

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:  
APPROPRIATIONS  
BUDGET  
HEALTH, EDUCATION,  
LABOR, AND PENSIONS  
HOMELAND SECURITY  
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

April 21, 2016

The Honorable Robert A. McDonald  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonald:

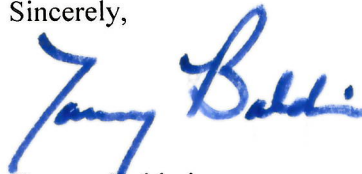
I am writing to share with you concerning allegations my office has received from constituents and Wisconsin State Senator Julie Lassa regarding conditions at the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King. While the daily operation of King is the responsibility of the State of Wisconsin, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is required by law to provide oversight of and funding for state veterans homes; as such, I request that you review these allegations and respond with the Department's plan to address any instances of substandard care at King, which should include the consideration of a "For-cause Survey."

According to Senator Lassa, multiple Wisconsin residents have submitted complaints regarding conditions at King, including that inadequate staffing levels are compromising patient care and leading to mandatory overtime for current staff members; infrastructure decay is resulting in potential dangers to human health, such as the discovery of Legionella bacteria in a McArthur Hall water heater; and direct veteran care funds are being misused for administration positions. To safeguard the health and well-being of King residents, the Department should immediately review and address these allegations.

VA provides funding to state veterans homes for both resident care and construction of facilities. According to VHA Handbook 1145.01, to be eligible for per diem payments, VA must annually survey and certify state veterans homes to ensure they meet Department standards. In addition to per diem payments, VA also provides grants to partially cover home construction and maintenance costs. Indeed, approximately two-thirds of new construction costs at state veteran nursing homes are covered by VA grants, further underlining the Department's oversight responsibility.

Thank you for your prompt consideration of this request. I would appreciate a response by May 20, 2016.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator

Enclosure