

Leading veterans' groups release Independent Budget Recommendations for the Department of Veterans Affairs

The veterans service organizations urge Congress to wholeheartedly support America's veterans

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WASHINGTON – The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), [DAV \(Disabled American Veterans\)](#) and [Paralyzed Veterans of America \(PVA\)](#), yesterday released [The Independent Budget Recommendations for the Department of Veterans Affairs for Fiscal Years 2026 and 2027](#). The report is an unbiased, needs-based blueprint for Congress, ensuring a fully funded VA can meet its core mission of caring for America's veterans and their families, caregivers and survivors.

While the president is required by law to release a proposed budget by the first Monday in February, administrations have consistently failed to meet that deadline stretching back two decades. However, the Independent Budget (IB) is a benchmark for lawmakers when considering its funding decisions for the VA.

“The VA is the best health care provider for veterans, particularly those with spinal cord injuries and diseases like multiple sclerosis (MS) and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS)” said Carl Blake, chief executive officer of PVA. “When the veteran population utilizing the VA’s direct and community care services is growing, but the system’s staffing, infrastructure and funding are not, there’s a serious problem. Unfortunately, veterans with the greatest support needs bear the cost of inadequate resourcing and inaction. Year after year, the Independent Budget Veterans Service Organizations (IBVSOs) carefully prepare budgetary

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recommendations to ensure VA is fully funded and capable of carrying out its full mission. Congress must do its part and properly fund the VA.”

The VA provided more care to veterans than ever in fiscal year 2024. That’s why, for the fiscal year 2026, the IBVSOs are recommending \$166.4 billion for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), which would enable the department to continue to provide timely and high-quality care. The IB report details specific funding levels and targeted increases for VHA programs, including a \$2 billion increase to strengthen long-term services and support to meet the specialized needs of disabled veterans and their caregivers; a \$1.4 billion boost to fill healthcare employee vacancies; a \$1 billion increase to cover the projected growth of new veterans seeking VA care; a \$462 million increase for 3000 new clinical social workers; and a \$179 million addition for mental health and suicide prevention programs. The IBVSOs also call for a \$300 million increase for emergency and urgent care, pivotal in providing on-demand acute care, and \$531 million to provide better dental care to a growing population of veterans seeking dental services.

“Our nation has a solemn duty to honor its commitment to America’s veterans by ensuring timely access to the high-quality healthcare and benefits they have earned and deserve,” said Randy Reese, executive director of DAV Washington Headquarters. “This year’s Independent Budget offers thoughtful recommendations to guarantee that the VA receives the full funding it requires to prevent future budget shortfalls, which would jeopardize veterans’ care and place a financial strain on the benefits many depend on to make ends meet.”

For the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), the IBVSOs recommend a total of \$6.5 billion for fiscal year 2026—a roughly \$1 billion increase over the projected FY 2025 levels—and \$296 million for the Board of Veterans’ Appeals (BVA). The VBA increases include a \$200 million rise to bring down the backlog of over 235,000 pending claim decisions; \$10 million more to support Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) due to an unprecedented number of applications; and a \$32 million increase to implement VA’s Transition Assistance Program (TAP) 6.0, to increase in-person TAP classes and ensure adequate staffing.

“VA infrastructure has been woefully underfunded and underprioritized for decades,” said VFW Washington Office Executive Director Ryan Gallucci. “The IBVSOs recommend a

substantial increase in infrastructure funding to ensure veterans and the healthcare workers who care for them have up-to-date, modern and safe facilities to perform this vital mission. There have been incredibly transformative expansions of care and benefits in the past few years, but this expanded enrollment in VA without improved infrastructure inevitably leads to fractured care,” continued Gallucci. “That is why VA’s investment in its Capital Infrastructure is critically important.”

The IBVSOs continue to call for improvements in funding VA infrastructure projects. These brick-and-mortar facilities must be safe, welcoming and up-to-date to meet veterans’ evolving needs. To this end, the IBVSOs call on Congress to significantly increase funding to nearly \$10 billion—a threefold increase over fiscal 2025. For fiscal 2026, the IB recommends a total of \$5.1 billion for the major construction account to increase staffing and begin reducing VA’s growing infrastructure backlog.

To view the IB’s full budget recommendation, please visit independentbudget.org.

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About DAV: DAV empowers veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. It is dedicated to a single purpose: keeping our promise to America’s veterans. DAV does this by ensuring that veterans and their families can access the full range of benefits available to them, fighting for the interests of America’s injured heroes on Capitol Hill, providing employment resources to veterans and their families, and educating the public about the great sacrifices and needs of veterans transitioning back to civilian life. DAV, a nonprofit organization with nearly 1 million members, was founded in 1920 and chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1932. Learn more at [DAV.org](https://davy.org).

About VFW: The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is the nation’s largest and oldest major war veterans organization. Founded in 1899, the congressionally chartered VFW is composed entirely of eligible veterans and military service members from the active, Guard and Reserve forces. With more than 1.4 million VFW and Auxiliary members located in nearly 6,000 posts worldwide, the nonprofit veterans service organization is proud to proclaim “NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS” than the VFW, which is dedicated to veterans service, legislative advocacy, and military and community service programs. For more information or to join, visit our website at [VFW.org](https://vfw.org).

About PVA: Paralyzed Veterans of America is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and the only congressionally chartered veterans service organization dedicated solely for the benefit and representation of veterans with spinal cord injury or diseases. The organization ensures veterans receive the benefits earned through service to our nation, monitors their care in VA spinal cord injury units, and funds research and education in the search for a cure and improved care for individuals with paralysis.

As a lifelong partner and advocate for veterans and all people with disabilities, PVA also develops training and career services, works to ensure accessibility in public buildings and spaces, and provides health and rehabilitation opportunities through sports and recreation. With more than 70 offices and 33 chapters, Paralyzed Veterans of America serves veterans, their families, and their caregivers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Learn more at [PVA.org](https://pva.org).

