

News from Chairman

Chet Edwards

**Chairman, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military
Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies**

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Edwards: 2008 Omnibus Provides Historic Funding Increase for Veterans

(Washington, DC)— U.S. Representative Chet Edwards (TX17) today released a statement on the final Omnibus Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2008, which includes record budget increases for veterans authored by Edwards. The bill increases the VA budget by \$6.6 billion above the 2007 level, the largest single increase in the 77-year history of the Veterans Administration and is \$3.7 billion above the President's request for fiscal year 2008. The \$3.7 billion increase for veterans is designated as emergency funding under the final bill, and is contingent on approval by the President before it can be released to the VA.

“This bill respects the service and sacrifice of America’s veterans by providing a historic funding increase for veterans’ health care and strongly supports our military families,” said Edwards, Chairman of the House Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee. “This bill says clearly to all who have served in uniform that as you have kept your promises to our country, we will keep our promises to you.”

“For the 400,000 veterans, including combat wounded vets, who are having to wait too long to have their benefits cases reviewed, this bill means over 1,800 new VA case workers to reduce the unacceptable delays in receiving earned benefits,” said Edwards.

The bill provides an unprecedented \$20.6 billion for military construction, family housing, and base realignment and closing process known as BRAC, which means better barracks, housing and training facilities when troops return from combat. The bill includes Edwards’ Military Families Initiative, which will fund \$129 million to construct 16 new child care centers at military installations.

“I am particularly proud of what we were able to do in this bill for military families because military children and spouses are the unsung heroes in our nation’s defense. They may not wear the uniform, but they make tremendous sacrifices every day for our country,” said Edwards.

“My Military Families Initiative will build 16 new child care centers at bases around the country,” said Edwards. “We have put the highest priority on bases that have faced multiple deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan.

The final 2008 Omnibus Appropriations bill is expected to pass the House this evening.