



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

November 22, 2019

The Honorable James M. Inhofe
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Inhofe:

Thank you for your October 28, 2019, co-signed letter to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regarding funding for the Tulsa Inpatient Facility and the Muskogee Behavioral Health Facility.

VA is excited about the Communities Helping Invest Through Property and Improvements Needed for Veterans Act of 2016 (CHIP-IN) proposal in Tulsa to address staffing, budgetary, and access challenges. The project would realize efficient use of clinical resources available in the Tulsa area, increase access to emergency care, improve specialty services, and expand educational programs and recruitment/retention efforts for high-quality health care professionals. The proposal has received overwhelming support from the VA's Federal, state, and municipal stakeholders, and VA appreciates your support for this project.

This project is a good value to the taxpayer because private-sector stakeholders have pledged resources to offset the cost of the project. It comes at an opportune time as the VA has been working to find a second viable project to execute under the CHIP-IN authority; the first CHIP-IN project is in Omaha, Nebraska and is showing great promise. As such, I have directed my staff to make the Tulsa CHIP-IN project one of our top priorities and work to secure funding as soon as possible.

VA is further exploring the potential to repurpose a portion of the Muskogee facility into a behavioral health facility, as noted above. This potential project is currently in the concept phase but cannot be fully developed until the potential Tulsa CHIP-IN project is addressed.

Should you have further questions, please have a member of your staff contact Mr. Brendon Gehrke, Congressional Relations Officer, at (202) 461-7318 or by email at Brendon.Gehrke@va.gov. A similar letter was sent to the cosigners of your letter.

Thank you for your continued support of our mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Robert L. Wilkie", is positioned above the printed name.

Robert L. Wilkie