

Department of Veterans Affairs

Memorandum

Date: July 28, 2003

From: Coordinator, Minority Veterans Program 541/007(W)

Subj: Public Hearing - CARES

To: Executive Director, CARES Commission

1. As the Coordinator/Program Officer for the Minority Veterans Affairs Program at the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center, I am involved in the Cleveland Minority Community. I participate in many outreach events in the Minority Community and work closely with veterans and community organizations. I am a member of various committees in the community, e.g., Minority Health Alliance, Women's Health Consortium and African American Advisory Board. Being out in the community I meet and talk with many people and the majority overwhelmingly support the consolidation of the Brecksville VA to Cleveland. The CARES plan would make health care more accessible to the veterans in the community that surrounds the medical center. Although the community is predominately minority the medical center would not only serve the minority veterans it would serve all veterans, regardless of race or ethnicity. The medical center would be accessible to all veterans because it would be located in the heart of Cleveland's cultural center and within walking distance of our museums, concert hall, restaurants, two renowned medical centers and Case Western Reserve University. Also, the CARES plan would improve the image of VA and add to our visibility in the local community and the city of Cleveland.
2. As a member of the Cleveland community I support the CARES plan because it would enhance the plans and re-development projects that are underway for the existing neighborhood. Under the One VA concept it would be beneficial for the entire VA Medical Center to be located on the east side of Cleveland which is closer to the VA Regional Office.
3. In closing, I reiterate that the consolidation of Brecksville and Wade Park would be advantageous for all parties concerned; the veterans, the city of Cleveland, the local community and the employees of the medical center. Moving Brecksville to Cleveland can only impact the neighborhood in a positive manner.

DELORIS ROACH



Volunteers of America*
Northeast and North Central Ohio

Testimony of
Dennis J. Kresak
President and CEO
Volunteers of America Northeast and North Central Ohio
Before the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) Commission
For the Department of Veterans Affairs

August 12, 2003
Cleveland, Ohio

Chairman Alvarez and Subcommittee members:

Thank you for your invitation to testify before this committee. Volunteers of America of Northeast and North Central Ohio is one of four non-profit affiliates in the state of Ohio. We also have affiliates in Columbus, Cincinnati, and Toledo/Sandusky. Our affiliate provides social and supportive services to people in Cleveland, Mansfield, Youngstown, and Massillon. Our focus in programming is to provide affordable housing coupled with supportive services that provide hope to the elderly, mentally ill, homeless veterans, and other underserved individuals.

Our organization celebrates a rich history of ministering to the needs of veterans. Specifically, we are now providing employment services to homeless veterans through a Department of Labor Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program grant, and are providing single unit housing to fifty veterans through a Veterans Administration Grant & Per Diem program grant. We have determined that on any given night there are approximately 12,000 veterans without shelter in the state of Ohio. Of those 12,000, we found that approximately 6,000 are in the Cleveland metropolitan area.

We have taken a special interest in the plight of homeless veterans and the health care issues that they face, and are continually strategizing on ways that we can direct more financial resources to this national concern. We have maintained some modest successes because of our collaboration with the local Veterans Administration Medical Center and through our interactions with Peter Dougherty of the Veterans Administration, and Paul Hinkhouse of the Department of Labor. While our efforts have provided some respite to those that have taken advantage of our services we have become increasingly aware of the gaps and barriers that homeless veterans face that impede their integration into the community.

A Ministry of Service

Volunteers of America of Northeast and North Central Ohio, Inc.
8225 Brecksville Road, Suite 206, Cleveland, Ohio 44141-1362
Tel: 440.717.1500, Fax: 440.717.1508

Volunteers of America of Northeast and North Central Ohio respectfully ask that this committee hear our concerns as a front line service provider to the veterans in our community. We would ask that this committee consider the following for inclusion in their final report to Mr. Anthony Principi:

- Enhance veterans' health care benefits by reducing resources spent on underused, inefficient, or obsolete VA facilities
- Engage in discussion with service providers to consider approaches to determining accessibility of health care needs
- Recommend that the VA be accountable for meeting all established access standards; when services cannot be provided within specific time frames that accommodate the veteran, have the VA contract with a non-VA provider.
- Provide more forums for discussion to hear concerns raised in the veterans community
- Strongly consider timeliness of care and types of medical services provided when discussing accessibility issues
- Increase home and community-based options for veterans who need extended care, increase mental health services, and work with non-VA providers in developing a pilot program for assisted living services
- Provide maximum funding under the new special needs category

Thank you for your invitation and consideration in providing this forum to the veterans community. Volunteers of America is proud to have been offered this opportunity to address this committee and remains eager to assist in any endeavors that will resolve some of the health care challenges that confront those that served our nation.

Dennis J. Kresak
President/CEO
Volunteers of America Northeast and North Central Ohio