

Veterans hospital in Orlando approved

By ASSOCIATED PRESS

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ORLANDO - Florida lawmakers are applauding the congressional approval of a \$377-million veterans hospital in Central Florida. Now all lawmakers have to do is pay for it.

"This sure looks great," said Rep. Tom Feeney, R-Oviedo. "We're like a football team that has to kick a field goal - and we just got to the 10-yard line. At this point, all we need is a chip shot."

The U.S. Senate approved the hospital at 3 a.m. Saturday as part of a marathon session to approve more than \$3-billion in veterans projects. The U.S. House approved the bill Friday. The next Congress will have to find funding sources for the hospital.

The Department of Veterans Affairs must also now pick between two sites in the Orlando area. A final decision is expected in early 2007.

Florida officials hope the veterans hospital will be part of a new Central Florida medical treatment and research hub, which will include the new Burnham Institute for Medical Research and an expanded University of Central Florida Medical School.