

Member Day Testimony: House Veterans Affairs Committee
Congressman Andy Kim (NJ-03)

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony to the House Veterans Affairs Committee today and thank the Chairman for his work supporting our Veteran community.

Veterans in Burlington and Ocean Counties in New Jersey, which I represent, as well as those around the nation have and continue to face problems in accessing the care they need. In many cases, an aging VA infrastructure for hospitals and other treatment facilities is to blame. In Brick, New Jersey, the James J. Howard Clinic was built to serve 5,000 Veterans, but now serves over 10,000 from a community of nearly 90,000 eligible veterans across three New Jersey counties. The clinic's aging infrastructure struggles to meet the needs of all of the Veterans it intends to work with, and a lack of parking and alternative transportation options leaves disabled veterans to park on busy roads and walk to the facility. An inability to meet all of the needs of its Veteran population means some of the clinic's patients are forced to drive over an hour to seek treatment at the East Orange VA facility, which also faces its own issues from an aging infrastructure.

These stories are not specific to New Jersey either. VA facilities across the country struggle to manage a lack of investment coupled with the growing needs of a more diverse Veteran population with different needs than VA has traditionally been prepared to handle. Now is the time for a massive investment in state-of-the-art health facilities nationwide that meet the needs of today's Veterans. We owe it to our Veterans who have put their lives on the line for our country to provide access to the care that they need, when they, where they need it. As we move ahead on bold initiatives like the American Jobs Plan, Congress needs to do our job and honor our promise to our nation's Veterans by investing in infrastructure for the Veteran-serving facilities.