



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Republicans | Ranking Member Phil Roe, M.D.

H.R. 3083: the AIR Acceleration Act of 2019

Background:

In 2016, the bipartisan Commission on Care released a [report](#) that recommended a robust strategy to meet and manage the Veteran Health Administration's (VHA's) capital asset needs after finding that the average VA medical facility is five times older than the average private sector medical facility and was designed and built to meet different health care needs in a different healthcare market than what today's veterans experience. That recommendation led to the VA Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) Act, which was signed into law in June 2018 as a part of the VA MISSION Act [Public Law 115-182]. The AIR Act established an objective, data-rich, and veteran- and community-driven process to recommend how VA's medical facilities could be brought into the 21st century and realigned to better care for veterans. The AIR Act requires the president, in consultation with Congress and Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), to nominate a nine-member Commission made up of veterans, subject matter experts, and VSO representatives by no later than May 31, 2021. The Commissioners are tasked with using data compiled by VA to make recommendations about how best to modernize and realign VHA facilities. Much of the data that the Commission will use will be supplied by capacity and commercial market assessments of each VA medical facility. The market assessments are currently underway and, according to VA, are expected to be complete by June 2020. Given that, Secretary Wilkie has [urged](#) Congress to allow the Commission to start their work sooner rather than later by removing a restriction in the AIR Act that allows the Commission to meet only in calendar years 2022 and 2023. The AIR Acceleration Act would eliminate that restriction, thereby enabling the Commissioners to be nominated, appointed, and begin their important work much faster.

The Message:

- The AIR Acceleration Act would allow the comprehensive review of VA capital assets to get underway as soon as possible so that America's veterans can benefit from a stronger VA healthcare system as soon as possible.
- VA has estimated that, by fiscal year 2020, there will be a space gap of 51.6 million square feet across the VA healthcare system. It is imperative that the AIR Commission begin their vital work before that gap grows anymore and veterans suffer for it.
- The AIR Act was signed into law with widespread, bipartisan support from VSOs and Members of Congress last year because it was the right thing to do for veterans. Allowing the AIR Commission to proceed without unnecessary delay this year is also the right thing to do for veterans.