

VFW Wants New Colorado Hospital Built

May 19, 2015

WASHINGTON — The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is calling on Congress and the Department of Veterans Affairs to work through a funding impasse for a new VA medical center in Aurora, Colo. If an agreement is not reached by the end of this week, VA will hit a mandatory spending cap that will force the project to shut down for the second time in six months, and with the very real possibility of never restarting.

“There is a lot of justified anger about this construction project,” said VFW National Commander John W. Stroud, “but the focus must be on completing it so that more wounded, ill and injured veterans in the Denver metropolitan area can be better served.” The new medical center was originally budgeted at \$604 million under current design plans. The completion estimate now exceeds \$1.7 billion due to a number of factors, such as the VA’s failure to provide completed blueprints, which caused excessive change orders. In a memorandum sent Monday to House and Senate VA Committee leadership, VA Secretary Bob McDonald requested a \$200 million increase to the current authorization level, and offered to reallocate \$150 million in unobligated funding to the project. To further reduce costs, McDonald also said he would delay building a community living center and a post-traumatic stress rehabilitation facility that were not part of the medical center’s original design.

“The VA has failed to deliver this project at every turn, but the VFW applauds the committee chairmen and ranking members for acknowledging that Colorado veterans should not be penalized for the VA’s failures, and for not allowing their frustrations with the department to stand in the way of completing this much needed project,” said Stroud.

“The VFW urges committee leadership to continue to work together — and to include the VA in those conversations — to allow construction to continue while a long-term funding solution is found,” he said. “Finish it first, then go after the VA for what has to be the worst managed construction project in the department’s history.”

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