

JOHN BOOZMAN

United States Senator *for* ARKANSAS

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Boozman Bulletin: The Recipe for Government Funding

I've been calling for Congress to break the cycle of continuing resolutions and omnibus spending deals for quite some time. For too long we've relied on these short-sighted solutions to fund the government rather than approving all 12 individual appropriations bills on an annual basis. I'm pleased to see that there is a renewed commitment to return to this regular process.

Yesterday the Senate passed a trio of appropriations bills in a package that included funding that supports military construction and veterans' benefit programs. As chairman of the Senate Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies (MilCon-VA) Subcommittee, I am proud of the bill we crafted that supports critical housing, infrastructure and facilities for U.S. military forces and their families and also provides increased funding for veterans' health care and benefits.

For months, the Senate Appropriations Committee has held hearings with agency officials about the funding needs for the next fiscal year which starts in October. We've crafted appropriations bills that return predictability to agency leaders and reflect today's priorities.

These bills allow us to respond to situations and take action to address current problems. It's especially timely that we make improvements to VA policies to ensure we have procedures in place to prevent tragedies that result from physician misconduct. We have unfortunately seen this happen – both in Arkansas at the Fayetteville VA Medical Center and in other facilities around the country. The legislation passed by the Senate requires the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit a departmental response plan to Congress that can be applied in Fayetteville and all future cases of disclosures and provide recommendations about changes necessary to prevent such incidents.

Keeping the promise we made to our veterans is an important responsibility of the federal government. This bill reflects this commitment by increasing resources to prevent veteran suicide, increasing rural access to healthcare, supporting critical mental health programs, preventing veteran homelessness and providing robust funding for innovative medical research.

Debating and passing these funding bills is a basic responsibility of the federal government that provides accountability and transparency to the American people. Having the ability to amend these bills before the full chamber allows all senators a voice in the spending process, regardless of whether or not they serve on the Appropriations Committee.

Before signing the Fiscal Year 2018 spending bill in March, President Trump made it clear that he would not approve another last-minute funding package. I am hopeful that we are on a path that returns us to regular order so that we can avoid that situation.



Misconduct at Fayetteville VA Medical Center: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced last week that one of its pathologists at the Fayetteville VA Medical Center was found to be [impaired while at work](#). This doctor has since been terminated, but the VA's Office of Inspector General found this physician misdiagnosed patients. The VA is notifying patients and has setup a call center to answer questions about the review process. Veterans who have questions or concerns can call 479-582-7995 or 866-388-5428. Understandably, veterans and their families who receive care at the Fayetteville VAMC are frustrated and concerned about

whether these misdiagnoses affect them. I am committed to getting answers for impacted veterans and their families and making sure the VA holds accountable those individuals responsible for this misconduct to prevent this from happening again. This week the Senate passed a bill that included a provision I authored that would require a [VA plan for future disclosures](#) in light of this incident.

Quick Takes:

- **Keeping Families Together:** We can strictly enforce our immigration laws, end 'catch and release' practices and secure our borders without separating families. I helped introduce the [Keep Families Together and Enforce the Law Act](#) which, among other things, addresses the treatment of accompanied minors and families at the border by requiring families to be kept together at residential centers pending the outcome of their civil or criminal immigration proceeding.
- **Certainty for Arkansas Agricultural Producers:** The Senate Committee on Agriculture recently passed a bipartisan Farm Bill. I worked with my colleagues on the committee to [ensure this legislation meets the needs of Arkansas farmers and ranchers](#) and will continue those efforts as the Senate debates the Farm Bill this week.
- **Supporting States Laws to End Government Funding of Planned Parenthood:** As a strong believer in the sanctity of life, I am committed to defending those who can't defend themselves. That's why I joined my colleagues in filing a court brief asking the Supreme Court review a case ruling that bars states from [prohibiting taxpayer funding for Planned Parenthood through Medicaid](#).
- **Deterring Russian Aggression:** The Senate passed the *National Defense Authorization Act* last week. The legislation provides our troops with the resources, equipment and training they need to keep Americans safe at home and abroad. The Senate approved the inclusion of a provision I introduced to help us prepare for the [serious threats Russia poses](#) to our allies and interests in Eastern Europe.
- **Highlighting the Positive Impact of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act:** Last week marked the six-month anniversary of the signing of the *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act* into law. I [spoke about how tax reform is helping hardworking Arkansans](#) keep more of their money in their own pockets and delivering results that are helping middle class Americans succeed.
- **Preserving Arkansas History:** The National Park Service (NPS) has determined

the [Butterfield Overland Trail](#) – which carried the longest stagecoach operation in history and traveled through a significant portion of Arkansas – meets the requirements to become a National Historic Trail. I am pleased to see that NPS agrees this trail merits preservation for future generations.

- **Mobile Office Hours:** My staff is hosting mobile office events in Pine Bluff and Hope this week. Get [more information about these events here](#). You're invited to come and speak with my staff. They'll be happy to help you.
- **Connect on Social Media:** Stay up to date with what I'm doing for Arkansans via social media. You can find me on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).



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