

Contra Costa Times - Political Blotter

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Rep. Jerry McNerney says he went to bat for a couple of 11th Congressional District projects as well as veterans across the nation in his one-on-one meeting today with U.S. Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki.

McNerney, D-Pleasanton – who had announced yesterday that he'll be the ranking Democrat on the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs – said he again urged the secretary to revisit decisions made by his predecessors to close the Livermore VA facility and to instead develop a plan that would keep it in veterans' hands.

“The Livermore VA is a uniquely situated facility that is an important resource for the thousands of veterans who live in the area,” McNerney said in a news release. “Given its tranquil setting, I've long advocated for the facility to remain in veterans' hands and be used to provide treatment for veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. With an increasing number of veterans suffering from PTSD, this type of care is more important than ever.”

He said they also discussed the new veterans' nursing home and outpatient medical facility planned for San Joaquin County.

“Just the other week, local veterans attended my most recent Congress at Your Corner event in Stockton to ask for an update on the VA's decision on where to locate the new medical facility,” McNerney said. “At today's meeting with the secretary I expressed again the importance of reaching a decision. This facility will create about 900 jobs and serve thousands of veterans in the area and it's very important to our community that a final location is selected without delay.”

And McNerney said he and Shinseki discussed the VA's backlog of benefits claims waiting to be processed – a figure the VA puts at about 400,000, but advocacy groups such as the American

Legion say could be closer to 1 million – as well as the need to improve care for veterans with PTSD and traumatic brain injuries.