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

HENRY A. WAXMAN  
30TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

October 26, 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 regarding the status of the Los Angeles National Cemetery Columbarium, another severely delayed project that was included in Secretary Nicholson's 2007 Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) decision. The project involves a Department of Veterans Affairs intra-agency transfer of approximately 13 acres from the West Los Angeles Veterans Affairs Medical Center (West LA VA) to the Los Angeles National Cemetery. The West LA VA directly abuts the National Cemetery.

The columbarium is a critical project because the Los Angeles National Cemetery has been unable to offer burials to our nation's veterans since 1978. The nearest national cemetery is located in Riverside, California, which is over 75 miles away. For many years, there has been a tremendous feeling in Los Angeles that there is a great need for this project. Los Angeles is home to a significant aging veteran population. Since the closure of the National Cemetery, my office has been contacted by numerous family members wishing to have their lost loved ones interred in a proper National Cemetery.

Unfortunately, the columbarium is not moving forward in a timely manner. I understand that the project was funded in FY 2011 and a design contract was issued to REM Engineering Co., Inc. The design was to be completed in the summer of 2011. I am writing to urge you to complete work on this long overdue project and to clarify the obstacles the VA is facing and how your agency plans to resolve them.

I request that you provide me with the schedule for completion of the columbarium. Please include in your response the total cost of this project, as well as a breakdown of the funding for design, engineering, and construction. Please also inform me as to whether the FY 2011 funds are still available to the VA for this project and whether the costs of the proposed columbarium have increased as a result of the delay. In addition, please specify the exact acreage and its location on the West LA VA property.

I understand that one obstacle is the need for the VA to modify an existing oil lease and relocate the underlying lease site and a related oil-drilling material storage site. Please describe

October 26, 2012

Page 2

the status of the modification of the lease, the parties to the lease, and the scope, length, and annual revenues of the lease, as well as whether the other parties are in agreement with the transfer. If these issues are not resolved, please inform me as to when the VA expects them to be fully resolved.

In addition, I understand the project requires the termination of an existing VA sharing agreement. Please provide details on the other parties to that agreement, the length of the agreement and its scope and purpose, the revenue it generates, and whether the other parties are amenable to the termination of the lease.

Further, I understand the VA believes that active litigation, *Valentini v. Shinseki*, presents a hurdle. Please explain how this litigation is an impediment to the columbarium progressing.

Finally, I request that you inform me as to the full scope of the project, the number of anticipated niches, whether the project will be completed in phases, the proposed timeline for the construction, and when families will be able to intern their loved ones in the columbarium. In addition, please specify the exact acreage and its location on the West LA VA property.

Please respond to this letter by November 5, 2012. We owe our veterans a dignified resting place that is near their families and in an official National Cemetery facility.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

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