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United States Senate

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON FOREIGN OPERATIONS
CHAIRMAN
RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

September 5, 2003

The Honorable Anthony J. Principi
Secretary
Department of Veterans' Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420-0002

Dear Secretary Principi:

The Department of Veterans Affairs recently released its National Capital Asset Realignment Study (CARES) regarding closures, expansions, and improvements at VA facilities throughout America. On September 8, officials from the Commonwealth of Kentucky, including a representative from my staff, will attend a CARES hearing in Lexington, Kentucky regarding CARES' ramifications for Veterans Integrated Service Network 9, which includes VA facilities in my state of Kentucky.

I continue to follow changes in the administration of care to America's veterans very closely. I am hopeful that the VA will pay considerable attention to the unique challenges that Kentucky veterans face in securing access to medical care and services. Many Kentucky veterans live in isolated rural communities far from the Veterans Hospitals in Lexington and Louisville.

I sincerely hope that the VA's efforts to reform and improve services and care for America's veterans are successful, and I stand ready to help the VA through my work on the Senate Appropriations Committee. As the VA moves forward with these efforts, the only acceptable result is one in which Kentucky's veterans face no degradation in services or care. In fact, I know you share my goal to ensure that the VA can significantly improve the level of care enjoyed by these deserving patriots.

Sincerely,



MITCH MCCONNELL
UNITED STATES SENATOR

CC: Kentucky State Senate President David Williams
Kentucky State Senator Dan Seum
Kentucky State Representative Mike Weaver
Kentucky Commissioner of Veterans Affairs BG Les Beavers (Ret.)

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JIM BUNNING
VA CARES COMMISSION FIELD HEARING – LEXINGTON, KY
SEPTEMBER 8, 2003

I want to thank the CARES Commission for holding this public hearing today. It is important to hear the concerns of those most affected by the CARES process, our veterans, their families, and the community.

Our veterans have willingly sacrificed their time and bodies to serve our nation. We owe all of our veterans a debt of gratitude for protecting our freedom. One of the most important ways our nation says “thanks” is by providing health care through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The CARES process is designed to identify shortcomings in the health care system and make sure the VA is using its resources in order to provide the best care to the most veterans. We all know the VA needs to make huge improvements in getting veterans to see doctors quickly. The goal of CARES is to do just that.

Kentucky is fortunate to have VA medical centers in Louisville and Lexington. We also have many outpatient clinics around the Commonwealth. Those facilities are extremely popular among our veterans and I am committed to making sure the VA is providing the best health care possible to all 380,000 of Kentucky’s veterans.

I am a member of the Senate Veteran’s Affairs Committee. Our Committee will hold hearings on the draft CARES report later this month, and I will bring the concerns raised today to the attention of our Committee and the VA at those hearings. My top priority is to ensure that the VA receives the support it needs to provide top quality health care to Kentucky’s veterans. We will work on the Committee to ensure VA facilities get upgraded, repaired, replaced, or built as needed. And any communities that VA closes a facility in will be the first to receive money to ensure the veterans of that area continue to receive quality health care.

I thank the CARES Commission for holding this hearing and I thank all participants for coming today. I look forward to reviewing the comments and concerns raised today.

ANNE M. NORTHUP
3RD DISTRICT, KENTUCKY

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

September 5, 2003

Mr. Richard E. Larson
Executive Director
CARES Commission
Department of Veterans Affairs (00 CARES)
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Mr. Larson:

In preparation for your public hearing on September 8, 2003, on the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) proposals, I wish to submit a few comments on the value of the Department of Veterans Affairs health care facilities to veterans in the Third District of Kentucky. I hope these comments will help inform you of the critical role that medical facilities play in honoring the commitment made to wounded and sick veterans and contribute to your efforts to improve delivery of medical services to veterans in my District and the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

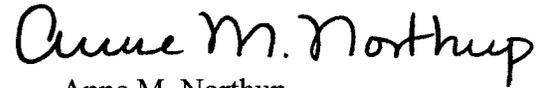
As you might expect, health care services for veterans are particularly important to Louisville-Jefferson County, since it is home to the largest population of veterans in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The Louisville VA Medical Center serves almost 160,000 veterans in 35 counties in Kentucky and Southern Indiana, including almost 70,000 veterans who reside in Louisville alone. Because of this concentration of veterans, our community has come to depend on the Louisville VA Medical Center on Zorn Avenue and other clinics in the area.

In particular, the VA Medical Center provides vital medical services, from the eye, nose, and throat clinic and prescription drugs to various surgery procedures and intensive care units. Due in part to the high quality of these services, more and more veterans are relying on VA medical services in Louisville. In fact, so far this year the Louisville medical center has treated 44,000 veterans, almost 8,000 more than it did all of last year. Also, Louisville's tertiary care facilities receives 4,800 admissions and 318,000 outpatient visits per year. In addition, our community is fortunate to have additional

community-based outpatient locations, including a women's veterans clinic that was relocated to the Shively area in 2001.

As you continue to receive public feedback on the CARES proposal, I hope that you will be mindful of the invaluable contributions that the Louisville VA Medical Center and the other health facilities in our community have made toward caring for our veterans. I look forward to working with you to ensure that veterans in Louisville and in the Commonwealth receive the best possible medical services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne M. Northup". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anne M. Northup
Member of Congress