



PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Paralyzed Veterans of America Remains Concerned With New Plans for Denver VA Replacement Facility

AURORA, COLORADO – The Mountain States Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America (MSCPVA) remains unsatisfied with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently proposed plans for Denver's replacement facility. Although some general questions regarding the overall plans were addressed at Friday's Colorado Congressional Delegation's Denver VA Hospital Veterans Forum, MSCPVA remains skeptical about the VA's intentions and continuous delays.

The main concerns expressed by veterans' service organization (VSO) representatives included the VA's inability to move this project forward and the increasing distrust of the VA for not involving the veteran community in the development of the new plan. The continual policy changes are discouraging because VISN 19 veterans need a permanent VA facility without hesitation.

It was especially disappointing for MSCPVA members to hear that the previously planned, and much needed, Spinal Cord Injury/Disease (SCI/D) Center remains eliminated from the plans. The original plans developed over the last few years between the Eastern Colorado Health Care System (ECHCS) and the Paralyzed Veterans of America included a comprehensive, 30 bed SCI/D Center. However, the newly proposed plans has eliminated the SCI/D Center and reduced it to a much smaller, eight (8) bed SCI/D Inpatient and Outpatient Program. VISN 19 is the largest geographic VISN in the adjoining 48 states, yet does not have a SCI/D Center.

While efforts to move some services to outlying areas to meet localized veteran need is commendable, it does not support the elimination of a new, tertiary care replacement facility in Denver to meet the complex needs of VISN 19 veterans. There is concern that a shared facility jeopardizes VA's autonomy, which will severely inhibit their ability to implement their world-renowned services and ultimately will negatively affect veterans.

Another critical issue still unresolved is how the integrity of the VA's system of electronic medical records be maintained in a shared environment. MSCPVA was displeased to discover that in result to the nature of the shared facility, National Service Officers will no longer be able to effectively advocate for veterans' benefits and medical needs.

In the end, eliminating the SCI/D Center from Denver's VA replacement facility will be a disservice to hundreds of veterans in this region. Furthermore, eliminating a new, VA tertiary care hospital will be a disservice to hundreds of thousands of veterans. If the ultimate goal of the VA is to service veterans close to their homes then the proposed SCI center should not be disregarded in the new plan and VISN 19 veterans should have a full scale regional hospital. MSCPVA urges the VA to reinstate the Project Eagle plans to guarantee all veterans in this region are being fully cared for and receiving the medical care they deserve.

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The Mountain States Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America, a veterans' service organization, was established in 1955 and serves paralyzed veterans in Colorado, Montana, Wyoming and Utah, all of whom have catastrophic paralysis caused by spinal cord injury or dysfunction. To learn more about MSCPVA, visit its website at www.mscpva.org.