

**118TH CONGRESS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**TESTIMONY OF RANKING MEMBER MARK TAKANO
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION
"COMMITTEE FUNDING FOR THE 118TH CONGRESS"**

**FEBRUARY 28, 2023, 10:40 A.M.
1310 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING**

Thank you, Chairman Steil and Ranking Member Morelle for having Chairman Bost and me here today to talk about the budget for the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs in the 118th Congress.

Our Committee was one of the busiest last Congress. Working together, we had some remarkable achievements. We passed 83 bills out of the House and 36 of those became law, the second-most of any House Committee.

Chief among these achievements is that we upheld our promise to care for toxic-exposed veterans – delivering long-overdue benefits and care to over 3.5 million veterans.

We made progress in addressing veteran suicide. We worked to improve veteran economic well-being by addressing the root causes of homelessness and enhancing access to educational opportunities. We also began the overdue work to bring equity to underserved veteran populations.

While we have much to be proud of, but there is still much work to be done. I thank the Members and Committee staff who worked with me on these efforts and who made these accomplishments possible.

The work to improve care and services for veterans will always be a constant and the Committee also has the important responsibility of overseeing the implementation of the laws that were enacted last Congress. One thing that underscores our work is that much of it is bipartisan. Certainly, Chairman Bost and I have our policy disagreements, but I believe that we, and our staff, have endeavored to work as productively as possible over the last four years and I expect that spirit of cooperation and bipartisanship to continue.

I believe this work strongly justifies our Committee's budget request. Although we have a very important mandate – to ensure that those who have worn the uniform of this country receive the benefits they are owed and to oversee the second-largest department in the federal government – we do this work as one of the smallest standing committees in the House. If we want to meet that mandate, we must have the funding to hire and retain excellent staff. Most of this work is not beginner's policy work, and we endeavor to hire experienced staff who already understand the complexities of veterans' issues. We also need a robust travel budget that allows both staff and Members to get out into the field to assess all aspects of VA's operations. For example, the

Veterans Health Administration has more than 1200 sites of care spread across the U.S., its territories, and the Philippines. Chairman Bost and I have agreed to this budget request, and I believe it will allow us to continue our important work.

How Congress chooses to allocate funding should be demonstrative of our values. Our commitment must be to ensure that we continue to do more for veterans than say “thank you for your service.” Adequately funding our Committee is an important part of that commitment.

I thank you for your consideration of our work and this funding request. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.