

By: Pena

H.C.R. No. 86

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 WHEREAS, The men and women who have served in this nation's
2 armed forces are entitled to ready access to the best possible
3 medical care; and

4 WHEREAS, For the more than 100,000 veterans living in the Rio
5 Grande Valley, the nearest U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
6 hospital is in San Antonio, as much as 300 miles and a five-hour
7 trip away, and the lack of a VA hospital in the Valley has long
8 imposed great hardships on veterans in that region and on their
9 families; and

10 WHEREAS, Veterans requesting appointments at the facility in
11 San Antonio typically wait months to be seen, even for serious
12 conditions; for those who cannot drive themselves, or who cannot
13 afford to drive, van transportation is provided by veterans service
14 groups; the lengthy trip, however, adds to the patients' physical
15 distress; no ambulances are available to convey veterans to San
16 Antonio, which makes the journey especially difficult for those who
17 are bedridden; and

18 WHEREAS, Once veterans arrive in San Antonio, they often wait
19 hours for an appointment that may take only 15 minutes, or they may
20 find that their appointment has been canceled; they may also
21 discover that they need to stay overnight, which adds to the
22 time-consuming nature of their trip and to its expense; and

23 WHEREAS, For veterans who must go to San Antonio several
24 times a month, the time lost to travel can make it difficult to hold

1 a job; the demands of such a trip also place a great burden on family
2 members who have to take time off from work, and possibly arrange
3 for child care, to drive a veteran to San Antonio, and who may need
4 to make such trips for many years; the cost of gas and meals, in
5 addition to the expense of lodging, if that is required,
6 substantially exceeds the prescribed travel allowance; and

7 WHEREAS, The current facilities for veterans health care in
8 the Valley are manifestly inadequate; the VA presently operates
9 several outpatient clinics in the region, but these do not offer the
10 full range of services, including testing and therapy, available in
11 San Antonio; moreover, the VA has failed to pay the bills of many
12 veterans who have had to seek emergency care at a local hospital; in
13 addition, although there are plans to contract with area hospitals
14 to provide some inpatient veterans care, the medical personnel in
15 those facilities are unlikely to have the necessary expertise in
16 treating the injuries and psychological trauma sustained by combat
17 veterans; and

18 WHEREAS, In recent years, local veterans organizations have
19 formed the Veterans Alliance of the Rio Grande Valley to help raise
20 awareness of this issue; and

21 WHEREAS, Veterans who live in the Valley, veterans from out
22 of state who make their home in the Valley during the winter months,
23 and U.S. veterans who reside in Mexico all sorely need and clearly
24 deserve a fully staffed, full-service veterans hospital in far
25 South Texas; now, therefore, be it

26 RESOLVED, That the 81st Legislature of the State of Texas
27 hereby affirm its support for the establishment of a veterans

1 hospital in the Rio Grande Valley; and, be it further

2 RESOLVED, That the Texas secretary of state forward official
3 copies of this resolution to the president of the United States, to
4 the secretary of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, to the
5 speaker of the house of representatives and the president of the
6 senate of the United States Congress, and to all the members of the
7 Texas delegation to the Congress with the request that this
8 resolution be officially entered in the Congressional Record as a
9 memorial to the Congress of the United States of America.