

AMENDMENTS ADOPTED TO THE
MILITARY CONSTRUCTION APPROPRIATIONS BILL
FOR FY 2015

Full Committee Markup
House Appropriations Committee
Wednesday, April 9, 2014

11

CULBERSON

ADDED
BY
VOICE
VOTE

Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies
FY 2015 Appropriations Act

Managers' Amendment

Offered by Mr. Culberson of Texas

REPORT LANGUAGE

In the report:

On page 33 of the report, insert before the header, "*Mental health issues*":

Innovative approaches to assistance. -- The Committee is encouraged by innovative proposals for helping homeless veterans and reducing veteran homelessness. The Committee encourages the VA to explore the benefits of such proposals and remove any disincentives to offering innovative services for homeless veterans. The Committee requests that the VA provide a report no later than 90 days after the enactment of this Act that provides a detailed analysis of innovative proposals the VA can offer to reduce veteran homelessness.

On page 34 of the report, insert before the header, "*Rural health issues*":

Physician recruitment. -- The Committee remains concerned by the high rates of PTSD in returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. The Committee believes there is a continuing need to recruit highly trained physicians to address this problem. The Committee encourages the Secretary to establish an action plan to address this shortage, including the possibility of strengthening the current loan repayment program to recruit psychiatric physicians for full-time employment in the VHA.

On page 37 in the report, insert before the header, "MEDICAL SUPPORT AND COMPLIANCE":

Nursing handbook. -- The Committee understands that the VHA Nursing Handbook is currently under review. The Committee encourages that the VHA to seek input from internal VA program offices and external professional stakeholders, prior to possible regulatory action and submission to the Under Secretary for Health for final approval. The Committee believes all possible

outreach efforts should be used to communicate the proposed changes, to gather public comment, and to collaborate with Congress, stakeholders, VA nursing staff, and external organizations. Finally, the Committee requests that the VHA ensure that any changes to handbooks within the VHA do not conflict with other handbooks already in place within the VHA.

Prescription drug abuse. -- Given the emergence of new technologies and services to address the abuses of prescription drugs, the Committee encourages the VA to utilize such technologies in the employment of a systematic approach that ensures the dispensation of medications to veterans is safe and transparent.

Hepatitis B virus. -- The Committee encourages the VA to increase hepatitis B (HBV) testing and work to implement the CDC HBV testing recommendations within the VA system. Chronic HBV infection is preventable but not curable; if left untreated, the virus may lead to advanced liver disease, liver cancer, and liver transplants, placing a greater financial burden on our health care system. Preliminary ad-hoc studies of prevalence have shown very high rates of HBV, but more research is necessary, as well as electronic medical record prompts for HBV screening. The Committee encourages the VA to establish a plan for testing and treating veterans enrolled in the VHA system and considered to be at risk for hepatitis B, including Vietnam-era veterans in the baby boomer birth cohort, as part of the effort to aggressively implement the CDC's viral hepatitis testing recommendations within the VHA system. Additionally, the VA shall submit a report to the Committee, no later than 180 days after enactment of this Act, on the prevalence of hepatitis B among veterans and the estimated impact of its HBV testing and treatment plan.

On page 38 of the report, insert before the header, "MEDICAL AND PROSTHETIC RESEARCH":

Response to VA Inspector General report. – The Committee was disturbed by the March 31, 2014 Inspector General report describing the problems and lapses in management in the VA leasing process for the Butler, PA health care center. While the Committee understands that changes have been made to operations in the VA Office of Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction in response to the IG report, the Committee directs the VA to provide a report by July 1, 2014 documenting the structural, staffing, and process changes that have been implemented or are in the process of being implemented to prevent the problems with the Butler lease from happening anywhere else in the VA system.

On page 46 of the report in the paragraph headed “*Training veteran medics*”, strike “encourages” and insert “directs”.

On page 47 in the report, insert before the header “INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS”:

Benefits for the victims of the 2009 Fort Hood shooting. -- The Committee remains concerned about the administration’s classification of the 2009 shooting at Fort Hood as workplace violence rather than an act of terrorism. The Committee is concerned that the victims are not and will not receive the proper benefits and medical care they are entitled to. The VA is to report back to the Committee by July 15, 2014 with a detailed analysis of the benefits and medical care the victims are eligible for under the Administration’s current classification, and how these compare to the benefits and medical care they would receive now and into the future if this event were classified as an act of terrorism.

On page 52 in the report, insert after the paragraph labeled “*Facility construction priority-setting*”:

Alternative financing. -- The Committee is concerned about meeting the need for access to high quality veterans health care facilities, including in rural areas where access to facilities, including clinics and hospitals, is more limited. The Committee directs the Department of Veterans Affairs to work collaboratively with other executive branch agencies with substantial construction portfolios, private sector contractors, and other non-governmental experts, together with the appropriate congressional committees, to explore the feasibility of employing new funding mechanisms to meet the need for such facilities, including but not limited to private development lease-back arrangements, and to provide a report on their conclusions to the Committee no later than September 30, 2014.

On page 60 in the report, insert before the header, “ARMED FORCES RETIREMENT HOME”:

Arlington land exchange. -- The Committee recognizes that the future burial capacity of ANC could be increased through the closure and relocation of current roadways adjacent to the cemetery. The modification of the Columbia Pike/Washington Boulevard interchange, and the realignment of all associated utilities would remove existing barriers to the contiguous expansion into the area of the former Navy Annex site. The Committee urges the Secretary of the Army

to provide the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress with an amended Master Plan and Navy Annex Area Development Plan detailing how the land the Cemetery would receive in the contemplated land exchanges will be utilized for internments, other Cemetery needs and the location of the future Pentagon Memorial Visitor's Center.

#2

Bishop

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. BISHOP

ADOPTED
By
VV

ON PAGE 45 OF THE REPORT

IN THE PARAGRAPH HEADED "SERVING
UNDESERVED AREAS" AFTER "ALASKA", INSERT

"U.S. TERRITORIES,"