



Office of the Governor

**MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Gov. Lujan Grisham makes impromptu stop at the New Mexico Veterans Home to visit with veterans, check on progress of improvements**

TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES – Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on Tuesday conducted an impromptu visit to the New Mexico Veterans Home in Truth or Consequences to meet with residents and staff to personally check on the progress of improvements recently implemented to provide a higher quality of care for veterans at the facility.

“It was important for me to talk directly to veterans and get their candid assessment of the progress we are making. This is not something that can be fully understood by reading a report. I needed to hear first-hand from the residents, because at the end of the day, all of our efforts are about providing the best care for the veterans who served our country,” Gov. Lujan Grisham said.

The governor has made it clear to the Secretary and staff at the Department of Health, as well as staff and leadership at the Veterans Home, that any resource required will be provided and that any bureaucratic obstacles that could impede progress will be removed. The governor is fully committed to providing the best possible care for all our veterans and will leave no stone unturned to make sure that happens.

“After speaking with several veterans on Tuesday, I was happy to hear that we are making progress and that the direct care they are receiving continues to improve. I know we have more work to do. That’s why we invested over \$60 million into providing new, state-of-the-art facilities which will become operational starting next year. I reassured them all that I will continue to hold accountable those in charge of our veterans’ care until every metric is met and every deficiency is corrected,” Gov. Lujan Grisham said. “I also made several commitments to them based on their feedback, including increasing transportation options, improving their access to medical specialists and more flexibility for meal options and times.”

Following annual surveys by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the state Department of Health in June, deficiencies at the facility were identified. The administration took

immediate action to correct the deficiencies and is working to bring the facility into compliance to not only meet but exceed the standards of care. Leadership is confident that the facility will be back in compliance within the time allotted by the Health and Human Services Department, with a reinspection to occur later this year.

Several important steps have already been taken by the team to improve care and correct deficiencies. Since the inspection the following actions have been taken by the state:

- The leadership responsible for the failures in care was held accountable: five individuals were terminated and two registered nurses were reported to the nursing board with eight other staff counseled or reprimanded.
- A strike team of experts was brought in to assess, improve and implement corrective measures and procedures for residents and staff. The team includes an expert long-term care professional, a certified Infection Control Nurse and multiple compliance specialists.
- All staff are being fully retrained in 18 critical areas of care to ensure every staff member has a robust clinical foundation.

In July, Gov. Lujan Grisham joined Veterans Home residents, families and staff to celebrate the groundbreaking of 12 new state-of-art homes that will replace the current aging structure which was built in the 1930s. The new units are needed to provide the highest level of care for our veterans and their families.

The state has invested \$60 million for the new facility. Six of the 12 new units are scheduled to be completed ahead of schedule in 2023. Once all 12 are fully operational, all residents will then be housed in the new facilities, which include private rooms and bathrooms, as well as open concept living spaces and kitchens available for use by residents.

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