



TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE

JERRY PATTERSON, COMMISSIONER

Office of Communications • Mark Dallas Loeffler, Director
1700 N. Congress Ave. • Austin, TX 78701-1495 • 512-463-5339 • Fax: 512-475-1415

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 6, 2010

Contact: Jim Suydam

Office: (512) 463-5339

cell: (512) 417-5382

Patterson encourages greater focus on veterans care

Stories by Dallas Morning News reporter rally call for improvement

AUSTIN — Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson today joined the *Dallas Morning News* and journalist James Drew in calling for greater scrutiny of the quality of care for the elderly, including residents in the state's Texas State Veterans Homes.

“For 12 years, our State Veterans Homes have been providing the best care anywhere,” Patterson said. “But providing top-quality care requires constant vigilance by our staff and contractors, veterans organizations, regulatory agencies, advocacy groups and the media. The attention brought to this issue by the *Dallas Morning News* shines a vital spotlight on the need to clarify and strengthen the oversight of all long-term care facilities in Texas.”

As state senator, Patterson authored the legislation that created the Texas State Veterans Home system in 1998 and has added three new homes in the past seven years as Chairman of the Texas Veterans Land Board. Construction on a new veterans home in Tyler will begin this year.

On Sunday, the *Dallas Morning News* gave front-page coverage to nearly three year old allegations of abuse against elderly veterans at Texas State Veterans Homes in Big Spring and Amarillo. The Howard County District Attorney indicted two former employees at the Big Spring home last week, blaming the state's cumbersome investigation process as a reason for the delay in filing charges for the 2007 cases.

“I want any allegation of abuse prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law,” said Patterson, a Vietnam veteran, former Marine and likely future resident at a Texas State Veterans Home. “Bureaucracy should never get in the way of caring for our veterans.”

On Monday, the *Dallas Morning News* quoted long-term care advocates calling for greater cooperation and increased training for law enforcement investigating allegations of elderly abuse.

“If everyone works together, we can ensure better care. Veterans deserve nothing less,” Patterson said.

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“As a long-time veterans advocate, I appreciate any increased scrutiny of the care provided to my fellow veterans,” Patterson said. “I encourage every Texan to visit a State Veterans Home in their area and see for themselves.”

Today, the Texas Veterans Land Board and its contractor in Big Spring, Senior Dimensions, announced there would be an Open House at the Big Spring home, tentatively scheduled for April 29. The public is invited to visit the home for tours and refreshments. Details are pending.

On Monday, Mike Barber, state commander of the Texas Veterans of Foreign Wars, sent Patterson a letter of support for his continued commitment to the Texas State Veterans Home system.

“Our 85,000 members appreciate the continued efforts of you and your staff in operating the nursing homes and your aggressive stance to create new homes,” Barber wrote. “These veterans homes have been so instrumental in affording Texas veterans a safe, secure and well-maintained facility.”

Texas State Veterans Homes offer a broad spectrum of health care services, comprehensive rehabilitation programs, special diets, recreational activities, social services, libraries, and certified, secured Alzheimer’s units, each with its own secured outdoor courtyard.

Currently, there are Texas State Veterans Homes in Amarillo, Big Spring, Bonham, El Paso, Floresville, McAllen and Temple. Construction on a home in Tyler begins this month.

For additional information on Texas State Veterans Homes and special home, land and home improvement loans for Texas veterans, call 800-252-VETS (800-252-8387) or visit our Web site at www.texasveterans.com.

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