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House of Representatives

VETERANS HEALTH CARE FACILITIES CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT ACT

HON. BOB FILNER
OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MR. FILNER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman, sometimes not so gentle, for yielding me time.

In fact, I thank the not-so-gentle woman for fighting for these facilities in her district. She has fought long and hard, and this is just one of the fruits. She has done a tremendous job.

I want to thank the chairman of the full committee and chairman of the Subcommittee on Health, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. Smith) and the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. Simmons) for creating the environment on our committee that we could talk about these issues and work towards solving them without partisan rancor. I sincerely appreciate the efforts by the majority side on these bills.

I too rise in support of H.R. 1720, the Veterans Health Care Facilities Capital Improvement Act. I think it goes without saying that if the VA is to provide excellent health care, it must have excellent health

facilities. We simply cannot allow our veterans and our VA employees to work and be treated in buildings that are unsafe.

Another such building on the list that you have heard is the Medical Center Building Number 1 in the VA health care system in San Diego, the medical facility used by veterans in all of San Diego and in my congressional district.

This building is in desperate need of seismic corrections, including new exterior bracing enhancements to the existing seismic structures, with an estimated cost of almost \$50 million. Not an insignificant sum--but the cost of not doing this project would be much higher in real human lives. The VA has identified more than 60 projects that require seismic fortification.

We cannot continue to turn our heads away while VA patients and employees are in harm's way.

So I compliment all of those who have worked on this, and I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1720.