

## HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 1014

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION, Urging the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to reconsider its proposed closure of certain VA facilities in Hot Springs.

WHEREAS, America's veterans from all walks of life have risked their lives and well-being to support and defend the principles upon which our country was founded. In return for their sacrifices, the United States government has committed itself to providing health care and other benefits for our veterans; and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs recently proposed major revisions to the VA Black Hills Health Care System that would essentially result in the closure of the VA Hospital in Hot Springs, one of the top VA facilities in the nation, along with revised services in other locations in the Black Hills area; and

WHEREAS, the proposed changes would result in the closure of the Hot Springs VA Domiciliary and inpatient hospital and nursing home services, with services to be moved to Rapid City and Fort Meade in Sturgis or served on a contractual basis by other private facilities in the area, leaving Hot Springs with only a VA outpatient clinic and the task of finding alternative uses for the existing buildings and structures; and

WHEREAS, many veterans have expressed satisfaction with the care they receive at the VA facilities in Hot Springs and often attribute part of the quality of their care to the facility's rural environment and setting. In addition, many veterans in southwestern South Dakota and northwestern Nebraska, both Native American and non-Native, will find themselves dealing with longer travel times and inconvenience in exchange for little, if any, improvement in health care under the proposed changes. For many veterans in the area, the VA represents their last resort for quality health care, but the increased distances and travel costs to use facilities in Rapid City or Fort Meade will cause serious hardship; and

WHEREAS, the proposed revisions to the VA Black Hills Health Care System are likely to have severe economic and social impacts on the community of Hot Springs. It is estimated that the current 1,062 Black Hills Health Care System employees will be reduced to 325 over the next eight years, which will negatively affect the city's employment and housing markets, as well as

its overall economy; and

WHEREAS, the current domiciliary facility is a National Historic Landmark, dating back more than one hundred years, with construction on the main hospital building beginning in 1925. These facilities, along with the State Veterans Home, are a central part of the history of Hot Springs and its identity as a veterans' community; and

WHEREAS, South Dakota's congressional delegation, Senator Tim Johnson, Senator John Thune, and Representative Kristi Noem, have joined to express concern to the Department of Veterans Affairs over the proposed changes and addressed a series of detailed questions to the VA about the impacts of the proposed revisions; and

WHEREAS, South Dakota's citizens, both Native American and non-Native, have consistently displayed high rates of military service and participation throughout the history of this state. They have put personal convenience and comfort aside to serve their country, and they deserve the high quality health care benefits that were promised to them as a part of their military commitment:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the House of Representatives of the Eighty-seventh Legislature of the State of South Dakota, the Senate concurring therein, that the South Dakota Legislature expresses its extreme concern with the proposed revisions by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to the VA Black Hills Health Care System, particularly the proposed closure of the VA Domiciliary and hospital at Hot Springs. The Legislature requests the Department of Veterans Affairs to reconsider its proposal and to maintain operations of its facilities in Hot Springs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the United States Congress and the Department of Veterans Affairs are strongly urged to ensure that the VA health care facilities in Hot Springs, as well as the VA facilities throughout the VA Black Hills Health Care System, are fully funded.

Adopted by the House of Representatives,  
Concurred in by the Senate,

February 24, 2012  
February 28, 2012

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Val Rausch  
Speaker of the House

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Karen Gerdes  
Chief Clerk of the House

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Matt Michels  
President of the Senate

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Fee Jacobsen  
Secretary of the Senate