

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 25, 2013

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

Dear Secretary Shinseki:

We write to express our strong opposition to the decision to cancel the 2013 National Veterans Golden Age Games (NVGAG) scheduled to take place in Buffalo, New York May 30 through June 4.

This abrupt decision – made just two weeks after the VA signed the contracts and ten weeks before the competition was to begin, and after six years of planning – is incredibly shortsighted and unjustifiable. The VA made a commitment to this region and the people of Western New York, especially our veterans, deserve much better from their government.

More than 2,500 veterans and families, supporters, sponsors and others were expected to come to Western New York and this cancelation will result in a loss in excess of \$ 2.2 million to our community. Local businesses and organizers have invested time and money to ensure this event would be a success. The local hotel industry reports this will result in a loss of 5,000 room nights over a 7 day period. The majority of these hotel rooms have been blocked or reserved since October 2009. Additional staff was hired, and 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. Countless 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.

The Veterans Administration was created to serve our veterans. These games, which have been held for 26 years, fall within the department's core mission and priorities and we remain concerned about the justification for canceling this event given that the VA has indicated no plans to cancel several similar events being held this year in Colorado, North Carolina, Florida, California and other destinations.

Mr. Secretary we urge you to reconsider this decision and proceed with the Games as agreed to by the community and your agency.



BRIAN HIGGINS
Member of Congress



KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND
United States Senator



CHRIS COLLINS
Member of Congress

Sincerely,



CHARLES SCHUMER
United States Senator



LOUISE SLAUGHTER
Member of Congress



TOM REED
Member of Congress