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August 5, 2014

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

Re: Invitation to visit Stanislaus County, California

Dear Secretary McDonald:

Congratulations on your confirmation as the new Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. It is exciting to see a man of your military background coupled with your private sector business experience leading the organization into the future. More than that, you appear to be a man of outstanding character and that continues to be of supreme importance when it comes to leading the affairs of our veterans. Your focus on conducting local town hall meetings is an important step in re-establishing credibility for the VA. I strongly believe that a focus on the veteran as a customer is an outstanding approach.

On behalf of the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors, I am inviting you to visit our County and meet with our veterans and service providers.

The Central Valley of California, and Stanislaus County in particular, provides important insights into the challenges our veterans face. With a population of 525,000, we are a mix of urban and rural communities, in an area of chronically high unemployment with a significant homeless veteran population. Our location presents a more rounded viewpoint than you might receive in a densely populated urban center.

We are 85 miles inland from the VA Palo Alto Health Care System and have an outpatient VA Medical Center as well as a Vet Center located in Modesto. We are also home to an extremely active Veterans Service Office and our area veterans also utilize the Oakland Regional Benefit Office. This is an ideal location for a focus group of veterans and providers to hear about the good things happening as well as the challenges they are facing with the VA System. We share a great partnership with our local veterans organizations and we are also pursuing the development of 25,000 square foot veterans meeting facility through a public/private partnership.

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I have been in touch with Congressman Jeff Denham (Tenth District) and he has expressed a similar interest in hosting you here in California in his district and we would be honored to help facilitate your visit.

Thank you for your consideration and thank you for your leadership. And as you stated in your message to VA Employees, you have the “noblest and most respected mission in Government—serving this Nation’s Veterans.” You do, indeed, and I truly hope your efforts to improve the department will succeed. We are happy to assist you with this.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim De Martini". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J".

Jim De Martini
Chairman