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Washington, D.C. - Today, Rep. Doris Matsui (CA-05) announced that the Department of Veterans Affairs will open a new Vets Center in Sacramento County by the Fall of 2009. The new Center was made possible by the \$15 million funding increase for Vet Centers provided last year by the Democratic Congress. . The additional resources will address the growing need for readjustment services to existing and new combat veterans. It will also assist families of those killed while on active duty and veterans experiencing military related sexual trauma.

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Democratic Congress Continues to Deliver on Promise to Provide for Veterans

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"Over the last year and a half, we have made landmark investments in veterans' services and funding. Now, as we prepare to welcome home the veterans currently serving our country, the new Vet Center will make sure that they have the tools and assistance they need to successfully reintegrate into our community," said Rep. Matsui.

Combat veterans will receive readjustment counseling and other assistance in 39 additional sites across the country, including the new one in Sacramento County which will be open by the Fall of 2009.

The existing 232 Vet Centers, including one on Howe Avenue, conduct community outreach to offer counseling on employment, family issues and education to combat veterans and family members, as well as bereavement counseling for families of service members killed on active duty and counseling for veterans who were sexually harassed on active duty.

"I am committed to providing expansive services and resources to our veterans. They have given dedicated service to our country, and we must honor that service by providing for them. That is why I look forward to supporting this year's veterans appropriations bill, which provides an additional \$10 million above the President's budget for Vet Centers," said Rep. Matsui.

Vet Center services are available at no cost to veterans who experienced combat during any war. They are staffed by small teams of counselors, outreach workers and other specialists, many of whom are combat veterans. The Vet Center program was established in 1979 by Congress, recognizing that many Vietnam veterans were still having readjustment problems.

The centers have hired 100 combat veterans who served in Iraq

and Afghanistan

as outreach specialists, often placing them near military processing stations, to brief servicemen and women leaving the military about VA benefits.

Today, the U.S. House

of Representatives also passed the Homes for Heroes Act (H.R. 3329) to expand housing assistance and supportive services for homeless veterans. The VA estimates that more than 400,000 veterans are homeless at some point during the year.

H.R. 3329:

- Establishes a supportive housing program at HUD for low-income veterans. The bill authorizes \$200 million in FY 2008 and such sums as may be necessary in subsequent years for an assistance program at HUD for supportive housing and services for low-income veterans. Specifically, the bill authorizes grants to nonprofit organizations and consumer cooperatives to expand the supply of permanent housing for low-income veterans and their families and to provide supportive services through such housing to support the needs of such veteran families.

- Requires HUD to provide at least 20,000 rental vouchers a year for homeless veterans. The bill also expands the highly successful Department of Housing and Urban Development - Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program (HUD-VASH), authorizing 20,000 rental vouchers annually and making the program permanent.

- Establishes the position of Special Assistant for Veterans

Affairs within HUD. The bill requires HUD to create a position within the department to serve as the liaison to the Department of Veterans Affairs. Among other things, the liaison would ensure that the owners of housing projects assisted under the bill have the managerial capacity to assess on an ongoing basis the service needs of residents, coordinate the provision of supportive services, and tailor such services to the individual needs of residents.

- Requires a comprehensive annual report on homeless veterans.
The bill requires HUD to submit a comprehensive annual report to Congress on the housing needs of homeless veterans and the steps HUD has taken under the programs provided for in the bill.

- Ensures veterans' families continued assistance.
The bill allows veterans' families to continue to receive the assistance provided for in the bill in the event of the veteran's death.

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