

**Chairman John Culberson**  
**Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies**  
**House Committee on Appropriations**  
**FY 2014 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations**  
**Bill – Subcommittee Mark Up**  
**Opening Remarks As Prepared**

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This Committee has a longstanding tradition of bipartisan support of our military, our veterans, and their families. However, despite years of providing substantial increases to the Department of Veterans Affairs, funds have languished as a result of construction delays, the claims backlog grows at an astounding rate, and the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs are, once again, back to square one in the development of a joint electronic health record. This bill sends a clear message that this state of affairs is unacceptable – and that our veterans deserve to receive the benefits that they need and have earned in a timely, efficient manner. Therefore, while this bill continues to support these activities, it also increases oversight of them. Funding is no longer provided without expiration for VA construction – bid savings must be reported and project scope changes are prohibited, aggressive monthly reporting from each regional office is required to monitor progress on the disability claims backlog, and bill language has been included to restrict IT funding until the Secretaries of Defense and Veterans Affairs select one single integrated electronic health record.

I have said many times at the hearings this year that our warfighters should not have the added burden of concerns over the quality of life that their families experience while they are away. So – this bill fully funds the budget request for school construction and the family housing program. However, particularly now, as our debt continues to grow at a deplorable rate, we must rigorously review all activities that our government funds. Therefore, this bill does not include funding for ten military construction projects that lacked sufficient justification, reduces funding for six projects, and rescinds \$584 million in prior year funding.

The bill before you was posted yesterday and you and your staffs have had an opportunity to review it. The bill includes \$73.3 billion in discretionary funding, an increase of \$1.4 billion above the fiscal year 2013 enacted level and \$1.4 billion less than the budget request. I think this is a bill that we can be proud to offer and I want to thank all of the Members of the Subcommittee for the hard work that they have done. I also want to thank our Ranking Member, Mr. Bishop for all the time and effort that he has put in on this bill, particularly on the veterans issues that have all of us so concerned. I know that he agrees that we are very fortunate to have Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey work with us on these issues - and our military and veterans can have no doubt of their support.

I would now like to ask my good friend from the State of Georgia and Ranking Member, Mr. Bishop, if he would like to make any remarks.

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