United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 4, 2007

The Honorable Daniel K. Akaka
Chairman
Committee on Veterans Affairs
412 Russell Senate Office Building,
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Larry Craig
Ranking Member
Committee on Veterans Affairs
412 Russell Senate Office Building,
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Akaka and Ranking Member Craig:

We respectfully request a hearing and mark-up as soon as possible on S.168, a bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a national cemetery for veterans in the Pikes Peak Region of Colorado.

Southern Colorado is home to 150,000 veterans and some of our nation's finest military installations, including Fort Carson, Peterson Air Force Base, Schriever Air Force Base, Cheyenne Mountain Air Station, and the United States Air Force Academy. Colorado Springs, the region's largest city, is home to 32,000 active duty personnel and 44,000 family members. Pueblo, the region's second largest city, is home to four Congressional Medal of Honor recipients. The region is truly a crown jewel of our nation's homeland defense.

Sadly, the veterans, service members, and military families who live in southern Colorado do not have a national cemetery of their own. Family members and friends often travel several hours in traffic and bad weather to reach Fort Logan National Cemetery, in Denver, which will soon reach capacity.

We believe that the Department of Veterans' Affairs current statistical guidelines for determining where to build new national veterans' cemeteries ignore important considerations, such as the actual travel time required to reach a cemetery and the number of active duty military personnel in a region. The men and women in uniform who live in the southern Colorado have made extraordinary sacrifices. They deserve a national veterans' cemetery in their own community, where they can pay tribute to their friends, family, and fellow service members.

The bill we have introduced, S.168, reflects our view that building a national veterans cemetery in the Pikes Peak region should be a top priority for the VA. We would like to move forward with this bill in parallel with the House, where the House Committee on Veterans Affairs recently held a hearing on a similar measure, H.R. 1660.

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Thank you again for your consideration of this request and for your leadership of the Committee.

Sincerely,

Ken Salazar
United States Senator

Wayne Allard
United States Senator