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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-0701**

June 11, 2003

**COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES**  
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The Honorable Anthony J. Principi  
Secretary  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Principi:

I am writing today to bring to your attention H.R. 890, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Veterans Equitable Treatment Act (VET-21). I have introduced this bill to ensure adequate health care access by setting standards for appointments using the VA's established performance goals. If the VA is incapable of meeting these standards, this legislation would allow service or treatment at a non-VA medical facility for which a veteran would have otherwise qualified within the VA system.

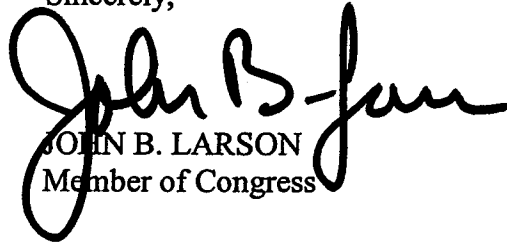
May I commend you for your positive work on behalf of our veterans. As you know, the recently released final report by the President's Task Force to Improve Health Care Delivery for Our Nation's Veterans included a number of recommendations. My legislation specifically addresses Recommendation 5.2:

VA facilities should be held accountable to meet the VA's access standards for enrolled Priority Groups 1 through 7 (new). In instances where an appointment cannot be offered within the access standard, VA should be required to arrange for care with a non-VA provider, unless the veteran elects to wait for an available appointment within VA.

As you consider a number of critical veterans issues, I wanted to make you aware of this inequity in the VA health care system and the legislation I first introduced in the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress to address it. For your review, I have enclosed a copy of the bill, a summary, and letters of support from a number of veterans organizations.

Again, thank you for your work on behalf of our veterans. I look forward to working with you and my colleagues in Congress to address this crucial issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John B. Larson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being the most prominent part.

JOHN B. LARSON  
Member of Congress