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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0530

HENRY A. WAXMAN
30TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

October 4, 2012

The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20420-0002

Dear Secretary Shinseki:

I am writing once again regarding Building 209 on the West Los Angeles Veterans Administration Medical Center (West LA VA).

As we have discussed, the renovation of Building 209 is essential for providing homeless veterans with long-term therapeutic services. Los Angeles has many of the nation's homeless veterans and many of them require comprehensive services that cannot be met by traditional homeless housing programs. It is shameful that we are not meeting their needs.

Some progress has been made. I joined with Senator Feinstein to ensure that your request for \$20 million for renovation of Building 209 was included in legislation that Congress enacted last October. But construction, which the VA expected to begin in June 2012, has not yet started. In fact, a contract for construction has not yet even been awarded. There is a deep frustration that the benchmarks and deadlines the VA has set for the project have expired and there is no fixed date for the start of the project.

That is why I am asking you to intervene personally to ensure work on this vital project is expedited. As a first step, the contract for renovation should be awarded without further delay. The contract has been advertised for bid twice and the deadline for bids has expired. There is no reason why your Department should not award the contract this month.

As a second step, I urge you to expedite work on Building 209. Previous VA schedules have indicated that work would be completed 18 months after the award of the contract, which would be in May 2014 if the contract is issued this month. I request that you investigate whether this timeline can be accelerated.

The VA has also identified two other buildings, Buildings 205 and 208, to provide services for homeless veterans. I would like to know what progress is being made on these buildings, what needs to be done to secure funding for them, and when veterans can expect construction to be completed. And I reiterate my request for detailed information about the land use decisions the VA has made and the revenues the VA has received from them.

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I know you share my great concern about the need for long-term therapeutic services for veterans at the West LA VA campus. But I hope you appreciate how intolerable the seemingly endless delays have become. Our veterans need action and they need it now. I want to work with you to ensure that this happens.

Sincerely,



HENRY A. WAXMAN
Member of Congress

HAW:pd