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Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

April 9, 2009

**President Obama Announces the Creation of a Joint Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record**

Taking Care of America's Greatest Strategic Asset and Improving the Health Care System for America's Veterans

WASHINGTON – Today, the President, along with Secretary Gates and Secretary Shinseki, announced that the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs have taken the first step in creating a Joint Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record. Currently, there is no comprehensive system in place that allows for a streamlined transition of health care records between DOD and the VA. Both Departments will work together to define and build a system that will ultimately contain administrative and medical information from the day an individual enters military service throughout their military career, and after they leave the military.

Access to electronic records is essential to modern health care delivery and the paperless administration of benefits. It provides a framework to ensure that all health care providers have all the information they need to deliver high-quality health care while reducing medical errors. The creation of this Joint Virtual Lifetime Record by the two organizations would take the next leap to delivering seamless, high-quality care, and serve as a model for the nation.

The President understands that those who serve and have served our country in uniform are America's greatest strategic asset. The President's commitment to the sacred trust we have with those who serve is clear in both the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs budgets and in the strong leadership of Secretaries Gates and Shinseki.

The President believes that the quality of care that our veterans receive should never be hindered by budget delays. He has shared this concern with Secretary Shinseki, and they have worked together to support advanced funding of veterans medical care. What that means is a timely and predictable flow of funding from year to year, but more importantly, that means better care for our veterans. The President was pleased to see that the Senate-passed budget supported this concept in a bipartisan manner.

The Department of Defense Budget will:

- Fully protect and properly fund the growth in military end strength in the base budget. This means completing the growth in the Army and Marines while halting reductions in the Air Force and the Navy.
- Continue the steady growth in medical research and development by requesting \$400 million more than last year.
- Recognize the critical and permanent nature of wounded, ill and injured, traumatic brain injury, and psychological health programs. This means institutionalizing and properly funding these efforts in the base budget and increasing overall spending by \$300 million. The department will spend over \$47 billion on healthcare in FY10.
- Increase funding by \$200 million for improvements in child care, spousal support, lodging, and education.

The Department of Veterans Affairs Budget will:

- Increase funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs by \$25 billion above baseline over the next five years.
- Dramatically increase funding for veterans health care.
- Expand eligibility for veterans' health care to over 500,000 veterans who were previously denied care by 2013.
- Enhance outreach and services related to mental health care and cognitive injuries, including post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury, with a focus on access for veterans in rural areas.
- Invest in better technology to deliver services and benefits to veterans with the quality and efficiency they deserve.
- Provide greater benefits to veterans who are medically retired from service.
- Combat homelessness by safeguarding vulnerable veterans.
- Facilitate timely implementation of the comprehensive education benefits that veterans earn through their dedicated military service.

You are Here: [Home](#) > The Briefing Room

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[The Blog](#)  
[Your Weekly Address](#)  
[Slideshows](#)  
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[Official Statements](#)  
[Press Briefings](#)  
[Press Releases](#)  
[Presidential Actions](#)  
[Nominations & Appointments](#)

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[Civil Rights](#)  
[Defense](#)  
[Disabilities](#)  
[Economy](#)  
[Education](#)  
[Energy & Environment](#)  
[Ethics](#)  
[Family](#)  
[Fiscal](#)  
[Foreign Policy](#)  
[Health Care](#)  
[Homeland Security](#)  
[Immigration](#)  
[Iraq](#)  
[Poverty](#)  
[Rural](#)  
[Seniors & Social Security](#)  
[Service](#)  
[Taxes](#)  
[Technology](#)  
[Urban Policy](#)  
[Veterans](#)  
[Women](#)  
[Additional Issues](#)

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[Presidents](#)  
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[The Oval Office](#)  
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[Air Force One](#)  
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[White House Internships](#)  
[White House 101](#)  
[Tours & Events](#)

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[The Executive Branch](#)  
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