

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 5, 2015

The Honorable Robert McDonald
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
819 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonald:

Thank you for your work on behalf of our nation's veterans. We write to respectfully urge the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to expedite the review consistent with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations of a Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) contract proposal for a new, non-invasive colorectal cancer screening technology.

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death among men and women combined in the United States, killing more non-smokers than any other cancer. This year, more than 130,000 Americans will be newly diagnosed with colorectal cancer, and approximately 50,000 will die from the disease. These statistics are disturbing because colorectal cancer is one of the most preventable cancers due to highly-effective screening tools. Regular screenings can be the difference between life and death. Yet, about one in three adults between the ages of 50 and 75 – about 23 million people – are not getting screened as recommended.

Recent reports have indicated that some veterans are experiencing hurdles in timely access to colorectal cancer screening at VA facilities¹. In fact, a 2013 VA Inspector General report found that veterans experienced delays in gastroenterology consults, including colonoscopies, at a medical facility in South Carolina². The VA must work to improve cancer screening and treatment wait times for the veteran community.

In August 2014, under a pilot program for innovative technologies, the Food and Drug Administration approved a new, non-invasive colorectal screening test that detects potentially cancerous growths through the use of DNA screening. Subsequently, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services established reimbursement for this non-invasive colorectal screening test. According to patient studies, the new test, Cologuard, detected 92 percent of colorectal cancer as well as 69 percent of advanced precancerous polyps when compared with the traditional colonoscopy screening tool³.

Currently, patients and their doctors under Medicare and private insurance now have access for the first time to a new, non-invasive option for colorectal cancer screening. Unfortunately, our nation's veterans are still waiting. We urge you to expedite your review of this FSS contract proposal.

Thank you for considering our request and for your commitment to improving the health and well being our veterans.

Sincerely,



Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress



Michael G. Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



Reid J. Ribble
Member of Congress



John K. Delaney
Member of Congress



Charles B. Rangel
Member of Congress



Rodney Davis
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Leonard Lance
Member of Congress



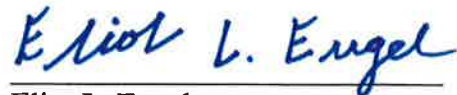
Bob Goodlatte
Member of Congress



Mike Thompson
Member of Congress



Robert A. Brady
Member of Congress



Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress



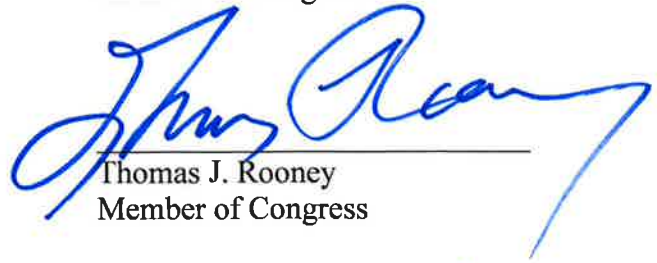
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



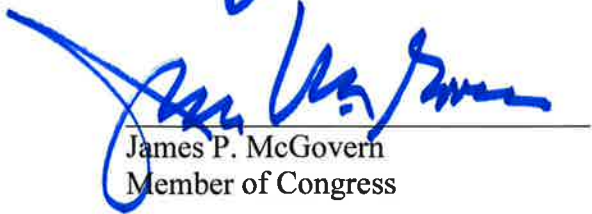
Brian Higgins
Member of Congress



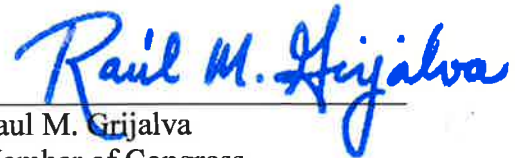
Betty McCollum
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Thomas J. Rooney
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



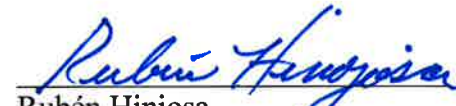
Keith Ellison
Member of Congress



David Scott
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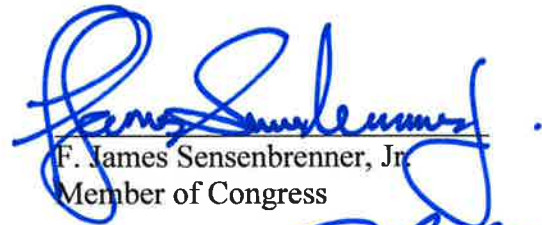
Matt Cartwright
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André Carson
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F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.
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Patrick E. Murphy
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Ed Perlmutter
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Gregg Harper
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Ted W. Lieu
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Sean P. Duffy
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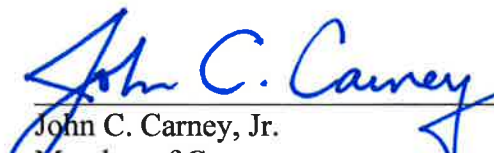

Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Albio Sires
Member of Congress

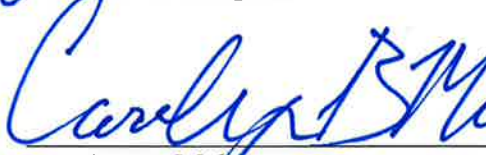

Glenn Grothman
Member of Congress


Gwen Moore
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Adam Smith
Member of Congress


Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress


G. K. Butterfield
Member of Congress


Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

¹House Veterans Affairs Committee hearing, April 9, 2014; “A Continued Assessment of Delays in VA Medical Care and Preventable Veterans Death”.¹

²Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Inspector General. “Healthcare Inspection: Gastroenterology Consult Delays William Jennings Bryan Dorn VA Medical Center Columbia, South Columbia”. September 6, 2014.

³Multitarget Stool DNA Testing for Colorectal-Cancer Screening”. Thomas F. Imperial, M.D., David F. Ransohoff, M.D., Steven H. Itzkowitz, M.D., Theodore R. Levin, M.D., Phillip Lavin, Ph.D., Graham P. Lidgard, Ph.D., David A. Ahlquist, M.D., and Barry M. Berger, M.D. New England Journal of Medicine; 3760: 1287-1297. April 3, 2014.¹