



June 19, 2019

The Honorable Mark Takano
Chairman
House Committee on Veteran's Affairs
B234 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Dr. Phil Roe
Ranking Member
House Committee on Veterans Affairs
3460 O'Neil House Office Building
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Chairman Takano, Ranking Member Roe, Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the more than one hundred thousand federal and public represented by the National Association of Government Employees, including frontline Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employees I write to you today to voice our strong opposition to H.R. 3083, the "AIR Acceleration Act."

Should this legislation become law it would authorize the Asset and Infrastructure Review Commission to meet earlier than the agreed upon timelines established in the VA MISSION Act law. The Asset and Infrastructure Review Commission (AIRC) uses the same Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process established for the Department of Defense (DOD) that has been widely rejected due to its high costs, lack of savings and extremely harmful outcomes for local communities. NAGE opposes this section of the law and the underlying bill to speed up this process.

The BRAC Section of HR 5674 Bill will put VA privatization on an even faster track and lead to the closings of VA hospitals and clinics in communities across the nation. This commission will lead to the privatization of the VA. With the MISSION Act's extremely broad access standards, will mean that a veteran has no choice but to go to unaccountable private providers to receive care. When the VA BRAC Commission closes a VA facility, costs will also soar because every eligible veteran in that area will get a voucher for private care including large numbers of veterans not currently using the VA for most of their care.

More concerning is that members of Congress will lose their ability to fight for the interests of veterans and all other constituents in their communities who value and depend on their VA medical centers for care. Instead of elected congressional leaders deciding what the VA needs, a private commission appointed by the President will have full power to make decision on which facilities close and which one remain open. Additionally, every VA facility that provides health care and counseling to veterans would be subject to the Commission's authority including hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, domiciliaries for homeless veterans, and Vet Centers that provide readjustment counseling.

We must note that the BRAC process – either for military or other federal entities, has never demonstrated that it can significantly save federal dollars. Should this legislation become law, the VA BRAC Commission will have full access to the VA health cares , already scarce, dollars that are so desperately needed to staff and maintain the VA's specialized health care. Given the high costs and minimal savings of military BRACs, we know that this is a very real threat to the VA's already severe funding situation. This will only

compound problems and cost at the VA because once the commission decides to close a facility and issue vouchers for private care to every veteran.

The Committee must not allow H.R. 3083 to move forward. The impact of this legislation will only harm the thousands of veterans that depend upon the VA health care system. For those reason NAGE unequivocally opposes H.R. 3083.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David J. Holway". The signature is written in a cursive style with a vertical line separating the first and last names.

David J Holway