

CHANCELLOR'S Notes



July 27, 2007

Letter from academic, political, and business leaders showing unified support for LSU/VA hospital in downtown New Orleans sent to VA Secretary

Governor Blanco sent a letter to VA Secretary James Nicholson this morning. It sends an important message about the broad-based consensus of support for the LSU/VA hospital to be built in downtown. Excerpts follow.

We write today to offer our strong support for the construction of a new Veterans Affairs Medical Center in downtown New Orleans. This new state of the art facility will ensure that the veterans of our region are provided with the highest quality care in a vibrant academic teaching and research environment.

In the more than 18 months since the MOU was signed, an LSU/VA Collaborative Opportunities Study Group (COSG) and a Collaborative Opportunities Planning Group (COPG) have set up the basic framework for construction and operation of the hospital complex outlined by the MOU. We believe this joint venture will save American taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars in operational costs while serving as the centerpiece of a vibrant academic teaching center and bioscience research zone.

Since Katrina, nearly 90% of our region's veterans have returned to the greater New Orleans region. With your support, significant progress has been made during the last

year in meeting the health needs of our veterans but they must still travel long distances to Alexandria, Mississippi and Houston for much of the care they require. It is time for the state and the VA to move forward as quickly as possible to establish permanent facilities to care for our rapidly expanding veterans population.

As the elected and appointed leadership of Louisiana and members of the New Orleans business community, we strongly believe that clustering our city's critical health care assets in downtown New Orleans will yield the highest quality care, education and research for all of the citizens of our region.

Clustering of health care assets has resulted in joint Tulane-LSU collaborations, such as development of a 60,000 square foot bioinnovation center and an \$86 million dollar Louisiana Cancer Research Consortium (LCRC) facility. The LCRC is expected to develop coordinated cancer research and education programs to optimize discovery and development of new cancer therapies and innovative clinical treatments for early detection, treatment and prevention of cancer. The VA is a cornerstone of these efforts and veterans will benefit as a result of the synergies created by such a dynamic research and teaching environment. Proximity to both the LSU and Tulane medical schools will maximize the involvement of highly trained faculty specialists providing value-added

clinical expertise to an already excellent level of care provided by the VA system.

Likewise Xavier University, which is nationally known for training minority pharmacy students, needs a new hospital to help educate future pharmacists.

In addition, local and state leaders from seven southeastern Louisiana parishes have unanimously passed a resolution expressing their collective support and their strong wish that the VA remain downtown. As well, the Louisiana Recovery Authority has called the hospital project and the return of high quality health care to New Orleans "one of the top priorities in Louisiana's recovery" and the Louisiana Legislature has endorsed the business plan for the LSU hospital.

Thank you for your commitment to our country and our veterans. We appreciate your attention to this matter and will make ourselves available at any time for further discussions or to assist in overcoming any remaining obstacles.

In addition to LSU leadership, it was signed by the Governor, Sens. Donald Hines and Joe McPherson, Reps. Joe Salter and Sydnie Mae Durand, Mayor Nagin, Arnie Fielkow, Drs. Scott Cowan, Norman Francis, Alan Miller, and Byron Harrell, Sandra Gunner, Jay Lapeyre, Walter Brooks, Kurt Weigle, and William Detweiler.