

MilCon / VA Approps Members Day Statement
Congresswoman Amata Radewagen (AS-At Large)

Thank you Chairman Dent and Ranking Member Wasserman-Schultz for holding this meeting to allow Members to make statements to the subcommittee. I know that you both work very hard to ensure that our veterans are fully funded and your efforts are appreciated.

I want to take this moment to talk a little bit about my home district of American Samoa, where we enlist into the United States armed forces at a rate higher than that of any other state or territory...something we are very proud of.

Our high rate of enlistment means that we also have a high number of veterans who live in American Samoa. Currently, those veterans who need to receive VA medical treatment must fly to Hawaii to see their Doctor...which the VA foots the bill for, as well as their lodging costs for the week, due to the limited number of flights a week to American Samoa. Another reason our veterans must fly to Hawaii to receive VA services is because the only hospital in American Samoa is so run down and lacking in proper equipment and medical professionals, that the VA will not allow anything other than outpatient services for our local veterans to be done at the hospital.

I respectfully request that the MilCon / VA Subcommittee examine avenues to rectify this issue which is not only costing the tax payer much more than it should, but is also harming the level of care our veterans in American Samoa are receiving.

Whether it be the construction of a new hospital that would serve the entire population, including our veterans, or simply renovating and adding on to the existing structure, I know that we can come up with a solution that will save the taxpayers a great deal of money in the long run, and also improve the level of care our veterans are receiving to bring it on par with those in the states and other territories.

Perhaps there could be something included in the report language for the bill that would direct the VA to look into possible solutions for this issue.

Thank you again Chairman Dent and Ranking Member Wasserman-Schultz for taking time from your busy schedules to listen to your fellow Members requests for the upcoming MilCon / VA Appropriations bill. Your work is truly appreciated, and please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff should you have any questions regarding my testimony today.

Fa'afetai tele lava.