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(Original Signature of Member)

109TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. _____

To provide for the health care needs of veterans in far South Texas.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. ORTIZ introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee
on _____

A BILL

To provide for the health care needs of veterans in far
South Texas.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “South Texas Veterans
5 Access to Care Act of 2006”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS; DEFINITION.**

7 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:



1 (1) The current and future health care needs of
2 veterans residing in the Far South Texas area are
3 not being fully met by the Department of Veterans
4 Affairs.

5 (2) The Department of Veterans Affairs states
6 that, as of January 1, 2006, the number of veterans
7 in Far South Texas is approximately 114,000.

8 (3) In its Capital Asset Realignment for En-
9 hanced Services study, the Department of Veterans
10 Affairs found that fewer than three percent of its
11 enrollees in the Valley-Coastal Bend Market of Vet-
12 erans Integrated Service Network 17 reside within
13 its acute hospital access standards.

14 (4) Travel times for veterans from the market
15 referred to in paragraph (3) can exceed six hours
16 from their residences to the nearest Department of
17 Veterans Affairs hospital for acute inpatient health
18 care.

19 (5) Even with the significant travel times, vet-
20 erans from Far South Texas demonstrate a high de-
21 mand for health care services from the Department
22 of Veterans Affairs.

23 (6) Current deployments involving members of
24 the Texas National Guard and Reservists from Texas



1 will continue to inflate projections by the Depart-
2 ment of Veterans Affairs of demand.

3 (b) DEFINITION.—For purposes of this Act, the term
4 “Far South Texas” means the following counties of the
5 State of Texas: Aransas, Bee, Brooks, Calhoun, Cameron,
6 Crockett, DeWitt, Dimmit, Duval, Goliad, Hidalgo, Jack-
7 son, Jim Hogg, Jim Wells, Kenedy, Kleberg, Nueces,
8 Refugio, San Patricio, Starr, Victoria, Webb, Willacy, and
9 Zapata.

10 **SEC. 3. MEDICAL CARE FOR VETERANS IN FAR SOUTH**
11 **TEXAS.**

12 (a) DETERMINATION.—Not later than 180 days after
13 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of
14 Veterans Affairs shall determine, and notify Congress pur-
15 suant to subsection (b), whether the needs of veterans in
16 Far South Texas for acute inpatient hospital care shall
17 be met—

18 (1) through a project for a public-private ven-
19 ture to provide inpatient services and long-term care
20 to veterans in an existing facility in Far South
21 Texas;

22 (2) through a project for construction of a new
23 full-service, 50-bed hospital with a 125-bed nursing
24 home in Far South Texas; or



1 (3) through a sharing agreement with a mili-
2 tary treatment facility in Far South Texas.

3 (b) NOTIFICATION AND PROSPECTUS.—Not later
4 than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act,
5 the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report—

6 (1) identifying which of the three options speci-
7 fied in subsection (a) has been selected by the Sec-
8 retary; and

9 (2) providing, for the option selected, a pro-
10 spectus that includes, at a minimum, the matter
11 specified in paragraphs (1) through (8) of section
12 8104(b) of title 38, United States Code, and the
13 project timelines.

14 **SEC. 4. PUBLIC-PRIVATE VENTURE FOR MEDICAL CARE**
15 **FOR VETERANS IN FAR SOUTH TEXAS.**

16 (a) PROJECT.—If the option selected by the Sec-
17 retary of Veterans Affairs under section 3(a) is the option
18 specified in paragraph (1) of that section for a project of
19 a public-private venture to provide inpatient and long-term
20 care to veterans at an existing facility in Far South Texas,
21 then the Secretary shall, subject to the availability of ap-
22 propriations for such purpose, take such steps as nec-
23 essary to enter into an agreement with an appropriate pri-
24 vate-sector entity to provide for inpatient and long-term
25 care services for veterans at an existing facility in one of



1 the counties of Far South Texas. Such an agreement may
2 include provision for construction of a new wing or other
3 addition at such facility to provide additional services that
4 will, under the agreement, be leased by the United States
5 and dedicated to care and treatment of veterans by the
6 Secretary under title 38, United States Code.

7 (b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
8 are authorized to be appropriated such sums as necessary
9 for a public-private venture project under this section.

10 **SEC. 5. NEW DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MED-**
11 **ICAL CENTER, FAR SOUTH TEXAS.**

12 (a) PROJECT AUTHORIZATION.—If the option se-
13 lected by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs under section
14 3(a) is the option specified in paragraph (2) of that section
15 for a project for construction in Far South Texas of a
16 new full-service, 175-bed facility providing inpatient and
17 long-term care services. Such facility shall be located in
18 the county in Far South Texas that the Secretary deter-
19 mines most suitable to meet the health care needs of vet-
20 erans in the region.

21 (b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
22 authorized to be appropriated to the Construction, Major
23 Projects, account of the Department of Veterans Affairs,
24 in addition to any other amounts authorized for that ac-



1 count, the amount of \$175,000,000 for the project author-
2 ized by subsection (a).

3 **SEC. 6. SHARED FACILITY WITH DEPARTMENT OF DE-**
4 **FENSE, FAR SOUTH TEXAS.**

5 (a) PROJECT AUTHORIZATION.—If the option se-
6 lected by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs under section
7 3(a) is the option specified in paragraph (3) of that section
8 for a project of a Department of Veterans Affairs-Depart-
9 ment of Defense shared facility to provide inpatient and
10 long-term care to veterans at an existing facility in Far
11 South Texas, then the Secretary shall, subject to the avail-
12 ability of appropriations for such purpose, take such steps
13 as necessary to enter into an agreement with an appro-
14 priate military treatment facility to provide for inpatient
15 and long-term care services for veterans at an existing fa-
16 cility in one of the counties of Far South Texas. Such an
17 agreement may include provision for construction of a new
18 wing or other addition at such facility to provide addi-
19 tional services that will, under the agreement, be leased
20 by the United States and dedicated to care and treatment
21 of veterans by the Secretary under title 38, United States
22 Code.

23 (b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
24 are authorized to be appropriated such sums as necessary



1 for a Department of Veterans Affairs-Department of De-
2 fense venture project under this section.

