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Rep. Bishop Statement After Full Committee Markup of the FY 2012 Milcon/VA Appropriations Bill

WASHINGTON – Rep. Sanford D. Bishop, Jr. (D-GA), the Ranking Member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies released the following statement after the House Appropriations Committee approved the FY 2012 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Subcommittee bill by voice vote. The bill now moves to the full House of Representatives for consideration.

"The House Appropriations Committee has a strong history of working across party lines to provide our military with the tools it needs to defend our country. And we have always provided the resources to care for our service members, their families and our veterans. There was bipartisan consensus on the key elements of this bill, and for the first time in several years, we were able to find real savings without compromising resources for benefits, care and services.

"I was pleased that the bill included more than \$90 million for construction at Fort Benning, including critical funding to replace McBride Elementary School and a new trainee barracks complex. I was also pleased that the bill restated the subcommittee's support for joint health care facilities between the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and that it directed GAO to assess the benefits and potential savings of joint DoD/VA health care facilities across the country.

"We have huge fiscal challenges but this bill is proof that Democrats and Republicans can come together and cut spending in a smart and effective way. I was pleased that the committee voted to block a controversial effort to repeal the Davis-Bacon provisions from the bill. The Davis Bacon Act requires that workers on federal construction projects of more than \$2,000 be paid no less than the wages paid in the community for similar work. Comparative studies have shown that removing this requirement for local prevailing wages would not save money.

"Unfortunately, the inclusion of language to limit project labor agreements could complicate final passage of this bill. I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to work out these differences and produce a bipartisan bill that will provide the support that our troops, our veterans and their families deserve."

"Funding in the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies fiscal year 2012 appropriation bill totals \$142 billion and is \$1.2 billion below the FY 2012 budget request. The bill includes \$72.5 billion in discretionary spending and \$69.5 billion in mandatory spending.

"Specifically, the bill includes 14.0 billion, for the Military Construction programs, \$58.3 billion is discretionary funding for Veteran Affairs, \$69.5 billion for mandatory VA programs and \$205.4 million to fund the Related Agencies under the committee's jurisdiction. The related agencies funded in this bill include the American Battle Monuments Commission, the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, Army Cemeterial Expenses (including Arlington National Cemetery) and the Armed Forces Retirement Home."

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