



MAY 10 1988

Honorable Christopher H. Smith
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Smith:

It was my pleasure recently to approve a lease contract for the establishment of a Veterans Administration outpatient clinic in Ocean County, New Jersey that will provide care for veterans in central and southern New Jersey. As the Administrator of Veterans Affairs, I wish to personally thank you for your fervent and continued support of this important undertaking.

We at the Veterans Administration recognize your dedication to the establishment of this clinic. Your support as a member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and your introduction of legislation on this issue, played a key role in the establishment of this clinic. I commend you for your initiative and leadership in this regard.

I look forward to working with you and your staff in the coming months as we plan the groundbreaking ceremony, and, subsequently, the dedication ceremony for the new clinic. We would be honored to have you participate in these important celebrations of expanded VA health care services for New Jersey veterans.

Again, your efforts on behalf of the VA and your dedication to America's veterans are greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thomas K. Turnage', written over a horizontal line.

THOMAS K. TURNAGE
Administrator

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Money sought for VA clinic

Press Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — The House Veterans Affairs Committee wants \$6.6 million appropriated to begin construction next year of a veterans outpatient clinic in Ocean County.

The panel yesterday agreed to include the facility in its Veterans Administration construction budget bill.

The VA has said it is proceeding with the project even though the clinic is not specifically identified in its budget request for the 1988 fiscal year.

However, Rep. Christopher Smith, R-N.J., who wrote the clinic provision, said the facility ought to be clearly authorized in legislation. He and other New Jersey congressmen

expected it to be mentioned in the VA budget.

Smith said although he believes the VA wants to fulfill its commitment to open the clinic in 1989 progress on the facility has been at a "snail's pace."

The \$6.6 million represents the estimated need for the first year of construction on the project. Overall estimates have ranged from \$16 million to \$20 million.

Smith's provision would allow the VA to begin building its own facility or to lease a building or space in 1988.

The bill the committee is drafting will be part of overall budget legislation expressing the House's spending plans.

The proposed clinic has generated local efforts to attract the facility to Brick and Jackson townships and Point Pleasant Beach.

Brick officials believe the hospital support zone there is an ideal location. Jackson has offered land for the clinic. The VA also may be asked to formally consider the former Arnold Theater in Point Pleasant Beach as a site for the clinic. Smith had sponsored legislation authorizing the clinic in the last Congress, but the measure was deleted from the House-Senate conference on an omnibus veterans health care bill because of Senate objections to instructing the VA to undertake specific projects.
