

News Flash

Vietnam Veterans of America

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Chairman Takano on COVID-19 Relief Legislation: “This funding will save veterans’ lives.”

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs Chairman Mark Takano (D-Calif.) spoke on the House floor in favor of the Senate amendment to HR 748 “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, or CARES Act.” See a video of Chairman Takano’s floor speech [here](#) and his remarks as prepared below.

Chairman Takano’s remarks as prepared:

Mr. Speaker,

I rise in support of S. 748 the CARES Act.

571 veterans in the VA’s healthcare system have tested positive for the coronavirus. We have already lost 9 veterans to this virus. 120 veterans have been admitted to VA hospitals. 18 employees, including doctors and nurses providing lifesaving health care to veterans with coronavirus, have also been infected.

Because of the lack of widespread testing due to supply chain challenges like low levels of reagents, shortages of swabs and testing kits, a dwindling supply of masks to protect health care workers, understaffed VA hospitals without providers to administer the tests, and a 7 day lag for veterans to receive results—we know that the magnitude of this public health emergency and the number of veterans sickened by this deadly virus are underreported. This situation will only become more severe in the weeks to come.

*Providing nearly \$20 billion to VA to combat this virus is vital. **This funding will save veterans’ lives, protect VA’s health care providers and first responders, and give VA the resources it needs to serve as the nation’s backup health care system in communities where local hospitals are overwhelmed with coronavirus patients.***

This relief package provides nearly \$16 billion in funding for VA to provide health care to veterans, including the purchase of essential medical supplies like ventilators. VA will have the funds to purchase more COVID-19 testing kits, N95 masks, gowns, face shields, and gloves—personal protective equipment—to keep health care providers and staff at VA hospitals safe. Health care providers and workers caring for veterans in their homes, at VA-run nursing homes, community living centers, and State Veteran homes will also receive personal protective equipment.

\$100 million is allocated for emergency management so VA first responders have the resources they need to help veterans and communities during this public health emergency.

\$590 million is set aside for veterans most vulnerable to COVID-19: homeless veterans and elderly veterans in community living centers and assisted living facilities.

Over \$2 billion is provided to support VA's IT systems and strengthen VA's telework capabilities. Greater telework capacity reduces the risk of coronavirus transmission in VA workforce and keeps the Department running.

Over \$600 million is set aside for VA to retrofit its hospitals and clinics to increase the number of beds and treatment rooms to care for veterans with COVID-19 and deploy mobile treatment units.

Over \$2 billion is appropriated for veterans who need urgent or emergency care in the community for COVID-19.

Finally, this funding ensures the VA health care providers putting their lives on the line to care for veterans are paid for the overtime hours they work.

This relief package also makes veteran owned small business owners eligible for loans to help their employees and keep their businesses afloat and prevents veterans from losing their homes to foreclosure. And it ensures veterans who receive stimulus checks remain eligible for pension and means-based VA benefits.

This package is far from perfect, but there is so much in this legislation that is critical to helping veterans and ordinary Americans survive this pandemic. I expect there will be more legislation to ensure no veterans or Americans are left behind. I urge all my colleagues to support this relief package.

Thank you Mr. Speaker, I yield back.

Source: <https://veterans.house.gov/news/press-releases/chairman-takano-on-covid-19-relief-legislation-this-funding-will-save-veterans-lives>