

**Chairman John Culberson**  
**Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies**  
**Department of Veterans Affairs FY 2013 Budget Hearing**  
**March 21, 2012**  
**Opening Statement**

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Secretary Shinseki, it is a pleasure and honor to welcome you again to this subcommittee. The energy and commitment you've shown as head of the Department of Veterans Affairs is a worthy capstone to your distinguished military record. At the VA, you have been presented with many challenges – veterans returning from two wars, alive, but with physical and mental injuries that are difficult to treat; a weak economy that makes reintegration difficult; and continuing access issues for the many veterans who live in geographic areas beyond the reach of VA facilities.

All Members of this subcommittee, and indeed the Congress, share your dedication to ensuring that veterans receive the high quality assistance they have earned with their service.

We'll be interested to hear you describe the highlights of your FY 2013 budget request. We have your written testimony and would appreciate you limiting your oral remarks to about five minutes. Before you introduce the officials you have with you and begin your statement, I'll ask our ranking Member, Mr. Bishop, if he has any comments he would like to make, as well as the chairman of the full committee, Mr. Rogers.

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