
CHUCK HAGEL & SENATE GOP GET FAILING GRADE ON VETS ISSUES

A new report from the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee shows that Senate Republicans have regularly voted against a range of veterans' interests, including expanding access to essential health care. Although the Iraq War continues to create more veterans, Senate Republicans continue to cut veterans funding. America can do better for its veterans.

Republicans Voted Against Veterans' Health Care FIVE TIMES This Year.

Before the Department of Veterans Affairs announced a \$1 billion budget shortfall earlier this year, Senate Republicans voted twice against \$1.98 billion for veterans' health care, while also opposing a proposal to increase veterans' health care funding by \$2.8 billion. And last month, Republicans said "no" to keeping veterans' health care funding in line with inflation and population growth. These votes all came despite at least five warnings from Sen. Patty Murray that the proposed federal funding for veterans' programs would not be enough to cover costs. [Vote #89, 4/12/05; Vote #90, 4/12/05; Vote #55, 3/16/05; Vote #251, 10/5/05; CQ Today, 10/5/05; U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs Press Release, 6/23/05; Office of Sen. Patty Murray; Tacoma News Tribune, 6/29/05]

Republicans Rubberstamped 2006 Budget, Cutting Veterans' Programs.

In March 2005, Senate Republicans voted for the FY 2006 Budget, which made numerous cuts in key federal programs, including a \$14.5 billion cut in veterans' funding. [S Con Res 18, 3/17/05, #81; Office of Sen. Conrad, GOP Budget Conference Report is Wrong for America, 4/28/05; Minority Views of Ranking Democratic Member Senator Kent Conrad, 3/11/05]

Republicans Voted Against \$1.8 Billion for Veterans' Medical Care Last Year.

In 2004, Senate Republicans voted against an amendment to create a reserve fund to allow for an increase in Veterans' medical care by \$1.8 billion. [S Con Res 95, 3/10/04, #40]

Despite Overwhelming Support from Veterans, Republicans Opposed Mandatory Full Funding of Veterans' Health Care.

In June 2004, Senate Republicans defeated an amendment that would ensure that all veterans have access to the health services and prescription drugs they need and deserve. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office predicted that this amendment would permit another 3 million veterans to receive pharmaceutical and health services from the VA. Senate Republicans killed this amendment despite support from a coalition of veterans' groups representing 26 million American veterans, including the American Legion, AMVETS, Blinded Veterans Association, Disabled American Veterans, Jewish War Veterans of the USA, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, and Vietnam Veterans of America. [S 2400, 6/23/04, #145; Press Release, Office of Sen. Daschle, 6/23/04]

Republicans Voted Against Increasing Funding For Vets By \$1 Billion in 2003.

In March 2003, Senate Republicans voted against increasing funding for veterans programs by \$1.019 billion, the level proposed by a coalition of veterans groups, and offsetting the new spending by decreasing proposed tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans. [S Con Res 23, 3/21/03, #74]

Senate Republicans Chose Tax Cuts for the Rich Instead of \$1.7 Billion for Veterans' Health Care.

In April 2001, Senate Republicans voted against an amendment to increase funding for Veteran's health care by \$1.7 billion. The budget resolution's funding level was inadequate to meet the needs of veteran's health programs, according to a budget authored by forty veteran's organizations and medical societies. [H Con Res 83, 4/6/01, #84]

How GOP Failures Have Impacted Everyday Veterans:

Sick and Disabled Veterans Returning from Iraq and Afghanistan Face Long Waiting Lists. It is expected that over 100,000 Iraq war veterans will be seeking medical attention in VA hospitals by September of this year. Already, over 15,000 severely wounded or disabled troops have returned home and the number of wounded has been climbing from stepped-up insurgencies. Yet 25,000 veterans are already on waiting lists nationwide. [Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, as of [11/9/05](#); [Spokesman Review](#), [7/11/05](#); [Sarasota Herald-Tribune](#), [7/25/05](#)]

Veterans Must Wait Six Months for Compensation. Veterans filing claims for disability compensation must wait on average six months and sometimes as long as two years before receiving any compensation. Today, 517,000 claims are pending, according to the Veterans Benefits Administration. [National Priorities Project, [May 2004](#); Veterans Benefits Administration, Monday Morning Workload Reports, [10/31/05](#)]

More Than 1/3 of Disabled Veterans Live Far From VA Hospital. Funding cuts have forced the Department of Veterans Affairs to partially or fully close a number of VA hospitals in recent year. At the same time, more than 34% of the members of the Disabled American Veterans live at least 50 miles away from the closest VA Medical Center. [[USA Today](#), [5/6/04](#); [Washington Post](#), [7/11/05](#); Disabled American Veterans, VA Health Care Survey, [December 2004](#)]

Up to 500,000 Veterans Are Homeless Each Year. “The VA estimates that nearly 200,000 veterans are homeless on any given night. And more than half a million experience homelessness over the course of a year.” The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans attributed these high numbers to a shortage of affordable housing and access to health care, among other factors. [National Coalition for Homeless Veterans; [Background & Statistics](#)]