



**Fiscal Year 2017  
Appropriations Wins**

**Congressman Henry Cuellar  
28<sup>th</sup> Congressional District, TX**

# **Fiscal Year 2017 HOUSE Appropriations Wins**

### MILCON – VA (*Passed House*)

1. Improving access to rural veterans: Encourages the VA to explore and implement innovative uses of telemedicine for rural and infirmed veterans.

“The Committee remains concerned about rural veterans access to care and encourages the VA to explore and implement innovative uses of telemedicine to provide care for rural and infirmed veterans who do not have easy access to medical facilities.”

2. Public-Private Partnerships for VA Cemeteries: Authorizes states and local governments to establish partnerships to help defray the cost of operation and maintenance of a state Veterans’ cemetery in a rural area.

“*Public-private partnerships.*-- In order to provide a burial option to those veterans who may not have reasonable access to a national cemetery or State cemetery, the Committee encourages VA to prioritize funding under the State veterans cemetery grant program for the establishment of veterans cemeteries in rural and highly rural areas. Additionally, States and local governments are encouraged to utilize public-private partnerships that are currently available to help defray the cost of operation and maintenance of a State veterans’ cemetery.”

*Rural burial access.* – The Committee continues to be concerned that there are geographic pockets in the country that would qualify for the VA rural veterans burial grounds initiative, but which are not served because their State as a whole does not qualify for it. Since 8 percent of veterans live in areas that do not meet the VA goal of having access to a burial option within 75 miles of their home, the Committee requests a report not later than 90 days after enactment of this Act describing VA’s future plans to narrow the gap of veterans without reasonable access to burial. The Committee encourages VA to include in its plans consideration of options in which private entities would donate land to establish rural cemeteries and the establishment of satellite cemeteries.

3. HUD-VASH Program: Encouraging the VA to work with local social service agencies in rural and small communities.

“*HUD-VASH program.*- The Committee recognizes the important contributions the HUD-VASH program has made in reducing the number of homeless veterans and commends VA for implementing a case management system that keeps veterans housed longer by providing the supportive care many of them require. The Committee encourages VA to more creatively and collaboratively work with local social service agencies, especially in rural and small communities, to ensure that HUD-VASH voucher recipients are receiving the most comprehensive services available to them. Many jurisdictions around the country are implementing their own coordinated care initiatives alongside public housing programs, and in the interest of maximizing public investment and providing the best, most comprehensive care available, VA should seek to partner with local and State governments when possible. The Committee requests a report not later than 60 days after enactment of this Act identifying how many HUD-VASH vouchers are given to female veterans with children, female veterans without children, male veterans with

children, and male veterans without children in each State. The report should also include the number of HUD-VASH vouchers distributed to veterans in rural, suburban, and urban areas per State.”

4. Furniture and household items for formerly homeless veterans: Encouraging the VA to conduct a pilot-program to supply formerly homeless veterans with furniture, household items, and other assistance.

*“Related needs of homeless veterans.-While VA has made strides in reducing veteran homelessness, its program clients need additional support beyond shelter. The Committee remains interested in the feasibility, advisability and cost of VA conducting a pilot program to award grants to eligible organizations to provide furniture, household items, and other assistance to formerly homeless veterans who have transitioned to permanent housing. The Committee requests a report on this concept not later than 60 days after enactment of this Act.”*

5. Ensuring law enforcement adequately address the unique needs of veterans: Calling on the VA to implement a program designating a VA liaison to work with law enforcement to ensure veterans who are a threat to themselves or others are treated in a humane and respectful manner.

*“Law enforcement liaison. – The Department is urged to implement a program that would designate a VA liaison to work with local law enforcement to ensure that the subsequent needs of veterans who are considered an immediate threat to themselves and others are addressed in a humane and respectful manner.”*

6. HSI Affiliations with VA Health Care Facilities: Encourages the VA to work in collaboration with medical schools at HSI’s.

*“Hispanic-Serving Institution affiliations with VA health care facilities.-The Committee continues to be concerned by the lack of Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) medical school participation and collaboration with local VA hospitals in areas where HSI medical schools are located. The Committee urges the Secretary to develop a plan to expand local VA medical facilities’ participation with HSI medical schools.”*

7. Enforcement of Border Security: Encouraging the National Guard to work in partnership with state and local governments to design and construct facilities adjacent to our southwestern border and report back to the Committee.

*“Enforcement of border security.-Recognizing the need to bolster resources for the enforcement of border security, the Committee instructs the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard to implement public-private partnerships with state and local governments, to design, and construct facilities adjacent to our southwestern border that will support National Guard activities and house and support assets used by Customs and Border Protection and other law enforcement agencies for the terrestrial, maritime, and aerial surveillance of those borders, to include aircraft hangars suitable for unmanned aerial systems, and report back to the Committee not later than 180 days after the enactment of this Act.”*