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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives

March 7, 2008

The Honorable James Peake  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420-0001

Dear Secretary Peake,

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to spend the day at the Walla Walla VA Medical Center. The time you spent listening to the community about their concerns showed your sincere commitment to our veterans and it was greatly appreciated.

The Jonathan M. Wainwright Veterans Administration Medical Center is a very special place to veterans and to Eastern Washington. This vital facility provides access to quality and affordable health care for almost 70,000 proud and deserving veterans.

I look forward to working with you and with other health care providers in our area ensure the availability of convenient health care to our veterans. After listening to the concerns of the providers within the facility, local civic leaders, veterans and constituents, I have come to understand why this facility is so vital to providing service to our veterans who would have to potentially endure a lesser quality of health if forced to seek services elsewhere.

Veterans seeking health care rely heavily on the Walla Walla facility because of the geographic and climactic challenges of the region. This facility provides care for our rural region including 14 different counties from Eastern Washington, Northern Idaho and Northeastern Oregon with a service area that includes almost 70,000 veterans in a 42,000 square-mile area and provides care to over 11,000 veterans annually – a number which will increase as more service men and women return from deployments.

Sharon Helman and her staff put forth a remarkable effort to care for veterans in this region. However, they are in desperate need of a new, modern outpatient facility that will facilitate the quality of care our deserving veterans require. Currently, this project is scheduled to begin in 2012; however, I encourage you to make this a higher priority.

In the few short months as Secretary, you have shown unwavering commitment to veterans who have fought for and secured the freedoms we enjoy in our great nation. I look forward to working with you on important issues that will benefit our veterans.

Best Wishes,



Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Member of Congress

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