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## RESOLUTION TO PROTECT VETERANS' PROPERTY PASSES BY UNANIMOUS VOTE

BURBANK, CA – The Republican Party of Los Angeles County (RPLAC) unanimously passed a resolution to protect the Veterans Property and Healthcare Facilities at the Sepulveda Ambulatory Care Center and the VA of Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System. Congressional Candidate in the 27<sup>th</sup> District, Mark Reed introduced the resolution.

The resolution was introduced to stem the encroachment of private industry from taking over the VA facilities on Sepulveda. By passing the resolution, RPLAC joins a coalition of opposition to enhanced use leases that were previously awarded to convert buildings 4 and 5 of the Sepulveda Ambulatory Care facility into a 149 unit apartment complex by developers New Directions and A Community of Friends. The RPLAC Resolution calls for the immediate rescission of the two 75 year enhanced use leases.

Under these leases, the buildings are to be converted to housing projects for homeless veterans with substance abuse problems. Terms of the agreement require occupancy by veterans only. However, since the project will be funded through HUD, New Directions will be powerless to enforce drug and alcohol restrictions or prevent non-veterans from residing there or risk losing their HUD financing. These buildings were handed over to New Directions and A Community of Friends in a private closed bidding.

Over 310,000 Veterans are served in the Sepulveda service area from the San Fernando, Simi, Santa Clarita and Antelope Valleys. This number grows daily as men and women return from Iraq and Afghanistan. The VA was built on 160 acres of property privately donated with the specific intent that it be used as a Veterans' hospital. Buildings 4 and 5 are medical facilities capable of seeing and treating thousands of Veterans weekly. It is not in the best interest of our Veterans to convert these facilities into housing for the few.

Mark Reed introduced the resolution after working with the VA, neighborhood councils and the nearly 4.3 million people who have registered their opposition to the enhanced use leases. Reed watched and waited as Congressman Brad Sherman has supported the leases in spite of questions he himself raised about private developers ability to restrict service to Veterans. In October, Congressman Sherman announced that language was added to the leases to limit occupancy to veterans.

*"Congressman Sherman's statements regarding the enhanced use leases are misleading. He indicated his support, noting that only homeless Veterans will be provided housing. Apparently, the Congressman hasn't read the new lease. According to Article 7, Section B, 4; these leases can be amended at any time, for any reason. They can, in fact, be re-amended tomorrow to allow rental to anyone. Therefore, there is no assurance and certainly no guarantee that these apartments will ultimately be limited to homeless Veterans or Veterans at all. As written, the leases require a Veteran to have nine months sober. Does it seem plausible that a homeless veteran will in fact be sober nine months? Who are these leases intended to serve?" said Reed.*

Further, taxpayers would bear the burden of a \$48 million dollar price tag to convert these buildings to residences. *"It is unconscionable that an elected representative would condone such an expenditure of taxpayer funds in this economy, especially when the cost to refurbish the medical facilities would be far less and serve many more Veterans."* Reed added.

Since shepherding the resolution through RPLAC, Mark Reed and other opponents testified before the Veterans' Advisory Commission of Los Angeles County. In response to the testimony, and a groundswell of opposition, the Veterans' Advisory Commission has scheduled a hearing to review their position on and support of the leases. The hearing will be held on May 12, 2010 at 1:30 pm during the regular Commission monthly meeting at 2615 South Grand, Los Angeles.

The coalition that opposes these leases includes: eleven neighborhood councils, California State American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, California Veterans of Foreign Wars, Veterans Caucus California Democratic Party, Veterans United for Truth, Mark Reed and RPLAC. A full list of the opponents is available upon request.

