

**JOINT HEARING
U.S. SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEES ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

**Joint Hearing to receive the Legislative Presentation of
Veterans of Foreign Wars**

**Wednesday, March 4, 2015
10:00 a.m.**

Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room G-50

- Thank you Mr. Chairman.
- Good Morning Commander Stroud. We thank you and the nearly 2 million members of the VFW for your military service, and your continued dedication to our country and its veterans.

- I want to welcome those of you in the audience from the great state of Florida. I know Commander Markham and a few members of the Florida VFW brought some of our wonderful Florida weather with them. It is always an honor to see you again.
- Commander, I share the VFW's commitment to ensuring that fiscal constraints are not carried on the backs of our deserving veterans. We owe it to America's veterans to provide certain and stable VA budgets.

- Every year, you and your partners bring us the Independent Budget that brings a non-Office of Management and Budget (OMB) view of the Department of Veterans Affairs budget. Every year, I look forward to this independent view of what veterans need, provided by veterans.
- Your purview in the document is construction. I happen to have a little experience with the VA construction process, and the length of time it can take to build a hospital. I want to commend you on your statement

regarding community resources and how the VA can work with them to provide accessible care to veterans in rural, remote, and underserved areas.

- I wanted to bring to the Committees' attention your final statement in the construction portion of the Independent Budget. "Last year VA identified nearly 500 buildings totaling 7.5 million square feet of under- or unutilized space that VA must continue to maintain. Unused space is a financial drain on VA overall operations and maintenance budget.

Every effort must be made to repurpose, lease, or dispose of these properties.”

- The VFW is an active and valued partner to us in Congress as we work to keep our promise to America’s veterans. Making sure that the VA can meet the challenges of the 21st century is a job for us all. I know that VFW, your members across the country, and your staff here in Washington are ready and eager for the challenge.

- I look forward to your testimony today, and again thank you for VFW's long history of distinguished service, in and out of uniform.
- Thank you Mr. Chairman and I yield back the balance of my time.