

**House Committee on Veterans' Affairs**  
**Funding Request for the 119th Congress**  
**Statement of Chairman Mike Bost before the Committee on House Administration**  
**February 12, 2025**

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Thank you, Chairman Steil and Ranking Member Morelle for the opportunity to discuss the Committee on Veterans' Affairs budget request for the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress. I am pleased to have Ranking Member Mark Takano joining me.

We have submitted our funding request forms for the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress per your Committee's guidance. As you know, the Committee has oversight of the entire:

- Department of Veterans Affairs,
- Various programs serving veterans at the Departments of Labor and Defense,
- Arlington National Cemetery and our overseas cemeteries, as well as other veterans-related matters.

All to ensure that V.A. is meeting their mission for the over 9 million veterans, their families, and their survivors they serve every single day.

V.A. is the second largest federal agency and the largest federal integrated healthcare system in the country. Employing over 377 thousand people with a budget approaching \$400 billion dollars. Since 2015, V.A. has seen budgetary growth of over 140%.

Ensuring proper oversight of taxpayer dollars is essential for the delivery of care and services to veterans. And a waste of those dollars is unacceptable. We owe it to veterans and taxpayers to ensure V.A. is making marked progress regarding:

- veterans' access to healthcare;
- wait times at hospitals and clinics;
- proper use of the Mission Act;
- the backlog of disability claims;

- implementation of the electronic health record; and more recently,
- the implementation of the Dole Act.

Before I speak about our request for the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress I want to say thank you to the members of this Committee. With your support, and bipartisan work of the members of the Committee, in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress we were able to –

- Conduct over 90 oversight hearings with over 100 VA officials;
- Connected with over 10,000 veterans and their families nationwide through in-person and telephone townhalls, and
- Sent over 160 oversight letters to VA.

We conducted this work while our funding request was relatively flat with only a modest increase of 4% in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, compared to the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress.

To continue our work to accomplish the mission, the committee needs essential, talented staff expertise. Accordingly, we request a 12% increase in the committee's annual budget for the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress.

As Chairman, I believe that with this additional funding we will continue to conduct oversight across the country on behalf of every veteran and the new funds would also allow us to hire three additional employees. Two of these employees on the majority staff would be healthcare investigators who will go out into the field to conduct oversight of V.A.'s vast healthcare system.

My goal would be to hire clinicians, or very experienced healthcare professionals for this role. I believe they would be an asset to the work Congress does every day. In this case, we would need additional funds to be competitive in hiring these individuals.

We all know that inflation has impacted our economy, and our request takes this into account by asking for funding to prevent our experienced and highly technical staff – on both sides of the aisle – from leaving the committee.

Mr. Chairman, unlike many other committees with a deep bench, staff who understand the complexities of V.A. don't simply grow on trees.

Despite being one of the smallest Committees in the House, we punch way above our weight. To put this into perspective, for every one of our committee staff there are over 8,000 VA employees. Let me say that again, Mr. Takano and I have just 43 staff to oversee an agency of over 377,000 employees. This is why it is so critical that we have the funds to attract the best and brightest and equip them with the tools they need to provide oversight over V.A.

Mr. Chairman, you have my assurance that we will continue to account for, and stretch, every dollar afforded us as we meet and exceed the expectations placed upon us.

But my humble request from you, the Ranking Member, and the Members of this Committee, is that we build on the oversight successes we made last Congress and fully fund our request.

In closing, I also wanted to thank the Chairman and members of staff of the Committee on Administration. The work you continue to do to modernize the House and make things easier for members and staff to serve the American people has been extraordinary.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be glad to answer any questions you may have.