Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 13, 2007

The Honorable R. James Nicholson
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Nicholson:

The North Dakota Veterans Home urgently needs to be replaced. We are writing to ask that you give North Dakota the highest priority for providing matching funds through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) State Home Grant program in order to replace the current facility in Lisbon, ND.

Despite the foundation of a supportive community and the hard work of a top-notch staff, our building is degrading. Inspectors have found significant structural design problems in our state's facility. Quality of care is not an issue, but these safety, code, and compliance issues have accumulated to a point where any further delay could lead to disaster. While short-term measures are being taken to minimize risk, the only acceptable long-term solution is replacement to eliminate these life safety concerns.

At our urging, North Dakota Governor John Hoeven has worked with the state legislature to appropriate state funding to address these problems. The North Dakota legislature has voted to provide $6.4 million in funds to construct a new facility, provided the state contribution is matched by the VA State Home Grant program.

From our positions on the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committees and the House Ways and Means Committee we fully understand the difficulty of prioritizing funding in the face of competing demands. However, we firmly believe that it is essential that we ensure our veterans have a safe place to retire. The deteriorating conditions at the North Dakota state home must be addressed. It is the least we can do for the brave men and women who honorably served their country.

We urge you to give the North Dakota Veterans Home the highest possible priority for the federal matching grant. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Kent Conrad
United States Senator

Byron Dorgan
United States Senator

Earl Pomeroy
Member of Congress

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