



Coronavirus Response: Supporting Veterans

Mission Statement: As Fort Bragg's Congressman and a voice for veterans, I am committed to ensuring veterans, active duty military and their families have the resources they need to respond to COVID-19 (coronavirus).

As part of the response, Congress has appropriated more than \$20 billion to the Department of Veterans Affairs. More information on the response efforts from the Department can be found here - <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/n-coronavirus/>.

H.R.6201 - Families First Coronavirus Response Act

Total Appropriations for the Department of Veteran Affairs – \$60 million

Coverage of Testing for COVID-19 through the Veterans Health Administration

Includes \$60 million for the Department of Veterans Affairs to cover the costs of COVID-19 diagnostic testing for veterans receiving care through Medical Services or through Medical Community Care.

Waiver of cost-sharing

During the emergency period, the Department of Defense (i.e., TRICARE) and Department of Veterans Affairs are also prohibited from requiring cost-sharing for COVID-19 testing and related visits.

S. 3548 – CARES Act

Total Appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs – \$19.6 billion

Medical services – \$14.4 billion.

Supports increased demand for healthcare services at VA facilities and through telehealth, including the purchase of medical equipment and supplies, testing kits, and personal protective equipment. Also enables the VA to provide additional support for vulnerable veterans, including through programs to assist homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless veterans, as well as within VA-run nursing homes and community living centers.

Medical community care – \$2.1 billion.

Supports increased demand for care in the community, specifically emergency room and urgent care.

Medical emergency management – \$100 million.

Supports the Veterans Health Administration's 24-hour emergency management coordination, including overtime, travel, transportation of materials, and training.

Medical facilities – \$606 million.

Supports development of alternative sites of care and procurement of mobile treatment centers to meet the demand for healthcare services, improvements in security, and non-recurring maintenance projects to existing infrastructure and utility systems at VA facilities (e.g., reconfiguration of space to support care).

Information technology – \$2.15 billion.

Supports increased telework, telehealth, and call center capabilities to deliver healthcare services directly related to coronavirus and mitigate the risk of virus transmission. This includes the purchasing of devices, as well as enhanced system bandwidth and support.

Veterans benefits administration – \$13 million.

Provides additional software licenses and telework support for staff and enhances cleaning contracts.

Emergency management – \$6 million.

Expands and maintains 24-hour operations of crisis response and continuity of operations plan implementation at various sites. Expands cleaning and sanitation service in high traffic facilities.

Grants for construction of state extended care facilities – \$150 million.

Supports modification or alteration of existing hospital, nursing home, and domiciliary facilities in state homes to prevent, prepare for and respond to coronavirus.

Office of inspector general – \$12.5 million.

Supports oversight of the VA's efforts to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus.

Additional Provisions

Prioritization of relief for Veteran-Owned Businesses

Includes a sense of the Senate for the Administrator to issue guidance to lenders and agents to ensure that the processing and disbursement of covered loans prioritizes small business concerns and entities in underserved and rural markets, including veterans and members of the military community, small business concerns owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals.

Expand telemental health services for isolated veterans

Authorizes the VA to expand mental health services delivered via telehealth and enter into short-term agreements with telecommunication companies to provide veterans with temporary broadband services.

Treatment of state homes during public health emergency

Directs the VA to maintain per diem payments, and to provide state homes with personal protective equipment, medicine, and cleaning supplies.

Modifications to veteran directed care program

Temporarily waives the in-person home visit requirement to enroll and permits telephone and telehealth visits as an alternative. Prohibits suspension or disenrollment from the program during a public health emergency.

Provision of prosthetic appliances through non-department providers

Ensures veterans with limb loss can utilize community-based prosthetists.

Waiver of pay caps for VA employees during public health emergencies

Waives federal pay caps for VA employees responding during covid-19 emergency so they can be compensated for all hours worked.

Provision of personal protective equipment for va home health workers

Requires VA to provide personal protective equipment to VA community-based home health workers.

Treatment of payments for purposes of eligibility for veteran pension and other benefits

Ensures that veterans receiving a 2020 recovery rebate under the cares act do not suffer a loss or reduction of any VA benefits.

Telehealth for case managers and homeless veterans

Ensures telehealth capabilities are available for case managers and homeless veterans participating in the HUD–VASH program.

Financial assistance for supportive services for very low-income veteran families

Waives any limits on grant amounts and rates for per diem payments for temporary housing to maximize social distancing within the vulnerable homeless veteran population.

Modifications to comprehensive service programs for homeless veterans

Waives funding limits for financial assistance for supportive services for very low-income veteran families in permanent housing during the public health emergency.

- Expands testing for all Americans, including \$82 million for Department of Defense and \$60 million for the Department of Veterans Affairs to cover testing for veterans.