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Reasons Why
West Virginia Veterans' Hospital
Should Be Located at
West Virginia University

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I observe from the press that the bill providing an appropriation of \$15,950,000 for veterans' hospitals has passed both houses of Congress and includes an item of \$700,000 for a hospital for this State. Next in importance to this appropriation comes the proper planning and location of the hospital in order that each dollar spent may be most effectively employed in the service of our soldiers. Most assuredly every town and city in the State will proclaim itself the most natural and desirable location for the hospital. But in deference to the highest service for our veterans, we must waive the aspirations of particular sections.

No provincial or narrowly sectional interest, but rather the comprehending viewpoint of a statesman would locate this hospital on the University grounds. The reasons for this are obvious. Ours is a State University, owned, like our State capitol, by all the people. Its program is commensurate with the boundaries of the State; its students come from every county; it stands at the head of our common school system.

I wish for a good many reasons that the hospital might be located on the grounds of the West Virginia University. This would result in a number of benefits mutual as between the Federal Veterans' Hospital, the University and our State.

Geographically, there are many sites more centrally located than the University campus. Heretofore, however, this would have been an argument against a central location, in that it has been found necessary to go around the State to get through it, its central portion being comparatively inaccessible. All this, however, is rapidly becoming history, with the development of our road system which is making any and all sections of the State readily accessible to one another. Any disadvantage to the University from its location fifty miles distant from the center of the State has, thanks to the ready means of communication recently provided, been reduced to the point of indifference. The larger consideration is no longer geographical in nature, but lies in the affiliating agencies at hand.

I should hope that the University authorities would not stint in giving the hospital commodious grounds, high and dry, so that the entire appropriation might be invested in building and equipment. Located in proximity to our Medical College, our well-equipped Health Service, whose total treatments average 1,462 a month, our University agencies for scientific analysis in our chemical, biological and pathological laboratories, it would have at its disposal agencies, not elsewhere provided in the State, for diagnosing, testing, analyzing, and consulting at a minimum cost or gratuitously.

Our chemical laboratory stands among the first in the country. The new hospital must have chemical analyses, and it could not provide as ably manned or well equipped service elsewhere in the State at the cost of the hospital itself. Our laboratories in pathology, bacteriology and preventive medicine would be in constant service to the hospital. To duplicate these expensive facilities by locating the hospital where they are not is indefensible. For purposes of aid and consultation, the ever-present faculty of the Medical School presents another consideration of singular importance. While the hospital would take on additional value from contact with these agencies, they would in turn find their own value to the State enhanced from their practical contact with a great clinic. These mutual advantages would be rapidly multiplied in the extension of our Medical School into a full-fledged medical college with its attendant corps of internes and the greatly increased number of cases brought to this center for study and treatment.

Respecting the advantages of the hospital in the upbuilding of the University: At this time when the University is working away from the undergraduate routine, which has heretofore absorbed its energies, toward a research institution of the first order and toward the strengthening of our professional schools to afford our youth opportunities as good as the best, the establishment of the hospital on the University grounds would be most timely. It would go far toward furnishing our Medical School clinical facilities comparable to the advantages offered in the great cities, facilities which our students would almost totally be denied were the hospital located elsewhere. Supplemented by the local hospitals, it would afford the West Virginia University more clinical material, in greater variety and amount, than is had, for instance, by Grade "A" medical colleges in small places such as Iowa City, Madison, Ann Arbor and Charlottesville. It is no mean advantage for a medical college to have hospital facilities wherein the graduates may serve their internship in the vicinity of their training.

The success of this University lies solely in its service to the State. In fully equipping students by way of training and internship for practice in the State, the necessity for locating the hospital here looms large. Our present situation affords a bitter experience for our citizens, who are providing means to train students in

medicine, which students go elsewhere to complete their work and are lost to the State. Available records indicate that our State is seriously under-manned with competent physicians. Certain of our counties are so inadequately manned that we have between four and five hundred licensed midwives in the State. For want of competent physicians, our Legislature has been forced by necessity to recognize this type of malpractice. The dire need for more physicians caused the introduction of a bill to finance students in medical schools outside the State on condition that they would return to practice for ten years in certain of our rural counties. Now that there is an opportunity to take a long step toward training facilities to supply this need, why forgo it?

This point takes on added emphasis when we contemplate the consequences of malpractice from untrained medical aid. Our State has an unbecoming record from malpractice in the form of infections, loss of health, premature deaths, and the want of corrective work among children which would prevent easily remedied deficiencies from maturing into permanent abnormalities. When we can offer the last two years in Medicine, together with interne facilities for the graduate, we can hold within the State our young men and women who go elsewhere for their finishing work and are placed by the school graduating them outside of West Virginia.

Our State must look forward to a great medical center, the natural location of which is about our Medical College. Other states have such centers; they are an essential part of the social equipment. At present our citizens, when afflicted, must go to Johns Hopkins, Cleveland, New York or elsewhere. Except for the few, the expense is prohibitive.

A coordinate development with the medical center would be a training school for nurses. Not only will there be a greatly enhanced demand for trained nurses when the hospital is in operation, but additional nurses should be had to supply the felt need for their services in the State. Physicians tell me that the supply is so limited that, except for the few, competent nurses are not to be had.

Every modern movement in the field of medicine with which I am acquainted points to the wisdom of coordinating the Medical School, the affiliated laboratories, the training school for nurses, and the hospitals or clinical facilities. Like site and dam in the location of a power plant, hospitals and training facilities are inseparable in the rounded equipment of a medical center. It behooves the State, whose medical facilities are limited at best, not to weaken by disseminating its strength, but rather to marshal its forces by pooling them. Like the fabled bundle of sticks, they are weak when separated, but bound together they are of great strength. The plan of coordination this letter has endeavored to suggest would give us a medical center of no mean strength, and one of invaluable service to West Virginia.

The placement of the hospital on the University grounds has, moreover, the effect of a financial investment for the State. It would contribute \$700,000 which otherwise the State, sooner or later, will have to supply of its own accord for a medical college hospital. It would amount to a saving of \$700,000 in taxes from the pockets of the people.

The more thoughtful will find a stimulating suggestion in the move to locate this hospital at the University. They will view it not as an isolated thing, but as a part of a vast medical center for veterans and the whole State, and its financial burden upon our citizens will be not more than one-third of its total cost. The clinical facilities provided by this \$700,000 veterans' hospital will incline the State to hasten its plans for a full-fledged medical college. This step made by the State, a great foundation has implied its willingness to step in with a large donation. This foundation has rendered vast aid to other institutions, including state universities. Its policy is not to help states unwilling to help themselves, or to "bait" legislatures by acting in advance of state appropriations. While this statement is not recent and is in no sense binding on the foundation, it was made in specific reference to this University. It does indicate, however, that the assured benefits peculiar to this location for the veterans and the State are attended by still larger possibilities.

In short, its location here would give force and effect to the purpose of Congress in making the appropriation; render the highest service to our veterans at the least cost; make an invaluable contribution toward the establishment of a medical center comparable to the best; stock our State, now under-manned, with well-equipped physicians; avoid an expensive and needless duplication of hospital facilities; and remove a \$700,000 burden from our tax-payers.

In sum and substance, whether the matter is viewed from the standpoint of Congress in making the appropriation for our veterans, or the wellbeing of the University, or the interest of the State, the weight of reason suggests that the location of the hospital on the University grounds would accord with the fullest measure of mutual service.

