EXPANDING THE MISSION: THE FUTURE OF THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR WARRIOR INDEPENDENCE IN WEST LA

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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C O N T E N T S

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2026

Page

OPENING STATEMENTS

The Honorable Mike Bost, Chairman 1
The Honorable Mark Takano, Ranking Member 2

WITNESSES

PANEL I

The Honorable John J. Bartrum, Under Secretary for Health, Veterans Health Administration, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs 6
Accompanied by:
Dr. Thomas O'Toole, Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Health Clinical Services, Veterans Health Administration, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Mr. Brett Simms, Executive Director, Office of Asset Management, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Ms. Danielle Runyan, Senior Counsel to the Secretary, Office of General Counsel, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

PANEL II

Dr. Nelson SooHoo, Associate Dean, Graduate Medical Education at the David Geffen School of Medicine, Designated Institutional Official for UCLA Health System 23
Ms. Tess Banko, West LA Project Director & Veterans Collective Community Developer, U.S. VETS 25
Mr. Richard Valdez, Past State Commander, Disabled American Veterans-Department of California 27
Mr. Jim Zenner, Executive Director, Los Angeles County Department of Military and Veterans Affairs 28

APPENDIX

PREPARED STATEMENTS OF WITNESSES

Veterans Health Administration Prepared Statement by Ms. Danielle Runyan 45
Dr. Nelson SooHoo Prepared Statement 46
Ms. Tess Banko Prepared Statement 47
Mr. Richard Valdez Prepared Statement 49
Mr. Jim Zenner Prepared Statement 52

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD

VETS Advocacy Prepared Statement 55

Page

APPENDIX—CONTINUED

Document for the Record Submitted by The Honorable Mark Takano, U.S. House of Representatives, (CA-39) 60
Requirements to Restore the National Home for Disabled Volunteers Soldiers-Pacific Branch and Restore Veterans Trust Document 71
Mr. Rob Reynolds Prepared Statement 73
Questions for the Record Submitted by The Honorable Mike Bost, U.S. House of Representatives, (IL-12) to the Disabled American Veterans-Department of California 76
Questions for the Record Submitted by The Honorable Mark Takano, U.S. House of Representatives, (CA-39) to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs 79
Disabled American Veterans-Department of California Response to the Questions for the Record 92
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Response to the Questions for the Record 95

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2026

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:15 a.m., in room 360, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Mike Bost (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Bost, Miller-Meeks, Murphy, Van Orden, King-Hinds, Takano, Brownley, McGarvey, Ramirez, Budzinski, Kennedy, and Dexter.

OPENING STATEMENT OF MIKE BOST, CHAIRMAN

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will come to order. Without objection, the chair may declare a recess at any time.

Good morning, everyone. Thank you to our witnesses for being here to discuss the future of West Los Angeles (LA) Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Campus.

Over a century ago, the West LA VA Campus was created with a clear mission: to serve our Nation's veterans in California. That promise has not been fully kept. For years, and through multiple administrations, members of this committee have raised concerns about how this land has been managed. Those concerns were not imaginary. They were documented. They were raised repeatedly and in many cases ignored. The Biden administration made decisions to prioritize other interests over veterans while veterans were sleeping outside the gates of this very campus.

Last year, the Trump administration reversed the decades-old status quo, stating that the current lease on the VA campuses do not principally benefit veterans. The latest congressionally mandated reports show that the VA is being significantly underpaid for renting land intended to be used to the benefit of veterans. Time and time again, the holders of these leases and contracts have failed to uphold their end of the bargain with VA. We have seen firsthand that the homeless veterans living on the campus do not have the services to—and the help to make them successful and get out of the homeless situation and back on track.

Today we will examine these previous agreements and contracts to ensure that they are putting veterans first. Oversight does not

mean standing in the way. It means making sure the Department has the tools, authority, direction to fix what has been broken.

I applaud Secretary Collins and the Trump administration for putting in hard work to try to make sense of years of inaction and let many of these agreements benefits oil—benefiting oil companies, a private school and public schools, baseball teams over the veterans. Rather than defending prior decisions, Secretary Collins is actively reexamining them and bringing accountability where it was previously lacking. That shift is postured and critical if we are serious—and is critical if we are serious about correcting course at West LA. It has taken new leadership willing to confront these challenges directly to begin addressing what has become a long-standing failure at this location.

Veterans are always at the top of my and all of my colleagues' mind, and I want to ensure you that those using this land have the same mindset. I fully support the intent of the administration's vision for the National Center for Warrior Independence to effectively lift veterans who are struggling out of homelessness. However, any pathway forward related to this new center should not move forward without clear and specific statutory authorization. Congress must ensure that new initiatives, especially at this scale, are properly authorized, structured, and aligned with congressional intent.

I understand that many entities operating on the campus were required to sign non-disclosure agreements (NDA) related to these projects. Since this is Federal property intended to serve veterans, transparency should be a priority, not an option. If agreements, planning decisions, or delay are hiding behind NDAs, the committee will demand answers. Oversight requires visibility. The American taxpayers and our veterans deserve to know how the land is being used and why progress has been so slow.

Finally, I did want to mention I am happy to see that the oversight plan from VA that shows how the Department will comply with President Trump's executive order (EO) to transfer this campus. However, this report is 248 days delayed. The Department owes this committee a clear path forward. I look forward to working with the bipartisan way with the ranking member and Secretary Collins to course correct West LA.

With that, I welcome our witnesses and look forward to your testimony. Now I recognize Ranking Member Takano for his opening comments.

OPENING STATEMENT OF MARK TAKANO, RANKING MEMBER

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to start the hearing by honoring the lives of two individuals who were dedicated to serving homeless veterans in Los Angeles. Edna Naito-Chan and David Echevarria have both recently passed away. Ms. Naito-Chan was the acting chief of community engagement and reintegration services for the greater LA healthcare system, having worked with homeless veterans for over 20 years. I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Echevarria last August at a roundtable I held in Los Angeles. David's advocacy improved thousands of veteran lives. My heart is with his family and all those who love him. I ask that, Mr. Chair-

man, will you join me in a moment of silence for Mr. Echevarria and Ms. Naito-Chan?

The CHAIRMAN. Take a moment of silence.

[Moment of silence.]

Mr. TAKANO. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are at a—let me just say at the outset, Mr. Chairman, I was not anticipating your statement about the inappropriateness of nondisclosure agreements, but I welcome those comments and am heartened that you have made that statement. Also, I appreciate your statement about the plan that was due 248 days ago. It is something that we have requested from the White House for many months, and veterans have been left in the dark, frankly, and the NDAs have been a severe—have created lots of unnecessary suspicion and distrust, and so I appreciate it. I think this is getting off to a good bipartisan start is what I am trying to tell you.

If we—so my point is, if we do not act at this inflection point regarding the future of the National Veterans—National Soldiers' Home in West LA, I fear that we will doom this property to become a vast West Side Skid Row. If you have ever been to Skid Row in downtown LA, to see the idea that this would become a vast—even a vaster West Side Skid Row is a horrifying vision. Now I know these are strong words, but I mean them. There is no other place in the country besides Skid Row where there are so many formerly—where so many formerly homeless people live.

These veterans bear the trauma of both having been homeless and the visible and invisible wounds of service. This concentration of veterans without adequate supportive services has jeopardized tenant safety, sobriety, and mental health. We have created a pressure cooker. We must address the root causes of the problems at West LA, or we will fail the thousands of veterans who should be able to call the National Soldiers' Home their home.

A home should be more than just a place to sleep. It should be a community, a place where veterans feel safe with services and amenities, and where veterans can stay with their children and not worry about crimes taking place next door, gangs coming on the property, or a neighbor dying from an overdose unattended. A community means that different groups of veterans can live together, work together, coexist together. That is what the vision for the Soldiers' Home was meant to be, but it is not. It is failing.

The veterans who are meant to call this campus home are being harmed by the same failed policies that are harming everyone in this country: a housing crisis, rising fuel costs, a skyrocketing cost of living, cuts to healthcare. The affordability crisis is getting worse and worse under this administration, and homeless veterans are experiencing it firsthand.

Now, there are many entities who are involved in what the Soldier's Home has become and what it could be. It is inexplicable that the majority did not heed my request, to include Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the two LA area public housing authorities, Breitburn Energy or Brentwood School, in today's hearing. I asked the majority to include a veteran advocate on the panel, but I was rebuffed. I will do my best to include these veteran voices by sharing some of their stories, by trying to get their questions for VA answered. Again, it is inexplicable that my

colleagues would refuse to bring these voices to the table, so I am going to share stories from six veterans who should have been invited here today.

Now, I will start with George, a 20-year retired disabled Air Force veteran who uses a wheelchair. For over 3 years, George lived in a 6-by–6 tiny shed on the West LA campus with his dog. After a series of failed housing placements, none of which were George's fault, he moved into an apartment at the Soldiers' Home 2 weeks ago. It took veteran advocate Rob Reynolds, my staff, and Jim Zenner from LA County getting involved to finally get George into housing. It should not have been this hard.

Two weeks ago, my staff met with Vince and his 2-year-old also named Vince. He shared that they—Vince shared that they were moving out of campus housing because their building was overrun with pests. He found roaches in little Vince's crib. Roaches in his child's crib. Unfathomable. Fire alarms go off all hours of the night, disturbing both of their sleep, the sleep of pets who also live in the building, and often triggering Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms for other veterans.

Another veteran named John shared that there are 50 known drug dealers on campus and that drug use is rampant. He said that there were three veteran deaths due to overdoses in a single building in March and April alone, but that the medical examiner codes overdoses as deaths by natural causes, skewing the data. He shared repeated instances of veterans passing away in a housing unit on campus and VA police failing to secure the unit, leading to thefts of the deceased veteran's belongings. He also told us about dogs who live with veterans having to be saved with Narcan after drug exposure. Narcan is not even readily available in every building on the campus.

Another veteran, Ryan, told us about how building and campus security is failing, but VA police is hamstrung by staffing challenges and jurisdictional and policy restraints from doing anything in this situation. There are frequent apartment break-ins, and people are climbing through windows to buy drugs. There is known prostitution and sex trafficking throughout the property.

Charlie lives in one of the newest buildings on campus, but is already having issues. He will not bring his two sons to visit and wishes the property were more family friendly. Each of these veterans talked about the need for more supportive services for campus residents.

In August of last year, a group of veterans living in Building 205 invited my staff in so they could witness the atrocious conditions. The building was infested with pests and mold. My staff immediately emailed VA Central Office asking for a meeting with VA, the Public Housing Authority, and the property management company, John Stewart Company. That meeting still has not happened 9 months later, and it was clear to my staff during their visit in April that the conditions in the building have only worsened.

When my staff asked facility leadership about this longstanding request regarding Building 205 during a visit 2 weeks ago, the medical center director and deputy were not even aware of it because VA Central Office, that is the Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs (OCLA), never sent it to them. Urgent casework

requests from my staff on behalf of veterans in crisis who live in West—at West LA have also gone unanswered. Now, when VA ignores my staff, they are ignoring veterans. This is utterly unacceptable and, frankly, it is dangerous. Veterans' lives are at real risk.

Now, I will mention one final veteran, Jeffrey Powers, the lead plaintiff in *Powers* v. *McDonough* lawsuit. Jeffrey has repeatedly asked why VA continues to drag on its appeal and when will VA finally do the right thing and implement Judge Carter's order. I share Jeffrey's frustration. I hope today that VA is ready to share with the public a real plan for West LA.

The implications of both the Powers case and the President's executive order establishing a Center for Warrior Independence at West LA would bring thousands more veterans to the campus. Is VA ready for this? I fear they are not. I have repeatedly called on VA to make its strategy for West LA public and to give veterans, Congress, and the community an opportunity to weigh in.

All the work that has been done to this point has been done behind closed doors without veteran or congressional input. Individuals working on the West LA project were required to sign nondisclosure agreements, as was mentioned earlier by the chairman, with the purpose of keeping information from the public. These unprecedented—and I repeat, unprecedented—nondisclosure agreements have prevented Congress and the public from getting information that it is entitled to and that VA is accountable for. Sadly, as VA's testimony today makes it clear, there is no plan to rectify the numerous issues I and my staff have raised for years, nor address the new housing required by President Trump's new executive order.

Now, I am not ideologically opposed to Trump's intent with his executive order. I do not know if the world just kind of shattered here. I am not ideologically opposed, Mr. Van Orden, to Trump's intent with this executive order, but to be able to serve 6,000 veterans, many of whom have complex needs, requires a comprehensive strategy. I do not see, frankly, the financial commitments being made, nor adequate plans for VA to meet these needs—to meet the needs of these veterans. I do not believe this VA has the expertise to develop, implement, and oversee a plan of this size and scope.

With the decades that the Soldiers' Home wasted away under mismanagement and corruption, VA should know better than to operate in secret when it comes to making plans for the land. Veterans deserve better. Veterans living at West LA need more than thousands of tiny homes. There are veterans who live at the Soldiers' Home who have jobs and who are doing well, but there is a significant population who may need more help. I fear without an intentional and significant investment of additional supportive services and a comprehensive strategy, we are setting up current and future veteran tenants for failure and will simply be warehousing veterans at the Soldiers' Home.

When a veteran is ready to say yes to treatment, VA must be prepared to provide that treatment on demand. Now, I call on my colleagues to join me in demanding VA invest in expanding clinical practices we know work, like mental health intensive case management, assertive community treatment, substance use case manage-

ment, and critical time intervention. VA must get serious about the reality of its staffing situation to build out integrated teams so they can provide the care veterans need. That means more social workers, more nurses, more physicians, and more VA police.

For those veterans who want to live in a sober environment, there should be options available at the Soldiers' Home. The best way to get people sober is through permanent housing and support, not through forced institutionalization. Being a homeless veteran should not be a crime, and having an addiction related to your service should not be an excuse to lock a veteran behind closed bar—behind bars.

Now, we have an opportunity to set the standard for ending veteran homelessness by building a community for veterans at the National Soldiers' Home. To date, VA has shown a lack of transparency and accountability. That needs to end today. Otherwise, the Trump VA's action and inaction threatens to doom this property to failure and the veterans who reside there to continued harm.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Ranking Member, for his opening statement.

We will now turn to our witnesses for their testimony. Testifying before us today, we have Mr. John Bartrum. He is the under secretary of health at VA. Accompanied by him—with him is Dr. Thomas O'Toole, acting deputy under secretary for Health Clinical Services at VA. Mr. Brett Simms, executive director at the Office of Assistant Management at VA, and Ms. Danielle Runyan, senior counsel for the Secretary at VA.

Will all the witnesses please stand and raise their right hand?

[Witnesses sworn.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Let the record reflect that the witnesses answered in the affirmative.

I now recognize Ms. Runyan for 5 minutes to deliver the testimony on behalf of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

STATEMENT OF DANIELLE RUNYAN

Ms. RUNYAN. Thank you, Chairman. Chairman Bost, Ranking Member Takano, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for inviting us to discuss the work VA is doing to implement President Donald J. Trump's executive order keeping promises to veterans and establishing a National Center for Warrior Independence.

For generations, VA's West Los Angeles campus has held the unrealized potential to be a beacon of hope and stability for thousands of veterans. Under the leadership of President Trump and VA Secretary Douglas A. Collins, this potential is finally on the way to being achieved, and it is about time, as the mismanagement of this campus dates back more than 130 years.

In 1888, Arcadia Bandini de Stearns Baker and Senator John P. Jones gifted hundreds of acres of land to the government for the purpose of providing a home and community for disabled veterans. It was meant to be a place where Civil War veterans could live out the rest of their days in peace, but this goal was never fully realized. Some housing was built, but over the years, large portions of

the campus were deeded away and other parcels were used in ways that did not benefit veterans. VA Inspector General (IG) reports in 2018 and 2021 concluded the property was being mismanaged. The IG determined that various agreements that allowed outside parties to use parts of the campus did not comply with the West LA Leasing Act, other applicable Federal laws, or the Draft Master Plan.

In May 2025, President Trump issued his executive order to turn this property around. It called on VA to vastly expand the capacity of this campus to house thousands of veterans at the new National Center for Warrior Independence by January 1, 2028. Here is what we have done to get there.

In February 2026, VA terminated illegal and wasteful West LA leases and a license under which the campus allowed the Brentwood School, Safety Park Corporation, and Bridgeland Resources to use the land in ways that serve no meaningful benefit to veterans. Bridgeland, for example, is operating oil wells on the land. It is bad enough that this campus was being leased out in ways that provided no benefits to veterans, but even worse, these agreements underpaid VA for the fair value of these properties by more than $40 million per year. To sum it up, these leases were ripping off veterans, and ripping off U.S. taxpayers.

The ongoing litigation in this area limits our ability to discuss these matters further, but we continue to do everything we can to reclaim the land at our West LA campus so we can fulfill the requirements of President Trump's order. In the meantime, VA has taken important steps to establish the National Center for Warrior Independence and build the infrastructure we need to host thousands of veterans at this site.

When we arrived in January 2025, the campus had the capacity to house 955 veterans. In January 2026, our capacity to provide housing to formerly homeless veterans expanded to 1,377. By the end of 2026, we expect to have capacity to house 1,670 formerly homeless veterans, thanks mostly to our plan to build temporary housing this year for another 220 veterans. By the end of 2027, we expect to have beds for 2,048 homeless veterans.

Meanwhile, VA is putting in place the infrastructure we need to handle an increased veteran population. For example, VA is enhancing safety measures on campus to give veterans the secure space they need to successfully achieve independence. We are also increasing the level of service we give to veterans who already are living on the campus. Among other things, VA has made homeless patient-aligned care team services available to all veterans for clinical care. We have provided case management support to help veterans as they seek housing vouchers with the Department of Housing and Urban Development. We have also terminated the lease of the Wadsworth Chapel on the West LA campus to ensure it can serve veterans of faith. These efforts and others have helped ensure that 98 percent of veterans on this campus remained housed and do not return to the streets.

Our goal is to give veterans a fair chance to succeed in the country they sacrificed so much to defend. In West LA, we are building a campus that unifies housing, clinical care, mental health care, and benefits for some of the Nation's most vulnerable veterans.

When we succeed, the campus will serve as a destination for thousands of homeless veterans across the Nation and a place where they can get the care they need, obtain sustainable employment, and achieve financial independence.

Thank you for supporting this important project, and we look forward to your questions.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF DANIELLE RUNYAN APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you for your testimony.

Now what want to go to questions, and I will recognize myself for 5 minutes.

Mr. Bartrum and Ms. Runyan, do you believe you are above congressional oversight and accountability? I just need a yes or no.

Ms. RUNYAN. No, we do not believe we are above that.

Mr. BARTRUM. No, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. Mr. Bartrum and Ms. Runyan, the committee has requested all nondisclosure agreements copies and who signed these agreements. Under oath, do you commit to working with the committee to provide all nondisclosure agreement copies to ensure proper oversight and avoid future hearings with you both as witnesses?

Ms. RUNYAN. Absolutely.

Mr. BARTRUM. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Good to know. Mr. Bartrum, for years this committee watched prior VA leadership avoid making difficult decisions at West Los Angeles because of the political sensitivity, litigation concerns, competing outside interests tied to the campus. Why did Secretary Collins decide to undertake this effort when previous VA leadership largely stood away from fully asserting VA control and direction over the West LA?

Mr. BARTRUM. Sir, I think the President decided to take this on for his commitment to veterans. That we know that we are here to fix things, and that this campus, as was pointed out by the ranking member and by yourself, has not been living up to the needs. We are taking this opportunity to address those needs and to make sure that it lives up to the fulfillment of the promise.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Bartrum, President Trump's executive order required an action plan to establish the National Center for Warrior Independence to be submitted to the President by September 6, 2025. This report was received last night, 248 days late. Why has the submission of this action been delayed, and when should we expect to be briefed on this plan?

Mr. BARTRUM. Sir, we would be happy to set up an appointment with you to brief you and your staff.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay.

Mr. BARTRUM. I will ask Ms. Runyan on any of the logistics on the release of the plan, but it is a plan that is submitted to the White House, and so we had to go through the White House process.

The CHAIRMAN. Who is personally responsible for the delay?

Ms. RUNYAN. I cannot comment on who is personally responsible, Chairman, but we are absolutely committed to providing you with updates as requested. This has been an iterative process.

The CHAIRMAN. The only concern I have is that we got it last night, but it is dated September 5, 2025. I have a lot of problems, but I see that as a problem.

Ms. RUNYAN. I understand, Chairman. What I will say, also, we have been embattled in litigation, in litigation that we inherited when this administration took over. Going forward, and we also made this commitment at the Eight Corners briefing, we are happy to provide monthly updates to the committee.

The CHAIRMAN. Would both of you agree that—and let me tell you that it has been through both Republican and Democrat administrations, through a tremendous amount of Secretaries, that as we have watched West LA deal with the issues it has because I can only even remember whenever I came out and toured West LA, I do not think I was—was I ranking member or just taken over as chairman? I was ranking member. We could see the problems that were developing then and there were promises made to cure it.

Do you—I know how we feel, but I—so the concerns that I have is that the outside influences that were being pressured on the VA and the local politics of that, not necessarily for the veteran, but what—for who had the lease agreements, is what held us up from actually aggressively going after this to get it ready for the veterans that needed to be taken care of.

Ms. RUNYAN. Yes, Chairman. We would absolutely agree. We have had to clean up a tremendous amount of challenges and issues that some of them that we listed out in our testimony and others that I think you all had already noted in your opening statements. Now that we have the lease agreements that are terminated, some of these topics I cannot necessarily get into because of the ongoing litigation. However, we are committed to ensuring that with all of those actions that we are taking, now we can finally move into the operationalizing phase of this to ensure that we achieve the President's objectives, which we are committed to achieving by January 2028.

Mr. BARTRUM. Sir, if I could add, there is a lot of steps that you talked about and, Ranking Member Takano, you mentioned about security. We have already are on a path now to—we have authorized and we are working to hire up to 160 VA police officers. We have increased it from last year in the 50 to 60 range to over 80 as of right now. We just awarded a security contract to have additional security, some contract security on. We just awarded a multimillion-dollar lighting contract to put lighting up around the campus to secure.

We are taking steps and actions to secure the campus because we know that we need a secure campus. As Ranking Member Takano said, you know, we need to be ready and support, and we are building out supporting facilities and supporting housing and supporting infrastructure for a community, not just a housing complex.

The CHAIRMAN. My time has expired, but would you follow up with me on who personally was responsible for delaying this report?

Ms. RUNYAN. Yes, Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, thank you.

I yield to the ranking member for 5 minutes.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you.

Mr. Bartrum, I do agree with you that the President has moved forward with an executive order, but he is also complying with Judge Carter's decision. Is that not right? Is not Judge Carter's decision also driving this, not just the President's executive order?

Mr. BARTRUM. You want to answer?

Ms. RUNYAN. I am happy to take that if that is okay, Ranking Member. Yes, absolutely.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you. Then why are you choosing to continue to appeal Judge Carter's order, which largely mandates most of Trump's EO?

Ms. RUNYAN. Because that is in litigation, unfortunately I cannot answer that question for you.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you. Ms. Runyan, did VA renew its lease with UCLA?

Ms. RUNYAN. We did not. Actually, there is a——

Mr. TAKANO. If you have not, when do you expect to make a decision on a lease renewal?

Ms. RUNYAN. That lease has an automatic option exercise that only University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) has to put us on notice that they want to extend for another 10 years. This is one of the issues that we have—we have come across and that we have inherited are these leases that give these third parties wildly inordinate unilateral rights.

Mr. TAKANO. It is a unilateral option that UCLA has. Ms. Runyan, has VA issued formal notice to Brentwood School and Breitburn Energy to vacate the West LA VA property?

Ms. RUNYAN. We have terminated those leases and we are in the process of winding down.

Mr. TAKANO. Okay. When were those notices issued?

Ms. RUNYAN. Those notices were issued in February.

Mr. TAKANO. Well, when did you—those notices to vacate, were notices to vacate issued?

Ms. RUNYAN. Notices to vacate have not yet been issued.

Mr. TAKANO. Okay. When those notices were issued—well, excuse me, not that one. VA did not request any funding in its Fiscal Year 2027 budget to support the removal of the physical infrastructure of the current leaseholders, Brentwood School and Breitburn Energy, from campus. Do you plan to request supplemental funding to support the eviction efforts?

Ms. RUNYAN. I cannot comment on that, and I can—I would be happy to take that for the record at a time when we have made some decisions on that front. What our funding does request for 2027 is to support the infrastructure and resources that we need, precisely what you had mentioned in your opening statement——

Mr. TAKANO. Okay.

Ms. RUNYAN [continuing]. regarding to support the 6,000 veterans that we have on campus.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you for the response.

Mr. Bartrum, how many case manager contracts has VA canceled for West LA VA?

Mr. BARTRUM. Case manager contracts?

Mr. TAKANO. Yes.

Mr. BARTRUM. I am only personally aware of 1, but we have 200 and, Dr. O'Toole, 246 cases.

Dr. O'TOOLE. There are 200——

Mr. TAKANO. Okay. Mr. Bartrum—I am sorry to cut you off——

Dr. O'TOOLE. That is okay.

Mr. TAKANO [continuing]. Dr. O'Toole. I know of at least three contracts that have been canceled that provided case management to over 240 veterans. Please provide me a list with contract numbers, the number of veterans served under those contracts, and the dates of cancellation by the end of the day.

Do you know how many case managers VA has in West LA and what their caseloads are, Mr. Bartrum?

Mr. BARTRUM. Yes, we do. Dr. O'Toole, do you want to give the details on that?

Dr. O'TOOLE. Sure. Thank you. There are currently 270 case managers working on campus taking care of veterans, homeless veterans. Of those, 135 are VA employees and about another 135 are contract. We also have an additional 145 support staff for those case managers, including housing navigators as well as others.

Mr. TAKANO. To be clear, VA—the VA's internal case management is at 135. The rest are contractors?

Dr. O'TOOLE. That is correct.

Mr. TAKANO. You just heard me talk about the three contracts that have been canceled, and I want the numbers for those. We have 135. What is the turnover rate for these case managers?

Dr. O'TOOLE. I do not know that offhand, sir.

Mr. TAKANO. Okay. Please get that number to me. How many leave West LA each month?

Dr. O'TOOLE. How many?

Mr. TAKANO. How many of those case managers leave West LA?

Dr. O'TOOLE. That I do not know either, sir.

Mr. TAKANO. Okay. How long does it take to replace them?

Dr. O'TOOLE. I would have to get that for you as well, sir.

Mr. TAKANO. All right, thank you. How many case managers are in the hiring pipeline?

Dr. O'TOOLE. Right now, the facility is actively hiring and we have allocated——

Mr. TAKANO. My question again is how many case managers are in the hiring pipeline?

Dr. O'TOOLE. I would have to——

Mr. TAKANO. You do not know.

Dr. O'TOOLE.—look into that.

Mr. TAKANO. Okay. You should know that the case manager situation in West LA is dire. VA's own data shows that there are 44 vacant social work positions in West LA, yet you have canceled contracts with seemingly no plan to replace them with internal manpower. I am usually for bringing VA care back in-house, that we hire internally, directly, but veterans should not be left without case management or a case manager who is stretched too thin while you struggle to fill these vacancies.

Do you know what VA regulations require that case managers serving veterans in the Department of Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) are supposed to have a caseload of about 25 veterans with some adjust-

ments for need level? President Trump is proposing to bring in an additional 6,000 homeless veterans to West LA You have a severe shortage of case managers and you have canceled the contracts that you use to help bridge the significant gap. I am sorry, sir, the math just is not adding up, Under Secretary Bartrum.

Dr. O'TOOLE. Sir, if I can make a couple of points to this. Currently, the case management ratio of number of veterans they are serving is below both the national guideline standards of 1-to–25 and at approximately the national average. We fully agree with you, though, sir, that in order to——

Mr. TAKANO. Dr. O'Toole, may I interrupt you here? We are hearing from veterans themselves that—from case managers, excuse me, case managers, that they have 300 veterans—300 patients on their panels.

Dr. O'TOOLE. I am not aware of that. I will say, sir, this is one of—this is a difficult job to do, and I support our employees doing this work and it is important work. The data that we have show that the ratio is below the 1-to–25 mark. We do agree with you, sir, that this is a workforce that is going to need to grow and we have plans to grow it commensurate with the growth of residents on campus.

Mr. TAKANO. Well, I suggest you are far from ready to deal with 6,000 homeless veterans that you intend to house at the campus.

I am over time. I am sorry. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields back.

Representative King-Hinds, you are recognized for 5 minutes. You really are.

Ms. KING-HINDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am from the Northern Mariana Islands where we do not have a Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC). I was going through, in preparation for today's oversight hearing, I was going through the major construction requests, and what struck me was almost $100 million for an 800-space parking structure. I guess my first question is, how much of the budget is actually veteran-facing versus administrative or community infrastructure?

Mr. BARTRUM. In our budget, sometimes it will appear that things are not veteran-facing when they are supporting the veteran in the community. The parking supports our veterans who live in the housing unit so that they can park.

I would like to do is, Brett, if you would like to talk about the projects that we are doing and how we are building the community out. Because the comments that have been made about are we ready, I would say that when we got this, it was not ready to be a community and we are doing things to make it a community. That is what we will talk about in our budget request.

Mr. SIMMS. Thank you. That is a great question, Congresswoman.

Parking is a challenge at every VA medical center. I do not think anyone would doubt that. On the North Campus, we have actually taken out of service virtually every parking lot that existed to build permanent supportive housing, so there is no parking for the veterans, for visitors for the veterans, for the staff servicing the veterans. This parking garage is intended to provide that in a single place to open up other land that we can put housing on.

There are other asks within there that are both clinical in nature. Our Community Living Center, our domiciliary programs, both have upgrades and expansion of bed capacity included in the 2027 ask, as well as the ranking member had mentioned, sober living. Building 212 is designed to be a 100-bed sober living unit, filling one of those gaps and needs for other types of housing available on the campus.

Ms. KING-HINDS. I guess what I am trying to reconcile is, is the price tag, right? I think everybody can agree that everybody wants to work on addressing the homelessness situation. When you are looking at the $500 million budget requests and then the $100 million price tag on parking requests, I want to understand what is the metrics whereby the cost per bed for each housing structure is analyzed?

Mr. SIMMS. That is a great question. As you noted, most of these buildings are not permanent supportive housing. We do have information on the cost per bed for the permanent supportive housing that we could provide. I will also say that I wish construction was cheaper. We could certainly do a lot more. The cost of construction has continued to escalate for every type of project that we do, whether it be beds, whether it be parking, whether it be utility infrastructure. That price tag just continues to escalate. Parking is an example of something we do at almost all of our campuses that we used to be able to do for 30-or $40 million; that is now quickly approaching that $100 million.

Ms. KING-HINDS. Okay. I get that. I guess, you know, in terms of just getting a full understanding of the ask, I think one of the issues is not getting a full campus master plan. Once you have exhausted the $500 million, do you anticipate additional costs to that? As we do—coming from a jurisdiction that has to deal with supply chain issues and just inflation of construction costs, you know, what are you—beyond the $500 million, what is the annual operating cost that you, you know, that you expect?

Just so that we have a full grasp of how much this is actually going to cost, given the fact that, you know, you are renovating like a 1930's property, right? There is going to be some permitting issues. Was there an analysis done whether it would be better to just build a new infrastructure altogether or actually comply with a lot of these regulatory requirements that can be incredibly expensive in the State of California?

Mr. SIMMS. Fully appreciate that, Congresswoman. The short answer is there will be more asks. We have both infrastructure needs beyond what we are asking for in 2027, as well as ongoing operational needs. There is $30 million into the healthcare budget to support the operations of a lot of what we are doing on the North Campus there. That is going to be enduring, and there will be more, both staffing and other types of facility operational components that will be added to that.

There will be more. This is sort of the down payment to build that foundation of a campus that can support more and more veterans that would be moving on. There will be additional costs in future budget requests that we will be working with the administration to provide.

Ms. KING-HINDS. I am running out of time. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentlewoman yields back.

Representative Brownley, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. BROWNLEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for the panel for being here.

Ms. Runyan, according to your own data from VA's By-Name list, nearly 400 veterans experiencing homelessness in VA are over the age of 65. Another 350 veterans are between 50 and 65 years old. That is nearly half of the By-Name list that will be over the age of 60 within the next 10 years. My question to you is, how many existing permanent supportive housing buildings at West LA have a nurse onsite?

Ms. RUNYAN. Thank you for your question, Congresswoman. I am going to turn that over to Dr. O'Toole to provide you with the information on that.

Dr. O'TOOLE. Thank you, Congresswoman. I—first, you are—I appreciate you raising that question. It is just——

Ms. BROWNLEY. Just I need a number, or we have none, or we are—we have three. I just need a——

Dr. O'TOOLE. Well, it is much more, though, ma'am, than just the number of nurses. We are planning an entire——

Ms. BROWNLEY. I just——

Dr. O'TOOLE.—aging-in-place healthcare support system——

Ms. BROWNLEY. I understand that.

Dr. O'TOOLE.—for those aging veterans.

Ms. BROWNLEY. I just want to know——

Dr. O'TOOLE. I do not know the specific number currently in place, but I just want to reassure you it is something we are actively planning for and anticipating.

Ms. BROWNLEY. Okay. Well, it sounds like that you understand that our older vets who have cognitive, mobility, or other health issues that hinder their ability to manage finances or complete basic housekeeping tasks, that this places them at risk of homelessness. Having regular assistance with activities of daily living and help with medication management can help diminish aging veterans' homelessness risk.

My bill, the Elizabeth Dole Act, expanded VA's authority to provide home and community-based services to help veterans safely age at home. LA County's Framework for Ending Veteran Homelessness suggests VA create assisted living arrangements for aging veterans. California Veterans Affairs (CalVet) and Swords to Plowshares have a program that providing supportive services to aging and vulnerable veterans to help them maintain housing stability and to safely age in place. The National Alliance to End Homelessness has a partnership with U.S. Aging to leverage resources to address these issues as well.

My question is, how is VA going to incorporate these supportive services into its plan to care for age—for the aging veteran population? If you can provide some examples and be brief, because I have a few more questions to ask.

Dr. O'TOOLE. Certainly. Well, I can say, you know, I have personally done site visits both to our Northern California Enhanced-Use Lease (EUL) system in Sacramento, as well as the Colma EUL in

South San Francisco, looking specifically at how they are managing aging in place and providing those additional services to project-based voucher residents. We need to be doing this, completely agree, and it is something we are working on as part of the plan——

Ms. BROWNLEY. If you are working on it, is there a way in which you can give us some information about how much help you need in order to have adequate services for aging veterans and give us some kind of plan? The plan that we saw last night does not include any specificity.

Dr. O'TOOLE. Yes, absolutely, and we would welcome the opportunity to work with you on adequate resourcing.

Ms. BROWNLEY. Great.

Ms. Runyan, I just wanted to ask you, my veterans in my district are absolutely 100 percent dependent on the West LA Medical Center, and you are well aware of the longstanding partnership of UCLA and the Medical Center. My data says that that partnership has helped over 80,000 veterans each year with over a million healthcare visits. To me, this partnership is absolutely critically important for the health and welfare of our veterans in the region. I just wanted to hear from you that you also believe that that partnership is critically important.

Ms. RUNYAN. Congresswoman, I would say yes. Let me clarify for you, the public, anyone who is unaware, that is unrelated to the lease agreement. I would also turn it over to the under secretary if he has anything to add on that front with respect to the medical services they provide.

Mr. BARTRUM. Yes, the medical services and the partnership between the hospitals and between the two facilities, whether it be for research or medical care, none of that is impacted by the lease or litigation?

Ms. BROWNLEY. Well, I just—I think the lease and the litigation and this partnership, you say they are separate, but I think that—I think differently about that, that they are interrelated. In fact, I think the partnership is—that VA needs that partnership more than UCLA needs that partnership. As a consequence, I just I hope that there will never be any action by the VA or an executive order that would impede this partnership in any way, shape, or form.

I see that my time is up. I have not been able to ask the questions that I wanted to ask, but I will yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentlelady yields back.

Representative Van Orden, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Simms, are you a homeowner?

Mr. SIMMS. Yes.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Did you put a down payment on your home?

Mr. SIMMS. Yes.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Did you know what the percentage of the cost of the home was going to be?

Mr. SIMMS. At the time? Yes.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Yes. Okay. There is no way in hell you are going to come here and say $500 million is a down payment and you cannot tell me what the actual cost is. You are going to come back for more stuff. That is absurd and it is indicative of the fact

that this project is going to be a further boondoggle. I think that this really is a gross demonstration of what we call corruption and it has been going on since 1888, and it is unacceptable and it is stopping.

This, look at this, current map, possible renderings. I do not understand how you guys can come here and ask for half a billion dollars for a possible rendering. I mean, this—we are not doing this any longer. I guaran-damn-tee you that President Trump, if he was aware of this, he is a builder, he builds things, he knows how much stuff costs, he has actual renderings. This is unacceptable on all levels, and it has been for multiple administrations.

I absolutely commend President Trump and the Secretary, you know, trying to fix this, but this is not how this gets fixed. This will perpetuate this problem in perpetuity.

I do not know who is going to answer this question. Who currently is utilizing this campus? It is all in here, but no one is going to read this, they are going to see a video. Who is utilizing this campus other than the VA? Anybody? Okay. UCLA, who else? The school is gone. How many entities external to the VA are utilizing this campus right now?

Ms. RUNYAN. Then we also have the EUL partners.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Okay. What is the revenue generated annually by the tenants?

Ms. RUNYAN. Do you have that information? We can certainly take that for the record.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Okay. Ma'am, we need to make this public. It is—this whole thing is just absurd. How much is the real estate valued at, the actual real estate? You do not know?

Ms. RUNYAN. We have the value of the leaseholds.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. The land. I mean, this is West LA, you know what I mean? This is not——

Ms. RUNYAN. We could easily come up with that based on the appraisal that we have for the parcels that we appraised.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Okay. Thank you. I would appreciate that, ma'am. This is not Kansas, this is West LA.

Ms. RUNYAN. We agree.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. What is the average time a veteran stays on this campus?

Ms. RUNYAN. Dr. O'Toole.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. It is probably for you, Mr. O'Toole.

Dr. O'TOOLE. It is going to depend, obviously, going back to Congressman Brownley's point about aging veterans, we would expect them to spend their lifetime with us on that campus.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. All right, thank you.

Dr. O'TOOLE. For younger veterans with shorter-term needs, substance use, mental health needs, following treatment, we would hope and expect they would be able to return to the community in community settings.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. The goal is to empower our veterans who served our country honorably, to get them back into the community to be productive members of society. That is the primary focus of this campus? Then for those who cannot, and as Ms. Brownley very aptly pointed out, the aging veterans, to give them a place where they can live in dignity and safety. Is that correct?

Dr. O'TOOLE. Yes, sir, it is correct.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Okay. Well, then get a plan. That is all we are asking, because you do not have one. We are not doing this. This falls under the purview of my subcommittee, and we have been trying to fix this problem for 3 years. This is corruption and it is going to stop now.

Ms. RUNYAN. We 100 percent agree, Congressman.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. I yield.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields back.

Representative Ramirez, you are recognized for 5 minutes. Yes.

Ms. RAMIREZ. Thank you, Chairman. I guess I am not hearing—I do not have enough coffee today. I did not hear Ramirez. Happy Wednesday. I want to thank the witnesses for being here today.

Some of you know that prior to me coming to Congress, I spent 13 years serving in a social service organization providing housing and shelter to unhoused Chicagoans. I witnessed firsthand the multilayered effect of not having a stable home on our unhoused neighbors. I will be honest with you, it impacted absolutely everything, from health outcomes to access to education to job retention, connections with family. The list goes on. It is why for me, as ranking member of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, I made it a priority to ensure that the most vulnerable of our veterans are receiving the care and the support they need.

However, it is clear to me that this administration is intent on dismantling and defunding programs that would effectively address veteran homelessness. Last year, Trump issued an executive order calling for his agencies to force people experiencing homelessness into institutions against their will. His lackeys, former Attorney General (AG) Bondi and Collins, made sure to follow suit with Project Safe Harbor, an initiative through which VA plans to try to weaponize the guardianship system to force homeless and at-risk veterans into treatment. Their actions are intended to appease Trump at the expense of veterans.

Let me ask, weaponizing guardianship and institutionalizing veterans, what will it actually do to address the root causes of homelessness in our country? Frankly, I think it is going to lead to worse outcomes for the most vulnerable of our veterans. Today I want to really focus my questions on Project Safe Harbor.

Dr. O'Toole, Greater Los Angeles is one of the sites for Project Safe Harbor, an initiative that would result in veterans losing their autonomy to make decisions for themselves, including what treatment to get and where to live. My question to you, Dr. O'Toole, how many homeless veterans or veterans at risk of homelessness in LA have VA—has VA already enrolled in Project Safe Harbor?

Ms. RUNYAN. I—if you do not mind, Congresswoman, I would like to answer on the guardianship front. That is strictly established to make sure that veterans receive proper care.

Ms. RAMIREZ. Hold on. I want to know specifically right now what my question is, is how many homeless veterans or veterans at risk of homelessness have been enrolled on Project Safe Harbor? Is that what you are answering?

Ms. RUNYAN. I am answering your first part of what you were asking. It is a guardianship issue.

Ms. RAMIREZ. I am asking Dr. O'Toole. Let me come back to Dr. O'Toole.

Ms. RUNYAN. It is important to understand.

Ms. RAMIREZ. It is my time, so I wanted to ask Dr. O'Toole.

Dr. O'TOOLE. Well, thank you, ma'am, for the question, and I also appreciate the opportunity to provide some clarification on this. First off, Project Safe Harbor was an IPT, interprofessional team, to look at what has been a longstanding issue of veterans who lack the mental capacity for decision-making and to be able to assist them.

Ms. RAMIREZ. I have information on the program, Dr. O'Toole——

Dr. O'TOOLE. Excuse me.

Ms. RAMIREZ [continuing]. but the thing I need for the record right now is I need to be able to indicate how many veterans or veterans at risk of homelessness in LA have already been enrolled in the program? Is there any?

Dr. O'TOOLE. Thank you, ma'am. As I was trying to state, the Project Safe Harbor was looking at existing practices and best practices, and so I want to make that clarification.

Ms. RAMIREZ. What is the number?

Dr. O'TOOLE. I do not have the number offhand, but this would be related to existing practices. The focus——

Ms. RAMIREZ. I need that number, Doctor. I only have a minute and 30.

Dr. O'TOOLE. Yes.

Ms. RAMIREZ. For the record, I need that number. The second thing is——

Dr. O'TOOLE. Congresswoman, if I can focus one of—because you have brought this issue up, the focus is on veterans who are hospitalized, and I want to make sure that that is an emphasis.

Ms. RAMIREZ. You are saying that it is focused on veterans who have been hospitalized. That was actually one of the questions I had here. Okay, thank you. Let me ask you one last question, and maybe you need to come back to, but how many of those cases have been adjudicated by the court?

Dr. O'TOOLE. I do not know that, and we would have to get back to you on that.

Ms. RAMIREZ. Okay. I do need that for the record, Chairman, if we can try to get that after.

We are hearing that homeless veterans are already——

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection.

Ms. RAMIREZ. Thank you. We are hearing that homeless veterans are already being targeted for guardianship, which is contrary to what you told us during your last conversation. I guess my question is to you, Dr. O'Toole, the Project Safe Harbor has planning documents that clearly state that the project's objectives are not just to place veterans already in care into guardianships, but to also those on the streets. During your last testimony, when you came before us, you claimed that those documents were outdated. What parts of those documents were outdated?

Dr. O'TOOLE. Thank you, ma'am, and I appreciate that question and the opportunity to clarify. This process began as an effort of looking at a longstanding issue of veterans who lack mental capac-

ity for decision-making and what is the best approach to it. The early document was looking at one of several options and considerations Project Safe Harbor is looking at existing best practices.

Ms. RAMIREZ. Thank you. My time is up, unfortunately, Dr. O'Toole.

Dr. O'TOOLE. If I could just complete this——

Ms. RAMIREZ. If there is a second round, I would love to be able to follow up.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Miller-Meeks, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. MILLER-MEEKS. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank our witnesses for being here today.

Mr. Bartrum, how often does the VA conduct oversight on the entities and organizations that have agreements and leases on the West LA campus?

Mr. BARTRUM. We have a program management staff at the facility, but Ms. Runyan can talk more about the specifics, and Brett can talk about on the contracting with the enhanced use lease to give you more specifics.

Ms. RUNYAN. Thank you, Congresswoman. To make clear, you know, this is a tremendous—there is a lot of challenges here that we have inherited. Particularly the West LA Leasing Act allowed for the property to be farmed out to third parties and even has a carve-out for UCLA. What we have inherited and what we have been working on is the iterative process to make sure that we get this right once and for all. That takes time, that cannot happen overnight.

What are we doing to provide oversight? Just recently we had—we requested that an inspection of all the EULs be done. I just received that report. We want to make sure that veterans are living in a safe, drug-free environment where they can thrive. As you all are aware, that is not happening, and we are taking care of that. This did not just happen overnight, and this did not happen on President Trump's watch.

Ms. MILLER-MEEKS. Excuse me, I know you inherited a mess. We inherited a mess with high inflation, international conflict, so I am not disputing that. I was just asking, how often does the VA conduct oversight? Is that once a year? Is that continual? Just a ballpark figure, Mr. Bartrum, if you could.

Ms. RUNYAN. I am happy to answer that because I have the answer. Thank you, Congresswoman. We are going to be doing that no less than monthly.

Ms. MILLER-MEEKS. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Bartrum, the committee staff were made aware of safety and security concerns on campus. I think this has been alluded to. Do you believe it is appropriate for illegal activities, such as drug distribution and prostitution, to happen on Federal land?

Mr. BARTRUM. I do not. That is the reason that we have put—we have increased VA police security. They have grown from in the 50's to 60's to last year to over 80, and we are moving toward 160. We also just put in place—we just awarded an additional security contract for some additional security. We have put in lighting contract that is put into place. As I fully agree with you and what has

been stated earlier, security is job one. The veterans have to feel secure on the campus.

Ms. RUNYAN. If I may, there is an important point that needs to be made here. You know, we have our VA police force, we are increasing our security, but our assistant secretary for the Office of Security and Preparedness met with the LA Sheriff's Office about 2 months ago because we wanted to see if we can engage in a contract for 24-hour patrol support. We were told that they are down 2,000 police officers and that they—their morale is low and that they are not even to meet their own needs. Please be assured, and we are happy to continue to update you, we are trying to do everything we can to make sure that this community for our veterans is safe.

Ms. MILLER-MEEKS. Thank you. What is your current, Mr. Bartrum, what is your current timeline for when Congress should expect an updated master plan? It sounds like you are putting things in place. I understand the constraints that you have. We share those constraints, especially with this being National Police Week. When do you expect Congress to have an updated master plan?

Mr. BARTRUM. Sure. As you alluded to, you know, we all inherited this and we are building this as we go. I think that we will continue to develop our plan over the next several months. Danielle, do you have a timeframe? I am assuming it will be toward the end of the year.

Ms. RUNYAN. What I can commit to is, again, we are happy to provide you with regular updates. We are very much committed to achieving President Trump's objectives. We are going to achieve those objectives. We are happy to continue to update you, and we look forward to having that finalized plan.

Ms. MILLER-MEEKS. Okay. Mr. Bartrum, how many acres on the West LA campus are currently not being used directly for veterans housing or veteran care?

Mr. BARTRUM. Brett, do you have that number?

Ms. RUNYAN. Congresswoman, I can answer that question. Presently, the northern part of the North Campus is impacted by a few things. One is the Brentwood lease that we talked about. That is about 22 acres of land. We will be happily providing you with an update when we have the future state of what that is going to look like.

We also learned that there are significant environmental concerns, which we are drilling down on to fully understand so that we can understand when we can actually develop on those portions of the property, and that consumes largely the northern part of the campus. As for the remainder of the campus, it is impacted by historical trees and other things. We are very much and for many months we have been looking at precisely where we can construct and continue to build.

Ms. MILLER-MEEKS. Thank you very much. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentlelady yields back.

Representative Kennedy, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KENNEDY. Thank you, Chairman. Thank you for being here today for your testimony.

I am deeply concerned that the VA is moving forward with plans to bring thousands of additional veterans to the West LA campus without first addressing the serious safety and operational failures already occurring there. Expanding housing capacity means nothing if the VA cannot guarantee a veteran's safe and stable environment once they arrive. Meanwhile, veterans in West LA are reporting drug activity, overdoses, robberies, major security breakdowns across a 388-acre campus patrolled by only a handful of officers. Before the VA expands this effort any further, I do have some questions.

Mr. Bartrum, ensuring the safety and security of veterans and employees in the West LA campus should be one of the VA's most basic responsibilities. Do you believe the West LA campus is currently a safe place to live and work? If not, who within the VA is accountable for fixing that?

Mr. BARTRUM. We agree that safety and security is critical and that we must have a safe and secure campus. That is, as I stated earlier, that is why we have increased our security presence to the campus with up to 165 officers that are being onboarded. We are at 80 right now and we were at 50 last year. We are working on—we have just approved a new lighting project that will be I think the estimate is about $3.5 million to expand lighting around the campus. We have a security infrastructure project that is going on to support and bring full-time security there while we continue to increase our VA police folks.

They are—we are doing a lot of things because you are right, we cannot have a broken glass approach to this. We have got to have a layered approach for security. We got to make sure they are secure.

What I would like to also add is——

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Bartrum, you are currently hiring more officers?

Mr. BARTRUM. Yes, we are.

Mr. KENNEDY. Okay. How many do you have on—employed right now?

Mr. BARTRUM. The last number I got was 83.

Mr. KENNEDY. Eighty-three. How many are you hiring?

Mr. BARTRUM. Up to 165.

Mr. KENNEDY. Okay. How many are patrolling at any one given time?

Mr. BARTRUM. I would have to get back with you on that.

Mr. KENNEDY. Okay. How do you expect the VA to recruit and retain these officers and keep the campus safe when Secretary Collins is trying to move forward with changes that could cut pay for many VA officers by $10,000 and drive more officers out the door?

Mr. BARTRUM. I would disagree with that assertion, sir, because what the Secretary has been doing is trying to increase the entry level of our security officers to a GS–6 to increase their pay and to ensure that they have a pipeline for growing so we can develop officers to go up through the ranks.

Mr. KENNEDY. Are you familiar with the cutting or the lowering of pay grade for officers within the VA system?

Mr. BARTRUM. I am familiar that there was a desire at—to that effect. I think it came through Office of Personnel Management

(OPM), but I am also familiar that we are moving forward with increasing their classification status and increasing their GS levels.

Mr. KENNEDY. There are no cuts to officers' pay, pay grade, employment?

Mr. BARTRUM. I am not personally aware of them, and the head of Office of Operations, Security and Preparedness (OSP), retired General Reg Neal, could give you more detail on that, so we can circle back on that.

Mr. KENNEDY. All right. Well, look, the VA has an obligation to provide veterans, especially those who are disabled, with the most basic expectation of safety and security. Right now, veterans and employees at the West LA campus are describing serious security failures and staffing shortages. Before the VA moves forward with bringing thousands of more veterans, the Department needs to demonstrate that it can safely care for veterans already there. Right now, President Trump and Secretary Collins have not done that.

Mr. BARTRUM. Sir, could I add on? I—we totally agree with you that we need to secure campus for our employees as well as our veterans. In addition, in the budget, part of the budget plan is $30 million for Veterans Health Administration (VHA) operations in West LA to support wraparound services and enhance staffing. The question was brought up earlier about case managers. That allows us to buy more case managers, allow—employees or contracts, allows us to support more social workers, and allows us to make sure that we build out our teams.

In addition to that, several months ago, after I got in the seat as the under secretary, I direct at the West LA, they have a mobile health clinic out there. To address some of the issues of mobility with some of our older veterans who are out—who are in LA, we are now using the mobile clinic on the homeless campus side. Three days a week they can get care right there without having to come over to the clinic.

We are doing and building that out, and in addition to that, in the buildings that we are building, and Brett could give you more details on it, but we are building out community centers that will put in additional aspects such as, you know, some of our stores so people can have access, coffee shops, clinics. We have to build a community, not just a housing complex.

Mr. KENNEDY. I appreciate your optimism. The things that I have heard have given me less hope than you are providing here today.

That being said, I do want to say this has been years in the making. Every indication thus far, it has been a categorical failure of planning, and we need to do better for our veterans.

I am out of time, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. The gentleman yields back.

For the members I want to let you know that I know how important this is. We are pressed for time. We—if you have other questions, please submit those in writing. That being said, with that, we are going to work with the staff to try to make sure we bring you back for more questions. Also, be assured that my questions that I asked, that they do believe that we as Congress have over-

sight, and also that those lease agreements, if we request, that we can get that information.

With this panel, I would like to excuse you. I would love for you to stay around for the next panel, but, with that, you are excused.

Ms. RUNYAN. Thank you, Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Our second panel will get ready and we will get the sign or the nameplates changed over and we will start in a moment.

All right. Our second panel is now before us. On this panel we have Dr. Nelson SooHoo, associate dean of Graduate Medical Education and designated institutional official for the UCLA Health System at the University of California, Los Angeles. Ms. Tess Banko, West LA project director and Veterans Collective Community developer—director at U.S. VETS. Dr. Richard Valdez, past State Commander at the Disabled American Veterans (DVA) Department of California. Dr. Jim Zenner—or Mr. Jim Zenner, executive director at LA County Department of Military Veterans Affairs.

I will ask the witnesses to please stand and raise their right hand.

[Witnesses sworn.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Let the record reflect that the witnesses answered in the affirmative.

I now recognize Dr. SooHoo for 5 minutes to deliver your testimony.

STATEMENT OF NELSON SOOHOO

Dr. SOOHOO. Good morning, Chairman Bost, Ranking Member Takano, and members of the committee. It is a pleasure to be here today. My name is Nelson SooHoo. I am the associate dean for Graduate Medical Education at UCLA's—oh, sorry. My name is Nelson SooHoo. I am the associate dean for Graduate Medical Education at UCLA School of Medicine, responsible for resident physicians. I have also proudly served as an orthopedic surgeon at the West LA VA for the last 20 years.

Taking care of our veterans is a very personal mission to me and a vital service to our community. My own father, Jack SooHoo, served in the Air Force during the Korean War. His service left me and my family with a lasting appreciation for the sacrifices all veterans and their families make for our country. Through my own work, I have witnessed firsthand how UCLA's partnership with the VA strengthens veterans' care while advancing the mission of both of our institutions. I strive to instill in every resident we train the debt we owe to our veterans.

UCLA resident physicians serve on the VA healthcare team in 57 medical specialties. In addition, three-quarters of our medical students train and serve veterans at VA facilities. UCLA resident physicians and faculty are involved in every surgery, all inpatient care, and the vast majority of outpatient care at the West LA VA Medical Center. This includes approximately 3,000 surgeries every year and more than 1 million patient visits each year for over 80,000 veterans.

We have also developed critical programs to address veterans' most pressing needs. I have seen firsthand how veterans struggle

to navigate care in the community, and we train our physicians to understand the social and psychological challenges they face every day. This includes PTSD treatment and research, as well as psychiatric care and advancing substance abuse treatment. Our commitment is reflected in our creation of a specific VA-based track in our psychiatry residency program. Each year we match eight residents specifically to this track based on their dedication to the mission of serving veterans.

While the core of our work at the West LA VA is our medical mission, we also have a lease of the land where Jackie Robinson's baseball stadium is located. That lease was authorized by Congress in 2016, and the VA's Office of Inspector General has concluded on multiple occasions that the lease is fully compliant with the law. Under that lease, UCLA has agreed to provide rent payments and $13.5 million of in-kind contributions to veterans programs over a 10-year period. This is above and beyond the medical care that we render at the West LA VA Medical Center. UCLA has already exceeded those obligations by over $2 million. This includes $4 million for the Veterans Legal Clinic, where in the last 6 years UCLA law students and clinic staff have helped veterans secure an additional $24 million in lifetime benefits.

It also includes over $4.5 million for the Veteran Family Well-Being Center, which provides veterans and their families well-being and resilience training. Since opening in 2017, the center has welcomed nearly 40,000 attendees at education and community building events and has completed around 10,000 resilience training sessions for over 1,300 participants. These are just two of the many programs and services that UCLA delivers under the lease at no additional cost to the VA or veterans.

Our 70-year partnership with the VA and commitment to veterans' service also extends beyond our work at the West LA VA. One key example is Operation Mend, a program UCLA helped pioneer alongside the United States military. As part of that program, we provide free advanced surgical and medical treatment, comprehensive psychological evaluation and support, and intensive treatment programs for post-9–11 veterans with PTSD and traumatic brain injury. Operation Mend, which is part of the Wounded Warrior Project's Warrior Care Network, is the only program of its kind in the Nation It has been one of the greatest privileges of my career to help restore function to these veterans using the most advanced surgical techniques.

We recognize that there are questions regarding the long-term future of UCLA's lease at the West LA VA. UCLA is committed to working in good faith with our partners at the VA toward a mutually agreeable solution. Whatever the outcome of these discussions, UCLA will continue to proudly serve veterans at the West LA VA Medical Center.

For decades, UCLA and the VA have worked together to train the next generation of physicians, advance medical research, and, most importantly, deliver the highest quality of care to those heroes who have sacrificed for our country. I hope my own role in this long relationship honors both my father and every veteran that we serve.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I welcome the committee's questions.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF NELSON SOOHOO APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Dr. SooHoo. The written statement, Dr. SooHoo, will be entered into the hearing record.

Ms. Banko, you are now recognized for 5 minutes for your opening testimony.

STATEMENT OF TESS BANKO

Ms. BANKO. My name is Teresa Tess Banko. I am an 80 percent disabled Marine Corps veteran, Active Duty, suicide surviving widow that has been serving the military and veterans community for over 20 years. Having overcome challenges of my own, I have not known if I would ever walk again, cradled a folded flag, and been immolated by the final crushing echo of the 21-gun salute. I am a person who knows what lies in the silence, alone when the door to your refuge closes on horrifying and life-altering events.

I also grew up homeless, and I want to thank you all for the programs and opportunities that allowed me to get up and give back. Uplifting and supporting what is possible and positive in housing and recovery is just as important and sacred to the team that I work with as it is to me.

The West LA VA neighborhood is the first of its kind in scope to remodel, repurpose, or build anew between one and two dozen buildings in partnership with the VA, veterans, and over 70 stakeholders and partnering organizations. In 2018, through a competitive process, the VA selected the West Los Angeles Veterans Collective as the principal developer team of the West LA VA campus. The principal developer model was chosen by VA because it is the most effective way to cohesively plan and manage such a complex system of housing and services over the long term.

The Veterans Collective is three organizations, including a housing developer with extensive mixed-use experience, a nonprofit developer with extensive permanent supportive housing experience, and the largest national nonprofit provider of veterans transitional housing and services. The collective is not just building housing alongside VA. We aspire to that vibrant, empowering, and deliberate therapeutic community that meets the needs of veterans' families and where people genuinely want to live.

While there are many reasons people become unsheltered, putting on a uniform should never be one of them, and I know you agree with me. We believe all who served our country deserve a place where they can find community and get gold standard care and services that they need to succeed, not just shelter from the storm. From the outset in 2018, the Collective leveraged our expertise to build on the existing 2016 framework master plan started by collecting additional input from veterans and other experts. This work informed updates to the 2016 master plan in 2018 and, ultimately, the VA's adoption of the 2022 master plan for the permanent supportive housing and services community for both resident and nonresident veterans.

We simultaneously worked alongside VA to fulfill National Environmental Policy and National Historic Preservation Act require-

ments, which started in 2017 and took over 2 years to complete. Our final design soon after reached full clearance, and our infrastructure and predevelopment work with the VA began, a total investment at which current day has brought more than $200 million in critical infrastructure improvements to the VA neighborhood.

As we move this crucial work forward, the broader community began to see the physical results of years of planning work grounded in the hopes of the many veterans who long to call the West LA VA home. Our first development, Building 207, previously sat vacant for decades, broke ground in December 2020, and opened to residents in February 2023. The building reached full occupancy within months. The Building 207's 59 units were just the beginning. Today, if you walk the neighborhood, you can feel the momentum. We have completed 6 buildings totaling 407 permanent supportive housing units, and 6 more buildings are under construction that will soon offer an additional 360 homes to veterans in need.

By the end of 2026, an astounding 1,089 new permanent supportive homes at the West LA will have been put into service in less than 4 years. I am proud to say that as of last year, the principal developer team has raised more than $1 billion in total funding commitments to make all of this possible.

As we continue to build housing, we cannot lose sight of managing the housing and ensuring the neighborhood promotes safety, improves health outcomes, and overall is the kind of environment that veterans want to live in rather than are forced to live through. It means working as one team, like the master association, Community Partner and Provider Alliance, spanning the continuum of housing and services.

We look forward to continuing to work with the VA, other developers, and community partners to create and support the these systems of administration for the long-term stability of neighborhood operations. This includes incorporating our previous work with the National Center for Warrior Independence.

The Nation's largest community for veterans cannot succeed without a strong, honest relationship with the VA. We meet with VA leadership, including the Office of Asset Enterprise Management, to become aligned on priorities, resolve issues, and hold ourselves mutually accountable to veterans and to the neighborhood. Communication, coordination, and continuity take constant focus across the span of years and political administrations.

Our goals remain fundamentally aligned. We are determined to continue in our mission until no veteran is left sleeping on the streets in the country they fought to protect. I look forward to working with this committee to support our work in the years to come.

Thank you. I welcome your questions.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF TESS BANKO APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Ms. Banko. Semper Fi. The written statement of Ms. Banko will be entered into the hearing record.

Okay. I think we are covered now. It is going again. Mr. Valdez, you are now recognized for 5 minutes to provide your testimony.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD VALDEZ

Mr. VALDEZ. Thank you, Chairman Bost, Ranking Member Takano, and members of the committee. On behalf of DAV-Department of California, DAV-Cal, I appreciate the opportunity to testify about the West LA Campus Master Plan to provide housing and services for homeless veterans.

DAV-Cal is a state-chartered veterans service organization (VSO) founded in 1922, which operates independently from the national DAV organization while supporting the same mission. Yes, it is on. Maybe I ought to sit closer. DAV-Cal does this by funding and managing a variety of assistance programs for veterans, including benefits and advocacy, employment assistance, and disaster and emergency relief. For decades, we have also operated a veteran transportation network providing free rides for veterans to medical appointments at VA facilities.

Mr. Chairman, my journey began in 1966 when I enlisted in the Marine Corps while still in high school. I spent 3 months—excuse me, in January 1967, I deployed to Vietnam and less than 2 months later, I was wounded during combat operations. I spent 3 months recovering at the Naval Hospital in Guam.

While convalescing, I volunteered to return back to my unit. I extended my tour in December 1967, and I returned in 1968 during the Tet Offensive. I suffered additional back injuries from mortar fire. During my time in the Marine Corps, I was awarded a Purple Heart and Combat Action Ribbon. I was honorably discharged, returned home, and began a 30-year career in the aerospace and defense sectors.

After I retired, in 2003, a DAV service officer helped me apply for and receive VA benefits for my gunshot wound, back injuries, and PTSD. I soon became active with my local DAV chapter, Department, and serving as State Commander from 2013 to 2014, legislative director from 2014 to 2019.

In February 2015, I had the chance to meet with then-VA Secretary Bob McDonald here in Washington, DC, to talk about the West LA VA draft master plan to provide housing and services for the homeless veterans. Secretary McDonald recruited me to assist with the draft master plan and its implementation.

Today, more than a decade later, lawsuits, legislation, and environmental impact studies, VA has yet to complete the plan. One of the issues the committee is looking at is the role of enhanced lease uses, the West LA campus, including agreements VA negotiated and signed with the oil drilling. As you know, DAV-Cal was a party to one of those VA agreements involving donations used for transportation, those services for the veterans there on campus. Although I did not negotiate or manage any of those agreements, I can provide background and context for the committee.

In March 2017, VA signed an agreement with Breitburn Energy that set in motion the continuation of oil drilling operations from a parcel of land on—at West LA. In exchange, Breitburn agreed to donate a portion of their oil royalties to support the transportation services for veterans at West LA. The VA then signed an agreement with DAV-Cal to accept those Breitburn donations and use them to transport veterans to and from medical appointments and benefits there in West LA.

While these agreements were in place from 2017 to 2024, DAV-Cal received approximately $897,000 in donations, disbursed $907,000 for transportation services. As reported to the committee last year, this included $667,000 for contracted transportation services and $240,000 for vehicle purchased and donated to the VA. DAV-Cal continues to operate those VA-owned vehicles to drive veterans to and from medical appointments at West LA.

Mr. Chairman, DAV-Cal remains committed to playing whatever other role is necessary to finally establish a real home and community for homeless veterans and their families on the campus.

That concludes my testimony, and I would be pleased to answer any questions for the committee.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF RICHARD VALDEZ APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Valdez. Semper Fi as well. The written statement of Mr. Valdez will be entered into the hearing record.

Mr. Zenner, you are recognized for 5 minutes to provide your testimony.

STATEMENT OF JIM ZENNER

Mr. ZENNER. Good morning. Good morning, Chairman Bost, Ranking Member Takano, and the rest of the committee. My name is Jim Zenner. I am the director of LA County Department of Military Veteran Affairs, and I serve as the county veteran service officer. Thank you for the opportunity today to testify regarding the development of the National Center of Warrior Independence in West Los Angeles VA campus.

Addressing foundational issues is an absolute necessity if we are to fulfill the President's vision of a National Center for Warrior Independence. To fully realize the vision and to deliver on the executive order's directives for self-sufficiency and restored lives, I urge the committee to prioritize three specific actions. First, the immediate establishment of a Federal Veterans Treatment Court on the campus. Second, expansion of affordable housing units combined with critical flexibility in project-based housing programs. Third, addressing the jurisdictional gaps impacting the campus, including the policies creating those gaps.

President Trump's May 2025 executive order sets an ambitious vision for the campus. It envisions bold action so homeless veterans can access the comprehensive care, housing, substance use treatment required to restore their independence. We broadly support the push for additional housing for veterans at West LA, but recognize the need for vouchers and required funding to make it happen.

We are seeing some headway with the VA's termination of non-veteran leases and the clearing of the land. However, that is an initial step in our goal to address the cycle of homelessness, untreated trauma, and the illicit activities that may undermine the center's success before it even begins.

This is where a dedicated on-campus Federal Veteran Treatment Court becomes essential. If a Federal treatment court is implemented on the campus, my team will collaborate closely with the VA to make sure it has our support and is successful. This court could be a critical link to ensure veterans whose actions are tied

to untreated behavioral health issues receive care, not just consequences. Nationwide, this model works. It reduces recidivism, improves housing outcomes, and significantly enhances public safety.

Building on that stability requires a deeply collaborative approach to housing. In Los Angeles County, we have witnessed the profound impact that the county, the VA, and the local service providers working closely together. Through our One Team Initiative, we bring stakeholders together at the same time, at the same table.

Through the barrier-busting work conducted by the One Team, we have learned that veterans experiencing homelessness is not a monolithic group. They present with complex circumstances that do not seamlessly fit into the rigid scope of our current eligibility rules. Achieving the President's vision requires not just new facilities, but flexible solutions.

It is important to note that the West LA VA campus sits on unincorporated land, meaning Los Angeles County, rather than the city, is responsible for administering the housing vouchers on the campus. To maximize this effort, we will need a waiver so HUD-VASH project-based vouchers are not counted toward the cap with local public housing authorities. We must also allow veterans at risk of homelessness to qualify for these project-based units.

If we concentrate our most high-need and highest acuity veterans in one location, we are creating a place where veterans are merely surviving their trauma rather than recovering and moving forward. To build a resilient community, we need to surround our most vulnerable with the varied life experiences of their peers. To achieve this, we need a diverse portfolio of housing on the campus. This must include workforce housing for the hundreds of veterans employed on the campus alongside transitional housing for recently separated servicemembers and their families and our student veterans.

Finally, we must confront the jurisdictional issues that are impeding campus operations. As veterans, we are entirely too familiar with the bureaucratic runaround, the frustration of being told our issues are not the responsibility of a specific jurisdiction. This passing of the buck represents a lack of accountability and leaves critical gaps in service and safety. This problem is further aggravated by staffing shortages within the campus VAPD. The Veteran Administration Police Department is saddled with uncompetitive GS positions that hinder the ability to recruit and retain officers.

I have worked to assist the local VAPD in navigating some jurisdictional hurdles, including a recent case involving a deceased veteran on the campus. These interactions have exposed systemic gaps. Congress must identify opportunities to close these jurisdictional gaps and address a lapse in enforcement authority.

At a minimum, veterans accessing the campus have earned the right to a safe, supportive environment in which to get treatment. Establishing the Veterans Treatment Court, expanding flexible housing options, and resolving these chronic jurisdictional shortfalls are not just policy tweaks. They are the fundamental actions required to honor the campus' original 1888 mission, fulfill the executive order's vision, and help veterans reclaim their independence.

Thank you for your time, and I welcome your questions.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF JIM ZENNER APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Zenner. The written testimony of Mr. Zenner will be entered into the hearing record.

Now I recognize myself for 5 minutes for questions of our second panel.

Dr. SooHoo, UCLA has been part of Western—West LA campus for a long, long time. Let me ask you plainly, what is UCLA bringing to the table today that directly improves lives of veterans on the campus? Mic, microphone.

Dr. SOOHOO. Sorry. In my 25 years as an orthopedic surgeon on staff at the VA and now in an administrative role overseeing our trainees, the relationship between UCLA and the VA is really a true partnership. The core of it is our medical mission. Every day there are over 200 trainees at the VA, and all of the faculty—all the attendees of the VA are eligible for faculty appointments at UCLA. We are bringing the highest quality of care to the veterans.

I have really seen this—a lot of veterans when they come, rightfully so, are oftentimes suspicious of the care that they are receiving, or are having difficult interactions with the healthcare system. One of the greatest things for us is to be able to say, we are from here, from UCLA. We are the part of the team taking care of you, to give them confidence, to make them feel part of what we are doing. That is been one of the most gratifying things to see, trust open up in patients when they hear where we are from, what we are doing with the same physicians that are there in training and teaching and helping care for them.

In addition, myself, I first worked in VA as a medical student in San Diego, then as a resident in Atlanta, and now here. It was a big part of what drove me to be part of the VA as part of my career. Similarly, we are building the pipeline for the future. We teach our medical students, our residents, what an honor it is to take care of the veterans, what a special population it is, and how they can be committed to this mission.

In my own field, orthopedic surgery, it is very hard to get orthopedic surgeons anywhere. Every one of the orthopedic surgeons on our service, at some point in their career were at the VA and most of them were my trainees previously in their career. When they come back, that is something they prioritize. They want to be part of the VA because they have seen what a special mission is, how important it is. It—for us, it really is a true partnership in that regard.

The CHAIRMAN. What then could the veteran that has experienced this, and what would they say to say this happened because UCLA stepped up? Where—I mean, when a veteran receives certain care, they do not necessarily know where the doctor is coming from unless the doctor or nurse tells them that they are training. Can they actually—because for public relations, and I am not doing it for just public relations, but I think it is very good that if a veteran could all of a sudden say, you know what, if it was not for UCLA being here, I may not have got this treatment or I might not have got this. Is there something there that they can say and wave the flag for?

Dr. SOOHOO. Yes, you know, it is for better or worse, the internet now, everyone looks up their doctor.

The CHAIRMAN. Yep.

Dr. SOOHOO. It is funny how often they come and say, hey, I see you are a UCLA doctor, when they come see me. I can see it builds such a trust, like they know that they are going to get good care, that they know we are part of the team, we are there to help them. It is interesting, I mean, I have not even thought of that question, it is so ingrained in the culture. We have been so tied together well before my time and well after my time, it is almost like a question that does not even rise. Seems like all the veterans know that this is a partnership, this is where their doctors come from.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I think as we are working forward, the idea and intent is, and you already said, regardless of what happens on the lease and everything like that, it still gives an opportunity for internships for docs to provide that care. You know, a lot of—but, unfortunately, a lot of veterans will look and feel that UCLA has done pretty good for itself over the years accessing the facility and researching opportunities and all the training programs while the veterans are still waiting to see the campus fully live up to where it is supposed to be.

Are you getting caught in that, in the fear that maybe we lose the opportunity for you to serve us? Like I said, I know in your testimony you said that it has nothing to do with the lease, but the general public would look at it and think maybe it does. Does that make sense?

Dr. SOOHOO. I am not quite understanding, maybe, sorry.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. I am going to try to do this with the time I got left. There is perception and there is reality. Reality is that you and the UCLA docs come in, they get to get their training, they get an opportunity for all these patients, but tied with that, or what the general public sees is tied with that, is a baseball stadium. How do we change that perspective without getting rid of the lease?

Dr. SOOHOO. Yes, I think again, from my perspective, the core of our relationship is the medical mission. You know, as a surgeon and, again, as an administrator, that is the core of what we do. In my mind, the baseball stadium seems to be a small part of our relationship.

Now, I will say, I would not want to minimize because I definitely have heard stories from veterans that go to the games.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes.

Dr. SOOHOO. The team really is interacting with them. For any individual veteran, it can really be something that helps them reenter from very difficult—the challenges they face in life, addiction, post-traumatic stress disorder. We have heard real stories about how it impacts, so I would not want to minimize that. I mean, I think overall it is a small part of our mission, but, you know, in my role as a—every patient you help, that is the world to them. While it is a small part, I would not want to minimize the impact it has for those veterans that partake in that portion of it. Really, the core of what we do is our medical mission.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Dr. SOOHOO. The relationship between UCLA and VA.

The CHAIRMAN. My time has expired.

Ranking Member, you are recognized for 5 minutes. Yes, Ms. Brownley, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. BROWNLEY. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Takano, for allowing me to go first. I appreciate it.

Dr. SooHoo, thank you for being here. You know, I wanted to just ask a little bit more about you know, what you do and how important this training program is. I wonder if you could address or if you know off the top of your head, you know, how many doctors, nurses, and social workers that are UCLA-educated and VA-trained end up going to work at the VA? Do you have any sense?

Dr. SOOHOO. Yes, I do not have—so my impression is the vast majority in my personal experience, in my own department, I would have to say every one of the attending physicians at some point, I believe, rotated at the West LA, but may have been at some other VAs. To give you a sense of the scale of relationship, as I mentioned, during a course of a year over 900 of our residents will rotate through the VA at some point. That is representing over 250 people onsite at any one time delivering care to the veterans.

You know, I always—my residents always have to suffer through stories from me, but I always tell them, if you ever get a chance to ask a veteran about their service, that you should take that chance. I will never forget, about 10 to 15 years ago, I was seeing one of the—you know, few World War II veterans that we care for, and I just happen to ask, oh, tell me a little bit about your service. He mentioned to me that he was at D-Day. I am not a military person, and he—but he told me, I do not know if it was a division or a battalion, but it was some huge number. He said it was—he was the only one that came back.

Those kinds of lessons that we teach our residents and our medical students, I think ingrains in them the importance of this mission. It makes them want to have this as part of their career. I had a resident of mine 10 years ago in private practice in Seattle called me up and said—they still call me Dr. Soo when they graduate—I am interested in taking a job at the VA in Arizona. What do you think? Of course, we went over it, but that was based on his experience as a resident, and he is there now doing the highest—he is one of the best residents we ever had. He is there now doing shoulder surgery on those veterans and taking great care of them.

Ms. BROWNLEY. Yes, that is great. I am not sure exactly how the match program works once, you know, a medical student graduates, but is there—do students ask for a match for a—at a VA medical center?

Dr. SOOHOO. You know, it is interesting, I had referenced before, most training programs, this is a component of their training program——

Ms. BROWNLEY. Right.

Dr. SOOHOO [continuing]. so you would match in a training program and you may or may not rotate into VA depending on your hospital. Something special about our program I mentioned is that we develop a track in psychiatry where you are matching to be the VA. We have eight slots at UCLA, we have eight slots at Santa Monica, and we have eight slots at the VA. We are picking you because you are dedicated to this mission, and we, of course, expect—

that is building the pipeline of psych—one of the most in-demand specialties, in particular to the VA group, we are building a pipeline. Those people are—clearly the vast majority of them are going to go work somewhere in a VA across our country.

Ms. BROWNLEY. Very good. Well, that mental health component is absolutely critical to the VA.

Mr. Valdez, thank you for being here. Thank you for your service to our country. Thank you for your leadership with regards to disabled veterans and certainly your leadership around this LA campus and how it has evolved. I appreciate it very, very much.

I was wondering, I wanted to ask you what you think, representing veterans, what do you think of VA's plan to bring 6,000 homeless veterans from around the country ultimately to the VA campus?

Mr. VALDEZ. In terms of the plan itself?

Ms. BROWNLEY. In terms of what?

Mr. VALDEZ. The executive order with regards to bringing——

Ms. BROWNLEY. No, I am just—I just want you to talk about how do you think veterans, you represent veterans, how do you think veterans across the country would feel about coming—you know, leaving a home base and coming to the LA campus?

Mr. VALDEZ. My personal opinion on that, if I was here in Washington, disabled, and this offer came up, I would rather be home to receive the same sort of care instead of having to travel across the country. Now that is just my opinion.

Ms. BROWNLEY. Well, that is what I hope for, too, and that is—certainly the Elizabeth Dole Act was about that, to bring, you know, bring those services into homes because that is where veterans want to receive their care if they are able to.

Okay. Do you think in terms of transportation—it does not look like I have a lot of time, but maybe we can—I can ask this offline, but, you know, ways in which we can improve the transportation system. I know my veterans utilize that and it is a long trip from LA to the medical center and back, and if there are ways in which we can improve that. I will catch up with you offline.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentlewoman yields back.

Representative King-Hinds, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KING-HINDS. Thank you. This question is for Ms. Banko. What is U.S. VETS' role in the construction of the National Center for Warrior Independence?

Ms. BANKO. VETS is one of the three partners of the Veterans Collective.

The CHAIRMAN. Microphone.

Ms. BANKO. Oh, is it not on? I am sorry. The collective has developers who specialize not only in the housing development aspect, but also in services. U.S. VETS is a housing developer, but also the lead service provider for the collective buildings.

Ms. KING-HINDS. Okay. All right. Can you speak then about how many security guards are patrolling the enhanced use lease that U.S. VETS operates?

Ms. BANKO. Absolutely. Well, it is actually a requirement under the Principal Developer Enhanced-Use Lease (PD EUL) amendment. The PD EUL is the umbrella agreement with VA that covers all of the different subsequent subleases for the different buildings.

There is been an amendment to that that requires all of the PD EUL-covered developers to have two security personnel on duty 24/7. Those two elements of what we call the safety and security team (SST) are one contracted security guard and one trained veteran safety and security specialist. This is a veteran peer with safety and deescalation training that patrols all of the different buildings under the collective.

Ms. KING-HINDS. Okay. What communication do you have with the VA and veterans on campus?

Ms. BANKO. Well, it really depends on what level of communication. I mean, we meet regularly with the Office of Asset and Enterprise Management (OAEM). I personally am responsible for the operation of the safety and security team for the principal developer team, so I have an assigned person that I meet with within OAEM regularly. We have monthly reporting to OAEM.

In addition, if there is an incident that requires VAPD response because our safety and security team is observe and report only, there is no jurisdiction for them to be able to take action if there is some type of activity going on besides being able to observe and report and hopefully deescalate VAPD is the first call. We have regular communication.

In addition to the SST, the staffing component of it, we have from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. talk-down cameras that are monitored. We are able to see, you know, activity that goes on after hours, and a warning is issued if, you know, the activity does not disperse, and then VAPD is called by the dispatch service. There is different components that are really intended to speak to the different aspects of safety and security amongst the EUL buildings.

Ms. KING-HINDS. There is a lot of conversation about safety and security, drug use, prostitution, right, which is very concerning. How do you believe safety and security can be improved on campus to address the, you know, these issues that have been raised in previous conversations?

Ms. BANKO. Well, I mean, I think one key point that has been made is the fact that, you know, the safety and security team that we operate is observe and report. Calls then go into VAPD. I think that increasing the communication and being able to address issues in the timeliest manner possible is really important. I know it can be challenging to do that when understaffed, unfortunately.

I think also the things that we are doing and what we have put in place in terms of the master association. Working with other developers, outlining the different issues that may be occurring across buildings, trying for prevention and early intervention, so identifying—I mean, at its root in the permanent supportive housing, in the EULs, you have case management, VASH case management. One of the key tenets of that is knowing who you are serving, knowing that person, looking for risky behaviors, and trying to prevent them before they escalate into something larger.

Then there is the community aspect of it, which also speaks to safety and security. Once veterans get to know each other and become members of, you know, their housing community, they oftentimes look out for each other, and they will go and they will notify someone if another veteran is in trouble. That is actually a hallmark of veteran life, is looking out for one another.

There are those components all the way up to, you know, if there is behavior that may have been noticed, further investigation by property management. There can be wellness checks made, of course respecting the rights of those tenants who live in the apartment-style buildings. There is a whole host of, you know, different activities that are going on in order to try to address and prevent issues.

We have also previously met with VAPD, but could use additional face time now that the safety and security team is functioning and operational. We had met with them previously and they gave us information about the scope of some of their not-publicized operations where they may have identified illegal activity going on and they are surveilling or, you know, collecting information in order to, you know, address the issue.

Ms. KING-HINDS. Thank you. I am out of time. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Ranking Member, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TAKANO. Yes, Mr. Chairman, before I begin my questions, I would like to ask unanimous consent to enter in the plan of action into the record so that veterans can finally see VA's action plan after months of waiting.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Zenner, I would like to begin with you. Thank you for being here, coming all the way from LA. Thank you, Richard Valdez, good friend of mine. Mr. Zenner, I want to thank you also for the important work you do for veterans in Los Angeles County. I want to turn back to VA's use of nondisclosure agreements with non-VA employees. Were you asked to sign a nondisclosure agreement with VA?

Mr. ZENNER. Yes.

Mr. TAKANO. Which senior-level VA officials were in the room for this meeting?

Mr. ZENNER. It was Dr. Linda Davis was leading the meeting, and I believe Dr. O'Toole was in there. I do not recall all the other leaders. There was also the interim deputy secretary—or interim medical center director was also there.

Mr. TAKANO. Okay. This was back in?

Mr. ZENNER. Back in—it was June, June 2025.

Mr. TAKANO. 2025. Were you given a reason why you needed to sign an NDA?

Mr. ZENNER. No.

Mr. TAKANO. How long have you had—how long have you been involved in the West LA project?

Mr. ZENNER. I was a patient on the campus in 2009, and once I graduated from social work school, I became a provider of grant per diem (GPD) programs for local nonprofits. From June 2010 until now.

Mr. TAKANO. 2009. Were you ever asked by VA to sign an NDA before this moment in June 2025?

Mr. ZENNER. No, I was not.

Mr. TAKANO. It is unprecedented?

Mr. ZENNER. Correct.

Mr. TAKANO. Were you offered time for LA County's attorney to review the NDA before you signed it?

Mr. ZENNER. I was not, no.

Mr. TAKANO. Were you given a copy of the NDA?

Mr. ZENNER. No.

Mr. TAKANO. Was it explained to you that the NDA does not cover whistleblower communications or communications with Congress?

Mr. ZENNER. Not that I remember.

Mr. TAKANO. Did VA state that the matters discussed in the meeting were private, not to be discussed with anyone?

Mr. ZENNER. Yes.

Mr. TAKANO. Was there anything discussed in the meeting that the NDA covered that should not be public knowledge?

Mr. ZENNER. In my opinion, no.

Mr. TAKANO. No. As a veteran who lives in LA and a community leader, how did you feel about VA making you sign an NDA to participate in meetings pertaining to West LA?

Mr. ZENNER. Yes, it was unprecedented because really our success in LA is because we show up at the same table and work together. That is really kind of the precedent that had been set up to that point, and the reason why we had so many more placements into permanent housing, as well as, you know, reducing the amount of veterans falling into homelessness. That was—yes.

Mr. TAKANO. Well, thank you for that. Mr. Zenner, on my committee staff's most recent trip to West LA, they were told that there are only five VA police officers on patrol at any one time. Five for a 388-acre, extremely complex campus and neighboring CBOCs that can literally be hours away in LA traffic. Five for all of that.

We heard that officers were pulled from as far away as Long Beach VA when they can be spared. West LA's current staffing leaves officers unable to answer all the calls for help they receive. We are approaching a real crisis here, especially as staffing and morale continues to worsen with the impending position downgrades and vacancy cuts across the VA police force. The VA police are notoriously underpaid in comparison to officers at the Santa Monica Police Department or Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has been poaching VA officers with $50,000 recruitment bonuses.

Mr. Zenner, how can we fix the critical security issues at West LA when the VA itself is not adequately investing in its police and security?

Mr. ZENNER. Yes, two parts to my answer. One is increase the budget. I know earlier in the conversation there has been movement in that direction. A GS–6 might not be a high enough pay increase. I would recommend looking at maybe a higher rate for those officers. Considering the point that you make with Santa Monica PD, they make three—six figures, so there is a considerable gap. Maybe looking at a study, a salary study in the region, and really kind of putting some concerted effort into making it competitive.

On the second part, really looking at the jurisdictional issues that I mentioned in my testimony earlier. VHA Directive 730 does

not allow sworn deputies—VAPD deputies to be sworn by a local jurisdiction, aka the sheriffs, to enforce State and local laws, and that is creating some of the jurisdictional gaps on that campus.

Mr. TAKANO. Yes, so VA police cannot just—they cannot do certain things. By extension, the under secretary or the assistant secretary mentioned a contract security. My understanding is that contract security will also similarly have no authority to deal with many of the situations of security on the campus. Is that right?

Mr. ZENNER. That is correct.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Representative Ramirez.

Ms. RAMIREZ. Thank you, Chairman. You can say Ramirez. Ramirez. I am just joking. I am messing with you. It has been a long day, Chairman. Thank you. I appreciate—you said it beautifully. You said it beautifully.

If any of you heard me in the previous panel, I mentioned how I have spent a number of years running a social service agency in Chicago, a homeless shelter. I have worked with a lot of unhoused populations in Chicago. For me, it is also really important for us to provide wraparound services and stable housing for our unhoused neighbors, including especially our veterans. We really need to have adequate staffing, infrastructure, case management, the kind of ratios that provide for a case manager to provide comprehensive support services for the veterans, and certainly funding to be able to support and deliver.

I want to talk to you, Mr. Valdez. First, let me just thank you for your service and your continued commitment to serving the veteran community. We are deeply grateful and certainly grateful that you are here as a witness today. From your testimony, I understand that DAV-Cal plays a critical role in supporting unhoused veterans. My question for you, Mr. Valdez, can you tell me what role DAV-Cal has played in the development of housing supports on the West LA campus? The second part of that question is, can you describe any challenges to progress?

Mr. VALDEZ. Well——

Ms. RAMIREZ. I will leave it there.

Mr. VALDEZ. Sure. In answer to that question, in terms of doing work there at the campus is primarily the transportation. However, our involvement with the draft master plan began when I met with Secretary McDonald. There were issues that were raised that were presented to me, and I offered those VSOs in Los Angeles that when I was in DC, that I would raise these with the Secretary and offer a recommendation. He agreed with the recommendation I presented and asked me to then put together a team of VSO leaders to then work with his special assistant on the development of the master plan.

That is basically where we are involved with the—that particular development in terms of the housing and all. When that began, I put together a roadmap of objectives that were then presented to the special assistant and the contractor for urban planning when that contractor was awarded.

Ms. RAMIREZ. That is great. Let me ask you, a part of that roadmap and recommendations that you put together, what would you

say in that roadmap or recommendations if you had to prioritize two or three things as the most effective in serving our veterans?

Mr. VALDEZ. The most effective that I thought was important, that as the homeless were provided safety, housing, the services that were required, training so that they can reintegrate with society and employment. I felt it was important because I would seen before where a veteran would be released because the services felt that he was or she was prepared to go out and, and rejoin society, that it was important to provide those individuals who did not make it to come in at the front of the line instead of the back of the line because I felt it was much more important to get them resituated, trained, and then they would be able to make the choice to return.

Ms. RAMIREZ. Got it. I am hearing you say that what you find most effective is housing, safety, wraparound support services, and training.

Mr. VALDEZ. That is right.

Ms. RAMIREZ. I really appreciate that. This last question in the last minute I have is for all the witnesses. I guess we can start with you, Mr. Zenner. What is the greatest challenge the West LA campus faces serving our unhoused veterans, and how do you think this challenge can be best resolved? I will start with you and then we will go all the way to Dr. SooHoo.

Mr. ZENNER. Yes. I think right now public safety is the biggest issue. Not only am I concerned for veterans on the campus, I am also deeply concerned for the VA employees and the contract employees that work on that campus. If everyone is not feeling safe, it is hard to accomplish all the other things that we need to accomplish on that campus.

Ms. RAMIREZ. Thank you. So public safety. Mr. Valdez, anything else to add?

Mr. VALDEZ. Oh, excuse me. Yes, in the roadmap was safety and training for the males that were on the campus because there were going to be women veterans also there, and so they needed to be prepared that, hey, look, you are not out on the street anymore——

Ms. RAMIREZ. That is right.

Mr. VALDEZ [continuing]. and there are women here.

Ms. RAMIREZ. Thank you. I only have a couple seconds. I am going to go to Ms. Banko and Dr. SooHoo.

Ms. BANKO. Continuity of commitment.

Mr. RAMIREZ. Continuity of commitment.

Ms. BANKO. I would say, overarchingly, things have to be systematized in a way that they span decades. It is a 99-year commitment for the leases and it has to continue to function no matter who is in place or what is in place. The budget also has to back it up.

Ms. RAMIREZ. Thank you. Dr. SooHoo, 2 seconds. Sorry.

Dr. SOOHOO. I would agree with public safety from our trainees.

Ms. RAMIREZ. Great. Public safety and training. Thank you so much.

Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Dexter, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. DEXTER. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to all our witnesses for coming and joining us today.

I am grateful for this committee's focus on veteran homelessness because we have made historic bipartisan progress getting veterans housed, and our work, as you are talking about, is far from over. I am committed to ensuring every veteran truly has a place to call home in this country and—that they served and I am hearing the same commitment from you.

Our committee staff heard directly from leadership at West Los Angeles last week that they are increasingly relying on the Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) program to provide emergency shelter for veterans experiencing homelessness. As a physician who trained in a VA, I know immediate and accessible care during a crisis can and does save lives.

However, veterans with other than honorable discharges, some of the veterans with the highest health needs, are not eligible for this program. According to the By-Name List data, at least 100 veterans experiencing homelessness in LA have other than honorable discharges. Not dishonorable, not court-martialed, other than honorable discharge. These veterans cannot access the care they need.

Luckily, I have a bill for that. The Every Veteran Housed bill would expand eligibility to all VA homeless programs to veterans with other than honorable discharges. These veterans can already access programs like HUD-VASH, and my legislation would create parity so veterans can access the full continuum of housing and supportive services they need.

Mr. Zenner, if a veteran with an other than honorable discharge seeks placement in a Health Care for Homeless Veterans program, what options are they—are available to them today?

Mr. ZENNER. Thank you for the question. Just to repeat, if they are—could you repeat the question?

Ms. DEXTER. Yes. It is not court-martialed, it is not a dishonorable discharge, it is other than honorable discharges. If they come to you, they are not—and I will just say again, they are not eligible for the Health Care for Homeless Veterans program, but they are eligible for things like HUD-VASH. This lack of continuity is creating barriers for some of the veterans. Again, it is about 100 in West LA, do not have access to the Healthcare for Homeless Veterans program. I am just asking, if they come, what options do they have?

Mr. ZENNER. Yes, for veterans with other than honorables, they have the HUD-VASH, like you mentioned. They also have grant per diem. The staffing—I have ran very large residential programs in LA in the past, both HCHV and GPD. GPD funding is very minimal compared to HCHV.

Ms. DEXTER. Okay.

Mr. ZENNER. HCHV allows for a lot of monitor staff that are constantly walking around and monitoring veterans in the program, as well as case managers with higher credentialing.

Ms. DEXTER. Okay. Great. There are some resources, just there is a lack of clarity or continuity, I guess, is the thing that we are trying to address. I would also want to know, for National Guard Reserves, they are also not eligible for some of these programs. Is that an issue that you have encountered in LA?

Mr. ZENNER. Yes. We have the LA Veteran Collaborative where we talk about barriers in the community, and that often comes up

as the unmet needs of our National Guard and Reservists. That is where county really comes in and plays as big a part as we possibly can——

Ms. DEXTER. Okay.

Mr. ZENNER [continuing]. in solving those gaps.

Ms. DEXTER. Clearly, more resources would be helpful.

Mr. ZENNER. We need more Federal resources.

Ms. DEXTER. Okay. Mr. Chair, it is the intent of the bill that we have proposed it would open up for our veterans from the National Guard Reserve to have the same access.

I also want to just pivot in the last minute. A major focus of the Center for Warrior Independence is veteran self-sufficiency. Many veterans have permanent and total disabilities and live on a fixed income from their VA benefits. With the cost of housing soaring across this country, many of those veterans will continue to use subsidies to afford rent, and you were just speaking of this. It seems to me that the only real path to self-sufficiency for these folks would be creating housing that is actually affordable, and I am sure LA is not different than my district in Portland, Oregon.

Mr. Zenner, do you have concerns about this self-sufficiency metric and how it could be implemented?

Mr. ZENNER. Yes. Yes, we really need to focus on the affordable side. There is a lot of veteran employees of the VA on that—working on that campus that are GS–5, GS–7. They have to travel over 2 hours to get to work and go back home. We need to look at some workforce housing. Also, for our transitioning servicemembers and their families coming to LA, it is a very difficult place to come into——

Ms. DEXTER. Yes.

Mr. ZENNER [continuing]. and yet we have hundreds coming back to LA. That is another opportunity that we should look at. Yes, affordability is really a big issue and EULs is not the complete answer.

Ms. DEXTER. No, agreed. Mr. Chair, I know my time is up, but housing is healthcare. We are creating more veterans as we speak, and I think we absolutely need to work together, and I look forward to doing that with you in this committee. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. The gentlelady yields back.

Ranking Member Takano, you have closing remarks?

Mr. TAKANO. I do, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to all of our witnesses who flew in from Los Angeles to be with us today. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, during this hearing, we received emails from a veteran at West LA who needs help and is facing eviction. We are trying to trouble this situation in real time from the dais because VA continues to fail this veteran. As we have demonstrated, OCLA has not been the most responsive to my staff, and I hope—I would hope to ask the VA witnesses about this, but they are gone. VA must do better, and I hope we can work together to make sure we troubleshoot these sorts of things together.

I look forward to VA complying with my request for copies of signed nondisclosure agreements and a list of individuals who signed them by 5 p.m. today. I have urged VA to stop using these NDAs, as you have, Mr. Chairman. They seem only to serve as an

intimidation tactic, not for serious purposes of protecting sensitive information. Veterans, Congress, and the public deserve transparency so that we can hold VA accountable for its care of those who served.

That being said, I am extremely concerned about the future of the National Soldiers' Home, but stand ready to give VA and its partners the support that they need to right the ship. We have the opportunity to do something truly great at West LA and with a National Center for Warrior Independence if executed with full funding, full staffing, and the best interest of veterans in mind. Ending veteran homelessness is a goal that I truly believe we can achieve, but we have to get this right in Los Angeles. Veterans' lives depend on it.

I yield back, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields back.

I want to thank all the witnesses for joining us here today. You know, this was very productive. I wish we had more time. Hopefully, as I promised, we will try to get back to this issue. I would appreciate—and I appreciate the healthcare discussion of what ties West LA to UCLA, but I am still not understanding where the baseball stadium is a benefit to the veterans, to the West LA campus. I am hoping to hopefully get that answered sometime as well.

I do look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, the President, Secretary Collins, to ensure that the leases and contracts principally benefit the veterans on the West LA campus like it is supposed to be. As to the concern that you have about those—the contracts that say we are not supposed to talk, the leases that way, we should have open. We have had that discussion. Again, thank you for being here.

I want to also say this. I want to say thank you. This is National Police Week, and that does not—that is all police, the police in this room as well as the police on the campus, that we can see how important they are to have around. I ask unanimous—yes.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Chairman, I might suggest, might we do like a—even a full committee or some sort of site hearing together in West LA?

The CHAIRMAN. We will check schedules, see if we can do that.

Mr. TAKANO. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. I ask unanimous consent that all members shall have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks, including any extraneous material. Hearing no objections, so ordered.

This hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:22 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

PREPARED STATEMENTS OF WITNESSES

Prepared Statement of the Veterans Health Administration by Danielle Runyan

Chairman Bost, Ranking Member Takano, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to discuss the work VA is doing to implement President Donald J. Trump's Executive Order, Keeping Promises to Veterans and Establishing a National Center for Warrior Independence (NCWI).

For generations, VA's West Los Angeles (LA) campus has held the unrealized potential to be a beacon of hope and stability for thousands of Veterans. Under the leadership of President Trump and VA Secretary Douglas A. Collins, this potential is finally on the way to being achieved.

And it is about time, as the mismanagement of this campus dates back more than 130 years.

In 1888, Arcadia Bandini de Stearns Baker and Senator John P. Jones gifted hundreds of acres of land to the Government for the purpose of providing a home and community for disabled Veterans. It was meant to be a place where Civil War Veterans could live out the rest of their days in peace.

But this goal was never fully realized. Some housing was built, but over the years, large portions of the campus were deeded away, and other parcels were used in ways that did not benefit Veterans.

VA Inspector General (IG) reports in 2018 and 2021 concluded the property was being mismanaged. The IG determined that various agreements that allowed outside parties to use parts of the campus did not comply with the West LA Leasing Act, other applicable Federal laws, or the draft master plan.

In May 2025, President Trump issued his Executive Order to turn this property around. It called on VA to vastly expand the capacity of this campus to house thousands of Veterans at the new NCWI by January 1, 2028. Here's what we've done to get there.

In February 2026, VA terminated illegal and wasteful (https://news.va.gov/press-room/va-terminates-illegal-and-wasteful-west-los-angeles-vamc-leases-and-license/) West LA leases and a license under which the campus allowed the Brentwood School, Safety Park Corporation, and Bridgeland Resources, LLC to use land in ways that served no meaningful benefit to Veterans. Bridgeland, for example, is operating oil wells on this land.

It is bad enough that this campus was being leased out in ways that provided no benefits to Veterans. But even worse, these agreements underpaid VA for the fair value of these properties by more than $40 million per year. To sum it up, these leases were ripping off Veterans and ripping off U.S. taxpayers.

The ongoing litigation in this area limits our ability to discuss these matters further. But we continue to do everything we can to reclaim the land at our West LA campus so we can fulfill the requirements of President Trump's order.

In the meantime, VA is taking important steps to establish the NCWI and build the infrastructure we need to host thousands of Veterans at this site.

- When we arrived in January 2025, the campus had the capacity to house 955 Veterans.
- In January 2026, our capacity to provide housing to formerly homeless veterans expanded to 1,377 Veterans.
- By the end of 2026, we expect to have capacity to house 1,670 formerly homeless Veterans, thanks mostly to our plan to build temporary housing this year for another 220 Veterans.
- By the end of 2027, we expect to have beds for 2,048 homeless Veterans.

Meanwhile, VA is putting in place the infrastructure we need to handle an increased Veteran population. For example, VA is enhancing safety measures on campus to give Veterans the secure space they need to successfully achieve independence.

We are also increasing the level of service we give to Veterans who are already living on campus. Among other things, VA has:

- Made Homeless Patient Aligned Care Team services available to all Veterans for clinical care;
- Provided case management support to help Veterans as they seek housing vouchers with the Department of Housing and Urban Development; and
- Terminated the lease of the Wadsworth Chapel on the West LA campus to ensure it can serve Veterans of faith.

These efforts and others have helped ensure that 98 percent of the Veterans on this campus remain housed and do not return to the streets.

Our goal is to give Veterans a fair chance to succeed in the country they sacrificed so much to defend. In West LA, we are building a campus that unifies housing, clinical health care, mental health care, and benefits for some of the Nation's most vulnerable Veterans. When we succeed, the campus will serve as a destination for thousands of homeless Veterans across the Nation and a place where they can get the care they need, obtain sustainable employment, and achieve financial independence.

Thank you for supporting this important project, and I look forward to your questions.

Prepared Statement of Nelson SooHoo

Good morning, Chairman Bost, Ranking Member Takano, and members of the Committee. It's a privilege to be here today.

My name is Nelson SooHoo. I am the Associate Dean for Graduate Medical Education at UCLA's School of Medicine, responsible for resident physicians, and I have also proudly served as an orthopedic surgeon at the West Los Angeles VA for the last 20 years.

Taking care of our Veterans is a very personal mission to me, and a vital service to our community. My father, Jack SooHoo, served in the Air Force during the Korean War. His service left me and my family with a lasting appreciation for the sacrifices all Veterans and their families make for our country. Through my own work, I have witnessed firsthand how UCLA's partnership with the VA strengthens Veterans' care while advancing the mission of both of our institutions. I strive to instill in every resident we train the debt we owe to our Veterans.

UCLA resident physicians serve on the VA health care team in 57 medical specialties. In addition, three-quarters of our medical students train and serve Veterans at VA facilities. UCLA resident physicians and faculty are involved in every surgery, all inpatient care, and the vast majority of outpatient care at the West LA VA Medical Center. This includes approximately 3,000 surgeries every year, and more than 1 million patient visits each year for over 80,000 Veterans. We have also developed critical programs to address Veterans' most pressing needs. I have seen firsthand how Veterans struggle to navigate care in the community, and we train our physicians to understand the social and psychological challenges they face every day. This includes PTSD treatment and research, as well as psychiatric care and advancing substance abuse treatment. Our commitment is reflected in our creation of a specific VA-based track in our Psychiatry residency program. Each year we match eight residents specifically to this track based on their dedication to the mission of serving Veterans.

While the core of our work at West LA VA is our medical mission, we also have a lease of the land where UCLA's Jackie Robinson baseball stadium is located. That lease was authorized by Congress in 2016, and the VA's Office of Inspector General has concluded on multiple occasions that the lease is fully compliant with the law.

Under that lease, UCLA has agreed to provide rent payments and $13.5 million of in-kind contributions to Veterans' programs over a 10-year period. This is above and beyond the medical care that we render at the West LA VA Medical Center. UCLA has already exceeded those obligations by over $2 million. This includes over $4 million for the Veterans' Legal Clinic, where in the last 6 years UCLA law students and Clinic staff have helped Veterans secure an additional $24 million in lifetime benefits. It also includes over $4.5 million for the Veteran Family Wellbeing Center, which provides well-being and resilience training services for Veterans and their families. Since opening in 2017, the Center has welcomed nearly 40,000 attendees at education and community building events, and has completed around 10,000 resilience training sessions for over 1,300 participants. These are just two

of the many programs and services that UCLA delivers under the lease at no additional cost to the VA or Veterans.

Our 70-year partnership with the VA and commitment to Veteran service also extends beyond our work at West LA VA. A key example is Operation Mend, a program UCLA helped pioneer alongside the United States military. As part of that program, we provide free advanced surgical and medical treatment, comprehensive psychological evaluation and support, and intensive treatment programs for post-9/11 Veterans with PTSD and traumatic brain injury. Operation Mend, which is part of the Wounded Warrior Project's Warrior Care Network, is the only program of its kind in the Nation, and it has been one of the greatest privileges of my career to help restore function to these Veterans using the most advanced surgical techniques.

We recognize that there are questions regarding the long-term future of UCLA's lease at the West LA VA. UCLA is committed to working in good faith with our partners at the VA toward a mutually agreeable solution. Whatever the outcome of those future discussions, UCLA will continue to proudly serve Veterans at the West LA VA Medical Center and beyond.

For decades, UCLA and the VA have worked together to train the next generation of physicians, advance medical research, and most importantly deliver the highest quality of care to those heroes who sacrificed for our country. I hope my own role in this long relationship honors both my father and every Veteran we serve.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I welcome the Committee's questions.

Prepared Statement of Tess Banko

Chairman Bost, Ranking Member Takano, and members of the Committee, thank you for the honor to be here today. My name is Teresa (Tess) Banko, and I am a disabled Marine Corps Veteran and active-duty widow that has been serving the military and Veterans communities for over 20 years. Having overcome challenges of my own, with service always as my true north, I have worked for the past 5 years as Community Director for the West LA Veterans Collective, the principal developer selected for the permanent supportive housing community being developed under the Enhanced Use Lease program at the West Los Angeles VA Medical Center.

I'd like to briefly cover four things:

- Who we are and our qualifications
- Our work at the West LA VA
- Where our work stands today
- Our partnership with the VA

Who We Are

In 2018, through a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process, the VA selected the West Los Angeles Veterans Collective as the principal developer team of the West LA VA campus. We were hired to cohesively plan and implement housing renovations, construction, and sustainable community-serving amenities, delivered on a scale magnitudes greater than ever endeavored previously by VA, to create the Nation's largest supportive housing community for Veterans.

The Veterans Collective is comprised of three organizations, each bringing deep expertise and decades of experience in affordable housing development and residential services, with a strong focus on serving Veterans to one of the most unique and ambitious Veterans housing and service communities in the country.

- Century Housing (est. 1995), is a large nonprofit that finances, develops, and self-operates affordable housing throughout California, including Century Villages at Cabrillo, one of the largest supportive housing communities for Veterans in the Nation, located in Long Beach, California.
- Thomas Safran and Associates (est. 1974), is a local housing developer based less than two miles from West LA VA, with decades of experience developing and operating affordable housing and mixed-use spaces across the Los Angeles region. They have built and self-manage affordable housing communities in LA County that are 100 percent for the Veteran community.
- U.S. VETS (est. 1993), is the largest nonprofit provider of Veteran housing and services in the country. Headquartered in Los Angeles, U.S. VETS now provides

housing and services to Veterans at 50 residential and service sites (including transitional and permanent supportive housing) across the Nation.

Our organizations came together in commitment to the long-term success of the neighborhood, to answer the VA's call for a master developer because we saw the large population of unsheltered Veterans, and recognized that it was a deeply meaningful and vital endeavor. We are not just building housing, we are building a vibrant, empowering, and deliberate therapeutic community that meets the needs of Veterans and families, and where people genuinely want to live.

While there are many reasons that people become unsheltered, putting on a uniform should never be one of them. We believe that the men and women who served our country deserve a place where they can find community; where they can walk out their front door, grab a cup of coffee or a bite to eat, and easily access high-quality VA medical care and wrap-around social services and amenities. They deserve a stable place to call home, with supportive services, and a community of peers in which to heal and grow, not just shelter from the storm.

Our Work at the West LA VA

Our team was selected by the VA to coordinate its ambitious plan for housing and community-serving amenities, on a scale that that is magnitudes larger than the VA has ever attempted.

From the outset, we leveraged our collective background in private and nonprofit community development and research, as we assessed the VA's initial 2016 master plan. Together with VA, we improved upon that original plan with input from Veterans and other experts, culminating in the updated 2018 master plan for the permanent supportive housing and services community (for both resident and non-resident Veterans).

We then worked alongside the VA to carry that vision through the National Environmental Policy and National Historic Preservation Act processes, which took over 2 years to complete beginning with a Notice of Intent in May 2017 and culminating in a Record of Decision in August 2019. Our final design soon after received full clearance, and our infrastructure and predevelopment work with the VA began, a total investment which at current day has brought more than $200 million in critical infrastructure improvements to the Veterans neighborhood.

As we moved this crucial work forward, the broader community began to see the physical results of our years of planning work grounded in the hopes of so many Veterans who longed to call the West LA VA campus home. Our first development, Building 207, previously sat vacant on campus for decades, and after predevelopment and final release by VA it broke ground in December 2020 and opened to residents in February 2023. The building reached full occupancy within months.

Building 207's 59 units were just the beginning.

Where We Stand Today

Today, if you walk the neighborhood, you can feel the momentum. We have completed 6 buildings totaling 407 permanent supportive homes, and we have six more buildings under construction that will soon offer an additional 360 homes to Veterans in need. Our Master Association partners have also completed 5 buildings, totaling 322 units. Altogether, we are now offering nearly 730 affordable homes for Veterans with onsite supportive services. By the end of 2026, the VA will have contracted an astounding 1,089 new permanent supportive homes at West LA in less than 4 years.

I am proud to say that as of last year, the principal developer team has raised more than $1 billion in total funding commitments. We have secured financing through low-income housing tax credits, State grants, local initiatives, and the extraordinary generosity of private donors including Tunnel to Towers, the Home Depot Foundation, The Smidt Foundation, and countless individuals who have stepped up to support not just the physical housing, but also the non-housing needs of its Veteran residents. VA continued to fund and coordinate several elements, including contributing the land, funding extraordinary infrastructure costs and preparing the land parcels for turnover to developers.

We continue to work with VA, and other developers and community partners to create systems of administration and the long-term stability of neighborhood operations. That includes work with the National Center for Warrior Independence, a developer Master Association, and a Community Partner and Provider Alliance spanning the continuum of neighborhood services.

Planning and coordination with VA leadership, incorporating Veteran feedback, is continuing for upcoming mixed-use community-serving amenities as outlined under

the West LA Leasing Act of 2016, VA RFP, and Master Plan 2022. These include an Integrated Wellbeing Center, Town Hall, Town Center and a plethora of VA, non-VA and community partner services and amenities.

Our Partnership with the VA

A vision for the Nation's largest supportive housing community for Veterans does not succeed without a strong, honest relationship with our VA partners.

We meet with VA leadership and with the Office of Asset and Enterprise Management to become aligned on priorities, work to resolve issues, and we hold ourselves mutually accountable to Veterans and to the neighborhood. Communication and coordination can always improve, and with diverse stakeholders, that takes a constant focus across the span of years. Our goals remain fundamentally aligned.

I believe that when we are done with this work, Veterans and families across the Los Angeles region will have access to some of the most outstanding supportive Veteran housing in the country. Together, we are creating a national model for co-located housing and VA medical care, delivering quality care for the Veterans we proudly serve.

This endeavor has not been without controversy. Yet, we have never wavered in our collective commitment: to provide Veterans and families across the Los Angeles region with some of the most outstanding supportive Veteran housing in the country. Together, we are creating a national model for co-located housing and VA medical care.

I look forward to working with this committee to support our work in the years to come.

We are proud to carry our commitment to Veterans forward, and determined to continue in our mission until no Veteran is left sleeping on the streets in the country they fought to protect.

Thank you. I welcome your questions.

Prepared Statement of Richard Valdez

Chairman Bost, Ranking Member Takano, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of DAV (Disabled American Veterans), Department of California (DAV-CAL), I appreciate the opportunity to testify before the Committee. My testimony addresses the challenges and opportunities to expand and strengthen programs, services, and facilities for homeless veterans at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) West Los Angeles campus. DAV-CAL is a state-chartered organization founded in 1922. It operates independently from the national DAV organization while supporting the same mission of fulfilling our promises to the men and women who served.

Aiding our fellow veterans is the core mission of DAV-CAL. We help fulfill our Nation's promises to veterans by funding and managing a variety of assistance programs. We employ Department Service Officers who, over the past 2 years, have helped more than 2,800 veterans file claims for VA benefits. DAV-CAL also connects service-injured veterans with job training programs, employers, hiring events, and other employment resources.

DAV-CAL provides disaster and emergency relief to veterans' families in need, including those affected by the Palisades and Altadena fires. We also regularly hold food and clothing drives for impoverished veteran families and veterans experiencing homelessness. DAV-CAL works with community organizations and private businesses to develop resources that support additional programs, including recreational and therapeutic art programs. DAV-CAL also operates a veterans transportation network, which I will discuss below. Importantly, all our services and assistance are provided free of charge to veterans.

Mr. Chairman, my journey to becoming a Marine and a lifelong veteran advocate began, unbeknownst to me at the time, when I was a little boy sitting on neighbors' porches listening to their World War I stories. Later, I listened to my brothers and their friends talk around a backyard fire about their World War II and Korean War experiences. It was not until I experienced my own war in Vietnam that I came to understand the full price paid by those who serve.

My military career began in February 1966, when I enlisted in the Marine Corps under a delayed-entry program while I was still in high school. After graduating from Fermin Lasuen High School in San Pedro, California, I reported to Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego in July 1966 and graduated as a private first class

in September 1966. After infantry training and completion of my primary MOS school, I was assigned to a unit preparing to make a landing in Vietnam.

On January 5, 1967, my comrades and I boarded the USNS General Nelson M. Walker and departed the next day for Vietnam, arriving on January 24, 1967. We were flown to Chu Lai, where we joined the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division. The next day, the battalion boarded trucks and convoyed to Quang Ngai, our jump-off point for Operation DeSoto near Duc Pho farther south. Although my MOS was cook, my training led to my assignment as a machine gunner on the battalion's Quick Reaction Force.

I was shot in the knee on the 45th day of the operation, suffered severe damage, and spent 3 months recovering at the Naval Hospital on Guam. When I learned that I might be transported back to the United States for continued rehabilitation, I requested to return to my unit in Vietnam, and that request was accepted. I later extended my tour in December 1967 and returned just as the Tet Offensive was getting underway. I remained in-country until I rotated back to the United States in October 1968. In addition to my knee wound, I suffered back damage during a mortar attack. I completed my service at Marine Corps Air Station Tustin and was honorably discharged in July 1969. During my time in the Marine Corps, I was awarded the Purple Heart and the Combat Action Ribbon.

After my discharge, I thought I was ready to enter the civilian workforce. My first 5 months were a rocky start, but in 1970 I shifted course and began a career that lasted more than three decades in the aerospace and defense industries. Beginning in the stockroom, I advanced to increasingly responsible positions, including computer operator, business manager, government contracts administrator, and technical and threat analyst on classified Sensitive Compartmented Information (SCI) defense contracts.

After I retired in 2003, I felt something was not right and began seeing a VA doctor, not only for my physical disabilities but also because I realized I needed mental health treatment. That is when I first learned how much DAV could help me receive the benefits I had earned through my service. Working with DAV service officers, I applied for and was awarded service connection for my knee and back injuries, as well as for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) related to my time in Vietnam and the psychological impact of those injuries and other incidents, including the rocket and mortar attacks I had survived.

During this period, I learned about and started going to a VA Vet Center for peer support with my fellow Vietnam veterans. I was struck by how much that experience reminded me of sitting by the fire listening to my brothers and their friends talk about their own war experiences. This was the start of my new career in veteran volunteerism.

I became active with San Bernardino DAV Chapter 12, where I later served as Chapter Commander from 2011 to 2013. For many years, I also served as a volunteer Chapter Service Officer, helping disabled veterans prepare claims for injuries and illnesses connected to their military service. I also spent 1 year volunteering for the San Bernardino County Department of Military and Veteran Affairs. Through that experience, I came to believe that many struggling veterans needed a place of their own—a place where they could gather and be among fellow veterans. That belief led me to develop a plan and negotiate with the city for a parcel of land to create a Veterans Wellness Garden. I am proud to say that, 15 years later, it is still serving veterans and their families. This experience later motivated me to become involved in the effort to develop a veteran community on the VA West LA campus.

I also became more involved with the DAV Department of California (DAV-CAL), eventually serving as State Commander from 2013 to 2014. After that, I served as DAV-CAL Legislative Director from 2014 to 2019 and as the Judge Advocate during the same period. I have also served on various committees of the national DAV organization dealing with legislation and charitable grants.

Mr. Chairman, the Committee has asked about the oil lease arrangement that helped support DAV-CAL's veteran transportation program at the West LA campus. Although I was not directly involved in negotiating or managing those agreements, I can provide background on the arrangement and how the resulting transportation program operated. I will also provide background on the West LA master plan, its laudable goals, the obstacles that have blocked its implementation, and what must be done now to make this dream a reality.

For more than a decade, DAV-CAL has supported efforts to expand housing and services for homeless veterans at the West LA campus. I have organized or participated in dozens of stand downs and other events to provide services and assistance to veterans, particularly those who were impoverished, vulnerable, homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless. I also volunteered to help conduct point-in-time counts

for San Bernardino County to help officials understand the scale of veteran homelessness. Given my personal commitment and the DAV-CAL mission, I closely followed developments related to the *Valentini* v. *Shinseki* lawsuit, which led to a January 2015 settlement agreement requiring the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System (VAGLAHS) to develop a master plan to assist veterans experiencing homeless at the VA West LA campus.

In February 2015, during national DAV's annual Mid-Winter Conference in Washington, DC, I had the opportunity to meet with then-VA Secretary Bob McDonald to discuss the importance of incorporating veterans' and veterans service organizations perspectives during development of the master plan. In that conversation, Secretary McDonald asked me to help his Special Assistant for West LA by organizing VSO leaders in California, primarily in the greater Los Angeles service area. That group became known as the VSO Coalition, which I chaired along with the American Legion State Commander as co-chair. The West LA VA Draft Master Plan was released for public comment in October 2015, and I was pleased to draft comments that DAV-CAL submitted to VA in December 2015.

Throughout 2016, I remained actively involved with fellow VSO leaders and other stakeholders who provided input to VA and Congress on how to implement the West LA Campus Master Plan. In September 2016, Congress passed, and the President signed, the West Los Angeles Leasing Act of 2016. The law supported implementation of the West LA Master Plan, with a focus on ensuring that leases of VA property principally benefited veterans, their families, and especially the homeless veterans who would eventually be housed on the campus.

During 2016 and 2017, as greater scrutiny was placed on whether leases at West LA were benefiting veterans, VA was negotiating with the Bureau of Land Management and Breitburn Operating LP, an oil and energy company interested in restarting oil drilling operations from a parcel of land on the West LA campus. VA officials proposed requiring Breitburn to donate 2.5 percent of its oil royalties each month to DAV-CAL to support transportation services for veterans to and from the West LA campus. DAV-CAL was well known at West LA for its veterans transportation network, which provided free rides for veterans to and from medical appointments at VA facilities.

Mr. Chairman, as I am sure you know, the national DAV Transportation Network is the largest program of its kind for veterans in the Nation. The program is primarily operated by individual DAV Departments in each State, including California, and has more than 3,400 volunteer drivers at VA medical centers across the country. During Fiscal Year 2025, DAV volunteers across all 50 states donated more than 614,000 hours transporting veterans to VA medical appointments. In total, DAV volunteer drivers logged more than 9.6 million miles and provided more than 230,000 rides to VA appointments, saving taxpayers more than $21.3 million.

DAV-CAL employs hospital service coordinators at several VA medical facilities in the State, including West LA. These coordinators arrange transportation for veterans traveling to and from appointments, including community care appointments. Since 2018, DAV-CAL volunteer drivers have provided more than 112,000 hours of service, transporting 84,000 veterans more than 1.8 million miles at no cost. DAV-CAL also purchases and donates vehicles to California VA medical centers for use in transporting veterans.

In March 2017, VA and Breitburn signed an amendment and extension of the revocable lease to resume oil drilling operations from land at the West LA campus for an additional 10 years. Although DAV-CAL was not a signatory to that agreement, it included a provision requiring Breitburn to donate a 2.5 percent royalty each month to the DAV-CAL. Those funds were to be used "*...solely for the purpose of providing transportation to Veterans on and around the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System*." Following further discussions and negotiations, VA and DAV-CAL signed a Donation Agreement in September 2017 authorizing the acceptance and use of Breitburn donations, which were to be used "*...to provide transportation services to Veterans and their families to and from the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System campus* [West LA]." VA's emphasis on transportation was considered critical to making the future West LA campus and its services fully accessible for veterans who lived on or off the campus.

DAV-CAL and VA agreed that a sound use of the donated funds would be to expand transportation services for non-ambulatory veterans, particularly those who use wheelchairs, through a third-party transportation vendor. In October 2019, after consulting with VA officials, DAV-CAL contracted with ButterFLi Technologies, a Los Angeles-based company that provided medical transportation for both ambulatory and non-ambulatory individuals. This new service transported veterans to appointments at VA West LA, VA Sepulveda, and the Wilshire Federal Building, where the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Regional Office was located.

Just months after this program began operating, COVID–19 struck the Nation in early 2020. During the pandemic, VA suspended all volunteer transportation programs nationwide beginning in April 2020. Fortunately, the contracted ButterFLi program was allowed to continue transporting veterans to medical appointments at West LA and Sepulveda, providing an especially valuable service during the pandemic. COVID–19 restrictions were lifted in late 2022, and DAV-CAL was able to restart its volunteer transportation program.

In October 2022, after consultation with VA officials at West LA, DAV-CAL modified its contract with ButterFLi from a fixed-route program to an on-demand program that could meet a wider variety of veteran needs, particularly for disabled veterans who used wheelchairs or had other mobility challenges. This program continued through April 2024, when DAV-CAL notified all parties that it was ending the program, stopping the donations from Breitburn, and ending the contract with ButterFLi.

In total, DAV-CAL received approximately $897,000 in royalty-funded donations and disbursed approximately $907,000 on veteran transportation services through this program. This included approximately $667,000 for contracted transportation services through ButterFLi and approximately $240,000 for the purchase of vehicles. In addition, during this period, DAV-CAL spent more than $300,000 of its operating budget for hospital service coordinators who worked with veterans to arrange their rides. That amount does not include other DAV-CAL staff time and resources used to manage and oversee these programs.

Although the ButterFLi transportation program was ended, DAV-CAL's veteran transportation network continues to serve both West LA and Sepulveda. Over the past 2 years, vehicles operated by DAV-CAL have transported thousands of Los Angeles area veterans hundreds of thousands of miles to and from medical appointments.

DAV-CAL also remains interested and engaged in the effort to establish a true home and community for thousands of homeless veterans at the West LA campus, as envisioned in the master plan. The executive order issued in May 2025 to create a National Center for Warrior Independence has put new emphasis on—and, I hope, momentum behind—this decade-long effort. DAV-CAL's transportation network would be a critical support for veterans seeking housing, treatment, and community reintegration at the National Center for Warrior Independence. To be successful, however, veterans and veteran stakeholders must be at the center of all discussions and decisions regarding implementation of this plan. The DAV Department of California stands ready to play whatever role is necessary to finally see this dream realized.

For the men and women who have served and suffered following their service, there is no more time to waste. They answered the call when our Nation needed them. Now we must answer the call by providing the housing, programs, services, and community they have earned through their service.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my testimony. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or members of the Committee may have.

Prepared Statement of James Zenner

Introduction

Chairman Bost, Ranking Member Takano, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the development of the National Center for Warrior Independence at the West Los Angeles VA Campus in Brentwood. My name is Jim Zenner, and I am the Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, as well as the County Veterans Service Officer.

Priorities for the National Center for Warrior Independence

President Trump's May 2025 Executive Order sets an ambitious target of housing up to 6,000 veterans by January 2028. It envisions bold action so homeless veterans can access the comprehensive care, housing, and substance use treatment required to restore their independence. We are seeing some headway with the VA's termination of non-veteran leases and the clearing of land. However, that is only an initial step in the goal to address the entrenched cycle of homelessness, untreated trauma, and the related illicit activities that threaten to undermine the Center's success before it begins.

To fully realize the vision of the National Center for Warrior Independence and to deliver on the Executive Order's directives for self-sufficiency and restored lives, I urge the committee to prioritize three specific actions. First, the immediate establishment of a Federal Veterans Treatment Court on campus. Second, a substantial expansion of affordable housing units, combined with critical flexibility in project-based housing programs. Third, a comprehensive review and resolution of the jurisdictional gaps impacting the campus, including exploring why VA Police Department officers are not allowed to be deputized by local law enforcement agencies. Addressing these foundational issues is an absolute necessity.

Establishing an On-Campus Federal Veterans Treatment Court

This is where a dedicated, on-campus Federal Veterans Treatment Court becomes essential. Justice-involved veterans near the campus grapple with PTSD, traumatic brain injury, substance use disorders, and other invisible wounds stemming from their military service. These conditions contribute to non-violent offenses. Without mandated treatment and structured accountability, we are simply cycling veterans through the justice system without addressing the root causes.

If a Federal treatment court is implemented on the campus, my team will collaborate closely with the VA to ensure it has our full, unwavering support. This court could be a critical link to ensure veterans whose actions are tied to untreated behavioral health issues receive care, not just consequences. Instead of repeated incarceration, participants would be mandated into integrated mental health services, substance abuse programs, and veteran mentorship. Upon successful completion, marked by objective milestones, charges could be reduced or dismissed. Nationwide, this model works: it reduces recidivism, improves housing outcomes, and significantly enhances public safety.

Expanding Flexible and Diverse Housing Solutions

Building on that stability requires a deeply collaborative approach to housing. In Los Angeles County, we have witnessed the profound impact of the County, the VA, and local service providers working closely together. Through our "OneTeam" initiative, we bring stakeholders to the same table at the same time. Through the barrier-busting work conducted by OneTeam, we have learned that veterans experiencing homelessness are not a monolithic group. They present with complex circumstances that do not seamlessly fit into the rigid scope of our current eligibility rules.

Achieving the President's vision requires not just new facilities, but flexible solutions. We need a waiver so HUD-VASH project-based vouchers are not counted toward the cap with local Public Housing Authorities. This waiver is necessary to provide a pathway for local public housing authorities who are nearing their cap to continue project-basing their VASH vouchers on the WLA VA campus for new buildings that will come online in future years.

Furthermore, we must allow veterans at risk of homelessness to qualify for project-based units. If we concentrate our most marginalized and highest-acuity veterans in one location, we risk creating a place where veterans are merely surviving their trauma rather than recovering and moving forward. To build a resilient community, we need to surround our most vulnerable with the varied life experiences of their peers. To achieve this, we need a diverse portfolio of housing. This must include workforce housing for the hundreds of veterans employed on the campus, alongside transitional housing for recently separated service members and student veterans.

Addressing Jurisdictional Gaps and Campus Security

Finally, we must confront the jurisdictional issues that are impeding campus operations. As veterans, we are entirely too familiar with the bureaucratic runaround and the frustration of being told our issues are not the responsibility of a specific jurisdiction. This passing of the buck represents a lack of accountability and leaves critical gaps in service and safety.

This problem is aggravated by staffing shortages within the campus VA Police Department. VAPD is saddled with uncompetitive GS positions that hinder their ability to recruit and retain officers. The downstream effects are precarious: alarmingly low patrol coverage, delayed response times, and a diminished law enforcement presence. I have worked to assist the local VAPD in navigating these jurisdictional hurdles, including a recent case supporting them with a deceased veteran on the campus, and these interactions have exposed systemic voids.

Currently, VA-imposed regulations prohibit VA police officers from being deputized by local agencies to enforce State or local laws on VA property. This policy has inadvertently created jurisdictional dead zones that compromise public safety for everyone on campus.

Conclusion

Congress should further review these jurisdictional issues to identify opportunities to address lapses in jurisdictional rights. At a minimum, veterans accessing the campus have earned the right to a safe, supportive environment in which to get treatment.

Establishing the Veterans Treatment Court, expanding flexible housing options, and resolving these chronic security shortfalls are not just policy tweaks. They are the fundamental actions required to honor the campus's original 1888 mission, fulfill the Executive Order's vision, and help veterans reclaim their independence.

Thank you for your time. I welcome your questions.

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD

Prepared Statement of the VETS Advocacy

VETSADVOCACY

May 15, 2026

Chairman Mike Bost
House Committee on Veterans Affairs
364 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Mark Takano
House Committee on Veterans Affairs
550 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Bost & Ranking Member Takano,

Thank you for holding the hearing "Expanding the Mission: Future of the National Center for Warrior Independence in West LA" on May 13, 2026.

Chairman Bost correctly pointed out that the 120-day Action Plan submitted by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for the record was sorely delayed. The President's Executive Order does not state that an Action Plan for the National Center for Warrior Independence would be submitted to Congress, or the American public, within 120-days.

However, VA did publish two different FY27 VA Budget proposals in March and April 2026 requesting your assistance in carrying out the President's Executive Order before giving Congress an opportunity to review the Administration's plan. This delay prevented both Congress, and veterans, from having an informed discussion about VA's FY 2027 Budget Submission.

1) FY 2027 Budget Submission

In both budget proposals, page 2-7 of Volume 4 provided a top line budget ask of $500 million associated with the National Center for Warrior Independence. Regretfully, I must inform you that VA's own calculation is inaccurate. The total sum of projects identified on page 2-7 is not $500 million. It is $509.3 million, a variance of $9.3 million or 1.86%. Some might argue that this is couch change for Congress, but as a budgeting exercise, every dollar counts against a national debt that is about to eclipse $39 trillion.

Skipping just three pages later (2-10), VA identifies three additional projects that were not included in the top line number of $500 million available on 2-7. These three projects include: Historic Rehabilitation of Wadsworth Chapel, Renovate Building 212 to Sober-Living Transitional Housing, and Construct Administration Building 306.

In the March 2026 submission, there is little information provided about the nature of these projects although Total Estimated Costs are found much later on page 6.2-18. To VA's credit, this additional project information was provided in the April 2026 update found on pages 4-7, 4-15 and 4-23. All three projects attempt to repurpose previously appropriated and authorized funds but do not disclose programs that may be impacted by granting VA's request.

As presented to Congress, the Total Estimated Cost for the National Center for Warrior Independence is not $500 million or $509.3 million, but $721,700,000 when considering new and requests for previously authorized funds. That's real money. Although I am grateful that VA



included West Los Angeles, and efforts to modernize the historic property in service to veterans, I believe it is fair to question which of these projects must take priority.

I intended to provide Congress with my interpretation of which projects should take priority. Unfortunately, it would largely be a waste of time or irrelevant as I have now had a brief opportunity following the hearing to compare VA's FY27 budget proposal with the 120-day Action Plan.

Nine of the 10 construction projects submitted to Congress in the FY27 Budget are not identified in the Future Site Map on page 11 of the 120-day Action Plan. In other words, if proposed projects in the budget were aligned with the Future Site Map, arguably we should only see a request for Building 306 totaling $82 million. Nowhere does the 120-Action Plan disclose, for example, plans for a $98.1 million parking garage or theatre renovations. That's not intended to be a judgement call on those specific projects, but an indicating factor that VA's budget submission and the 120-day Action Plan are disjointed.

Furthermore, VA is requesting an additional $98 million to renovate Building 212 when, in 2019, it previously informed Congress that it would do so with funds appropriated in FY16 (Refer to FY20 Vol 4 page 2-10). What happened to these previously appropriated funds?

Similarly, why is there an additional ask for infrastructure on campus when VA shared in 2023 that $361 million from the PACT Act was directed at VA West Los Angeles for infrastructure? Is that money already depleted? Mr. Van Orden put his finger on the pulse. VA's financial stewardship of this project has become a boondoggle. This budget request, frankly, puts it over the top.

These are major discrepancies that I ask you and your staff to review in the weeks ahead. I also wanted to take a moment to shed some light on what I believe to be a considerable opportunity for progress given the President's mandate to establish a National Center for Warrior Independence.

2) A Joint Plan for Warrior Independence in West Los Angeles

In the FY27 Budget, VA is seeking a combined $297 million to modernize its existing Domiciliary and Community Living Center (CLC) programs at VA West Los Angeles. VA's plan, as proposed, would include "temporary relocation of CLC patients and staff" although it does not provide specifics about how to address veteran patients currently receiving care in the Domiciliary program. The preferred alternative discusses "continuity of existing operations and clinical programming onsite during renovation" but what does that mean exactly? One interpretation is that veterans will be subjected to receiving treatment while the buildings are actively being renovated. Another is that veterans will be moved to other facilities on campus while renovations are underway. I submit both scenarios are unnecessary and unacceptable.

Each of the project funding packages include a set of "Alternatives to Construction Considered", including a preferred alternative. Currently VA's preference is renovation for all four buildings.

There is one alternative scenario I'd like to spotlight for further consideration. *Alternative 6: Collaboration with the Department of Defense for a Joint Facility* (also referred to as Department of War elsewhere in the Budget) discusses a potential new joint facility with DoD / DoW in the vicinity of the existing VA Medical Center (VAMC). Unfortunately, the analysis discounts the

concept citing the nearest installation, Los Angeles Air Force Base, being 11 miles away. But, I must inform you, this is inaccurate.

The nearest DoD / DoW location, the West Los Angeles U.S. Army Reserve Center, is collocated on the same federal property approximately 1,100 feet from the VAMC front door. Like VA's Domiciliary and Community Living Center, the U.S. Army Reserve Center is beginning to show its age. More importantly, the U.S. Army Reserve Center is physically located on the original 300-acre land grant provided to house disabled veterans in 1888. The National Center for Warrior Independence could be an opportunity for VA and DoD / DoW to work in concert restoring the land to its primary mission. Not as a military installation, but serving veterans following their honorable service to our nation. It is unfortunate that DoD / DoW was not identified as a federal partner in the 120-day Action Plan. This was a missed opportunity.

I ask that you work with your colleagues on the House and Senate Armed Services Committees as well as partners in The White House, Office of Management and Budget and Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy, to find the U.S. Army Reserve Center a new home. Perhaps nine miles away at the nearest reserve facility or further south with its command element at Joint Forces Training Base (JFTB) Los Alamitos.

This will pave the way for VA to establish the National Center for Warrior Independence as a world-class Domiciliary and Community Living Center program on the site of the former Reserve Center. After a difficult start with shared electronic medical records, this partnership would emphasize that the two agencies can work together, with unity of purpose and without disrupting current treatment programs or forcing veterans to relocate. Reservists would do what they do best: mobilize to meet the mission. Veterans would focus on recovery and self-sufficiency until new construction is completed and ready for occupancy.

3) Public safety conditions must improve before adding housing capacity

Without improved public safety, recovery will be an uphill battle for veterans seeking refuge at VA West Los Angeles no matter how new the setting. During the past few weeks, I have received several calls from veteran residents and staff citing security concerns. In full disclosure, in response to those complaints and prior to the hearing, I FOIA'd the past five years of VA Incident Reports on campus (#26-20098-F).

Campus security was a known and foreseeable problem that VA has failed to adequately prepare for jeopardizing the health and safety of veterans. I say this as someone who requested the August 2019 briefing from VAGLAHS' Chief of Police during my time on the Veterans and Community Oversight and Engagement Board (VCOEB). It was a small but good faith effort to get VA thinking proactively about safety in anticipation of the community that would soon arrive. That day has come.

At Wednesday's hearing we heard testimony that VA is currently staffed at approximately 83 officers with a potential increase up to 165 officers. I would ask that the Committee clarify if those figures are specific to VA West Los Angeles Medical Center or VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System as a whole. There is a material difference between the two service areas with a direct impact on response time in the event of a crisis.

I largely agree with Mr. Kennedy's remarks during the hearing. It is not clear to me at this time that adding additional capacity makes sense when current residents and staff are concerned for

their safety. VA should reconsider its current plans and first demonstrate that it has the ability to protect those who serve or served. This includes full transparency with public safety data so all parties are confident the current situation is being managed appropriately.

Elsewhere in the hearing I was pleased to learn that VA has started a dialogue with the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (LASD). While it is true LASD has its own staffing issues, I would look to the future as the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority is expected to field its own police force freeing contract capacity at LASD and other local agencies. That does not address the near-term security challenges but, as history demonstrates, planning at VA West Los Angeles takes time and all avenues should be explored.

4) University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Lease

And I believe there are further avenues worth exploring surrounding VA's relationship with UCLA. In particular, the 120-day Action Plan identifies Buildings 113, 114, and 115 on the north campus as part of the Future Site Map yet we find no request of Congress to replace the current research buildings in FY27's Budget request (or prior requests). VA must vacate these buildings and relocate its functions elsewhere on campus to speed up housing delivery for veterans. Yet, the public record is weak in detailing VA's "Consolidated Research Building" project on the south campus. Here again presents an opportunity for new thinking and collaboration.

First, let me be clear. Jackie Robinson Stadium's days at VA West Los Angeles should be numbered. In fact, the area shouldn't even belong to VA West Los Angeles at all. The land beneath Jackie Robinson Stadium should be transferred to the National Cemetery Administration (NCA). The National Cemetery has already jumped the 405 Freeway in the form of the Urban Initiative, or Columbarium. I believe it should extend even further beyond its artificial boundary to the natural barriers above Constitution Ave.

Current plans for the Collubarium call for 90,000 niches. At present, the site consists of approximately 10,000 niches. Eventually Congress will appropriate funds for NCA to complete site plans for the existing plot where it will need to grow based on veterans' preferences for burial benefits. Until that time comes, I believe UCLA can maintain its current use of the underutilized section of NCA administered land (not VAGLAHS) as a temporary steward in exchange for their assistance in financing and developing the Consolidated Research Building.

UCLA is a leading institution in the field of medical research. And, UCLA has proven itself much more adept at construction management compared to VA. Secretary Collins should lean into this expertise utilizing existing legal authorities, such as the CHIP IN Act, to develop a framework for success with tangible results. The past ten years of service "commitments" included in the existing UCLA lease agreement have yielded suboptimal outcomes and, worse yet, a betrayal of trust. VA should leverage its ownership of the land to extract real value for veterans while, at the same time, offsetting the cost of a new medical facility in Los Angeles.

5) Concerns about further implementation of Master Plan 2022

Finally, Chairman Bost spoke about the need for clear and specific statutory authorization in his opening remarks. The Leasing Act is clear about the VA Secretary's authority to carry out Enhanced Use Leases for supportive housing on the property. I am *still very concerned* VA is violating Section 2(b)1 of the Leasing Act with its ongoing implementation of Master Plan 2022. This issue has been reported to Congress at length in the form of various VCOEB

VETSADVOCACY

recommendations over the years. It is disappointing to discover that the 120-day Action Plan appears to be Master Plan 2022 rebranded as the National Center for Warrior Independence. As the expression goes, "lipstick on a pig."

Two VA Office of Inspector General reports and five federal judges have determined that the agency's ability to faithfully execute federal law at VA West Los Angeles is less than sterling. I do not believe it is beyond the realm of possibility that VA has planned, in broad daylight, to violate the Leasing Act specific to leases for Buildings 408 and 409 (executed) and 13, 407, and 410 (planned). But don't take my word for it.

In 2021, VA admitted it did not possess authority to implement mixed-use facilities through its Enhanced Use Lease program prior to adoption of Master Plan 2022 yet signed off on the plan anyway. In August 2022, following approval of Master Plan 2022, the PACT Act did make modifications to VA's Enhanced Use Lease authority nationwide, but those changes did not, and should not, apply to VA West Los Angeles.

I would encourage members of the House Oversight Committee to look back at the VCOEB record on this issue. The members, a majority of which are required to be veterans, have dutifully carried out the federal advisory committee's mandate established in the West Los Angeles Leasing Act of 2016.

I believe it is now your turn to take the watch. Please feel free to contact me at anthony@vetsadvocacy.org if I can be of assistance in your oversight of the campus or the National Center for Warrior Independence, whichever form it may take.

Respectfully,



Anthony Allman
Executive Director
Vets Advocacy
U.S. Army, '01-03

Past VCOEB Member, '17-23

Document for the Record Submitted by Mark Takano

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National Center for Warrior Independence

Action Plan

September 5, 2025

I. Executive Summary

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) presents this 120-day Action Plan in response to the President's Executive Order (EO) to establish the National Center for Warrior Independence (NCWI) at the West Los Angeles VA campus. This initiative represents a transformative commitment to addressing veteran homelessness through expanded access to care, housing, and services designed to restore veterans' independence and dignity.

The plan details a phased redevelopment of the West LA campus—revitalizing historically veteran-dedicated land—and reimagining it as a national hub for recovery, societal reintegration, and long-term support. Through strong Federal interagency coordination, with Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and Health and Human Services (HHS), VA will implement nationwide referral pathways, repurpose existing campus infrastructure, redirect federal resources, and build comprehensive programming focused on wellness, job training, addiction recovery, and housing stability.

Veterans will be prioritized based on need, with targeted services for aging populations, women, those with complex mental health and substance use challenges, and those preparing for workforce reentry. To enhance safety and care outcomes, VA will align facility laydown by population-specific needs, enabling semi-segmentation that supports both treatment compliance and secure living environments. Additionally, layered campus security measures and community policing will help foster a safe and orderly community.

VA's current housing development includes 571 fully operational units, 196 under construction, and 298 more scheduled to begin construction by Q4 2025. This phase is expected to be completed by February 2028, adding 1,065 new housing units. More than 630 additional units are now in active development.

Veterans who reach self-sufficiency will also be supported in their transition back into the LA area or into communities across the country, using VA's existing benefits, services, and support programs.

Secretary Collins remarked, *"This Executive Order recognizes that the moral obligation we have to our nation's veterans includes restoring dignity to those who have fallen through the cracks. Homelessness among veterans is a national disgrace. This plan represents a return to accountability, action, and honor."*

This plan reflects President Trump's decisive leadership and unwavering commitment for America's veterans. It underscores our national responsibility to ensure that veterans are not only housed, but empowered with beautiful homes, world-class facilities, and the opportunity to rebuild their lives in a community of safety, dignity, and respect.

To validate planning assumptions and identify operational gaps, VA conducted a tabletop exercise on the West LA campus in August 2025. Lessons learned from this exercise have informed and strengthened this plan, which will continue to evolve through stakeholder engagement and on-the-ground feedback.

II. Governance and Leadership

- Lead Agency: Department of Veterans Affairs
- Interagency Partners: HHS, HUD, other potential relevant federal agencies

- Executive Oversight: Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy

III. Strategic Vision

The vision for NCWI is to restore the West LA campus to a thriving, veteran-centered community that promotes recovery, independence, and dignity. The Center will provide a national model to address veteran homelessness by offering comprehensive services rooted in clinical excellence, trauma-informed care, and community reintegration. As emphasized in the tabletop exercise, the success of NCWI depends on coordinated planning, service accessibility, fair rule enforcement, and physical safety. Veterans will be expected to participate actively in their journey toward self-sufficiency, and the Center will be structured to promote accountability and community through incentives, mentorship, and structured engagement.

IV. Lines of Effort

A. Infrastructure Redevelopment (Sec. 2a)

The VA has conducted a full audit of campus land use agreements, including 5 leases, 7 enhanced use leases (EULs), 5 subleases, 33 revocable licenses, and 7 easements. Three of the leases – those with Brentwood School, SafetyPark Corporation, and University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) – and one revocable license with Bridgeland Resources, LLC – were invalidated on October 11, 2024, by Order of the District Court for the Central District of California, with a stay of the Order implemented on November 25, 2024, by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. On June 30, 2025, the Ninth Circuit issued an Order clarifying that UCLA is permitted to access its baseball fields while the appeal remains pending. Leases also exist for Chapel renovation and for transitional and permanent housing for veterans.

In September 2025, VA will be adding a new full-time program manager who will serve as the overall lead to oversee the infrastructure development. VA added more contracts for on-site support to focus on coordination and site safety for on-going construction.

Development will proceed in phases and will include a mix of permanent supportive housing, sober living facilities, and transitional housing, including accessible and trauma-informed spaces for women veterans and veterans with high-acuity needs. Building 13 is prioritized as a central facility for clinical, recovery, and peer support programming. The plan integrates co-location of services and housing to promote ease of access to care. The principal developers are engaged to ensure clinical support, safety standards, and community engagement expectations are embedded into current and future operations.

All newly constructed or converted housing units should incorporate trauma-informed design features such as natural light, security measures, women-specific accommodations, and soundproofing. Furthermore, VA recommends the integration of hygiene facilities, accessible laundry areas, and on-site peer support rooms within housing units to promote safety and dignity.

To further support clinical alignment and community stability, the campus laydown of facilities will be guided by population-specific needs. Veterans will be semi-segmented based on clinical acuity, treatment compliance requirements, and recovery stage. For instance, those with substance use disorders or in early-stage treatment will be housed in

proximity to intensive case management and behavioral health services, while veterans preparing for workforce reentry will reside in areas focused on independence and peer accountability. This strategy supports adherence to care plans, enhances safety, and fosters a therapeutic environment tailored to the diverse needs of the campus population.

The infrastructure redevelopment strategy consists of three construction phases. Phase I is scheduled for completion in February 2028 and will deliver 1,065 supportive housing units. Infrastructure evaluations are underway to ensure proper alignment with build-out requirements, including utility expansion assessments. Currently there are 32 acres that are being used for the EULs to support homeless veterans. However, there is the potential to utilize up to 32 more acres of federal property on campus to support this project.

B. Housing Development Status

VA has made significant progress in the development of supportive housing at the West LA Campus. The following summarizes the current and upcoming construction phases:

- **Fully Operational Housing Units:** Multiple buildings are now fully operational, providing a total 571 housing units for veterans.
- **Under Construction:** Several additional buildings are currently under active construction, which will deliver 196 new housing units upon completion.
- **Upcoming Construction:**
    - One building is scheduled to begin construction this month, expected to add 43 housing units.
    - Three additional buildings are scheduled to break ground in Q4 of 2025, contributing to another 255 housing units.

This phased development is on track to be completed by February 2028, bringing the total number of new housing units to 1,065. In addition, there are over 630 more units slated for future development as part of the existing campus Master Plan.

These milestones support the larger objective of expanding veteran housing on-site and represent a tangible step toward restoring the land's historic intent to provide housing to homeless veterans.

C. Veteran Access Across the Nation (Sec. 2b)

Veterans experiencing homelessness outside of the Los Angeles region will be referred to NCWI based on clear eligibility criteria. Referrals will focus on veterans with complex needs who would benefit from the robust, wraparound services uniquely available at NCWI. Eligibility considerations include documented chronic homelessness, history of high service utilization, geographic and psychosocial suitability, and commitment to recovery-based programming. Case conferencing with referring VA facilities will be essential, along with the integration of HUD-VASH. The plan establishes transportation logistics, pre-admission assessments, and mechanisms for local Veteran Integrated Service Network (VISN) alignment.

VA is in the process of developing a national referral process for veterans experiencing homelessness to be relocated to the West Los Angeles VA Medical Center (VAMC) campus.

This process will be implemented following the completion of Phase I of campus redevelopment – or earlier, if VA determines that existing capacity can meet demand.

Criteria for referral in the process being considered includes:

- The veteran meets HUD criteria[1] for homelessness
- The referring community or VAMC lacks adequate housing capacity.
- The veteran has a family residing in the greater Los Angeles area, enabling reconnection with familial support.
- The veteran presents to the Center with needs that can be effectively addressed by the services offered at the West LA Campus.
- The veteran is willing to participate and consents to the transfer.

It is anticipated that referrals would be initiated by VA medical facilities to ensure standardized tracking and appropriate clinical screening. The outreach strategy is expected to include internal VA facility communications and well as external public announcements to ensure broad awareness of the Center's mission and capabilities.

In addition to supporting veterans traveling to the NCWI, VA will also leverage existing national programs, housing navigation tools, and employment support to help veterans who achieve self-sufficiency transition back into communities across the country, including by assisting them in location housing and employment opportunities in the greater LA area or other locations that align with their goals. VA is committed to ensuring that veterans have access to the resources and guidance needed to return to independent living and long-term stability, wherever they choose to live.

D. Community Safety and Campus Security

As part of its commitment to fostering a safe, structured, and healing-centered environment, VA will expand its security and safety infrastructure across the West LA Campus. Plans include increasing VA Police presence and visibility, implementing design strategies (e.g., lighting, emergency call boxes, clear sightlines), strengthening coordination with community law enforcement, and embedding supportive behavioral teams to assist in crisis prevention and response. A key goal is to establish a secure and orderly community that allows residents to focus on wellness, recovery, and independence while maintaining a dignified, low-barrier housing environment.

E. HUD-VASH

On July 16, 2025, HUD released the 2025 Registration of Interest for HUD-VASH Vouchers. This notice makes $34 million in new HUD-VASH vouchers available for public housing agencies (PHA) to apply for. The application window closes on September 10, 2025 – HUD will make the awards later in the calendar year. Through this notice, selected PHAs have been contacted and solicited to apply for new HUD-VASH vouchers. Of the 15 additional HUD-VASH PHAs currently partnered with the GLA VA, 3 have registered their interest as of September 2, 2025 – the County of Santa Barbara (CA021), the City of Santa

[1] 42 U.S.C. § 1437f(o)(19) and 24 CFR 982/983

Barbara (CA076), and Santa Monica (CA111). HUD has not yet received confirmation that the Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA) (CA002) will be coming in for additional vouchers – HUD has been in near-daily contact with LACDA and GLA VA on this. The fiscal year 2025 Appropriations Act makes an additional $10 million available for HUD-VASH administrative fees. HUD anticipates publishing this notice in the next month and making awards later this calendar year. The method through which HUD will allocate these funds will result in relatively high funding for HACLA and LACDA (if they come in) given their number of awarded HUD-VASH vouchers – these funds will help Los Angeles-area PHAs improve HUD-VASH voucher utilization rates.

F. Budget and Resource Realignment (Sec. 2c)

The VA will partner with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) on funding requests, if needed, as the final construction, security, and wrap-around services plans are established based on assumed operational cost to support the NCWI. The EO notes the Administration's intent to reallocation resources previously used to support housing and services for illegal aliens, the VA stand ready to partner with OMB on any resource transfers for this project. Current housing and service programs are being supported through VA appropriations, existing HUD-VASH project-based and tenant-based vouchers.

As the full action plan is finalized and project scope solidifies, VA will develop a detailed cost estimate by November 30, 2025, to support ongoing development, operations, and service delivery at NCWI. This estimate will serve as the foundation for future budget submissions, interagency coordination on shared funding streams, and Congressional engagement. Cost modeling will include facility construction and renovation, staffing, programming, transportation, infrastructure upgrades, and governance infrastructure. It will also assess costs for clinical integration, IT support, emergency preparedness, and service contracts across the multi-year implementation horizon.

VA recognizes that sustained funding will be essential to achieving the President's vision for NCWI and is committed to ensuring fiscal transparency, cost effectiveness, and alignment with veteran outcomes.

VA will continue to work closely with the OMB to on resourcing needs and to coordinate with HUD and HHS on any applicable discretionary funding envisioned to be available legally and effectively under the EO for redirected to support this initiative.

G. Self-Sufficiency and Warrior Ethos Programs (Sec. 2d)

NCWI will provide programming designed to help veterans rebuild discipline, purpose, and community. Housing will be accompanied by a phased reintegration model that includes access to clinical care, substance use recovery services, peer mentorship, vocational training, legal assistance, spiritual support, and structured community activities. Residents will agree to shared responsibilities and community norms that promote order and growth. A "continuum of responsibility" framework will provide veterans with pathways to increased autonomy based on sustained engagement and accountability. There will be a need for community governance models, consistent enforcement of program expectations, and alternatives for residents who decline to participate.

The Center's programming will focus on six primary homeless veteran populations:

1. **Sober Living** – Veterans in recovery requiring substance-free environment.
2. **Mental Health Focus** – Veterans with mental health challenges needing specialized support.
3. **Substance Recovery** – Veterans in active addiction treatment and recovery services.
4. **Low Income/Working Poor** – Veterans employed needing affordable housing; students attending local colleges and universities part-time.
5. **Elderly Homeless/Multi-Morbid** – Senior veterans requiring age-appropriate care, limited mobility and capacity for self-care and accessibility.
6. **Pre-Treatment Homeless** – Veterans currently living in tiny houses and low-demand GPD and HCHV housing where active substance use, potentially illegal activity may be more common.

A comprehensive slate of services is planned. Workforce development offerings will include job-specific vocational training, apprenticeships with local employers, dedicated job placement offices, resume support, and career counseling with individualized plans. Addiction treatment will be expanded through detoxification services, Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) programs, and both residential and outpatient treatment options, all integrated with peer support groups and relapse prevention strategies.

VA will invest in housing navigation services, including assistance with buying or renting their own home and transitional housing options. Veterans with severe mental illness will receive intensive case management, inpatient and outpatient care, and access to 24/7 crisis services. Aging veterans will benefit from geriatric care planning, home-based primary care, and hospice services when needed. Integrated care teams and peer support specialists will round out the continuum of support services.

Anticipated metrics will include the reduction in veteran homelessness, improved housing retention, increased access to permanent housing, employment and income outcomes, and engagement in mental health and substance use treatment. VA will use its national Homeless Programs performance framework to monitor and report on veteran independence, progress, and overall system effectiveness.

V. Stakeholder Engagement Plan

In addition to Federal partners, VA's partnerships span city, country, and state government entities, including the LA County Departments of Military and Veterans Affairs, Health Services, Mental Health, Public Social Services, Veteran Service Organizations, non-profits, and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA). The City of Los Angeles, its housing agency (HCIDLA), LAPD, LAFD are also key partners. At the state level, CalVet, California HCD, CHHS, and Employment Development contribute essential services and resources to this mission.

VI. Potential Risks and Mitigation Strategies

Risk	Impact	Mitigation Strategy
Leaseholder legal disputes.	Potential limitation on housing development.	In litigation.
Crime or criminal activity on campus.	Threats to residents/employee safety, disruption of treatment environments, reduced public trust, harm to morale.	VA will improve campus safety through increased VA Police presence, surveillance, access controls, and housing layouts that promote order and reduce conflict.
Utility or Infrastructure shortfalls.	Increased construction scope and/or delayed construction.	Perform an updated campuswide infrastructure analysis to include all VA owned property.
Budgetary limitations.	Insufficient financing for scope of programs.	Engage with OMB.
Coordination and Project delays.	Program launch bottlenecks.	Standing weekly interagency working sessions.
Landfill closure.	Schedule delay.	Ongoing engagement with LA regulators.

VII. Timeline and Milestones

Milestone	Target Date
Leaseholder resolution and campus audit complete	FY25 Q4
Phase I construction mobilized	FY25 Q3
Referral protocols and transportation strategy finalized	FY26 Q2
Initial NCWI self-sufficiency programs launched	FY26 Q3
1065 housing units operational	FY28 Q1

VIII. Conclusion

The National Center for Warrior Independence will be a lasting testament to the Nation's promise to those who served. This Action Plan lays the foundation for a campus that not only honors the original intent of the land but delivers on President Trump's vision for reform, accountability and restored dignity for our homeless veterans. It represents a renewed era of results-driven leadership and reflects the President's unwavering support for the men and women who wore the uniform, insisting they be treated as heroes not only in rhetoric, but in outcomes.

This initiative is not merely a commitment to restore infrastructure – it is a generational opportunity to fundamentally reform how we serve homeless veterans. Through the establishment

of this Center, VA will provide not just housing, but a structured path to recovery, reintegration, and renewed purpose.

Through enhanced access to care, co-located services, safety-centered housing, and modernized infrastructure, VA will foster a community where veterans can regain their health, stability, and purpose. They layout of facilities will ensure that specific populations, such as women veterans, veterans in recovery, and those with high-acuity needs are thoughtfully served in settings designed to support their progress and adherence to treatment programs.

By leveraging interagency coordination, redeveloping underutilized federal property, and building a scalable national model centered on dignity and independence, VA will set a new standard. We are determined to ensure that no eligible veteran seeking support from the West LA campus will be turned away for lack of space, services, or vision.

The President's bold Executive Order sets a clear direction: VA must lead with urgency and integrity to solve veteran homelessness. As Secretary Collins affirmed, *"We are answering that call with urgency, discipline, and resolve."* With this plan, VA is acting decisively to transform lives, restore a sense of safety and belonging, and ensure that America's veterans are never left behind.

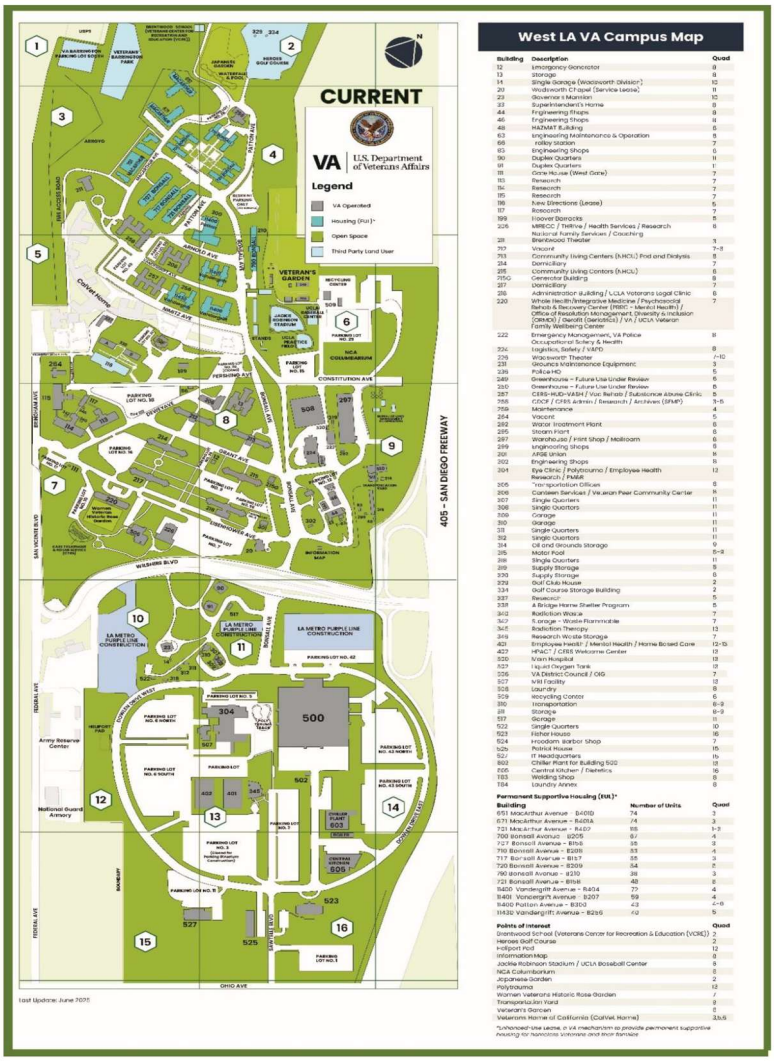
IX. Appendix

- Appendix 1: Maps of WLA campus and proposed development zones

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Appendix 1: Maps of WLA campus and proposed development zones

Current Site Map



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Future Site Map



Requirements to Restore the National Home for Disabled Volunteers Soldiers-Pacific Branch and Restore Veterans Trust Document

Requirements to Restore the National Home for Disabled Volunteers Soldiers—Pacific Branch
and
Restore Veterans Trust

Congressional acknowledgement of (1) the March 2nd, 1887, Congressional Act which directed the establishment, *construction, and permanent maintenance of* a National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (NHDVS) west of the Rockys. (2) the March 3rd, 1888, deed recorded by the Los Angeles County Registrar Recorder establishing the NHDVS—Pacific Branch at what is now known as the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System (VAGLAHS) campus. (4) legal precedents involving VAGLAHS, specifically:

1. 2018 VA OIG Findings
   11 Land-Use-Agreement were found not compliant with the West LA Leasing Act of 2016, other federal laws, or the campus's Draft Master Plan. These include:
   I. **Brentwood School:** Agreement for 22-acres of athletic facilities; OIG deemed it did not provide adequate documented benefits to Veterans.
   II. **UCLA Baseball Stadium:** A 10-acre lease deemed a "sweetheart" deal, found to be below market value with insufficient benefit to Veterans.
   III. **Breitburn Energy Partners:** An oil drilling operation on campus.
   IV. **City of Los Angeles (Barrington Park):** Popular 1.5-acre public dog park.
   V. **Safety Park:** Public Parking lot operations.
   VI. **Caltrans:** Land-use agreements identified as non-compliant.
2. 2021 VA OIG Findings
   New and amended agreements created since the 2018 report still did not comply with the 2016 Leasing Act, Draft Master Plan, lacked sufficient Veteran input, and failed to meet housing development timelines. It was also determined the VA was underpaid by over $40 million per year, as many leases were far below fair market value.
   Specific Examples of Noncompliance:
   I. **Brentwood School**: Lease deemed invalid because it did not principally benefit Veterans and provided exclusive use to a private school.
   II. **UCLA:** The VA could not verify that promised "in-kind" benefits and services were delivered or that their valuation was accurate.
   III. **Bridgeland Oil Drilling & Safety. Park:** Agreements deemed illegal as they prioritized private profit over Veteran needs.
3. *Valentini v. Shinseki Final Judgement Order of February 17, 2015*
   Order indicates that if the parties (VA & homeless Veterans) did not resolve the matter through a mutually agreed-upon strategy, the court would reinstate its 2013 judgment. The 2013 judgment declared that the VA's land-use agreements for non-healthcare purposes on the West L.A. campus were unauthorized by law and void.
4. *Powers v. McDonough September 2024 Ruling*
   Ruling voids the four remaining illegal leases on the West LA VA campus: UCLA, Brentwood School, Safety Park, and Bridgeland Oil. The court determined these leases violated the West Los Angeles Leasing Act because they did not primarily benefit Veterans and their families. This matter is currently under review by the 9th District Court of Appeals.
5. May 19, 2025, Presidential Executive Order 14296 for the creation of the National Center for Warrior Independence at the west LA VA
   President Donald J. Trump via Executive Order

"*Our Nation's security, prosperity, and freedom would not be possible without our veterans. Many service members paid the ultimate sacrifice. Many others bear visible and invisible wounds from their service. Too many veterans are homeless in America. Each veteran deserves our gratitude.*

Yet the Federal Government has not always treated veterans like the heroes they are…

The story of the West Los Angeles Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center is indicative of this failure. More than one hundred years ago, Senator John Percival Jones and Arcadia Bandini de Stearns Baker generously donated hundreds of acres of land that they owned in West Los Angeles on the condition that it be used to house disabled veterans. The campus once featured a chapel, billiard hall, 1,000-seat theater, and housed about 6,000 veterans, but the Federal Government has since allowed this crown jewel of veteran care to deteriorate over the last few decades.

The Department of Veterans Affairs leased parts of the property to a private school, private companies, and the baseball team of the University of California, Los Angeles, sometimes at significantly below-market prices. As of 2024, there were approximately 3,000 homeless veterans in Los Angeles, more than in any other city in the country and accounting for about 10 percent of all of America's homeless veterans.

…

6. <u>February 9, 2026, Department of VA Termination of revocable licenses at West LA VA</u>
   VA Secretary Dou Collins "These groups have been fleecing taxpayers and Veterans for far too long, and under President Trump, VA is taking decisive action to ensure the West LA VAMC campus is used only as intended: to benefit Veterans," Effective today VA has terminated its leases with:
   I. **Brentwood School**
   II. **Safety Park Corporation**
   III. **Bridgeland Resources, LLC**

Congressional Investigation of (1) State of California's and City of Santa Monica's use of beachfront property donated as part of the NHDVS—Pacific Branch. This property is currently a parking lot. (2) The C&H Tract operated by UCLA as student housing but originally acquired under the guise of providing care for Veterans. (3) Illegal medical waste dumping by UCLA that now renders NHDVS land un-inhabitable. (4) Enhance Use Lease holders currently using private and public funds to construct, maintain and operate housing. The many lease holders and building operators do not provide consistent nor quality services while utilizing public grants.

Congressional Legislation (1) Ending the use of Enhanced Use Leases in favor of Congressional funding to construct and manage all structures and services for Veterans. (2) Ending non-essential public access to the NHDVS—Pacific Branch. (3) Creating a Veteran Oversight Committee with actionable power consisting of local Veteran advocates and NHDVS—Pacific Branch residents to ensure the terms of the deed-restrictions and ongoing success of the NHDVS—Pacific Branch. (4) Holding aforementioned lease holders accountable for restitution for years of underpaying the VA and destruction of land meant to rehabilitate and house disabled Veterans.

Prepared Statement of Rob Reynolds

House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Attn: Chairman Bost, Ranking Member Takano, and Members of the Committee

Subject: Written Testimony from Rob Reynolds
reynoldsh431@gmail.com

On: Expanding the Mission: *The Future of the National Center for Warrior Independence in West LA*.

My name is Rob Reynolds, and I am a U.S. Army veteran who served as an infantryman from 2006 to 2010. I deployed to Iraq in 2007 with the 10th Mountain Division, 4-31 Infantry, and earned the Combat Infantry Badge. That deployment was brutal. We lived in extremely harsh conditions in an area south of Baghdad known as the "Triangle of Death," which was heavily impacted by IEDs and an active insurgency. My unit sustained heavy casualties, including three soldiers who were kidnapped on May 12, 2007. We spent months searching for them and ultimately had to return home with two still missing. I had personally known and trained with one of those missing soldiers.

When I returned from Iraq, I struggled deeply to adjust to life being back home. I was also dealing with a physical injury that led to an addiction to prescription painkillers—an addiction that nearly cost me my life.

In 2018, I came to the West Los Angeles VA for PTSD treatment. What I saw there was shocking. Outside the gates, veterans were sleeping on the sidewalks, while inside, much of the 388-acre property sat vacant or was being leased out for private, non-veteran uses. The contrast was devastating. On land originally donated as a Soldiers' Home for disabled veterans, I saw athletic fields for private schools, a baseball stadium for UCLA, parking lots, oil drilling, and even a dog park for wealthy residents—while disabled veterans were sleeping on the street just outside the gates.

In 2019, there were only 54 housing units on that entire property, while an estimated 4,000 veterans were homeless in Los Angeles. Nothing had ever angered or motivated me more than seeing land donated for disabled veterans being used for nearly everything *except* that purpose.

That realization drove me to act. I began volunteering with homeless veterans during the Veterans Row encampment and helped move veterans off the street and onto VA grounds. I worked alongside other veteran advocates and had a direct hand in starting the CTRS tiny home program, which provides emergency shelter for veterans.

In 2022, I worked with Public Counsel, a pro bono law firm, and served as a witness in their lawsuit against the VA for illegally leasing VA land and failing to build housing for veterans. I testified for two days during the 2024 trial and attended every court hearing.

In April 2025, I met with Secretary Collins to discuss the West Los Angeles VA land-use issues, shortly before President Trump's May 9, 2025, Executive Order to establish the National Center for Warrior Independence—which I fully support.

For the past seven years, I have dedicated my life to advocating for homeless veterans and fighting to ensure that the West Los Angeles VA land is restored to its intended purpose—a home for disabled veterans.

I traveled to Washington, D.C., for the Committee on Veterans' Affairs hearing *Expanding the Mission: The Future of the National Center for Warrior Independence in West LA*. When I arrived, I was hopeful this would be an oversight hearing that finally addressed the illegal leases on the VA property—leases that have been paying tens of millions of dollars below market rates, according to the VA's own congressionally mandated report submitted at the end of 2025. In that report, the VA also stated that it could not verify or confirm the services UCLA and Brentwood School claim to provide to veterans.

Five federal judges have ruled that certain leases on the West Los Angeles VA are illegal: District Court Judges James Otero (2013) and David Carter (2024), and Ninth Circuit Judges Consuelo Callahan, Roopali Desai, and Ana de Alba (2025).

I expected the hearing, led by Chairman Bost, to thoroughly examine these illegal agreements and get to the bottom of the leases that Secretary Collins has said have been fleecing taxpayers and veterans for years. However, Chairman Bost did not include Brentwood School in this oversight hearing, which is very concerning, and he did not question anything about UCLA's baseball stadium lease. Instead, Chairman Bost devoted time to allowing a doctor from UCLA to speak about UCLA's academic affiliation agreement with the West LA VA—an entirely separate issue that is not at the center of contention. The real issue is the baseball stadium lease. When it comes to oversight and holding the illegal leaseholders at the VA

accountable for years of corruption and adverse court rulings, nothing was done. These matters were completely overlooked and ignored.

Furthermore, UCLA failed to pay rent for the Jackie Robinson Stadium for 14 months, only making payment after *The Los Angeles Times* and Spectrum News reported on it in November 2025.

In January 2021, while the Veterans Row encampment was ongoing and veterans were sleeping on the sidewalks outside the VA gates, UCLA and the VA negotiated a new deal allowing UCLA to amend its lease and build an additional practice baseball field on VA property. This arrangement was made in secret, and a former VA executive recorded a meeting in which VA officials discussed plans to keep this from veterans and advocates because they believed veterans would be "up in arms" if they found out another baseball field was being built.

After that recording became public, the Veterans Community Oversight and Engagement Board issued Recommendation 12-05A in March 2021 to VA Secretary Denis McDonough, urging termination of UCLA's second lease amendment because it disproportionately benefited UCLA's interests over those of veterans. Despite that, Secretary McDonough approved the lease amendment, and UCLA's new practice baseball field was constructed on VA land while veterans continued sleeping on the sidewalk outside the gates.

The deal with UCLA has been ripping veterans off. UCLA pays its baseball coach more in salary and bonuses than it pays for about ten acres of VA land. Under its lease, UCLA is also supposed to operate a legal clinic for veterans, but it significantly underperforms; veterans can only walk in for intake appointments on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month.
To justify its continued use of the property, UCLA always tries to conflate its academic affiliation agreement—which places resident physicians and fellows at the VA hospital—with its baseball lease. These are entirely separate agreements, and UCLA is compensated by the VA for that arrangement.

VAs across the country partner with universities, but none of them—except for UCLA—have a baseball stadium on VA land.

The courts have spoken, the evidence is clear, and the law is on the side of our veterans. What's missing is the will to enforce it. I'm asking this committee to ensure that these corrupt land-use deals are held accountable.

Questions for the Record Submitted by Mike Bost to the Disabled American Veterans-Department of California

REPUBLICANS
MIKE BOST, ILLINOIS, CHAIRMAN
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JACK BERGMAN, MICHIGAN
NANCY MACE, SOUTH CAROLINA
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JEN KIGGANS, VIRGINIA
ABE HAMADEH, ARIZONA
KIMBERLYN KING-HINDS, NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
TOM BARRETT, MICHIGAN

JON CLARK
STAFF DIRECTOR

U.S. House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS
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WASHINGTON, DC 20515
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DELIA RAMIREZ, ILLINOIS
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MAXINE DEXTER, OREGON
HERB CONAWAY, NEW JERSEY
KELLY MORRISON, MINNESOTA

MATT REEL
DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

May 20, 2026

Commander Armando Hernandez
State Commander
Disabled American Veterans, Department of California
13733 Rosecrans Ave.
Sante Fe Springs, CA 90670

Dear Commander Hernandez:

Thank you to your team for appearing as a witness before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Oversight for the hearing titled "Expanding the Mission: The Future of the National Center for Warrior Independence in West LA" that was held on May 13, 2026.

As a follow-up to the hearing, I request Mr. Richard Valdez, Past State Commander, respond to the attached questions for the record.

The Committee requests a written response no later than June 11, 2026, so it may be made part of the hearing record. If you have any questions, please reach out to Mr. Nicholas West, Chief Clerk, on my staff via email at Nicholas.West@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

MIKE BOST
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

cc: The Honorable Mark Takano, Ranking Member, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Enclosures: Questions for the Record submitted by Chairman Mike Bost

Chairman Bost to Disabled Veterans of America, Department of California

1. When was the last time your organization conducted an internal or external audit of its financials?

2. Were the donations and expenses reported accurately in the organizations' taxes annually?

3. Could you please confirm whether the Vans are fully owned by VA or GSA and provide any relating documents that support the transfer of titles?

4. What internal process does DAV utilize to track donations and expenses?

5. How much is the final monetary amount that was received by Breitburn and what was spent on transportation services?

6. How did DAV-CA first learn of ButterFli Technologies, and can you confirm there were no pre-existing relationships prior to having them provide services?

7. Were there are any negotiations conducted on the rates that ButterFli proposed to conduct transportation services?
    a. If yes, what was the change in rates and who conducted those negotiations on behalf of DAV-CA?
    b. If no, did DAV-CA accept rates at face-value? Who approved that agreement?
    c. Did Mr. David Contreras have any part of the negotiations between DAV and Butterfli?

8. Can you confirm that there was no collaboration between any member of congress, ButterFli Technologies, and DAV-CA that may have led to this agreement?

9. What was the process for the market research that resulted in choosing ButterFli to provide transportation services?
    a. Was it done by online search, or did they reach out to DAV first?

10. Was Butterfli Technologies aware of the donation agreement between DAV and Breitburn at any point prior to them beginning service?
    a. Were they made aware as they were providing services?

11. Were there any other vendors that were considered besides Butterfli?

12. VA reported that DAV-CA received $654,924.40 in Breitburn donations, and of that amount paid $363,947 for ButterFli services and $236,155.50 for the purchase of the vans. Can you confirm whether these amounts are correct or incorrect?
    a. Should this align with what DAV provided to our staff?

Questions for the Record Submitted by Mark Takano to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

REPUBLICANS
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MAXINE DEXTER, OREGON
HERB CONAWAY, NEW JERSEY
KELLY MORRISON, MINNESOTA

MATT REEL
DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

June 1, 2026

The Honorable Douglas A. Collins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Thank you to your team for appearing as a witness before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Oversight for the hearing titled "Expanding the Mission: The Future of the National Center for Warrior Independence in West LA" that was held on May 13, 2026.

As a follow-up to the hearing, I request the Honorable John J. Bartrum, Under Secretary for Health, Veterans Health Administration, respond to the attached questions for the record.

The Committee requests a written response no later than June 23, 2026, so it may be made part of the hearing record. If you have any questions, please reach out to Mr. Nicholas West, Chief Clerk, on my staff via email at Nicholas.West@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

MIKE BOST
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

cc: The Honorable Mark Takano, Ranking Member, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Enclosures: Questions for the Record submitted by Ranking Member Mark Takano

Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Oversight Hearing

"Expanding the Mission: The Future of the National Center for Warrior Independence in West LA"

Wednesday, May 13, 2026, 10:15 AM

360 Cannon House Office Building

QUESTIONS

Non-Disclosure Agreements

a. Which specific individual and office at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) developed, drafted, and directed the use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) for projects related to VA?

b. Did the Secretary approve the use of NDAs? For which projects and/or programs did the Secretary approve the use of NDAs? Does the Secretary know that NDAs have been used for the West LA projects?

c. Who at VA made the decision to not allow signers to have a copy of the NDAs, or to prevent them from reviewing it with their attorney before they signed it?

d. The final section of the NDA VA provided to Committee staff states "VA reserves the right to take disciplinary action for violations of this Agreement". What disciplinary action does VA plan to take against non-VA employees who violate the NDA?

e. What criteria were used to determine that work on the West LA project included access to information sensitive enough to warrant the use of an NDA?

f. What criteria were used to determine which individuals, including non-VA employees, would be required to sign an NDA to participate in meetings or access information related to the West LA project?

Intensive Case Management

a. How many veterans living in housing on campus are currently enrolled in the Mental Health Intensive Case Management program, which provides comprehensive and recovery-oriented care for veterans with serious, persistent mental illness?
b. How many veterans living in housing on campus are eligible for MHICM?
c. Is VA adequately staffed to enroll veterans who are found to be eligible for MHICM on-demand?
d. How many veterans on the by-name list are eligible for MHICM?
e. How many psychiatrist vacancies are there currently at GLA? How many psychiatrists, social workers, and nurses does GLA need to hire to expand access to MHICM to every veteran who needs it?
f. How many veterans residing at West LA receive care through an Assertive Community Treatment model?
g. How many veterans residing at West LA receive care through Critical Time Intervention practices?
h. How many case managers or social workers with specialized training in substance use provide care to veterans in the housing buildings at West LA?
i. Please provide a details as to how VA is expanding use of these evidence-based practices to serve veterans residing on the West LA campus.

Domiciliary Care

a. How many vacancies does the West LA campus currently have for each of its Domiciliary Programs?
b. What is the staff turnover rate for each of the West LA Domiciliary Programs?

c. How many new hires are in the pipeline for West LA Domiciliary Program positions?
d. There is currently a 43% occupancy rate for the Domiciliary for Homeless Veterans and 68% for the General Domiciliary. Please provide details as to the factors leading to these occupancy rates.

LSV-A Grants

The Isakson-Roe Act from 2021 provided authority for VA's Homeless Programs Office (HPO) to grant funding to eligible organizations to coordinate or provide legal services to Veterans who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. One of these legal services for veterans grants is called colloquially the "LSV-A" grant because it is intended to serve veterans with assistance accessing their VA benefits, including through discharge upgrades.

a. Is VA issuing a NOFO in 2026 or 2027 for the LSV-A grants?
b. Please provide details related to VA's decision to issue or not issue a NOFO for the LSV-A grants.
c. How many LSV-A grants were previously awarded to the organizations in Los Angeles area? How many veterans were served under these grants?
d. How many veterans nationwide will be affected if VA no longer offers these grants?

Narcan Availability

Committee staff have heard there have been at least 6 overdose deaths on campus, but veterans who live at West LA report there have been even more overdoses, but these deaths haven't always been coded as such by the medical examiner. In many cases, narcotic overdoses can be preventable.

a. Do veterans residing on campus have access to naloxone, or Narcan, in every residential building?
b. How has VA decided that some veterans may have access to this medication whereas others do not? What does a veteran have to do to access Narcan from VA?
c. Has VA done an analysis of the buildings where Narcan may be most effective for veterans based on reports of drug use and overdoses?
d. Are employees working in, visiting, or responding to incidents in these buildings, whether they are clinical professionals, police officers, or case managers, trained and able to administer Narcan when necessary?

Veteran Community Oversight & Engagement Board

Subsection 2(i) of the West LA Leasing Act requires VA establish a Veterans Community Oversight and Engagement Board, or VCOEB to provide advice and recommendations to the Secretary on the Master Plan and how to improve services and outcomes for veterans. The VCOEB has not met since August 2025. HVAC staff were told during their visit to West LA in April that there "is no V-C-O-E-B right now". We have heard from multiple former members of the VCOEB who termed out of their role that VA told them that the White House would be vetting their social media and online presence if they chose to pursue renewing their membership. In response to a question from my staff, VA has stated that individuals are not being excluded from consideration for VCOEB due to their social media.

a. Has VA reviewed the social media and online presence of any member or potential member of the VCOEB? If yes, who at VA performed that review?
b. Who at VA directed that person to perform that review? What were they told to look for?

c. Was any individual disqualified from membership on the VCOEB because of their social media presence?

Security responsibility / Staffing

On my staff's most recent trip to West LA they were told that there are only 5 VA police officers on patrol at one time for the entire Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System catchment area.

a. How many officers have left VA to go work for ICE or other law enforcement departments in Los Angeles? How many officers have left VA over issues of pay and/or advancement opportunities in Los Angeles? How many officers have left VA to go work for ICE across the VA enterprise?
b. How is VA going to compete to recruit and retain enough VA police to protect veterans who live at the National Soldiers' Home?

What is the status of VA and OPM's efforts to downgrade VA Police Officers?

How many veterans have died (of any causes) in EULs on campus since January 1, 2025? Please provide details on these losses, how these deaths were coded by the medical examiner or coroner, and if VAPD responded to these reports.

a. What policies, unofficial or official, does OCLA currently have in place for the notification of veteran deaths both on and office, at any VA facility, if any? Do these policies differ for campuses that contain leased space, like the West LA VA Medical Center campus or Regional Offices?

The current contract between GLA and Surveillance Security, Inc. Holds that contracted security personnel maintain a responsibility to "assist [VAPD] with evacuating buildings, locking down buildings, and crowd control."

What role in the response to reported deaths (overdoses, natural causes, etc.) does GLA's contracted security play in securing rooms and buildings?

a. In the hearing, Mr. Bartrum noted that VA had just awarded "an additional security contract for some additional security." Will these security personnel be stationed within EULs, or will they be patrolling/static personnel on the campus in outdoor areas?

Funding

Section 2(c) of the President's executive order for West LA states that VA is to coordinate with the Secretaries of HHS and HUD to ensure that funds spent on housing and other services for undocumented immigrants is redirected to construct, establish, and maintain the National Center for Warrior Independence.

a. Has VA received any funds for the National Center for Warrior Independence from HUD or HHS?
b. Please detail any discussions between Secretaries Collins, Turner, and/or Kennedy regarding reprogramming or transferring funds to VA for the purposes of the National Center for Warrior Independence.

Security Jurisdiction

It is unclear what VA's operational posture is for its police force in regards to its jurisdiction and authority in enhanced use lease housing on the West LA campus. In some cases, VAPD can enter these buildings when they are called by veterans reporting disturbances, but are not able to patrol otherwise; at other times, VA police have been barred from entering these buildings entirely. The current contract between Greater Los Angeles and Surveillance Security, Inc. holds that contracted security personnel maintain a responsibility to assist VAPD with evacuating buildings, locking down buildings, and crowd control. Veterans have shared stories that their friends and neighbors have died from overdoses, and then, due to the lack of a secure unit, their belongings have been stolen.

a. What is the current operational posture for VA police for their ability to enter leased housing building on the West LA campus when responding to a call?
b. What entity is responsible for securing housing units on the West LA campus when a veteran has died?
c. If a veteran has been ruled to have died of "natural causes," what guidance is VAPD or contracted security given regarding securing the unit of the deceased veteran?
d. What trainings, guidance, or policies do the VA Police Officers at the West LA VA Medical Center campus receive regarding the handling of potential crime scenes involving deceased individuals? Please provide full, unredacted copies of these policies, trainings, and/or guidance documents.
e. How are these officers instructed to interact with LAPD, LA Fire Department, or other emergency responders that may have concurrent jurisdiction?

Building 212

VA has requested to reprogram $98 million to renovate Building 212 to create Sober-Living transitional housing.

a. Why is VA choosing to operate this is transitional housing versus permanent housing?
b. Does VA envision this building being managed through the Grant and Per Diem program?
c. Since by definition the GPD program is a grant program, has VA targeted a provider to run Building 212? Please provide details, including the model that will be used and how a provider will be selected to operate Building 212.

Supply/Demand

The President's executive order calls for VA to house up to 6,000 veterans at West LA. There was extensive debate during the Powers v. McDonough trial as to the appropriate number of housing units on campus and the types of housing that should be built.

a. What is the current and projected demand for permanent supportive housing on campus?
b. What is the current and projected demand for affordable permanent housing for veterans?
c. Is VA considering affordable workforce or student veteran housing in its next phase of development, if so please describe and detail the veteran demand for those types of units?

d. Part of the President's executive order calls for veterans outside of the area to be moved to West LA for treatment. If veterans are transferred to LA for services and treatment, what is VA's plan for ensuring they can return to their home community to reintegrate?

Reductions in Homelessness

Last year, VA housed over 52,000 veterans, which exceeds the number of veterans identified in the point-in-time count, which was around 32,000 in January 2024. VA is clearly excelling at getting veterans into housing, but cannot control inflow. That inflow can be attributed to the soaring cost of living and the lack of affordable housing across the country. These issues become even more acute for the many disabled veterans who are on a fixed income. HUD-VASH voucher utilization is at an all time high with over 94,000 veterans under lease with a voucher across the country at the end of FY25. Yet we understand that Secretary Turner is still considering time-limiting HUD housing subsidies.

a. Has Secretary Collins asked Secretary Turner to exempt HUD-VASH from any plans to put time-limits on vouchers for veterans?
b. What about the hundreds of thousands of veterans who receive other types of HUD assistance – has Secretary Collins asked that all veterans be exempt from time limits for subsidies?

Executive in Charge

a. Who is the VA official who is the executive-in-charge of developing, executing, and overseeing plans for West LA?
b. Who is VA's expert on homelessness assigned to the West LA project?

Project-Based Vouchers

The Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA) will reach its project-based voucher cap by the end of 2027. This will potentially impede future development on campus since project-based vouchers are used to help developers secure funding and provide a reliable stream of rental income, reducing risk.

a. Has Secretary Collins met with Secretary Turner about this issue? What is the plan to resolve it?
b. If LACDA runs out of project-based vouchers, how will development of permanent housing on campus continue?

Town Center/Community Amenities

Over the last few years before the Trump Administration came in, there was a very public debate about the development of a Town Center at West LA. Veterans living on campus need things to do and access to essentials. Proposals for Town Center include amenities like a grocery store, cafeteria, arts studio, barber shop, and hair salon. VA and the principal developer sought veteran input for what they want to see in the Town Center through a survey and campus listening sessions.

a. Has VA changed the plan for the Town Center since the end of 2024? What amenities will be provided in the Town Center?
b. VA has been analyzing its authority to operate a grocery store on campus through the veteran canteen service for nearly 3 years now. Please describe the current status of this project and VA's authority to operate a grocery store and other amenities on campus.

Project Safe Harbor

a. How many veterans across the country have been referred for guardianship since January 1, 2025? Please provide a detailed breakdown of veteran location, referral source, number of veterans referred, and number of homeless veterans referred.
b. Please provide detailed data broken down by location and veteran homelessness status (i.e. homeless versus non-homeless) for the following metrics:
    1. Number of veterans engaged in Safe Harbor Program (not necessarily completed);
    2. Number of veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness evaluated/assessed for guardianship and other state-specific legal needs;
    3. Number of veterans who are inpatient boarding at a VA facility awaiting guardianship;
    4. Number of veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness with completed guardianship application packets submitted to vendor/contractor/court;
    5. Number of veterans on inpatient VA units and awaiting evaluation/guardianship, including number of days they have been awaiting evaluation;
    6. Number of veterans who completed program and received guardianship;
    7. Number of veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness placed in housing once guardian appointed; and
    8. Number of veterans who are stable and transition out of program.

c. How many VA attorneys have been appointed under the Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Justice to serve as special assistant U.S. attorneys? How many VA attorneys have been trained to serve as special assistant U.S. attorneys? Please provide a full, unredacted copy of all training materials.

d. Will homeless veterans from other parts of the country who VA petitions the court for guardianship be moved to Los Angeles for treatment at the National Center for Warrior Independence? Please provide a detailed description of the legal processes VA will use to carry out this initiative.

Disabled American Veterans-Department of California Response to the Questions for the Record

June 5, 2026

1. When was the last time your organization conducted an internal or external audit of its financials?

- The most recent audit was conducted from August through October 2025 by Sabocor & Co., LLP (CPA).
- The Department of California undergoes annual independent financial audits conducted by a certified public accounting firm.

2. Were the donations and expenses reported accurately in the organization's taxes annually?

- Yes. All donations and expenses are accurately recorded and included in the organization's annual audited financial reports and tax filings.

3. Could you please confirm whether the vans are fully owned by VA or GSA and provide any related documents that support the transfer of titles?

- The seven vehicles purchased by DAV-CA with the donated funds from Breitburn are fully owned by the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Attached are scanned copies of the titles of the seven vehicles showing that ownership was directly transferred from Ford to VA upon delivery.

4. What internal process does DAV utilize to track donations and expenses?

- Donations are reviewed by accounting to verify donor intent and then deposited into the applicable account.

5. How much is the final monetary amount that was received from Breitburn, and what was spent on transportation services?

- Total received: $905,563.65
- Total expended on transportation-related services: $914,858.77

6. How did DAV-CA first learn of Butterfli Technologies, and can you confirm there were no pre-existing relationships prior to having them provide services?

- DAV-CA identified Butterfli Technologies during a market research process and WLA VA recommendation for ambulatory transportation services in the surrounding area.
- There were no pre-existing relationships between DAV-CA and Butterfli prior to entering into an agreement.

7. Were there any negotiations conducted on the rates that Butterfli proposed to conduct transportation services?

a. If yes, what was the change in rates and who conducted those negotiations on behalf of DAV-CA?

- An agreement was executed in 2019 with negotiations being conducted by Robert Graves and Daniel Contreras for rates through recommendation of VA.
- Approval authority was provided by Dan Contreras and Robert Graves.

b. If no, did DAV-CA accept rates at face value? Who approved that agreement?

- Not applicable, as negotiations did occur.

c. Did Mr. David Contreras have any part in the negotiations between DAV and Butterfli?

- We do not know a 'David Contreras' and assume you are referring to Dan/Daniel Contreras.
- Yes, Dan Contreras and Robert Graves did participate in negotiations between DAV-CA and Butterfli.

8. Can you confirm that there was no collaboration between any Member of Congress, Butterfli Technologies, and DAV-CA that may have led to this agreement?

- DAV-CA can confirm that there was no collaboration or involvement between any Member of Congress, Butterfli Technologies, and DAV-CA in the development or execution of this agreement.

9. What was the process for the market research that resulted in choosing Butterfli to provide transportation services?

a. Was it done by online search, or did they reach out to DAV first?

- The process included independent online research and recommendation of WLA VA of rideshare and medical transportation providers in the West Los Angeles area.
- Three vendors were evaluated:
    - Top Transportation Services Co.
    - Mobility for Medics
    - Butterfli Technologies
    - Butterfli was selected due to its proximity (headquartered in West Los Angeles) and its operational capacity, including appropriate vehicle infrastructure to support the program.

10. Was Butterfli Technologies aware of the donation agreement between DAV and Breitburn at any point prior to them beginning service?

- Butterfli was informed that transportation services would be funded through external contributions and not through DAV-CA departmental funds.

a. Were they made aware as they were providing services?

- Yes. Quarterly reports were submitted to the VA Medical Center and relevant stakeholders to ensure transparency throughout the program of how many rides were being produced on a monthly basis.

11. Were there any other vendors that were considered besides Butterfli?

- Yes. In addition to Butterfli, the following vendors were considered:
- Top Transportation Services Co.
- Mobility for Medics

12. VA reported that DAV-CA received $654,924.40 in Breitburn donations, and of that amount paid $363,947 for Butterfli services and $236,155.50 for the purchase of the vans. Can you confirm whether these amounts are correct or incorrect?

- The figures reported by the VA are incorrect for total contributions and disbursements at the end of the program; but may represent cumulative totals through approximately February or March 2022.
- As documented in the July 17, 2025, memorandum that was delivered to the Committee:
    - Total contributions received: $905,563.65
    - Disbursed to Butterfli: $667,400.93
    - Disbursed for purchase of vans and related costs: $247,457.84
    - Total disbursements: $914,858.77

a. Should this align with what DAV provided to our staff?

- The final totals align with what DAV provided to the Committee. The VA reported totals appear to be cumulative totals as of approximately February or March 2022.

Respectfully,



Enrique Ramos
Adjutant
DAV California

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Response to the Questions for the Record

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
Questions for the Record
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Oversight Hearing

May 13, 2026

The Department's responses to these Questions for the Record are based on information reasonably available to the Department as of the date of this submission. The Department has made a good-faith effort to provide complete and accurate answers, and the responses reflect the Department's present understanding of the matters addressed.

Non-Disclosure Agreements

Question a: Which specific individual and office at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) developed, drafted, and directed the use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) for projects related to VA?

VA Response: Non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) have been in use at the Department of Veterans Affairs for decades, and it's unclear who first employed them. What we can say, however, is that VA's NDAs expressly preserve and do not supersede or restrict each signer's right to communicate freely with Congress; the Government Accountability Office; the VA Inspector General; and any other oversight or investigative body, consistent with all applicable whistleblower and disclosure protection statutes, including 5 U.S.C. § 7211 and 5 U.S.C. § 2302(b)(8), among others. Those rights are absolute and unaffected by NDAs at all times.

Question b: Did the Secretary approve the use of NDAs? For which projects and/or programs did the Secretary approve the use of NDAs? Does the Secretary know NDAs have been used for the West LA projects?

VA Response: Sec. Collins is aware the Department uses NDAs in certain instances, but his approval is not required for NDAs.

Question c: Who at VA made the decision to not allow signers to have a copy of the NDAs, or to prevent them from reviewing it with their attorney before they signed it?

VA Response: VA is not presently aware of this happening, but if you have details of it taking place, we will be happy to look into it.

Question d: The final section of the NDA VA provided to Committee staff states "VA reserves the right to take disciplinary action for violations of this

Agreement." What disciplinary action does VA plan to take against non-VA employees who violate the NDA?

VA Response: VA is not aware of anyone violating a VA NDA.

Question e: What criteria were used to determine that work on the West LA project included access to information sensitive enough to warrant the use of an NDA?

VA Response: Projects that dealt with proprietary information, such as procurement planning.

Question f: What criteria were used to determine which individuals, including non-VA employees, would be required to sign an NDA to participate in meetings or access information related to the West LA project?

VA Response: Projects that dealt with procurement planning and the potential for access to sensitive information.

Intensive Case Management

Question a: How many veterans living in on-campus housing are currently enrolled in the Mental Health Intensive Case Management (MHICM) program which provides comprehensive and recovery-oriented care for veterans with serious, persistent mental illness?

VA Response: As of July 2026, 11 Veterans living in on-campus housing are enrolled in Mental Health Intensive Case Management (MHICM).

Question b: How many veterans living in housing on campus are eligible for MHICM?

VA Response: A comprehensive evaluation is necessary to determine the eligibility of each Veteran. Typically, around 4% of those in the psychosis registry qualify for MHICM.

MHICM Eligibility Criteria:
1) Primary Serious Mental Illness diagnosis.
2) More than 20+ hospital days or 2-3 psychological hospitalizations in 1 year.
3) Voluntary enrollment.
4) Willing to meet weekly with case manager and if high intensity agree to 2 visits per week.
5) No violence or dangerousness.
6) Needs cannot be met by routine outpatient clinic.

Question c: Is VA adequately staffed to enroll veterans who are found to be eligible for MHICM on-demand?

VA Response: MHICM is operating at capacity for the number of clinicians currently employed. VA is in the process of hiring for vacant positions to allow for an increase in enrollment of Veterans found to be eligible for MHICM.

Question d: How many veterans on the by-name list are eligible for MHICM?

VA Response: As of July 2026, there are 1,132 Veterans on the by-name list (BNL) who are eligible for VA health care. Some may qualify for MHICM after a comprehensive clinical assessment to determine their individual needs.

Question e: How many psychiatrist vacancies currently at GLA? How many psychiatrists, social workers, and nurses does GLA need to hire to expand MHICM to every veteran who needs it?

VA Response: At the Greater Los Angeles (GLA) Health Care System as of July 2026, there are 86 psychiatrists and 10 psychiatrist vacancies. GLA Health Care System needs three case managers and two psychiatrists for MHICM.

MHICM is generally tasked to provide care for 4% of Veterans on the VA Greater Los Angeles psychosis registry (psychosis census is 4,113 as of July 2026). VA's target MHICM enrollment would be 165 Veterans. As of July 2026, there are 138 enrollees because VA is short-staffed by 3 case managers and 2 psychiatric full-time equivalent (FTE) employees.

Question f: How many veterans residing at West LA receive care through an Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) model?

VA Response: Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) does not exist at West Los Angeles VA Medical Center (VAMC). However, the primary model includes MHICM, which is functionally equivalent to ACT and is proven to support Veterans with serious mental illness.

Question g: How many veterans residing at West LA receive care through Critical Time Intervention (CTI) practices?

VA Response: None of the Veterans residing at the West Los Angeles VAMC campus receive care through a formal Critical Time Intervention (CTI) program. CTI is a time-limited, transition-focused model, whereas West Los Angeles VAMC uses a continuous, evidence-based case management approach in which every Veteran receives regular acuity assessments and care intensity is adjusted based on current clinical and social needs. While CTI is a well-studied model with demonstrated benefits for specific high risk transition groups, published reviews note that its evidence base is relatively limited,

results are mixed for some outcomes and settings, and effectiveness is highly dependent on context and implementation fidelity. In a large campus environment like West Los Angeles VAMC, where Veterans already receive ongoing, comprehensive case management rather than short, discrete transition episodes, a continuous acuity-based model is more appropriate than strict CTI implementation.

Question h: How many case managers or social workers with specialized training in substance use provide care to veterans in the housing buildings at West LA?

VA Response: The West Los Angeles VAMC employs 24 social workers and case managers. All are trained to identify Veteran care needs and make referrals to substance abuse treatment services when appropriate.

Question i: Please provide details on how VA is expanding use of these evidence-based practices to serve veterans residing on the West LA campus.

VA Response: VA is committed to expanding evidence-based mental health practices to better serve Veterans residing on the West Los Angeles VAMC campus. The primary approach includes MHICM, a model functionally equivalent to ACT that is proven to support Veterans with serious mental illness.

CTI has been considered as a potential model. While CTI is a time-limited, evidence-informed approach focused on supporting individuals through critical transitions, current research suggests that its greatest benefit is for populations experiencing significant changes in their housing or support systems, rather than for ongoing, complex clinical needs. At VA Greater Los Angeles Health Care System, VA is emphasizing individualized case management tailored to each Veteran. Every Veteran is systematically assessed on acuity, current needs, and recovery stage to determine the most appropriate level of case management.

This stage-based, person-centered approach aligns with evidence-based practices, and allows VA to provide the right level of support at the right time, and deploy our resources where they are likely to have the highest impact. While CTI may be suitable for certain transitional scenarios, VA's priority is to implement models with the strongest evidence for improving ongoing clinical outcomes and community integration among the Veterans served.

Domiciliary Care

Question a: How many vacancies does the West LA campus currently have for each of its Domiciliary Programs?

VA Response: There is one Domiciliary Program with three bed sections: Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans, General Domiciliary, and Substance-Use Disorder.

As of July 2026, vacancies include one Health Technician, three Social Workers, four Addiction Therapists, and two Social Service Assistants. Seven of these 10 vacancies are pending staff onboarding.

Question b: What is the staff turnover rate for each of the West LA Domiciliary Programs?

VA Response: The approximate turnover rate from July 1, 2025, to July 1, 2026, was 4.82%.

Question c: How many new hires are in the pipeline for West LA Domiciliary Program positions?

VA Response: There are seven pending onboarding: three Social Workers, two Addiction Therapists; and two Social Service Assistants.

Question d: There is currently a 43% occupancy rate for the Domiciliary for Homeless Veterans and 68% for the General Domiciliary. Please provide details as to the factors leading to these occupancy rates.

VA Response: The data in the question is inaccurate. There are 200 operational beds:

- **Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans** – 50 of the 62 designated beds (80.6%) are occupied.
- **General Domiciliary** – 66 of the 80 designated beds (82.5%) are occupied.
- **Substance Use Disorder** – 53 of the 58 (91.38%) designated beds are occupied.
- **July 2026 Census** is 167 + 2 Domiciliary Veterans in the hospital = 169 designated beds.
- **Overall occupancy rate** is 84.5%

LSV-A Grants

Question e: Is VA issuing a NOFO in 2026 or 2027 for the LSV-A grants?
Question b: Please provide details related to VA's decision to issue or not issue a NOFO for the LSV-A grants.

VA Response: 38 U.S.C. 501(d) requires VA to publish regulations before implementing new grant programs. This is a lengthy process and involves multiple steps, including drafting, internal review, public notice-and-comment periods, and final publication in the Federal Register. VA cannot announce funding via a NOFO until the regulations are finalized.

Question c: How many LSV-A grants were previously awarded to the organizations in Los Angeles area? How many veterans served under these grants?

VA Response: For the reason stated in the above, VA has not made awards under this program.

Question d: How many veterans nationwide will be affected if VA no longer offers these grants?

VA Response: For the reason stated above, VA has not made any awards under this program.

Narcan Availability

Committee staff have heard there have been at least 6 overdose deaths on campus, but Veterans who live at West LA report there have been even more overdoses, but these deaths haven't always been coded as such by the medical examiner. In many cases, narcotic overdoses can be preventable.

Question a: Do veterans residing on campus have access to naloxone, or Narcan, in every residential building?

VA Response: Naloxone (Narcan) is not stocked as an emergency medication in every EUL or non-clinical residential building. VA is working with the building operators on a plan for Narcan to be stocked in every residential building.

Question b: How has VA decided that some Veterans may have access to this medication whereas others do not? What does a Veteran have to do to access Narcan from VA?

VA Response: Any Veteran who is eligible for VA health care can obtain free naloxone from VA pharmacy services by requesting it from their provider, a clinical team member, or the pharmacy. No special eligibility beyond general enrollment in VA health care is required, and staff offer naloxone and overdose prevention education to Veterans.

Veterans who are not enrolled in VA health care may access naloxone through local public health departments, community pharmacies, or harm-reduction programs, consistent with current state and local resources. Acknowledging these differences, VA is working to strengthen collaboration with community providers and housing operators, and is exploring solutions to close gaps in naloxone access across the West Los Angeles VAMC campus.

Additionally, some EUL property managers make naloxone available in common areas, such as lobbies, to support resident safety. VA continues to promote overdose prevention and is evaluating opportunities to expand direct access to naloxone for all Veterans in campus housing, regardless of VA health care eligibility.

Question c: Has VA done an analysis of the buildings where Narcan may be most effective for Veterans based on reports of drug use and overdoses?

VA Response: VA recognizes that a significant percentage of Veterans receiving homeless services on the north campus struggle with substance use disorders. As a result, VA considers all Veterans in these settings to be at increased risk for overdose regardless of the substance use or overdose history of any individual building.

Question d: Are employees working in/visiting/responding to incidents in these buildings (clinical staff, police, case managers) trained and able to administer Narcan when necessary?

VA Response: VA Police Officers and medical staff are trained and equipped to administer naloxone (Narcan). To amplify readiness and response, the Chief of Social Work, in partnership with clinical leadership and other key staff, is ensuring that all staff working in high-risk areas, including all north campus locations, are trained to recognize overdoses and administer naloxone.

As part of this effort, VA is implementing a standard operating procedure to guide staff in carrying and administering naloxone during an overdose emergency. Additionally, VA uses an incident reporting system to notify staff after an overdose, so they can provide timely follow-up and intervention. VA staff contact paramedics as needed to provide advanced medical care.

Veteran Community Oversight & Engagement Board

Subsection 2(i) of the West LA Leasing Act requires VA establish a Veterans Community Oversight and Engagement Board, or VCOEB to provide advice and recommendations to the Secretary on the Master Plan and how to improve services and outcomes for Veterans. The VCOEB has not met since August 2025. HVAC staff were told during their visit to West LA in April that there "is no V-C-O-E-B right now." We have heard from multiple former members of the VCOEB who termed out of their role that VA told them that the White House would be vetting their social media and online presence if they chose to pursue renewing their membership. In response to a question from my staff, VA has stated that individuals are not being excluded from consideration for VCOEB due to their social media.

Question a: Has VA reviewed the social media and online presence of any member or potential member or the VCOEB? If yes, who at VA performed that review?

VA Response: VA is formalizing a process to ensure the board is fair and balanced and composed of qualified members.

Question b: Who at VA directed that person to perform that review? What were they told to look for?

VA Response: See previous response.

Question c: Was any individual disqualified from membership on the VCOEB because of their social media presence?

VA Response: See previous response.

Security Responsibility / Staffing

On my staff's most recent trip to West LA they were told that there are only 5 VA police officers on patrol at one time for the entire Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System catchment area.

Question a: How many officers have left VA to go work for ICE or other LA law enforcement departments in Los Angeles? The system of record shows that approximately 6 Police Officers have left for West Los Angeles VAMC for DHS; 1 in October 2023 and 5 between October 2025-January 2026. How many officers have left VA over issues of pay and/or advancement opportunities in Los Angeles? The data does provide additional detail on the reason for the loss nor more granularity into the components of the gaining Agency. How many officers have left VA to go work for ICE across the VA enterprise?

VA Response: VA only tracks employee transfers to other federal agencies, such as the Department of Homeland Security. Our system does not include sub-agency info, so we can't say how many departing officers have since went to work for ICE.

Question b: How is VA going to compete to recruit and retain enough VA police to protect Veterans who live at the National Soldiers' Home?

VA Response: In Q4 of FY25 West Los Angeles VAPD expanded staffing from 92 position authorizations to 163. At the time, there were 83 personnel onboard. There are currently 96 onboard, and we anticipate growing to 105 by the end of FY26 as recruitment and hiring continue.

Question [sic]: What is the status of VA and OPM's efforts to downgrade VA Police Officers?

VA Response: No downgrades have been nor will be implemented for VA Police Officers as a result of the 2025 Police Officer Consistency Review. In fact, VA raised the entry-level grade for Police Officers to General Schedule (GS)-6 and established a clear career ladder with advancement opportunities through leadership positions up to the Senior Executive Service. These changes provide career stability and make VA an

attractive employer for law enforcement professionals. For more info, see here: https://news.va.gov/press-room/va-fixes-police-force-boosting-safety-for-veterans-families-staff/

Question a: How many veterans have died (of any cause) in EULs on campus since January 1, 2025? Please provide details on these losses, how these deaths were coded by the Medical Examiner or Coroner, and if VAPD responded to these reports.

VA Response: From January 1, 2025, to June 2026, 22 deaths were recorded in VA EULs on the West Los Angeles VAMC campus and 4 deaths at the Sepulveda Ambulatory Care Center. According to VA Police reports, these deaths were categorized as resulting from natural causes, accidental causes, or suspected overdose.

Question a [sic] e: What policies, unofficial or official, does OCLA currently have in place for the notification of veteran deaths both on and off, at any VA facility, if any? Do these policies differ for campuses that contain leased space, like the West LA VA Medical Center campus or Regional Offices?

VA Response: It is the Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs' policy and practice to notify the Staff Directors for the Chair and Ranking Member of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs following any Veteran suicides on VA property, as reported by the VA Administrations.

Question [sic]: The current contract between GLA and Surveillance Security, Inc. holds that contracted security personnel maintain a responsibility to "assist [VAPD] with evacuating buildings, locking down buildings, and crowd control." What role in the response to reported deaths (overdoses, natural causes, etc.) does GLA's contracted security play in securing rooms and buildings?

VA Response: VA Police do not use contract security guard personnel to respond to calls for service, including death investigations. Contract security guard personnel do not manage the integrity of a scene. Contracted security guards may provide temporary support only to help isolate an area while a perimeter is set. A contract security guard or VA employee may be asked to prevent passersby from entering a scene while barrier tape or other control methods are put in place.

Question a: In the hearing, Mr. Bartrum noted that VA had just awarded "an additional security contract for some additional security." Will these security personnel be stationed within EULs, or will they be patrolling/static personnel on the campus in outdoor areas?

VA Response: Per EUL lease-agreement terms, EUL lessees are responsible for providing security within EUL properties. VA security personnel will not be stationed within the EULs. A total of 10 personnel are assigned each shift to perform security

duties on the North Campus of West Los Angeles VAMC 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This number includes six single-guard static posts, one two-person static post checking bags as individuals enter the Gorham Gate adjacent to the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) Veterans state home, and two single-guard mobile patrols that continuously patrol the North Campus. All security guards are tasked with observing and reporting suspicious or criminal activity and maintaining direct communication with VA Police Dispatch to ensure timely law enforcement response.

Funding

Section 2(c) of the President's Executive Order for West LA states that VA is to coordinate with the Secretaries of HHS and HUD to ensure that funds spent on housing and other services for undocumented immigrants is redirected to construct, establish, and maintain the National Center for Warrior Independence.

Question a: Has VA received any funds for the National Center for Warrior Independence from HUD or HHS?

VA Response:
https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.hud.gov%2Fnews%2Fhud-no-26-052&data=05|02||4e82ff7521284da6390808dee3630c3b|e95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf|0|0|639198211770880246|Unknown|TWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D|0|||&sdata=W9HvGUzYi3dLtwIbOmm144Oe9TQWmMUYvsiyLCZ1Sus%3D&reserved=0https://www.hud.gov/news/hud-no-26-052https://www.hud.gov/sites/default/files/hudclips/documents/PIH-2026-01.pdf

Through the June 2026 announcement (link below), VA Greater Los Angeles Health Care System was the recipient of 200 HUD-VASH vouchers in partnership with the following PHAs:

PHA Number	PHA Name	Number of Vouchers
CA002	Los Angeles County Development Authority	72
CA021	Housing Authority of the County of Santa Barbara	50
CA076	Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara	25
CA092	Area Housing Authority of the County of Ventura	20
CA111	Santa Monica Housing Authority	15
CA118	Norwalk Housing Authority	18
Total GLA HUD-VASH Voucher Award		**200**

HUD's full list of voucher and administrative fee awards is available here (https://www.hud.gov/sites/default/files/PIH/documents/OCIR-Template-Filetwo-2026-102-PHVP.pdf).

Question b: Please detail any discussions between Secretaries Collins, Turner, and/or Kennedy regarding reprogramming or transferring funds to VA for the purposes of the National Center for Warrior Independence.

VA Response: Discussions between Cabinet Secretaries regarding interagency coordination and funding are internal Executive Branch deliberations. Consistent with longstanding Executive Branch practice, VA does not characterize or disclose such deliberations.

Security Jurisdiction

It is unclear what VA's operational posture is for its police force in regards to its jurisdiction and authority in enhanced use lease housing on the West LA campus. In some cases, VAPD can enter these buildings when they are called by Veterans reporting disturbances, but are not able to patrol otherwise; at other times, VA police have been barred from entering these buildings entirely. The current contract between Greater Los Angeles and Surveillance Security, Inc. holds that contracted security personnel maintain a responsibility to assist VAPD with evacuating buildings, locking down buildings, and crowd control. Veterans have shared stories that their friends and neighbors have died from overdoses, and then, due to the lack of a secure unit, their belongings have been stolen.

Question a: What is the current operational posture for VA police for their ability to enter leased housing buildings on the West LA campus when responding to a call?

VA Response:

VA Police are authorized to enter leased housing buildings on the West Los Angeles VAMC campus when responding to active calls for service or other immediate threats to protect the safety and security of the community. VA Police do not have authority to conduct self-initiated investigative activities on EUL property.

VA sees multiple challenges with EULs, including unclear law enforcement jurisdiction and in many instances lease terms that permit non-Veterans to reside within EUL properties. These issues are particularly acute at an EUL property on the campus of the Dwight D. Eisenhower VA Medical Center in Leavenworth, Kansas, where local law enforcement simply refuses to respond to issues within the EUL, where VA currently has no law enforcement jurisdiction.

VA is working to amend its many EUL agreements to restore by agreement the authority the leasehold removes. This change, however, depends on lessee agreement and is not a sufficient permanent or universal fix.

Your committee could help empower VA to better police its EUL properties by passing legislation to amend the definition of "Department property" in 38 U.S.C. § 901 to include an authority outside Federal property clause.

This approach mirrors authority Congress has granted to comparable Federal agencies. For instance, the Federal Protective Service has authority over "buildings, grounds, and property that are owned, occupied, or secured by the Federal Government" under 40 U.S.C. § 1315.

Question b: What entity is responsible for securing housing units on the West LA campus when a veteran has died?

VA Response: VA Police are responsible for securing the scene after the death of a Veteran.

Question c: If a Veteran has been ruled to have died of "natural causes," what guidance is VAPD or contracted security given regarding securing the unit of the deceased Veteran?

VA Response: VA Police will advise the property manager and release the scene to the property manager's control once it is established that no suspicious circumstances are present and all investigative actions are complete.

Question d: What trainings, guidance, or policies do the VA Police Officers at the West LA VA Medical Center campus receive regarding the handling of potential crime scenes involving deceased individuals? Please provide full, unredacted copies of these policies, trainings, and/or guidance documents.

VA Response: VA Evidence Handling Procedures, Training Unit 16, (attached) directs VA Police actions regarding crime scene evidence handling. The 3i Crime Scene Processing Standard Operating Procedure (attached) guides patrol officer actions for crime scene response and management (Attachments 1 and 2).

Question e: How are these officers instructed to interact with LAPD, LA Fire Department, or other emergency responders that may have concurrent jurisdiction?

VA Response:

The VA police handbook provides guidance on interactions with local authorities depending on legislative jurisdiction, which in this case is concurrent legislative jurisdiction. Additionally, and consistent with the VA police handbook and VA policy, each facility police unit must establish liaisons between VA police and appropriate local, Federal, and state, law enforcement agencies and court officers as well as with the VA Office of Inspector General. Workable support agreements are generally memorialized in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the agencies with the MOU delineating aspirational expectations of both VA police and Federal, local, and state law enforcement agencies. The handbook and MOUs guide operations and facilitate cooperation with state and local entities at facilities with concurrent, partial, or proprietorial legislative jurisdiction.

Building 212

VA has requested to reprogram $98 million to renovate Building 212 to create Sober-Living transitional housing.

Question a: Why is VA choosing to operate this as transitional housing versus permanent housing?

VA Response: VA proposes to operate Building 212 as sober living transitional housing through the Compensated Work Therapy–Transitional Residence (CWTTR) program, because it is the most appropriate level of care for Veterans stepping down from emergency housing and residential treatment. CWTTR provides a time-limited, substance-free, highly structured environment where Veterans can practice independent living while continuing treatment, vocational rehabilitation, and recovery-oriented services.

This design is consistent with Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive 1160.01, which requires access to integrated, recovery-oriented mental health and rehabilitation services that support functional improvement and successful transitions between levels of care. Operating Building 212 as transitional housing, rather than permanent housing,

preserves its role in the continuum of care, that is, stabilization in residential treatment, step-down in sober living CWTTR, and placement into permanent housing in the community.

Building 212 is aligned with Executive Order 14296 establishing the National Center for Warrior Independence (NCWI) on the West Los Angeles VAMC campus. A transitional CWTTR model advances that mandate by giving Veterans dedicated time and support to consolidate treatment gains and build skills for independent living before moving into permanent housing.

Veterans explicitly asked for this kind of transition period in a substance free setting where they can focus on physical, mental, and social health while still having support. Veterans report that moving directly from emergency or residential treatment to permanent housing can feel abrupt. A structured CWTTR sober-living environment responds to this feedback and better prepares Veterans for long-term housing stability and independence.

Question b: Does VA envision this building being managed through the Grant and Per Diem (GPD) program?

VA Response: VA does not envision operating Building 212 through the Grant and Per Diem (GPD) program. The intent is for Building 212 to function as a VA operated CWTTR sober-living program on the West Los Angeles VAMC campus, serving Veterans eligible for the full VA medical benefits package. Using CWTTR on campus allows VA to integrate housing with NCWI services, mental health care, vocational rehabilitation, and other VA resources, consistent with the coordinated, recovery-oriented approach to care described in VHA Directive 1160.01. This configuration maximizes Veterans' use of onsite VA services during the transition period from emergency housing or Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Programs to permanent housing. GPD remains an important tool for community based transitional housing, especially for Veterans who are not eligible for VA health care or who are better served off campus. However, for Building 212—given its location on the West Los Angeles VAMC campus and its NCWI mission—VA recommends CWTTR as the primary operating mechanism, rather than GPD.

Question c: Since by definition the GPD program is a grant program, has VA targeted a provider to run Building 212? Please provide details, including the model that will be used and how a provider will be selected to operate Building 212.

VA Response: No, VA's intent is to use Building 212 for VA-operated CWTTR transitional housing. VA has not identified a community provider to run this building.

Under the CWTTR model, VA operates the program directly and staffs it with interdisciplinary teams that include vocational rehabilitation specialists, mental health clinicians, case managers, and peer support. This structure supports strong clinical

oversight and integration with NCWI and other VA services on the West Los Angeles VAMC campus.

If VA were to use GPD for any portion of transitional housing related to NCWI, providers would be selected through the standard competitive GPD grant process. That process includes public notice of funding, solicitation of applications, and evaluation against statutory and regulatory criteria. No provider is preselected.

Supply / Demand

The President's calls for VA to house up to 6,000 Veterans at West LA. There was extensive debate during the *Powers v. McDonough* trial as to the appropriate number of housing that should be built.

Question a: What is the current and projected demand for permanent supportive housing on campus?

VA Response: The projected demand cannot be determined without a clinical intake assessment.

As of July 2026, based on the BNL data from the Greater Los Angeles Health Care System, the VA National Homeless Programs Office (HPO) has preliminary insights into the population of actively homeless Veterans. Consequently, VA estimates that an average of 313 new homeless Veterans are added to the BNL every month and an average of 145 Veterans are permanently housed each month. An average of 79 homeless Veterans come off the BNL each month due to unknown or other status (such as, loss of contact or death).

VA anticipates 37% of permanently housed Veterans on the Greater Los Angeles campus may require permanent supportive housing, while the remaining 63% may need affordable housing in the community.

The goal is to turn the campus into a beacon of hope and a destination for homeless Veterans from across the Nation who can travel there to find housing and support and start their journey back to self-sufficiency.

Question b: What is the current and projected demand for affordable permanent housing for Veterans?

VA Response: See the above response.

Question c: Is VA considering affordable workforce or student-Veteran housing in its next phase of development, if so, please describe and detail the Veteran demand for those types of units?

VA Response: No. The goal is to build housing for homeless Veterans.

Question d: Part of the President's Executive Order calls for Veterans outside of the area to be moved to West LA for treatment. If Veterans are transferred to LA for services and treatment, what is VA's plan for ensuring they can return to their home community to reintegrate?

VA Response: Following their time on campus, Veterans are free to choose where they would like to live.

Reductions in Homelessness

Last year, VA housed over 52,000 Veterans, which exceeds the number of Veterans identified in the point-in-time count, which was around 32,000 in January 2024. VA is clearly excelling at getting Veterans into housing, but cannot control inflow. That inflow can be attributed to the soaring cost of living and the lack of affordable housing across the country. These issues become even more acute for the many disabled Veterans who are on a fixed income. HUD-VASH voucher utilization is at an all time high with over 94,000 Veterans under lease with a voucher across the country at the end of FY25. Yet we understand that Secretary Turner is still considering time-limiting HUD housing subsidies.

Question a: Has Secretary Collins asked Secretary Turner to exempt HUD-VASH from any plans to put time-limits on vouchers for Veterans?

VA Response: Discussions between Cabinet Secretaries regarding interagency policy coordination are internal Executive Branch deliberations. Consistent with longstanding Executive Branch practice, VA does not characterize or disclose such deliberations.

Question b: What about the hundreds of thousands of Veterans who receive other types of HUD assistance - has Secretary Collins asked that all Veterans be exempt from time limits for subsidies?

VA Response: Discussions between Cabinet Secretaries regarding interagency policy coordination are internal Executive Branch deliberations. Consistent with longstanding Executive Branch practice, VA does not characterize or disclose such deliberations.

Executive in Charge

Question a: Who is the VA official who is the executive-in-charge of developing, executing, and overseeing plans for West LA?

VA Response: No VA official is officially appointed as the "executive-in-charge." Mrs. Danielle Runyan is the individual delegated to approve all actions related to the WLA Campus.

Question b: Who is VA's expert on homelessness assigned to the West LA project?

VA Response: West Los Angeles VAMC has a team of professionals under the VHA Homeless Program Office with different disciplines and areas of subject matter expertise.

Project-Based Vouchers

The Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA) will reach its project-based voucher cap by the end of 2027. This will potentially impede future development on campus since project-based vouchers are used to help developers secure funding and provide a reliable stream of rental income, reducing risk.

Question a: Has Secretary Collins met with Secretary Turner about this issue? What is the plan to resolve it?

VA Response: VA is in communication with the Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA) and will have more information on this program as campus planning progresses.

Question b: If LACDA runs out of project-based vouchers, how will development of permanent housing on campus continue?

VA Response: In the event LACDA were to run out of project-based vouchers, the EUL developers would continue development through other sources such as tenant-based vouchers or seek project-based vouchers from another authority, such as Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA). There are EULs on the campus that utilize HACLA project-based vouchers, and numerous EULs across the county that leverage tenant-based vouchers.

Town Center / Community Amenities

Over the last few years before the Trump Administration came in, there was a very public debate about the development of a Town Center at West LA. Veterans living on campus need things to do and access to essentials. Proposals for Town Center include amenities like a grocery store, cafeteria, arts studio, barber shop, and hair salon. VA and the principal developer sought Veteran input for what they want to see in the Town Center through a survey and campus listening sessions.

Question a: Has VA changed the plan for the Town Center since the end of 2024? What amenities will be provided at the Town Center?

VA Response: The Town Center's core purpose remains unchanged; however, it alone cannot accommodate the increased service demand associated with a larger

on-campus Veteran population. In response, VA is evaluating and resourcing targeted enhancements across the West Los Angeles VAMC campus—guided by Veteran feedback—to ensure the delivery of fully integrated, wrap-around support. The Town Center will continue to anchor this strategy by consolidating high-impact services, such as benefits access, job training, meal options, and peer support. Complementary facilities and restored historic venues will expand capacity for wellness, recreation, and community engagement. Collectively, these efforts are designed to strengthen the campus-wide service infrastructure, improve Veteran readiness and stability, and position the NCWI to meet future demand effectively and sustainably.

Question b: VA has been analyzing its authority to operate a grocery store on campus through the Veteran canteen service for nearly 3 years now. Please describe the current status of this project and VA's authority to operate a grocery store and other amenities on campus.

VA Response: Congress established the Veterans Canteen Service (VCS) on August 7, 1946, to provide Veterans living in VA hospitals and homes with reasonably priced merchandise and services that support their comfort and well-being. Under this authority, VCS is expanding food and retail services to meet the needs of the growing Veteran resident population on the NCWI campus at Greater Los Angeles.

To better serve Veterans living on campus, VCS conducted market research and expanded its product selection to include grocery items, such as fruits, vegetables, proteins, milk, bread, eggs, furnishings, apparel, footwear, packaged snacks, beverages, and health and beauty care essentials.

VCS is implementing this effort in two phases.

Phase 1 began on June 29, 2026, with the launch of a VCS food truck that provides hot meals, beverages, limited grocery items, and other retail products. The food truck can prepare up to 600 meals per day and ensures Veterans have access to affordable food while additional services are developed.

Phase 2 is in the planning stage and will establish a 900-square-foot temporary canteen with a mobile kitchen that will provide expanded hot food, grocery, and retail services while the permanent canteen is under construction. VA's goal is to open the temporary canteen by November 30, 2026.

The permanent canteen is planned as part of the larger modernization of the Greater Los Angeles North Campus. Market planning is approximately 90% complete, and VCS continues to work with Greater Los Angeles Health Care System on the design and construction of the new facility. The permanent canteen will provide food service, grocery items, and retail products to support Veterans living on campus and is planned for construction during 2027–2028.

Project Safe Harbor

Question a: How many Veterans across the country have been referred for guardianship since January 1, 2025? Please provide a detailed breakdown of Veteran location, referral source, number of veterans referred, and number of homeless Veterans referred.

VA Response: The effort began in October 2025 as an Integrated Product Team across five VAMCs. The team's goal was to better understand how facilities navigate cases involving Veterans who lack decision-making capacity for most medical decisions, require continued medical care outside of VAMCs, and have no available surrogate.

It was not a national guardianship program and therefore, had no established standardized model. VA is developing standardized national policy, including uniform documentation, facility-level Guardianship Committees, and a centralized tracking and reporting system. These efforts will enable VA to accurately identify and monitor these Veterans across all VAMCs. This work will also provide reliable data and ensure that Veterans requiring continued medical care and lacking decision-making capacity receive consistent, timely support.

Question b: Please provide detailed data broken down by location and Veteran homelessness status (i.e. homeless versus non-homeless) for the following metrics:

1. Number of Veterans engaged in Safe Harbor Program (not necessarily completed);

VA Response: From the initiation of Safe Harbor in October 2025 through February 12, 2026, the 5 participating sites reported that state courts appointed guardians for 22 Veterans, while 13 additional Veterans across these sites remained inpatients awaiting guardianship.

2. Number of Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness evaluated / assessed for guardianship and other state-specific legal needs.

VA Response: Of the 35 Veterans identified above, 12 experienced homelessness prior to admission.

3. Number of Veterans who are inpatient boarding at a VA facility awaiting guardianship.

VA Response: As of February 12, 2026, 13 Veterans across the 5 Safe Harbor sites remained on a VA inpatient unit and are still in need of a court appointed guardian to serve as surrogate decision-maker to authorize post-acute placement.

4. Number of Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness with completed guardianship application packets submitted to vendor / contractor / court.

VA Response: 6 of the 22 Veterans appointed a guardian experienced homelessness prior to admission.

5. Number of Veterans on inpatient VA units and awaiting evaluation/guardianship, including number of days they have been awaiting evaluation.

VA Response: 13 Veterans remain on a VA inpatient unit across 5 sites and are still in need of a court appointed guardian to serve as surrogate decision-maker to authorize post-acute placement.

6. Number of Veterans who completed program and received guardianship.

VA Response: State courts have appointed guardians for 22 Veterans.

7. Number of Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness placed in housing once guardianship appointed.

VA Response: Project Safe Harbor is not a homeless program. Its purpose was to identify Veterans who have been clinically determined to lack decision-making capacity and who are in inpatient beds, but no longer require inpatient medical care and treatment, and have no surrogate decision-maker to authorize post-acute placement.

For Veterans who met these criteria, the program sought a court-appointed guardian to safely transition the Veteran from an acute setting to the most clinically appropriate setting. Incapacitated Veterans without a legal representative are unable to consent to transfer to and placement in community sites. Examples include transfers to a community residential facility, assisted living facility, custodial care, or skilled nursing home facility. Once the state court appoints a guardian, VA works with the guardian to obtain consent to transfer the Veteran to the most appropriate community site based on the Veteran's clinical needs.

8. Number of Veterans who are stable and transition out of program.

VA Response: This data is unavailable.

Question c: How many VA attorneys have been appointed under the Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Justice to serve as special assistant U.S. attorneys? Please provide a full, unredacted copy of all training materials.

VA Response: One VA attorney has been appointed as a Special Assistant United States Attorney (SAUSA) under a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Justice (DOJ). VA is in communication with DOJ regarding additional potential SAUSA designations as the guardianship initiative develops and will supplement this response if additional appointments are finalized.

Regarding training materials, DOJ maintains ownership of the SAUSA training materials. VA does not have these materials to provide.

Question d: Will homeless Veterans from other parts of the country VA petitions the court for guardianship be moved to Los Angeles for treatment at the National Center for Warrior Independence? Please provide a detailed description of the legal process VA will use to carry out this initiative.

VA Response: There is no provision for this.

Department of Veterans Affairs
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