

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

S.C.R. 46  
By: Averitt  
Defense Affairs & State-Federal Relations  
Committee Report (Unamended)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

The Thomas T. Connally Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center was a fundamental part of the city of Marlin, Texas, for more than 50 years, and its recent closure dealt a significant blow to the community and surrounding area. Beginning in 1943, the citizens of Marlin organized a campaign to secure their city as the location for a proposed naval medical facility; initially, 31 individual contributors donated \$2,025 to finance their preliminary effort, and two years later, the city raised an additional \$25,000 in small contributions from the local citizenry to purchase 150 acres of land for a new naval hospital.

Although Marlin's selection as the site for the hospital had been announced in 1944, and the order approving construction of the new 500-bed facility was signed by President Harry S. Truman on July 1, 1945, congressional funding for the project was omitted from appropriations legislation later that year. Undeterred, the residents focused on attracting a 200-bed Veterans Administration (VA) general and surgical hospital and collected additional funds for the purchase of eight acres to donate for the facility; the city's efforts came to fruition when the Marlin VA Hospital opened on November 1, 1950, with a staff of 14 physicians, 42 nurses, and two dentists; during its 50 years of operation, the hospital provided hundreds of jobs to area residents, continuing to reward the community's early faith and determination.

In 1992, the facility was renamed the Thomas T. Connally Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center after U.S. Senator Connally, who championed the city's efforts to have the hospital located in Marlin; regrettably, the medical center has since been closed by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and there currently are no plans for its reuse despite a recent extensive remodeling. Although the center's closure was a major economic loss to the residents of Marlin, the city's spirit and goodwill have yet to waver; in the aftermath of hurricanes Rita and Katrina, Marlin opened the Connally VA Medical Center to house medically fragile evacuees from the affected areas, but, with that notable exception, the complex has sat empty and will likely be razed if a permanent use for the center cannot be found.

Fortunately, the Connally VA Medical Center facilities can be easily converted for a number of uses by the state, presenting a practical and beneficial use for the idle buildings; precedent for the adaptation of a VA facility to state use was established in 2001 when the U.S. Congress authorized the conveyance, without consideration, of all real property and improvements associated with the Fort Lyon VA Medical Center in Las Animas, Colorado, to the state of Colorado. Elected officials from Falls County and the City of Marlin, as well as many civic leaders, have expressed their support for the reuse of the Connally VA Medical Center, and given the City of Marlin's long history with the site and the fact that it would cost more to destroy the center than to convey the facility to the State of Texas, it is only fitting that the state take advantage of this available resource.

### **ANALYSIS**

S.C.R. 46 requests the Congress of the United States to authorize the secretary of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to convey the Thomas T. Connally Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center located in Marlin, Texas, to the State of Texas, and, that the Texas secretary of state forward official copies of this resolution to the president of the United States, to the speaker of the house of representatives and the president of the senate of the United States Congress, to all members of the Texas delegation to the congress, and to the secretary of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs with the request that this resolution be officially entered in the Congressional Record as a memorial to the Congress of the United States of America

