

THE INDEPENDENT BUDGET

A Budget for Veterans by Veterans

www.independentbudget.org

October 3, 2013

House Speaker John Boehner
1011 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi
235 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Boehner, Leader Reid, Leader Pelosi and Leader McConnell:

On behalf of *The Independent Budget*—co-authored by AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and Veterans of Foreign Wars—we would like to express our tremendous disappointment that Congress' inability to pass a full annual budget has led to a government shutdown. Your failure is already causing real harm to the brave men and women who have served and sacrificed for this nation.

The current government shutdown has stopped work on the more than 250,000 Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability claims that are awaiting adjudication; compensation, pension and education benefits are in jeopardy of not being paid; Vocational Rehabilitation offices are working with reduced staffs; and the Department of Labor's VETS programs and federal employment OneStops are closed. These are real impacts on veterans, many of whom are struggling to transition back into civilian life.

Furthermore, funding the operations of the VA through short-term continuing resolutions (CRs) or other stop-gap measures are not acceptable solutions. Typically, short term CRs don't take into account the effects of inflation or increased demand for VA benefits and services. CRs also prevent VA from starting or expanding critical programs and disrupt or delay vital new research and construction projects.

As the leaders of Congress, we call on you to immediately take all actions necessary to give final approval to legislation providing the full year's FY 2014 appropriation for all veterans programs. Our organizations and the millions of veterans we represent will no longer tolerate Congress leveraging veterans' health and wellbeing to achieve unrelated political ends.

In order to prevent future disruptions to veterans' programs, we also urge you to approve legislation that would extend advance appropriations to all VA discretionary and mandatory appropriations accounts. Advance appropriations have shielded VA health care from most of the harmful effects of the current government shutdown as well as prior continuing resolutions. Now Congress must provide the same protections to all remaining discretionary and mandatorily funded veterans programs, including disability compensation processing and payments. There

A Joint Project of:

AMVETS
4647 Forbes Boulevard
Lanham, MD 20706
(301) 459-9600
www.amvets.org

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
807 Maine Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20024-2410
(202) 554-3511
www.dav.org

PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA
801 Eighteenth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006-3517
(202) 872-1500
www.pva.org

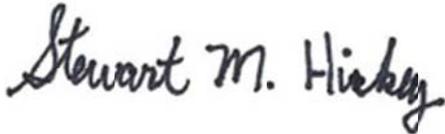
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE UNITED STATES
200 Maryland Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 543-2239
www.vfwdc.org

are currently bills pending in both the House (H.R. 813) and the Senate (S. 932) that could be quickly amended and approved to achieve this goal.

Both government shutdowns and continuing resolutions represent failures in leadership. Congress' obligation to veterans does not start in the eleventh hour of a national crisis; you have an obligation to pass a timely, sufficient budget for all veterans programs, benefits and services.

On behalf our organizations and all of America's veterans, their families and survivors, we call on you to work together to immediately approve a full year's appropriation for all veterans programs, and subsequently to approve pending legislation to extend advance appropriations to all VA discretionary and mandatory funding. Anything less is unacceptable to the men and women who have served this nation in uniform.

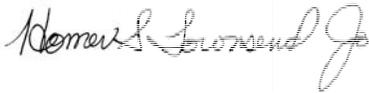
Sincerely,



Stewart M. Hickey
National Executive Director
AMVETS



Garry J. Augustine
Executive Director
Disabled American Veterans



Homer S. Townsend, Jr.
Executive Director
Paralyzed Veterans of America



Robert E. Wallace
Executive Director
Veterans of Foreign Wars
of the United States

- c:
- Sen. Barbara Mikulski, Chairwoman, Senate Committee on Appropriations
 - Sen. Richard C. Shelby, Vice Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations
 - Sen. Patty Murray, Chairman, Senate Committee on the Budget
 - Sen. Jeff Sessions, Ranking Minority Member, Senate Committee on the Budget
 - Sen. Bernard Sanders, Chairman, Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
 - Sen. Richard Burr, Ranking Minority Member, Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
 - Rep. Harold Rogers, Chairman, House Committee on Appropriations
 - Rep. Nita Lowey, Ranking Minority Member, House Committee on Appropriations
 - Rep. Paul Ryan, Chairman, House Committee on the Budget
 - Rep. Chris Van Hollen, Ranking Minority Member, House Committee on the Budget
 - Rep. Jeff Miller, Chairman, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
 - Rep. Mike Michaud, Ranking Minority Member, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs