

KATHY CASTOR
11TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON TACTICAL AIR AND LAND
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS AND
CAPABILITIES

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET
DEMOCRATIC STEERING AND
POLICY COMMITTEE
ASSISTANT WHIP



Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-0911

WASHINGTON OFFICE:

137 CANNON BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3376

DISTRICT OFFICE:

4144 NORTH ARMENIA AVENUE
SUITE 300
TAMPA, FL 33607
(813) 871-2817

www.castor.house.gov

October 18, 2011

The Honorable Eric Shinseki
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

RE: VA Outpatient Clinic – Proposed for Fort Homer Hesterly Armory in Tampa, Florida

Dear Secretary Shinseki:

Thank you for your continued work to bring a community-based outpatient clinic to the heart of Tampa. I appreciated Assistant Secretary Joan Mooney's telephone call to me in August clarifying that the Veterans' Administration (VA) intends to propose a purchase of the Fort Homer Hesterly Armory from the Florida National Guard rather than a lease of the property (dependent upon inclusion in the President's 2013 proposed budget).

As you are aware, I recently met with some of your staff in my Washington office to receive an update on the VA acquisition and procurement process and to further discuss options for the central Tampa clinic. I reiterated the community's support for a clinic on the Florida National Guard property and in general for the West Tampa community. We also mentioned the VA's need to remain in contact with Florida National Guard about their plans for the Armory. I also met with new James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital & Clinics Director Kathleen R. Fogarty last month to brief her and appreciate her interest and review.

I was recently informed by the Florida National Guard that a non-profit organization also is interested in purchasing the historic Armory building and property. The site is 10 acres in total and the large historic Armory sits on the southern half while the National Guard retains some operations on the northern half. If the Florida National Guard chooses to proceed to sell the Armory to the nonprofit organization, I recommend that VA stay on track to locate the outpatient clinic on the northern five acres or in close proximity. The Mayor of the City of Tampa Bob Buckhorn has relayed a willingness to assist in any way. I suggest that VA budget documents and Strategic Capital Investment Process provide enough flexibility to ensure that a central Tampa clinic could proceed even if the National Guard sells the Armory to another organization.

Additionally, the scheduled completion of a South Hillsborough County VA clinic by 2014 (Riverview/Apollo Beach area) and a Primary Care Annex in North Hillsborough County

by 2012 (north of Temple Terrace) are important steps to serve veterans in the Tampa Bay region. I appreciate the VA's work to get these projects up and running as soon as possible. These initiatives are welcomed by our community and will complement our efforts for a new clinic in the heart of Tampa's population center.

Thank you for remaining committed to bringing a clinic to the heart of Tampa. We have a large and growing veteran population in the Tampa Bay region and I am proud to see the VA is recognizing this growth with added facilities and services for our veterans and their families. I look forward to working with you and all parties to ensure that the veterans of Tampa have convenient access to VA outpatient services. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me or my Legislative Director, Rene Munoz, at 813-871-2817 or 202-225-3376. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Kathy Castor
U.S. Representative
Florida – District 11

CC: Joan Mooney, Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Legislative Affairs at the Department of Veterans Affairs
Kathleen R. Fogarty, Director, James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital