**From:** bluemountain@montana.com
**To:** "bcc"; John Engen; Grp. City Council and City Web Site; Sandra Vasecka
**Subject:** Opening ceremony of David Thatcher VA Health Clinic on Friday, Feb. 4
**Date:** Wednesday, February 9, 2022 1:17:00 PM

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Dear Mayor Engen, Missoula City Council and Missoula County Commissioners,

I was one of many veteran supporters that have for many years advocated for the new David Thatcher VA Health Clinic that opened near the Missoula Airport with great fanfare last Friday, Feb. 4 but was very disappointed and angry that many people, including you, much local media and many Missoula veterans and their supporters were excluded from the opening ceremonies. We were not invited or even informed that a grand ceremony took place at the new health clinic.

When I called Senator Daines' and Rep. Rosendale's offices on Monday, Feb. 7, I was told that they were informed that attendees were limited to 50 and an audience beyond that was not allowed due to covid, but in reality, the Missoulian reported that in excess of 200 people attended the ceremony, including honor and color guards from well outside Missoula. The local veteran honor and color guards that perform veteran funeral ceremonies and military honors for many special events throughout the year weren't even told about the opening ceremony on Feb. 4.

My understanding is that this opening ceremony was organized by VA bureaucrats outside Montana that must not have known that David Thatcher was a hometown hero from Missoula with my ties to the Missoula veteran community. At his funeral in 2016 thousands of average Missoulians attended his service to respect him and several hundreds of veterans and supporters would have liked to have attended the opening ceremony on Friday to once again honor David since the clinic is named for him.

I am disgusted that since taxpayer money from county and city coffers went into the land for this health clinic, you as our elected officials were not invited to the ceremony. At minimum, you all should have been invited. Key leaders from local veterans groups should have been invited, too.

I suggested that you all formally object to the opening ceremony held without you and Missoula veterans and their supporters and demand of VA that a second more inclusive opening ceremony take place that invites you, the local media, including our radio stations, and the local American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars posts that were excluded February 4. In other words, there should be a do-over.

Sincerely,

Susan Campbell Reneau

Volunteer for veteran events and services, averaging 4,000 to 5,000 hours a year
Life Member of VFW and American Legion Auxiliaries, At-Large