

**From:** March, Joseph H.  
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Attachments:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Legion: "Approve VA Budget Immediately"** *New Fiscal Year - another Continuing Resolution*

WASHINGTON (Oct. 1, 2009) - The leader of The American Legion expressed disappointment today at the failure of Congress to okay an appropriations bill to fund the Department of Veterans Affairs during this new fiscal year, though a Continuing Resolution (CR) to provide additional funding for VA medical accounts was approved,

"A year ago, Congress made history by passing, *on time, before the beginning of the new fiscal year*, the Military Construction, Veterans' Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for FY 2009." said Clarence E. Hill, national commander of The American Legion. "We at The American Legion applauded the record-setting event, especially since the majority of federal agencies did not receive their new appropriations until March 11 - six months into the new fiscal year."

Early last month, Hill testified before a joint session of the Veterans' Affairs Committees that timely passage of the FY 2010 Mil Con-VA budget was a top priority of The American Legion. "Since my election, I have emphasized this to every member of Congress with whom I have met," Hill said. "Running the 'best health care system in the nation' is an important responsibility and having a budget that is sufficient, predictable, and on time will help hospital administrators make efficient and cost-effective management decisions. Both long and short range strategies are more relevant and reliable when 'the money is in the bank' rather than having a 'check in the mail.' Therefore, we urge Congress to approve VA funding immediately."

There are currently eight million veterans enrolled in the VA health care delivery system, with nearly six million patients dependent on timely access to quality health care. There are also many ongoing medical and prosthetics research programs that depend on annual federal

funding. Historically, VA administrators have often found themselves delaying maintenance projects, implementing hiring freezes, and postponing equipment and supply purchases in order to maintain medical services for American veterans and their families.

"Most Americans understand the importance of meeting the needs of the nation's wounded warriors, but there is also an ongoing obligation to generations of men and women who served honorably and earned the benefits provided by a grateful nation," Hill said. "Admittedly, the Continuing Resolution provides additional funding for VA medical accounts, but its balance does not fully fund other quality-of-life benefits for service members and their families. Therefore, passage of the FY 2010 Mil Con - VA appropriations remains a top priority for The American Legion family."

With a current membership of 2.5 million wartime veterans, The American Legion was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism, and the mentoring of youth. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through more than 14,000 posts across the nation.

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