

Mitchell Skaggerberg, President, Vietnam Veterans of Maui County

To: Senator Daniel K. Akaka
From : MITCH SKAGGERBERG - MAUI COUNTY VETERANS COUNCIL- LEGISLATIVE
CHAIR Maui County Veterans Council
Subject: Testimony for April 10th Senate Field Hearing/ Oahu Vet Ctr. Maui Veterans Health
Care Problems & Concern's

1)The loss of up to 50% of our Maui CBOC Medical Staff over the last 18 months; with turnover of 20 staff leaving our CBOC In the last 3 years. We are still understaffed by 8 to 10 unfilled positions. This “ Revolving Door” situation is severely undermining the Quality and Timeliness of the Health Care our Maui Disabled Veterans Deserve ;and have been PROMISED by our VA.

Hundreds of our Maui Veterans are UPSET, ANGRY, and VERY ANXIOUS about their future health if our staff is not soon bought up to normal levels. Other Disabled Veterans have already Abandoned our VA Clinic and gone to the Private Sector to receive urgently need Health Care. Thank GOD that our remaining staff are doing a SUPER HUMAN JOB WORKING OVER TIME AND WEEKENDS TO KEEP OUR CLINIC AFLOAT WHILE ALSO DOING the JOB OF THE 10 VACANT POSITIONS.. THEY CANNOT KEEP THIS PACE UP WITHOUT MAJOR “BURN OUT” MUCH LONGER !!!

We have gone from the best Health Care in the VA System to one of the worse .

2)The need to address the very high cost (8 to 10 million Dollars annually) to transport our Hawaii and Pacific Island Sick Veterans to Honolulu for critical health care. This results in our VAPIHCS Annual Budget Deficits ;which may also lend itself to OUR SLOW(8 to 12 months on the average) replacement of departing Maui CBOC staff; And NOT PAYING our Maui Fee Basis Medical Providers on Time. Many are waiting from 6 months to 12 months for our Honolulu Va to PAY them. Some of these Fee Basis providers will NOW NOT Accept to work with our VA Patients How SAD again for our Maui Veterans!!!

3)Asking for your support to secure the needed” VA Appropriations” in Fiscal 2013 Congressional Supplemental Budget “ to start construction of our Consolidated VA health Care System on Maui at the Maui High School Complex. WE have been in non compliance for 2 years now with our Current Maui CBOC in meeting VA Earthquake Seismic Standards . So why has our Local VA Management deferred this important Appropriation Request until Fiscal 2014. We have been waiting to get this appropriation started so we are requesting Your support Senator Akaka to get it in the 2013 Congressional Supplemental Budget.

Possible Solutions to improve our VA Health Care on Maui -and Island Wide.

1) Re Classify our VAPIHCS to Highly Rural from the current Rural Classification. This will give us more budget to cover the high cost of inter island travel for SICK VETERANS going to Honolulu. (Please reference the 2 VA White Papers by TOM Driskill/ VAPIHCS Rural Health

Coordinator)

2) Encourage our Honolulu VA Human Resources Department to URGENTLY Recruit Hawaii based Doctors and Nurses and support Staff for our unfilled CBOC vacancies as soon as they happen. This requires local Jobs advertising on Oahu & Neighbor Islands. WE must have a majority of Locally Based medical staff to stop this UNACCEPTABLE “revolving door” turnover in our Maui CBOC,

3) Also , listing the Hawaii open CBOC positions on the VA Jobs website at same time as they are posted throughout the entire VA mainland system. Right now our NON VA Medical providers who are qualified to apply for these CBOC openings must wait until the VA posting period is finished. This doubles or triples the time our CBOC’S wait to fill the positions (6 to 12 months on average).ALSO , IT is our Belief that our Honolulu VA “Human Resource Department” “needs to drastically reduce it” Hiring Window” down to 2-3 months to fill our current and future CBOC Staff vacancies in a timely and less disruptive manner that currently reduces the Quality of our Health Care to our most Disabled Maui Veterans. Where is their sense of Urgency for Maui?

4)) THE POSSIBILITY OF CREATING A SEPERATE “ VISN” FOR OUR PACIFIC ISLANDERS HEALTH CARE : OR ANOTHER AUTONOMOUS SYSTEM.- LIKE the AUTONOMY OUR MILITARY HAS IN THE MID PACIFIC REGION. OUR HAWAII HEALTH CARE NEEDS MUCH MORE LOCAL CONTROL. The CURRENT VA SYSTEM IS A BIG PART OF OUR CURRENT HEALTH CARE PROBLEMS!!!

Mahalo Nui Loa Senator Daniel Akaka FOR YOUR support in finding Resources to remedy our very Serious Health Care problems on Maui.

Aloha Pumehana / MITCH SKAGGERBERG - MAUI COUNTY VETERANS COUNCIL-
LEGISLATIVE CHAIR