



PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA NEWS

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Contact: Laura Holman at
(303)597-0038 or (720)352-8243

VA's Plan for Fitzsimons Flawed & Opposed by Veterans

AURORA, COLORADO – The Mountain States Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America (MSCPVA) is outraged about the Rocky Mountain Network (VISN 19) and the Eastern Colorado Health Care System's (Denver VAMC) decision to exclude the veteran community from giving their input on the new plan for Denver's VA replacement facility. These actions have caused an overall distrust of the Veterans Health Administration (VA).

Last week, the veteran community was informed that the VA had completed the master design plans in January 2008 for a stand-alone VA tertiary care hospital that was to be built on the Fitzsimons medical campus. The new plan, released in late April, disregards the old plan (Project Eagle) and calls for a joint-venture with the University of Colorado Hospital (UCH). The partnership to build a shared bed tower, owned by UCH, does not allow for VA autonomy or identity within the community.

The most offensive component of the new plan is the proposal to split the 30 bed spinal cord injury (SCI) center among two buildings. The VA has yet to produce any reliable information showing that this new proposed model of specialized health care is in fact the best option for veterans living in VISN 19.

Furthermore, the VA is blatantly disregarding their own guidelines for building a SCI center, VA Handbook 1176.1, and has violated a Memorandum of Understanding between the VA and PVA, which requires our involvement in SCI center construction projects. All these concerns have been articulated to the VA many times, yet have continued to be ignored as the VA moves forward with a plan that is opposed by the entire veteran community.

It is not acceptable for the VA to make up for lost time and resources by speeding up a new plan that is insufficient and not in the best interest of the veterans served. MSCPVA is tired of the VA trying to placate the veterans of Colorado when it is clear their concerns are being overlooked. The support of the veteran community is necessary and mutually beneficial for all stakeholders in order for Denver to build a new, timely, and cost efficient VAMC that will provide excellent health care.

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The Mtn. 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 disease. To learn more about MSCPVA, visit www.mscpva.org.