

November 13, 2014

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Senate Majority Leader  
S-221 Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid:

As leaders of America's major veterans and military service organizations, we are writing to thank you for your commitment to bring S. 932, the Putting Veterans Funding First Act, up for a vote in November. Enactment of this budget-neutral legislation, which would extend advance appropriations to all Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) programs, services and benefits, is one of the highest priorities for all our organizations and the millions of veterans and servicemembers we represent.

As you know, in 2009, with near-unanimous support, Congress passed and President Obama signed into law the landmark Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act, P.L. 111-81. This law authorized Congress to appropriate VA medical care funding one year in advance, thereby shielding veterans' hospitals and clinics from disruptions caused by late budgets, continuing resolutions and government shutdowns. While the law has been a tremendous success, there are still parts of the Veterans Health Administration – including information technology, clinical research and construction – that do not receive advance appropriations. The same is true for the Veterans Benefits Administration and the National Cemetery Administration, as well as for all mandatory veterans benefit payments, such as disability compensation.

S. 932 is bipartisan legislation sponsored by Senators Mark Begich (D-AK) and John Boozman (R-AR) that was overwhelmingly approved by the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs last November. During the Committee's consideration of the bill, an amendment was included to extend advance appropriations to also include direct payments to veterans entitled to receive disability compensation, pension, educational and other mandatory benefit payments. As you will recall, had last year's government shutdown continued just a couple weeks longer, these essential benefits for veterans, their families and survivors would have been cut off.

Enactment of S. 932 would not result in any additional spending by the federal government, there is no PAYGO score, and no offsets would be required since the projected spending under advance appropriations exactly matches the current CBO baseline. In addition, all of the oversight tools and techniques that Congress uses in the regular appropriations process can be used with advance appropriations. In addition, there is an extra year before advance appropriations funding is released, thereby giving Congress additional time to hold oversight hearings or enact legislative or report language restricting the use of Congressionally-provided appropriations. A bipartisan companion bill, H.R. 813, sponsored by House Chairman Jeff Miller (R-FL) and Ranking Member Mike Michaud (D-ME) was previously approved last year by a unanimous vote of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. It awaits further action on the House floor.

Senator Reid, we greatly appreciate your commitment to holding a Senate vote on S. 932 this month and ask that it be done under a procedure that ensures a "clean" up-or-down vote, thereby allowing the Senate to work its will on this vitally important legislation. As you stated in your letter, "... [this] important bill will go a long way to ensuring secure funding for America's veterans. It is indeed the right

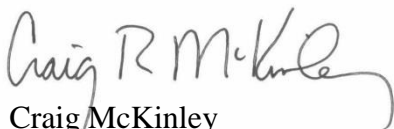
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thing to do for our nation's veterans." By passing advance appropriations, Congress can protect veterans from being used as political pawns during unrelated fights over the budget, debt limit, or during any future government shutdowns. Surely America's veterans deserve no less.

Respectfully,



Craig McKinley  
President  
Air Force Association



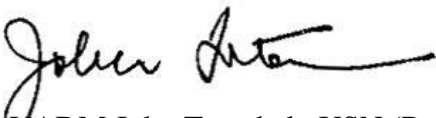
Robert L. Frank  
Chief Executive Officer  
Air Force Sergeants Association



Stewart M. Hickey  
National Executive Director  
AMVETS



Gordon R. Sullivan  
General, USA Retired  
President & CEO  
Association of the U.S. Army



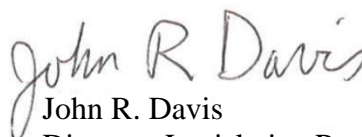
ADM John Totushek, USN (Ret)  
Executive Director  
Association of the U.S. Navy



Al Avina  
Executive Director  
Blinded Veterans Association



Garry J. Augustine  
Executive Director  
Washington Headquarters  
DAV (Disabled American Veterans)



John R. Davis  
Director, Legislative Programs  
Fleet Reserve Association



Paul Rieckhoff  
Chief Executive Officer  
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America

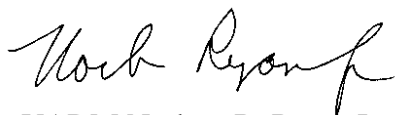


Herb Rosenbleeth  
National Executive Director  
Jewish War Veterans of the USA

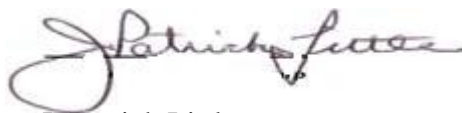
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VADM Norbert R. Ryan, Jr., USN (Ret.)  
President  
Military Officers Association of America



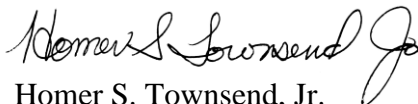
J. Patrick Little  
National Commander  
Military Order of the Purple Heart



Jack Klimp  
Lieutenant General, US Marine Corps (Ret.)  
President and CEO  
National Association for Uniformed Services



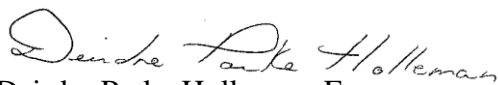
Gus Hargett  
Major General, USA (Ret.)  
President  
National Guard Association of the United States



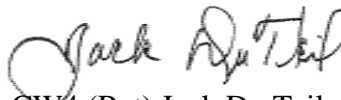
Homer S. Townsend, Jr.  
Executive Director  
Paralyzed Veterans of America



Verna L. Jones  
Executive Director  
The American Legion



Deirdre Parke Holleman, Esq.  
Washington Executive Director  
The Retired Enlisted Association



CW4 (Ret) Jack Du Teil  
Executive Director  
United States Army Warrant Officers Association



Randy Reid  
Executive Director  
U.S. Coast Guard Chief Petty  
Officers Association



Robert E. Wallace  
Executive Director  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
of the United States



Heather Ansley  
Vice President  
VetsFirst, a program of  
United Spinal Association



Rick Weidman  
Executive Director for Policy and  
Government Affairs  
Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.

Cc. Minority Leader Mitch McConnell  
Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Bernie Sanders  
Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Barbara Mikulski  
Budget Committee Chairman Patty Murray  
Senator Mark Begich