

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

August 25, 2010

The Honorable Daniel K. Akaka
Chairman
Committee on Veterans Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Veterans Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Akaka and Senator Burr:

We write to request your assistance in providing an authorization for a homeless housing project at the West Los Angeles VA campus.

As you may know, we have been working closely with Secretary Shinseki of the Department of Veterans Affairs to begin renovations to convert three buildings at the West Los Angeles VA into long-term therapeutic homeless housing. These buildings, which have stood unoccupied on the West LA campus since the 1980s, were first identified as a possible home for therapeutic homeless housing in 2004. In 2007, then-VA Secretary Nicholson officially designated the three buildings for homeless veterans and the Department of Veterans Affairs began efforts to secure a provider to renovate and provide services at the buildings. Unfortunately, the VA was unsuccessful in its efforts to secure a service provider and three years later the buildings remain underutilized.

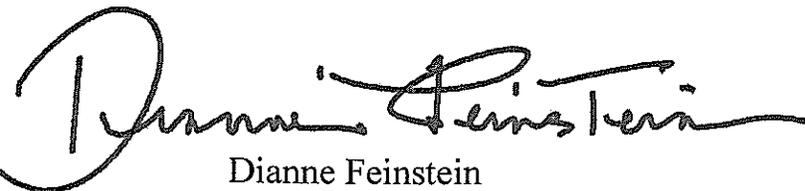
Earlier this year, several of us met with Secretary Shinseki to discuss the future of the buildings and the VA's struggle to secure a provider that could renovate the buildings in a timely manner. We are pleased that Secretary Shinseki agrees that converting the three buildings into therapeutic homeless housing facilities should be a top priority for the VA, consistent with his November 2009 announcement to end homelessness among veterans within 5 years. He committed to throwing the full weight of his office behind the West LA project, starting with identifying and allocating \$20 million in major construction funds to jump-start renovations at the first building this year. The final piece to this effort is to authorize the project and provide the VA with legal authority to move forward with the renovations.

The Los Angeles area is home to a disproportionate share of the nation's homeless veteran population, with 15,000 homeless veterans in Los Angeles County alone. More veterans live within 50 miles of the West LA VA campus than in 42 states combined. Los Angeles County is home to 1% of the nation's population but

roughly 14% homeless veterans nationwide. Further, many of these veterans are "difficult to place," meaning they have health issues that require higher levels of medical or psychiatric care. These buildings offer the first real opportunity to provide services to those veterans, whose needs simply cannot be met by traditional homeless housing programs.

We ask for your assistance in providing authorizing language to allow this project to move forward as expeditiously as possible. After six years of combating bureaucratic red tape, we sincerely appreciate your help in turning this priority into a reality. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us directly. Our staffs will be in touch with your offices to follow up on this request.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



Henry A. Waxman
Member of Congress