



American Rescue Plan Supporting our Nation's Veterans

Veterans have been hit hard during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many veterans have lost their jobs and are struggling to find work. Others are at risk of losing their homes. Too many of our heroes have gotten sick from COVID-19 and other health crises, and many more have delayed needed health care. Sadly, we've lost more than 10,300 veterans and 131 VA staff members to the pandemic. The Democrats' American Rescue Plan Act is essential to help veterans get the health care, employment, and housing support they need during this unprecedented time.

The American Rescue Plan Act would:

- **Provide critical funding for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA):** Provides **\$14.5 billion** for health care services and additional resources to care for our nation's veterans. Because of COVID-19, VA needs this additional support to cover the impact of delays in care, more expensive care due to putting off needed care, and more reliance on VA due to economic strain. This funding will also help continue CARES Act-supported VA programs to prevent suicide, provide women's health care, serve homeless veterans, and expand telehealth.
- **Secure assistance for unemployed veterans:** Provides nearly **\$400 million** to help get veterans back to work by funding up to 12 months of rapid retraining assistance and a housing allowance for veterans who are unemployed as a result of the pandemic and do not receive other veteran education benefits.
- **Increase claims and appeals processing to reduce the backlog caused by COVID-19:** Provides VA **\$272 million** to mitigate the backlog in claims processing caused by the pandemic. This additional funding will help cover overtime costs so staff can work through these delays and help the Board of Veterans' Appeals conduct more telehearings. Additionally, a significant portion of these funds will help digitize and improve access to veterans' military records so that veterans can get more timely responses to their requests for VA benefits.

- **Bolster VA's supply chain modernization:** The pandemic has exposed weaknesses in VA's medical supply chain. This legislation provides **\$100 million** in funding to accelerate VA's supply chain modernization, which is crucial for improving the Administration's public health emergency response.
- **Support State Veterans Homes:** Provides **\$500 million** to help states upgrade State Veterans Homes across the country and **\$250 million** in one-time emergency payments to support these facilities and ensure they can care for our veterans during the pandemic.
- **Fund stronger oversight through VA's Office of Inspector General (OIG):** Provides **\$10 million** to help VA's OIG continue their stringent oversight of VA's response to the pandemic.
- **Prohibit copayments for medical care for veterans during the pandemic:** Allows VA to waive copays that would otherwise be charged to veterans for VA health care services during this unprecedented health emergency and reimburses veterans who have already submitted payments
- **Emergency Employee Leave Fund:** Includes **\$80 million** to provide certain VHA personnel with paid emergency leave – renewing VA's commitment to those employees who have worked to care for veterans during the pandemic.