



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

Washington, DC 20515

August 28, 2020

The Honorable Robert Wilkie  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
801 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Thank you for everything that you and the people of your agency do to care for America's heroes.

I write today to express concerns over the rising number of COVID-19 cases and deaths at the Wisconsin Veterans Home at Union Grove, in Wisconsin's First Congressional district.

While this is a state-run facility, I am aware that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is already assisting with the outbreak. This potentially life-saving assistance is greatly appreciated. Given the importance of providing the best care possible to America's veterans and their families, I ask for your continued assistance and ask that your agency conduct a thorough investigation of this matter to prevent future outbreaks.

As you may know, on August 15, 2020, this facility reported that 20 residents and 20 staff members tested positive for COVID-19 and three residents have died.<sup>1</sup> In response to this outbreak, it is my understanding the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) is now taking further precautions to prevent the spread, mandating that members quarantine in their rooms for 14 days, and limit contact with staff.<sup>2</sup>

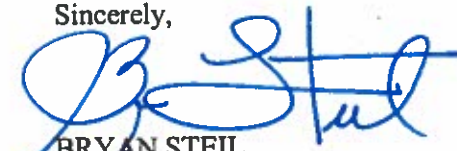
Since the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak in America, we have known that this virus presents significant risks to older populations and has been especially deadly in nursing home situations. Given the data we have seen, it is imperative that significant precautions be maintained in these facilities. I want to ensure the VA is taking sufficient precautions to mitigate transmission of COVID-19 and provide proper oversight of WDVA facilities working to combat the virus.

I respectfully request that your agency investigate this matter and provide a report on:

- How the outbreak began at the Union Grove facility;
- What mitigation measures are in place to prevent further COVID-19 outbreaks at the Union Grove facility; and
- The VA's plan to prevent and respond to COVID-19 outbreaks in other VA facilities.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter and for your ongoing leadership. I am ready to work with you and your team to ensure that our veterans and the VA's frontline healthcare workers are provided with the highest quality of care during this challenging time for our country. We must protect our veterans and do everything we can to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Sincerely,



BRYAN STEIL  
Member of Congress

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wisn.com/article/three-residents-die-of-coronavirus-at-veterans-nursing-home-in-union-grove/33611930>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fox6now.com/news/union-grove-veterans-home-makes-changes-after-12-vets-11-staff-test-positive-for-virus>