

WASHINGTON - The quality of health care at the Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center in Phoenix will continue to improve under additional appropriations funding provided by Congress, U.S. Rep. Ed Pastor, D-Ariz., announced today.

Pastor, who sits on the House Appropriations Committee, said an additional \$6.7 million for the Phoenix VA Hospital will help complete a construction project in the basement that will allow for improved services. The project will include construction of the Ambulatory Care Clinical Addition, an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) unit, and clinic space for specialty care including medicine and surgery specialties, psychology and mental health.

On Jan. 17, the President released an additional \$3.7 billion in veterans funding provided by Congress. The \$3.7 billion above the president's budget request for 2008 was designated as emergency funding under the final 2008 appropriations bill authored and passed by the Democratic Congress in December. Overall, the bill increases funding for veterans health care and benefits by \$6.6 billion above the 2007 level, the largest single increase in the 77-year history of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"The Democratic Congress is committed to keeping America's promise to our veterans," Pastor said. "We have a moral obligation to care for our veterans, especially in their time of need. They deserve and need improved and timely medical services, and I am working with my colleagues to continue to make veterans healthcare a top priority in Congress."

The added facilities at the Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center will help reduce waiting times for specialty care. In addition, psychological services would be improved by ensuring an appropriate number of testing rooms. Expansion of the mental health recreation and fitness area will better support the center's seamless transition efforts by ensuring appropriate psychosocial activities to assist in patients' therapy.

The project also will finish the Ambulatory Care Clinical Addition, helping keep outpatient functions together to make it easier and less confusing for veterans. Plus, a new MRI unit will be installed in the basement, improving customer service and inpatient care.