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Congressional Record S. 14011 - Fort Harrison Veterans Administration Hospital

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. PASTORE. I yield.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, before the Senator gets into the main part of his speech I wish to ask a question about the Veterans' Administration hospital at Fort Harrison, Mont.

I have been receiving a number of communications from various veterans' organizations and individual veterans in Montana about the fact that the Veterans' Administration at Fort Harrison has closed a 40-unit wing, stating they could give better service with the remaining facility. That may be true or it may not be true, but the fear on the part of veterans in Montana—and the State covers approximately 148,000 square miles—is that the Veterans' Administration is using this as a first step to close down permanently this 40-unit wing, thereby reducing the capability of Fort Harrison to take care of the needs of veterans in Montana. Can the distinguished chairman of the committee give me some information on this particular situation?

Mr. PASTORE. Yes, I would be delighted to do so.

Mr. President, the distinguished Senator from Montana raised the same question at the markup in full committee. Pursuant to that statement we had the staff check into it in detail. The staff took the matter up with the proper agency and the proper authorities therein. We have been assured that that particular wing is closed temporarily because of the lack of patients, but it is available and will be available, and it is not to be abandoned.

Mr. MANSFIELD. I could not ask for more of an assurance than that. On behalf of the veterans of Montana I wish to thank the chairman of the committee, the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. PASTORE) for his assurance that this 40-unit wing will not be abandoned.

Mr. PASTORE. It was a pleasure to make the inquiry and gain that assurance.