

CRS Report for Congress

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Military Construction, Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs: FY2007 Appropriations

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The annual consideration of appropriations bills (regular, continuing, and supplemental) by Congress is part of a complex set of budget processes that also encompasses the consideration of budget resolutions, revenue and debt-limit legislation, other spending measures, and reconciliation bills. In addition, the operation of programs and the spending of appropriated funds are subject to constraints established in authorizing statutes. Congressional action on the budget for a fiscal year usually begins following the submission of the President's budget at the beginning of each annual session of Congress. Congressional practices governing the consideration of appropriations and other budgetary measures are rooted in the Constitution, the standing rules of the House and Senate, and statutes, such as the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974.

This report is a guide to one of the regular appropriations bills that Congress considers each year. It is designed to supplement the information provided by the House Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs and Senate Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittees. It summarizes the status of the bill, its scope, major issues, funding levels, and related congressional activity, and is updated as events warrant. The report lists the key CRS staff relevant to the issues covered and related CRS products.

NOTE: A Web version of this document with active links is available to congressional staff at [http://beta.crs.gov/cli/cli.aspx?PRDS_CLI_ITEM_ID=2349].

Military Construction, Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs: FY2007 Appropriations

Summary

The structure of the Committees on Appropriations underwent significant change with the beginning of the 109th Congress. As a result, jurisdictions over the appropriations covered in this report, including military construction, military housing allowances, military installation maintenance and operation, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and other veteran-related agencies, rest in the House Committee on Appropriations with the new Subcommittee on Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs. In the Senate Committee on Appropriations, jurisdiction for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and other veteran-related agencies lies with the Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, while military housing allowances and military installation maintenance and operation are the responsibility of the Subcommittee on Defense. Authorization jurisdictions lie with the two Committees on the Armed Services and Committees on Veterans Affairs.

Key issues in congressional action to date include:

- **Military Construction:** The changing structure of the Army, the redeployment of troops from overseas garrisons to domestic bases, and implementation of the current BRAC round have drawn committee attention during the appropriation process. To fund the activities included in the military construction and family housing portion of this bill, the President requested \$16.7 billion, the House appropriated \$15.9 million, and the Senate Committee on Appropriations recommended \$16.3 billion.
- **Veteran Benefits:** Entitlement spending is rising as the number of beneficiaries is increasing, education benefits are being augmented, and annual cost of living adjustments are being granted. Benefits such as disability compensation, pensions, and education are mandatory payments and constitute more than half (\$37.2 and \$41.4 billion, respectively) of the VA appropriation of approximately \$71 billion for FY2006 and almost \$78 billion proposed for FY2007.
- **Veteran Medical Care:** The Administration has again requested legislative changes to increase certain co-payments and other cost sharing fees for veterans in lower priority categories. The House passed version of H.R. 5385 provides \$32.7 billion for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) for FY2007, about the same amount as the President's request. On July 20, 2006, the Senate Committee on Appropriations reported out of committee its version of H.R. 5385. H.R. 5385, as amended, provides \$32.7 billion for VHA for FY2007, almost equivalent to the House-passed amount and the President's request. The House-passed bill and the Senate Appropriations Committee-reported bill do not include any provisions that would give VA the authority to implement fee increases.

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Military Construction, Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs: FY2007 Appropriations

Most Recent Developments

Military Construction, Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs Appropriations (H.R. 5385). The House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies reported its draft of the appropriations bill on May 15, 2006 (H.R. 5385, H.Rept. 109-464), recommending a total Fiscal Year appropriation of \$136.9 billion. The Rules Committee reported H.Res. 821, providing for one hour of general debate and leaving the bill open to general amendments, on May 18. The resolution passed on May 19, when the House began debate. Several Members offered amendments, though none was adopted, and raised points of order before the bill passed by the Yeas and Nays 395-0 (Roll No. 176).

The Senate received the bill and referred it to the Committee on Appropriations. The Committee reported H.R. 5385 with an amendment in the nature of a substitute favorably on July 20 (S.Rept. 109-286).¹ It was then placed on the Legislative Calendar under General Orders (Calendar No. 525).

Defense Authorization (H.R. 5122, S. 2766). Representative Duncan Hunter introduced (by request) the draft National Defense Authorization Act to the House on April 6, 2006. After referral to the Committee on Armed Services, the bill was reported (amended) to the House on May 5 (H.Rept. 109-452). The chamber considered the bill on May 10-11, 2006, and after amending it, considered recommitting it with instructions to Armed Services. Recommittal failed on a recorded vote 202-220 (Roll no. 144). The House then passed the measure 396-31 (Roll no. 145).

Senator John Warner reported the Senate Committee on Armed Services bill (S. 2766) and its accompanying report (S.Rept. 109-254) to the Senate on May 9, 2006. Additional views were filed simultaneously. The measure was placed on the Senate Legislative Calendar under General Orders (Calendar No. 426). The measure was laid before the Senate on June 12, debated, amended, and passed on June 22 by a Yea-Nay vote of 96-0 (Record Vote No. 186).

¹ The Committee also recommended a change of the bill's title from "Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2007" to "Military Construction and Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriation Bill, 2007," reflecting the differences between the chambers in appropriations subcommittee names and jurisdictions.

H.R. 5122 was received on May 15 and placed on the Legislative Calendar under General Orders (Calendar No. 431). On June 22, the Senate struck all after the Enacting Clause and substituted the language of S. 2766 amended, passing the amended measure by Unanimous Consent and requesting a conference. The House disagreed to the Senate amendment on September 7 and agreed to a conference. The conference was held on September 12, 2006.

Defense Appropriation (H.R. 5631). Several items in the House version of H.R. 5385 lie within the jurisdiction of the Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense. These include basic allowance for housing (military personnel account), facilities, sustainment, restoration, and modernization (operations and maintenance account), and defense-related agencies. Appropriations for these activities are therefore included in the Senate's defense appropriation bill. Nevertheless, they are included in the tables appended to this report.

H.R. 5631 was introduced in the House on June 16, 2006, and passed on June 20 by a vote of 407-19 (H.Rept. 109-504, Roll no. 305). Referred to the Senate Committee on Appropriations, it was reported out on July 25 with an amendment in the form of a substitute (S.Rept. 109-292) and was placed on the Legislative Calendar under General Orders (Calendar No. 532). The Senate agreed to the committee substitute by Unanimous Consent on August 1. The Senate debated and amended the bill between August 1 and 3 and continued on September 5 through 7, passing it with amendment on a Yea-Nay vote of 98-0 (Record Vote No. 239) and requesting a conference.

Status of Legislation

Table 1a. Status of FY2007 Military Construction, Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs Appropriations (H.R. 5385)

Committee Markup		House Report	House Passage	Senate Report	Senate Passage	Conf. Report	Conference Report Approval		Public Law
House	Senate						House	Senate	
5/4/06	—	H.Rept. 109-464	5/19/06	S.Rept. 109-286	6/22/06	—	—	—	—

Table 1b. Status of FY2007 Defense Authorization (H.R. 5122, S. 2766)

Committee Markup		House Report	House Passage	Senate Report	Senate Passage	Conf. Report	Conference Report Approval		Public Law
House	Senate						House	Senate	
5/18/05	5/4/06	H.Rept. 109-452	5/11/06	S.Rept. 109-254	9/7/06	—	—	—	—

Summary and Key Issues

Realignment of Appropriations Subcommittee Jurisdictions

House. During the first session of the 109th Congress, the Committee on Appropriations reorganized its subcommittee structure and realigned subcommittee jurisdictions. In the resulting redistribution of subcommittee responsibilities, the Subcommittees on Veterans Affairs, Housing and Urban Development (VA-HUD) and Military Construction were eliminated and some of their responsibilities were assigned to a new Subcommittee on Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies. The new subcommittee was given jurisdiction for appropriations to the following accounts:

- *Department of Defense (DOD):* Military Construction, Army, Navy (including Marine Corps), Air Force, Defense-wide, and Guard and Reserve Forces, Facilities Sustainment, Restoration and Modernization, Army, Navy (including Marine Corps), Air Force, and Guard and Reserve Forces, Chemical Demilitarization Construction, Defense-wide Military Family Housing Construction and Operation and Maintenance, Army, Navy (including Marine Corps), Air Force, and Defense-wide Family Housing Improvement Fund, Military Unaccompanied Housing Improvement Fund, Homeowners Assistance Fund, Basic Allowance for Housing, Army, Navy (including Marine Corps), Air Force, and Guard and Reserve Forces, Environmental Restoration Accounts, Base Realignment and Closure Account, NATO Security Investment Program, Defense Health Program Account.
- *Department of Veterans Affairs*
- *Related Agencies:* American Battle Monuments Commission, Armed Forces Retirement Home, Cemeterial Expenses, Army (DOD), Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

Senate. At the same time, the Senate Committee on Appropriations dissolved its Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs, Housing and Urban Development was dissolved and its responsibilities for Veterans Affairs, the American Battle Monuments Commission, Cemeterial Expenses, Army (Arlington National Cemetery), the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, and the Selective Service Commission were transferred to the former Subcommittee on Military Construction, which retained its responsibility for military construction appropriations. The reconstituted organization was renamed the Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs.

Subsequent Agreement. After negotiating the differing jurisdictions between the two subcommittees, House and Senate appropriators agreed that legislation considered would include appropriations to all of the accounts within the jurisdiction of the former Military Construction subcommittees and those related to the Department of Veterans Affairs and the related agencies. When considering appropriations for odd-numbered fiscal years (e.g., 2007, 2009, etc.), the legislation

add the appropriations accounts specific to the jurisdiction of the House subcommittee.²

Title I: Department of Defense

Military Construction

Military Base Realignments and Closures.³ Actions to implement recommendations to realign or close a number of defense installations throughout the United States began during FY2006. Originally drafted by the Department of Defense and modified by the independent nine-member BRAC Commission (officially known as the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission of 2005), the list of actions will close 25 major military bases, realign another 24, and carry out some 765 other actions before the end of September 2011, according to the Department of Defense.

The 2005 round marked the fifth time that a commission took part in determining which military installations are to be closed or significantly reduced in scope. The first, the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, was chartered by, and reported its recommendations to, the Secretary of Defense. All subsequent commissions were created by Congress in the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990, as amended. Three subsequent rounds (in 1991, 1993, and 1995) were authorized by Congress in the original legislation. The 2005 round was authorized in an amendment to the original law incorporated into the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2002.

Several BRAC-related issues arose during the formulation and consideration of the list of recommendations, as indicated below.

Requested Funding for BRAC Accounts. The appropriation request for FY2007 is split between two BRAC Accounts, one labeled the 1990 account and the other the 2005 account.

The BRAC 1990 account is the consolidation of what had been four separate accounts, one for each of the previous BRAC rounds. Because all of the recommended BRAC actions from those rounds were completed in 2001, the BRAC 1990 account is devoted to funding the continuing environmental remediation required on the federal property deemed excess during those rounds but not yet

² See Tim Starks, "Bill Targets Veterans' Funding Shortfall," *CQ Weekly* (November 18, 2005), p. 3136.

³ CRS products that discuss the BRAC process in greater detail include CRS Report RL32216, *Military Base Closures, Implementing the 2005 Round* by David E. Lockwood, CRS Report RS22291, *Military Base Closures: Highlights of the 2005 BRAC Commission Report and Proposed Legislation* by Daniel H. Else and David E. Lockwood, and CRS Report RL33092, *Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC): Property Transfer and Disposal* by Aaron M. Flynn. Current BRAC-related products can most easily be found through the CRS web page under *Current Legislative Issues: Defense* and then *Military Base Closures*.

conveyed to non-DOD ownership. There was \$246 million appropriated to the 1990 account for FY2005, and \$252.2 million was enacted for FY2006. For FY2007, the President requested \$191.2 million, while the House Committee on Appropriations recommended \$216.2 million. The Senate Committee on Appropriations endorsed the President's request for \$191.2 million.

The BRAC 2005 account funds the many realignment and closure actions, to include the movement of units and equipment, the construction of new infrastructure at receiving installations, and the realignment and closure of property deemed excess in the current BRAC round. In addition, the Department of Defense has incorporated into the BRAC 2005 account funding for construction to accommodate units being redeployed to the United States and its territories from garrisons located overseas — primarily in Germany and the Republic of Korea.

BRAC appropriations in previous rounds rose rapidly during the first two or three years in order to initiate needed military construction. Appropriations then stabilized and fell off as units and functions were moved to new locations and surplus properties were relinquished. Continuing appropriations, as mentioned above, have been dedicated primarily to environmental remediation of remaining problematic real property for which title remains with DOD.

Congress appropriated \$1.59 billion to the BRAC 2005 account for FY2006. The President requested \$5.6 billion for FY2007. If DOD follows its historic pattern, this request is likely to be repeated for FY2008 before falling off to perhaps half that for FY2009. The House Committee on Appropriations recommended a \$5.3 billion appropriation for FY2007, while the Senate Committee on Appropriations recommended \$5.2 billion.

Impact of Military Redeployments on Local Schools. Unit and function movements associated with BRAC and the associated Integrated Global Presence and Basing Strategy (IGPBS)⁴ will significantly increase the populations in and around some military installations. For example, the 2005 BRAC Commission estimated that Aberdeen Proving Ground and Ft. Meade in Maryland are expected to gain more than 1,800 and 10,000 military, civilian, and contractor positions, respectively. Ft. Belvoir, Virginia, is calculated to gain more than 21,000 direct and indirect positions. Local jurisdictions in the vicinity of gaining installations have expressed concern that they may have difficulty creating the infrastructure needed to support such large-scale changes in population.

One such issue concerns the provision of primary and secondary education for the children of families being moved into the various areas. Some school boards have expressed concern that the process for providing federal impact aid, which subsidizes the maintenance and operation of local education institutions adversely affected by federal government activity such as maintaining a military installation, may not be received in time to construct and staff new school facilities before these new students

⁴ BRAC deals with the closure and realignment of defense installations within the United States and its territories, while the IGPBS addresses all other U.S. military installations worldwide.

arrive. A detailed discussion of impact aid in the BRAC context can be found in CRS Report RL33137, *Military Base Closures and the Impact Aid Program for Education*, by Rebecca R. Skinner.

Rescissions. The House-passed version of the bill would rescind \$170.6 million in previous-year military construction appropriations due to favorable contract bids and the cancellation or delay of some construction projects. The Senate Committee on Appropriations recommendation rescinds \$366.7 million.

Recapitalization. In 2001, the Department of Defense estimated its existing recapitalization rate at 192 years.⁵ This meant that, on average, the Department was funding military construction at a rate that would replace its real property inventory every 192 years. At that time, the Department established a recapitalization goal of 67 years. In testimony to Congress on February 15, 2006, the Hon. Philip Gone, the Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Installations and Environment, stated that the current budget request would support a recapitalization cycle of 72 years, indicating an acceleration of construction that is approaching, but has not yet reached, its goal.

NATO Security Investment Program (NSIP). The NSIP constitutes the United States contribution to the common North American Treaty Organization (NATO) infrastructure fund. Traditionally, these common alliance funds have constructed facilities such as petroleum pipelines, roads, communications networks, and the like that are employed in the defense of the NATO alliance.

Since the end of the Cold War, the military focus of the North Atlantic Alliance has shifted from the defense member states in Western Europe to the potential for “out-of-area” operations in areas such as the Balkans and Central Asia. In its report to the House (H.Rept. 109-464), the Committee on Appropriations recommended \$201.0 million for the NSIP, noting that the “Committee expects projects will be prioritized with the highest priority given to NATO on-going missions such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan.”⁶

The President requested \$221.0 million for the NSIP for FY2007, while the House approved \$201.0 million. The Senate Committee on Appropriations has recommended an appropriation of \$206.0 million.

Additional Appropriations, House. In Title IV of its bill, the House Committee on Appropriations recommended an additional \$507 million for military construction accounts for “projects supporting contingency operations related to the global war on terrorism” (see **Table 2**). These funds were intended for “projects

⁵ Recapitalization is the process of replacing old structures as they reach the end of their expected service life (assuming that facility sustainment, or routine maintenance, is fully funded). If maintenance is inadequate, the service life of any structure is correspondingly shortened. The Department of Defense often quotes a shorthand Department-wide “recapitalization rate” that is the funded service life (e.g., 192 years) and an “expected service life” that is a replacement goal (e.g., 67 years).

⁶ House, *Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2007*, 109th Cong., 2nd Sess., 2006, H.Rept. 109-464, p. 27.

related to urgent transformation efforts, as well as projects directly supporting operations in the theater and those that will enhance training in urban operations and close quarters combat.”⁷

Table 2. Additional Appropriations, House, FY2007

Military Construction Account	New Budget Authority (\$ millions)
Army	379,300
Navy and Marine Corps	26,037
Air Force	49,923
Defense-Wide	44,500
Army National Guard	5,530
Army Reserve	1,713
<i>Total</i>	507,003

Source: H.Rept. 109-464, p. 69.

Each of these appropriations was addressed in a separate paragraph under Title IV, and each was designated an emergency appropriation by language stating that “the amount under this heading is designated as making appropriations for contingency operations related to the global war on terrorism pursuant to section 402 of H.Con.Res. 376 (109th Congress), the concurrent resolution on the budget for FY2007.” This language would have constituted legislation within a general appropriations bill by changing the existing concurrent resolution. It therefore violated Clause 2(b) of Rule XXI of the House Rules.⁸ Representative Jeb Hensarling, of Texas, raised a point of order against each of these paragraphs and was sustained by the Chair.

Additional Appropriations, Senate. The Senate Committee on Appropriations included in its defense appropriation recommendation \$50 billion in additional appropriations to fund the global war on terrorism for the first several months of Fiscal Year 2007. Of this, \$897 million was recommended as an addition to the recommended basic allowance for housing for Army active and reserve component members, as noted in **Table 3**.

⁷ House, *Military Quality of Life*, p. 69.

⁸ The clause states, “A provision changing existing law may not be reported in a general appropriation bill, including a provision making the availability of funds contingent on the receipt or possession of information not required by existing law for the period of the appropriation, except germane provisions that retrench expenditures by the reduction of amounts of money covered by the bill (which may include those recommended to the Committee on Appropriations by direction of a legislative committee having jurisdiction over the subject matter) and except rescissions of appropriations contained in appropriation Acts.”

Table 3. Additional Appropriations, Senate, FY2007

(\$ in thousands)

Basic Allowance for Housing	Amount
Army	888,704
Army Reserve	3,164
Army National Guard	5,141
<i>Total</i>	897,009

Source: S.Rept. 109-292, p. 236.

Title II: Department of Veterans Affairs

Table 4. Department of Veterans Affairs Appropriations, FY2000-FY2006

(budget authority in billions)

	FY2000	FY2001	FY2002	FY2003	FY2004	FY2005	FY2006
VA	\$46.04	\$47.95	\$52.38	\$58.10	\$61.84	\$65.84	\$71.46

Source: Amounts shown are from reports of the Appropriations Committees accompanying the appropriations bills for the following years.

Agency Mission

Federal policy toward veterans recognizes the importance of their service to the nation and the effect that service may have on their subsequent civilian lives. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) administers, directly or in conjunction with other federal agencies, programs that provide benefits and other services to veterans and their dependents and beneficiaries. The three primary organizations in VA that work together to accomplish this mission are the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), and the National Cemetery Administration (NCA). The benefits provided include compensation for disabilities sustained or worsened as a result of active duty military service; pensions for totally disabled, poor war veterans; cash payments for certain categories of dependents and/or survivors; education, training, rehabilitation, and job placement services to assist veterans upon their return to civilian life; loan guarantees to help them obtain homes; free medical care for conditions sustained during military service as well as medical care for other conditions, much of which is provided free to low income veterans; life insurance to enhance financial security for their dependents; and burial assistance, flags, grave-sites, and headstones when they die.

**Table 5. Appropriations: Department of Veterans Affairs,
FY2006-FY2007**

(budget authority in billions)

Program	FY2006 enacted	FY2007 request	FY2007 House	FY2007 Senate Approp Comm.	FY2007 Conf
Total: (VA)	\$71.458	\$77.909	\$77.909	\$77.909	
Compens., pension, burial	\$33.898	\$38.007	\$38.007	\$38.007	
Readjustment benefits	3.309	3.262	3.262	3.262	
Insurance/indemnities	0.046	0.050	0.050	0.050	
Housing prog. (net, indef.)	-0.047 ^a	0.097	0.097	0.097	
<i>Subtotal: Mandatory</i>	<i>\$37.206</i>	<i>\$41.416</i>	<i>\$41.416</i>	<i>\$41.416</i>	
Medical services	21.322	25.512	25.412	28.689	
Emerg. funding	1.225	—	—	—	
Emerg. funding (P.L. 109-148)	0.225	—	—	—	
Medical administration	2.858	3.177	3.277	—	
Medical facilities	3.298	3.569	3.594	3.569	
Med. & prosthetic research	0.412	0.399	0.412	0.412	
Med. care collection fund ^b					
(offsetting receipts)	-2.170	-2.329	-2.329	-2.329	
(approps. indefinite)	2.170	2.329	2.329	2.329	
<i>Subtotal: Med. programs & admin. (appropriations)</i>	<i>29.341</i>	<i>32.657</i>	<i>32.695</i>	<i>32.670</i>	
<i>Total available to VHA</i>	<i>31.511</i>	<i>34.986</i>	<i>35.024</i>	<i>34.999</i>	
Gen. admin. exp. (total)	1.411	1.481	1.481	1.468	
Emerg. funding (P.L. 109-148)	0.025	—	—	—	
Information technology	1.214	1.257	1.302	1.256	
National Cemetery Admin.	0.156	0.161	0.161	0.161	
Emerg. funding (P.L. 109-148)	^c	—	—	—	
Inspector General	0.070	0.069	0.069	0.071	
Construction	0.806	0.597	0.494	0.597	
Emerg. funding (P.L. 109-148 & 234)	0.955	—	—	—	
Grants; state facilities	0.085	0.085	0.105	0.085	
State veteran cemeteries	0.032	0.032	0.032	0.032	
Housing & other loan admin.	0.155	0.154	0.154	0.154	

Program	FY2006 enacted	FY2007 request	FY2007 House	FY2007 Senate Approp Comm.	FY2007 Conf
Disaster comp. — emerg. (P.L. 106-148)	0.003	—	—	—	
<i>Subtotal: Discretionary</i>	<i>\$34.252</i>	<i>\$36.493</i>	<i>\$36.493</i>	<i>\$36.493</i>	

Source: Table prepared by the Congressional Research Service based on H.Rept. 109-464 and S.Rept. 109-286.

- a. This negative budget authority is the result of combining the loan subsidy payments estimated to be needed during FY2006 with the offsetting receipts expected to be collected.
- b. Medical Care Collections Fund (MCCF) receipts are restored to the VHA as an indefinite budget authority equal to the revenue collected.
- c. \$200,000.

Key Budget Issues

The budget submitted by the Administration in February 2006 calls for funding VA at a level of \$77.9 billion dollars for FY2007 (see **Table 5**). This would be an increase of \$6.5 billion, or 9.0%, over the FY2006 total including the supplemental appropriations. The most recent supplemental (P.L. 109-234) added FY2006 funds for construction of a replacement for the VA Medical Center in New Orleans.⁹

The Senate passed its version of the budget resolution for FY2007 (S.Con.Res. 83) on March 16, 2006, and the House passed H.Con.Res 376 on May 18, 2006. The overall budget function 700 for veterans benefits and services addressed in the budget resolution is broader than just the VA and includes money that will be appropriated in other bills for other departments as well. The House-passed version recommends \$74.6 billion in new budget authority for veterans benefits and services. The Senate version was amended on the floor to increase the total to \$74.8 billion for the veterans budget function.

The House Appropriations Committee approved its appropriations bill (H.R. 5385) including about the same amount as requested for VA on May 10, 2006. The bill, as passed by the House on May 19, 2006, would provide a total of \$77.9 billion for the VA budget with \$36.5 billion of the bill's \$94.7 billion 302(b) allocation going for VA discretionary spending. The Senate Appropriations Committee approved the bill with the same totals on July 20, 2006.

VA Cash Benefits. Eligibility requirements and benefit levels for VA cash benefits are specified in law. Since spending for these programs is mandatory as

⁹ For further information on this bill, see CRS Report RL33298, *FY2006 Supplemental Appropriations: Iraq and Other International Activities; Additional Katrina Hurricane Relief*, coordinated by Paul M. Irwin and Larry Nowels.

noted above, the amounts requested in the budget are based on projected caseloads. While the total number of veterans is declining, the number receiving benefits is increasing. VA entitlement spending (outlays), mostly service-connected compensation, pensions, and readjustment (primarily education) payments, rose from \$31.2 billion in FY2004 to \$39.7 billion in FY2005 and is projected at \$39.2 billion in FY2007. In addition to the increased number of beneficiaries, much of the projected increases in recent years result from cost-of-living adjustments for compensation benefits and from liberalizations to the Montgomery GI Bill, the primary education program.

Out of concern for the disparity in the amounts of disability compensation awarded to veterans living in different regions of the country, the Senate passed an amendment on September 22, 2005, to instruct the VA to conduct a veterans disability compensation information campaign in states with an average annual disability compensation payment of less than \$7,300. The conference report included this provision in §228.¹⁰ In response to this provision, VA is conducting outreach efforts in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, New Jersey, and Connecticut. The reports of both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees on H.R. 5385 express concern about the time veterans must wait to have their claims processed.

Medical Care

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is a direct service provider of primary care, specialized care, and related medical and social support services to veterans through an integrated health care system. In FY2005, VHA operated 156 hospitals, 135 nursing homes, 43 residential rehabilitation treatment centers, and 711 community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs).¹¹ VHA also pays for care provided to veterans by independent providers and practitioners on a fee basis under certain circumstances. Inpatient and outpatient care is provided in the private sector to eligible dependents of veterans under the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA). In addition, VHA provides grants for construction of state-owned nursing homes and domiciliary facilities, and collaborates with the Department of Defense (DOD) in sharing health care resources and services.

The President's FY2007 budget proposal to Congress requested \$32.7 billion for VHA, a 11.3% increase over the FY2006 enacted amount of \$29.3 billion, and a 10% increase over the FY2005 enacted amount of \$29.7 billion. As in previous budget proposals, the President's FY2007 budget request also includes a set of

¹⁰ House, *Making Appropriations for Military Quality of Life Functions of the Department of Defense, Military Construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies for the Fiscal Year ending September 30, 2006, and for Other Purposes*, 109th Cong., 2nd Sess., 2006, H.Rept. 109-305, p. 22.

¹¹ Data on the number of hospitals and nursing homes includes facilities damaged by Hurricane Katrina. Data on the number of CBOCs differ from source to source. Some count clinics located at VA hospitals while others count only freestanding CBOCs. The number represented in this report excludes clinics located in VA hospitals. The data are current as of Dec. 1, 2005.

legislative proposals. The Administration is requesting authorization from Congress to assess an annual enrollment fee of \$250 for all Priority 7 and 8 veterans, increase the veterans' share of pharmaceutical co-payments from \$8 to \$15 (for each 30-day prescription) for all enrolled veterans in Priority Groups 7 and 8, and bill veterans receiving treatment for nonservice-connected conditions for the entire co-payment amount.

The House passed its version of the Military Construction, Military Quality of Life, and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill (MIL-CON-QUAL-appropriations bill) for FY2007 (H.R. 5385, H.Rept. 109-464) on May 19, 2006. H.R. 5385 provides \$32.7 billion for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) for FY2007, about the same amount as the President's request. This includes \$25.4 billion for medical services, a \$2.6 billion (11.6%) increase over the FY2006 enacted amount and \$100 million less than the President's requested amount of \$25.5 billion. The MIL-CON-QUAL-appropriations bill also includes \$3.3 billion for medical administration, a \$100 million increase over the President's request; \$3.6 billion for medical facilities; and \$412 million for medical and prosthetic research, a \$13.0 million increase over the Administration's request. The House-passed bill **does not** include any provisions that would give VA the authority to implement fee increases as requested by the Administration's budget proposal for VHA for FY2007.

On July 20, 2006, the Senate Committee on Appropriations reported out of committee its version of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations bill (MIL-CON-VA-appropriations bill) for FY2007 (H.R. 5385, H.Rept. 109-286). H.R. 5385, as amended, provides \$32.7 billion for VHA for FY2007, about the same as the House-passed amount and the President's request. This amount includes \$28.7 billion for medical services, a 26.0% increase over the FY2006 enacted amount, and a 13.0% increase over the House-passed amount. Although it appears that the Committee-recommended amount is significantly higher than the President's request (\$25.5 billion) and the House-passed amount (\$25.4 billion), it should be noted that the Committee combined the medical administration account into the medical services account. The MIL-CON-VA-appropriations bill also includes \$3.6 billion for medical facilities, and \$412 million for medical and prosthetic research. The Senate Appropriations Committee reported bill **does not** include any provisions that would give VA the authority to implement fee increases as requested by the Administration's budget proposal for VHA for FY2007.

For a more detailed discussion of the VA medical care budget, see CRS Report RL33409, *Veterans' Medical Care: FY2007 Appropriations*, by Sidath Viranga Panangala.

Title III: Related Agencies

Independent Commissions

American Battle Monuments Commission. The American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) is responsible for the maintenance and construction of U.S. monuments and memorials commemorating the achievements in battle of U.S. armed forces since the nation's entry into World War I; the erection of monuments and markers by U.S. citizens and organizations in foreign countries; and the design, construction, and maintenance of permanent military cemetery memorials in foreign countries. The Commission maintains 24 military memorial cemeteries and 25 monuments, memorials, and markers in 15 countries, including three memorials on U.S. soil.

The ABMC was responsible for the planning and construction of the World War II Memorial on the Mall in Washington, DC. Though the National Park Service assumed responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the Memorial at its dedication, the ABMC retains a fiduciary responsibility for the remaining public contributions given for its construction. The ABMC has undertaken the construction of an Interpretive Center at the Normandy American Cemetery, Normandy, France, to commemorate the World War II Allied invasion of France on June 6, 1944, and the subsequent land battles in Europe. The Commission is scheduled to open the facility on June 6, 2007.

U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. The U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims was established by the Veterans' Judicial Review Act of 1988. The Court is an independent judicial tribunal with exclusive jurisdiction to review decisions of the Board of Veterans' Appeals. It has the authority to decide all relevant questions of law; interpret constitutional, statutory, and regulatory provisions; and determine the meaning or applicability of the terms of an action by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). It is authorized to compel action by the VA. It is authorized to hold unconstitutional or otherwise unlawful and set aside decisions, findings, conclusions, rules and regulations issued or adopted by the Department of Veterans Affairs or the Board of Veterans' Appeals.

The Court currently occupies leased facilities near Judiciary Square in the District of Columbia and is searching for a permanent location. The Court's major operational initiative is its transition to an electronic case filing system, which is also funded through this appropriation.

Cemeterial Expenses, Army. The Secretary of the Army is responsible for the administration, operation and maintenance of Arlington National Cemetery and the Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery. In addition to its principal function as a national cemetery, Arlington is the site of approximately 3,100 non-funeral ceremonies each year and has approximately 4,000,000 visitors annually.

Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH). The Armed Forces Retirement Home account provides funds to operate and maintain the Armed Forces Retirement Home in Washington, DC (also known as the United States Soldiers' and Airmen's

Home), and the Armed Forces Retirement Home in Gulfport, Mississippi (originally located in Philadelphia, PA, and known as the United States Naval Home). These two facilities provide long-term housing and medical care for approximately 1,600 needy veterans. The appropriation is not drawn from the general treasury, but rather comes from a special trust fund that is maintained through gifts, bequests, and a \$0.50 per month assessment on the pay of active duty enlisted military personnel and warrant officers.

The Gulfport campus, encompassing a 19-story living accommodation and medical facility tower, was severely damaged by Hurricane Katrina at the end of August, 2005, and is not currently in use. Four hundred fourteen of the 583 residents then occupying the facility were transferred to the Washington, DC, location immediately after the storm.

Congress required the AFRH to consider alternative paths to future. The Home forwarded its special report with Congress on February 28, 2006, proposing five options for future planning:

Option 1: Renewal of the Gulfport facility. This plan would restore the existing tower, though with modifications to enhance its use by the disabled and better protect it against future storms.

Option 2: Replacement of the Gulfport campus. This requires the damaged existing tower to be torn down and replaced with a new Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant facility also designed to be more resistant to storm damage.

Option 3: Surrender the Gulfport site to use by another federal agency: The preferred agency would be the Department of Defense, with its future use envisioned as a military recreation site (the land lies within a few yards of the Gulf of Mexico). AFRH would retain title and maintain the site.

Option 4: Reposition the AFRH: In this option, the Home would close and dispose of the Gulfport site and focus its operations on its Washington location. The AFRH would maintain the site until disposal.

Option 5: Immediately sell the Gulfport site.

Options 3 through 5 would establish funding that could eliminate the \$0.50 per month military pay contribution. The Home would also consider establishing a new location or locations elsewhere in the country. One recommendation under consideration would reconstitute the Home as an independent nonprofit corporation, requiring the repeal the 1991 act establishing it under Department of Defense supervision and enabling the Home's management to engage in outside fundraising activities.

Appendix A. Consolidated Funding Tables

Table 6a. DOD Military Construction
(budget authority in \$000)

Account	FY2006 Enacted	FY2007 Request	House	Senate	Conf.
<i>Military Construction, Army</i>	1,757,507	2,059,762	1,756,298	2,137,822	
Emergency Appropriations	—	—	—	34,800	
Rescissions	(19,746)	—	(43,348)	(43,348)	
Rescissions (Emerg. Approps.)	—	—	—	(125,800)	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109- 234)	187,100	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	1,924,861	2,059,762	1,712,950	2,003,474	
<i>Military Construction, Navy and Marine Corps</i>	1,145,570	1,162,038	1,193,834	—	
Rescissions	(50,037)	—	(38,000)	—	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109- 148)	291,219	—	—	—	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109- 234)	44,770	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	1,431,522	1,162,038	1,155,834	1,200,065	
<i>Military Construction, Air Force</i>	1,275,645	1,156,148	1,187,550	—	
Rescissions	(29,100)	—	(2,694)	—	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109- 148)	52,612	—	—	—	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109- 234)	125,000	—	—	—	
Rescissions (Emerg. Approps.)	—	—	—	(10,800)	
<i>Total</i>	1,424,157	1,156,148	1,184,856	1,181,575	
<i>Military Construction, Defense- wide</i>	998,766	1,208,198	1,107,606	1,061,395	
Emergency Appropriations	—	—	—	100,886	
Rescissions	(20,000)	—	(110,229)	(124,065)	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109- 148)	45,000	—	—	—	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109- 234)	20,600	—	—	—	

Account	FY2006 Enacted	FY2007 Request	House	Senate	Conf.
<i>Total</i>	1,044,366	1,208,198	997,377	1,038,216	
<i>Total, Active components</i>	5,824,906	5,586,146	5,051,017	5,423,330	
<i>Military Construction, Army National Guard</i>	517,919	473,197	512,873	539,804	
Rescissions	—	—	—	(2,129)	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-148)	374,300	—	—	—	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-234)	210,071	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	1,102,290	473,197	512,873	537,675	
<i>Military Construction, Air National Guard</i>	312,956	125,788	207,088	252,834	
Rescissions	(13,700)	—	—	—	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-148)	35,000	—	—	—	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-234)	5,800	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	340,056	125,788	207,088	252,834	
<i>Military Construction, Army Reserve</i>	151,043	166,487	167,774	191,450	
<i>Total</i>	151,043	166,487	167,774	—	
<i>Military Construction, Naval Reserve</i>	46,395	48,408	55,158	48,408	
Rescissions	(66,090)	—	—	—	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-148)	120,132	—	—	—	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-234)	24,270	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	124,707	48,408	55,158	48,408	
<i>Military Construction, Air Force Reserve</i>	104,824	44,936	56,836	44,936	
Rescissions	(13,815)	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	91,009	44,936	56,836	44,936	
<i>Total, Reserve components</i>	1,809,105	858,860	999,729	1,075,303	
Total, Military Construction	7,634,011	6,444,962	6,050,746	6,498,633	
NATO Security Investment Program	204,789	220,985	200,985	205,985	
Rescissions	(30,000)	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	174,789	220,985	200,985	205,985	

Account	FY2006 Enacted	FY2007 Request	House	Senate	Conf.
Family Housing Construction, Army	544,140	594,991	578,791	578,781	
Rescissions	(16,000)	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	528,140	594,991	578,791	578,781	
Family Housing Ops and Debt, Army	795,953	676,829	674,657	675,617	
Family Housing Construction, Navy and Marine Corps	216,753	305,071	308,956	305,071	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109- 148)	86,165	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	302,918	305,071	308,956	305,071	
Family Housing Ops and Debt, Navy and Marine Corps	582,773	509,126	509,126	498,525	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109- 148)	48,889	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	631,662	509,126	509,126	498,525	
Family Housing Construction, Air Force	1,090,868	1,183,138	1,169,138	1,182,138	
Rescissions	(43,900)	—	(66,200)	(66,200)	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109- 148)	278,000	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	1,368,868	1,183,138	1,102,938	1,115,938	
Family Housing Ops and Debt, Air Force	759,270	755,071	755,071	755,071	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109- 148)	47,019	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	806,289	755,071	755,071	755,071	
Family Housing Construction, Defense-wide	0	8,808	8,808	8,808	
Family Housing Ops and Debt, Defense-wide	45,927	48,506	48,506	48,506	
DOD Family Housing Improvement Fund	45,927	57,314	57,314	57,314	
Total, Family Housing	4,482,232	4,092,848	3,998,161	3,997,625	
Chemical Demilitarization Construction, Defense-wide	0	130,993	90,993	140,993	
Base Realignment and Closure					
BRAC, 1990	252,279	191,220	216,220	191,220	
BRAC, 2005	1,489,421	5,626,223	5,309,876	5,237,100	
<i>Total</i>	1,741,700	5,817,443	5,546,096	5,428,320	
Grand Total, MilCon & FH	14,032,732	16,707,231	15,866,981	16,271,556	

Table 6b. DOD Basic Allowance for Housing
(budget authority in \$000)

	FY2006 Enacted	FY2007 Request	House	Senate	Conf.
Army	3,880,723	3,715,905	3,687,905	3,715,905	
Navy	3,511,570	4,185,061	4,135,061	4,185,061	
Marine Corps	1,166,686	1,351,921	1,350,921	1,351,921	
Air Force	3,162,073	2,979,327	2,934,327	—	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-148)	6,526	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	3,168,599	2,979,327	2,934,362	2,979,327	
Army National Guard	444,819	469,109	469,109	469,109	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-148)	32,294	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	477,113	469,109	469,109	469,109	
Air National Guard	238,396	277,533	277,533	277,533	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-148)	10,289	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	248,685	277,533	277,533	277,533	
Army Reserve	306,642	347,607	347,607	347,607	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-148)	361	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	307,003	347,607	347,607	347,607	
Naval Reserve	189,141	208,838	208,838	208,838	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-148)	1,053	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	190,194	208,838	208,838	208,838	
Marine Corps Reserve	40,134	43,082	43,082	43,082	
Air Force Reserve	69,357	76,218	76,218	76,218	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-148)	85	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	69,442	76,218	76,218	76,218	
<i>Total</i>	13,060,149	13,654,601	13,530,636	13,654,601	

Note: Reserve Component (Reserve and National Guard) BAH is not listed as a separate line item in the Senate Committee on Appropriations Report.

Table 6c. DOD Facilities Sustainment, Restoration, & Modernization
(budget authority in \$000)

	FY2006 Enacted	FY2007 Request	House	Senate	Conf.
Army	1,832,607	1,810,774	1,810,774	1,780,774	
Navy	1,331,521	1,201,313	1,201,313	1,208,313	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-148)	215,499	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	1,547,020	1,201,313	1,201,313	1,201,313	
Marine Corps	548,420	473,141	473,141	473,141	
Air Force	1,827,246	1,684,019	1,684,019	1,511,019	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-148)	69,005	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	1,896,251	1,684,019	1,684,019	1,511,019	
Defense-Wide	115,731	86,386	86,386	86,386	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-148)	5,238	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	120,969	86,386	86,386	86,386	
Army National Guard	392,579	387,882	387,882	387,882	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-148)	49,217	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	441,796	387,882	387,882	387,882	
Air National Guard	177,993	255,322	255,322	175,122	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-148)	13,557	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	191,550	255,322	255,322	175,122	
Army Reserve	202,326	215,890	215,890	215,890	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-148)	1,128	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	203,454	215,890	215,890	215,890	
Naval Reserve	67,110	52,136	52,136	101,524	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-148)	310,024	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	377,134	52,136	52,136	101,524	
Marine Corps Reserve	10,004	9,579	9,579	9,579	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-148)	1,094	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	11,098	9,579	9,579	9,579	
Air Force Reserve	49,860	59,849	59,849	59,849	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-148)	1,917	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	51,777	59,849	59,849	59,849	
<i>Total</i>	7,222,076	6,236,291	6,236,291	6,009,479	

Note: Defense-Wide FSRM is not broken out in the Senate report and is estimated.

Table 6d. DOD Environmental Remediation
(budget authority in \$000)

	FY2006 Enacted	FY2007 Request	House	Senate	Conf.
Army	403,786	413,794	413,794	413,794	
Navy	302,222	304,409	304,409	304,409	
Air Force	402,396	423,871	423,871	423,871	
Defense-Wide	27,885	18,431	18,431	18,431	
Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS)	254,352	242,790	257,790	257,790	
<i>Total</i>	1,390,641	1,403,295	1,418,295	1,418,295	

Table 6e. DOD Health Program
(budget authority in \$000)

	FY2006 Enacted	FY2007 Request	House	Senate	Conf.
Operation and Maintenance	19,106,789	20,498,163	20,218,205	20,544,605	
Rescissions	—	—	(40,042)	—	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-148)	120,000	—	—	—	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-148)	172,958	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	19,399,747	20,498,163	20,178,163	20,544,605	
Procurement	375,328	396,355	402,855	397,355	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-148)	28,592	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	403,920	396,355	402,855	397,355	
Research and Development	536,883	130,603	444,103	467,903	
<i>Total, Defense Health</i>	20,340,550	21,025,121	21,025,121	21,409,863	

Table 6f. DOD Military Totals
(budget authority in \$000)

Account	FY2005 Enacted	FY2006 Request	House	Senate	Conf.
Total, Department of Defense, Military					
New Budget Authority	56,046,148	59,026,539	58,077,324	58,763,794	

Table 7. Related Agencies
(budget authority in \$000)

Account	FY2006 Enacted	FY2007 Request	House	Senate	Conf.
American Battle Monuments Commission					
Salaries and Expenses	35,888	35,838	37,088	37,088	
Foreign Currency Fluctuations	15,098	4,900	4,900	4,900	
<i>Total</i>	50,986	40,738	41,988	41,988	
U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims					
Salaries and Expenses	18,607	19,790	19,790	19,790	
Department of Defense-Civil					
<i>Cemeterial Expenses, Army</i>	28,760	26,550	26,550	26,550	
Armed Forces Retirement Home					
Operation and Maintenance	56,463	54,846	54,846	54,846	
Capital Program	1,236	—	—	—	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-148)	65,800	—	—	—	
Emerg. Approps. (P.L. 109-234)	176,000	—	—	—	
<i>Total</i>	299,499	54,846	54,846	54,846	
<i>Total, Agencies</i>	397,852	141,924	143,174	143,174	

Appendix B. Additional Resources

Budget

CRS Report RL30002, *A Defense Budget Primer*, by Mary T. Tyszkiewicz and Stephen Daggett.

CRS Report 98-720, *Manual on the Federal Budget Process*, by Robert Keith and Allen Schick.

Selected Websites

House Committee on Appropriations
[<http://appropriations.house.gov/>]

Senate Committee on Appropriations
[<http://appropriations.senate.gov/>]

House Committee on Armed Services
[<http://www.house.gov/hasc/>]

Senate Committee on Armed Services
[<http://armed-services.senate.gov/>]

House Committee on Veterans Affairs
[<http://veterans.house.gov/>]

Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs
[<http://veterans.senate.gov/>]

Commission on Review of Overseas Military Facility Structure of the United States
(Overseas Basing Commission)
[<http://www.obc.gov/>]

CRS Appropriations Products Guide
[<http://www.crs.gov/products/appropriations/apppage.shtml>]

CRS Multimedia Library
[<http://www.crs.gov/products/multimedia/multimedialibrary.shtml>]

Congressional Budget Office
[<http://www.cbo.gov/>]

Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC Commission)
[<http://www.brac.gov>]

Government Accountability Office
[<http://www.gao.gov/>]