Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 4, 2009

The Honorable Eric Shinseki
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs
810 Vermont Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki:

We write to acknowledge and encourage your interest in the potential use of Silver Cross Hospital in Joliet, Illinois for veterans' health care.

Silver Cross Hospital plans to move out of its current facility in 2012. Last summer, the Hospital formed a community-based commission to explore options for reuse. Not surprisingly, given the limitations on current health care options for veterans in the area, the commission identified veterans' health as an optimal use for the space Silver Cross Hospital will vacate.

Our veterans drive up to 100 miles to reach Hines Veterans' Affairs Medical Center. It is our understanding that the VA's Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Joliet is constrained by space from expanding services beyond primary care.

If the Silver Cross campus presents an opportunity for VA to offer a larger and more robust array of services to Joliet-area veterans, we would strongly support such a decision.

Thank you for your interest to date in exploring these options. We look forward to learning of the Department's perspective and plans for Joliet-based services.

Sincerely,

Richard Durbin

Roland Burris

Judy Biggert

Debbie Halvorson

cc: Jeffrey A. Murawsky, MD, Director, VISN 12