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Donnelly pens letter to VA about Crown Hill Woods

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Sen. Joe Donnelly sent a letter to the Department of Veterans Affairs secretary Bob Arnold today requesting more dialogue with local residents regarding their planned development of a national cemetery within the grounds of Crown Hill cemetery in Indianapolis.

In the letter, Donnelly says while he appreciates the selection and is proud of the men and women who have served our country, the success of the project "will require sufficient input both from veterans as well as the local community." He asks the VA to continue to engage with Hoosiers and listen to their thoughts on the project.

And that's all.

It does not mentioned anywhere about the concerns Indy residents have with the project or the main focus of that concern – the destruction of an old growth forest containing 300-500 year old trees or an entire ecosystem of flora and fauna, including two species of endangered Indiana bats. In fact, the letter does not feature the words tree, animal, forest or environment at all, in any sentence.

Donnelly's office as well as other Indiana congressional representatives have received hundreds of calls from constituents asking for the senator's involvement in putting a halt to the project and asking the VA to re-open the public comment period and host a public hearing on the issue. While a public comment period was open prior to last year's sale of the land to the VA, notification of the comment period was minimal at best and no public hearing was held, despite evidence the Indiana Department of Environmental Management informed the VA of the potential controversy over the land.

Is Donnelly's letter a request for the comment period to be re-opened and a public hearing be held? After all that is what people want.

If it is, then why didn't he just say that?

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