

DOC HASTINGS
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CHAIRMAN,
COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS
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COMMITTEE ON RULES
CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON RULES
AND ORGANIZATION OF THE HOUSE



1323 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-5816

2715 SAINT ANDREWS LOOP, SUITE D
PASCO, WA 99301
(509) 543-9396

302 EAST CHESTNUT
YAKIMA, WA 98901
(509) 452-3243

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

October 5, 2006

Secretary Jim Nicholson
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, Northwest
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Nicholson:

Thank you for your continued support of our nation's veterans. I write to you about the current state of health care for veterans I represent in Central Washington state.

Increasing access to hometown health care is a priority for me. As you are aware, I have long worked with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to bring a new outpatient clinic to North Central Washington. I remain concerned, however, about the VA's ability to meet its commitment to open a new clinic in the area by the end of the year. While I am aware that a location for the new clinic has been selected, it has come to my attention that the VA has yet to approve the appraisal that is required before plans can move forward to completion.

I strongly urge the VA to do everything possible to get this new clinic up and running as quickly as possible.

In addition, I request that the VA provide an update on this process, including: 1) the latest deadline for the clinic's projected date of completion, 2) the location of the selected site, 3) detailed information about how the VA plans to get the clinic open for business, and 4) any delays that may impede the ability of the VA to meet its original completion goals.

I also encourage the VA to be open with local veterans and North Central Washington communities about the location and status of the new clinic. This clinic is for their benefit and I believe the VA would be well-served by communicating as openly and frequently as possible.

I appreciate your continued efforts to meet the needs of veterans I represent in North Central Washington, and I look forward continuing to work with you on their behalf.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Doc Hastings".

Doc Hastings
Member of Congress