

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 25, 2012

The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20420-0001

Dear Mr. Secretary:

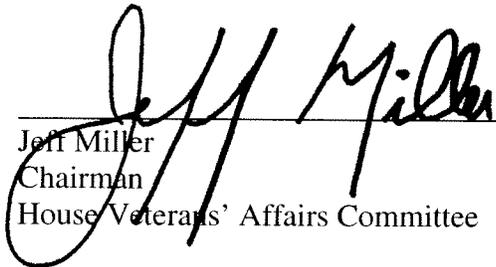
We are writing today to follow-up on previous correspondence and continued interest in the change of scope request presented by James A. Haley Veterans Hospital (JAHVH) in Tampa, Florida. As you know, JAHVH is the busiest VA Polytrauma hospital in the nation, serving approximately 90,000 veterans in the Tampa Bay Area. As a result, JAHVH was approved for a three-pronged, \$231.5 million new construction and renovation project.

As you noted in past correspondence, JAHVH has formally submitted a request to modify this approved Polytrauma major construction project and incorporate a new bed tower. We find this request particularly remarkable because within the confines of already appropriated funding, JAHVH has developed a long-term solution that will meet the projected 2018 demands, increase accessibility, improve conditions for veterans, and do this with an estimated cost-savings of more than \$500 million over 30 years. Under the scenario JAHVH has presented, their current hospital functions would be uninterrupted while the new facility is constructed. This is particularly pertinent given the significant medical facility construction delays exposed by the House Veterans' Affairs Full Committee hearing "From the Ground Up: Assessing Ongoing Delays in VA Major Construction" on March 27, 2012.

This forward-thinking proposal truly makes sense, and we would like to work with you to move it ahead. We were disappointed to note that it had not been included in the Administration's Fiscal Year 2013 Budget request. Specifically, we would like to know where this project falls in the priority list and what obstacles must be overcome to bring this project to fruition. Given the reality of our nation's financial situation, and our obligation to be wise stewards of the taxpayer dollar, we are deeply concerned that the Department of Veterans Affairs has slated to move forward with the project as is, knowing that it is ultimately a more costly alternative.

We thank you for your time, consideration, and continued service to our nation, and we look forward to working with you on this important issue. Please do not hesitate to contact us to further discuss advancing this project.

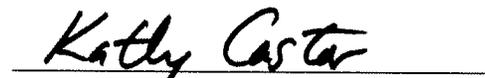
Sincerely yours,



Jeff Miller
Chairman
House Veterans' Affairs Committee



Gus M. Bilirakis
Vice Chairman
House Veterans' Affairs Committee



Kathy Castor
Member of Congress
Florida's Eleventh District