



# Chairman Hal Rogers

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## House Committee on Appropriations

**Subcommittee Markup**  
**FY 2016 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations**  
**April 15, 2015**  
**Opening Statement As Prepared**

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I thank Chairman Dent for yielding, and I congratulate him and Ranking Member Bishop on working together to write a Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2016.

The members of this subcommittee have produced a balanced, bipartisan bill that addresses the current and future needs of our Veterans, and funds critical construction priorities for the Department of Defense.

This bill provides funding for essential services our servicemembers and their families depend on – access to quality schools, hospitals and housing. It fulfills our commitment to these brave men and women on active duty, and ensures that, after they have served honorably, our veterans have access to the medical care, job training, education and other benefits that have been guaranteed to them by their Government.

There is no question that the VA has struggled to meet this obligation in recent years, paying an unacceptable disservice to our veterans and their families. This Committee has worked hard to support the VA as it turns the tide to redress years of mismanagement, and this bill is another fine example of our commitment in that respect. I am particularly pleased that the Committee has continued to prioritize reducing the disability claims backlog. This bill provides an additional \$163 million over FY15 funding levels for this initiative, including \$141 million for the digital scanning of health records. This funding will help speed up the claims process and get VA back on track. In addition, the bill will ensure that VA is moving forward in improving its electronic health records system and is working hand-in-hand with DoD on achieving an interoperable e-health platform. This bill also increases information technology funding over FY15 levels, and will move the ball forward on ensuring that all veterans, including those with disabilities, have access to Veterans Affairs online services, wherever they may be. Finally, this bill exercises key oversight mechanisms, ensuring that VA is held accountable for the gross mismanagement of pain medication prescriptions that have led to rampant - and deadly - misuse of prescription opioids. This bill calls on VA to end the cycle of abuse and mismanaged prescriptions, and ensure that our veterans receive responsible pain management care under VA supervision.

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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