

# THE INDEPENDENT BUDGET

*A Budget for Veterans by Veterans*

www.independentbudget.org

April 6, 2005

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the co-authors of *The Independent Budget*, AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, we are writing to express our support for the proposed Murray-Akaka amendment to the FY 2005 Emergency Supplemental that would provide \$1.9 billion in much needed funding for veterans' health care.

Providing health care to returning servicemembers is an ongoing cost of our national defense. Servicemembers who participate in a theater of combat are eligible for health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs for two years after separation or release from active duty, without regard for strict eligibility rules. VA hospitals are facing budget deficits and moving to reduce services. Neither the Administration's FY 2006 budget request, nor the recently passed budget resolution, addresses the costs of providing needed health care. *The Independent Budget* has recommended an increase for VA health care of \$3.5 billion for FY 2006. This amendment would provide the funding needed to care for these returning veterans, as well as provide the resources the VA needs to meet shortfalls that are affecting veterans today.

We ask you to support this amendment and to provide the dollars needed to care for servicemembers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as all veterans who rely upon the VA to provide their health care.

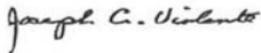
Sincerely,



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AMVETS



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