

June 2nd, 2011

WASHINGTON- House Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Rep. Norm Dicks gave the following statement on the House floor during consideration of the Military Construction, VA Appropriations bill for FY2012 (H.R.2055):

"We all acknowledge the challenges facing the nation today with respect to the debt and deficit, and I believe this bill has done a commendable job addressing these fiscal challenges while ensuring that we are not impacting the level of care and benefits that our service members have so rightfully earned.

"Military Construction is funded at \$14 billion, which is \$2.6 billion below the FY11 enacted amount and \$752 million below the President's Request. The subcommittee achieved these cuts through incremental funding of projects and by eliminating funding for several projects that were ahead of need. As Ranking Member Bishop noted, this bill makes a strong investment in Defense Department Schools by investing \$483 million for construction and replacement of sub standard facilities. I have been a strong advocate for the modernization of schools serving the children of our nation's servicemembers and I commend the Chairman and Ranking Member on their commitment to this effort.

"The Department of Veterans Affairs would be funded at \$58.3 billion in discretionary spending, which is \$1.85 billion above the FY11 enacted level and \$476 million below the President's Request. Most of this funding is for veteran's medical services. The recommendation provides full funding of \$69.5 billion for the mandatory VA programs providing compensation and pensions, educational benefits, vocational rehabilitation, life insurance and housing loan programs. I'd like to commend the Chairman and Ranking Member for their efforts to ensure that our Nation's veterans are well taken care of by maintaining adequate funding for veterans healthcare and other benefits on which so many have come to count on.

"Again, I am pleased overall with the funding levels proposed in this bill today, and am pleased that during the Full Committee markup we were able to remove a contentious and divisive restriction on implementation of Davis Bacon wage requirements. But unfortunately, there is one item that I believe will complicate the passage of this bill. I am troubled by the inclusion of a provision that prohibits the use of Project Labor Agreements for any project in this bill. This

divisive policy rider should not be included in an appropriations bill, and the decision to implement PLA's should remain at the discretion of the agency as to whether it is appropriate for an individual project. The inclusion of this provision unnecessarily complicates the support for a bill that would otherwise pass with wide bipartisan support. I expect an amendment to be offered that would remove this restriction on PLA's and would further improve this bill—I would like to urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support such an amendment.

"Regardless, I remain committed to working with my colleagues to respectfully work out these differences on the floor so that we may pass a bipartisan bill that adequately provides for our troops, veterans and military families."

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