

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

March 10, 2017

The Honorable David Shulkin
Secretary
United States Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shulkin:

We write to express our profound disappointment in the extent of the community outreach for the development and design of a columbarium national cemetery at the Crown Hill Cemetery in Indianapolis. This project, which should be a celebration of our brave veterans, has been turned into a contentious issue that has divided some of our community and has undermined local confidence in the Veterans Administration.

We wholly support the VA's efforts to build and expand its cemeteries to improve access for veterans and their families. Those who have served and sacrificed for our nation have earned our complete respect and they deserve the option to be buried in our national cemeteries. Unfortunately, in developing the plans for the new facility in Indianapolis, the VA made only cursory attempts to engage with those who wanted to express their concerns about the design and location of the facility.

As a result, some Hoosiers now feel they have to choose between either a new resting place for our veterans or a centuries-old forest. We believe it was possible to balance both. The VA's actions to date, however, have shaken some Hoosiers' confidence in the department's ability and willingness to do so. It did not have to be this way.

As the VA completes this project and others like it, we hope that the VA will learn from its mistakes so the department builds and maintains what can, and should, be broad support for honoring the brave men and women who have sacrificed for our country.

Sincerely,


Joe Donnelly
United States Senator


André Carson
Member of Congress