

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1534

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to ensure that the medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs located in Harlingen, Texas, includes a full-service inpatient health care facility, to redesignate such medical center, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 9, 2015

Mr. CORNYN introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to ensure that the medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs located in Harlingen, Texas, includes a full-service inpatient health care facility, to redesignate such medical center, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Treto Garza South
5 Texas Veterans Inpatient Care Act of 2015”.

1 **SEC. 2. DESIGNATION OF MEDICAL CENTER OF DEPART-**
2 **MENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS IN HARLINGEN,**
3 **TEXAS, AND INCLUSION OF INPATIENT**
4 **HEALTH CARE FACILITY AT SUCH MEDICAL**
5 **CENTER.**

6 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following find-
7 ings:

8 (1) The current and future health care needs of
9 veterans residing in South Texas are not being fully
10 met by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

11 (2) According to recent census data, more than
12 108,000 veterans reside in South Texas.

13 (3) Travel times for veterans from the Valley
14 Coastal Bend area from their homes to the nearest
15 hospital of the Department for acute inpatient
16 health care can exceed six hours.

17 (4) Even with the significant travel times, vet-
18 erans from South Texas demonstrate a high demand
19 for health care services from the Department.

20 (5) Ongoing overseas deployments of members
21 of the Armed Forces from Texas, including members
22 of the Armed Forces on active duty, members of the
23 Texas National Guard, and members of the other re-
24 serve components of the Armed Forces, will continue
25 to increase demand for medical services provided by
26 the Department in South Texas.

1 (6) The Department employs an annual Stra-
2 tegic Capital Investment Planning process to “en-
3 able the VA to continually adapt to changes in de-
4 mographics, medical and information technology,
5 and health care delivery”, which results in the devel-
6 opment of a multi-year investment plan that deter-
7 mines where gaps in services exist or are projected
8 and develops an appropriate solution to meet those
9 gaps.

10 (7) According to the Department, final approval
11 of the Strategic Capital Investment Planning pri-
12 ority list serves as the “building block” of the an-
13 nual budget request for the Department.

14 (8) Arturo “Treto” Garza, a veteran who
15 served in the Marine Corps, rose to the rank of Ser-
16 geant, and served two tours in the Vietnam War,
17 passed away on October 3, 2012.

18 (9) Treto Garza, who was also a former co-
19 chairman of the Veterans Alliance of the Rio Grande
20 Valley, tirelessly fought to improve health care serv-
21 ices for veterans in the Rio Grande Valley, with his
22 efforts successfully leading to the creation of the
23 medical center of the Department located in Har-
24 lingen, Texas.

1 (b) REDESIGNATION OF MEDICAL CENTER IN HAR-
2 LINGEN, TEXAS.—

3 (1) IN GENERAL.—The medical center of the
4 Department of Veterans Affairs located in Har-
5 lingen, Texas, shall after the date of the enactment
6 of this Act be known and designated as the “Treto
7 Garza South Texas Department of Veterans Affairs
8 Health Care Center”.

9 (2) REFERENCES.—Any reference in any law,
10 regulation, map, document, paper, or other record of
11 the United States to the medical center of the De-
12 partment referred to in paragraph (1) shall be
13 deemed to be a reference to the Treto Garza South
14 Texas Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care
15 Center.

16 (c) REQUIREMENT OF FULL-SERVICE INPATIENT
17 FACILITY.—

18 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans
19 Affairs shall ensure that the Treto Garza South
20 Texas Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care
21 Center, as designated under subsection (b), includes
22 a full-service inpatient health care facility of the De-
23 partment and shall modify the existing facility as
24 necessary to meet that requirement.

1 (2) PLAN TO EXPAND FACILITY CAPABILI-
2 TIES.—The Secretary shall include in the annual
3 Strategic Capital Investment Plan of the Depart-
4 ment a project to expand the capabilities of the
5 Treto Garza South Texas Department of Veterans
6 Affairs Health Care Center, as so designated, by
7 adding the following:

8 (A) Inpatient capability for 50 beds with
9 appropriate administrative, clinical, diagnostic,
10 and ancillary services needed for support.

11 (B) An urgent care center.

12 (C) The capability to provide a full range
13 of services to meet the health care needs of
14 women veterans.

15 (d) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 180 days
16 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
17 shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the
18 Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the
19 House of Representatives a report detailing a plan to im-
20 plement the requirements in subsection (c), including an
21 estimate of the cost of required actions and the time nec-
22 essary for the completion of those actions.

23 (e) SOUTH TEXAS DEFINED.—In this section, the
24 term “South Texas” means the following counties in
25 Texas: Aransas, Bee, Brooks, Calhoun, Cameron, DeWitt,

- 1 Dimmit, Duval, Goliad, Hidalgo, Jackson, Jim Hogg, Jim
- 2 Wells, Kenedy, Kleberg, Nueces, Refugio, San Patricio,
- 3 Starr, Victoria, Webb, Willacy, Zapata.

