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2008 Budget Honors our Commitments to Veterans

“As a nation at war, these funds will help cover the ongoing cost of war to care for the men and women of the U.S. military and their families.”

The American Legion

Provides Historic Increase for Veterans — The 2008 budget provides the funding needed to honor our commitments to veterans – most importantly, to provide them with excellent health care. It provides more than \$43.0 billion in appropriated veterans funding for 2008 – the largest increase in history and \$6.7 billion more than current 2007 appropriations.

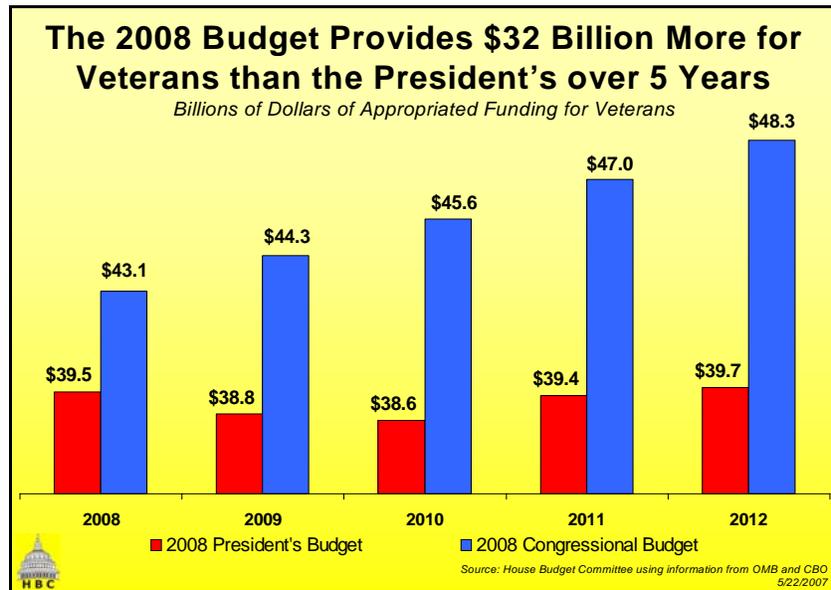
Provides \$32 Billion More than the President’s Budget Over Five Years — While the 2008 budget provides a historic funding increase, the President’s budget does not adequately fund veterans’ health care for 2008 and cuts funding below the 2008 level in later years.

Rejects the President’s Fee Increases for Veterans’ Health Care — The 2008

budget saves veterans from paying increased fees totaling \$355 million in 2008 and \$2.3 billion over five years. The President’s budget imposes those new enrollment fees and increases co-payments on Priority 7 and 8 veterans. Congress has rejected these fees four years in a row.

Commended by Veterans Service Organizations — VSOs have commended the 2008 budget:

- **The Independent Budget (a plan developed by four leading VSOs):** “We appreciate your efforts . . . to achieve an excellent mark for total discretionary spending for the Department of Veterans Affairs for this year. Your support for discretionary funding levels consistent with The Independent Budget will allow the VA to better address the needs of the men and women returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom as well as all veterans who have served in the past.”
- **The American Legion:** “The American Legion and its 2.8 million members applaud . . .



the Fiscal Year 2008 Budget Resolution. . . Your recommendations closely correspond to the views and estimates submitted by The American Legion in February.”

- ***Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America:*** “[W]e applaud the . . . \$43.1 billion in discretionary funding for Veterans . . . Members of the Armed Services serving in Iraq and Afghanistan have answered the call to serve our nation. Now it is time to ensure that they are properly taken care of once they have returned from the battlefield.”

Supports Excellent Health Care for All Veterans — Following the problems at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, the 2008 budget provides resources to begin implementing recommendations for improving military and veterans’ health care facilities and treatment. The budget resolution also includes funds to cover increases in medical care costs and deal fully with the increasing number of patients in the veterans’ health care system.

Provides More Funding for Mental Health and Traumatic Injuries — The 2008 budget increases funding above the President’s budget’s inadequate levels to research and treat mental health problems, post-traumatic stress disorder, and traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries.

Increases Funding to Speed Disability Claims Processing — The 2008 budget increases funding above the President’s budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to improve the speed and accuracy of disability claims processing and reduce the inventory of pending claims. The resolution allows VA to hire more personnel than the President’s budget.

Includes a Deficit-Neutral Reserve Fund for Improving Veterans’ Benefits — The 2008 budget accommodates legislation to:

- enhance disability benefits for military personnel or veterans,
- expand eligibility to receive both VA disability compensation and military retirement pay,
- eliminate the offset between survivor benefit annuities and veterans’ dependency and indemnity compensation,
- improve disability evaluations of military personnel or veterans,
- enhance education benefits, and
- increase benefits to Filipino veterans of World War II and their survivors and dependents.

Why VA Needs Additional Funding

VA is Treating More Patients Every Year and 2.4 Million More than 10 Years Ago — Over the last decade (1996-2006), the number of VA patients rose from 3 million annually to more than 5.4 million (up 80 percent). For 2008, VA projects 5.8 million patients, including 5.3 million veterans. In total, there are currently more than 23 million veterans. Although the number of veterans is declining, the number of VA health care patients is rising.

VA is Treating Many More Iraq and Afghanistan War Veterans Each Year — In 2003, VA treated just under 14,000 Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans. In 2006, VA treated about 155,000, a ten-fold increase. For 2008, VA expects to treat more than 263,000 veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.