



Chairman Hal Rogers

House Committee on Appropriations

Fiscal Year 2015 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Bill

Subcommittee Markup

April 3, 2014

Opening Statement As Prepared

I thank Chairman Culberson for yielding, and I congratulate him and Ranking Member Bishop on producing a fiscal year 2015 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

As the first bill of twelve FY 2015 appropriations bills to be marked up in subcommittee, this legislation is a prime example of bipartisan collaboration that addresses the most urgent needs of our Nation's veterans, as well as the construction priorities across the Department of Defense. In these tough budgetary times, the members of the subcommittee have carefully assessed every penny this bill appropriates, making responsible decisions that align funding to results and requiring stringent oversight of the relevant agencies.

Specifically, the bill funds the hospitals, schools and family housing that support our dedicated servicemembers in the Department of Defense. Not only does the legislation fulfill our commitment to these brave men and women during their active duty service, but it ensures that our veterans and their families have access to the quality medical care, job training and education and other benefits to which they are entitled after serving our country with distinction and honor.

I am particularly pleased that the Committee has continued to place a high priority on reducing the shameful backlog in disability claims within the Veterans Benefits Administration, providing an additional \$49 million above 2014 levels to be used in part for the digital scanning of health and benefit files so that the VA can process these claims more rapidly. In addition, the bill will ensure that VA is satisfactorily implementing its strategic plan for electronic health records, as well as moving forward with the DOD on an interoperable e-health platform. We absolutely need a seamless method to provide healthcare to our warfighters and veterans, and this bill will move the ball forward. Unfortunately, as yesterday's tragedy at Fort Hood demonstrated, this need to provide our returning veterans with the right care to treat the wounds of battle – both in mind and body – is becoming even more apparent. Our thoughts and prayers remain with that community.

This is legislation that we can all support, and I urge the subcommittee to promptly report this bill to the full Committee. Thank you and I yield back.

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