

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 16, 2012

The Honorable Eric Shinseki
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki:

Thank you for your commitment and dedication to serving our nation's veterans. In New Hampshire, veterans represent approximately ten percent of the population, and we have worked closely together to ensure that our veterans have the care they need and deserve.

As the VA undergoes its regular process for determining where to establish Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) around the country, we ask you to consider Colebrook, New Hampshire. Colebrook is located in rural Coos County, which occupies the largest area of any New Hampshire county.

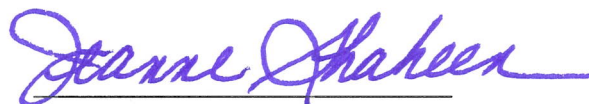
While Coos County's population is small compared to the area covered, there are some 3,605 veterans in New Hampshire's "north country," of which 1,821 are in the VA medical system. Many of these veterans are World War II, Korean War, or Vietnam era veterans. Currently, these veterans—many of whom are elderly—must travel two to three hours to the White River Junction, Vermont, VA Medical Center (VAMC), which has jurisdiction over Coos County. The nearest CBOCs are in Littleton and Conway, New Hampshire—each approximately two hours away. During inclement weather and winter driving conditions, the driving times are much longer and more hazardous.

Given the substantial obstacles veterans in our "north country" confront in getting the VA care they have earned, we ask the VA to consider whether the unique circumstances in Coos County warrant the establishment of a CBOC. We urge you to give this matter your highest priority, and we look forward to working with you to ensure all of the veterans of New Hampshire have access to the health care they deserve.

Sincerely,



Kelly A. Ayotte
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Charlie Bass
Member of Congress