

KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON

UNITED STATES SENATOR
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510-4304

October 1, 2003

The Honorable Everett Alvarez,
Chairman
Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) Commission
810 Vermont Ave NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Chairman Alvarez and Members of the CARES Commission:

Thank you for taking the time to visit San Antonio and holding this important hearing at which you will have an opportunity to hear from those most affected by the proposed changes. As a member of the United States Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, I fully understand the need for the Veterans Administration to examine all of the medical services provided to our veterans and to realign the requirements where necessary to address the greatest need.

Nearly one in ten active duty service members calls Texas home and returns to Texas after they have served our country. Texas, therefore, has a rapidly growing veterans population and I believe this will require expanded veterans' medical services in Kerrville, Corpus Christi, the Rio Grande Valley, and San Antonio to meet the increased needs in the years ahead.

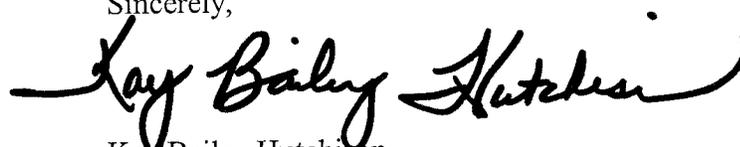
As you review the health care needs in this region, I also want to ask that you carefully consider any proposal to reduce the level of care in Kerrville. As a community-based health care provider, the Kerrville Veterans Affairs Medical Center consistently provides excellent care, and lessens the burden on the San Antonio Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Smaller community-based hospitals can provide a quality of care simply not possible at larger facilities.

Our veterans deserve access to quality healthcare and I reaffirm my opposition to reduction in services at any of the VA facilities in this region. I am concerned that fewer VA facilities could force veterans to travel greater distances for healthcare or even go untreated, which is simply unacceptable.

Today, you will hear testimony from many of those veterans who depend on the care provided by the Veterans Administration and will be most affected by any major changes. Your efforts on this Commission will help ensure the best outcome for our veterans and the affected communities. I believe you can best accomplish that outcome by being creative and working with the communities and veterans to identify the most cost-effective ways to provide the quality care to our veterans they so richly deserve.

I thank you for your service on this Commission and thank you for your willingness to consider all options to ensure all veterans receive access to quality care. I appreciate your efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kay Bailey Hutchison". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning and a large flourish at the end.

Kay Bailey Hutchison