



BLINDED VETERANS ASSOCIATION

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Blinded Veterans Commend Chairman Miller and Ranking Member Michaud for Introduction of H.R. 813 Advance Appropriations VA Legislation

WASHINGTON (October 4, 2013)—Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) Executive Director Al Avina today praised the chairmen of the House Veterans Affairs Committee and Ranking member for introducing advanced funding legislation for all parts of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The legislation would authorize Congress to approve VA Benefits, Research, and Information Technology appropriations one year in advance of the start of each fiscal year instead of for the upcoming fiscal year only. An advance appropriation would provide VA with up to a year in which to plan how to deliver the most efficient and effective programs and care for to an increasing number of veterans with increasingly complex medical conditions.

“BVA enthusiastically supports this bipartisan legislation that will change the age-old problems inherent in the current budget process that ultimately resulted in severe delays and underfunding of services to veterans,” said Avina. H.R. 813 and S 932 call for discretionary spending accounts -- those used for things like disability claims processing, VA construction, and veterans’ call centers -- to be funded a year in advance. First filed by Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, it is modeled after legislation passed in 2009 that enabled full funding of all VA healthcare programs a year in advance.

It is for that reason all VA medical centers and healthcare operations are up and running today regardless of the shutdown. The 2014 appropriations were included in the FY 2013 budget. Chairman Miller and Ranking Member Michaud sponsored the House bill -- Putting Veterans Funding First Act of 2013 -- to keep VA services from becoming a casualty of this kind of partisan politics.

“Today hopefully marks the beginning of a change in the way our Nation cares for those who have bravely defended it,” said BVA Director of Government Relations Tom Zampieri. “If passed, the Putting Veterans First Act of 2013 will significantly improve the ability of our veterans, and in our case those with vision loss, to access VA benefits, research, and have improvements in information technology accessibility independent of a budgetary process that has, sadly, seen delays frequently.”

Zampieri said that the sufficient, timely, and predictable funding mechanism inherent in the legislation would result in improved VA services with greater transparency in its delivery.

“Passage of this landmark legislation would also protect veterans from the political infighting that accompanies each round of the budget process in Washington,” he said.

BVA is one of nine Congressionally chartered Veterans Service Organizations comprising the Partnership for Veterans Health Care Budget Reform that fully supports H.R. 813 now. The Blinded Veterans Association has assisted blinded veterans and their families in adjusting to life without sight and in regaining confidence and independence since 1945. For more information, visit www.bva.org. ###