

# MOPH December 2009 Department News Bulletin

## VA Family Caregiver Assistance Update 01:

On 19 NOV the Senate passed Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2009 (S.1963) an omnibus package of veterans bills. The bill had been held up for several days because of Senator Tom Coburn's (R-OK) amendment calling for a cost offset. His amendment required an offset of the costs and would have ordered the State Department to transfer funds from its budget for supporting international organizations and peacekeeping activities. The amendment was defeated 32-66. The bill was then passed 98-0. It combined several different bills:

**S.801: Family Caregiver Program Act of 2009.** A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to waive charges for humanitarian care provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs to family members accompanying veterans severely injured after September 11, 2001, as they receive medical care from the Department and to provide assistance to family caregivers, and for other purposes.

**S.252: Veterans Health Care Authorization Act of 2009.** A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to enhance the capacity of the Department of Veterans Affairs to recruit and retain nurses and other critical health-care professionals, to improve the provision of health care veterans, and for other purposes.

**S.597: Veterans Health Care Improvement Act of 2009.** A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to expand and improve health care services available to women veterans, especially those serving in operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, from the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

**S.498: Vet Dental Insurance.** A bill to amend Title 38, United States Code, to authorize dental insurance for veterans and survivors and dependents of veterans, and for other purposes.

**S.246: Veterans Health Care Quality Improvement Act.** A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the quality of care provided to veterans in Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities, to encourage highly qualified doctors to serve in hard-to-fill positions in such medical facilities, and for other purposes.

**S.772: Honor Act of 2009.** A bill to enhance benefits for survivors of certain former members of the Armed Forces with a history of post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury, to enhance availability and access to mental health counseling for members of the Armed Forces and veterans, and for other purposes.

Among other things It authorizes approximately \$3.7 billion for programs to help caregivers for veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, improve health care in rural areas, focus on women veterans health care, provide VA dental care for some veterans and their families and survivors. Senator Coburn's failed amendment would have also expanded the bill to cover all veterans rather than just those from the present wars. His hold caused a dramatic confrontation. Veterans' Affairs Chairman Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI) said: "The cost of veterans' health care is a true cost of war and must be treated as such. The cost of the underlying bill does not need to be offset. The price has already been paid, many times over, by the service of the brave men and women who wore our nation's uniform. " Senator Coburn's statement was: "I don't have any opposition to veterans' care. We're supposedly anti-veteran because we think maybe we ought to

pay for some things that we do around here. . .I apologize to no one for having put a hold on this bill for a very good reason.”

[Source: TREA Washington Update 20 Nov 09 ++]

## VA Budget 2010 Update 05:

The Senate approved its version of the "2010 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations" bill with a proposed budget of \$133.9 billion on 17 NOV. The House version of the legislation was approved in July. The measure (HR 3082), passed 100-0, is now headed to conference committee, where negotiators will try to hammer out the differences between the Senate and House versions. Some items of interest to the veteran community in the Senate version include:

Both Senate and House bills include an information technology (IT) budget of \$3.3 billion. However, the Senate bill puts hold on \$1.1 billion in IT development funds until VA's Chief Information Officer Roger Baker completes a review of the department's IT systems and he and Secretary Eric Shinseki identify which projects should receive funding in fiscal 2010.

\$3.2 billion nationally for health care and support services for homeless veterans, including \$500 million in direct programs to assist homeless veterans.

\$50 million for the VA to renovate unused, empty buildings on VA campuses to provide housing with supportive services, including rehabilitation and counseling for homeless veterans.

\$29 million for medical care for veterans in highly rural areas

\$44.7 billion for VA healthcare in fiscal 2010, which started 1 OCT 09

\$48.2 billion for VA medical services for 2011 to end the cycle of the VA getting its funding late every year as Congress wrangles over the federal budget.

Gold Star parent admission to VA nursing homes.

An amendment that directs VA to study how it addresses combat stress in women vets.

A provision that requires the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) to look into creating a national cemetery in Montana.

[Source: Various 19 Nov ++]

## Military History Anniversaries:

**Dec. 01, 1918 - WWI:** An American army of occupation enters Germany

**Dec. 01, 1969 - Vietnam:** America's first draft lottery since 1942 is held.

**Dec. 02, 1944 - WWII:** General George S. Patton's troops enter the Saar Valley and break through the Siegfried line.

**Dec. 03, 1950 - Korea:** The Chinese close in on Pyongyang Korea, and UN forces withdraw southward. Pyongyang falls 2 days later.

**Dec. 03, 1942 - WWII:** U.S. planes make the first raids on Naples, Italy.

**Dec. 06, 1941 - WWII:** President Franklin D. Roosevelt issues a personal appeal to Emperor Hirohito to use his influence to avoid war.

**Dec. 07, 1917 - WWI:** The United States declares war on Austria-Hungary with only one dissenting vote in Congress.

**Dec. 07, 1941 - WWII:** Japanese attack Pearl Harbor without a declaration of war and land forces in Northern Borneo.

**Dec. 07, 1942 - WWII:** The U.S. Navy launches USS New Jersey, the largest battleship ever built.

**Dec. 08, 1861 - Civil War:** CSS Sumter captures the whaler Eben Dodge in the Atlantic. The American Civil War is now affecting the Northern whaling industry.

**Dec. 08, 1941 - WWII:** Roosevelt declares war on Japan noting the previous day's events mark it as a date that will live in infamy.

**Dec. 08, 1943 - WWII:** U.S. carrier-based planes sink two cruisers and down 72 planes in the Marshall Islands.

**Dec. 08, 1944 - WWII:** The United States conducts the longest, most effective air raid on the Pacific island of Iwo Jima.

**Dec. 09, 1950 - Cold War:** Harry Gold gets 30 years imprisonment for passing atomic bomb secrets to the Soviet Union during World War II.

**Dec. 09, 1992 - Operation Restore Hope:** U.S. Marines land in Somalia to ensure food and medicine reaches the deprived areas of that country.

**Dec. 10, 1898 - Spanish American War:** The U.S. and Spain sign the Treaty of Paris, ending the war and ceding Spanish possessions, including the Philippines to the United States.

**Dec. 10, 1941 - WWII:** Japanese troops invade the Philippine island of Luzon.

**Dec. 11, 1862 - Civil War:** Union General Ambrose Burnside occupies Fredericksburg and prepares to attack the Confederates under Robert E. Lee. The battle ends two days later with the bloody slaughter of onrushing Union troops at Marye's Heights.

**Dec. 11, 1941 - WWII:** Germany and fascist Italy declare war on America. The U.S. reciprocates.

**Dec. 12, 1863 - Civil War:** Orders are given in Richmond Virginia, that no more supplies from the Union should be received by Federal prisoners.

**Dec. 13, 1775** - The Continental Congress authorizes the building of 13 frigates.

**Dec. 13, 1774** - Mass militiamen successfully attacked arsenal of Ft. William and Mary

[Source: Various Nov 09 ++]