The American Legion

OFFICE OF THE
NATIONAL COMMANDER

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September 30, 2015

Honorable Harry Reid, Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-221 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Minority Leader Reid:

Last May then-National Commander Michael D. Helm called on Congress to pass a budget for the Military Construction-Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill that won't shortchange the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). On April 30 the House of Representatives had passed a funding bill which unfortunately underfunds VA's medical care, major construction and Information Technology accounts by more than $1.5 billion below the Administration's request.

We were pleased when the Senate Appropriations Committee remedied that shortfall somewhat, but because they were tasked with making an unworkable allocation workable, the Senate version of the bill still underfunds veterans by approximately $857 million. This comes at a time when the VA is faced with an unprecedented demand for services, in terms of both numbers and complexity.

We need your help to ensure that VA is fully funded so it can provide the care and services veterans have earned and need. An inadequate VA budget will have a negative effect on the timeliness and quality of care that veterans will receive. Fully funding VA must be a very high priority for Congress.

The American Legion is the largest veteran service organization in the nation and we take our responsibility to analyze and evaluate veterans' healthcare options very seriously. As VA, Congress and The American Legion move forward together we must ensure that America's veterans are provided with the healthcare and services they have earned and were guaranteed.

Respectfully,

DALE BARNETT
National Commander