

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

HENRY A. WAXMAN
30TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

October 18, 2007

Acting Secretary Gordon H. Mansfield
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20420-0002

Dear Acting Secretary Mansfield:

I want to congratulate you on your new position and look forward to working with you to address the needs of veterans and the West Los Angeles VA Medical Center.

I also want to take this opportunity to provide you with a summary of the decisions and actions taken by the Local Advisory Panel (LAP) at its final meeting on September 6, 2007. The LAP voted to support Business Plan Option 3, which calls for the construction of a new acute bed tower, construction of VA research and VBA facilities, construction of a new nursing home, construction of a new columbarium for NCA, renovation of building 500 for ambulatory care, including outpatient mental health and renovation of facilities for the domiciliary. The LAP also expressed support for the Secretary's plans to move forward on developing therapeutic housing for homeless veterans.

In addition, the LAP unanimously passed seven motions, which:

1. Call upon the VA to disclose all short-term agreements, including the revenue generated by the agreements.
2. Call upon the VA to consider all the suggestions for programs and services that were offered during the public comment portion of the meeting.
3. Add a Seventh Guiding Principle, calling on the VA to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for all current and future projects. (As you know, the LAP unanimously passed Six Guiding Principles during the last CARES meeting).
4. Call upon the VA to permanently prohibit commercial development, sale or disposal of the land. This prohibition has been expressed and reiterated numerous times over the years by local veterans.
5. Endorse the capital construction component of Business Plan Option 3.
6. Call upon the VA to prioritize the implementation of the construction plans based on clinical needs. The LAP did not vote on any re-use of the property and were asked to refrain from taking a position on re-use.
7. Call upon the VA to expedite funding for BPO 3.

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As noted above, the VA asked the LAP to refrain from discussions about re-use of buildings at the West LA VA during the final CARES meeting. Because re-use has been such a controversial subject, however, I believe there should be a concerted attempt to resolve this matter as soon as possible using a fully transparent process. It has been almost ten years since Congress mandated the West LA VA to develop a comprehensive land use master plan for the campus. Unfortunately, after the failed attempt in 2001, no further action has been taken to comply with the congressional mandate.

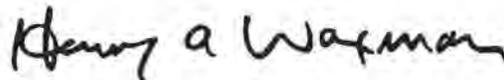
Specifically, I request that you convene a group of stakeholders to work with land use experts and experienced veterans service providers as soon as possible to renew the master plan process. Local veterans, residents, and elected officials believe it is imperative to develop a roadmap for the future of the property and prevent the use of piecemeal arrangements and attempts to privatize the land.

Finally, the Stage II CARES report indicates that an Independent Review Panel (IRP) would be convened to review the work of PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC). I would appreciate receiving copies of the IRP reports and evaluations and any additional reports prepared by PwC or the VA for the CARES process at the West LA VA. In addition, I would appreciate being kept apprised of your decisions as you move forward to implement CARES and take other significant actions regarding the West LA VA.

Thank you for your consideration of the foregoing concerns. I look forward to working with you and hope you will let me know if I can be of any assistance to you.

With kind regards, I am

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Henry A. Waxman". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

HENRY A. WAXMAN
Member of Congress