

# VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS



# OF THE UNITED STATES

July 24, 2003

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 2.6 million men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) and our Ladies Auxiliary, I strongly urge you to fulfill earlier promises made by the House Leadership by supporting a \$1.8 billion increase in veterans' health care funding over what the House Appropriations Committee has recommended.

It is our understanding that an amendment will be offered to provide for the additional funding to bring the appropriations bill in line with the funding level already approved by the House in the fiscal year 2004 budget resolution. We strongly urge you to support this amendment and to do everything in your power to ensure its success.

In a recent press conference, the House Republican leadership assured veterans and the nation that this would be a budget that "meets the needs of America's veterans." They used veterans as political props and touted the "increase of \$3.4 billion or 12.9 percent – nearly all of which is expected to be for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical programs" contained within the FY 2004 budget resolution.

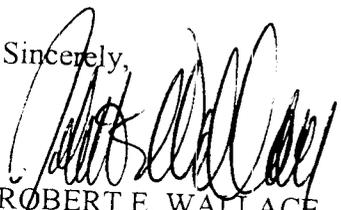
The Appropriations Committee has betrayed this promise. Their bill calls for a meager \$1.4 billion increase over last year. This is totally unacceptable—especially to the nearly 200,000 veterans who have been waiting over six months for a basic health care appointment. We emphasize that no member of Congress or the Administration must wait that long for their health care appointments.

Is this how veterans can expect to be honored by this Congress? How can we assure our brave men and women serving in Iraq and around the world in the war on terrorism that this nation will take care of their needs when we fail to meet today's obligations? Actions, not words, are needed to assist those veterans still waiting for health care and for those category 8 veterans who are being denied care completely due to a lack of adequate appropriations.

Our 2.6 million members are looking to you to solve this funding crisis. The current funding amount is a betrayal of the assurances we were given. Either the funding amount for veterans' health care must be increased by \$1.8 billion, or the VA-HUD appropriations bill must be defeated.

The VFW and America's veterans are watching and we will remember our friends. We trust that you live up to the promises and commitment our grateful nation has made to this country's veterans.

Sincerely,



ROBERT E. WALLACE

Executive Director