

# THE INDEPENDENT BUDGET

## Veterans Agenda for the 116th Congress

### Policy Recommendations for Congress and the Administration

#### Expanding VA's Capacity to Provide Care

With VA reporting over 45,000 vacancies in its August 31, 2018, report to Congress, it is imperative that VA be provided adequate resources and additional tools to make VA the preferred employer for medical professionals. The VA MISSION Act contains numerous provisions to strengthen, expand, and create new programs, including the VA Health Professional Scholarship Program, Education Debt Reduction Program, VA Specialty Education Loan Program, Veterans

Healing Veterans Medical Access and Scholarship Program, Recruitment, Relocation, and Retention Bonuses, and Pilot Program on Graduate Medical Education and Residency. Additionally, the law expands VA's authority to operate telehealth programs across state lines and requires VA to develop new health care programs specifically targeted to rural and underserved areas, both of which must remain priorities for VA.

#### Recommendation

- VA must fully and faithfully implement the provisions of the VA MISSION Act that would enhance VA's ability to hire quality medical personnel, as well as provisions to expand VA care to rural and underserved areas.

It remains imperative that VA continue to improve its hiring process and pay standards, and Congress continue to invest in expanding VA's internal capacity to provide care to enrolled veterans since it was lack of capacity that caused the access crisis in the first place.