

STATE OF COLORADO

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

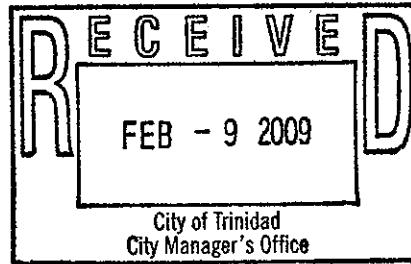
136 State Capitol Building
Denver, Colorado 80203
(303) 866 - 2471
(303) 866 - 2003 fax



Bill Ritter, Jr.
Governor

February 5, 2009

Joseph Reorda
Office of the City Manager
P.O. Box 880
Trinidad, CO 81082



Thank you for contacting me and expressing your concern about the Trinidad State Nursing Home. I regret that there has been some confusion about my future plans for that facility. I hope that this letter will clear up some things, and reassure you that I am not planning to close the facility. Let me first address the problem we are facing, and then what we are proposing for legislation in the 2009 session.

The State and Veterans Nursing Homes do not receive state general funds for operating costs, so they must be able to earn enough revenue to be self-supporting. Trinidad, along with four Veterans Nursing Homes, is included in a Central Fund called the 505 Fund. Currently, \$1 million from that fund's annual budget is needed to support the operating deficit the Trinidad State Nursing Home. Over \$10 million per year of monies received to the fund come with strings attached from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. We are unable to continue subsidizing the annual deficit at Trinidad from that fund. Unfortunately, given Colorado's budget restrictions, we do not have additional money in the general fund to support Trinidad's losses.

That's why my administration is proposing legislation that will do two things. First, the proposed legislation would transfer ownership of the Trinidad State Nursing Home from the state to a private or public entity. That's probably where some have gotten the mistaken idea that my administration is closing down the facility. We recognize that the home is providing essential long-term care services, and that there are no other nursing homes in the community. Based on that concern, a second and crucial element is also included in the proposed plan, namely that any new ownership of the home will need to include a plan for operating the facility so that it remains open and available to provide care to the elders and employment for the residents in your community. My administration will take an active part in determining who will be in the best position to do so. That new ownership could be a public or private nursing home provider, or it could be a public-private partnership. The bill has already been introduced in the General Assembly and has been designated SB09-56, or Senate Bill 56. State Senator Ken Kester (R-Las Animas) is the legislative sponsor for SB09-56.

Once again, I am not trying to close the Trinidad State Nursing Home. In fact, I am trying to find a solution that will keep the facility open, maintain good quality care and provide a nurturing home for its residents while trying to balance a budget in tough financial times. I think

the best way to reconcile all of these things is by transferring the ownership and operation of the Trinidad State Nursing Home *and* finding a new provider.

Finally, I am very aware of the strong support for the Home in the Trinidad and Las Animas County area, as well as the concerns expressed in your letters. In that regard, I am particularly pleased to learn of recent efforts initiated by the Trinidad Community Foundation to pull together elected officials, the chamber, health care providers, the newly created Health District, and others in the community to assist in addressing this important matter. Your continued support, involvement and assistance will be essential to find a solution that works for those who rely on the Home for care and their families, for the employees at the Home, and for the community as a whole.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bill Ritter, Jr." in a cursive style.

Bill Ritter, Jr.
Governor