



VA advance funding bill clears Congress

The American Legion cheers "landmark" VA advance funding bill

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The bill now on its way to the White House for President's signature

WASHINGTON, DC (October 15, 2009) - A long campaign by The American Legion has come to a victorious conclusion with Senate passage Wednesday of the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act of 2009, better known as the "VA Advance Appropriations Bill."

The bill, H.R. 1016, passed the Senate by unanimous consent and with no debate. The House of Representatives gave final approval to the bill Oct. 8 with a 419-1 vote. The act authorizes financial appropriations for Department of Veterans Affairs medical care programs one year in advance of the start of each fiscal year, beginning in 2011.

National Commander Clarence E. Hill of The American Legion was greatly pleased when he learned of the Senate action Wednesday.

"Imagine having to live paycheck-to-paycheck, but not knowing how much that paycheck would be or when it would arrive," Hill said.

"That's the situation the VA's Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has been in. This has resulted in hardships for the agency and even compromises in care to veterans."

Yesterday, Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Democratic and Republican Members of Congress joined representatives from The American Legion and other Veterans Service Organizations for an enrollment

ceremony, an official ceremony the Speaker does when formally sending bills to the President for signature, for the act. At the event, Speaker Pelosi signed the legislation, which will now be sent to President Obama for his signature.

"I have every confidence that President Obama will sign this act into law and thus resolve this longstanding problem," said Hill. "This is a milestone measure and The American Legion celebrates it."

Hill has sent thank you letters to congressional leaders instrumental in shepherding the bill and to President Obama. His letter to the President reads, in part:

"Your signature enacting this critical piece of legislation would be greatly appreciated and a noteworthy achievement. The American Legion believes this bill will go down in history as landmark legislation in the veterans' community."