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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 passed H.R. 2055, which provides funding for military construction projects, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies under the Subcommittee's jurisdiction. The bill passed by a vote of 411 to 5.

"The House of Representatives came together in a bi-partisan fashion today to provide our military with the tools it needs to defend our country. We have always provided the resources to care for our service members, their families and our veterans, 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 funding to build or replace 15 DoD schools, six in the United States and nine at installations overseas. Providing these funds will not only help the children of our service members get a quality education in a safe facility, but it will also give our service members and their families some peace of mind.

"The bill also included critical funding to replace the Regional Medical Center in Landstuhl, Germany with a modern facility that can provide state-of-the-art care to wounded service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and personnel stationed in the region. In addition, 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 it directed GAO to assess the benefits and potential savings of joint DoD/VA health care facilities across the country.

"We have no greater obligation than to care for our veterans, and we provide adequate funding

in this bill to help the VA deliver the best medical care and facilities possible to those who have served our country. I was also pleased that the House voted to strip language from the bill that would have prohibited the use of project labor agreements. The use of project labor agreements in appropriate circumstances can make the federal contracting process more efficient, and ensure that construction projects are built correctly the first time, on time and without cost overruns.

"I enjoyed working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to pass a good bill that will provide the support that our troops, our veterans and their families deserve. 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 look forward to working with the Senate to get a bill to the President that he can sign into law as quickly as possible."

"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 in 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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