

**VFW WASHINGTON WEEKLY**  
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**1. VA funding Passes House:** By a 409-4 vote, the House passed the 2009 VA and Military Construction funding bill. The bill builds on last year's historic funding increase, providing \$8.8 billion more than last year's funding level. For VA, it's a \$4.6 billion increase in funding to a total of \$47.7 billion. It includes funding to treat the 40,000 new Iraq and Afghanistan veterans that VA expects to treat this year.

It also includes funding for:

- \* Priority 8 veterans - would allow a small number of new Priority 8 veterans back into the health care system
- \* Mental health care - nearly \$1 billion more than last year's funding level for PTSD, suicide prevention and other mental illnesses
- \* Mileage Reimbursement - would increase the rate by \$.13 per mile and freeze the deductible
- \* Rural care - increases funding for rural care options, especially targeted at returning Guard and Reserve members who live far away from VA facilities
- \* Research and prosthetics - over \$170 million more than last year's amount
- \* Claims processors - allows the hiring of 2,100 additional processors to help reduce the disability claims backlog
- \* Construction - begins funding six additional VA facilities and allows smaller projects to be conducted at 145 additional locations

The Military Construction portion of the bill includes \$336 million in new funding for quality of life programs for troops and their families, much of which is targeted towards barracks and medical facilities. It also sends \$3.2 billion specifically towards military housing.

The bill awaits Senate action. With the Senate on recess until September, we will not see any movement for a while. Once the Senate passes its version of the funding bill, the differences would need to be resolved before being sent to the President.

For a detailed summary of the bill: <http://appropriations.house.gov/pdf/MilConSummaryHP09.pdf>

For information about the bill:

<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d110:h.06599>:

To see how your Representative voted:

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2008/roll563.xml>

**2. New Housing Bill has Vet Provisions:** The housing and economic recovery legislation that was recently signed into law (PL 110-289) includes several VFW-supported provisions designed to safeguard servicemembers and veterans during the mortgage and foreclosure crisis.

Some of the provisions in the bill will:

- \*\*Prohibit foreclosure of servicemembers property for at least nine months following deployment.
- \*\*Increase the amount of VA's Home loan guarantee program.
- \*\*Authorize VA to provide assistance for specially adapted housing to active-duty members with certain service-connected disabilities.
- \*\*Allows individuals with severe burn injuries to be eligible for specially adapted housing assistance.

\*\*Extend through December 31, 2011, the period of assistance for individuals residing temporarily in housing owned by a family member.

For the entire bill's provisions click here: <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d110:h.r.03221>:

**3. House Passes Vet Bills:** The House passed eight veteran-related bills covering a wide array of benefits. Several of the bills will provide new protections for servicemembers who have or are in the process of being deployed. One such bill is HR 6225, The Improving SCRA and USERRA Protections Act of 2008. Provisions include requiring judges to give veterans a hearing when they are seeking to regain a job lost during deployment and allowing servicemembers to terminate contracts if they are notified of deployment. It also lets them continue education benefits where they left off prior to active duty. VFW Resolution 639 supports another bill cleared by the House- HR 6445 ,The Veterans Health Care Policy Enhancement Act, would eliminate co-payments for catastrophically disabled veterans and would direct VA to develop and implement a comprehensive policy on the management of pain. It also mandates the VA to centralize third party billing, and allow family members of veterans to be eligible for counseling.

For a complete list of bills passed visit the House VA website at: <http://veterans.house.gov/news/>

**4. Congress on August Recess:** Congress heads out of town with many items left on the agenda including VA funding and the Defense Authorization bill. Now is the perfect time to visit their local offices and talk about issues important to veterans and the VFW. Remember all of the House members are up for re-election in November so they should be willing and eager to visit with you. When making an appointment make sure you arrive promptly and come prepared to discuss your issues. It is best to stick to one or two specific items and give examples of why you (VFW) support these issues. Always thank them and remind them that you expect them to do the right thing for America's veterans and servicemembers. For a list of our priority goals visit our website at:

<http://www.vfw.org/index.cfm?fa=caphill.level&did=3694>

To find contact information for your Representative including district office locations, type your zip code in the box in the following link: <http://capwiz.com/vfw/dbq/officials/>