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VA Announces Plan to Dispose Of Or Reuse All Its Vacant Buildings in 24 Months

Move Projected to Save Taxpayers Millions Annually

WASHINGTON — Following through on a key promise from less than a month ago, Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin today announced a plan to dispose of all vacant VA buildings in 24 months (either by demolishing or setting for reuse).

Dr. Shulkin had raised the vacant building issue as a priority in his “State of the VA” address delivered at the White House on May 31.

Nationwide, VA currently has 430 vacant or mostly vacant buildings that are on average more than 60 years old, and cost taxpayers more than \$7 million per year to maintain.

Today Dr. Shulkin announced that, of those 430 buildings, VA has begun disposal or reuse processes on 71. Of the remaining 359 buildings, Dr. Shulkin announced VA will begin disposal or reuse processes on another 71 in the next six months, and plans to initiate disposal of the final 288 vacant buildings within 24 months.

“We owe it to the American taxpayer to apply as much of our funding as possible to helping Veterans,” said Dr. Shulkin. “Maintaining vacant buildings, including close to 100 from the Revolutionary War and Civil War, makes no sense and we’re working as quickly as possible to get them out of our inventory.”

The Secretary also announced that VA will review another 784 non-vacant, but underutilized, buildings to determine if additional efficiencies can be identified to be reinvested in Veterans’ services.

Finally, in addition to the building closure, Dr. Shulkin announced today that the Veterans Benefits Administration is freezing its footprint and will maximize space management by leasing or eliminating office space nationwide, thanks to a robust telework program and the digitization of claim files. VA estimates these actions will save taxpayers an additional \$15.7 million annually beginning in 2017, for a total of close to \$23 million in combined annual savings from the initiatives.

“As I said in my State of the VA presentation, we need to move rapidly to bring savings to taxpayers,” said Dr. Shulkin. “We will work through the legal requirements and regulations for disposal and reuse and we will do it as swiftly as possible.”

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