

CHRIS PAPPAS
FIRST DISTRICT, NEW HAMPSHIRE

COMMITTEE ON
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE

PAPPAS.HOUSE.GOV



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
319 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-5456

MANCHESTER OFFICE:
889 ELM STREET
MANCHESTER, NH 03101
(603) 935-6710

DOVER OFFICE:
660 CENTRAL AVENUE, SUITE 101
DOVER, NH 03820
(603) 285-4300

August 2, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol

Dear Speaker Johnson,

I write to you in response to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) notification to Congress regarding the agency's anticipated funding shortfall. On behalf of veterans across New Hampshire, I stand ready to work with leadership on both sides of the aisle and urge you to work in a bipartisan, bicameral fashion to expeditiously pass clean emergency supplemental funding legislation to ensure our veterans and their families receive the benefits they have earned.

Late last month, VA informed Congress of anticipated funding shortfalls before the end of Fiscal Year 2024, largely due to the PACT Act exceeding expectations in terms of attracting veterans who are enrolling in VA health care for the first time. In addition, VA has seen higher-than-expected veteran enrollment for VA benefits since the PACT Act was signed into law, as more veterans are receiving disability compensation and pension benefits. Furthermore, VA is already on track to award 20% more in GI Bill education benefits to newly eligible veterans and dependents under the legislation compared to last year.

The PACT Act marked a historic expansion of benefits for toxic-exposed veterans. As a result, not only are more veterans receiving VA health care, but VA is also delivering more care per veteran than ever before. Over \$2 billion in benefits have been awarded to veterans and their survivors, and in New Hampshire's First Congressional District alone, more than 2,400 veterans have filed PACT Act-related claims. The PACT Act has profoundly impacted the lives of countless veterans and their families, and Congress must act to ensure their benefits are secure.

While these statistics underscore the success the Department has had in enrolling veterans in VA care since the PACT Act, because enrollment was better than anticipated the VA is requesting an additional \$13 billion in supplemental funding. We must secure this funding prior to September 20 to ensure that seven million veterans and their survivors receive the benefits they are entitled to receive on October 1.

I have previously joined members of both parties in highlighting our serious concerns about VA's budgetary plans as a member of the House Veterans Affairs' Committee, which would

neglect modernization needs and divert funding from VA health care. In this serious situation, time is of the essence. I plan to work in a bipartisan fashion with my colleagues to further investigate this shortfall, but with a deadline of less than a month and half, failure to immediately address this issue is not an option.

I stand ready to work with you and urge you to work in bipartisan, bicameral fashion to swiftly negotiate and pass clean emergency supplemental funding legislation to ensure veterans receive the benefits they deserve.

I appreciate your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Pappas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chris Pappas
Member of Congress