



SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 18-003

BY SENATOR(S) Garcia, Aguilar, Cooke, Coram, Court, Crowder, Donovan, Fenberg, Fields, Gardner, Guzman, Hill, Jahn, Jones, Kagan, Kefalas, Kerr, Marble, Merrifield, Moreno, Todd, Williams A., Zenzinger; also REPRESENTATIVE(S) Covarrubias and Esgar, Arndt, Benavidez, Buckner, Exum, Garnett, Hamner, Herod, Hooton, Landgraf, Lee, Liston, Lundein, Melton, Pabon, Pettersen, Reyher, Roberts, Rosenthal, Singer, Valdez, Winter, Young.

CONCERNING MEMORIALIZING CONGRESS TO APPROVE AND FUND A NEW VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HOSPITAL IN SOUTHERN COLORADO.

WHEREAS, The Veterans Administration (VA) health care system is an invaluable resource for the millions of men and women who have served their country in the United States Armed Forces, and for their families; and

WHEREAS, Southern Colorado has the fastest-growing population of veterans in the nation, with more than 86,000 men and women in the immediate vicinity eligible for VA care; and

WHEREAS, The current VA satellite facilities in the area only have the capacity to serve fewer than half of the eligible veterans who may need care; and

WHEREAS, Since the closure of the VA facility in Bent, Colorado, in 2001, veterans in southern Colorado and elsewhere in the region have been forced to travel to Denver or the Fitzsimons VA Hospital in Aurora for specialty care; and

WHEREAS, When a patient eligible for VA care must travel more

than fifty miles for treatment, taxpayers, in addition to the individual veterans, are responsible for travel and lodging expenses for that patient; further, many elderly or otherwise infirm veterans have great difficulty making often-frequent trips to the Denver metropolitan area to receive their health care services; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans eligible for VA care are mid- to low-income residents of the state and may be surviving check-to-check off of retirement, pensions, or social security payments; and

WHEREAS, Construction of a new VA hospital in an area north of Pueblo would serve the veterans of Pueblo, the "Home of Heroes" and birthplace of four Congressional Medal of Honor recipients, in addition to residents of Colorado Springs and El Paso county within its fifty-mile service radius; those men and women living as far as Castle Rock and Trinidad would be eligible to receive VA health care services without requiring taxpayer assistance for travel and lodging; and

WHEREAS, In such a location, a new VA hospital would be positioned to serve not only Colorado veterans, but also veterans in western Kansas and Oklahoma and northern New Mexico, for whom travel to Pueblo would be closer or more convenient than travel to Albuquerque or another regional facility; and

WHEREAS, A new VA hospital facility north of Pueblo would be a major economic driver and boost to rural health care in the state by drawing hundreds of doctors in residency, nurses, and other health care professionals to underserved areas of Colorado; and

WHEREAS, These new health care professionals could partner with local hospitals, health care facilities, Pueblo Community College, and Colorado State University - Pueblo to increase access to valuable medical and mental health care and specialty services for the general population of the region, in addition to those veterans being served by the VA; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Health Administration Office of Rural Health works to implement targeted, solution-driven approaches that increase access to health care for the more than three million veterans nationally who live in rural communities, through innovation, collaboration, and partnership with VA program offices and federal, state,

and local health care entities; and

WHEREAS, In such respects, a new VA hospital in southern Colorado, north of Pueblo, would contribute significantly to improvements in the quality of life and health in the state and region; now, therefore,

Be It Resolved by the Senate of the Seventy-first General Assembly of the State of Colorado, the House of Representatives concurring herein:

That we, the members of the Colorado General Assembly, call on the Congressional leadership of our state and nation to actively and aggressively pursue funding for and construction of a new Veterans Administration hospital to be located in southern Colorado, near Interstate 25, north of Pueblo.

Be It Further Resolved, That copies of this Joint Memorial be sent to Colorado's Congressional delegation; the President of AFGE Local 2430; the Director of the VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System; and the United Veterans Committee of Colorado.

Kevin J. Grantham
PRESIDENT OF
THE SENATE

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