



WETZEL COUNTY HOSPITAL

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

From: GEORGE COUCH, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
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Phone: 304-455-8111

SENATOR BYRD DESIGNATES \$1 MILLION FOR WETZEL COUNTY HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

New Martinsville, WV ---- Funding for Wetzel County Hospital's Emergency Room expansion project has been approved by the Senate, due to the work of U.S. Senator Robert G. Byrd, D-W.Va. Byrd, who serves as chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, directed \$1 million to the Northern West Virginia hospital in the Fiscal Year 2008 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies legislation.

The \$1 million secured by Senator Byrd will be used to make the first upgrade to and renovation of Wetzel County Hospital's Emergency Room. This will be the first major refurbishing of the facility since 1979, when the new hospital opened its doors. For 28 years, Wetzel County Hospital has been working with the same emergency room facility, but with increased patient loads and more challenging cases such as increased incidents of drug abuses and overdoses; all-terrain vehicle (ATV) accidents; chemical exposures; mining disasters; and other industrial accidents, the facility is in need of upgrades.

"Emergency care has changed dramatically over 28 years. In order to effectively deal with the complicated cases that enter the Emergency Room, the hospital must have the most effective tools and equipment to ensure up-to-date emergency health care," Byrd said.

The demands of the Wetzel County Hospital are tremendous. The hospital is designated as the Sole Community Hospital for Wetzel, Monroe, and Tyler counties. Although the hospital provides

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care for three counties, it does not generate enough income to meet the budget demands of an emergency room upgrade because it serves a disproportionately uninsured population.

"For too long, the health care providers at Wetzel County hospital have had to jump over major hurdles to provide quality health care to those who walk into its Emergency Room," Byrd said. "I am proud to have worked with my colleagues to secure this funding. I know that we are making a critical and fundamental investment in the health and welfare of Northern West Virginians."

"The top priority for the Wetzel County Hospital Board of Trustees, Management and Medical Staff has been the renovation and expansion of our Emergency Department. With the funds Wetzel County Hospital has set aside for this project and this \$1 million appropriation, 2008 should finally be the year when this vitally needed project becomes a reality," said George Couch, C.E.O. of Wetzel County Hospital.

"We are deeply grateful to Senator Byrd for his dedication and commitment to this project," added Marge Knight, R.N. who is Chief of Emergency and Outpatient Services for Wetzel County Hospital. "With our advanced skills and the quality of our Emergency Department Physicians and Staff we will now be able to purchase and utilize the most modern and advanced equipment and technology, which will in turn enhance the quality of care to the citizens served by Wetzel County Hospital."

Wetzel County Hospital is a licensed and accredited, 68-bed facility, offering comprehensive acute care inpatient, outpatient services, emergency department and transitional care unit. The hospital is located 35 miles south of Wheeling and 60 miles north of Parkersburg, West Virginia.

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