



# **Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen**

## *House Committee on Appropriations*

**FY 2018 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill  
Subcommittee Markup  
June 12, 2017  
Opening Statement As Prepared**

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the time.

Today, the House continues its appropriations process with the first subcommittee mark-up of the FY 2018 cycle. And once again, it is the Military Construction-VA subcommittee that leads the way

This is only fitting because our most important responsibility as Members of Congress is to provide for the common defense and it is the men and women of our Armed Services and their families, and those who have worn the nation's uniform who form the foundation of our national security.

On their behalf, the proposal before us makes investments to address many challenges at the VA – including closing service loopholes, cutting red tape and increasing efficiency, and providing good oversight over spending so that these precious dollars are used for our veterans, not wasted on mismanagement.

I note that the Subcommittee (once again) is addressing the nagging issues related to the VA's electronic health records system. I applaud the decision of Secretary Shulkin last week to conform the VA's system with the DOD's but the issue deserves our continuing attention.

I am also pleased that this legislation addresses the VA benefit appeals backlog and provides funding for veterans' homeless assistance – two pressing for my fellow veterans in my home state of New Jersey.

The bill also provides funds so the men and women fighting for our country, and their families, have the facilities and services that they need every day. We owe it to our troops to ensure that their facilities and resources support their missions at home and abroad.

In coming weeks and days, we will continue with the oversight and funding process. We intend to put forward appropriations bills that work to reduce or eliminate waste and duplication.

It is our intention to move as expeditiously as possible to complete the fiscal year 2018 Appropriations bills.

Again, today's hearing is a part of the process we will follow to determine the best use of taxpayer's dollars. After all, the "power of the purse" lies in this building - it is the Constitutional duty of Congress to make spending decisions on behalf of the people we represent at home.

I commend you, Mr. Chairman, the Ranking Member Ms. Wasserman Schultz, all the members of the Subcommittee and the professional staff who have worked so hard to make this mark-up possible.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

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