

**Answers to Questions for the Record
Duplication, Waste, and Fraud in Federal Programs Hearing
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate**

April 26, 2017

Question from Senator Steve Daines

Question 1: My home state of Montana has urged the VA to build a 60-bed state-operated veterans' home in Butte for more than 6 years. The state provided its \$5 million cost share up-front in 2011, yet the project has languished near the bottom of the VA's "Priority 1" List since February of 2012. Mr. Repko, your home state of Missouri also has two projects on the "Priority 1" list. Can you speak to actions the VA is taking to improve the scheduling and management of these projects? Should we expect to see an inflection point in the speed of progress for these approved projects?

VA Response: The rules governing how the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) ranks applications for grants on the priority list are set by regulation at 38 Code of Federal Regulations 59.50. The wait time of each project on the list depends on the project's rank and amount of funding available for the program during any given fiscal year.

Questions from Senator Jon Tester

Question 1: Please offer your perspective on the relationship between you and your staff, and VISN, and VA level staff who handle construction requirement development and procurement, and how you believe that relationship could be improved. Please focus on how better to handle the requirements development process.

VA Response: VA has a great number of initiatives under way to increase Veterans' access to health care and benefits, which start at the local level by understanding the unique needs of the Veterans in our communities. Working harmoniously at the local, Veterans Integrated Services Network (VISN) and staff levels of VA, we have made great strides to reduce appointment wait times and to expand services to women Veterans and families, for example, but we can do more. The outcomes and results of VA construction projects at St. Louis have been achieved through such communications between the medical center, the VISN office, and VA Office of Construction and Facilities Management. As with all communications, there are opportunities to improve. VA St. Louis Leadership will continue to evaluate our relationship with department level construction offices to ensure communications are timely and enhance the requirements development process.

Question 2: Please explain-from-your-perspective how VA can do a better job of communicating infrastructure needs and VA's plans to address those needs to stakeholders, like veterans' service organizations and local government.

VA Response: On an annual basis, VA completes the Strategic Capital Investment Planning (SCIP) process. The SCIP process is a long range planning tool that integrates all capital investment needs across VA. SCIP drives investment and funding decisions by annually setting capital investment policy direction and objectives. Using gap analysis and projected utilization of services, SCIP identifies specific capital investments needed to close performance gaps in the areas of space, safety/compliance, security, utilization, access, seismic protection, facility condition deficiencies, parking, and energy.

The results of the SCIP process are included in VA's annual budget submission to Congress. VA's budget submission is available online. Volume IV, Construction and Long Range Capital Plan can be found at the following site: <https://www.va.gov/budget/docs/summary/fy2018VAbudgetVolumeIVconstructionLongRangeCapitalPlanAndAppendix.pdf>. In addition to the budget submission, VA provides briefings on the SCIP process, the results, and the budget request to stakeholders, including members of Congress and their staff, Veterans' Service Organizations, and any other requestors. VA leadership also participates in Congressional budget hearings, where our capital needs are communicated to members of Congress and other witnesses and attendees.

VA is always looking for ways to further enhance its communication with stakeholders and is receptive to ideas the Senator may have to enhance VA's communication of its infrastructure needs and plans to stakeholders.