

FOVA

Friends of VA Medical Care and Health Research

A coalition of national
organizations committed to quality
care for America's veterans

Executive Committee

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April 22, 2009

The Honorable Kent Conrad
Chair, Committee on the Budget
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Spratt
Chair, Committee on the Budget
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Judd Gregg
Ranking Member, Committee on the Budget
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Ranking Member, Committee on the Budget
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support of VA Medical Care and Research Advanced Appropriations

Dear Budget Conferees:

On behalf of the Friends of VA Medical Care and Health Research (FOVA), we write to urge inclusion of advance appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical care and research programs in the final conference agreement for the FY 2010 budget resolution. FOVA was founded 20 years ago to ensure that America's veterans receive high-quality health care. Today, FOVA is a diverse coalition representing more than 80 national academic, medical, and scientific societies; health and patient advocacy groups; and veteran-focused associations.

Delayed funding jeopardizes VA's ability to provide quality and timely health care services to all eligible veterans. Similarly, unpredictable and partial-year funding with arbitrary peaks and valleys for the VA research program impedes important VA research on national priorities, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), amputations, poly-trauma, burns, and a variety of other acute and chronic health conditions prevalent in the veteran population. VA research administrators and investigators are understandably reluctant to expand their research endeavors as this record of inconsistent funding can quickly devastate plans for growth or cause interruptions and even cancellations of ongoing projects.

Consistent with the *Independent Budget* veterans service organizations, FOVA encourages Congress to reform VA's medical care and research budgets to allow advanced appropriations, providing funding for these programs one year or more in advance of the operating year. Section 302(b) of the Senate budget resolution (S.Con.Res.13) permits advanced appropriations the VA Medical Services, Medical Administration, Medical Facilities, and Medical and Prosthetic Research accounts of the Veterans Health Administration. The FOVA Executive Committee strongly supports inclusion of this provision in the final budget resolution conference agreement to help ensure the highest standard of care for our nation's veterans.

The FOVA Executive Committee thanks Senator James Inhofe for his amendment (S.AMDT.742) to allow for advanced VA appropriations and applauds its co-sponsors: Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chair Daniel Akaka and Ranking Member Richard Burr; as well as Senators John Thune and Lisa Murkowski.

Sincerely,

The Executive Committee of the Friends of VA Medical Care and Health Research
(FOVA)