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ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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

HENRY A. WAXMAN
30TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

June 15, 2005

The Honorable R. James Nicholson
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20420-0002

Dear Secretary Nicholson:

I am writing to inform you of my strong interest in the CARES process at the West Los Angeles VA and to request a meeting with you to discuss issues of long-standing concern to stakeholders.

As the largest VA medical center in the nation, the West LA VA spans 388 acres. The property was deeded to the federal government in the late 1800's for use as an Old Soldiers Home. The campus is located in West Los Angeles and is surrounded by dense residential and commercial property. It is adjacent to UCLA, the federal building, and the 405 freeway. The nearby intersection of Westwood and Wilshire Boulevards often ranks as one of the nation's busiest.

Due to the dense infrastructure around the VA, previous proposals for developing the campus have been met by strong veteran and community opposition. In 1998, Congress mandated that the West LA VA develop a land use master plan for the property. In 2001, the VA attempted to comply with this mandate, but the plan proposed by a local consulting firm was a complete failure, and it was opposed by the VA, the surrounding community, and veterans.

Shortly after the 2001 master plan was released, then-Secretary Anthony Principi visited the West LA VA campus and held a town hall meeting. During the meeting, he pledged to veterans and the community that there would be no commercial development on the property. He also made a commitment to return to a comprehensive master plan process that included meaningful participation by veterans and the surrounding community.

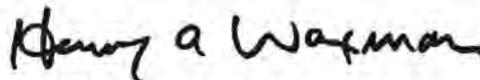
As part of his CARES decision, Secretary Principi appointed a Local Advisory Panel (LAP) to "develop a Master Plan for the campus in collaboration with stakeholders who will have input into the plan's development." The LAP has been selected and one public meeting has been held to provide information on the development of a business plan that will recommend future uses of the property to the VA.

The public meeting was held during business hours, and many interested parties unfortunately were unable to attend. As I understand the process, the consultants for the project, PricewaterhouseCoopers, will be developing options for the business plan at the West LA VA for the next public meeting in September. The community and veterans are raising strong concerns that these options are being developed after just one public meeting. It would be premature and almost certainly lead to another failed result if the consultants disregard Secretary Principi's commitment and proceed to develop options without comprehensive input from all stakeholders.

I appreciate your attention to my concern and look forward to meeting with you at your earliest convenience to discuss this matter in more detail.

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

HAW:lp