privatized housing.
- \$1.5 billion for construction or alteration of **Guard and Reserve** facilities in states and territories, an increase of \$396 million above the fiscal year 2023 enacted level and \$481 million above the fiscal year 2024 budget request.
- \$634 million for the **Energy Resilience and Conservation Investment Program**, which is equal to the fiscal year 2024 budget request and supports DOD's investments in energy efficiency, resilience, renewable energy systems, and energy security.
- \$293 million for the **NATO Security Investment Program**, an increase of \$73 million above the fiscal year 2023 enacted level and equal to the fiscal year 2024 budget request, for infrastructure necessary for wartime, crisis, peace support

and deterrence operations, and training requirements. The funds will support responses to the challenges posed by Russian aggression as well as the risks and threats emanating from the Middle East and North Africa.

- \$489 million for **Base Realignment and Closure remediation**, an increase of \$100 million above the fiscal year 2024 budget request. Within this amount, \$50 million is provided for dedicated funding for the cleanup of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) contamination.
- \$514 million for eligible, authorized **Unfunded Requirement (UFR) projects**.
- \$45 million for additional planning and design for **Barracks** to advance future barracks projects to address the large unaccompanied housing backlog.
- \$150 million for **Natural Disaster Recovery construction**, which will support Air Force requirements to recover from damage incurred by natural disasters.
- \$30 million for additional planning and design and unspecified minor construction for **Climate Change and Resilience** to mitigate the risks of climate change to military installations and ensure installation readiness.
- \$2.4 billion for **Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Plan (SIOP)** projects, which is \$1.1 billion above the fiscal year 2023 enacted level, and \$164 million above the fiscal year 2024 budget request.
- \$30 million for planning and design and unspecified minor construction to address priority **Defense laboratory requirements** to maintain the advanced technology necessary to keep ahead of U.S. adversaries across all domains.
- \$131 million for **Indo-Pacific Command** additional planning and design and minor construction to advance critical projects in a strategically vital region of the world.

**Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)** – Together with funding provided in last year’s Act, the bill provides a total of \$134.8 billion in discretionary appropriations for VA for fiscal year 2024, an increase of \$48 million above the fiscal year 2023 enacted level and \$3 billion below the President’s budget request. These resources will serve to expand access to services for veterans and will boost oversight and accountability across the department. Of this amount, the bill includes:

- \$121 billion for **Veterans Medical Care**, equal to the fiscal year 2024 budget request and consistent with the agreement made in the Fiscal Responsibility Act. When combined with the \$17.1 billion for medical care provided in the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 for the Toxic Exposures Fund, this bill will provide care for 7.4 million patients expected to be treated by VA in fiscal year 2024. This amount includes:

- \$16.2 billion for **Mental Healthcare**, including \$559 million for suicide prevention outreach. This will support the nearly 2 million veterans who receive mental health services in a VA specialty mental health setting, as well as support suicide prevention services like the Veterans Crisis Line.
  - \$3.1 billion for **Homeless Assistance Programs**. This funding will enhance VA's ability to reach homeless veterans, which is particularly crucial as the most recent homelessness survey showed that on a given night in January 2023, an estimated 35,574 veterans were experiencing homelessness.
  - \$231 million for **Substance Use Disorder programs**. This funding will help support care for the over 550,000 veterans who had a substance use disorder diagnosis in 2022. Additionally, \$715 million is for **opioid misuse prevention**, an increase of \$53 million above the fiscal year 2023 enacted level and equal to the budget request. This funding will allow for more targeted funding of pain management and opioid safety programs primarily at the facility level.
  - \$108 million for **Whole Health Initiatives**, which is \$22 million above the fiscal year 2023 enacted level. This will enable VA to build upon the success of this program that focuses on veterans' overall health and well-being.
- Additionally, the bill includes \$112.6 billion in advance fiscal year 2025 funding for **Veterans Medical Care** – equal to the President's budget request, and in addition to the funding provided for fiscal year 2025 in the FRA through the Toxic Exposures Fund. This funding will provide for medical services, medical community care, medical support and compliance, and medical facilities, and ensure that our veterans have continued, full access to their medical care needs.
  - In addition to the \$3.2 billion provided in the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 for the Toxic Exposures Fund for activities related to toxic exposures outside of medical care in fiscal year 2024, the bill includes \$16.2 billion for VA non-medical care programs. Of this amount:
    - \$943 million is for **Medical and Prosthetic Research**, an increase of \$27 million above the fiscal year 2023 enacted level and \$5 million above the President's budget request. This funding will support high priority areas of veterans health research, including military environmental exposures, traumatic brain injury, cancer and precision oncology, and mental health.
    - \$1.3 billion is to continue implementation of the **VA Electronic Health Record Modernization** initiative, equal to the revised fiscal year 2024

budget request. These funds will allow VA to support improvements to the stability and usability of the new electronic health record (EHR) system, continued deployment of the EHR at VA medical centers once the program exits the Reset period and allow for intensive staff training critical to the success of the effort and to ensure patient safety. The bill also continues strict and robust oversight of this program, including by the Government Accountability Office, to ensure that the EHR system is implemented in a timely and efficient manner.

- \$2.1 billion is for **VA Construction** programs, which is \$92 million above the President’s budget request. Within this amount, \$961 million is for Major Construction, which is \$80 million above the budget request, and \$692 million is for Minor Construction, which is \$12 million above the budget request. This increase will support VA’s highest priority projects and correct critical seismic and safety deficiencies and address other performance gaps at VA facilities to ensure that veterans can access care in modern facilities that are safe, secure, sustainable, and accessible. In addition, \$646 million in funds made available from the Recurring Expenses Transformational Fund will support additional VA construction projects, for a total funding level of \$2.3 billion in fiscal year 2024.
- \$171 million is for **Grants for Construction of State Extended Care Facilities**, an increase of \$21 million above the fiscal year 2023 enacted level and \$7 million above the President’s budget request. This increase will allow VA to provide more grants to assist States in constructing State home facilities, for furnishing domiciliary or nursing home care to veterans, and to expand, remodel, or alter existing buildings.
- \$3.9 billion is for operating expenses of the **Veterans Benefits Administration**, an increase of \$36 million above the fiscal year 2023 enacted level and equal to the President’s budget request, to ensure the prompt processing of disability claims and efforts to continue reducing the disability claims backlog. These funds will allow VA to support service-connected compensation payments to an estimated 5.7 million veterans, and 503,000 survivors and dependents. In addition, pension payments will be funded for approximately 250,000 veterans and survivors.
- The bill includes \$195.8 billion in advance fiscal year 2025 mandatory funding for VA benefit programs.



- The bill rejects language included in the House report requiring the Department to provide inappropriate, detailed information related to abortions.
- The bill includes a provision prohibiting the use of funds in this Act to report a veteran to the Department of Justice National Instant Criminal Background Check System without a judicial determination.
- The bill includes a provision eliminating testing on animals at VA within 2 years, with limited exceptions, and requires the Department to provide a plan for the elimination of testing on animals no later than 90 days of enactment.

**Related Agencies** – The bill provides a total of \$471 million in discretionary appropriations for related agencies, an increase of \$29 million above the fiscal year 2023 enacted level. Of this amount, the bill includes:

- \$188 million for **Arlington National Cemetery**, including \$89 million to continue the urgently needed Southern Expansion project that will create 80,000 additional burial spaces. This is equal to the President’s budget request.
- \$159 million for the **American Battle Monuments Commission**, equal to the President’s budget request and \$71 million above the fiscal year 2023 enacted level. This will support three one-time projects and the continued maintenance of its 26 cemeteries, 32 federal memorials, and 8 nonfederal memorials.
- \$77 million for the **Armed Forces Retirement Home**, equal to the President’s budget request. This will support the needs of the over 800 residents at the two retirement home campuses and invest in critical life and safety infrastructure improvements.
- \$47 million for the **Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims**, equal to the President’s budget request. This will enable the Court to keep pace with its caseload of veterans’ appeals, which consisted of over 95,000 decisions issued in fiscal year 2022.