

## Rep. Bilirakis Supports Bill Funding Local VA Medical Facilities

WASHINGTON (30 Apr.) — On Wednesday, U.S. Rep. Gus M. Bilirakis (R-Fla.), member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, supported legislation passed by the Committee that would authorize the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to obtain leases for two important local veterans' medical facilities.

The Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Facility Authorization and Lease Act, H.R. 5856, would provide leasing authority to the VA for up to 20 years and authorize nearly \$13 million in Fiscal Year 2009 for a new 50,000 square-foot multi-specialty outpatient clinic in the city of Brandon, Fla. and a new 100,000 square-foot primary care offsite facility for the James A. Haley VA Medical Center (VAMC) in Tampa, Fla.

"The addition of these two local VA medical facilities will improve important services for our veterans in the Tampa Bay region," said Bilirakis. "I am especially pleased that this legislation will move along my efforts to have a VA medical facility placed in Brandon to serve veterans in Southeastern Hillsborough County."

Congressman Bilirakis successfully placed language in last year's Consolidated Appropriations Act (H.R. 2764), signed into law in December 2007 (P.L. 110-161), calling for a feasibility study for a Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Brandon, Fla. H.R. 5856 will now be referred to the full House for a vote, where Bilirakis is urging immediate passage.

Other legislation passed by the House Veterans panel and supported by Bilirakis, includes:

- H.R. 4883 extends the current 90 day moratorium on foreclosure, sale or seizure of a veteran's home to one year following deployment on active duty.
- H.R. 4884 makes certain improvements in the home loan guaranty programs administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, including refinancing of homes with up to zero percent equity and a repeal of all loan funding fees except for a one percent fee on refinancing loans.
- H.R. 5684 makes certain improvements in the basic educational assistance program administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, including an extension of the time Montgomery GI Bill benefits can be used to 15 years after discharge.
- H.R. 5826, effective as of December 1, 2008, increases the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of certain disabled veterans.
- H.R. 5892 directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to modernize the disability benefits claims processing system of the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure the accurate and timely delivery of compensation to veterans and their families and survivors.