

## United States Senate

December 4, 2009

The Honorable General Eric K. Shinseki (Ret.)  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20420-0001

Dear Mr. Secretary:

It has been brought to my attention that VA Medical Centers (VAMC) across the country have until January 1, 2010 to make improvements to be in compliance with new standards of surgical procedures. I would strongly suggest that VA provide a time extension, as well as the necessary resources to the Cheyenne VAMC to meet new requirements and maintain Level 2 surgical capabilities in Cheyenne.

The Cheyenne VAMC currently operates a Level 2 surgical program. I should point out that quality of patient care has not been in question by the VA or accrediting organizations. Consolidation of surgical services in Denver and Salt Lake City does not serve to achieve the objectives of improving procedures or patient safety. I oppose any attempts to diminish the level of surgical services currently offered in Cheyenne.

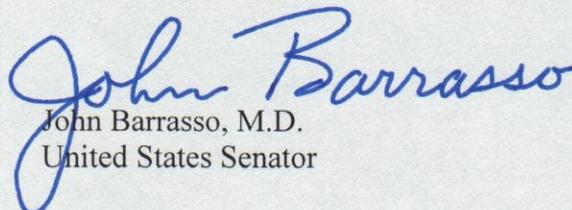
The Cheyenne VAMC serves veterans from a tri-state region, including Wyoming, Colorado and Nebraska. Wyoming's veterans currently travel long distances in often adverse weather to receive the services and care to which they are entitled. A reduction in the level of surgical programs in Cheyenne would cause an undue and unfair hardship to the veterans of the area. If anything, VA should consider the addition of services, rather than reducing or eliminating them.

The Cheyenne VA Medical Center (VAMC) is a critical component of the VA Rocky Mountain Network. I am fully confident that given adequate time to recruit, hire and train necessary personnel, it will meet and maintain these new requirements.

In striving to provide the very best care to our country's veterans, VA is to be commended for continued efforts to improve surgical procedures necessary to ensure quality of care and patient safety. I appreciate your leadership on this front.

Thank you for your consideration of extending the compliance deadline and your continued service to Wyoming's veterans.

Sincerely,

  
John Barrasso, M.D.  
United States Senator