



# Chairman Hal Rogers

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## House Committee on Appropriations

**Full Committee Markup – FY 2016 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related  
Agencies Appropriations Bill  
April 22, 2015  
Opening Statement As Prepared**

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Thank you to both Chairman Dent and Ranking Member Bishop for their thoughtful words and good work putting together this bipartisan bill.

You have produced a balanced, thorough bill that will help improve the quality of life for our brave service men and women on active duty, address the current and future needs of our veterans, and tackle the challenges facing the Department of Veterans Affairs.

As Chairman Dent outlined, this bill provides \$76.6 billion in discretionary funding for these programs. This funding will go toward essential construction projects that advance the effectiveness of our military mission, and it will allow military families access to the services they need each day.

This total represents a 5.6 percent increase over last year's levels for the Department of Veterans Affairs – helping to fulfill our commitment to our veterans that they have access to medical care, job training, education, and other benefits promised to them for their service.

I'm proud that, with this bill, we are able to address some of the most egregious problems that have plagued the VA in recent months. In particular, this bill prioritizes reducing the disability claims backlog, providing \$163 million more than last year to speed up the claims process and get the VA back on track.

In addition, the bill continues forward progress on the VA's electronic health records system, guaranteeing that they work hand-in-hand with DoD to achieve a fully interoperable e-health platform.

Lastly, this bill implements and continues stringent oversight mechanisms to help ensure that the VA is being responsible with its tax dollars and that it is held accountable when wrongdoings occur. It's been made abundantly clear that we must hold the VA under the microscope.

I'm very glad to see, for instance, that this bill directs the VA to take steps to end the abuse of pain medication prescriptions. Our veterans should expect and receive responsible, well-planned pain management care when they are under VA supervision.

I am optimistic that these steps will help right the ship at the VA – ensuring that this Department is able to provide our nation's veterans with the high quality of care that they so richly deserve for their service.

This legislation does the right thing in the right way, and I congratulate Chairman Dent, Ranking Member Bishop, and the entire Subcommittee on a job well done. I urge the Members of this Committee to support it today.

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