

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 15, 2011

The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary
Department of Veteran Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki:

We are writing to you today as a follow up to Senator Wyden's inquiry of March 2, 2011 regarding the pending upgrade of the Grants Pass West Outreach Clinic to a Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC). This clinic is operating in Grants Pass, in Josephine County, Oregon. The veterans living in the outlying areas continue to use the Outreach Clinic for chronic illness primary care, but those living in Grants Pass must still travel out of the area for their primary care needs. The limited health care services and bifurcated access criteria have created unnecessary hardship on those who should be able to access the clinic for basic primary care but cannot.

We understand that the Outreach Clinic is part of the VA's attempt to reach more rural veterans and when CBOC status is approved, then all veterans in Josephine County regardless of location within the county, will be able to access health care services at the upgraded facility.

The timeline for decision has been postponed several times since the application was first submitted over 18 months ago. Veterans in Grants Pass continue to travel great distances for their health care needs but are anxious for a local facility all veterans can access, especially as the winter months are upon us. We ask you to rule that the Grants Pass West Outreach Clinic be upgraded to a CBOC as soon as possible so all veterans in Josephine County can have access to quality health care for all their primary care needs.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jeff Merkley
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator