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FISCAL YEAR 2002 BUDGET FAILS VETERANS

Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez on President Bush's Budget Recommendations for Veterans:

“I am concerned about the President's budget, which is premised on a fiscally irresponsible tax cut and deprives the Veterans' Administration (VA) of the funding it needs to provide the services our veterans deserve.”

“Obtaining the necessary funding for veterans benefits will be difficult if the needed dollars are being consumed by the Administration's proposed tax cut.”

“Until we have fulfilled our promises to our nation's veterans, we have no surplus.”

Overall VA Discretionary Spending is Inadequate

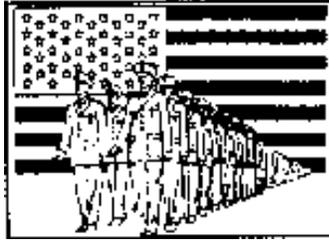
The Bush Administration has requested \$23.4 billion in discretionary spending for veterans' programs for FY 2002, only \$1 billion over the FY 2001 level, just enough to keep up with inflation.

The House Veterans' Affairs Committee, on a bi-partisan, unanimous basis, has recommended an increase of \$2.1 billion over FY 2001 - which is \$1.1 billion over the President's budget request.

Many essential programs will be shortchanged with the Administration's budget, like:

- VETERANS' MEDICAL CARE
- VETERANS BENEFITS PROCESSING
- VETERANS' LONG TERM CARE
- VETERANS EDUCATION BENEFITS
- HOMELESS VETERANS

For details on these programs please see reverse.



The Bush Administration's Proposed FY 2002 Budget Lacks The Funding Needed For Important Veterans Programs

■ VETERANS' MEDICAL CARE

We must be able to meet the growing health care needs of our aging veterans. This is only possible with the commitment of sufficient funds. Of particular concern to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs is Alzheimer's Disease, other dementia and brain disorders.

The budget contains:

NO funding commitment for mental health treatment programs. The bi-partisan Veterans Affairs Committee recommended a \$141 million increase.

NO specific funding to reduce lengthy delays in veterans' access to VA health care providers.

NO specific funding to fully implement the Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act.

■ VETERANS' LONG TERM CARE

The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs has recommended an additional \$88 million in discretionary spending to meet the long term health care needs of veterans.

The budget contains:

NO specific funding for veterans' long-term care.

NO specific funding requested for State Veterans Homes.

■ HOMELESS VETERANS

A VA report issued May 2000 estimated that there were 344,983 homeless veterans in 1999.

The budget contains:

NO specific funding for homeless veterans housing.

■ EDUCATION BENEFITS

Statistics released this year show an average increase of \$10,000 in tuition and fees for higher education. With no increase in Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) benefits, the disparity between benefits received and cost incurred will be a barrier for many.

The budget contains:

NO specific funding request for an increase in MGIB benefits.

■ BENEFITS PROCESSING

The Veterans Benefits Administration has a backlog of more than 512,085 claims awaiting processing.

The budget contains:

NO immediate funding available to VA to tackle problem; the VA is in need of a \$30 million supplemental appropriation.