

Second Regular Session
Seventy-first General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO

ENGROSSED

LLS NO. M18-0130.01 Joel Moore x4497

SJM18-003

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House Committees

SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 18-003

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

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

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

8 WHEREAS, The current VA satellite facilities in the area only
9 have the capacity to serve fewer than half of the eligible veterans who

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing statute.
Dashes through the words indicate deletions from existing statute.

SENATE
Final Reading
February 7, 2018

1 may need care; and

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

6 WHEREAS, When a patient eligible for VA care must travel more
7 than fifty miles for treatment, taxpayers, in addition to the individual
8 veterans, are responsible for travel and lodging expenses for that patient;
9 further, many elderly or otherwise infirm veterans have great difficulty
10 making often-frequent trips to the Denver metropolitan area to receive
11 their health care services; and

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

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

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

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

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

1 VA; and

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

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

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

14 That we, the members of the Colorado General Assembly, call on
15 the Congressional leadership of our state and nation to actively and
16 aggressively pursue funding for and construction of a new Veterans
17 Administration hospital to be located in southern Colorado, near Interstate
18 25, north of Pueblo.

19 *Be It Further Resolved*, That copies of this Joint Memorial be sent
20 to Colorado's Congressional delegation; the President of AFGE Local
21 2430; the Director of the VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System; and
22 the United Veterans Committee of Colorado.