



During the final days of November 2023, we learned about the necessary closure of the NC State Veterans Home in Fayetteville, and the relocation efforts for the 85 residents from their home by February 2024. As reported by various news agencies, the NC Department of Military & Veterans Affairs (NC DMVA) is responsible for this facility, with care provided from PruittHealth, and with administrative oversight provided by Whitney Bell and Kweilin Belitsos. Officials have confirmed the current building is unsafe for occupancy, having structural and environmental issues beyond repair in its current location. NC DMVA leaders have promised to ensure each affected Veteran's wellbeing and best interests are top priority, and their excellent standards of care will continue and not be compromised after their relocations.

We, the NC Veterans Council, call upon our elected representatives in Raleigh and in Washington, DC to approve any emergency funding for our NC DMVA to acquire the necessary new home site; to approve an expedited contracting process and provide full funding for the immediate construction of a new NC State Veterans Home in the Fayetteville area; to fully fund the NC DMVA trust funds necessary for long-term administration, maintenance, and staffing for all of our NC State Veterans Homes; and to fully fund the NC DMVA trust funds necessary to support long-term administration, staffing and maintenance of our NC State Veterans Cemeteries.

As any responsible parties should always be held accountable where necessary, we must also recognize those in leadership who take necessary actions and make the proper tough calls. It is our understanding that NC DMVA leaders have met with each affected Veteran resident and many family members, to ensure the smoothest transition possible given the dire realities; details have been shared for current options and negotiations being implemented for all residents, with several Veterans already relocated or in the process of moving. We commend those NC DMVA leaders, and appreciate their compassions and actions thus far.

This isn't simply a facility to these Veterans; this is their home. We must not find ourselves asking, "What if this was your family member?" Make no mistake; these ARE our family! These are our loved ones, who answered our nation's call to service, put on the uniforms, and defended liberty and freedom wherever their duties were demanded. We owe them a debt of gratitude, and must show our appreciation, giving them the respect and dignity they have earned and deserve. Simply relocating these patriots to other locations and other accommodations is not satisfactory. We call on our elected representatives to act now, and help ensure the replacement of this home.

While we appreciate these efforts, we cannot accept simple promises of tomorrow. Remember, it took several extra years for the NC State Veterans Home in Kernersville to finally open. This isn't the play *ANNIE* where we will accept being entertained with a song and dance about "tomorrow"; we must see action today. Today is when our elected representatives fully fund and support the NC DMVA efforts to replace this home and restore dignity and normalcy to the lives of our affected Veterans, not tomorrow. Today is when our elected representatives fully fund and support our NC DMVA in their responsibilities for the other NC State Veterans Homes, not tomorrow. Today is when our elected representatives fully fund and support our NC DMVA to provide respectful cemetery services for our heroes, not tomorrow. Our NC DMVA cannot provide their vital ministries to our deserving patriots and heroes without the necessary assets and talent.

Today is when our elected representatives prove that NC is the most friendly, the most respectful, and the most grateful state in the nation to Veterans and their families...not tomorrow.

Respectfully,

Jay Wood  
Commander, NC Veterans Council