

House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Member Day
Representative Ross Spano (FL-15)
September 10, 2019

Introduction:

Thank you, Chairman Takano, Ranking Member Roe, and the other committee members for hosting this Member Day Hearing. The District I serve, Florida's 15th Congressional District, is estimated to have over 55 thousand veteran residents. We are in close proximity to MacDill Air Force Base, and many servicemembers who are stationed there end up retiring in District 15.

Priority:

The region is served by the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital located in Tampa. One of the biggest priorities for the facility is the opening of the new Lakeland VA Outpatient Clinic. This clinic would be a tremendous help for Central Florida veterans that live further from James A. Haley Hospital.

I appreciate the Committee's recognition of the importance of a Lakeland Outpatient Clinic to improve care for my constituents. S. 114, the VA Choice and Quality Employment Act of 2017, authorized nearly 11 million dollars for the facility. That legislation was signed into law in August 2017.

However, I am discouraged by the amount of time it is taking for the project to make its way through the various agencies' approval processes. I recently received an update from the Office of Management and Budget that they anticipate completing their approval of the lease in the next few weeks, at which point it will be transmitted to GSA for their approval.

Under this timeline, I have been told the lease award is planned for March 2021 and the facility would open in March 2024.

I would appreciate any help the Committee can provide in pushing the Agencies involved in approving these leases to expedite the process so that the facilities that were improved in 2017 can begin serving our veterans sooner than 2024.

Closing:

While there are many other priorities I would like to work with you on to improve the care and services available to our nation's veterans, the expedited opening of the Lakeland Outpatient Clinic is my top priority. I appreciate you allowing me to appear before the Committee today and would welcome any questions you have.

###