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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3226

March 19, 2013

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Hon. Eric Shinseki
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki,

I write today to express my deep concern with the decision to postpone the 2013 National Veterans Golden Age Games (NVGAG) scheduled to take place in Buffalo, New York. The Veterans Administration notified my office of this postponement on March 19, only two weeks after the VA signed the Conference Packet approving the event.

Work has been underway for the past six years in preparation for this event and Buffalo was officially awarded the 2013 NVGAG in August 2011. Thousands of hours have been spent by stakeholders in the Western New York convention and hospitality industry, VA personnel, military personnel, and local volunteers to prepare for this event. More than 2,500 veterans and families, supporters, sponsors and others were expected to come to Western New York and this postponement will result in a loss of in excess of \$ 2.2 million to our community.

The Department cites the current fiscal climate as the impetus for postponing this event. However, as you are aware the VA was exempt from sequestration including care, benefits and administrative expenses. The Continuing Resolution, H.R. 933, to fund the government through September 30th provides \$61 billion in discretionary funding for the VA – a \$2.5 billion increase which is also immune from sequestration.

Approximately 1,000 veterans will now not be able to compete in a pre-qualifying event for the senior Olympics and will suffer a loss for any non-refundable airline tickets purchased. Further, all the venues that committed to provide facilities for the games and will now need to scramble to find alternatives to replace this loss of income.

These games have been held for 26 years and I urge you to reconsider and proceed with the Games as agreed to by my community and your agency.

Sincerely,



Brian Higgins
Member of Congress