In the United States, the governmental institution responsible for the control and operation of the military veteran benefits systems is the Department of Veterans Affairs. They receive funds for their programs and services through monetary allocations from the United States Congress. Although the VA was not very powerful before the 1940’s, “World War II resulted in not only a vast increase in the veteran population, but also in large number of new benefits enacted by the Congress for veterans of the war” (“About VA”). The recent recession though is forcing Congress to cut spending in many important government programs and agencies, one of them being the VA. The VA is at times constrained by some strict guidelines placed on how they are able to use the money that they receive from Congress. The VA would like to have additional money to run other programs as well as more flexibility with the use of the money, while Congress looks to cut funds where it can and keep only the programs they feel are necessary. These differences in monetary policies and ways of spending between these two prominent governmental institutions are causing economic conflict, and their solution can be found through a series of new policies and restrictions that give the VA the decision in how to use the funds given to them. The VA and Congress must also find ways to use non-governmental organizations to raise money for the VA.

The mission of the VA is “to fulfill President Lincoln’s promise ‘To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan’, by serving and honoring the men and women who are America’s Veterans” (“About VA”). The VA has many advertisements that
attempt to capture the attention of the veterans, their family members, or anyone who knows a veteran. By doing this, they try to ensure that all veterans take advantage of the many benefits that the VA offers and all of the programs set in place to help those who sacrificed so much for their country. Their credibility is established by stating their website in the ads, as well as by using real military veterans, which helps demonstrate the benefits that the VA provides. Their goal is to appeal as best they can to their audience of veterans and their families to provide them with the services they need. In order to provide all these benefits and continue to fulfill their mission, they need substantial funding and economic support from Congress.

The funds that the VA receives for their programs are allocated from Congress, which is officially the legislative body of the United States government. Congress is comprised of two houses: the House of Representatives and the Senate, as well as several agencies that provide support services. With the creation of the VA in 1930, the responsibility is in the hands of the head of the Department of Veteran Affairs. Their role in the veteran’s benefits process now is the allocation of funds to the VA for dispersal through their programs and benefits. With funding being such an issue lately, many Congressmen see veteran’s benefits as an important topic for economic reasons rather than as a moral and responsible duty. Many Congressmen choose to support legislation for the funding of government programs that will bring revenue into their districts, instead of using their power to serve those who need their help. This causes the Congressmen to make decisions that hurt some of the programs and benefits that veterans deserve, whether it be purposefully or not.

The two stakeholders, the Department of Veterans Affairs and the United States Congress, have one very complicated yet simple reason for their troubles: money. The VA tries to budget the use the money it receives from Congress in a very efficient manner, yet sometimes
they fail to receive sufficient funds. Their ideal solution to the problem would be to receive unlimited funds from Congress while also being able to completely control how they use those funds. Congress on the other hand, handles all of the funds that the U.S government receives, and must figure out how to efficiently distribute all those funds. Congress’ ideal solution would be to cut many of the programs they see as unnecessary and vastly reduce the money given to the VA, while still keeping offices or programs open in their districts so they can retain jobs there.

Despite their different views on the allocation of funding, both the stakeholders demonstrate a profound respect for veterans and want to see the US veterans cared for. They sometimes both try to listen to the others thoughts and opinions on an issue and try to understand where each other is coming from. These three signs on similarity between both stakeholders- money issues, respect for veterans and probability of listening to each other- could be the determining factor for the level of cooperation that will occur and help could them work together and lead to a solution.

In order to come to a solution with their problem, both stakeholders need to be able to give up some of the powers and freedoms that they have. The VA will have to give up the power to control all of the money that they receive and must use time to find other ways to fund their programs, while Congress must relax their restrictions and try to use their best judgment to allocate the funds fairly. The VA must understand that they fall under Congressional approval for funding, and must understand that they are not the only institution that needs funds. In 2013, the President and Congress agreed on a budget that gave the VA $64 billion to operate (“Fiscal Year”). The VA must use this money wisely and with precaution so as not to waste any funds and be able to fulfill its mission. Congress, on the other hand, must understand the importance of the VA and some of the programs that they have cut, and must let the VA decide where they would like to allocate their funds. Congressmen must listen to veterans and the VA and not cut
programs such as the VA Disability Compensation Benefits Plan, a plan that provides money about 3.2 million veterans who are disabled due to injuries or illnesses sustained during, or as a result of, military service (“Veterans Groups”). The VA and Congress could also work together to try to garner public attention and set up non-profit, non-governmental organizations to raise money for the VA’s programs.

By working together, both stakeholders could come to an effective solution where they would both give up equal benefits in order to support a greater cause. They will both be directly helping veterans and their families receive the benefits they deserve, a service that should have no price on it. Both the VA and Congress should feel proud of the fact that they will be helping those who sacrifice so much for the US. Although the implementation of the solution will take some time, its progress must be consistent and visible. Through legislation and policy, both stakeholders must work together in order to fulfill the task.

Currently, there are approximately 22.3 million veterans, yet it is projected that the total veteran population will decrease by almost two-thirds to around 8 million by the year 2036 (Mall 170). Even though the number of veterans is projected to shrink, a vast quantity of younger veterans will require VA benefits due to service connected injuries or diseases (Mall 170). Congress tries to give the VA the money they need in order to fund the many programs they have in place for these veterans, yet they must also find ways to fund all the many other areas of the United States government. Both the VA and Congress must come to a decisive compromise and agree that the method to success is to have strict evaluations on the use of money by the VA, while both working together to find out ways to use non-governmental organizations to augment the funds given by Congress. By making sure that evaluations and guidelines are set forth for the
use of funding by the VA, while also ensuring Congress assists the VA in finding another source of funds, the solution will be one that will not only be effective, it will also be everlasting.
Works Cited


