

**STATEMENT OF THE
RICHARD B. FULLER, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR
PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA
FOR THE RECORD OF THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH OF THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
CONCERNING THE
"VETERANS' MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITIES CONSTRUCTION
ACT OF 2000"**

APRIL 24, 2002

The Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) appreciates the opportunity to express our views on the "Veterans' Major Medical Facilities Construction Act of 2002." PVA supports this measure.

Last year, PVA enthusiastically supported H.R. 811, the “Veterans’ Hospital Emergency Repair Act.” We testified that:

A study conducted by Price-Waterhouse in 1998 recommended that in order for the VA to protect its facility assets against deterioration and to maintain an adequate and appropriate level of building services, 2 to 4 percent of the assets’ replacement value should be spent each year for facility improvements, and another 2 to 4 percent should be expended for nonrecurring maintenance. The VA’s total facility assets are valued at approximately \$35 billion. Hence, according to the study, the VA should be spending \$700 million to \$1.4 billion annually, as well as a similar amount for nonrecurring maintenance.

We also stated that “the physical infrastructure of the VA is indeed facing an emergency. With further inaction, a valuable and irreplaceable national asset will be lost, for without health care buildings you do not have a health care system.” We appreciate this Subcommittee’s hard work on this important issue.

Again this year, *The Independent Budget* called for an additional \$250 million to repair seismic deficiencies in VA buildings. We are pleased that this measure authorizes \$285 million for projects in FY 2003, the vast majority involving seismic deficiencies. We also appreciate the Subcommittee’s inclusion of raising the \$4 million cap on minor construction to \$6 million. *The Independent Budget* has recommended that this level be raised to \$16 million in order to better finance the scope of many needed construction projects. PVA also applauds the Subcommittee for its explicit recognition of the importance of spinal cord injury centers, specialized services programs, and medical research within the scope of the “Veterans’ Major Medical Facilities Construction Act of 2002.”

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, PVA wants to state unequivocally that these much needed construction funds must not come at the expense of, or out of the medical care budget line-item that provides direct health care services to veterans. The VA medical system is facing a crisis, a crisis brought about by inadequate funding, a crisis that has lead to health care rationing and shocking waiting times faced by veterans all across this nation. The solution to this crisis lies in providing the funding required by VA health care in the medical care account. The crisis facing VA infrastructure, likewise, will be solved by providing the necessary additional resources in the construction line-item.

PVA wishes to again thank this Subcommittee and offer our support to see the “Veterans’ Major Medical Facilities Construction Act of 2002” enacted into law.

RICHARD B. FULLER

Richard B. Fuller is the National Legislative Director of the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), a non-profit veterans service organization chartered by the United States Congress to represent the interests of its members, veterans with spinal cord injury or dysfunction, and all Americans with disabilities. PVA's primary legislative focus centers on issues supporting the Department of Veterans Affairs health care system and the specialized services VA provides to PVA members. He is responsible for coordinating the organization's legislative and oversight activities on all veterans' benefits and services, as well as oversight on all federal health systems – Medicare and Medicaid – and research activities which benefit veterans as well as all Americans with disabilities.

Mr. Fuller served for eight years on the professional staff of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the U.S. House of Representatives with primary responsibilities in areas of veterans' health and education legislation. Since 1987, he has worked in the field of public policy and government relations, specializing in health policy for a wide variety of health advocacy, consumer health research and provider non-profit organizations in Washington, DC.

Mr. Fuller was Director of Public Affairs of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs from 1979-1981. He served on the professional staff of the Subcommittee on Education, Training and Employment and for the Subcommittee on Hospitals and Health Care until 1987. In 1987, he joined the national government relation's staff of PVA, serving first as Associate Legislative Director, and then as National Legislative Director. In 1991, he joined a Washington D.C. health care consulting firm representing the public policy and legislative interests of several national medical and research societies, including: the American Federation for Clinical Research; the American Gastroenterological Association; the American Geriatrics Society; and the National Association of Veterans Research and Education Foundations. He returned to PVA in 1993 to lead the organization's outreach efforts on national and state health-care reform.

Mr. Fuller graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Duke University in 1968. He served in the United States Air Force from 1968-1972, stationed two and one-half years in Vietnam and Southeast Asia as an aircrew Vietnamese linguist with the Air Force Security Service.

Information Required by Rule XI 2(g)(4) of the House of Representatives

Pursuant to Rule XI 2(g)(4) of the House of Representatives, the following information is provided regarding federal grants and contracts.

Fiscal Year 2002

Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, administered by the Legal Services Corporation — National Veterans Legal Services Program— \$179,000 (estimated).

Fiscal Year 2001

Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, administered by the Legal Services Corporation — National Veterans Legal Services Program— \$242,000.

Fiscal Year 2000

General Services Administration —Preparation and presentation of seminars regarding implementation of the Americans With Disabilities Act , 42 U.S.C. §12101, and requirements of the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards — \$30,000.

Federal Aviation Administration – Accessibility consultation -- \$12,500.

Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, administered by the Legal Services Corporation — National Veterans Legal Services Program— \$200,000.