

# VA Spends Close to \$500 Million on Conference Room, Office Makeovers Under Obama

President requests 3 percent increase for VA budget



Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki / AP

BY: [Mary Lou Byrd](#)  
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President Barack Obama has increased the Department of Veterans Affairs' budget each year since he took office, claiming the funds would give veterans the health care they deserve. However, an analysis of records show the agency has spent close to \$500 million on office furniture under the

Obama administration.

This upcoming fiscal year Obama requested a 3 percent increase for the Veterans Affairs budget. Obama's FY 2015 budget request points out he [has](#) increased the VA discretionary budget by 35.2 percent since 2009 so veterans continue to access necessary services.

"VA's 2015 budget provides the necessary resources to allow us to serve our veterans who selflessly served our nation," stated the president's FY 2015 budget.

As the embattled agency [faces charges of record tampering](#) and neglect of veterans, records reviewed by the *Washington Free Beacon* show the VA has not neglected

upgrading and decorating its offices throughout the country.

The VA has [spent](#) a total of \$489 million to upgrade conference rooms, buy draperies, and purchase new office furniture during the past four-and-a-half years.

A total of 15,010 contracts were awarded for office furniture by the VA for Fiscal Years 2010 through 2014.

“This is just one of many misplaced priorities at the VA, and unfortunately, I think we’ve only begun to scratch the surface,” Sen. John Cornyn (R., Texas) said in an emailed statement. “I will not stop until the VA is investigated top to bottom, and new leadership is brought in to clean up this dysfunctional agency.”

One contract awarded \$6.8 [million](#) for construction of a conference room and facilities at its Carol Stream, Ill., office. That renovation is ongoing and is expected to be completed next April.

The VA’s San Juan, Puerto Rico office [spent](#) \$1.8 million on new office furniture, and one of its Virginia offices spent \$1.9 million on “systems office furniture.” That project is expected to be completed at the end of this month.

Another \$1.4 million is currently [being](#) spent on a yearlong third floor renovation project for the “design, purchase/installation of furniture” in Saint Petersburg, Fla. That is expected to be completed on Sep. 17. The *Free Beacon* found a second [contract](#) for the same office signed earlier this year in which \$267,131, for “non-upholstered wood household furniture manufacturing.”

The VA also spent \$1.8 [million](#) for “systems furniture” in Philadelphia; \$1.8 [million](#) for “multi-functional, mobile, enhance learning space” in Tampa; \$1.8 million for “showcases, partitions, shelving” for its Los Angeles office.

To make the office makeovers complete, draperies, roller shades, and cornice boxes were also purchased. The VA spent \$10.7 [million](#) in the past five fiscal years on curtains and draperies.

Some of those contracts include [\\$454,085](#) for “cubical curtains and draperies” for its Brecksville, Ohio, office. The Pittsburg, Pa., VA office spent [\\$382,879](#) on window shades which were just installed in January.

Instead of draperies, the VA’s Los Alamitos office preferred cornice boxes and roller shades. The contract shows they spent [\\$106,615](#) on its window treatments.

The *Free Beacon* also found pricey filing system expenditures. For example, \$1.7 [million](#) was spent on a filing system for the California office. The reason the VA is spending high amounts on filing systems is unclear, since Obama’s FY 2015 budget included \$138.7 million in Veteran Claims Intake Program for the conversion of paper documents into eFolders.

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