

On February 7, 2005, President Bush released his proposed FY 2006 budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs. The budget provides \$28.1 billion for veterans' health care, well short of the funding necessary to pay for health care for all eligible veterans. To compensate for the funding shortfall, the budget proposes to raise billions of dollars by charging millions of veterans a \$250 annual enrollment fee and doubling their copayments for prescription drugs.

President Bush's VA budget seeks to raise the fees paid by the two large classes of veterans: the so-called "Priority 7" and "Priority 8" veterans. Priority 7 veterans are veterans whose injuries are not service-related and whose income is more than \$24,644 (\$29,576 for a veteran with a dependent) but less than 80% of the community's median income. Priority 8 veterans are veterans whose injuries are not service related and whose incomes are higher than Priority 7 veterans. There are 2.4 million Priority 7 and Priority 8 veterans nationwide, representing 45% of the veterans currently receiving VA health care

One of President Bush's proposals would charge all Priority 7 and Priority 8 veterans in the VA system a \$250 annual enrollment fee in order to receive care. A second provision would increase prescription drug copayments for Priority 7 and Priority 8 veterans who are receiving VA care. The copayments for prescription drugs would more than double, increasing from \$7 to \$15 per 30-day prescription.

These new fees will have a dramatic impact on veterans. According to Bush Administration estimates, they will force over one million veterans, almost half of the Priority 7 and Priority 8 veterans, to drop out of the VA healthcare system. And veterans who remain in the VA healthcare system will be forced to pay hundreds of dollars annually in new costs.

Documents and Links

- [Sample Report: Maryland's 7th District for Rep. Elijah Cummings](#)
- [Sample Report: Oregon's 5th District for Rep. Darlene Hooley](#)
- [Sample Report: California's 29th District for Rep. Adam B. Schiff](#)
- [State-by-State Data on the Veterans Health Care](#)