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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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TIMOTHY H. JOHNSON
38TH DISTRICT

March 24, 2021

Ways & Means Committee
Kansas Senate

RE: HB 2021 Senate Committee Hearing

Dear Chairman Billinger:

I would request to speak briefly on HB 2021 during the hearing on March 25th, 2021 as a co-sponsor of the bill and as father of two active duty Army officers. I have attached a brief outline of my notes shared before the House Veterans Committee for reference on this bill.

My brief statement will address that the grandfather of my stepson, Walter Jones served as a decorated war hero in Korea, including ribbons for “Pork Chop Hill.” He also served in the Army Reserve after his combat tour ended. Now 88 years old and living in Kansas City, Kansas as a widower, Papa Luke is facing the issues of age and finances. We will soon need to make some choices for where he will go from his home. It cannot be to the current facilities hours from here as we could never visit him. Papa Luke deserves a long term care facility like we can create in northeast Kansas for his service to his country.

Again, thank you for the consideration of this important Veterans Home issue.

Respectfully,

Rep. Tim Johnson
38th District

House Bill Number 2020 / 2021

Demanding the submission of an initial application to US Department of Veterans Affairs for the construction of a State Veterans Home Facility to be located in NE Kansas (specifically, Douglas, Jefferson, Leavenworth, Shawnee or Wyandotte County) with an expected construction / building cost <\$17.5M.

Is there a need?

There is absolutely a need for an additional Veterans Home Facility, specifically in northeast Kansas.

Where are current facilities located?

Dodge City, KS (Southwest Kansas)

The Kansas Soldiers' Home at Fort Dodge, Kansas is located approximately 5 miles east of Dodge City, Kansas, on Highway 400 (formerly 154). Fort Dodge dates back to 1865 when it was ordered to be built as a supply post for people and wagon trains traveling the Santa Fe Trail. Fort Dodge was strategically located to the wet and dry routes of the Santa Fe Trail.

- 30 domiciliary unit
- 30 long term care unit
- 26 bed special care unit for dementia
- 60 cottages

**<https://kcva.ks.gov/veteran-homes/fort-dodge-home>

Winfield, KS (Southcentral Kansas)

The Kansas Veterans' Home is located in Winfield, Kansas. This community has a population of approximately 12,000 and is located 35 miles southeast of Wichita, Kansas. Friendly people are one of the community's greatest assets. Winfield has a growing business community and excellent schools, including Southwestern College.

- 48 bed domiciliary unit
- 118 bed long-term care unit
- 24 bed special care unit for Alzheimer and related dementia

**<https://kcva.ks.gov/veteran-homes/winfield-home>

Other facilities in the larger Kansas City Metro Area?

Missouri operates Veterans Homes in Warrensburg and Cameron
Veterans Hospital, Kansas City, MO
Veterans Hospital, Leavenworth, KS
VA Clinic, Overland Park, KS
VA Clinic, Shawnee, KS
Wyandotte Co. VA Clinic, Kansas City, KS
Honor VA Clinic, Kansas City, MO
VA Clinic, Paola, KS
VA Clinic, Platte City, MO
VA Clinic, Lawrence, KS
VA Clinic, Excelsior Springs, MO
VA Clinic, Garnett, KS

**<https://www.va.gov/find-locations>

Eligible population density in specified counties?

<u>County</u>	<u>County Seat</u>	<u>Est. Pop</u>	<u>Est. Vet. Pop</u>	<u>Pop trend</u>
Douglas	Lawrence	120.290	4.210	up
Jefferson	Oskaloosa	18.890	1.322	up
Leavenworth	Leavenworth	80.745	12.313	up
Shawnee	Topeka	177.852	27.122	down
Wyandotte	Kansas City	164.861	5.770	up

**Est. General Population <https://www.kansas-demographics.com/>

**Est. Veteran Population https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/State_Summaries_Kansas.pdf

**Population trending <https://www.kansas-demographics.com/>

Is this a duplication of previous efforts?

No, it builds upon previous efforts to provide appropriate care for the military veteran population of Kansas.

Intended side effects:

Placing an additional facility is expected to produce effects other than the physical care of the admitted veterans. Other expected effects include providing a number of professional, skilled and unskilled jobs to the local economy on both a short and long term basis; adding a boost to the local economy from added vehicle traffic of employees, patients and visiting family members; and increasing the moral aptitude of both the county and state.

Unintended side effects?

Depending on the location of the facility, there may be resistance from local residents to both the construction of the facility as well as its ongoing operation. A number of the patients may enter the facility with an existing substance abuse situation, if that becomes a trend or drug addiction rehabilitation therapy is a provided service, there has been a tendency with facilities of that nature to promote an influx of narcotics activity into the area, where it did not previously exist. This naturally leads to an increase in both ancillary crimes and police activity.

Any risk of unintended side effects can be mitigated with proactive measures and partnership building with local government resources already in place.

Recommendation:

I recommend approval of the measure included in H.B. No. 2020 and H.B. No. 2021. Further, I would urge the placement of the facility to be in or near Leavenworth, Kansas. Although Leavenworth County does not have the highest population of the specified counties, it does have several already present advantages (existing military post [Ft. Leavenworth] with its existing logistical advantages; VA hospital with all its medical and logistical advantages; proximity to Leavenworth, KS and Lansing, KS, both are known to be supportive of current and prior military personnel.) and a population that is trending upward and a geographical advantage as being placed between Topeka, KS and Kansas City, MO.

There are currently 2 residential facilities in the State of Kansas. The first in Dodge City, KS provides 86 beds between domiciliary, long term and dementia care, complimented by 60 cottages. The second facility is located in Winfield, KS and provides 190 beds between domiciliary, long term and dementia care. Both locations provide services such as restorative care, physical therapy, occupational therapy, social services and psychological services.

While the two existing facilities provide coverage in the southwest and southcentral portions of the state, this bill provides for appropriate coverage in the northeast and most populous portion of the state. Locating a facility in Leavenworth County would provide an easily accessible (by highway and distributed population densities) center. Additionally, it is within a short driving distance of military support channels. This can aid in both logistical needs and mental health adjustments. The value of each of these is immeasurable.