

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

January 28, 2006

Dear Mr. Speaker:

My Administration is committed to ensuring that our Nation's veterans continue to receive timely and high-quality health care.

On July 14, 2005, I submitted an FY 2006 budget amendment to the Congress of \$1.977 billion to cover increased costs in the Department of Veterans Affairs medical care system. I did not designate the funds as an emergency requirement when I submitted the FY 2006 budget amendment. While I believe this funding should be categorized as part of the VA's base budget, it is critical that this funding be made available to meet veterans' needs. As a result, to provide the needed funds to veterans in a timely manner and consistent with the 2006 Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act, Public Law 109-114, I hereby revise that request to designate \$1.225 billion of the amount proposed in that amendment as an emergency requirement. I appreciate your cooperation in working with me to ensure the highest quality of care for our veterans.

Additional information on this action is set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget. The details of the FY 2006 amendment were included in the previous transmittal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Dennis Hastert". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Enclosure



THE DIRECTOR

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

January 24, 2006

The President
The White House

You originally requested an FY 2006 budget amendment of \$1.977 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) on July 14, 2005. Submitted for your consideration is a letter to the Congress that designates \$1.225 billion of this amount as an emergency requirement for VA's medical care budget.

Last summer, VA determined that due to unanticipated growth in the number of patients using the VA health care system and the increased cost per patient of providing this care, the FY 2005 enacted budget and FY 2006 request included insufficient funding. On June 30, 2005, and July 14, 2005, respectively, you submitted to the Congress a supplemental request to address FY 2005 needs and a budget amendment for FY 2006 totaling \$2.952 billion. Congress provided the entire amount over the two year period, but shifted \$525 million of the amended FY 2006 request into FY 2005 supplemental funding.

You did not initially request that the funds be designated as an emergency requirement, because they will finance the base operations of the Department. However, when Congress passed the 2006 Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act, Public Law 109-114, it included the funds requested, but designated \$1.225 billion as an emergency requirement "available only if an official budget request is transmitted by the President to the Congress that revises the President's budget amendment of July 14, 2005, to designate the entire \$1,225,000,000 as an emergency requirement." With this requirement in law, the funds will not be available—and veterans medical care would have to be curtailed—unless you transmit this request to the Congress. To avoid a disruption in VA's provision of care to veterans, we recommend you designate this funding as an emergency requirement.

Your 2007 Budget will not treat these funds as if they carried the emergency designation, because it is more accurate to classify this funding as part of the VA base budget. This category change will not affect the availability of these funds.

I have carefully reviewed this proposal and am satisfied that it is necessary at this time. Therefore, I join the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs in recommending that you transmit this request, which revises your July 14, 2005, budget amendment to designate \$1.225 billion of the amount as an emergency requirement. No further congressional action is required.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Bolten", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Joshua B. Bolten
Director