

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 20, 2006

The Honorable R. James Nicholson
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Elko, Nevada, is a thriving community of approximately 45,000 (4,300 of whom are veterans) located in the northeast corner of our state. The veterans living there are required to travel to the Salt Lake City Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center, some 250 miles distance through treacherous mountain roads, to receive healthcare services not locally available through VA resources. This is an intolerable situation that has existed for far too long. Attempts to provide Elko with a Community Based Outpatient Clinic have not been successful.

It is our understanding that the VA has authority under Title 38 USC 1703 to provide fee cards for hospital care and medical services for veterans when the VA is unable to provide necessary medical care or when the VA has determined VA healthcare facilities are geographically inaccessible. This is the case for Elko veterans.

We would appreciate your personal involvement in this matter. Permitting the veterans of Elko to participate in the Fee ID Card Program given their remote location is a common-sense solution to a grave problem. The veterans of Elko deserve no less.

We look forward to hearing of your progress in this matter at your earliest opportunity.

Sincerely,


Harry Reid
United States Senator


John Ensign
United States Senator