



## **Fact Sheet: Senate Republican Funding Bill Shortchanges the Nation's Military and Veterans by Over \$1 Billion**

*Taking care of our nation's veterans should be at the top of the Senate's priority list – but instead Senate Republicans are holding another “show vote” on an appropriations bill, one that cuts veterans funding by \$857 million. Republican Leader Mitch McConnell has already acknowledged the need for bipartisan budget negotiations to provide relief from the deep, automatic spending cuts to critical priorities like rebuilding VA hospitals. Yet, this veterans funding bill would keep those cuts in place, which one veterans' group called “unacceptable.”<sup>1</sup> Democrats are ready to negotiate a budget agreement that provides what we need for our national and economic security and honors our commitment to the nation's veterans.*

### **Key Deficiencies with the Senate Republican MilCon-VA Appropriations bill**

**Cuts funding for military construction and veterans affairs by \$1.2 billion.** Keeping in place the automatic “sequester” cuts to the MilCon-VA bill shortchanges critical investments in Veterans healthcare that will shortchange our men and women in uniform from receiving quality care. At a time when we continue to have a backlog in healthcare for veterans, aging hospitals, and emerging treatment needs; we cannot keep in place the spartan sequester caps that were never meant to become reality. [OMB, [6/2/15](#)]

**Understaffs the nation's VA hospitals with over \$500 million in health care cuts.** The Senate MilCon-VA appropriations bill reduces funding for the VA by \$857 million below the President's budget. This would lead to underfunding of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical care by over a half a billion dollars, equivalent to the cost of providing care for more than 60,000 veterans. If enacted, the Senate Milcon-VA bill would negatively impact veterans' medical care services, including reducing the VA's ability to maintain sufficient staff and equipment at VA hospitals. [OMB, [6/2/15](#)]

**Cuts funding for maintenance at VA hospitals in spite of warnings that they are crumbling and unsafe.** Roughly 60 percent of VA's medical facilities are more than 50 years old. The VA estimates a total of \$10 billion to \$12 billion in unfunded requirements to correct deficiencies at hospitals and clinics. A VA Inspector General audit of the Veterans Health Administration found that failure to deal with the \$10 - \$12 billion maintenance backlog jeopardizes patient safety. The VA estimates that this bill makes a cut of approximately \$105 million for non-recurring maintenance to address deficiencies at hospitals and clinics, which is entirely inadequate given the unfunded requirements. [Senate Committee on Appropriations, [5/21/15](#), VA Inspector General, [5/7/14](#)]

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<sup>1</sup> American Legion statement, [4/23/15](#)

**Pits funding for traditional medical services against funding for new, lifesaving prescription drugs that treat diseases like Hepatitis-C or the VA's Caregivers program for Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans.** Veterans are disproportionately affected by the deadly disease known as Hepatitis-C. The VA is facing significant unanticipated costs due primarily to increased demand for new Hepatitis-C treatment drugs that have up to a 96 percent cure rate; a nearly 50 percent increase in the utilization of fee-based medical care provided outside of the VA health care system; and a spike in the usage of the VA's Caregivers Program for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. The VA allocation in this bill does not provide sufficient funding to address requested medical service requirements and all of these emerging medical care priorities. [Senate Committee on Appropriations, [5/21/15](#)]