

JIM COSTA

20TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

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CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WASHINGTON, DC 20515

July 13, 2011

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
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RURAL DEVELOPMENT, RESEARCH,
BIOTECHNOLOGY AND FOREIGN AGRICULTURE
RANKING MEMBER

The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20420


Dear Secretary Shinseki:

Thank you for your steadfast commitment to improving the lives of the brave men and women who have served our country in uniform. I write today regarding recent actions by the state of California that will result in a delayed activation of the Fresno Veterans Home. I urge you in the strongest possible terms to ensure California abides by the terms of the grant agreement with your department and makes this critically important home available to homeless and disabled veterans upon completion of the facility.

Following the passage of a bond measure for the construction of veterans homes in Fresno and Redding, the state of California received a grant from your department's Home Grant Program, which will reimburse the majority of the projects' costs. On March 9, 2011, Acting Secretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CDVA), Rocky Chavez, signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for this grant. By signing the MOA, the state agreed to adequately fund the operation and maintenance of the facility and to open at least eight beds per month until the home is filled following construction of the home, now slated for next spring.

However, the Legislature recently passed and the Governor signed a budget that delays the activation of the Fresno Veterans Home for up to one year following construction of the home. While I understand the importance of reducing government spending on the federal and state levels, I cannot understand why the Legislature chose to violate the provisions of the MOA and balance the state's checkbook on the backs of homeless and disabled veterans in Fresno and across the state.

As you know, your department lists California as one of two states in "great need" of additional veterans homes. I urge you to take action as soon as possible to ensure California receives the reimbursement grant and abides by the terms of the grant agreement, which clearly requires the opening of the facility for Fresno's homeless and disabled veterans. I look forward to speaking with you about this vital issue, and I thank you again for your work to better the lives of veterans in Fresno and across the nation.

Sincerely,

JIM COSTA

Member of Congress

*I will call you on
this matter.*

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