

Commenter IK1: Mark Keffeler

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: Mark Keffeler

Address: _____

Phone: _____

e-mail: _____

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

Section: _____

Need: _____

See attached sheet (letter to Washington DC):
This is how I addressed the VA closing

Purpose: _____

I Mark Keffeler give permission/authorization for _____ to
enter this information online on my behalf.

Mark Keffeler Signature Date 1-29-16

Commenter IK1: Mark Keffeler	
<p>Jan. 25, 2016</p> <p>TO:</p> <p>US Representative, Kristi Noem</p> <p>US Senator, John Thune</p> <p>US Senator, Tim Johnson</p> <p>How many ways would the continuing downsizing and closing of the Hot Springs VA affect me and my family? Let me count the ways.</p> <p>1) Continuation of my excellent health care would stop. I am alive because of the accurate diagnosis and quick treatment of a severe heart problem. The staff at the Hot Springs VA is excellent and treated me with respect and dignity.</p> <p>2) As a property owner, the values will continue to go down and taxes will go up.</p> <p>3) As an owner of rental property, opportunities for renting will go down. I have rented to both employees and patients of the VA.</p> <p>4) The school will be down-sized. My wife is employed there and two grandsons are attending school there this year.</p> <p>5) One of the biggest hardships will be for my daughter, who is employed at the VA as a nurse, and my son-in-law, who is a fireman also at the VA. They have bought a house and put roots down in this community.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">There are many more reasons to keep this facility open, but these alone should be enough for concern. I am just one of thousands who will be affected, some a lot worse than me. I and my fellow Vets need this facility.</p> <p>Mark Keffeler, Veteran</p> <p>806 Happy Hollow St</p> <p>Hot Springs, SD 57747</p>	<p>IK1-1: VA is committed to providing quality care to its Veterans and believes that the proposed reconfiguration will allow VA to meet the current and future needs of our Veterans. While the preferred alternative calls for closing of the existing hospital, VA notes that outpatient primary care and certain specialty care services will continue to be provided in Hot Springs, and on the existing campus under the new preferred alternative A-2. In addition, Veterans now have more options for care from community providers (hospitals), at VA expense, closer to where Veterans live. See group response in E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to purchased care option and quality of care.</p> <p>IK1-1</p> <p>IK1-2</p> <p>IK1-2: VA recognizes the potential adverse economic and has expanded sections 4.10, 4.11 and 4.16 of the Final EIS to address impacts on the local economy, property taxes and schools; measures to address these potential impacts are identified in Section 4.10 and 5.0. See also group response in Table E-2 of Appendix E relating to socioeconomic impacts from the proposed reconfiguration.</p> <p>VA has also stated that no VA employees would lose VA employment, although this could mean retraining for another VA job.</p>

Commenter IK2: Terry Kizer

Commenter IK2: Terry Kizer

Thank you for your comment.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: Terry Kizer

Address: Buffalo Gap

Phone: 

e-mail: _____

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

Section: _____

Need: This Va comm Part 5 Wgo - Neb + SDdt
think being consider to close just political
Rapid City wants it, more water power
there.

Purpose: _____

I _____ give permission/authorization for _____ to
enter this information online on my behalf.

Signature  Date 7-23-2016

Commenter IK3: Angela Koch

Commenter IK3: Angela Koch

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: Angela L. Koch

Address: [Redacted] Hot Springs, SD 57747

Phone: [Redacted]

e-mail: [Redacted]

EIS Section: 1.2.2.1.1

EIS Statement: Difficulty Recruiting and Retaining Qualified Staff, and maintaining Clinical Competencies

Comment: As a Veteran, I have the following experience as relating to the difficulty recruiting of qualified staff: my primary care physician had been at the Black Hills VA from 5 TO 7 years and I began to see him in October 2011. From October 2011 to December 2014 we often spoke about his panel and all the traveling he had to do as a Patient Aligned Care Team member. He stated that he traveled between Ft. Meade, Rapid City, Hot Springs and all other CBOC's covered by VA Black Hills. He told me that as a (PACT) member he was supposed to have an RN/LPN during this entire time, he was only given an LPN even though he consistently requested to have an RN assigned he was turned down. In Dec 2014, his LPN could not handle the traveling and workload and stopped participating as a (PACT) member. In December 2014 he told me that he was thinking of leaving VA Black Hills, I told him that if it meant his mental sanity and job satisfaction that he needed to go. In March 2015 I had my last visit with him, he told me he had made a decision and that he would be leaving, I asked where he was going, and he said I am going to Rapid City Regional as a hospitalist on the 4th floor. This PA was also a veteran and enjoyed working with veterans from the OEF/OIF/OND, National Guard, Reservist and military personnel transition out of the military in the VA Black Hills. Therefore there is a need to fully staff all RN/LPN positions to keep qualified primary care doctors. Due to the VA Black Hills failure to fully staff positions as needed the physicians are overworked and stressed by upper management and are therefore leaving VA Black Hills.

IK3-1

IK3-1: Thank you for your comment. Past decisions relating to staffing levels and health care services are made by Veterans Health Administration professionals (leaders, planners and health care practitioners and professionals), based on a variety of factors, and are not subject to a NEPA review. See also group response in Table E-2 of Appendix E relating to the past decline in services and the extent to which it has been considered in the cumulative impact analysis in Section 4.16 of the Final EIS.

Commenter IK3: Angela Koch	
<p>Release Information to the Congressional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>I <u>Angela L Koch</u> give permission/authorization for <u>State of VA</u> to enter this information online on my behalf.</p> <p><u>Angela L Koch</u> _____ <u>2/20/2016</u> _____ Signature Date</p>	

Commenter IK4: Rhonda Kocourek

Commenter IK4: Rhonda Kocourek	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet</u></p> <p>Name: RHONDA KOCOUREK</p> <p>Address: [REDACTED] HOT SPRINGS, SD 57747</p> <p>Phone: [REDACTED]</p> <p>e-mail:</p> <p>EIS Section: 1.2.2.2.2</p> <p>EIS Statement: DISTANCE VETERANS MUST TRAVEL FOR CARE</p> <p>Comment: By making the veterans go further for care, they will be discouraged from seeking care</p> <p>EIS Section: ALTERNATIVE E</p> <p>EIS Statement: Restoring services to the existing facility in Hot Springs</p> <p>Comment: Keeping all of the facility here would benefit the veterans in the PTSD program, and it would be beneficial to the community of Hot Springs.</p> <p>EIS Section: 1.2.2.2.1</p> <p>EIS Statement: Location of veteran population</p> <p>Comment: VA Data is erroneous, veteran populations in the BHHCS Rural areas are greater than stated.</p> <p>EIS Section: 1.2.2.1.4</p> <p>EIS Statement: Cost at Hot Springs is higher</p> <p>Comment: Numbers are not broken down to include off site care costs or treatment types</p>	<p>IK4-1: Outpatient primary care and certain specialty care will continue to be provided in Hot Springs, and on the existing campus under the new preferred alternative A-2. Under all of the alternatives, Veterans will have more options for care from community providers (hospitals), at VA expense, closer to where Veterans live. See group responses in E.3.1 and E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to distance travelled and to purchased care option and quality of care.</p> <p>IK4-2: VA acknowledges your support for expanded services at the Hot Springs campus under Alternative E (Save the VA proposal) and has made it part of the public record for this EIS.</p> <p>IK4-3: VA used the most up-to-date information available. The agency is responsible for Veterans health care nationwide and continually compiles data from all facilities about volumes and services. Exhibit 1 in Chapter 1 has been updated and expanded to include more current Veteran population data.</p> <p>IK4-4: See response to IK4-3: Also, VA is unable to update the cost information provided in the EIS due to current appropriation restrictions.</p>

Commenter IK4: Rhonda Kocourek

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

I Rhonda Kocourek give permission/authorization for Save the VA to enter this information online on my behalf.

Rhonda Kocourek 1/25/2016
Signature Date

Commenter IK5: Sharon Kalvels

Commenter IK5: Sharon Kalvels

From: VA Black Hills Future <vablackhillfuture@va.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, February 10, 2016 4:33 PM
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] Comments on draft EIS BHHCS
Attachments: Comment on draft EIS BHHCS (Sharon Kalvels).rtf

From: Sharon Kalvels [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 09, 2016 7:57 PM
To: VA Black Hills Future
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comments on draft EIS BHHCS

Attached is my document with comments regarding the draft EIS for BHHCS.
thank you.
Sharon Kalvels

Commenter IK5: Sharon Kalvels

**Comment on Draft Environmental Impact Statement
VA BLACK HILLS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM RECONFIGURATION** Sharon Kalvels

The purpose of the VA's proposal to reconfigure healthcare services in Black Hills Health Care System (BHHC) is to provide high quality, safe, and accessible health care for Veterans well into the 21st century.

PURPOSE

Increasing access to care close to where Veterans reside.
Reducing out-of-pocket expenses for Veterans' travel.

IMPACT

The purpose of the VA's proposal is an apparent distraction, based on a premise un-supported by Veteran Health Administration (VHA) data and information.

The Veterans have earned their healthcare provided through the VA, deservedly at locations and appointment times which meet their needs.

Evidence demonstrates that Veterans are accessing care in a timely fashion with ease and satisfaction at the Hot Springs VAMC. According to the VHA access goals, the Hot Springs VAMC is exceeding the standards.

Spending taxpayers' money to reconfigure a system that is working is wasteful and is a disservice to the Veterans who receive care at the Hot Springs VAMC and to the community. The tax paying residents and Veterans are from a tristate area of South Dakota, Nebraska, and Wyoming. Reconfiguring the Hot Springs VAMC by moving to Rapid City increases the distance and expense to the Veterans by traveling at a minimum of an additional 120 miles round trip. Multiplying 120 miles times an estimated beneficiary travel reimbursement of .50 cents per mile equals \$60.00 per Veteran per trip from Hot Springs. Veterans who travel from Nebraska and Wyoming add at a minimum another 120 miles round trip from their state borders, which is an additional \$60.00 per Veteran per trip. The impact of this travel burden effects the wear and tear on vehicles, increased emissions, increased staffing and cost to the VA and ultimately to the Veteran.

Rather than wait for an appointment and traveling an extended distance, Veterans are likely to delay needed treatment or increase episodic visits to a nearby emergency department. The results place an undue demand on local health care, impeding Veterans' comprehensive health care, and jeopardizing overall health status.

The money proposed to be spent on reconfiguring and moving needed care and service to leased buildings in Rapid City is better served by spending on the Hot Springs VAMC for Veterans' medical care rather than devastating the Veterans and the tax paying citizens. The impact reaches at a minimum a tristate area, increasing the local burden and health care expenses, and fragmenting the Veterans' health care. The Hot Springs VAMC's existing historic buildings with appropriate, timely maintenance and upkeep provide a therapeutic environment and location to address the Veterans' health care needs. Vacating the buildings will place an additional burden and expense on the VA system to serve as a landlord or real estate agency, diverting the demand for health care dollars from Veterans' health care.

IK5-1

IK5-2

IK5-1: Under all of the alternatives, Veterans will have more options for care from community providers (hospitals), at VA expense, closer to where Veterans live. See group responses in E.3.1 and E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to distance travelled and to purchased care option and quality of care. Primary care and some specialty care services would also still available in Hot Springs.

IK5-2: VA revised the statements about the suitability of the campus buildings to comply with the ABA. See group response in Table E-2 of Appendix E. Also, VA has selected a new preferred alternative in the Final EIS that includes renovation of Building 12 on the existing campus to house the new CBOC in Hot Springs.

Commenter IK5: Sharon Kalvels

**Comment on Draft Environmental Impact Statement
VA BLACK HILLS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM RECONFIGURATION** Sharon Kalvels

According to a review of the VHA established wait time goal of appointments completed within 30 days for Veteran's access to care, the following is revealed. Hot Springs VAMC shows a trend over time of exceeding the national VHA standard and the VISN 23 average.

(Source data: VHA Patient Access Data, higher is better).

Date	Hot Springs VAMC	VISN 23	VHA
November 2015	97.39	96.23	96.35
July 2015	98.61	98.15	96.99
November 2014	99.10	98.17	97.22

PURPOSE

Ensuring facilities for Veterans receiving any services comply with accessibility requirements for handicapped individuals, support current standards of care, and can be well-maintained within available budgets and resources.

NEED

Existing locations and facilities constrain the quality of care, range of services, and access to care that VA offers to Veterans in the catchment area.

IMPACT

To further demonstrate the flawed rationale for the basis of the VA's proposal, reviewing 2011 VHA survey data, the following shows that the need addressed by the Veterans ranks accessibility, quality, cost, and wait times high in VISN 23 in which the Hot Springs VAMC is located. The VISN 23 Veterans' responses reflect the highest score or second highest score when compared to the results of all of the other twenty VISNs and exceeds the national VHA average in the following (noted by percent satisfaction, where higher is better; source data: VHA Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Policy and Planning, 2011 Survey of Veteran Enrollee's Health Reliance Upon VA)

VISN 23	VHA	compared to 20 VISN's	response statement
84.0	79.6	highest	Accessibility "It is easy for Veterans like me to get around in the VA health care facility."
80.3	73.1	highest	Quality "Veterans like me are satisfied with the health care they receive."
79.0	75.0	second highest	Cost "VA offers Veterans like me the best value for our health care dollar."
75.9	70.3	second highest	Wait Times "Veterans like me can get in and out of appointments at VA in reasonable time."

IK5-3

IK5-3: Thank you for your comment and reference to Hot Springs VAMC superior performance in the past. This is just one subset of data and type of information that VA has analyzed for the entire BHHCS service area (e.g., it does not take into account the geographic access concerns within the service area, that resulted in its assessment of the need for change and development of the proposed reconfiguration.

Commenter IK5: Sharon Kalvels

**Comment on Draft Environmental Impact Statement
VA BLACK HILLS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM RECONFIGURATION** Sharon Kalvels

PURPOSE

Providing locations and facilities that support VA's efforts to enhance and maintain quality and safety of care in the 100,000 (square) miles catchment area.

NEED

VA has difficulty maintaining high quality, safe, and accessible care at the Hot Springs campus.

IMPACT

The continued unsettling stance by the VA's proposal conflicts with the accreditation results of the BHHCS including the Hot Springs VAMC location.

In October 2013, the BHHCS received full accreditation by the Joint Commission. The Gold Seal of Approval was awarded in compliance with health care standards of high quality, safety, and important functions relating to patient care. All programs surveyed under the applicable standards for hospital, long term care, behavioral health, and home based primary care achieved the re-accreditation.

The employees and volunteers that staff the Hot Springs VAMC bring knowledge, skills, and abilities to their respective positions and strengthen the foundation of the health care community and community at large. This talent pool of people supports the tax base of Hot Springs, Fall River County, and South Dakota.

Reconfiguring and removing the skilled workers and professionals severely damages the survival of the economy and the cultural environment of a city whose pillars are built on a base as the Veterans Town. The Hot Springs VAMC previously had a strong partnership with the South Dakota State Veterans Home located in Hot Springs. The State Home continues to serve Veterans and their spouses, upgrading the physical plant on site as necessary. The State Home has served Veterans for over 100 years, dating back to the Spanish American War. The Veterans' comprehensive health care previously fully supported at the Hot Springs VAMC was eroded covertly by VHA leadership rather than strengthened through visionary leadership. Re-energizing and sustaining the comprehensive health care supports the stakeholder partnerships within the community and returns to the stewardship of caring for the Veterans and taking care of the staff and volunteers who are the woven fabric of the Hot Springs VAMC.

The Hot Springs residents, residents of South Dakota, Nebraska, and Wyoming communities, family members, business owners, government employees, students, school teachers, clergy, bankers, laborers, professionals, Native Americans, farmers, ranchers, elected officials, private health care practitioners, retired and active duty military, and many others are unable to cut the woven fabric of their lives and move to Rapid City. The VA management based a reconfiguration on an un-supportable premise and overlooked the reputation in this society of serving the Veterans' through hospital and therapeutic treatment programs, housed in buildings recognized as a National Historic Landmark.

Commenter:

Sharon Kalvels, member American Legion Auxiliary and Legion Riders, Battle Mountain Post 71, Hot Springs, SD; daughter WWII American Ex-Prisoner of War combat infantryman; daughter of retired career VHA employees; retired Associate Medical Center Director, VA Southern Oregon Rehabilitation Center and Clinics; retired Registered Dietitian and Fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives

IK5-4: VA recognizes the potential adverse economic and has expanded sections 4.10, 4.11 and 4.16 of the Final EIS to address impacts on the local economy and businesses. VA would also implement measures (e.g., job retraining) as needed so that employees could keep their employment. In addition, a new national VHA call center has recently been proposed to operate on the existing Hot Springs campus. While it is not part of the proposed reconfiguration but if implemented, the call center would bring up to 120 jobs to the area and help address potential economic concerns.

IK5-4

Commenter IK6: Bob Kraft

Commenter IK6: Bob Kraft

From: VA Black Hills Future <vablackhillsfuture@va.gov>
Sent: Thursday, February 4, 2016 10:41 PM
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] Opinion

From: Bob Kraft [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, February 03, 2016 6:45 PM
To: VA Black Hills Future
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Opinion

To Whom It May Concern:

First of all, I went to this site, <https://www.research.net/r/?sm=EeedubPT6cBPrZZTGIMMziGE2SCiKZXrAvnX1hMqai0%3d>, filled in all the boxes,

Thank you for participating in the NEPA process. By providing your comments here, you can ensure that your concerns are addressed appropriately in the Final EIS and Record of Decision.

! This question requires an answer.

* 1. Please enter your name and contact information.

Name	Bob Kraft
Address	1985 A Street
Address 2	
City/Town	Gering
State/Province	NE Nebraska
ZIP/Postal Code	69341
Email address	bobkraft@gmail.com
Phone Number	3084303580

* 2. My mailing list and contact preference is:

- Please contact me via U.S. Mail at the address I entered above.
- Please contact me via email at the email address I entered above.
- I wish to provide my comments anonymously. Do not add me to the mailing list.

and it still told me I need to supply an answer to a required question. Tell me which question I did not fill out!

In regards to closing the VA Hospital in Hot Springs, I am strongly opposed to its closing. Even now, it's a 2.5 hr. drive for me to get there, but it would be even farther to go to another VA hospital. Other veterans, like myself, depend on the services at Hot Springs, not to mention the workers from the surrounding Hot Springs area that depend on that facility for their livelihood. Us older vets need a facility like HS. Please reconsider.

Please do not close the hospital at Hot Springs.

Bob

IK6-1: Under all of the alternatives, Veterans will have more options for care from community providers (e.g., hospitals), at VA expense, closer to where Veterans live so there would be less driving required. See group responses in E.3.1 and E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to distance travelled and to purchased care option and quality of care.

IK6-1

Commenter IK7: Patrick Kearns

Commenter IK7: Patrick Kearns

Black Hills EIS Public Comment

#43



COMPLETE

Collector: New Web Link (Web Link)
 Started: Friday, February 05, 2016 2:44:12 PM
 Last Modified: Friday, February 05, 2016 3:12:00 PM
 Time Spent: 00:27:48
 IP Address: [REDACTED]

PAGE 1: Public Comment on the Draft EIS for Reconfiguration of the VA Black Hills Health Care System.

Q1: Please enter your name and contact information.

Name Patrick Kearns
 Address [REDACTED]
 City/Town Iowa City
 State/Province IA
 ZIP/Postal Code 52245
 Email Address [REDACTED]
 Phone Number [REDACTED]

Q2: My mailing list and contact preference is: Please contact me via U.S. Mail at the address I entered above.

PAGE 2

Q3: Please enter your comments here-reference relevant pages/sections in the Draft EIS where appropriate, and be as specific as possible. (This field will expand as you type to accommodate your comments):

I have grave concerns about a reduction in the VA's ability to provide appropriate inpatient care in the local community. Also the VA's loss of bed capacity to provide rehabilitative services. The Closure of the Black Hills VA will result in the loss of both of these valuable services. The service once gone will never be available again. When the Knoxville IA VA was closed the community was assured that capacity would be added to offset these losses of service. This capacity a decade later has never materialized. This has resulted in loss of timely rehabilitative care to Iowa veterans seeking substance abuse treatment, mental health care, rehabilitation after surgery and long term care. The Iowa veterans need to now be sent into the community to receive fragmented care or wait to be discharged from expensive acute inpatient beds with associated risks of long stays in an acute care environment. This is not cost effective or appropriate patient care. The Black Hills site could be a center of excellence for inpatient long term treatment of substance abuse and PTSD, services for which the VA desperately needs to increase capacity. This would provide needed capacity nationally for services in a community welcoming to these patients with a facility already designed for delivery of these services. Closure of the VA Black Hills would be an error and waste of a valuable resource. This would be a repeat of the error already committed once in Iowa, with predictably similar results.

IK7-1

IK7-1: While the Hot Springs hospital would be closed under the preferred alternative (A2), Veterans now have more options for care from community providers (hospitals), at VA expense, closer to where Veterans live. Since publication of the Draft EIS, VA has been given authority to expand the purchased care program, now referred to as Care in the Community, to Veterans that was not available before and now potentially hundreds of providers are available to eligible Veterans. It is now an integral part of the proposed reconfiguration alternatives as a way to improve overall quality and delivery of care. See group response E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to purchased care option and quality of care.

Commenter IL1: Marc Lamphere

To those who are concerned about the VA's current proposal to re-organize the health-care offered to veterans within their service area within South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Wyoming and Nebraska -

From: Marc Lamphere
address: Hot Springs, SD 57747
phone: [REDACTED]
e-mail: [REDACTED]

Release Information to the Congressional: yes

Regarding statements made within Section 1.2.2.1.1 of the EIS -

The VA has spent over twenty years systematically reducing the services offered at the Hot Springs VAMC, thus reducing the number of employees, both medical professionals and administrative and other staff. It is well-known locally in Hot Springs that the VA has counseled prospective medical professionals that their job, should they choose to accept the assignment, may only be temporary, and that purchase of a house in Hot Springs might not be wise. Naturally, the professional candidate will choose another option for employment, perhaps not within the VA, and this situation has led to the VA's self-imposed and self-perpetuated "difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified staff" (Section 1.2.2.1.1 of the EIS).

The logical conclusion regarding this personnel situation is that it is not pertinent to the proposed changes, not a legitimate reason to propose any changes, and would be more reasonably rectified by changes in program structure, followed by changes in personnel management.

Therefore, I suggest this paragraph be removed from the EIS.

I further request hereby that the VA take immediate and permanent moves to re-establish all the services that were ever previously conducted at the Hot Springs VAMC.

Signed: 

Date: 1-26-16

IL1-1
IL1-2

IL1-1: Thank you for your comment and suggested text change. Concerns over long-term job security could also recruiting efforts. However, VA believes the reasons outlined in Chapter 1 remain the most salient and has not changed the text.

IL1-2: VA acknowledges your support for expanded services at the Hot Springs campus under Alternative E (Save the VA proposal) and has made it part of the public record for this EIS.

Commenter IL1: Marc Lamphere

To those who are concerned about the VA's current proposal to re-organize the health-care offered to veterans within their service area within South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Wyoming and Nebraska -

From: Marc Lamphere
 address: [REDACTED], Hot Springs, SD 57747
 phone: [REDACTED]
 e-mail: [REDACTED]

Release Information to the Congressional: yes

Regarding statements made within
 Section 1.2.2.2.2 of the EIS -

In making its list of justifications for closing or further reducing the Hot Springs VAMC, the VA somehow interprets its guidelines for driving time in such a way as to assert that driving further will be an advantage to the least economically advantaged sector of enrolled veterans, that being those who live in the remotest villages within the BHHCS service area, both on and off the Indian Reservations.

The management professionals within the VA apparently believe that it would make no difference, indeed it will even be preferable, to have to arise at 3:00 a.m. rather than 4:00 a.m. to make a 10:00 a.m. appointment. Of course, everybody's car always starts in sub-zero weather, there's always plenty of gas in the tank, the roads are always plowed that early, and these health issues aren't an emergency anyway, right?

The patently ridiculous nature of any assertion that driving a longer distance will be among the reasons the veterans' health care should be removed yet further from them is reason enough to discard the VA's current proposal to eliminate or further reduce the Hot Springs VAMC.

Indeed the only logical conclusion from this section would be that the VA should rather undertake immediate and permanent moves to re-establish all the services that were ever previously conducted at the Hot Springs VAMC.

Signed:  Date: 1-26-16

IL1-1

IL1-1: Outpatient primary care and certain specialty care will continue to be provided in Hot Springs, and on the existing campus under the new preferred alternative A-2. Also, while the preferred alternative calls for closing of the existing hospital, Veterans now have more options for care from community providers (hospitals), at VA expense, closer to where Veterans live. See group responses in E.3.1 and E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to distance travelled and to purchased care option and quality of care.

Commenter IL2: Caryn Lerman

Commenter IL2: Caryn Lerman

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: Caryn Lerman

Address: [Redacted]

Hot Springs, SD 57747

Phone: [Redacted]

e-mail: [Redacted]

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

Section: 1.2.2.1(4); 1.2.2.1(2) 1.2.2.1(3) 1.2.2.1(4)

Need: Alternative E

Purpose: (1) Numerous individuals have been employed by the VA & the prospect of this continuing is very viable. The Black Hills is a sought after place to live making the ability to hire staff not a true issue.
 (2) The building has been in use for 108 years. There has not been access problems in the past. This historical building should be 'grandfathered' in, unless actual accessibility exist.
 (3) The City Hot Springs could easily work with the VA to provide access to these off site living facilities.
 (4) If there are budgetary issues, the facility manager should be given ample opportunities to work on re-structuring to bring cost down.

I, Caryn Lerman give permission/authorization for Julie Sauermann to enter this information online on my behalf.

Signature: Caryn Lerman Date: 1/8/16

IL2-1: VA acknowledges your support for expanded services at the Hot Springs campus under Alternative E (Save the VA proposal) and has made it part of the public record for this EIS.

IL2-2: VA agrees there are many benefits to living in Hot Springs, however, we continue to face challenges in recruiting qualified staff as described in Chapter 1 of the EIS.

IL2-3: VA has revised its statements about the suitability of renovating existing historic buildings to the standards of the ABA and VA directives. See group response in Table E-2 of Appendix E.

IL2-1

IL2-4: VA believes there are many advantages to relocating the residential program to a more urban setting in Rapid City. This is explained more fully in Section 1.2.2.3 of the Final EIS.

IL2-5: While costs are a consideration and the VA will work diligently to incorporate cost efficiencies into the budget, the final decision will be based on a variety of factors and not just cost.

IL2-2

IL2-3

IL2-4

IL2-5

Commenter IL3: Lynda Long

Commenter IL3: Lynda Long	
<p data-bbox="459 337 926 362" style="text-align: center;"><u>Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet</u></p> <p data-bbox="369 375 520 396">Name: Lynda S. Long</p> <p data-bbox="369 410 693 433">Address: [REDACTED] Hot Springs, SD 57747</p> <p data-bbox="369 446 699 469">Phone: [REDACTED]</p> <p data-bbox="369 483 699 506">e-mail: [REDACTED]</p> <p data-bbox="369 519 499 540">EIS Section: 2.3.5</p> <p data-bbox="369 555 627 576">EIS Statement: Save the VA Proposal</p> <p data-bbox="369 591 1005 698">Comment: The Veterans need the small community atmosphere to feel more at ease instead of a populated area. The small community provides more one on one care for each individual. The VA makes Hot Springs. The VA keeps Hot Springs alive and Veterans from all over come to our BHHCS for care. They need to fully staff the VA back to full capacity.</p> <p data-bbox="369 1015 457 1036">EIS Section:</p> <p data-bbox="369 1050 474 1071">EIS Statement:</p> <p data-bbox="369 1086 445 1107">Comment:</p>	<p data-bbox="1289 256 1854 375">IL3-1: VA acknowledges your support for expanded services at the Hot Springs campus under Alternative E (Save the VA proposal) and has made it part of the public record for this EIS.</p> <p data-bbox="1184 706 1251 734" style="text-align: center;">IL3-1</p>

Commenter IL3: Lynda Long

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

I Lynda S. Long give permission/authorization for Soretho VA to enter this information online on my behalf.

Lynda S. Long Signature 2-26-2016 Date

Commenter IL4: Kenneth Lorang

Commenter IL4: Kenneth Lorang

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: Kenneth Lorang

Address: [REDACTED]

Hot Springs, SD 57747

Phone: _____

e-mail: _____

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

Section: 3.10.2 E VA Employee 357 RTTE's

Need: Loss of employees would impact the community severely. For every dollar lost due to income lost there would be an eight dollar impact to the local economy.

IL4-1

Purpose: 2.3.5 Alternative E Save the VA proposal.

IL4-2

I, Kenneth Lorang give permission/authorization for John R. [REDACTED] to enter this information online on my behalf.

Signature: Kenneth Lorang Date: 3/1/2016

IL4-1: VA recognizes the potential adverse economic and has expanded sections 4.10, 4.11 and 4.16 of the Final EIS to address impacts on the local economy and businesses. See also group response in Table E-2 of Appendix E relating to socioeconomic impacts.

IL4-2: VA acknowledges your support for expanded services at the Hot Springs campus under Alternative E (Save the VA proposal) and has made it part of the public record for this EIS.

Commenter IL5: Liz Lorang

Commenter IL5: Liz Lorang

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: Liz Lorang

Address: [REDACTED]

Hot Springs S.D. 57747

Phone: [REDACTED]

e-mail: _____

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

Section: 3.10.2.6 VA Employers 357 ~~FTEE~~'s

Need: _____

We need our employees more or we will be down to a "ghost town". HS is a beautiful spot to go to pet.

Purpose: 23.5 Alternative E - Save the VA Proposal

I, Liz Lorang give permission/authorization for Sarah Peterson to enter this information online on my behalf.

Signature: Liz Lorang Date: 3-1-16

IL5-1: VA recognizes the potential adverse economic and has expanded sections 4.10, 4.11 and 4.16 of the Final EIS to address impacts on the local economy and businesses. See group response in Table E-2 of Appendix E relating to socioeconomic impacts.

VA would also implement measures (e.g., job retraining) as needed so that every existing employee could keep their job. In addition, a new national VHA call center has recently been proposed to operate on the existing Hot Springs campus. While it is not part of the proposed reconfiguration but if implemented, the call center would bring up to 120 jobs to the area and help address potential economic concerns.

IL5-2: VA acknowledges your support for expanded services at the Hot Springs campus under Alternative E (Save the VA proposal) and has made it part of the public record for this EIS.

IL5-1

IL5-2

Commenter IL6: Uriah Luallin

Commenter IL6: Uriah Luallin

<u>Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet</u>	
Name: <u>Uriah Luallin</u>	<p>IL6-1: VA acknowledges your support for expanded services at the Hot Springs campus under Alternative E (Save the VA proposal) and has made it part of the public record for this EIS.</p> <p>IL6-2: See group response in Table E-2 relating to the cost of alternatives. Section 2.3 of the Final EIS has been revised to include a more detailed breakout of costs for each alternative.</p> <p>IL6-3: VA revised the statements about the suitability of the campus buildings to comply with the ABA. See group response in Table E-2 of Appendix E. Also, VA has selected a new preferred alternative in the Final EIS that includes renovation of Building 12 on the existing campus to house the new CBOC in Hot Springs.</p>
Address: <u>[Redacted]</u> <u>Hot Springs SD 57747</u>	
Phone: <u>[Redacted]</u>	
e-mail: <u>[Redacted]</u>	
Release Information to the Congressional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Section: <u>1.2.2.1.4</u>	
Need: <u>Alternative E</u>	
<u>Section 1.2.2.1.1</u>	
Purpose: <u>The cost to maintain the current VA IS think is less than they estimate. There are things that they are saying need to be fixed that do not.</u>	
<u>The criteria set forth in 36 CFR 1191 AppC have not been an issue and therefore should not apply. In fact, fixing something that is not broken simply for a recent law is inappropriate.</u>	
I <u>Uriah Luallin</u> give permission/authorization for <u>JULIE SAUCERMAN</u> to enter this information online on my behalf.	
<u>[Signature]</u> Signature	Date: <u>1-8-16</u>

Commenter IL7: Phoebe Lucey

Commenter IL7: Phoebe Lucey

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: Phoebe Lucey

Address: [Redacted]
Hot Springs SD 57747

Phone: _____

e-mail: _____

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

Section: _____

Need: My father uses the VA for ongoing medical care related to post [Redacted] it would be an inconvenience as well as financial hardship if he had to travel elsewhere for monthly visits.

Purpose: _____

I Phoebe Lucey give permission/authorization for Lynn Bolton to enter this information online on my behalf.

Phoebe Lucey Signature 1-25-16 Date

IL7-1: While the preferred alternative (A2) calls for closing of the existing hospital, outpatient primary care and certain specialty care services will continue to be provided in Hot Springs, and on the existing campus. In addition, Veterans now have more options for care from community providers (hospitals), at VA expense, closer to where Veterans live so that Veterans would not have to travel as far. See group responses in E.3.1 and E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to distance travelled and purchased care option and quality of care.

IL7-1

Commenter IL8: Ellen Luther

Commenter IL8: Ellen Luther

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: Ellen Dale Luther

Address: [REDACTED]

Hot Springs, SD 57747

Phone: [REDACTED]

e-mail: _____

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

Section: 3.10.2.6 VA BHCS Employment

Need: Hot Springs has 357 FTEs - it will impact the community in every aspect. Our town will get smaller - there has been too many businesses close as it is. My husband was a vet & I want to stay here

Purpose: _____

2.3.5. Alternative E - Save the VA Proposal

I, Ellen D Luther give permission/authorization for Janal Peterson to enter this information online on my behalf.

Ellen Luther Signature Date X 2-20-16

IL8-1: VA recognizes the potential adverse economic impact and has expanded sections 4.10, 4.11 and 4.16 of the Final EIS to address impacts on the local economy and businesses. See also group response in Table E-2 of Appendix E relating to socioeconomic impacts.

IL8-1

Commenter IL9: Randy Lays Back

Commenter IL9: Randy Lays Back

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: Randy Lays Back
 Address: [Redacted]
Porcupine S.D 57772
 Phone: _____
 e-mail: _____

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

Section: 1.2.2.2.2 Distance Traveled

Need: The Pine U.S. Veterans need the VA in Hot Springs for health care. Can date Veterans need the PTSD program to get signed up for the [Redacted] program. I have health issues because I have [Redacted]

Purpose: Syndrom. I will have to travel out of state if the Hot Springs VA closes.

IL9-1

2.3.5 Alternative E - Save the VA proposal

IL9-2

Is Randy Lays Back give permission/authorization for [Signature] enter this information online on my behalf.

Signature: [Signature] Date: 6-11-16

IL9-1: Outpatient primary care and certain specialty care will continue to be provided in Hot Springs, and on the existing campus under the new preferred alternative A-2. Also, while the preferred alternative calls for closing of the existing hospital, Veterans now have more options for care from community providers (hospitals), at VA expense, closer to where Veterans live. See group responses in E.3.1 and E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to distance travelled and to purchased care option and quality of care.

IL9-2: VA acknowledges your support for expanded services at the Hot Springs campus under Alternative E (Save the VA proposal) and has made it part of the public record for this EIS.

Commenter IL10: Evelyn Leite

Commenter IL10: Evelyn Leite

From: VA Black Hills Future <vablackhillfuture@va.gov>
Sent: Monday, November 16, 2015 11:31 AM

Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] closing Hot Springs health facility

-----Original Message-----
From: Evelyn Leite [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, November 05, 2015 9:58 AM
To: VA Black Hills Future
Subject: [EXTERNAL] closing Hot Springs health facility

We strongly protest the closing of the facility in Hot Springs. it is needed right where it is. And no one from Washington should tell us where to put it. Thank You Evelyn and Allen Knapp. Viet Nam Veteran who uses the service.

IL10-
1

IL10-1: VA acknowledges your support to keep the existing Hot Springs VAMC open and fully operational has made it part of the public record for this EIS.

Commenter IL11: Martin Luebke

Commenter IL11: Martin Luebke

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, October 31, 2015 9:39 AM
To: vablackhillsfuture@va.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] BHHCS

As a Vet, I'm likely have a minority opinion on this topic. I do not understand why all Vet's can not get medical care from local hospitals, long term care from local Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Facilities. These are already located in the community where families live. They are close to family, friends and would help cut transportation costs. The funds used for 'seperate segregated' facilities could be used to improve that care given to all.

We have made great progress at integrating treatment and services to blind, visually impaired and folks with other disabilities--isn't it time to do same for our Vet's. We are all People First.

Thanks
Martin Luebke
Garretson, SD

IL11-
1

IL11-1: Thank you for your comment. We appreciate your support for an important element of the proposed reconfiguration, i.e., the option to receive care from local community providers. VA has also seen many successes through its recently expanded affiliation with local providers within the BHHCS. Veterans now have more options for care from community providers (hospitals), at VA expense, closer to where Veterans live. See group responses in E.3.1 and E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to distance travelled and to purchased care option and quality of care.

Commenter IL12: Chris Lind

Commenter IL12: Chris Lind

Staff Assistant of the Director
VA Black Hills Health Care System
113 Comanche Road
Fort Meade, South Dakota 57741

Chris Lind
[Redacted]

Dear Assistant,

I am writing in regard to the possible closing of this facility. I have been a member of ALA almost all my life. I grew up with a concern for servicemen and veterans. I am a member of Unit 137 of Gurley Nebraska and am the current president. We all have a concern for the future of your facility. Many veterans in Western Nebraska receive care there. It is highly respected by the veterans of this area. Longer distance of the new facility would make treatment for these veterans more difficult. Many of their lives already contain much difficulty. We hope you will consider the veterans of Western Nebraska in your decision. Thank you for your consideration.

Yours Truly,
Chris Lind

IL12-
1

IL12-1: Thank you for your comment. VA BHHCS is taking every Veteran within the multi-state service area, including western Nebraska, into consideration in the development of the proposed reconfiguration. An important element of the proposal is the option to receive care from local community providers. VA has seen many successes through its recently expanded affiliation with local providers within the BHHCS. Veterans now have more options for care from community providers (hospitals), at VA expense, closer to where Veterans live. See group responses in E.3.1 and E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to distance travelled and to purchased care option and quality of care.

Commenter IL13: Pat Lyke

Commenter IL13: Pat Lyke

From: Pat Lyke
 US Army Veteran,
 Retired VA employee 30+ years.
 Former Historic Preservation Officer VA BHHCS Hot Springs VA, 1995 to 2013.
 Former Maintenance Supervisor VA BHHCS Hot Springs
 Member of Hot Springs Historic Preservation Commission, 1993 to 2016.

The following comments and concerns are my own, and separate from the combined response of the Hot Springs Historic Preservation Commission.

(1) VA still, to this date, has never considered the other alternatives submitted prior to June 30, 2012. VA BHHCS did a thorough cost benefit analysis of their alternatives, prior to the deadline of other alternatives were to be submitted. This action is troubling, and are pre-decisional actions.

1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED

(2) To show purpose and need, the VA BHHCS has provided in this draft EIS, and prior submitted documents information that is "very" misleading, to VACO, Congress, and to the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

RTTP/Domiciliary patients do not travel excessive miles to seek RTTP treatment. Currently per year there are on average about 30 to 50 PTSD/Drug and Alcohol treatment patients per year from Pennington county and North of Pennington County. Such a small amount of patients, does "not" justify moving the Domiciliary 60 miles. To invest the amount of funding to save 30 to 50 Veterans 120 miles round trip, does not make good business sense and does not reduce miles traveled by the majority of the Veterans we serve!

Table 1-6

The miles traveled meet the VA's guidelines for travel time guidelines for secondary care. Page 23, draft EIS moving the RTTP to Rapid City would have little to no change in this goal.

1.2.2.2.1 Patient locations chart. Is misleading.1.2.1(Increasing access to care closer to where Veterans reside)

Figure 1.2, would lead one to believe that the majority of Veteran patients live closer to the Ft. Meade campus, since they are being sent there for Primary and some secondary care. This assumption is "not correct". Based on the FOIA response provided by VA BHHCS listing Veteran patients by zip code, will show that the majority of patients being sent to Ft. Meade are traveling long distances to get there. And per year, the percentage of veterans will show that there are a far larger percent of Veterans that live far closer to Rapid City, but are being sent to Ft. Meade for Care.

IL13-1

IL13-1: Publication of the Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS (May 16, 2014) began the official public scoping process in which issues - including potential alternatives - to be addressed in the EIS are identified. VA considered the alternatives identified during the scoping process consistent with the requirements of NEPA. Any previously identified alternatives that were offered at the time of scoping were also considered in the EIS.

IL13-2

IL13-2: The reason for moving the Domiciliary to Rapid City is not based on the number of Veterans living in Rapid City. VA agrees that RRTP patients come from all over the BHHCS area and throughout the U.S. VA believes that Rapid City offers more advantages to Veterans in terms of the elements necessary for successful community re-integration (e.g., housing, public transportation, jobs). This has been further clarified in Section 1.2.2.3 of the Final EIS. See also a revised Exhibit 1 in Chapter 1 that provides an additional breakout of RRTP patient data.

IL13-3

IL3-3: The data provided in Figure 1.2 simply show where existing Veterans are receiving their primary care, and the proposed reconfiguration would not change this. Primary care services, and some specialty care services, would continue to be provided in Hot Springs and, under the new preferred alternative A-1,would be provided on the existing Hot Springs campus in a renovated Building 12. VA's proposal includes modernization of the CBOC in Hot Springs and expansion of the CBOC in Rapid City to a MSOC offering more specialty services. The MSOC would better service the large number of Veterans in the Rapid City area, and would also be available to Veterans living in the southern portion of the service area (closer than Fort Meade). See Section E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to purchased care options.

Commenter IL13: Pat Lyke	
<p>Financial Analysis dated March 20, 2012 (VA Midwest Health Care Network (VISN 23))</p> <p>Page 10, will confirm, that the majority of patients are traveling long distances for primary and secondary care to the Ft. Meade Campus, showing Beneficiary travel costs of \$2,477,106.00 for Ft. Meade, and \$833,155.00 for Hot Springs. Showing the Beneficiary travel (3 times higher for Ft. Meade). And showing the need to reduce those Patient miles traveled. If the VA BHHCS is being honest about what they are trying to achieve, to provide "Better Access to Care", then reducing those miles traveled to Ft. Meade, should be the number one priority!</p> <p>1.2.1 Increasing access to care closer to where Veterans reside.</p> <p>VA BHHCS has stated "several times" that they want to provide more services to the Rapid City Veterans (in Rapid City), I agree, this makes sense, for many reasons, possible partnerships with Rapid City providers, possible VA/DOD partnerships, possible IHS/VA partnerships. (All VA goals nationwide). The majority of Northern Catchment Veterans live in, around, or near Rapid City. Approximately 7,500 per VA "current and projected Veteran population locations" page 16 of the draft EIS.</p> <p>Yet, the VA BHHCS has no current investment plan to add enough space or services to expand the care for the Rapid City Veteran patients. By expanding the Primary and secondary Care offered in Rapid City, VA BHHCS could reduce the patient miles traveled, by approximately 12,000 Veterans per year, that are now traveling from the South, East, and West of Rapid City, and having to go to Ft. Meade. Greatly increasing their miles traveled. And providing duplicate services 30 miles apart does not make good, or logical business sense. The VA BHHCS is "not being a good steward of the Taxpayers funds".</p> <p>Moving the Domiciliary/RTTP to Rapid City, does "not reduce Veteran miles traveled, in fact, the Southern Catchment Veterans now having to travel to Ft. Meade, (due to VA BHHCS reduced services), has increased by approximately 934,000 additional miles per year. These additional miles added to the Southern Catchment Veterans "Defeats the Purpose" and Goals that the VA BHHCS has stated!</p> <p>1.2.1 Reducing out-of-pocket expenses for Veterans travel</p> <p>I, and many of my fellow Veteran patients (that are not 30% disabled, or more, are now having to pay, (out-of-pocket) the travel costs, to get to Ft. Meade, or spend an entire day to ride a shuttle van to get to and from Ft. Meade. To repeat from above, now that services have been reduced at Hot Springs VA, there are "per year" additional 934,000 miles being traveled by Southern Catchment Veteran Patients!</p> <p>1.2.2 Factors Resulting in Need for Reconfiguration of BHHCS</p>	<p>IL13-4: Under the proposed reconfiguration, primary services (and some specialty services) would continue to be offered in Hot Springs, and expanded specialty services would be available in Rapid City. Alternately, Veterans may have the option of going to a local provider closer to home such that travel distance and time should be reduced. Veterans would still be given the option to go to Fort Meade or other VA facilities, however, if they prefer.</p> <p>IL13-5: VA proposes to expand care in Rapid City, from the existing CBOC to an MSOC with more specialty care services available. See response to IL13-3.</p> <p>IL13-6: As noted in responses to IL13-3 and IL13-5 above, the proposed reconfiguration would reduce travel distance, times and therefore costs, such as the drive to Fort Meade, by continuing to offer primary services (and some specialty services) in Hot Springs, expanded specialty services in Rapid City, and expanded care in the community option where Veterans can receive care, at VA expense, from a local provider closer to where they live. Veterans would also continue to have the option of service at Fort Meade if they prefer.</p> <p>IL13-4</p> <p>IL13-5</p> <p>IL13-6</p>

Commenter IL13: Pat Lyke

The Factors listed, would have relevance to both VA BHHCS campuses, Yet, VA BHHCS, did not ever consider completing any cost benefit Analysis of moving, or changing anything at the Ft. Meade campus. Until that step has been completed, this entire process should not be decided. The Northern campus, also does not meet current VA design guidelines for Mental Health buildings CLC, Nursing Home guidelines, ' Surgery suite guidelines, Inpatient care guidelines, etc. But, at no time did VA BHHCS, ever consider evaluating the possibility of reconfiguring any of the outdated, Ft. Meade buildings or functions. This is at the least, poor management practices. If the VA BHHCS is really concerned about being a good steward of the Taxpayer dollars, why didn't they ever at least consider a 30 year life cycle cost of moving services from Ft. Meade. And considering that the sq. foot cost of maintaining the Ft. Meade campus has been about \$6.00 per sq. foot, per year higher than the Southern campus, it should have been a high priority, to at least consider, why the costs of maintaining the Ft. Meade campus is so much higher than the Hot Springs campus?

Having been an employee during most of this process, my opinion is that VA BHHCS rushed to vacate the Landmark buildings, without taking any of the proper steps to do so. The plan was put together, without any Historic Preservation involvement or knowledge, until almost 2 years after VA BHHCS started developing the plan to vacate the Landmark site. The plan still is not a good plan, and should be carefully considered, prior to any plan to move forward. The History of Veterans Healthcare is important, to the citizens of the United States, and should be saved. Once History is ignored, or lost, it can't be changed! Let's be very careful, and considerate, of the Civil War Veterans that picked the Location of the Battle Mountain Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, for a very good reason, IT IS, AND HAS BEEN GOOD FOR VETERANS!

On behalf of all my fellow Veterans, Please consider this plan very carefully, we could loose something that we can't get back! Thank you for considering my comments, and concerns. Proud Veteran, Proud to be a former VA employee, member of the American Legion, member of the Hot Springs H-P Commission, member of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.



Pat Lyke

5-3-2016

IL13-7

IL13-7: Health care services at the Fort Meade VAMC are not part of the scope of the proposed reconfiguration or this EIS. See group response in Table E-2 of Appendix E relating to Fort Meade and the scope of the EIS.

Commenter IM1: Berry Madsen

Commenter IM1: Berry Madsen

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: Betty Madsen
 Address: [REDACTED]
Oral, SD 57766
 Phone: [REDACTED]
 e-mail: _____

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

Section: 3.11.2.1 Hospitals & Clinics.

Need: If the VA closed our small rural hospital will be gullge veterans. It will take forever to get an appointment to see my Dr. because all the Drs will have to be served by our local Dr.

Purpose: _____

We need the VA to stay open
3.11.2.1 B. Alternative E. Save the VA

I Betty Madsen give permission/authorization for Sarah Petersen enter this information online on my behalf.

Betty Madsen 2-20-2016
 Signature Date

IM1-1: Veterans now have more options for care from community providers (e.g., hospitals), at VA expense, closer to where Veterans live. Since publication of the Draft EIS, VA has been given authority to expand the purchased care program, now referred to as Care in the Community, to Veterans that was not available before and now potentially hundreds of providers are available to eligible Veterans. It is an integral part of the proposed reconfiguration alternatives as a way to improve overall quality and delivery of care. See group response E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to purchased care option and quality of care. Given the large number and distribution of local providers within the service area, the increased demand from closure of the Hot Springs VAMC hospital on any one provider is not expected to adversely affect existing capacity. Primary care and some specialty care services will continue to be provided in Hot Springs.

IM1-1

IM1-2: VA acknowledges your support for expanded services at the Hot Springs campus under Alternative E (Save the VA proposal) and has made it part of the public record for this EIS.

IM1-2

Commenter IM2: Chris Martin

Commenter IM2: Chris Martin

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: Chris Martin

Address: [Redacted]

Hot Springs, SD 57747

Phone: [Redacted]

e-mail: [Redacted]

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

Section: _____

Need: I am a disabled Veteran would like to keep the Hot Springs VA open. Please

Purpose: _____

I Chris Martin give permission/authorization for VA to enter this information online on my behalf.

Signature [Signature] Date 4/23/16

IM2-1

IM2-1: VA acknowledges your support to keep the existing Hot Springs facility open and fully functional.

While the hospital would be closed under the proposed reconfiguration, outpatient primary care and certain specialty care will continue to be provided in Hot Springs (and on the existing campus under the new preferred alternative A-2). Veterans also now have more options for care from community providers (hospitals), at VA expense, closer to where Veterans live. See group responses in E.3.1 and E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to distance travelled and to purchased care option and quality of care.

Commenter IM3: Pat Martin

Commenter IM3: Pat Martin

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: Patricia Martin
 Address: [Redacted]
Hot Springs, SD 57747
 Phone: [Redacted]
 e-mail: [Redacted]
 Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

Section: _____

Need: We moved to Hot Springs in 1995. One of the characteristics of this town that makes us love it so much is the care and respect given to veterans by the entire community. So many people that we know moved here to retire for just that reason. It is a safe place - No. 3 safest community

Purpose: in SD, and veterans health care was readily accessible. Now waiting times have increased and locals have to go to Fort Meade for services once available here. Residents of the State Veterans home have to rely on community instead of VA doctors for health care. Our veterans were promised and DESERVE better!

IM3-1

Patricia Martin give permission/authorization for _____ to enter this information online on my behalf.

Patricia Martin Signature Date 4/23/16

IM3-1: Thank you for your comment. It is interpreted as support to keeping the existing Hot Springs facility open and fully functional.

Commenter IM4: William Martin

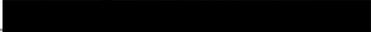
Commenter IM4: William Martin

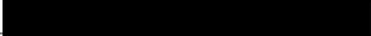
Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: William Martin

Address: 

HOT SPRINGS SD 57747

Phone: 

e-mail: 

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

Section: _____

Need: AS A LOCAL MINISTER I HAVE BEEN OFTEN ASK TO TAKE VETERANS TO STURGIS TO THE VA HOSPITAL BECAUSE THE SERVICES HERE HAVE BEEN LIMITED. SOME WHO HAVE MOVED HERE BECAUSE HOT SPRINGS HAS A VA HOSPITAL ARE NOW HAVING TO TRAVEL ELSEWHERE. THIS TOWN IS BLESSED FOR SERVING OUR VETERANS.

Purpose: _____

I William Martin give permission/authorization for _____ to enter this information online on my behalf.

William Martin Signature Date 04-23-16

IM4-1

IM4-1: Thank you for your role in driving our Veterans to receive the care they need. VA is committed to providing quality care to its Veterans and believes that there is a need for change in the health services configuration, as described in the EIS, and that the proposed reconfiguration would better meet the current and future needs of our Veterans.

Outpatient primary care and certain specialty care will continue to be provided in Hot Springs, and on the existing campus under the new preferred alternative A-2. Also, while the preferred alternative calls for closing of the existing hospital, Veterans now have more options for care from community providers (hospitals), at VA expense, closer to where Veterans live. See group responses in E.3.1 and E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to distance travelled and to purchased care option and quality of care.

Commenter IM5: Frank Mason

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: Frank Mason

Address: [Redacted]
Hot Springs, SD 57747

Phone: [Redacted]

e-mail: [Redacted]

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

Section: 1.2.2.2.2, and 5.1.14

Need: The Hot Springs VAMC serves a large geographic region with many veterans in parts of 3 states. This region includes many Native Americans. As all of the veterans age, their medical needs are going to increase. The facilities are here in Hot Springs, they are up to federal standards, it would make absolutely no sense to move or

Purpose: close this facility. Closing the Hot Springs VA medical center would create a major transportation problem for many of the veterans in the area, specifically those living on the Pine Ridge Reservation

I, Frank Mason give permission/authorization for Jan Speirs to enter this information online on my behalf. Hot Springs
C of C ATTN: Justin Gausman

Frank Mason 1/23/2016
Signature Date

JM

IM5-1

IM5-1: Outpatient primary care and certain specialty care will continue to be provided in Hot Springs, and on the existing campus under the new preferred alternative A-2. Also, while the preferred alternative calls for closing the existing hospital, Veterans now have more options for care from community providers (hospitals), at VA expense, closer to where Veterans live. See group responses in E.3.1 and E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to distance travelled and to purchased care option and quality of care, including for Native Americans.

Commenter IM6: Lynn Mason

Commenter IM6: Lynn Mason

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: Lynn Mason
 Address: [Redacted]
Hot Springs, SD 57747
 Phone: [Redacted]
 e-mail: [Redacted]

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

Section: 4.11.2.1 and 4.11.6.2

Need: The Veterans need an environment of quiet and sanctuary. They need people who welcome them into the community. Both the physical environment and the social environment are extremely important.

Purpose: The Hot Springs V. A. is a beautiful sanctuary for the Veterans. It is ~~is~~ sandstone buildings in a parklike (like) setting that emanates peace and comfort. The people of Hot Springs include, ~~are~~ welcome, and embrace the Veterans in all of the town activities. Whether it is a church choir, parade or ^{local} small group activity, Veterans become part of the town. If the patients cannot leave the facility, the fun and entertainment is brought to them. In my 28 years →

I, Lynn Mason give permission/authorization for Hot Springs Chamber to enter this information online on my behalf.

Lynn Mason Jan. 24, 2016
 Signature Date

Commenter IM6: Lynn Mason	
<p><i>in this community, I find so very impressive the focus of our community in taking care of our veterans. Alternative (E) is the answer <u>not</u> (A).</i></p>	<p>IM6-1: VA acknowledges your support for expanded services at the Hot Springs campus under Alternative E (Save the VA proposal) and has made it part of the public record for this EIS.</p> <p>IM6-1</p>

Commenter IM7: SandyMassa

Commenter IM7: SandyMassa

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: Sandy Massa

Address: [Redacted]

Black Hawk SD

Phone: [Redacted]

e-mail: [Redacted]

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

Section:

Need:

Not only does this community need this VA those in SD, NE, MO also come to this location. It has served our veterans well & should remain there.

My son is a veteran & also works here. He is a dedicated employee as are all who work there.

Purpose:

[Empty lines for purpose]

Sandy Massa give permission/authorization for [Redacted] to enter this information online on my behalf.

Sandy Massa 4-23-16
Signature Date

IM7-1: VA interprets your comment as support to keep the existing facility open and fully functional. VA also notes that outpatient primary care and certain specialty care will continue to be provided in Hot Springs, and on the existing campus under the new preferred alternative A-2. Also, while the preferred alternative calls for closing of the existing hospital, Veterans now have more options for care from community providers (hospitals), at VA expense, closer to where Veterans live. See group responses in E.3.1 and E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to distance travelled and to purchased care option and quality of care.

IM7-1

Commenter IM8: Beth Merkel

Commenter IM8: Beth Merkel

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: Beth I. Merkel

Address: [REDACTED]

Hot Springs, S.D. 57747

Phone: [REDACTED]

e-mail: [REDACTED]

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

Section: 3.11 & 3.11.2.1.1

Need: It is important to me to keep our health care services local due to my current medical problems and increasing age.

Purpose: I have medical issues that make it difficult for me to travel long distances to take my husband to his medical appointments.

I, Beth I. Merkel give permission/authorization for CHAMBER OF COMMERCE to enter this information online on my behalf.

Signature: Beth I. Merkel Date: 4-11-2016

IM8-1: VA interprets your comment as support to keep the existing facility open and fully functional. VA also notes that outpatient primary care and certain specialty care will continue to be provided in Hot Springs, and on the existing campus under the new preferred alternative A-2. Also, while the preferred alternative calls for closing of the existing hospital, Veterans now have more options for care from community providers (hospitals), at VA expense, closer to where Veterans live. See group responses in E.3.1 and E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to distance travelled and to purchased care option and quality of care.

IM8-1

Commenter IM8: Beth Merkel

DUPLICATE PAGE

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: Beth I. Merkel

Address: [Redacted]

Hot Springs, S.D. 57747

Phone: [Redacted]

e-mail: [Redacted]

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

Section: 3.11 & 3.11.2.1.1

Need: It is important to me to keep our health care services local due to my current medical problems and increasing age.

Purpose: I have medical issues that make it difficult for me to travel long distances to take my husband to his medical appointments.

I Beth I. Merkel give permission/authorization for CHAMBER OF COMMERCE to enter this information online on my behalf.

Signature: Beth I. Merkel Date: 4-11-2016

Commenter IM9: Gary Merkel

Commenter IM9: Gary Merkel

IM9-1: Potential impacts on local property values are addressed in Section 4.10 of the EIS.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: GARY L. MERKEL

Address: [Redacted]

HOT SPRINGS, So. DAK. 57747

Phone: [Redacted]

e-mail: [Redacted]

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

Section: 3.10

Need: I need to maintain the value of my home to use as part of my retirement.

Purpose: Closing the Hot Springs VA will definably decrease the value of my home which is something I am counting on using as part of my retirement planning as the need arises for my wife and I need assisted living or nursing home care in our later years of life.

IM9-1

I GARY L. MERKEL give permission/authorization for CHAMBER OF COMMERCE to enter this information online on my behalf.

Gary L. Merkel Signature Date 4-11-2016

Commenter IM9: Gary Merkel

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: GARY L. MERKEL

Address: [REDACTED]

HOT SPRINGS, So. DAK. 57747

Phone: [REDACTED]

e-mail: [REDACTED]

Release information to the Congressional Yes No

Section: 3.11 & 311.2.1

Need: It is important to me to keep my health care services local due to my present medical problems and increasing age.

Purpose: I am finding it harder to get to my medical appointments due to I prior [REDACTED] with the last one fusing my lower back making it difficult to travel longer distances. My wife has present medical issues that additly make it difficult for her to drive me longer distances for my medical appointments.

I GARY L. MERKEL give permission/authorization for CHANDRA OF COMMERCE to enter this information online on my behalf.

Gary L. Merkel Signature 4-11-2016 Date

IM9-2: VA understands your travel concerns and has taken them into consideration in developing the proposed reconfiguration. Under the new preferred Alternative A-2, outpatient primary care and certain specialty care will continue to be provided on the existing campus. Also, while the preferred alternative calls for closing of the existing hospital, Veterans now have more options for care from community providers (hospitals), at VA expense, closer to where Veterans live. See group responses in E.3.1 and E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to distance travelled and to purchased care option and quality of care.

IM9-2

Commenter IM10: Evie Miller

Commenter IM10: Evie Miller

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: Evie Miller

Address: 345 N. River St.
Hot Springs

Phone: _____

e-mail: _____

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

Section: _____

Need: Need to stay in Hot Springs

Purpose: I visit the VA 3 times each week
for kidney dialysis. It would be
a hardship to have to travel to
Royal City 3 times a week, both
financially & time-wise.

IM10-1

I _____ give permission/authorization for _____ to
enter this information online on my behalf.

Signature: [Signature] Date: 4-21-2016

IM10-1: Under the new preferred Alternative A-2, outpatient primary care and certain specialty care will continue to be provided on the existing campus. Also, while the preferred alternative calls for closing of the existing hospital, Veterans now have more options for care from community providers (hospitals), at VA expense, closer to where Veterans live. See group responses in E.3.1 and E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to distance travelled and to purchased care option and quality of care.

Commenter IM11: Glenn Miller

Commenter IM11: Glenn Miller

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: Glenn Miller

Address: [Redacted] SDS/H

Phone: 445 8

e-mail: about 4-5 away I will have to find a ride

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

Section: 1.2.2, 2.2,

Need: now about 4-5 away right now I will have to find a ride

Purpose: 2.3.5 Alternative E

I Glenn Miller give permission/authorization for Sarah Peter to enter this information online on my behalf.

Signature: Glenn Miller Date: 22 2016

IM
10-1

IM
10-2

IM10-1: VA understands your travel concerns and has taken them into consideration in developing the proposed reconfiguration. Under the new preferred Alternative A-2, outpatient primary care and certain specialty care will continue to be provided on the existing campus. Also, while the preferred alternative calls for closing of the existing hospital, Veterans now have more options for care from community providers (hospitals), at VA expense, closer to where Veterans live. See group responses in E.3.1 and E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to distance travelled and to purchased care option and quality of care.

IM10-2: VA acknowledges your support for expanded services at the Hot Springs campus under Alternative E (Save the VA proposal) and has made it part of the public record for this EIS.

Commenter IM12: Ricky Miller

Commenter IM12: Ricky Miller

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: Ricky Miller

Address: [REDACTED]

Hot Springs, SD.

Phone: _____

e-mail: _____

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

Section: _____

Need: Keep the VA Hospital in Hot Springs OPEN!

IM
12-1

Purpose: The town needs this important business to stay keep the town alive.

I _____ give permission/authorization for _____ to enter this information online on my behalf.

Ricky Miller 4-16-16
Signature Date

IM12-1: VA acknowledges your support to keep the existing Hot Springs facility open and fully functional.

Commenter IM13: William Mills

Commenter IM13: William Mills

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: WILLIAM M. MILLS (VIETNAM VET)

Address: GRAND JUNCTION, CO 81506

Phone: _____

e-mail: _____

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

* Section: 2.3.1 - 2.3.7

Need: THE VA NEEDS TO CONTINUE THE SERVICES THEY PROVIDE, ESPECIALLY AS OUR IRAQ/AFGANISTAN VETS GROW OLDER. THE QUIET AND SERENITY OF THE EXISTING CAMPUS CAN NOT BE REPLACED IN A LARGER CITY. THE HOT SPRINGS FACILITY IS IRREPLACEABLE

IM13-1

Purpose: 2.3.5 - YES, THE EXISTING FACILITIES NEED RENNOVATION. HOWEVER, DUE TO THE CONSTRUCTION THE EXISTING FACILITIES WILL LAST FOR ANOTHER 100 YEARS. OTHER THAN USE BY THE VA, THE EXISTING CAMPUS HAS NO OTHER USEFUL PURPOSE IF THE VA DOES NOT MAKE USE OF THE CAMPUS, THE EXISTING BUILDINGS WOULD BECOME AN EXCESS COST TO THE GOVERNMENT BECAUSE THEY CAN NOT BE TORN DOWN (HISTORICAL SITE). IF THE VA DOES NOT USE THEM THE FACILITIES WOULD BE WASTED

IM13-2

I, WILLIAM M. MILLS, give permission/authorization for _____ to enter this information online on my behalf.

William M. Mills Signature 1-30-16 Date

IM13-1: VA acknowledges your support to keep the existing Hot Springs facility open and fully operational.

IM13-2: VA has revised its previous statements about the suitability of the historic buildings to comply with the ABA and VA directives. See related group response in Table E-2 of Appendix E.

Commenter IM14: Richard Moer

Commenter IM14: Richard Moer

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: Richard Moer
Address: [Redacted] Hot Springs
South Dakota 5747
Phone: [Redacted]
e-mail: [Redacted]

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

Section: 3.10.2.3

Need: People moving Selling their houses Friends leaving VA not there for the veterans that need care and help with there health problems, and help them with their P.S.D.

Purpose: 2.3.5 Alternative E - Save the VA Proposal

I Richard Moer give permission/authorization for Sarah Adams to enter this information online on my behalf.

Richard Moer 2/2/16
Signature Date

IM14-1: VA acknowledges your support for expanded services at the Hot Springs campus under Alternative E (Save the VA proposal) and has made it part of the public record for this EIS.

IM
14-1

Commenter IM15: Kim Moir

Commenter IM15: Kim Moir

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: Kim Moir

Address: [Redacted] Hot Springs, SD 57747

Phone: [Redacted]

e-mail: [Redacted]

EIS Section: 3.10

EIS Statement: Socioeconomics

Comment: My business provides a service for the Veterans 24/7, as a workout facility. This service allows the Veterans a place to de-stress and stay physically fit. Also offered is hydro massage which has been known to offset PTSD symptoms as well as pain relief. The community and businesses work hard at providing the Veterans an environment that is welcoming and supportive.

This community has taken care of these veterans for decades. We, as a community, understand what the individual Veterans require to heal, to civilize. We are the healing place, we are known for our healing waters and a place for Veterans to heal and it needs to stay that way!

As a business owner, this would have a direct impact on my business financially, by depleting the population which in turn would affect the demographics!

IM
15-1

IM15-1: VA recognizes the potential adverse economic and has expanded sections 4.10, 4.11 and 4.16 of the Final EIS to address impacts on the local economy and businesses and steps VA would take to address them. See also group response in Table E-2 of Appendix E relating to socioeconomic impacts from the proposed reconfiguration.

EIS Section:

EIS Statement:

Comment:

Commenter IM15: Kim Moir	
<p>Release Information to the Congressional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>I <u>Kim Moir</u> give permission/authorization for <u>Love the VA</u> to enter this information online on my behalf.</p> <p><u>Kim Moir</u> <u>2/20/14</u> Signature Date</p>	

Commenter IM16: Charlene Monfore

Commenter IM16: Charlene Monfore

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: Charlene C. Monfore
 Address: [REDACTED]
Oral, S.D. 57766
 Phone: [REDACTED]
 e-mail: [REDACTED]
 Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

Section: _____

Need: Closing the VA will have an economic impact on Hot Springs and community.

Purpose: _____

- 1) 15 years ago, nearly 400 employee's employed ~~at~~ the Hot Springs Campus
- 2) Staff lived in Hot Springs, ^{for surrounding communities} ie Bought homes groceries, supported schools paid taxes
- 3) Employees such as ad locums stay and utilize motels & restaurants ^{rent a doc or nurse} currently
- 4) Many ~~are~~ ^{can} employees commute and do not want to invest money in housing or community and avoid coming to work for H.S. VA.

I, Charlene C. Monfore give permission/authorization for Save VA to enter this information online on my behalf.

Signature Charlene Monfore Date 4-20-16

IM16-1: VA recognizes the potential adverse economic and has expanded sections 4.10, 4.11 and 4.16 of the Final EIS to address impacts on the local economy and businesses in Hot Springs; section 4.11 addresses potential impacts on local community services (including schools). Chapter 4 also identifies steps VA would take to address these impacts. See also group response in Table E-2 of Appendix E relating to socioeconomic impacts from the proposed reconfiguration.

IM
16-1

Commenter IM17: William Makes Him First

Commenter IM17: William Makes Him First

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: William Makes Him First SR.

Address: [REDACTED]

OGALA, S.D. 57764

Phone: [REDACTED]

e-mail: _____

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

Section: _____

Need: FOR VETS OF ALL BRANCHES

1. 2222 DISTANCE TRAVELLED

Purpose: _____

For health care

1. Close - too far to travel

2. Not good transportation

3. Have someone to take care of it

Close -

Keep costs down for vets

Alternative SAVE VA Proposal

I, William Makes Him First SR. give permission/authorization for William Makes Him First to enter this information online on my behalf.

Signature: William Makes Him First Date: 6-11-16

IM17-1: Under the new preferred Alternative A-2, outpatient primary care and certain specialty care will continue to be provided on the existing campus. Also, while the preferred alternative calls for closing of the existing hospital, Veterans now have more options for care from community providers (hospitals), at VA expense, closer to where Veterans live. See group responses in E.3.1 and E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to distance travelled and to purchased care option and quality of care.

IM17-2: VA acknowledges your support for expanded services at the Hot Springs campus under Alternative E (Save the VA proposal) and has made it part of the public record for this EIS.

IM
17-1

IM
17-2

Commenter IM18: Mike Martinez

Commenter IM18: Mike Martinez

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: Mike J. Martinez
 Address: [Redacted]
Box Elder, SD 59919
 Phone: [Redacted]
 e-mail: [Redacted]
 Release Information to the Congressional Yes No
 Section: _____
 Need: _____

1.2.2 2.2 Distance Veterans must travel for care

Purpose: Closing of the VA in Hot Springs would cause my relatives to travel a long ways for health care. My brother benefited from the Alcohol Recovery Program here in Hot Springs. He had a better chance of recovery by being in a town he knew and less opportunity to relapse. Losing a facility such as this VA center provides to the surrounding community would have an adverse effect to many people.

2.3.5 Alternative E. Save the VA Proposal

I, Mike J. Martinez, give permission/authorization for [Signature] to enter this information online on my behalf.

Signature: [Signature] Date: 6-11-16

IM18-1: Under the new preferred Alternative A-2, outpatient primary care and certain specialty care will continue to be provided on the existing campus. Also, while the preferred alternative calls for closing of the existing hospital, Veterans now have more options for care from community providers (hospitals), at VA expense, closer to where Veterans live. See group responses in E.3.1 and E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to distance travelled and to purchased care option and quality of care.

IM18-2: VA acknowledges your support for expanded services at the Hot Springs campus under Alternative E (Save the VA proposal) and has made it part of the public record for this EIS.

IM 18-1

IM 18-2

Commenter IM19: Darrell Marshall

Commenter IM19: Darrell Marshall

From: VA Black Hills Future <vablackhillfuture@va.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, December 29, 2015 11:41 AM
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] Hot Springs future

From: Darrell Marshall [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, December 28, 2015 10:52 AM
To: VA Black Hills Future
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Hot Springs future

I am a 68 year old Vietnam Veteran. I receive all my health care at the Hot Springs VA. I live in Chadron NE, 50 miles from Hot Springs. It would be quite an inconvenience to have to drive 100 miles to Rapid City, or 135 miles to Fort Meade, (one way). We live in a part of the country that has harsh winter driving conditions. I have tried the Choice program and that is not very satisfactory.

IM
19-1

IM19-1: VA is committed to providing quality care to its Veterans and believes that the proposed reconfiguration will allow that - to meet the current and future needs of our Veterans. One of the integral elements under all of the proposed reconfiguration alternatives is that Veterans now have more options for care from community providers (hospitals), at VA expense, closer to where Veterans live so they don't have to travel as far. Since publication of the Draft EIS, VA has been given authority to expand the purchased care program (beyond just the Veterans Choice Program), now referred to as Care in the Community, to Veterans that was not available before and now potentially hundreds of providers are available to eligible Veterans. They offer another way to improve overall quality and delivery of care. See group responses in Sections E.3.1 and E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to distance travelled and to purchased care option and quality of care.

Commenter IM20: Sherry McGarity

Commenter IM20: Sherry McGarity

From: VA Black Hills Future <vablackhillfuture@va.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, March 29, 2016 1:02 PM

Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] Hot Springs, SD Veterans Health Care Facility

-----Original Message-----
From: Sherry Mc Garity [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, March 26, 2016 11:22 AM
To: VA Black Hills Future
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Hot Springs, SD Veterans Health Care Facility

Dear Sir/Madam, foremostly, I would like to be informed as to WHY an "OREGON FARM BUREAU" public commenter, ie: not an attorney either, is giving US guidelines with which to fight our case to save our VA facility in Hot Springs, when she hasn't a CLUE about our history or probably even where the facility is actually located. This is where I'll begin. Please send an answer forthwith. Sherry J. McGarity, RN CNOR CRNFA, AACCS (Surgeon appointed RN Affiliate to the American College of Surgeons), LNC (Legal nurse consultant), PC. And possible full time resident of Hot Springs, SD. Thank you. [REDACTED]

IM
20-1

IM20-1: Thank you for your comment, but it is not relevant to the actions being analyzed in the EIS or the decision at hand and is not addressed further.

Commenter IM21: Paul Miller

Commenter IM21: Paul Miller	
<hr/> <p>From: VA Black Hills Future <vablackhillsfuture@va.gov> Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2016 3:26 PM Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] EIS</p> <p>From: Paul Miller [REDACTED] Sent: Thursday, January 14, 2016 7:40 PM To: VA Black Hills Future Subject: [EXTERNAL] EIS</p> <p>Please get copy of EIS to Custer County Library. Thank You. Paul V. Miller</p> <p>1</p>	<p>IM21: A copy of the Draft EIS was provided to the Custer County Library on CD.</p>

Commenter IM22: John Moisan

Commenter IM22: John Moisan

From: VA Black Hills Future <vablackhillfuture@va.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, December 9, 2015 3:48 PM
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] Comments on Hot Springs Closing

From: VanBeek, Brandon (Rounds) [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, December 03, 2015 9:25 AM
To: VA Black Hills Future
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comments on Hot Springs Closing

To whom it may regard,

We had a constituent who was unable to access the link on the website to submit his comments on the Draft EIS. Please see below the comments he instructed to have passed along.

Thank you for your time and effort.

1. The STATE VA Veterans Home is located in Hot Springs and recently rebuilt to modern standards. The FEDERAL facility provides easy access to OLD veterans who need immediate care.
2. Closing the FEDERAL facility in Hot Springs will mean additional travel for many, many Native American veterans from Pine Ridge, Rosebud, and other locations.
3. Closing the FEDERAL facility in Hot Springs will devastate the economy of the City of Hot Springs and Fall River County. Aside from a minor tourism industry, there are few economic opportunities in the southern Black Hills.
4. Closing the FEDERAL facility in Hot Springs will mean a large number of empty buildings being left unattended by the Federal Government only to deteriorate, leaving State and local agencies to care for them or tear them down. (May I bring to your attention: Wakpa Sica in Fort Pierre and the Oahe Irrigation Project Building at the Oahe Dam. Both were never completed and still sit vacant with millions of dollars of new equipment installed) Simply, donating the buildings to the City or County will not work.....what exactly could they be used for and who would pay for renovations which would be required?

End of comments.

John G. Moisan
 [REDACTED]
 Fort Pierre, SD 57532

Email: [REDACTED]

Brandon Van Beek
 Sen. Mike Rounds (R-SD)



IM22-1: VA partners with the South Dakota State Veterans Home to the extent possible. No changes to that partnership are expected under any of the alternatives.

IM22-2: While the preferred alternative (A2) calls for closing of the existing hospital, Veterans now have more options for care from community providers (hospitals), at VA expense, closer to where Veterans live. See group responses in E.3.1 and E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to distance travelled and to purchased care option and quality of care. The group response also addresses options for Native Americans.

IM22-3: VA recognizes the potential adverse impacts on the local economy and businesses See group responses in Table E-2 of Appendix E relating to the analysis of potential socioeconomic impacts and potential cumulative impacts on the local community.

IM22-4: VA has committed to a long-term preservation plan that goes beyond the traditional mothballing protocols. The cost of the program is not known at this time because the program cannot be developed until after selection of an alternative. A full description of the long-term preservation plan is available in Section 5.2.

IM22-1
 IM22-2
 IM22-3
 IM22-4

Commenter IM23: Joseph Muller

Commenter IM23: Joseph Muller

From: VA Black Hills Future <vablackhillsfuture@va.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, December 9, 2015 3:48 PM
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] EIS comments
Attachments: HS VAMCEIScomments.docx; ATT981827.txt

-----Original Message-----

From: Joseph Muller [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, December 07, 2015 3:13 PM
To: VA Black Hills Future
Subject: [EXTERNAL] EIS comments

Dear VA Black Hills Future:

I am attaching my comments in regards to the VA Black Hills Health Care System EIS.

Sincerely,

Commenter IM23: Joseph Muller

Joseph A. Muller

Hot Springs, SD 57747

December 7, 2015

Hot Springs VA EIS Comments:

1.2.2.1.1 – How can you possibly try to retain and recruit professional employees when you have been constantly removing services and having rumors of closing the facility. I wrote letters back in 1992 when the VA closed down the surgical unit, this has been going on with the VA for close to 30 years.

Low patient volume is also associated with cutting back on services, how can you maintain a high patient volume when the VA continues for over 30 years of reducing and eliminating services.

You could be more likely to match private service salaries if you didn't give un-deserved bonuses to the administration. There are other benefits of being employed professionally at a government institution, such as no need for liability insurance, regular working hours etc.

Fulltime positions could be supported by workload if the VA didn't continue to cut services.

Table 2.3 – Estimated costs. I saw a figure of leasing at 14.7 million a year, if you take that times 30, I come up with around \$441 Million. Nowhere close to your \$150 million 30-year life cycle cost. The sandstone buildings at the Hot Springs VA, will long withstand anything that you would lease in Rapid City. The VA is a boondoggle, just look at your facility in Aurora, CO, that was estimated I believe at \$350 million, it isn't complete yet and is now over \$1 billion. Use correct figures and not figures that you want to fit your pre-destined plans!

If you aren't willing to re-establish the Hot Springs VA to where it was, look at alternatives to fill the space and expand the use of the facility for Veterans and expand for PTSD, the Hot springs community is more peaceful and relaxing than what they will receive in Rapid City.

Figure 2-4 (in Section 2.3.1.1.1 for Alternate A) – Why build/lease another facility when you have the current one. Why build or lease a firehouse when you already have one at the Hot Springs VA?

2.3.2.2 Employment – A decrease of 218 FTEEs in Hot Springs would have an enormous affect on the school system and economy of the Hot Springs community. I would also question the increase of only 26 FTEEs in Rapid City, it doesn't seem possible to handle the supposed increase in veterans being served with only 26 additional FTEEs. If the 218 FTEEs decrease in Hot Springs are supposedly wouldn't lose their VA employment, where would they have to go to continue their employment if you are only adding 25 in Rapid City?

2.3.5 – A very creative out-of-the-box scenario that would benefit the veterans and provide even better PTSD care and work opportunities in a clean, safe, quiet environment. Clean – Rapid City has had several instances of exceedances of the

IM23-1

IM23-1: Thank you for your comment and additional input on why recruiting is difficult at Hot Springs. The discussion of recruiting challenges in Chapter 1 of the EIS is still considered valid and has not changed in the Final EIS. In addition, past decisions relating to staffing levels and health care services are made by Veterans Health Administration professionals (leaders, planners and health care practitioners and professionals), based on a variety of factors, and are not subject to a NEPA review. See also group response in Table E-2 of Appendix E relating to the past decline in services and the extent to which it has been considered in the cumulative impact analysis in Section 4.16 of the Final EIS.

IM23-2

IM23-2: The Final EIS provides a more detailed breakout of costs for each alternative in Section 2.3. See group response in Table E-2 of Appendix E relating to the cost of alternatives. With respect to the current estimates for the proposed reconfiguration, VA has re-visited and re-verified our assumptions, design criteria, and resulting cost estimates for the alternatives and believes them to offer an accurate cost comparison between alternatives at this time. However, VA is unable to update the cost information provided in the EIS due to current appropriation restrictions.

IM23-3

IM23-3: It is too late to consider new alternatives at this time. VA's reasons for relocating the RRTP to Rapid City have been further clarified in Section 1.2.2.3 of the Final EIS.

IM23-4

IM23-4: VA has selected a new alternative in the Final EIS that includes renovating Building 12 on the existing campus to house the new CBOC. This will allow VA to maintain a continued presence on the campus.

IM23-5

IM23-6

Commenter IM23: Joseph Muller	
<p>PM10 standard, Hot Springs has none. Also see Table 3.2.2 in regards to pollutants, Rapid City has many more Economic Sectors Emitting pollutants than Hot Springs does. Safe – how many murders have occurred in Hot Springs versus Rapid City this past year? This creative alternative would actually return money to the VA, what a novel idea for any governmental body to look at.</p> <p>3.3 – The Hot Springs VA buildings play a major part in the Hot Springs Historic District. These native sandstone buildings provide very stable structures that have been in existence for over 100 years and will be here for another 100, where a new structure leased or build won't be made of the same materials and don't have that same timeframe for expected usefulness.</p> <p>3.7.2 - Hot Springs and especially the HS VAMC has a much lower Sound Level (dBA) than Rapid City. Which is more beneficial for veterans returning from action or being treated for PTSD.</p> <p>3.9 – There is no worry about the HS VAMC and flooding. Depending on where you build or lease in Rapid City this may be an issue. The 1972 flood created havoc in Rapid City along Rapid Creek. This didn't stop the RC Schools, Journey Museum and others from building fairly close to Rapid Creek once the houses were removed from the floodplain.</p> <p>3.10.8 – 74.5% of the employees at the Hot Springs campus live in Fall River County. The projected decrease of 218 FTEs would mean 162 of the 218 would be from Fall River County. Based on Table 3.10.9 the average wage of the Hot Springs Campus for those living in Fall River county is \$45,875.85, taking this times the 162 would mean a loss of \$7,431,887.70 in wages to Fall River County residents this will have a major affect on the downtown businesses. The loss of 162 employees would be a loss to the school enrollment and school funding. This would in turn affect the number of high school age students that the local businesses rely on for help in the summer months for taking care of the heavily impacted tourism industry.</p> <p>3.15.2 – Losing 162 high paying jobs in Fall River County would increase the % of the families and persons below the Poverty Level, which is substantially higher already than Pennington County.</p>	<p>IM23-5: VA recognizes the potential adverse impacts on the local economy and school and Sections 4.10, 4.11 and 4.16 of the Final EIS have been expanded to address the local impacts on Hot Springs. See also group response in Table E-2 of Appendix E relating to socioeconomic impacts.</p> <p>IM23-7 - VA interprets this comment as support for expanding operations at the existing Hot Springs campus. VA's reasons for relocating the RRTP to Rapid City are outlined further in Section 1.2.2.3 of the Final EIS.</p> <p>IM23-6</p> <p>IM23-8</p> <p>IM23-7: VA agrees that the existing historic buildings can indeed be renovated and made suitable for continued use, and this has been clarified in the Final EIS.</p> <p>IM23-9</p> <p>IM23-8: VA agrees that there are no issues related to flooding at the Hot Springs VAMC. Flooding considerations would also be taken into account in the selection of a new site in Rapid City.</p> <p>IM23-9: See response to IM23-5.</p>

Commenter IM24: Neonila Martyniuk

Commenter IM24: Neonila Martyniuk

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Sheet

Name: Neonila Martyniuk
 Address: [REDACTED]
Hot Springs, SD 57747
 Phone: [REDACTED]
 e-mail: [REDACTED]

Release Information to the Congressional Yes No

Comments refer to EIS Section(s): Alternative E 2,3,5 SAVE the VA proposal

Need: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Substance Abuse Treatment Facility located at the VA Black Hills Health Care System in Hot Springs, S.D. is located in a tranquil environment. Patients treated in Hot Springs confirm their ability to feel more calm + relaxed in the Hot Springs

Purpose: The Rapid City, S.D. POLICE DEPARTMENT released to the PUBLIC "2015 CRIME ANALYSIS REPORT". This statistical report shows clearly the continuing increase in crime in RAPID CITY, S.D. between year 2009 until year 2015. To view: Go To: www.rcgov.org. ALTERNATIVE 'E' Save the VA needs to be the rational choice made by the VA to AVOID placing veterans in an environment of RAPID CITY where crime rate is 11%

I Neonila Martyniuk give permission/authorization for _____ to enter this information online on my behalf.

Signature Date

Addition Comment: _____

Signature Date

Neonila Martyniuk MARCH 01, 2016
Signature Date

IM24-1: VA acknowledges your support for expanded services at the Hot Springs campus under Alternative E (Save the VA proposal) and has made it part of the public record for this EIS.

IM24-2: VA has expanded Section 1.2.2.3 in the Final EIS to further explain the reasons for moving the RRTP to Rapid City. The more urban environment offers significant advantages with respect to Veterans ability to successfully reintegrate into the community.

IM24-1

IM24-2

Commenter IM25: Nancy McCulloch

Commenter IM25: Nancy McCulloch

<https://www.fdms.gov/fdms/getcontent?objectId=0900006481d3e5b5&f...>

PUBLIC SUBMISSION

As of: 11/16/15 10:20 AM
Received: November 12, 2015
Status: Posted
Posted: November 16, 2015
Tracking No. 1jz-8m80-kv78
Comments Due: January 05, 2016
Submission Type: API

Docket: VA-2015-VACO-0001
Notices Requesting Comments

Comment On: VA-2015-VACO-0001-0272
Environmental Impact Statements; Availability, etc.: Reconfiguration of VA Black Hills Health Care System; FR Doc. #2015-27684

Document: VA-2015-VACO-0001-0384
Comment on Environmental Impact Statements; Availability, etc.: Reconfiguration of VA Black Hills Health Care System; FR Doc. #2015-27684; McCulloch, Nancy

Submitter Information

Name: Nancy McCulloch

Address:
[Redacted]

Missoula, MT, 59802

Email: [Redacted]

Phone: [Redacted]

General Comment

To the Department of Veterans Affairs:

I urge you to keep Battlefield Mountain Sanitarium in use for the treatment of veterans. The location of the facility makes it convenient for use by veterans who live or have family in the surrounding area. Also, it's peaceful location makes it a restorative place. Finally, this building is historical as the first medical treatment center for veterans and should be preserved by keeping it occupied and maintained.

Thank you for your consideration of my request.

IM
25-1

IM25-1: VA acknowledges your support for expanded services at the Hot Springs campus under Alternative E (Save the VA proposal) and has made it part of the public record for this EIS.

Commenter IM25: Nancy McCulloch

<https://www.fdms.gov/fdms/getcontent?objectId=0900006481d3c593&f...>

PUBLIC SUBMISSION

As of: 11/16/15 10:23 AM
Received: November 12, 2015
Status: Posted
Posted: November 16, 2015
Tracking No. 1jz-8m80-kt3q
Comments Due: January 05, 2016
Submission Type: API

Docket: VA-2015-VACO-0001
Notices Requesting Comments

Comment On: VA-2015-VACO-0001-0272
Environmental Impact Statements; Availability, etc.: Reconfiguration of VA Black Hills Health Care System; FR Doc. #2015-27684

Document: VA-2015-VACO-0001-0385
Comment on Environmental Impact Statements; Availability, etc.: Reconfiguration of VA Black Hills Health Care System; FR Doc. #2015-27684; McCulloch, Nancy

Submitter Information

Name: Nancy McCulloch

Address:



Missoula, MT, 59802

Email:



Phone:

General Comment

P.S. I meant to add that Alternative C or Alternative E appear to me to be better choices.

IM
25-1

Commenter IM26: Laura Marciniak

Commenter IM26: Laura Marciniak

Black Hills EIS Public Comment

#34



COMPLETE

Collector: New Web Link (Web Link)
 Started: Wednesday, January 20, 2016 9:17:15 AM
 Last Modified: Wednesday, January 20, 2016 9:23:42 AM
 Time Spent: 00:06:26
 IP Address: 65.190.151.103

PAGE 1: Public Comment on the Draft EIS for Reconfiguration of the VA Black Hills Health Care System.

Q1: Please enter your name and contact information.

Name: Laura Marciniak
 Address: [Redacted]
 Address 2: [Redacted]
 City/Town: Clayton
 State/Province: NC
 ZIP/Postal Code: 27520
 Email Address: [Redacted]
 Phone Number: [Redacted]

Q2: My mailing list and contact preference is: Please contact me via email at the email address I entered above.

PAGE 2

Q3: Please enter your comments here--reference relevant pages/sections in the Draft EIS where appropriate, and be as specific as possible. (This field will expand as you type to accommodate your comments):

You are doing a grave disservice to all veterans in the Black Hills area by moving to close this facility. Please do build something in Rapid City. But it foolish in the extreme to close one facility before you even break ground on it's replacement. Have you seen the debacle regarding the VA in Denver? More veterans are created every day and there are not enough facilities to serve them but you want to close the facility with the best reputation west of the Mississippi? All I can say is something smells and who PROFITS from it's closure? Who PROFITS from the contract for the new facility? Who PROFITS from stealing this facility when it's sold as surplus? Because the citizens of the United States and most specifically the Veterans, know - that profit is the only motivator in Washington, D.C.

IM26-1

IM26-1: VA interprets your comment as support to keep the existing facility open and fully functional. However, outpatient primary care and certain specialty care will continue to be provided in Hot Springs, and on the existing campus under the new preferred alternative A-2. Also, while the preferred alternative calls for closing of the existing hospital, Veterans now have more options for care from community providers (hospitals), at VA expense, closer to where Veterans live. See group responses in E.3.1 and E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to distance travelled and to purchased care option and quality of care.

Commenter IM27: Lisa McPherson

Commenter IM27: Lisa McPherson

Black Hills EIS Public Comment

#30



COMPLETE

Collector: New Web Link (Web Link)
Started: Wednesday, December 30, 2015 1:57:02 PM
Last Modified: Wednesday, December 30, 2015 2:51:31 PM
Time Spent: 00:54:29
IP Address: [REDACTED]

PAGE 1: Public Comment on the Draft EIS for Reconfiguration of the VA Black Hills Health Care System.

Q1: Please enter your name and contact information.

Name	Lisa McPherson
Address	[REDACTED]
Address 2	[REDACTED]
City/Town	Hot Springs
State/Province	SD
ZIP/Postal Code	57747
Email Address	[REDACTED]
Phone Number	[REDACTED]

Q2: My mailing list and contact preference is: Please contact me via email at the email address I entered above.

PAGE 2

Commenter IM27: Lisa McPherson

Black Hills EIS Public Comment

Q3: Please enter your comments here--reference relevant pages/sections in the Draft EIS where appropriate, and be as specific as possible. (This field will expand as you type to accommodate your comments):

My response is in regards to the Black Hills EIS.

I myself am the spouse of a disabled Veteran who receives services at the local VA Hospital in Hot Springs. The purpose of the VA is to "provide quality, safe accessible care" to the Veterans. It is in my opinion that in order to do so the VA Hospital in Hot Springs needs to remain open, and services need to be expanded, or at the very least remain the same.

My role as a caregiver dictates that I be involved in the majority of the care for my husband. I attend the majority of his Doctor's visits in the event that there are any changes to his medications, to act as his memory, and most importantly to ensure that he goes. Over 90% of my husband's missed appointments are due to my inability to go with him. This is a problem when moving care outside of Hot Springs. It is one thing for me to take a quick break from work to accompany my husband to either his primary care team, or for emergent services when it is five minutes away, but quite another when it's a minimum of an hour drive to get to a VA facility. I don't know an employer who would accept an employee who needs to take a morning or afternoon off sometimes weekly, and mine is no exception. We are not in a position for me to lose my job however what the VA is doing is essentially making me choose between my employment and my Veteran getting the care he needs, as well as is owed, with the proposed move of the Hot Springs VA Hospital.

I have heard the argument that the majority of the Veterans live in the Rapid City area and therefore it is more cost effective (as stated as part of the need) to move services there. I believe that while the number of Veterans living in the Rapid City and surrounding areas may out number the amount living in Hot Springs it is important to note that the demographics of the Veterans who receive services at the Hot Springs VA are not only from South Dakota. I believe it is also important to note that the Ft. Meade campus is half the distance from Rapid City than from Rapid City to Hot Springs. The Veterans in Rapid City and the surrounding areas have access to services far more available to them than the citizens of Hot Springs and the Veterans the Hot Springs VA Hospital serves.

I can state with absolute certainty that the care that my husband has received at the Hot Springs location has been the best care he has received throughout his entire dealings with the VA system. To remove that care would be detrimental not only to his care, but to our family as a whole.

IM27-1

IM27-1: Under the preferred Alternative A-2, primary care services and some limited specialty services will still be provided on the existing Hot Springs campus. While the existing hospital would be closed, an integral element of the proposed reconfiguration is to give Veterans more options for health care from local community providers, at VA expense, closer to where they live. Travel would not have to be so far for Veterans within the BHHCS service area. Partnering with community providers offers another way to improve overall quality and delivery of care. See group responses in Sections E.3.1 and E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to distance travelled and to purchased care option and quality of care. Veterans also now have more options for care from community providers, at VA expense, closer to where they live; this would help reduce the driving distance. See group response E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to purchased care option and quality of care.

Commenter IM28: Ted Moeller

Commenter IM28: Ted Moeller

Black Hills EIS Public Comment

#37



COMPLETE

Collector: New Web Link (Web Link)
Started: Sunday, January 31, 2016 5:34:30 PM
Last Modified: Sunday, January 31, 2016 6:32:50 PM
Time Spent: 00:58:20
IP Address: [REDACTED]

PAGE 1: Public Comment on the Draft EIS for Reconfiguration of the VA Black Hills Health Care System.

Q1: Please enter your name and contact information.

Name	TED MOELLER
Address	[REDACTED]
Address 2	[REDACTED]
City/Town	HOT SPRINGS
State/Province	SD
ZIP/Postal Code	57747
Email Address	[REDACTED]
Phone Number	[REDACTED]

Q2: My mailing list and contact preference is: Please contact me via email at the email address I entered above.

PAGE 2

Commenter IM28: Ted Moeller	
<p style="text-align: center;">Black Hills EIS Public Comment</p> <p>Q3: Please enter your comments here--reference relevant pages/sections in the Draft EIS where appropriate, and be as specific as possible. (This field will expand as you type to accommodate your comments):</p> <p>To whom it may concern:</p> <p>I have to preface this by stating that my opinions are not the popular ones regarding the whole VA existence. While I do believe that veterans deserve medical care for their service - where they get should get it is where my beliefs differ.</p> <p>I am a medical technologist (recently retired from Hot Springs) who still works as a contractor in the laboratory because of the short staff. I worked about 25 years in the private sector before coming to the VA and finished my career by working at the VA for about 16 years.</p> <p>I have observed over the last 16 years that veterans don't just come to the VA for medical care; it is a time to meet with their comrades, it is a social outing as much as seeking medical care. But are they receiving the best medical care that they deserve? I think not. If you ask the average person on the street what's the worst medical system in America - hands down it is IHS. Second is the VAMC. Veterans deserve better. Our government has no business running healthcare, that is best left up to the private sector. And now we have Obamacare!! Look at the fiasco in Denver with the new VA hospital there.</p> <p>I believe veterans should be given a medical card so they can seek medical care where ever THEY wish - in their own home town, in Rapid City, at Mayo Clinic, etc.</p> <p>If the government does stay in healthcare, then I believe it should only be as clinics and all inpatients should be sent to the nearest hospital near their home town.</p> <p>Thank you for listening, Ted Moeller</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">48 / 89</p>	<p>IM28-1: Thank you for your comment. Your suggestion to use local providers is consistent with an integral element of our proposed reconfiguration - providing Veterans with more options for care from community providers (hospitals), at VA expense, closer to where Veterans live. Since publication of the Draft EIS, VA has been given authority to expand the purchased care program (beyond just the Veterans Choice Program), now referred to as Care in the Community, to Veterans that was not available before and now potentially hundreds of providers are available to eligible Veterans. They offer another way to improve overall quality and delivery of care. See group responses in Sections E.3.1 and E.3.3 in Appendix E relating to distance travelled and to purchased care option and quality of care.</p>