



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON **VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

Chairman Phil Roe, M.D.

VA Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) Act of 2017

Background:

On June 30, 2016, the Commission on Care released [its report](#) on transforming the Veterans Health Administration, which included a recommendation for a robust capital asset realignment process. This Congress, the committee has explored avenues for capital asset review through roundtables, hearings and meetings with Veterans Service Organizations and stakeholders. Members on both sides of the aisle shared their support for examining VA's assets at a [full committee hearing](#) where former VA Secretary Anthony J. Principi [warned](#) that "VA will fail" if it fails to review its assets, noting VA is spending too much money on bricks and mortar rather than on care providers like doctors and nurses. According to VA, the department has 430 vacant or mostly vacant buildings that cost taxpayers [more than \\$7 million](#) per year to maintain.

The VA AIR Act would establish a nine-member Asset and Infrastructure Review Commission made up of veterans, subject matter experts, and representatives from Veterans Service Organizations to provide a comprehensive and fair look at VA's medical assets. The VA AIR Act would require the president to work with VSOs and members of Congress to fill the panel with appointees that would be confirmed by the Senate.

Under the VA AIR Act, VA would be required to submit proposed criteria to be used to evaluate VA assets to Congress and on the Federal Register, followed by a 90-day public comment period. After the final criteria is published, VA will have until January 31, 2022, to release its report with its recommendations for the modernization or realignment of VHA facilities. The commission would then have a year to conduct public hearings on VA's recommendations and issue a report containing the commission's own recommendations to the president. Next, the president will have an opportunity to request changes before the recommendations, if signed off on by the president, are sent to Congress for consideration. This legislation provides additional transparency by [requiring all proceedings, information, and deliberations of the commission be available for review by the public](#) and requiring that information transmitted or received by VA, the commission or the president regarding commission-related activities be made publically available online within 24 hours. The bill would also include \$2.1 billion to fund the Choice program through FY18, \$500M for non-recurring maintenance of VA facilities and rescinds a restriction on VA recruitment and retention.

The Message:

- The AIR Act would require VA to develop criteria to assess and recommend changes to VA medical facilities and would establish a commission to review VA's recommendations, conduct public hearings, and report the Commission's findings for the modernization and realignment of VA medical facilities to the president and, if approved, Congress..
- This bill would allow VA to take a comprehensive look at its assets and infrastructure and devise a plan to move forward in reinvesting in a stronger VA for America's heroes.