THE INDEPENDENT BUDGET

A Budget for Veterans by Veterans

www.independentbudget.org

March 23, 2004

All Members
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the co-authors of *The Independent Budget* (IB), AMVETS (American Veterans), Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, we are writing to urge you to oppose and vote against H. Con. Res. 393, the House budget resolution for fiscal year 2005.

For veterans' discretionary programs, primarily veterans' medical care, H. Con. Res. 393 would provide $1.3 billion below the minimum amount of funding determined necessary by the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, and $2.0 billion below the amount of funding recommended by the IB just for VA health care services.

Despite an increase over the President's Budget request released in February, the budget resolution does not provide adequate funding for veterans' health care to meet the needs of sick and disabled veterans seeking care from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health system. Last year, the Under Secretary for Health of the VA testified that the VA needs approximately 13 percent to 14 percent annually just to meet the costs of inflation and mandated salary increases. This budget does not even come close to meeting those needs.

The co-authors of the IB call on you to reject this half-hearted attempt to fund veterans' health care. Passage of the Budget Resolution, as presented, would be a disservice to those men and women who have served this country and who are currently serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, and around the world in our fight against terrorism.

The IB veterans service organizations ask that Congress restore some sense of reason, responsibility, and justice to the budget process. Please vote to defeat this ill-advised budget resolution.

Sincerely,

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