

health care access for veterans, especially those living in southwest Kansas. He constantly worked on opportunities to bring the Department of Veterans Affairs to the area for general health care while finding ways to transport veterans to a VA regional hospital for specialty care. L.D. was one of many veterans whose efforts were rewarded when a VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic was opened at Ft. Dodge, Kansas, in 1999. He provided me valuable counsel and never let me forget that our Nation's veterans deserve the best health care possible.

I signed a picture taken of myself and L.D. during one of his trips to Washington, DC to represent the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I was proud and humbled to know the picture was displayed during his funeral. On that picture, I wrote the following words. "I wish Congress would serve our veterans as well as you and all veterans have served our country." Veterans have brought honor to our country through their military service. It is only right that their government honor its commitment to them.

In addition to his service to veterans, L.D. was devoted to his family. Over the course of their 63 year marriage, L.D. and his wife, Esther, were committed parents and grandparents. They raised twelve children and enjoyed 30 grandchildren.

In the many important roles L.D. filled in his life, he served out of a sense of duty. He made his community better and his Nation safer. I join L.D.'s many friends and admirers in paying tribute to a great man. My thoughts and prayers go out to Esther and the Minor family during this time of loss.

IN MEMORY OF DALLAS SAMS

HON. KEITH ELLISON

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 8, 2007

Mr. ELLISON. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and memory of Dallas Sams of Staples, Minnesota, former state senator, father and dedicated advocate for Minnesota's environment. He passed away last Monday after a hard fight against cancer.

During his sixteen years in the Minnesota State Senate, Dallas never forgot who he was or where he came from. A tireless advocate for rural Minnesota, he never passed up an opportunity to talk about the beauty of the lakes and fields that surrounded his home. In the last few years it was hard to have a discussion with him without discussing his most recent addition or renovation to his beloved cabin, his love for which was second only to his love for his children Seth, Stacia, Jordan, Mitchell and Michael, as well as his wife Mary Beth.

Dallas nurtured his passion for the land and the environment throughout his life. As a dairy farmer and agriculture management teacher he developed a hands-on knowledge and appreciation of our state's natural environment. His understanding of the vital importance of a clean and healthy ecosystem was clear in his work at the state legislature. One of his greatest accomplishments as the foremost advocate for ethanol in the state was the passage of his legislation mandating the Nation's highest ethanol and gasoline blend standard in

2005. He supported efforts to involve more young people in family farms in order to guarantee the success of the next generation in farming as well as made sure that summer youth employment programs in Minneapolis got adequately funded. His most sought after goal and one which was sadly never accomplished during his lifetime was the successful passage of legislation dedicating a portion of Minnesota's sales tax toward maintaining and protecting the environment that he loved so much. Perhaps this year will be the year his dream will finally be accomplished.

While history will record his accomplishments in terms of legislation passed and projects funded, those who knew him, whether for a lifetime or just for a few moments, will remember the passing of a man universally known for his humor, humility and honor. The true measure of our love and admiration for Dallas will not be found in the laws he passed but in the lives he touched through his good-humored nature, ready laugh and mischievous smile.

TO PRESERVE THE WALTER REED
ARMY MEDICAL CENTER ACT OF
2007

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 8, 2007

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, at the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform hearing on March 5, 2007 at Walter Reed Army Hospital, I asked the top brass who testified whether designating Walter Reed for closing in the midst of a war had contributed to any instability of personnel at the Walter Reed Hospital Garrison. Each of them responded unequivocally that the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) closing for Walter Reed had had a destabilizing effect on the hospital. Army Vice Chief of Staff General Richard Cody testified, "You're trying to get the best people to come here to work, and they know in three years that this place will close down and they're not sure whether they will be afforded the opportunity to move to the new Walter Reed National Military Center . . . that causes some issues." This and other testimony, as well as recent Washington Post revelations, have contributed directly to my introduction today of the "Preserve Walter Reed Army Medical Center Act of 2007." Several senior leaders of the relevant committees have since agreed that Walter Reed should be taken off the BRAC list and should remain open.

There have been no complaints about the hospital's world-class treatment or the hospital itself, which was built only in 1977, but the hearing laid bare a broken military health care outpatient system and bureaucracy in need of both long term and short term remedies. The epicenter of this system is its "crown jewel," Walter Reed Hospital, whose physical and administrative outpatient care have rapidly become a potent symbol of a national breakdown that will require systemic remedies for military and veteran hospitals across the country. However, because the problems are both deep and wide, we must find immediate solutions at each facility while the military outpatient systems are freed from knotted bureaucratic tangles.

A first step to take to stop the proverbial bleeding of staff and talent is to reverse the madness of closing the nation's best and most vital military hospital in the middle of a shooting war and the war on terrorism. This bill to reverse the closing of the Walter Reed base will help stabilize personnel who, as the generals testified, scatter once they believe a base will close. At a time when Walter Reed is receiving large numbers of injured soldiers and a military surge may mean many more, closing the Nation's premier military hospital should be unthinkable.

Moreover, leaving Walter Reed on the BRAC list has become increasingly untenable because closing the hospital carries with it a promise and an intention to build a new hospital by 2011. In the foreseeable future, no one expects the administration or Congress to come forward with the required \$2 billion to construct the proposed new Walter Reed in Bethesda, Maryland, and much more for moving costs and new equipment, given a huge and mounting deficit, and certainly not in the middle of a war, when funds must be committed to soldiers, their families, veterans and the war itself. Nevertheless, a repeal bill is necessary because, if Walter Reed continues to be listed for closing, Congress will continue to send a signal to personnel to make their career decisions accordingly. As is already occurring, Walter Reed will find it increasingly difficult to retain and hire personnel, including vital civilian clinical and medical personnel, particularly the very best; who the Nation expects will work at Walter Reed to attend to the most seriously injured military men and women.

Further, Walter Reed is an essential and integral component of the Emergency Preparedness Plan for the Nation's Capital. The hospital is located just 5½ miles from the White House, 6½ miles from the Capitol and 6 miles from the Washington Convention Center. Its location in the city is strategically important. If moved to Bethesda, traffic and distance would place Walter Reed outside of the homeland security system here that has been developed specifically to take account of the location of the top-tier Federal presence, officials and employees. Because of the location here Walter Reed is essential to treat mass casualties in the case of a terrorist attack. The hospital is part of the Emergency Preparedness Plan for the District, a system for treatment of acute illness or trauma of people requiring hospitalization from a chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or explosive incident. The specialized needs are above the District's hospital capacity. Thus, the District needs Walter Reed's available resources in order to comply with this Department of Homeland Security mandate.

I fully recognize that reversing a BRAC decision is and should be rare. However, particularly after what we have learned about unmet needs for injured members of the military returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan, this step is minimally necessary to stabilize operations at the Nation's most important hospital base for caring for our most seriously injured members of the military. Far from establishing a precedent, no other military facility stands on the same footing or has so central a mission. The question should not be can we take Walter Reed off the closing list but, why was this hospital scheduled to close in the first place, as our soldiers were engaged in a shooting