Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 3, 2006

The Honorable James T. Walsh
Chairman
Subcommittee on Military Quality
of Life and Veterans Affairs
House Committee on Appropriations
H-143 U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chet Edwards
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Military Quality
of Life and Veterans Affair
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Military
Construction and Veterans Affairs
Senate Committee on Appropriations
127 Dirksen Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Military
Construction and Veterans Affairs
Senate Committee on Appropriations
123 Hart Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

We write to respectfully request you support the President's recommendation of $85 million for the State Extended Care Facilities Grant Program in the Fiscal Year 2007 Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act. This program provides funds to construct and maintain extended care facilities through a 65 percent to 35 percent federal-state match. While the President's FY 2007 request of $85 million would maintain the amount appropriated in the previous fiscal year, we would encourage any additional amounts to enable California to accelerate work on these projects. We also request that the grants be available for both the construction of new homes and for improvements to existing extended care facilities.

Our home state of California has more than 2.3 million residents who are veterans. Many of the men and women who served our country in uniform now unfortunately find themselves in need of basic healthcare and housing. For those with limited options available, veterans' homes provide a critical safety net for their well-being.

In California, veterans are forced to endure a two-year waiting list to join one of the state's three veterans' homes in Yountville, Chula Vista, and Barstow. Unfortunately, in many cases, eligible veterans pass away before they are ever admitted. The United States Department of Veterans Affairs reports that California has the greatest need for additional veterans' homes and the state is committed to working with the federal government to build new facilities. Plans for five new facilities are now underway in Los Angeles, Lancaster, Ventura County, Fresno, and Redding.

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Any reduction to the State Extended Care Facilities Grant Program or restriction on the use of funds for new projects would delay the construction of these new California veterans' homes and jeopardize construction and maintenance of homes in other states. Clearly, the well-being of our veterans is at stake.

Thank you for your consideration and support for this program. As Americans, we have all counted on veterans in the past, and we should never forget the contributions they have made to our country. Now, our veterans are counting on you.

Sincerely,

JIM COSTA
Member of Congress

GEORGE RADANOVICH
Member of Congress

HENRY WAXMAN
Member of Congress

LOIS CAPPS
Member of Congress

WALLY HERGER
Member of Congress

WILLIAM M. THOMAS
Member of Congress

LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD
Member of Congress

BOB FILNER
Member of Congress

HOWARD BERMAN
Member of Congress

JOHN DOOLITTLE
Member of Congress

ELTON GALLEGLY
Member of Congress

JANE HARMAN
Member of Congress

ZOE LOFGREN
Member of Congress

DANA ROHRABACHER
Member of Congress

SUSAN DAVIS
Member of Congress

GRACE NAPOLITANO
Member of Congress

MIKE HONDA
Member of Congress

JOE BACA
Member of Congress

KEN CALVERT
Member of Congress

HOWARD "BUCK" MCKEON
Member of Congress

HILDA SOLIS
Member of Congress

BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress

JUANITA MILLINDER-MCDONALD
Member of Congress

GEORGE MILLER
Member of Congress

MARY BONO
Member of Congress

TOM LANTOS
Member of Congress

MAXINE WATERS
Member of Congress

XAVIER BECERRA
Member of Congress

PETE STARK
Member of Congress

DORIS MATSUI
Member of Congress

DIANE WATSON
Member of Congress

BRAD SHERMAN
Member of Congress

NANCY PELOSI
Member of Congress

DENNIS CARDOZA
Member of Congress

ADAM SCHIFF
Member of Congress

MIKE THOMPSON
Member of Congress

LINDA SANCHEZ
Member of Congress

DARRELL ISSA
Member of Congress

DEVIN NUNES
Member of Congress

ELLEN TAUSCHER
Member of Congress

LORETTA SANCHEZ
Member of Congress

ANNA ESHOO
Member of Congress

LYNN WOOLSEY
Member of Congress