

House Passes Michaud Bill Helping Homeless Veterans

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WASHINGTON, DC - Today, Congressman Mike Michaud, Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health, applauded last night's passage of H.R. 3329, the Homes for Heroes Act, which will provide shelter for homeless veterans and homeless veteran families, and help prevent low-income families from falling into homelessness.

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"The House voted to give our homeless veterans a benefit they have earned - the promise of a home for themselves and their family," said Michaud. "I strongly urge the Senate to take up this bill as soon as possible. If we can make this bill law, more than 400,000 of our bravest Americans will be one step closer to being able to say they have achieved the American dream of a house to call their own."

On any given night in this country, 800,000 persons experience homelessness. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), nearly 200,000 of these homeless Americans are adult veterans who live on the streets, in shelters or in community based organizations. Nearly 400,000 veterans may experience homelessness at some point during the course of a year. Many more low income veterans and veteran families live at the margins and are at risk of becoming homeless in the absence of permanent housing solutions and supportive services. In fact, 1.5 million veterans have incomes that fall below the federal poverty level, including 634,000 with incomes below 50 percent of the poverty line.

"This bill does more than merely bring to light the struggles that many veterans face. It provides tangible solutions so that veterans can get off the streets and get into sustainable housing," said Michaud. "Giving our veterans a chance to have a home is the least we can do for those who fought for us. As Chairman of the Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Health, I will continue to work to provide all of our veterans with the assistance that they need."

Many homeless veterans are not connected to the vital housing and supportive services that they need. The VA reports that its homeless

veteran programs serve 100,000 veterans annually. National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV)-member community-based organizations serve an additional 150,000 veterans annually. VA reaches only 25 percent and NCHV-member community-based organizations reach only 35 percent of those in need. This means that there are 150,000 homeless veterans who do not have access to these critical housing and supportive services programs every year.

H.R. 3329, the Homes for Heroes Act, would:

- Establish the position of Special Assistant for Veterans Affairs within the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to coordinate services to homeless veterans and serve as a liaison to the Department of Veterans Affairs, state and local officials, and nonprofit service organizations.

- Establish a \$200 million assistance program for supportive housing and services for low-income veterans.

- Expand the highly successful HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program, authorizing 20,000 vouchers annually and making the program permanent.

- Authorize \$1 million in HUD grants to assist housing and service providers with the execution of their housing projects for veterans assisted by HUD, fulfilling the planning and application process, and assisting veterans in obtaining permanent housing or homeless assistance.

- Require HUD to submit a comprehensive annual report to Congress on the housing needs of homeless veterans and the steps HUD has taken under the programs provided for in the bill.