

Remarks for Groundbreaking of Building 209 at the West LA  
VA  
January 25, 2013

I am delighted to join VA Under Secretary Dr. Randy Petzel, veterans, VA staff, and other guests at this groundbreaking ceremony for Building 209.

As we all know, in 2007, VA Secretary Jim Nicholson designated three buildings – Buildings 205, 208, and 209 – to be renovated for long-term therapeutic housing for homeless veterans. It is now more than five years later, and while we recognize this first step today, it is long overdue.

With today's groundbreaking, 65 veterans are closer to having a safe home and comprehensive services. We won't be able to celebrate, however, until every veteran in Los Angeles has access to the services he or she needs. That is why I will work as hard as I can to get funding for the renovation of Buildings 205 and 208 and to support other increases in critical resources for homeless veterans.

Secretary Shinseki has pledged to end veteran homelessness, and I commend him for focusing on veterans who by definition need intensive treatment and services. Because Los Angeles has the highest number of homeless veterans in the nation, the success or failure of this pledge rests here with the West LA VA. Our greatest homeless challenges are in Los Angeles, and the West LA VA should be looking for solutions with a sense of urgency. It should be leading the nation in developing new strategies for outreach, finding the smartest use

of resources, and providing services with minimal delay and unnecessary red tape.

We owe veterans an immeasurable debt, and our homeless veterans need us today. They are a national emergency and their plight is a national disgrace. We should be clearing away every obstacle to help them.