



Business and
Professional
Women's
Foundation

Proposed Department of Veterans Affairs Budget Will Fund Key Programs

Business and Professional Women's (BPW) Foundation supports President Obama's decision to provide increases in the Department of Veterans Affairs budget for FY2012. The proposed budget for next year demonstrates his commitment to providing vital services and programs to assist veterans in important areas. Despite this time of austerity when many areas are seeing spending cuts, the President's budget provides the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) with \$61.85 billion -- a 10.6 percent increase above the FY2010 funding level.

A major focus of BPW Foundation's mission is to support women veterans and their families. Therefore the organization endorses proposed budget funding for several critical programs that will support this underserved population. This includes \$6 billion for specialized care to veterans for post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury, and other mental health needs. These funds are vital because of the growing number of men and women returning from Afghanistan and Iraq with these types of physical injuries and mental health traumas. In addition, the proposed funds will support needed collaborative programs between VA and Department of Defense (DOD) for research on psychological health and increased outreach to veterans.

Currently, there are more than 100,000 homeless veterans in this country, 13,000 of them women, which is unacceptable. Therefore BPW Foundation fully supports that the budget includes \$939 million dollars dedicated to ending homelessness among veterans by not only expanding the existing VA services for homeless and at-risk veterans but also supporting important collaborative partnerships.

Women veteran's health care is a vital issue that must be addressed and improved. For too many years VA only focused on men's health care needs but with 1.8 million women veterans today, and 1.9 million by 2020, this must change. BPW Foundation fully supports the President's budget of \$270 million to invest in health care for women veterans—which is a 12 percent increase from the 2011 medical care enacted amount. This amount is at a minimum of what is needed to ensure that our women veterans can obtain the health care they need and deserve.

Veteran's unemployment, especially among those who served in Afghanistan and Iraq, is higher than that of the general population. In January 2011, veteran unemployment rates were reported to be 15.2% with the rate for women veterans higher than their male counterparts. Therefore BPW Foundation is pleased that there were no funding cuts in the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) budget. Three of the VETS programs – State Grants, Veterans Workforce Investment Program, and National Veterans Employment Training Services Institute – will be funded at the same levels as 2010 and 2011. The proposed budget includes increases for two other VETS programs: an additional \$2 million for the

Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and an additional \$3 million for the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program.

BPW Foundation will continue to follow the budget debate and educate lawmakers and the public about the importance of keeping our promises to all veterans, especially to our women veterans whose unique needs and circumstances deserve the best services our nation has to offer.