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Budget Update: The effect of the recent “CRomnibus” on homeless veteran programs

WASHINGTON, Dec. 15, 2014 – Two days ago, in a rare Saturday session, the Senate voted to approve a budget deal that had already cleared the House earlier in the week. The deal took the form of a “CRomnibus” – a combination of continuing resolution and omnibus. Essentially, it funded most of the government for the entirety of the remaining fiscal year and temporarily funded the Department of Homeland Security until February.

All major programs serving homeless and at-risk veterans were funded via the omnibus, and have spending authority through until the end of Fiscal Year 2015. Those programs that are administered through the Department of Veteran’s Affairs (VA) are funded on a unique two year cycle called advanced appropriations. These programs (including Supportive Services for Veteran Families [SSVF] and Grant and Per Diem [GPD]) were therefore funded until the completion of Fiscal Year 2016.

For FY 2015, the SSVF program was funded at \$300 million – the same as it received this past year. This money has already begun to be disbursed to programs around the country; it was announced through the two rounds of “surge funding” that the VA made available in both January of 2014, and more recently, in October of 2014. Fortunately, FY 2016 will see an increase in the funding level of this program. The advanced appropriations for the SSVF program in FY 2016 are at the \$375 million level.

GPD received a \$15 million increase over last year’s appropriation figure; its funding level for FY 2015 is \$250 million. The advanced appropriations for FY 2016 provide \$253 million for this program.

On the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) side, the HUD-VA Supportive Housing program received an additional \$75 million for FY 2015. This money will fund roughly 10,000 vouchers this year. The supportive services piece of this partnership, administered by VA, received the necessary level of funding to support these vouchers.

The Department of Labor administers the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP). HVRP received a steady funding level from last year, at \$38.109 million dollars. This number has remained unchanged for a number of years in a row, and there is room for it to grow. NCHV strongly supports growing the program, and will work to accomplish an increased appropriation for FY 2016.

Despite the flat funding of HVRP, all other homeless veteran programs received increases in their appropriations through the CRomnibus, and no programs were shrunk. VA healthcare received a further \$209 million for this year; this is in addition to their previously agreed upon funding level, *and* in addition to the \$15 billion (over three years) they received through the “Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act”. Though none of this money will be going to homeless programs specifically, it does represent a promise of expansion of medical services (especially in rural areas) and a reduction in wait times for services.

Mission: The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans will end homelessness among veterans by shaping public policy, promoting collaboration, and building the capacity of service providers.