

*Says veterans in south central Minnesota will see expanded access to VA care with facility located in Mankato*

Mankato, MN – Today, Rep. Walz applauded the VA's South Central VA Outpatient Clinic announcement, saying expanded access to VA facility in Mankato is a win for veterans.

Walz was notified by the Department of Veterans Affairs Under Secretary of Health Dr. Robert Petzel, that the VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic contract has been awarded to Sterling Medical Associates for a clinic in Mankato with a satellite clinic in St. James. Veterans in southern Minnesota have been looking forward to this announcement. Currently, local veterans can receive mental health services in Mankato, but not primary care. With the opening of this clinic, veterans will have access to both mental health services and primary care in Mankato.

“Southern Minnesota veterans often have to drive over an hour to Minneapolis to receive VA care. This award announcement and the anticipated opening in April is great news. Many veterans just can't make the drive anymore and are forced to resort to private insurance or Medicare for their primary care,” said Rep. Walz. “I have been pushing the VA to get this done and I am pleased with today's announcement.”

“Congressman Walz has been a strong advocate for southern Minnesota veterans, working with us to ensure this project is delivered, so those veterans have improved access to primary care.” said Dr. Robert Petzel, VA Undersecretary for Health.

Walz discussed the need for rural veterans to have better access to primary care, including the completion of this clinic, with VA Secretary Shinseki when he was in Mankato this summer.

Congressman Walz is member of the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. The Subcommittee provides oversight on programs and operations of the Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as those of other federal agencies that pertain to veterans.