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## **2003 Budget Committee Meeting**

**Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, my name is Gary Bermeosolo and I stand before you today as the newest Administrator of the Nevada Veterans Nursing Home. Let me share with you that I am both honored and privileged to have the opportunity to assist a truly dedicated staff in "Caring for Americas Heroes."**

**I am a disabled navy veteran who spent two duty tours in Vietnam. I hold lifetime memberships in the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Disabled American Veterans. With that kind of background, you will not be surprised at the fact that I can think of nothing more satisfying than providing quality nursing care to the heroes who have safeguarded the freedoms that we Americans enjoy.**

**Let me assure you that I come to Nevada with considerable experience in the state veterans home business. I served as the Director of Veterans Affairs for the State of Idaho for nearly twenty years. During that time, I participated in the construction and opening of two new veterans homes and the remodel of an existing one. I not only was the Director of Veterans Affairs, but I also carried my nursing home and residential care licenses and administered the Boise Home for eleven years. I even did a six month stint at the Pocatello Veterans Home when its first nursing home administrator didn't work out.**

During this entire period, I was actively involved in the National Association of State Veterans Homes. My involvement with this Association enabled me to become extremely familiar with the VA state home program. In fact, some of you may recall that in the early 1990s, I spoke to members of the Nevada Legislature about the virtues of the state home program. Within VA circles, however, I am probably best known as that state director who sued VA for not providing medications to eligible veterans in state veterans homes. I prevailed and VA medications are now widely available to qualified residents in state homes. I imagine Mr. Fulkerson knew all this when he contacted me and asked me to help out with the new Nevada Home in its quest to gain VA recognition so it can begin receiving per diem payments for the veterans who reside there.

Let me assure you that the Home is very close to receiving VA recognition. Our Plan of Correction has been accepted and is pending VA Central Office approval. We are expecting a follow-up survey at any time and once we successfully pass that, the VA dollars should start to flow.

In closing, I want to say that I am very much aware that our Veterans Home got off to a rather rocky start. It's unfortunate, it was avoidable, but it happened nevertheless. I suppose this "rocky start" perpetuated some of the talk I have heard about privatization. I want you to know that I too favor privatization of those elements of the home that will be cost effective and will not jeopardize the quality of the care we provide. I would discourage you from putting the entire home out to bid for a

private contractor to operate. I know of some neighboring states such as Oregon and Utah that have tried this, and the results have been less than desirable. I'm told that both states are involved in soliciting bids for their third contractor. They have struggled financially and have had difficulty keeping their resident census up. I firmly believe that a state operated home is the best way to go. The staff turnover will be lower and ultimately, the patient care will be better. That is the major reason the State of Mississippi has recently cancelled the private contracts they had on all four of their homes and assumed their control. Mr. Chairman, Committee Members, give my team members and me a chance...a chance to make our veterans home what it was truly intended to be...a place where veterans can go to spend their final days with dignity, respect, and love. After all, these are America's true Heroes, and they deserve no less. Thank you, God Bless you, and God Bless America!

Mr. Chairman, I would be happy to stand for questions.