

Dear _____:

I realize that you receive many requests for funding; however, this situation is very different. In fact, this is an invoice for services rendered. This is a request to fully fund Louisiana's War Veterans who have provided our nation with its freedom.

Louisiana's veterans served our nation without question, and we owe them the same respect. My husband, like so many others, is 100% service connected disabled and depends on Northwest Louisiana War Veterans Home for his survival. It is our duty to care for those whom we sent into harm's way and to be prepared to care for the brave young soldiers who currently serve in Iraq and Afghanistan.

When the state partnered with the federal government to build five facilities designed to care for war veterans, it pledged that it would support these brave heroes "with enhanced healthcare." State leaders, as well as citizens of, Louisiana, voiced their commitment to lead the nation in providing outstanding care for the Louisiana Veterans who sacrificed so much to keep our nation strong and free.

Unfortunately, the state of Louisiana has broken her pledge to care for the veterans. FY 09-10 state funding for the five War Veterans Homes totaled approximately \$6,000,000. In a mid-year budget cut, the five state War Veterans Homes budgets were reduced by \$500,000. Key medical staff positions were ordered vacated. The FY 10-11 budget released on February 12, 2010, has requested another \$1,089,749 in "savings" by eliminating further care for the veterans.

Terminology may be misleading, but the facts are not. Removing on-staff medical positions, whether they are consolidated into a central location or otherwise, reduces quality of care. The approximately \$1.5 million dollar budget reduction has a detrimental impact on the state's ability to care for its veterans in its five War Veterans Homes.

The voters of Louisiana do not agree with these budget cuts for war veterans. They continue to support providing outstanding care for our veterans. In fact, they signed over 7000 postcards from Northwest Louisiana to Governor Jindal's office expressing their desire to fully fund the War Veterans Homes. Without exception, these citizens feel their tax dollars should be used for that purpose.

Civic groups, such as the American Legion in Shreveport, have voiced their support for full funding of the War Veterans Homes as well. The Caddo Parish Commissioners unanimously passed a resolution against budget cuts for veteran care. The Joint Commission for Veterans Affairs met in Baton Rouge in March, 2010, and expressed the same feeling.

You hold the power to assure that all veterans receive the care they deserve. Please restore mid-year budget cuts! Appropriations and include full funding for the state's five War Veterans Homes in the FY 10-11 budget.

Sincerely,

Decline in Medical Services and Patient Care

As a Result of State Budget Cuts at Louisiana's Five War Veteran Homes

Budget reductions:

- There have been two significant removals of state funds from the state War Veteran Homes since the FY10 Appropriated Budget.
- The initial cut, effective in January 2010, removed \$2 million dollars from the state five War Veteran Homes. The net savings was projected to be 51.5 million dollars to the state; however, the savings to the state have proven to be considerably less. Additionally, reduced facility spending results in reduced federal reimbursement; therefore, the cuts are even greater than on paper.
- The second cut, effective in March-April 2010, came as a result of Executive Order BJ 2009-11.
- The Louisiana Way Forward, FY 10-11 Budget Moves to a More Sustainable. Cost-Effective Government. p.8, includes the following statement:
"As it is done in most other states, partnering with private physicians at Louisiana's Veterans homes will bring \$51,089,749 in savings."

Changes in Medical Services:

- Pharmacy:
 - Prior to the budget cut:
 - All five War Veterans Homes were staffed with a pharmacist and on-site pharmacy. Medications were provided at no cost to the state and with the lowest cost to the veteran. Under Option I, pharmacists dispensed medications in blister packaging which provided for optimum patient safety, ease of accountability, and expedient delivery of medications.
 - After the budget reductions:
 - Four of the pharmacies were closed, and their pharmacists' positions were vacated. As a consequence, receipt of medication is delayed, costs are considerably higher for the veterans and nurses are now pulled away from patient care to count and monitor medications.
- Physician and nurse practitioner:
 - Prior to the budget cut
 - Four of the five homes had a full-time physician and nurse practitioner on staff. In most instances, patient treatments and follow-up occurred on-site with minimal disruption to the patient. Early diagnosis prevented patient complications.
 - After the budget reductions:
 - One of the five homes retains an on-staff Medical Director. In other homes, contract doctors see the patients less frequently. Patients are often transported to Emergency Rooms for treatment and follow-up care.

Budget Appropriations Funding required to restore services:

- The five state War Veterans Homes would need to have the appropriation for the 51.5 million taken from them returned to be able to reinstate programs lost by budget reductions.
- The proposed 51,089,749 reduction in the FY 10-11 state general funds must not be removed.
- At Northwest Louisiana War Veterans Home, an appropriation of approximately \$325,000 would be needed to restore the pharmacy program. Additionally, the approximately \$200,000 projected loss from state general funds must be prevented to maintain current status.