

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1904

April 11, 2018

COMMITTEES:
SPECIAL COMMITTEE
ON AGING,
CHAIRMAN
APPROPRIATIONS
HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS
SELECT COMMITTEE
ON INTELLIGENCE

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boozman
Chairman
Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Brian Schatz
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Boozman, and Ranking
Member Schatz:

I respectfully submit the following requests for funding to be included in the Fiscal Year
(FY) 2019 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies appropriations bill and
report:

- 1) **Specific Department, Agency, or Bureau:** Navy
Appropriation Account: Military Construction, Navy
Program, Project, or Activity (PPA): Dry Dock #1 Superflood Basin (Program Element:
0703676N; Project Number: P310)
Amount Provided in the FY 2018 Enacted Bill: N/A
Amount in the President's FY 2019 Budget Request: \$110 million
Amount Requested by the Member (and corresponding change): \$110 million
Brief Explanation Justifying the Request: I support the FY 2019 PBR for \$110 million for
modernization of Dry Dock #1 at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard (PNSY). Currently, Dry Dock
#1 can only support Los Angeles-class submarines. As the Fleet moves to the Virginia-class,
without upgrades to Dry Dock #1, the Navy will lose a dry dock essential to the maintenance
and overhaul of nuclear submarines beyond 2021.
Language Request: N/A
Proposed Language: N/A
Staff Contact Name, Email Address and Direct Phone Number: Mike Wakefield,
mike_wakefield@collins.senate.gov, 202-224-3913.
- 2) **Specific Department, Agency, or Bureau:** Navy
Appropriation Account: Military Construction, Navy
Program, Project, or Activity (PPA): Extend Portal Crane Rail (Program Element:
0712876N; Project Number: P1074)

Amount Provided in the FY 2018 Enacted Bill: N/A

Amount in the President's FY 2019 Budget Request: \$39.7 million

Amount Requested by the Member (and corresponding change): \$39.7 million

Brief Explanation Justifying the Request: I support the FY 2019 PBR for \$39.7 million for to extend the portal crane at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard (PNSY). This critical project will enable PNSY to support the Navy's new 688 Class Service Life Extension Program (SLEP). Construction completion is required by August 2020 in order to test and certify the rail system prior to the crane delivery in October 2020. Funding will enable PNSY to increase efficacy and efficiency as it continues to repair and modernize Virginia-class submarines.

Language Request: N/A

Proposed Language: N/A

Staff Contact Name, Email Address and Direct Phone Number: Mike Wakefield, mike_wakefield@collins.senate.gov, 202-224-3913.

3) Specific Department, Agency, or Bureau: Navy

Appropriation Account: Military Construction, Navy

Program, Project, or Activity (PPA): Naval Shipyard Modernization Plan

Amount Provided in the FY 2018 Enacted Bill: N/A

Amount in the President's FY 2019 Budget Request: N/A

Amount Requested by the Member (and corresponding change): N/A

Brief Explanation Justifying the Request: I support the Navy's efforts to identify gaps in its public shipyard infrastructure and capital equipment. Therefore, I request that the committee urge the Navy to continue its focus on public shipyard infrastructure, particularly with respect to dry dock capacity, which is critically necessary to ensure that the Navy successfully completes expected fleet maintenance availabilities in the future. The proposed dry dock improvements at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard (PNSY) have a particularly high return on investment for the Navy, as the improvements to its dry dock #1 allow PNSY to conduct 27 of the total 68 deferred availabilities projected by the Navy in the absence of any improvements (or 40-percent of the total deferred availabilities).

Language Request: Report

Proposed Language: *The committee is aware of the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Plan submitted to Congress in February 2018. The plan seeks to, among other requirements, assess existing facilities for efficiencies and address future infrastructure requirements at public shipyards. It also includes a master plan for each shipyard, including, but not limited to, capital equipment and facility investment requirements. The committee believes the Navy's assessment of public shipyard dry dock capacity is particularly important, as it identifies 68 deferred maintenance availabilities under the status quo, 67 of which are restored upon making the public shipyard dry dock investments within the timeframe recommended by the plan. Accordingly, the Secretary of the Navy is directed to adequately prioritize the timely funding of public shipyard infrastructure, in particular dry dock and shore infrastructure necessary to support critical maintenance of surface and submarine fleets by public shipyards.*

Staff Contact Name, Email Address and Direct Phone Number: Mike Wakefield, mike_wakefield@collins.senate.gov, 202-224-3913.

- 4) **Specific Department, Agency, or Bureau:** Defense Logistics Agency
Appropriation Account: Military Construction, Defense-wide
Program, Project, or Activity (PPA): DLA – Consolidated Warehouse Replacement
Amount Provided in the FY 2018 Enacted Bill: N/A
Amount in the President’s FY 2019 Budget Request: \$11.6 million
Amount Requested by the Member (and corresponding change): \$11.6 million
Brief Explanation Justifying the Request: I support the FY19 PBR of \$11.6 million to replace an aging warehouse for DLA at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine.
Language Request: N/A
Proposed Language: N/A
Staff Contact Name, Email Address and Direct Phone Number: Mike Wakefield, mike_wakefield@collins.senate.gov, 202-224-3913.
- 5) **Department, Agency or Bureau:** Department of Veterans Affairs
Appropriation Account: Veterans Health Administration, Medical Services
Program, Project, or Activity (PPA): Office of Rural Health (ORH)
Amount Provided in the FY 2018 Enacted Bill: \$270 million
Amount in the President’s FY 2019 Budget Request: \$250 million
Amount Requested by the Member (and corresponding change): robust funding
Brief Explanation Justifying the Request: I support robust funding for ORH, which provides critical funding for veterans living in rural areas. ORH identifies and implements initiatives that support rural clinics and rural home-based primary care, funds initiatives focused on eliminating barriers and providing access to quality health care delivery in rural areas, develops workforce recruitment and retention initiatives, and accelerates and expands telehealth initiatives. ORH also operates Rural Health Resource Centers and works with federal and non-federal community partners to share resources and expand access to care for rural veterans.
Language Request: N/A
Proposed Language: N/A
Staff Contact Name, Email Address and Direct Phone Number: Mike Wakefield, mike_wakefield@collins.senate.gov, 202-224-3913.
- 6) **Department, Agency or Bureau:** Department of Veterans Affairs
Appropriation Account: Veterans Health Administration, Medical Services
Program, Project, or Activity (PPA): Caregivers for Veterans
Amount Provided in the FY 2018 Enacted Bill: \$840 million
Amount in the President’s FY 2019 Budget Request: \$510 million
Amount Requested by the Member (and corresponding change): robust funding
Brief Explanation Justifying the Request: I support robust funding for caregivers at a level sufficient to enable the VA to expand eligibility for the caregiver program to veterans who served prior to September 11, 2001. I am a lead sponsor of authorizing legislation which would remove this barrier to eligibility, a reform supported by numerous national veterans service organizations. Caregivers assume an enormous burden, providing a necessary continuum of care for veterans and shouldering costs that would otherwise be passed on to the government. Funds for caregivers will help provide some respite to these selfless

individuals and allow our nation to do more to support those caring for our wounded, ill, and injured warriors.

Language Request: N/A

Proposed Language: N/A

Staff Contact Name, Email Address and Direct Phone Number: Mike Wakefield,
mike_wakefield@collins.senate.gov, 202-224-3913.

- 7) **Department, Agency or Bureau:** Department of Veterans Affairs
Appropriation Account: Veterans Health Administration, Medical Services
Program, Project, or Activity (PPA): Homeless Veterans Initiatives
Amount Provided in the FY 2018 Enacted Bill: \$1.748 billion
Amount in the President's FY 2019 Budget Request: \$1.754 billion
Amount Requested by the Member (and corresponding change): \$1.754 billion
Brief Explanation Justifying the Request: I support the FY19 PBR of \$1.754 billion for programs to prevent and reduce veteran homelessness. Specifically, I support funding for the Grant and Per Diem Program, Supportive Services for Veterans Families, and funding for case management services for veterans receiving Section 8 rental assistance vouchers from the Department of Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing Program (HUD-VASH). Although veteran homelessness has reduced significantly since 2010, I am concerned by recent HUD data showing a 1.5 percent increase in veteran homelessness over 2016. While progress has been made in addressing veteran homelessness, continued investments are necessary to help eliminate the problem.
Language Request: Report
Proposed Language: *The agreement includes full funding for the HUD-VASH program. However, if additional new vouchers are issued in fiscal year 2019 by the Department of Housing and Urban Development for the HUD/VASH program. VA is directed to increase funding for this program above the budget estimate to ensure adequate staffing levels exist to manage the increased workload.*
Staff Contact Name, Email Address and Direct Phone Number: Mike Wakefield,
mike_wakefield@collins.senate.gov, 202-224-3913.
- 8) **Department, Agency or Bureau:** Department of Veterans Affairs
Appropriation Account: Veterans Health Administration, Medical Services
Program, Project, or Activity (PPA): Mental Health
Amount Provided in the FY 2018 Enacted Bill: \$8.4 billion
Amount in the President's FY 2019 Budget Request: \$8.6 billion
Amount Requested by the Member (and corresponding change): \$8.6 billion
Brief Explanation Justifying the Request: I support the FY19 PBR of \$8.6 billion for mental health services to ensure accessible, patient-centered, recovery-oriented mental health care services for veterans. While progress has been made in addressing veteran mental health issues, continued investments are necessary to sustain these critical services.
Language Request: N/A
Proposed Language: N/A
Staff Contact Name, Email Address and Direct Phone Number: Mike Wakefield,
mike_wakefield@collins.senate.gov, 202-224-3913.

- 9) **Department, Agency or Bureau:** Department of Veterans Affairs
Appropriation Account: Veterans Health Administration, Medical Services
Program, Project, or Activity (PPA): Women Veterans' Health Care
Amount Provided in the FY 2018 Enacted Bill: \$512 million
Amount in the President's FY 2019 Budget Request: \$511 million
Amount Requested by the Member (and corresponding change): robust funding
Brief Explanation Justifying the Request: I support robust funding for women veterans' health care. Women comprise approximately 15 percent of today's active duty military forces, and the number of women seeking VA health care services continues to grow. Continued funding will help to ensure women veterans have access to the care they need.
Language Request: N/A
Proposed Language: N/A
Staff Contact Name, Email Address and Direct Phone Number: Mike Wakefield, mike_wakefield@collins.senate.gov, 202-224-3913.
- 10) **Department, Agency or Bureau:** Department of Veterans Affairs
Appropriation Account: Veterans Health Administration, Medical Services
Program, Project, or Activity (PPA): Medical and Prosthetic Research Program
Amount Provided in the FY 2018 Enacted Bill: \$722.3 million
Amount in the President's FY 2019 Budget Request: \$727 million
Amount Requested by the Member (and corresponding change): \$727 million
Brief Explanation Justifying the Request: I support the FY19 PBR and the continued strong funding of the Medical and Prosthetic Research Program to facilitate and improve technological and medical solutions that will materially improve the lives of veterans.
Language Request: N/A
Proposed Language: N/A
Staff Contact Name, Email Address and Direct Phone Number: Mike Wakefield, mike_wakefield@collins.senate.gov, 202-224-3913.
- 11) **Department, Agency or Bureau:** Department of Veterans Affairs
Appropriation Account: Veterans Health Administration
Program, Project, or Activity (PPA): Veterans Choice
Amount Provided in the FY 2018 Enacted Bill: N/A
Amount in the President's FY 2019 Budget Request: \$1.9 billion
Amount Requested by the Member (and corresponding change): adequate funding
Brief Explanation Justifying the Request: I support adequate funding as appropriate to help VA transition from Veterans Choice to a successor community care program and ensure continuity of care for veterans who participated in the Access Received Closer to Home (ARCH) pilot in Maine. The Choice program has allowed veterans in northern Maine to continue accessing care in the community following the successful implementation of the ARCH pilot program. I look forward to continuing to work with VA and the committee to ensure veterans who participated in the ARCH pilot maintain continuity of care through the use of provider agreements or other similar mechanisms.
Language Request: Report
Proposed Language: *Rural Health Continuity of Care.--The Committee notes the Access Received Closer to Home [ARCH] pilot program was highly successful in some areas in*

providing healthcare services to veterans who live in the rural and highly rural States in which it operated, such as in northern Maine and in Kansas. During the pilot, VISN analysis demonstrated that more than 90 percent of veterans who received medical care through ARCH were "completely satisfied" with their care and cited significantly shortened travel and wait times to receive care. Furthermore, the Committee is pleased the Department has made efforts to provide continuous, ARCH-like access to rural healthcare in northern Maine through the use of provider agreements. As the Department transitions away from the Choice Program to a reformed community care program, the Committee directs the Secretary to sustain continuity of care for rural veterans through provider agreements, based on previous models such as the ARCH program, to ensure veterans do not experience a lapse in existing healthcare access during the transition to the new community care program and any resulting integrated networks.

Staff Contact Name, Email Address and Direct Phone Number: Mike Wakefield, mike_wakefield@collins.senate.gov, 202-224-3913.

12) Department, Agency or Bureau: Department of Veterans Affairs

Appropriation Account: Veterans Health Administration, Medical Services

Program, Project, or Activity (PPA): Medical and Prosthetic Research Program

Amount Provided in the FY 2018 Enacted Bill: N/A

Amount in the President's FY 2019 Budget Request: N/A

Amount Requested by the Member (and corresponding change): N/A

Brief Explanation Justifying the Request: Many veterans served on Enewetak Atoll between 1977 and 1980 to clean up fallout from nuclear weapons testing conducted in the 1950s. Hundreds of these veterans now suffer health problems, such as brittle bones, cancer, and birth defects in their children. I sponsored legislation directing the VA to establish a registry of veterans who participated in the Enewetak cleanup and conduct an independent study on potential toxic exposures to such veterans.

Language Request: Report

Proposed Language: *Enewetak Atoll Registry Research. – The Committee is aware that thousands of veterans served on the Enewetak Atoll to clean up the island following its use for nuclear weapons testing. The Committee is also aware of many instances of veterans who conducted the cleanup suffering serious health problems, such as brittle bones, cancers, and birth defects in their children. The Committee urges the Department to study whether there is a connection between certain illnesses and the potential exposure of individuals to radiation related to service at Enewetak Atoll between January 1, 1977, and December 31, 1980.*

Staff Contact Name, Email Address and Direct Phone Number: Mike Wakefield, mike_wakefield@collins.senate.gov, 202-224-3913.

13) Department, Agency or Bureau: Department of Veterans Affairs

Appropriation Account: Veterans Health Administration, Medical Services

Program, Project, or Activity (PPA): Medical and Prosthetic Research Program

Amount Provided in the FY 2018 Enacted Bill: N/A

Amount in the President's FY 2019 Budget Request: N/A

Amount Requested by the Member (and corresponding change): N/A

Brief Explanation Justifying the Request: Many veterans contend they have suffered from health problems as a result of being exposed to the herbicide Agent Orange during military

training at Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Gagetown. For years, veterans who trained at Gagetown have attempted to gain recognition from the VA that their health problems stem from exposure to Agent Orange, which was previously sprayed there in 1966 and 1967. From the 1950s through the 1980s, fields at the base, which specialized in heavy artillery training, were sprayed with chemical herbicides and defoliants including a small amount of Agent Orange. Members of the Maine National Guard regularly trained at CFB Gagetown during this period.

Language Request: Report

Proposed Language: *Canadian Forces Base Gagetown.--The Committee is aware that many National Guard veterans engaged in training activities at Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Gagetown in the 1950s and 1960s. The Committee is also aware that Veterans Affairs Canada approved one-time, lump sum payments to eligible veterans exposed to Agent Orange and other defoliants who served at CFB Gagetown, and that veterans who served there between June 20 and June 24, 1964, are currently eligible for an Agent Orange Registry Health Exam from the Veterans Health Administration. The Committee urges the Department to establish and maintain a health registry for veterans who were stationed or underwent training at CFB Gagetown between 1956 and 2006 and who have subsequently experienced health problems which may be attributed to Agent Orange or other defoliants. The Committee further urges the Department to commission an independent study tasked with investigating the linkage between service at Gagetown and the development of health problems and disease associated with exposure to Agent Orange.*

Staff Contact Name, Email Address and Direct Phone Number: Mike Wakefield, mike_wakefield@collins.senate.gov, 202-224-3913.

14) Department, Agency or Bureau: Department of Veterans Affairs

Appropriation Account: Veterans Health Administration, Construction

Program, Project, or Activity (PPA): Grants for State Veterans Homes

Amount Provided in the FY 2018 Enacted Bill: \$110 million + \$575 million

Amount in the President's FY 2019 Budget Request: \$150 million

Amount Requested by the Member (and corresponding change): robust funding

Brief Explanation Justifying the Request: I request robust funding for grants to assist states in acquiring or constructing state veterans' homes. These grant opportunities are important to ensure that each State Veterans Home facility continues to meet VA's standards and delivers the highest caliber of care to veterans.

Language Request: N/A

Proposed Language: N/A

Staff Contact Name, Email Address and Direct Phone Number: Mike Wakefield, mike_wakefield@collins.senate.gov, 202-224-3913.

15) Department, Agency or Bureau: Department of Veterans Affairs

Appropriation Account: Veterans Health Administration, Medical Services

Program, Project, or Activity (PPA): Reproductive Services

Amount Provided in the FY 2018 Enacted Bill: N/A

Amount in the President's FY 2019 Budget Request: N/A

Amount Requested by the Member (and corresponding change): N/A

Brief Explanation Justifying the Request: I support continued authority for VA to provide reproductive services, including in vitro fertilization, to service-connected catastrophically disabled veterans whose injuries preclude their ability to conceive.

Language Request: Bill

Proposed Language: Language authorizing the use of VA healthcare funds for reproductive services, similar to Sec. 236 of Division J of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018.

Staff Contact Name, Email Address and Direct Phone Number: Mike Wakefield, mike_wakefield@collins.senate.gov, 202-224-3913.

16) Department, Agency or Bureau: Department of Veterans Affairs

Appropriation Account: Veterans Health Administration, Medical Services

Program, Project, or Activity (PPA): Advance Appropriations for FY 2020

Amount Provided in the FY 2018 Enacted Bill: \$49.2 billion (for FY19)

Amount in the President's FY 2019 Budget Request: \$79.1 billion

Amount Requested by the Member (and corresponding change): \$79.1 billion

Brief Explanation Justifying the Request: I support the advance appropriations requested in the PBR for medical services, medical support and compliance, and medical facilities to ensure certainty and continuity of funding for the delivery of medical care for veterans.

Language Request: N/A

Proposed Language: N/A

Staff Contact Name, Email Address and Direct Phone Number: Mike Wakefield, mike_wakefield@collins.senate.gov, 202-224-3913.

17) Department, Agency or Bureau: Department of Veterans Affairs

Appropriation Account: Veterans Benefits Administration

Program, Project, or Activity (PPA): Advance Appropriations for FY 2020

Amount Provided in the FY 2018 Enacted Bill: \$95.8 billion (for FY19)

Amount in the President's FY 2019 Budget Request: \$79.1 billion

Amount Requested by the Member (and corresponding change): \$79.1 billion

Brief Explanation Justifying the Request: I support the advanced appropriations requested in the budget for important benefits programs such as Compensation and Pensions, Readjustment Benefits, and Insurance and Indemnities.

Language Request: N/A

Proposed Language: N/A

Staff Contact Name, Email Address and Direct Phone Number: Mike Wakefield, mike_wakefield@collins.senate.gov, 202-224-3913.

18) Department, Agency or Bureau: All

Appropriation Account: Offices of the Inspector General (OIG)

Program, Project, or Activity (PPA): OIG Programs

Amount Provided in the FY 2018 Enacted Bill: N/A

Amount in the President's FY 2019 Budget Request: N/A

Amount Requested by the Member (and corresponding change): adequate funding

Brief Explanation Justifying the Request: OIGs are an indispensable tool in the fight against waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement. Through its partnership with OIGs across the government, Congress has been able to identify and reduce inefficient, ineffective, and

improperly functioning federal programs. Given their importance, I support adequately funding of all the OIGs contained in the bill to ensure proper oversight is conducted and taxpayer dollars are appropriately spent by the federal government.

Proposed Language: N/A

Staff Contact Name, Email Address and Direct Phone Number: Mike Wakefield,
mike_wakefield@collins.senate.gov, 202-224-3913.

Recognizing the significant budget challenges facing our nation, I appreciate your consideration of these requests and look forward to working with you as you develop the FY 2019 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill. If you have any questions about these requests, please contact me or have your staff contact Mike Wakefield on my staff at 202-224-3913 or mike_wakefield@collins.senate.gov.

Sincerely,


Susan M. Collins
United States Senator