

## LEGISLATIVE REPORT

In late September, the House voted to adopt HR 6157. During the same time frame, an \$855.1 billion spending package was approved by the Senate. These House and Senate bills fund the Departments of Defense, Labor, Education, and Health and Human Services. It is the first time in over a decade that the DoD will have funding at the beginning of the fiscal year. Defense appropriations usually fund certain priorities. However, final legislation did not address expansion of Concurrent Receipt nor eliminate the dollar for dollar deduction of DoD's Survival Benefit Plan from the VA's Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, better known as the Widow's Tax.

The VA spending bill is the largest in history. It includes more than \$197 billion for health and benefits programs. The VA Mission Act includes expanding mental health services, directing more resources to rural care, funding to increase medical care for women veterans, prevention programs to target opioid abuse, expanding long-term care programs, modernization of the VA's electronic healthcare records, and funding to increase staffing for reduction of wait times.

Most existing TRICARE Prime and Select fees will not go up. In addition, TRICARE for Life is not affected. The current fee structure will remain in place. TRICARE Group A retirees will continue to pay \$41 for specialty appointments and \$29 for Primary Care appointments.