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## **Testimony**

of

**Richard "Rick" Jones**  
**AMVETS National Legislative Director**

presented to the

**Committee on Veterans' Affairs**  
**Subcommittee on Health**  
**U.S. House of Representatives**

on

**Draft Legislation to authorize capital  
leases, changes to the enhanced-use lease  
authority, capital asset and construction  
matters and for other purposes**

**Thursday, June 24, 2004**  
**9:30 am, Room 334**  
**Cannon House Office Building**



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**A M V E T S**

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Chairman Simmons, Ranking Member Rodriguez, and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of AMVETS National Commander S. John Sisler and the nationwide membership of AMVETS, I am pleased to offer our views to the Subcommittee on Health regarding draft legislation to authorize capital leases, changes to the enhanced-use lease authority, capital asset and construction matters and for other purposes. Thank you for this opportunity.

Mr. Chairman, AMVETS is a staunch advocate of providing veterans with appropriate benefits and services *earned* through honorable military service. As a leader since 1944 in helping to preserve the freedoms secured by America's Armed Forces, our organization continues its proud tradition, providing not only support for veterans and the active military in procuring their earned entitlements but also an array of community services that enhance the quality of life for this nation's citizens.

AMVETS applauds this Subcommittee and its effort to identify, examine and pursue legislative initiatives to implement solutions necessary for veterans to obtain the services, benefits and assistance they merit, earned and richly deserve.

Regarding the matter at hand, AMVETS supports the numerous leases authorized for contract in the draft bill. Ensuring sponsorship of these outpatient and related healthcare facilities will help address the quality and appropriateness of medical care service for sick and disabled veterans. These facilities will help maintain VA congressionally mandated missions of sustaining health care delivery for America's veterans, regionally and demographically.

We have learned important lessons over the years that the establishment of

health care clinics helps pave the way toward a comprehensive solution to veterans health care needs. Strengthening clinical services, as this draft legislation would, should help continue VA's effort to change with the times and attain the quality health care programs that will significantly affect veterans' care. We trust that Congress and VA will also work together to provide a health care system that meets the specialized needs of veterans as well.

The draft bill also contains language to establish a Department of Veterans Affairs Capital Asset Fund in the Department of the Treasury. Under the proposal, this Fund would receive proceeds from a disposal of VA real property by sale, transfer or exchange. Proceeds retained within the Fund would be used for the costs of actual or planned disposals of real estate, including demolition, environmental cleanup, necessary improvements to facilitate the sales, transfers or exchanges and administrative expenses. And, the Fund would be available for use to improve non-recurring VA capital projects.

Finally the draft language terminates the Nursing Home Revolving Fund, transfers remaining funds to the Capital Asset Fund, and authorizes to be appropriated to the Fund \$10 million.

AMVETS supports these provisions because they would facilitate VA's completion of transfers and disposals. And, the provisions provide for an orderly process of notice, public hearings, and receipt of fair market value for disposals and transfers, while at the same time providing a funding mechanism for improving current facilities.

Mr. Chairman, as AMVETS understands Section 7 of the draft proposal, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs would be given the authority to continue to provide a veteran any of the services that could have been provided in a pilot program at the end of the pilot. AMVETS supports the inclusion of this

provision and sees the passage of this authority as a way to ensure that the rug will not be pulled out from under veterans in receipt of pilot-program services.

Mr. Chairman, we applaud your holding this hearing and thank the Subcommittee for extending us the opportunity to present our views on these matters. We look forward to working you and others to strengthen, enhance, and improve the earned benefits of our nations' veterans and their families.

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**Richard “Rick” Jones**  
National Legislative Director

Richard “Rick” Jones joined AMVETS as the National Legislative Director on January 4, 2001. As legislative director, he is the primary individual responsible for promoting AMVETS legislative, national security, and foreign affairs goals before the Departments of State, Defense, and Veterans Affairs, and the Congress of the United States.

Rick is an Army veteran who served as a medical specialist during the Vietnam War era. His assignments included duty at Brooke General Hospital in San Antonio, Texas; Fitzsimons General Hospital in Denver, Colorado; and Moncrief Community Hospital in Columbia, South Carolina. At Moncrief Hospital, Rick was selected to assist in processing the first members of the all-volunteer Army.

Rick completed undergraduate work at Brown University prior to his Army draft and earned a Master Degree in Public Administration from East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina, following military service.

Prior to assuming his current position, Rick worked nearly twenty years as a legislative staff aide in the offices of Senator Paul Coverdell, Senator Lauch Faircloth, and Senator John P. East. He also worked in the House of Representatives as committee staff for Representative Larry J. Hopkins and Representative Bob Stump.

In working for Rep. Stump on the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, he served two years as Republican minority staff director for the subcommittee on housing and memorial affairs and two years as Republican majority professional staff on funding issues related to veterans affairs’ budget and appropriations.

Rick and his wife Nancy have three children, Sarah, Katherine, and David, and reside in Springfield, Virginia.

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June 24, 2004

The Honorable Rob Simmons, Chairman  
House Veterans' Affairs Committee  
Subcommittee on Health  
Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Simmons:

Neither AMVETS nor I have received any federal grants or contracts, during this year or in the last two years, from any agency or program relevant to the June 24, 2004, hearing on issues before the Subcommittee

Sincerely,

Richard Jones  
National Legislative Director



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