

July 17, 2011

WASHINGTON, DC— Today, Representative Peter DeFazio (OR-4) and Senators Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Jeff Merkley (D-OR) announced that three high ranking members of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will visit Roseburg, Oregon on Monday, June 20 and listen to local veterans concerned about the future of the Roseburg VA Medical Center (RVAMC).

In addition to meeting with local veterans, Chief of Staff John Gingrich, Assistant Secretary Joan Mooney, and Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management William Schoenhard will also tour VA facilities and meet with Mercy CEO Kelly Morgan.

In April, DeFazio, Wyden, and Merkley requested that Secretary Eric Shinseki visit the RVAMC before the VA makes any decisions to cut medical services there. This visit is happening as a result of the members' request.

“For months, we have expressed our concerns about the future of the Roseburg VA. We questioned the process used by Booz Allen Hamilton to make their recommendations and we presented creative solutions for collaboration in hopes of continuing full service in Roseburg. I am pleased that the VA is sending out senior officials to see firsthand how vital this medical center is to the health and well being of veterans in southwestern Oregon. The veterans need a full service hospital in this community. They have earned it. I am optimistic that will come across on Monday,” said DeFazio

“When I was last in Roseburg meeting with our veterans, we developed the idea of asking senior Veterans Administration officials to come out to Oregon and visit the Roseburg campus before making a final decision on hospital service levels,” **said Senator Merkley**. “I’m pleased that the administration has heard our Congressional delegation call for senior officials to visit the beautiful campus in Roseburg. I am hopeful that they will come away from their visit with a deeper understanding of the importance of the hospital to our veterans and the need for additional resources -- not a reduction in hospital services for Southern Oregon veterans.”

“It is an encouraging sign that VA officials are coming to see for themselves the great work

being done at the Roseburg VA Medical Center and how essential the facility is to veterans all around southern Oregon,” Wyden said. “With the VA considering a reduction of services at the Roseburg VAMC at the same time that thousands of veterans have returned to Oregon from Afghanistan, it is more important now than ever that they take the time to meet with the men and women who rely on the facility and see the impact those decisions may have on Oregon’s veterans.”

In previous letters to Secretary Shinseki, DeFazio, Wyden, and Merkley expressed their concerns about the failures of an independent review to comprehensively assess the current and historical levels of care at the RVAMC and the lack of consultation with local veterans who depend on the medical services available there.

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