

# The American Legion



For God and Country

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July 17, 2003

The Honorable C.W. "Bill" Young, Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-218 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515-6015

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As you and your colleagues consider the FY04 VA-HUD appropriations bill, The American Legion is deeply concerned with its inadequate funding level for VA medical care. Hundreds of thousands of enrolled veterans are currently being denied timely access to quality health care.

The budget resolution for FY04 recommended a \$1.8 billion increase in the President's budget request. Since then, the war with Iraq and ongoing peacekeeping operations around the world have generated more veterans, especially among National Guard and Reserve components. VA has promised these returning veterans timely access to quality health care over the next two years. After those two years, their chances to enroll would be as uncertain as it is today for many other veterans.

Contained in the appropriations bill are some of the President's legislative initiatives specifically crafted to "reduce enrollment" of over 1.3 million veterans from this nation's largest health care delivery system. Reducing the very patients paying for care, while increasing the third-party reimbursement collections offset doesn't add up. Reaching deeper into veterans' pockets is not the best solution to VA funding problems. Surely, the individual hardship and personal sacrifice associated with honorable military service is payment enough.

The American Legion applauds the Committee's commitment to providing adequate resources to meet the nation's moral, ethical, and legal obligations to America's veterans. However, where will these disenfranchised veterans go to receive timely access to quality health care? Unfortunately, many of them will be forced to go without treatment and medications.

Sincerely,

Steve Robertson, Director  
National Legislative Commission

CC: The Honorable David Obey