

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Senator Hutchison Announces Veterans Affairs Department to Keep Open Big Spring VA**

WASHINGTON – Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX), Chairman of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee, today announced the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has removed Big Spring VA Medical Center from its Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) list, keeping the VA facility open for the future.

“This announcement is welcome news for the dedicated staff, patients and the entire area,” Sen. Hutchison said. “The Big Spring facility has many valuable assets that will serve the community for years to come. With the capacity for growth to enhance services and its central location to the veteran population in the region, Secretary Nicholson and the Veterans Administration made the right decision to keep it open.”

Sen. Hutchison authored language that passed in the Fiscal Year 2006 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill that delayed the CARES process by encouraging further study of VA facilities. In seeking the delay, Sen. Hutchison argued the CARES process began just as our country was mobilizing to fight the War on Terror and the subsequent changes to veterans’ health care needs must be considered before any decisions are made to close facilities.

Further study determined expanded needs can be best met for the region by the Big Spring facility. The VA also determined during the review that there are possible expansion opportunities for inpatient care and mental health services. VA regional offices are working to develop plans to expand these services. Options include adding a 35-bed domiciliary unit, which could be in coordination with the expansion of 18 psychiatric beds.

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