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### NEWS RELEASE

Committee on Energy and Commerce

Rep. John D. Dingell, Chairman

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### Dingell, Stupak, Melancon Welcome Announcement of New Orleans VA Hospital Reconstruction Site

Washington, D.C. — Three lawmakers today commended the announcement made by the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) that a site has been chosen for the reconstruction of the New Orleans VA hospital destroyed by Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

This announcement closely follows the second of two hearings held by the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce on the continually poor state of healthcare facilities for residents of New Orleans and surrounding areas. At the August 1 hearing, New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin along with federal and local public health officials testified on the difficulty of retaining healthcare workers in the region, the lack of reopened hospitals and clinics, and the hardships for doctors attempting to sustain their practices in the region.

"It is a relief to know that the Department of Veterans' Affairs is making concrete progress in its rebuilding efforts," said Committee on Energy and Commerce Chairman John D. Dingell (D-MI). "I sincerely hope that other health care organizations in the region follow VA's good example. It is imperative that this and other area hospitals undergo the necessary repairs and open their doors as soon as possible. The people of this region deserve better, especially when it comes to protecting their health."

"Our Committee staff were able to work in a bipartisan manner to push for the VA to continue to provide service in downtown New Orleans," said Congressman Bart Stupak (D-MI), the Chairman of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee. "Maintaining health services for veterans in New Orleans is an important stride towards bringing health care in this city back to pre-Katrina levels. I am pleased that our Committee was able to draw attention to this issue and, as Chairman of the Subcommittee, I will continue to focus on what needs to be done to restore health care services in New Orleans."

"I am pleased that the VA has announced the preferred site for the reconstruction of a VA Medical Center in downtown New Orleans. The VA's ultimate decision to rebuild at this downtown site will lay the foundation for the recovery of the region's healthcare network and will have a powerful and positive impact on New Orleans' overall recovery efforts," said Rep. Charlie Melancon (D-LA), the Vice-Chair of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee. "The downtown site will provide veterans in south Louisiana with high-quality health care in an easily accessible location and will also be a critical asset in teaching our state's future physicians and health care professionals. The VA medical center, together with the Medical Center of Louisiana, LSU and Tulane's medical schools, the coming Cancer Research Center, and a biosciences research corridor, will be an epicenter for high-quality primary and specialty health care that this region needs and deserves. The people of Louisiana are not looking to just rebuild what was lost to the storms; they are working to rebuild bigger and better than before, and I am confident that the VA's commitment to rebuild in the downtown area will help do just that."

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Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

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