



**Department of
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News Release

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President's 2010 Budget Request Strongly Supports VA Programs *Funding Plan Improves Access, Modernizes Technology*

WASHINGTON – President Obama's first proposed budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) expands eligibility for health care to an additional 500,000 deserving Veterans over the next five years, meets the need for continued growth in programs for the combat Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, and provides the resources to deliver quality health care for the Nation's 5.5 million Veteran patients.

The 2010 budget request is a significant step toward realizing a vision shared by the President and Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki to transform VA into an organization that is people-centric, results-driven and forward-looking.

“Our success must encompass cost-effectiveness,” Shinseki said. “We are stewards of taxpayer dollars, and we will include appropriate metrics to accurately gauge the quality of our care and the effectiveness of our management processes.”

If accepted by Congress, the President's budget proposal would increase VA's budget from \$98 billion this fiscal year to \$113 billion for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, 2009. This is in addition to the \$1.4 billion provided for VA projects in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

The 2010 budget represents the first step toward increasing funding for VA efforts by \$25 billion over baseline during the next five years. The gradual expansion in health care enrollment that this would support will open hospital and clinic doors to more than 500,000 Veterans by 2013 who have been regrettably excluded from VA medical care benefits since 2003. The 2010 budget request provides the resources to achieve this level of service while maintaining high quality and timely care for lower-income and service-disabled Veterans who currently rely on VA medical care.

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VA Budget 2/2/2/2

The new budget provides greater benefits for Veterans who are medically retired from active duty, allowing for the first time disabled military retirees to keep their full VA disability compensation along with their retired pay. The President's budget request also provides the resources for effective implementation of the post-9/11 GI Bill -- providing unprecedented levels of educational support to the men and women who have served our country through active military duty.

The new budget will support additional specialty care in such areas as prosthetics, vision and spinal cord injury, aging, and women's health. New VA Centers of Excellence will focus on improving these critical services.

The proposed fiscal year 2010 budget also addresses the tragic fact of homelessness among Veterans. It expands VA's current services through a collaborative pilot program with non-profit organizations that is aimed at maintaining stable housing for vulnerable Veterans at risk of homelessness, while providing them with supportive services to help them get back on their feet through job training, preventive care, and other critical services.

Finally, the President's budget request provides the necessary investments to carry VA services to rural communities that are too often unable to access VA care. The President's budget expands VA mental health screening and treatment with a focus on reaching Veterans in rural areas in part through an increase in Vet Centers and mobile health clinics. New outreach funding will help rural Veterans and their families stay informed of these resources and encourage them to pursue needed care.

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