

## Gus meets with Veterans Administration Secretary Eric Shinseki

This morning Gus visited with Veterans Administration Secretary Eric Shinseki , during a special meeting of the Military Veterans Caucus. Gus who is a co-chair of the caucus, along with Rep. Mike Thompson (D-Ca.), invited Secretary Shinseki to speak about his plans for the Veterans Administration and then engage in Q & A with Members.

The Secretary addressed a packed room of members and staffers to discuss everything from streamlining GI bill education benefits to improving the efficiency of disability claims call centers.

In addition, Shinseki addressed leveraging information technology to accelerate and modernize services, and opening VA's health care system to Veterans previously unable to enroll in it, while facilitating access for returning Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans.

Gus specifically asked Secretary Shinseki, "What's the plan to get homeless veterans off the streets?" Shinseki indicated that multiple other conditions have to first be addressed such as depression and overall mental health of vets, joblessness, and substance abuse. As such, Shinseki noted that \$3.2 billion in the proposed FY '10 budget would go towards safe housing as part of a broad scope approach to ending the plight of homelessness for our veterans.

A member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Gus has been working closely with federal and local VA officials to improve the services and facilities at the Pasco Clinic, particularly enhancing the mental health services. Pasco VA Clinic Director Duke Miller is pleased with the progress and commented on Congressman Bilirakis's efforts, particularly in terms of his help in enhancing the mental health services. "We are very appreciative of Congressman Bilirakis's concerns and help in expanding the Clinic's mental health capabilities and staff for our veterans," said Miller. For more information visit [bilirakis.house.gov/vets](http://bilirakis.house.gov/vets).

function fbs\_click()

```
{u=location.href;t=document.title;window.open('http://www.facebook.com/sharer.php?u='+encodeURIComponent(u)+'&t='+encodeURIComponent(t),'sharer','toolbar=0,status=0,width=626,height=436');return false;}
html .fb_share_button {
display: -moz-inline-block; display:inline-block; padding:1px 20px 0 5px; height:15px; border:1px solid #d8dfea;
background:url(http://b.static.ak.fbcdn.net/images/share/facebook_share_icon.gif?8:26981) no-repeat top right; }
html .fb_share_button:hover { color:#fff; border-color:#295582; background:#3b5998
url(http://b.static.ak.fbcdn.net/images/share/facebook_share_icon.gif?8:26981) no-repeat top right; text-decoration:none;
} Share
```