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By Michael Rowe

<http://snovalleystar.com/2009/03/19/snoqualmie-valley-hospital-could-get-help-from-bill>

A bill before the Washington state House of Representatives could help the Snoqualmie Valley Hospital.

“What we’re trying to do is keep the hospital there,” state Senator Cheryl Pflug said.

The bill known in the state Senate as Senate Bill 5423 was moved to the House of Representatives after approval by the Senate. If the House approves the bill, it could become law this summer.

The bill would allow Snoqualmie Valley Hospital to designate up to 25 beds for long-term care, without a certificate of need. Hospitals in cities without nursing homes could designate beds for long-term nursing care, and be reimbursed for those beds. The hospital could use up to 15 in-patient beds as swing beds this year, with the remainder becoming swing beds after July 1, 2010.

A press release from Pflug notes that the Snoqualmie Valley Hospital will use this flexibility to develop a geriatric psychiatric service. The hospital would like to collaborate with other nursing care providers, such as the Mount Si transitional nursing center in North Bend to develop long-term health care service programs for the community.

“We are greatly encouraged that Senate Bill 5423 is progressing through the legislative process and are very appreciative of Senator Pflug’s support for our community and our hospital by stewarding this bill through,” Snoqualmie Valley Hospital CEO Rodger McCollum said.

“It will have a great impact on senior care services in our community and we will no longer need to turn patients away when we have empty beds available,” McCollum said.

Rural hospitals that are designated as critical access hospitals, like the Snoqualmie Valley Hospital, can receive enhanced reimbursements from Medicare to help sustain their operations. Swing beds are allowed under federal law for critical access hospitals.

“I’m pleased to help the Snoqualmie Hospital District,” Pflug said. “Since it is also partially supported by local tax dollars, I want to do anything I can to help residents receive care in their communities, rather than be forced to travel to other facilities in the region far from home and family.”

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