

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

December 21, 2011

Stephen DiStasio
Acting Director
VA Black Hills Health Care System
113 Comanche Road
Fort Meade, South Dakota

Dear Mr. DiStasio:

I am writing today to request you hold an additional meeting in the Third District of Nebraska regarding the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) recent proposal to reduce services at the VA Black Hills Health Care System at Hot Springs, South Dakota. I recently sent a letter to VA Secretary Eric Shinseki expressing my disappointment and concern with this proposal. In addition, numerous veterans' stakeholders subsequently have contacted me with similar concerns.

Specifically, this proposal will have a detrimental effect on thousands of veterans throughout the Third District of Nebraska and further restrict their already-limited access to health care. Veterans living in rural areas deserve comparable access to care as those living in urban areas. I want to ensure rural veterans in my district and across the country maintain their access to the health care they were promised by serving this country.

In announcing this decision, I understand the VA held community meetings throughout the Black Hills Health Care region, including two in the Third District. I appreciate the outreach and encourage you to carefully consider the feedback during these meetings.

Knowing of the importance of this issue to my constituents, I respectfully request an additional meeting in early 2012 with representatives of the VA and veteran leaders and service officers from the impacted communities. Please contact Megan Beveridge at (202) 225-6435 or at Megan.Beveridge@mail.house.gov for any assistance with this request.

I thank you for your service and appreciate consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



ADRIAN SMITH
Member of Congress

AMS/mb