



HENRY A. WAXMAN  
30TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

May 31, 2007

Secretary R. James Nicholson  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Nicholson:

As you prepare for the next meeting of the CARES Local Advisory Panel at the West Los Angeles VA Medical Center, we are writing to share some concerns and suggestions about land use and veterans' services for this property.

At the last CARES meeting at the West LA VA, local veterans, community members and local elected officials were unanimous in their support to protect this precious resource for direct veterans' programs and services. In fact, the Local Advisory Panel developed Six Guiding Principles for the property. We are writing to restate those principles and urge you to adopt them in your next CARES decision for the West LA VA. The principles include: (1) declaring there is no excess property at the West LA VA; (2) honoring the intent of the deed which donated the land; (3) complying with the Cranston Act and the subsequent prohibition on Enhanced Use Leases for the Cranston Act acreage; (4) fulfilling the congressionally mandated master plan; (5) maintaining current agreements; and (6) complying with the National Historic Preservation Act.

As you know, Congressman Waxman has introduced H.R. 2225, "The West Los Angeles Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center Preservation Act of 2007," which reaffirms and expands on those principles. We support Congressman Waxman's legislation and feel strongly it should become Public Law.

H.R. 2225 includes a requirement to complete the congressionally mandated comprehensive master enacted in 1998. Careful planning must take place at the West LA VA based on veterans' needs. Inappropriate uses that do not benefit veterans simply must be stopped. The best way to address veterans' needs is to complete a comprehensive land use master plan. We wish to state emphatically that the CARES process is not synonymous with the master plan

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mandate. This mandate dates back nine years and we urge you to move forward immediately to complete a meaningful and inclusive master plan.

As the master plan is developed, however, we believe you have the authority to create therapeutic supportive housing under the Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Services Program Act of 1992. The Act allows you to lease any real property at the West LA VA to a representative of the homeless provided the representative agrees to use the property only as a location to provide services to homeless veterans and the families of homeless veterans.

We support your use of this Act within the framework of the CARES process. We understand you are considering this option. Your recommendation to utilize the Act must include a comprehensive and inclusive process for the lease's implementation. We feel this process must include, at a minimum, a competitive RFP, many opportunities for veterans, community and elected officials to give input and compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The plan must be carefully developed so that all stakeholders are aware of the scope of the project, the therapeutic model to be used, the number of veterans who will be served and the funding sources. We adamantly oppose the commercialization of any parcel on the property to fund the rehabilitation or programmatic uses for this project. As stated above, we also oppose the use of an Enhanced Use Lease for this or any project at the West LA VA.

As a delegation of elected officials interested in serving Los Angeles veterans, we stand ready to support your use of the Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Services Program Act of 1992. We encourage you to include a recommendation in the upcoming CARES decision anticipated this summer. Thank you for giving our suggestions every consideration.

We all agree there is a need for a full continuum of care for our nation's veterans. As the number of returning veterans from OIF/OEF continues to grow, we believe West LA VA must be prepared to serve them when they come home. Recent revelations at the Walter Reed Army Hospital have served to remind us that veterans' care must be the highest priority for our nation.

Currently, there are significant strides being made by the County and City of Los Angeles and other surrounding cities to address the issues of homelessness. The federal government must do its part as well and the Department of Veterans Affairs must fulfill its compact with our veterans.

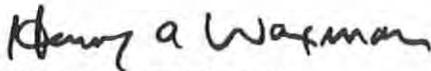
According to the California Department of Veterans Affairs, there are more veterans within a 50-mile radius of the West LA VA than in 42 other states.

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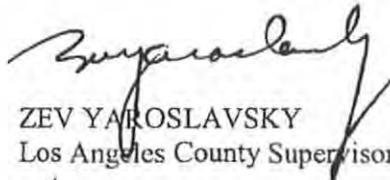
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The most recent homeless census in Los Angeles County calculated there are nearly 90,000 homeless people on any given night. Conservative estimates indicate that 20% of those are veterans. We believe we have a moral and legal obligation to serve those veterans whose numbers reach at least 18,000 each night in Los Angeles County.

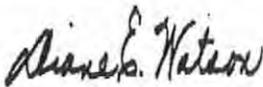
As you move forward in the CARES process, we look forward to your acknowledgement of the Six Guiding Principles supported by every stakeholder in this process. We also look forward to the swift passage of H.R.2225. Finally, we encourage you to use your existing authority to begin addressing the needs of homeless veterans who use the West LA VA. We look forward to hearing from you.



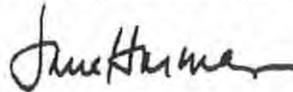
HENRY A. WAXMAN  
Member of Congress



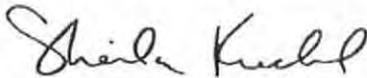
ZEV YAROSLAVSKY  
Los Angeles County Supervisor



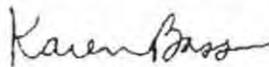
DIANE E. WATSON  
Member of Congress



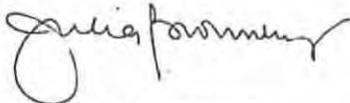
JANE HARMAN  
Member of Congress



SHEILA KUEHL  
California State Senate



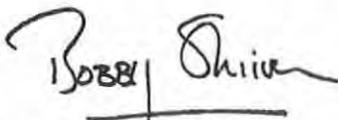
KAREN BASS  
California State Assembly



JULIA BROWNLEY  
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MIKE FEUER  
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BOBBY SHRIVER  
Santa Monica City Council

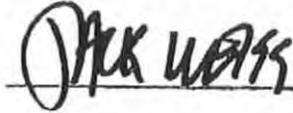


BILL ROSENDAHL  
Los Angeles City Council

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**BARRY GROVEMAN**  
Calabasas City Council



**JACK WEISS**  
Los Angeles City Council