



EL PASO COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT

April 29, 2008

The Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison
284 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Veterans Health Care Study

Dear Senator Hutchison:

Thank you for your leadership on issues of importance to the nearly 60,000 veterans in our region. As Ranking Member of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs and as a member of the Veterans Affairs Committee, you have continually demonstrated your commitment to the veterans who have served our nation. Our community has greatly benefited from your advocacy.

In early April, you used a Senate subcommittee hearing to call attention to an internal Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) report that lists the El Paso VA outpatient clinic among the worst in the country. You also sent a letter to VA Secretary James Peake inquiring about the details of the study and seeking additional information about the VA's plan for health care delivery in El Paso. It is clear that we must do more for our veterans and are pleased to hear that you will soon be hosting VA Secretary Peake in El Paso to provide him with an in depth look at the VA clinic.

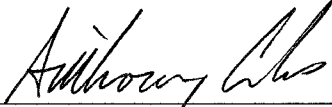
We are seeking your assistance as we try to ensure that our local veterans receive access to high quality health care. The El Paso County Commissioners request that you contact Secretary Peake and formally request an independent study to assess the needs in El Paso and to suggest ways to improve access to high quality health care. In December of 2005, you personally made a request to the VA Secretary to have his department conduct a study to examine access to health care for veterans in the Rio Grande Valley. We believe the El Paso region needs a similar assessment.

The previous assessment conducted by the VA is outdated. As a result of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure decision, the overseas rebasing initiative, and the Army's Grow the Force plan, the troop population at Fort Bliss will more than quadruple. By 2012, there will be over 40,000 soldiers in the El Paso region and the number of military members, dependents and civilian employees at Fort Bliss will approach 100,000. An updated assessment of the needs of the veterans in our region is urgently needed.

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Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your commitment to our nation's veterans. We look forward to working with you and ensuring that the veterans in El Paso receive the highest quality of health care possible. Please do not hesitate to call on us if we can be of any assistance.

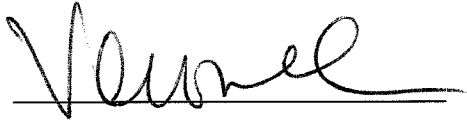
Sincerely,



Anthony Cobos
County Judge



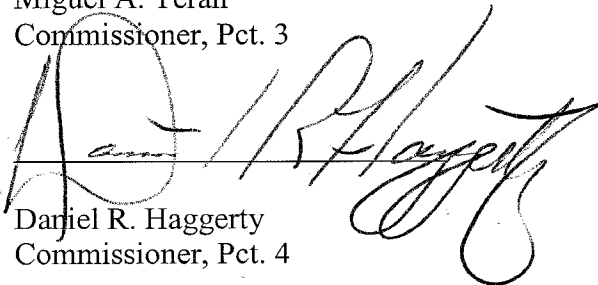
Luis Sariñana
Commissioner, Pct. 1



Veronica Escobar
Commissioner, Pct. 2



Miguel A. Teran
Commissioner, Pct. 3



Daniel R. Haggerty
Commissioner, Pct. 4