

Senator Patrick Leahy (D), Senator Bernie Sanders (I) and Representative Peter Welch (D) Friday announced that the Vermont Veterans Home (VVH) in Bennington is on a high priority list to receive federal funding for an electronic medical records system from the Department of Veterans Affairs. If approved, more than \$790,000 would be awarded for the project, through VA's State Home Construction Grant program. A grant, which would cover 65 percent of the project's cost, would require the state to cover the remaining 35 percent. Vermont officials have confirmed that state matching funds have already been secured.

The electronic medical record system would allow the Veterans' Home to improve communication across departments, streamline their billing systems and ensure better accuracy of patients' medical information. Melissa Jackson, the administrator of VVH, believes that it will also directly improve the quality of care for each veteran. "The EMR will decrease the amount of time our staff spends completing daily documentation and increase the amount of time they spend with our Veterans and Members," said Jackson.

The Vermont congressional delegation hailed the VA's decision to prioritize the VVH project. Leahy, Sanders and Welch have all promoted transitioning the VA and the country as a whole to using electronic medical records to improve health care. In a joint statement the delegation called the announcement "a promising prospect for improving the quality of care for those brave Vermonters who have our served our country in uniform."

Jackson thanked the VA, the State of Vermont and the congressional delegation and said that VVH is eager for the EMR system to be implemented. She said, "I am asked on a regular basis when it will be up and running, and we are hoping it will be within the next year."