



## Senate Approves Crucial Veterans' Health Care Funding

June 29, 2005

**Washington, DC** – The United States Senate today approved legislation cosponsored by U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) to provide urgently needed funds for veterans' health care. Following is a statement by Senator Feinstein:

**“Mr. President, I want to start by thanking Senator Murray and Senator Byrd for working tirelessly with me to try and find a solution to the VA budget crisis that faces our nation's veterans. I very much appreciate their leadership on this issue.**

**During the Emergency Supplemental under Senator Murray's leadership we brought this issue before the body and warned of the impending crisis.**

**As we all know, at that point Secretary Nicholson sent a letter to Chairman Hutchison stating that “I can assure you that VA does not need emergency supplemental funds in FY 2005 to continue to provide the timely, quality service that is always our goal.”**

**We now know this is not the case. Yesterday, Secretary Nicholson testified before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee and acknowledged that in fact the VA is at least \$1 billion short this year in veterans' medical care.**

**The VA is resorting to shifting funds from capital accounts as well as spending money budgeted as carry over for next year to make up the shortfall. Additionally, the Secretary stated that the VA budget request for next year is short by at least \$1.5 billion.**

**As I have always stated, the care for our veterans should never get tangled up in partisan gamesmanship.**

**This is why we have been working hard with our Republican colleagues to find a solution to this problem.**

**I am pleased that the modifying amendment would add an additional \$80 million to help shore up this year's budget problems at the VA, and I commend Senator Hutchison, my chairman on the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee, for her leadership and commitment to the needs of America's veterans.**

**However, let us not forget that while the emergency funds that I hope we will pass today helps solve the problem for this year, Secretary Nicholson testified yesterday that the budget request for next year is insufficient as well.**

**I am hopeful that the Administration will take the necessary steps to transmit to the Congress an amended budget which provides an accurate estimate of the VA's needs for FY 2006 – and a realistic blueprint for meeting those needs.**

**I look forward to working with Senator Hutchison, Senator Cochran, Senator Byrd and my other colleagues on the Appropriations Committee to make sure that we provide sufficient funding in 2006 to keep the VA from being awash in red ink again next year.**

**Let me close by again thanking Senator Murray and Senator Byrd. Their leadership has been instrumental in helping to solve this problem.**

**I also want to thank Senator Hutchison and Senator Craig for working hard with us to try and ensure that veterans receive the care they need.”**

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