

DISTRICT OFFICES:

4434 AMBOY ROAD, 2ND FLOOR
STATEN ISLAND, NY 10312
(718) 356-8400
(718) 356-1928 (FAX)

8505 FOURTH AVENUE
BROOKLYN, NY 11209
(718) 630-5277
(718) 630-5388 (FAX)

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Vito Fossella
13th District, New York

CAPITOL OFFICE:

2453 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-3213
(202) 225-3371
(202) 226-1272 (FAX)

E-MAIL ADDRESS:

www.house.gov/fossella

January 15, 2008

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush:

I write to respectfully urge you to release the nearly \$3.7 billion in funding designated as emergency requirements for the Veterans Administration (VA) included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008. According to the legislation, the funding must be released no later than January 18, 2008, or else it cannot be made available to the VA this year. To date, the White House has not yet stated whether it will release this funding to the VA.

I believe the funding is necessary to reduce existing benefits claims backlogs, hire additional medical staff, expand services at VA hospitals and conduct research. As you know, demand for VA medical services continues to rise with veterans returning from the Iraq and Afghanistan joining those of the Gulf War, Vietnam, Korean and World War II eras.

However, it is my understanding that due to a shortage of funds, the VA currently has a backlog of over 600,000 pending benefits claims from men and women who honorably served in our nation's armed forces and are now in need of medical treatment. It goes without saying that every veteran must have access to the care he or she needs without unacceptable delays. Releasing the emergency contingency funds would help ensure this backlog is reduced while at the same time increasing turnaround on new claims processing for thousands of Staten Islanders and Brooklynites who have served New York and our country with honor.

This funding will also allow the VA to expand programs to treat the needs of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, including Traumatic Brain Injuries care and Post Traumatic Stress counseling. These programs are vitally important to ensure the health and well-being of America's veterans.

I am proud to note that the funding levels for 2008 represent an 18% increase (or \$6.6 billion) over 2007, yet with the current demand on VA resources more is still needed to care for our heroic veterans. Therefore, I again respectfully urge you to release the

emergency funding to expand access and care for our veterans on Staten Island and Brooklyn and across America. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vito Fossella". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent flourish at the end.

Vito J. Fossella
Member of Congress