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Perlmutter, Udall, Bennet Call for Increased Funding for VA Medical Center in Aurora

Washington, DC – Today, U.S. Reps. Ed Perlmutter (CO-07) and Sens. Mark Udall and Michael Bennet (D-CO) testified before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee about funding for the new VA Medical Center to be built at the Fitzsimons medical campus in Aurora, CO.

Perlmutter, who represents the district where the new medical center will be built, testified in support of the \$119 million President Obama requested for the facility in his 2010 budget. He noted that while Congress already authorized \$568 million for the facility, the VA estimated the cost of final construction to be approximately \$800 million.

“It is our duty to give the VA the resources to make world class care available to world class soldiers,” stated Perlmutter. “There are an estimated 700,000 veterans to be served by this facility and the current major VA medical facility simply doesn’t cut muster. Our veterans deserve a medical facility worthy of their service. Property has been purchased and we are ready to turn dirt.”

“The current medical center in Denver is at full capacity and simply doesn’t meet the needs of our veterans, who too often have to wait months to see a doctor or travel to other states for treatment. It is long past time to build a state-of-the-art hospital that matches the sacrifice Colorado’s veterans have made for us,” Senator Udall said. “I am very pleased that after some serious bumps on the road Fitzsimons is again one of the highest priorities for the VA. We just need the funding in place. Congress has so far authorized \$568 million for the hospital, but this is not enough to get us to the finish line. I will be working closely with my colleagues in Congress to ensure this hospital is fully funded.”

“Our veterans made tremendous sacrifices for our country and they deserve the best health care our country has to offer,” Bennet said. “This new facility will set the bar high. It will bring together the best resources the VA has to offer and enable more veterans to access the high-quality care they need and deserve. We have the support of Secretary Shinseki, President Obama, and we are ready to break ground. It’s time we build a hospital that will be a shining example of how we do right by our veterans.”

In 2004, following 38 public hearings and over 200,000 public comments, the independent CARES commission studying the needs of the VA hospital determined a new stand-alone facility

was a high priority for the VA to build. However, through four secretaries of the VA, plans vacillated between a shared facility and stand-alone facility. Perlmutter, along with former Sen. Salazar, Udall and the rest of the Congressional delegation were strong proponents of a stand-alone facility. In March 2009, new Secretary of the VA Eric Shinseki announced plans to move forward with a stand-alone facility which is slated for construction in August. The new medical center will provide a full range of medical, laboratory, research and counseling services including a new spinal cord injury unit.

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