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

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
READINESS
MILITARY PERSONNEL

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR
WORKFORCE PROTECTION
HEALTHY FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

www.shea-porter.house.gov

January 29, 2008

The Honorable James B. Peake
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Peake:

Congratulations on your recent confirmation as the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I am proud to have supported the largest increase in funding for the Department in its history. I look forward to working with you and others to ensure that our veterans and our troops returning home from Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere are provided with the best possible care and services.

In October, I wrote to then Acting Secretary Mansfield to request that the Manchester, NH veterans' facility be restored to a full-service VA hospital. I am repeating this request because this is a very serious and pressing issue for our veterans in New Hampshire.

New Hampshire is the only state in the country that lacks a full-service veterans' hospital -- a serious inequity for our state and our state's veterans. I hope that we can work together to solve this problem. Seven years ago, the VA Medical Center in New Hampshire discontinued many inpatient and outpatient care services. Many of our veterans live in rural areas and are already required to travel long distances to receive care. If the care they need is not available due to the reduced service level in Manchester, our veterans may have to be transported to centers in Massachusetts or Vermont. This often places a medical, financial and transportation hardship on the patients and their families. In no other state in the country does this happen, and it places our veterans' health and care at serious risk.

Those brave men and women who have served our country deserve the highest level of medical care. The dedicated professionals at our veterans' facility do their absolute best with what they are given and provide the finest care that they can. However, the lack of a

full-service hospital puts an unfair and undue strain on New Hampshire's veterans and their families.

I am hopeful that by working together the Congress and the Veterans Administration will be able to give the staff and their patients what they truly need – a full-service Manchester facility.

Again, I look forward to working with you and wish you the best in your new position.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carol Shea-Porter". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Carol Shea-Porter
Member of Congress

Cc: Marc F. Levenson, MD, MBA