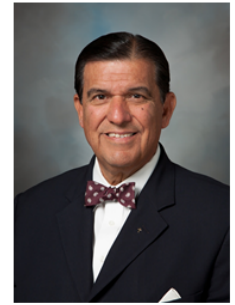




**STATE SENATOR
EDDIE LUCIO, JR.
DISTRICT 27**



Austin Capitol Office
P.O. Box 12068
Austin, TX 78711
512-463-0127

Cameron County office
7 North Park Plaza
Brownsville, TX 78521
956-548-0227

Hidalgo County office
1210 W. Interstate 2, Suite 10
Pharr, Texas 78577
956-787-5227

June 10, 2014

**Senator Lucio statement on reports of patient wait times
at Harlingen VA clinic**

AUSTIN - Senator Eddie Lucio Jr. (D-Brownsville) issues the following statement in response to media reports that wait times for new patients seeking specialist care at Harlingen's Texas Valley Coastal Bend VA clinic are the highest in the nation.

"I am horrified by reports that our veterans in the Valley are waiting months for appropriate healthcare. It's simply unconscionable. There are at least 100,000 veterans living in the Rio Grande Valley, and we have a moral obligation to ensure they have access to appropriate care.

"To me, this VA audit, as well as other recent reports of delays in VA care across the nation, supports our community's enduring call for a full-fledged VA hospital in the Rio Grande Valley. Such a hospital would ensure that more veterans receive appropriate specialty doctor care in a timely manner.

"The time for a new VA hospital could not be more opportune, with the recent authorization by the legislature of the University of Texas - Rio Grande Valley and the transition of the Regional Academic Health Center into a four-year medical school. Our business and healthcare community has already rallied around this new medical school with promises to increase medical student residency slots in the Valley. Creation of a new veteran's hospital would further expand residency opportunities and attract top-rate talent to treat our veteran community.

"The pursuit of a veteran's hospital is personal for me. It was a dream of my father, who was himself a combat veteran. Before the Harlingen facility's creation, I personally made several 500-mile round trips to San Antonio to seek treatment for my father. I recognize that since that time the Harlingen facility has been a blessing to many veterans, but I think recent reports make clear that much more must be done."

###