

**Washington, DC** - Congressman John Barrow (GA-12) announced today that the Augusta VA Medical Center will be receiving \$2.4 million in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The funds will be used to renovate and modernize inpatient wards (\$1.4 million) and to renovate an area for a Position Electron Transformation/CAT Scanner (\$1 million.) In addition, the VA will make a one-time payment of \$250 dollars to eligible veterans and survivors to mitigate the effects of the current economy. The VA estimates that \$700 million in payments will be made, with payments beginning in June 2009.

“These funds have two positive benefits: They're going to construction projects that'll put folks to work, and the results will mean better care for the men and women who serve this country,” said Barrow. “The veterans in our community deserve the best facilities and services available, and this is just one step in that direction.

“Also, I'm glad that veterans are going to get some money in their hands during these hard times. No one's going to get well on this amount of money, but it will help everyone some, and it'll help the ones who need it the most a lot.”

The VA is funding \$1.4 billion worth of projects through the Recovery Act. Recovery Act funding through the VA is being targeted to improve medical facilities and national cemeteries, provide grants to assist states in acquiring or constructing state nursing homes and domiciliaries, and to remodel, modify, or alter existing facilities to care for veterans.

Funds from ARRA will also be used to hire and train temporary claims processors, and to

pursue needed information technology initiatives.

To be eligible for the \$250 payment, VA beneficiaries must have received compensation, pension, dependency and indemnity compensation, or spina bifida benefits at any time between November 2008 and January 2009. Also, beneficiaries must reside within the United States or Puerto Rico, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, or the U.S. Virgin Islands.

No application is necessary. VA will use its existing payment records to determine eligibility to the \$250 payment. Beneficiaries will receive their payments in the same way they receive their monthly VA benefits (either by direct deposit or mail). The VA will inform beneficiaries and the public when releasing the payments. This payment does not count in determining eligibility for VA pension or Parents' DIC, and the Internal Revenue Service can't tax this payment.

The law allows only one \$250 payment per individual. VA beneficiaries who also receive benefits from the Social Security Administration or Railroad Retirement Board will be paid through those agencies, instead of the VA.

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