

## **Policy and Legislative Update: Get Involved with National Advocacy at the Annual Conference!**

*Joshua Stewart, Director of Policy*

### **Join the NCHV Advocacy Team at the Annual Conference**

This year, NCHV is doing our Public Policy Session at the Annual Conference a little differently. While the program has always been intended to get members and attendees up to speed on what is happening on the Hill, this year we want to encourage and empower even more of you to go talk to Congress while you are in D.C.!

Over the past year we have been building up the new “NCHV Advocacy Team”, already made up of dozens of providers, housing authorities, and continuums of care. All of the members of the team are local experts in the myriad of issues that NCHV advocates for on a daily basis, and all of the team members are committed to talking to Congress too. Many of you already do this work on your own, but many providers don’t know about the benefits of talking to their Representatives and Senators – or how easy it is!

The Public Policy Session at this year’s Annual Conference will be a chance to get attendees up to speed on what is happening on Capitol Hill, and to prepare them for meetings with Congress. Will you help yourself and fellow providers across the country to better serve homeless veterans, by walking the halls of Congress? Even if you have never spoken to your congressional offices before, NCHV will be able to prepare you for your first meeting. Are you already planning on taking these meetings? Let us know!

It is vitally important for the welfare of the veterans we serve that we all speak with a loud, clear, and unified voice on the most important national issues. If you want to be a part of the NCHV Advocacy Team and learn about how to advocate to Congress, or just join your own efforts with the national effort, please email me right now at [jstewart@nchv.org](mailto:jstewart@nchv.org).

We will be doing preparatory work leading up to the Annual Conference in the coming months to make sure that when we are all together in June we make the biggest impact possible. The stakes are high this year; will you help?

### **President’s Budget Outlines Funding Request for Homeless Veteran Programs**

Last month President Obama unveiled the last budget proposal of his Presidency. This document outlines the goals of the administration and acts as a suggestion to Congress on how to fund federal programs for the upcoming Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, and is mainly an indication of the priorities of the federal agencies. In the Budget, programs that exist to end veteran homelessness have received positive attention and proposed increases in funding.

Specifically, several programs are singled out for increased funding in the next fiscal year:

- For the first time in many years, the Department of Labor (DOL) has requested that the Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP) be fully funded at its authorization cap of \$50 million. This would realize an increase in funding of \$11,891,000 over the status quo of the past few years. With this increase, DOL projects that it will be able to increase enrollment of veterans in the program by more than five thousand individuals. The Department is also considering raising the caps on grant awards for both urban and rural areas.

- The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requested \$7 million to actualize the Tribal Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Demonstration program for Native American homeless veterans.
- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has requested a total of \$496 million for the case management and supportive services provided by that department to the HUD-VASH program. This is a year-over-year increase of more than \$80 million.

Other programs did not receive increases:

- Funding for the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program has been requested at \$300 million, which is a flat funding from the previous year.
- The Grant and Per Diem (GPD) program funding request was \$247 million. This is \$46 million above what the Department requested last year. NCHV was able to stop that year's proposed cut, and is pleased to see that the request for the upcoming fiscal year is in line with what communities across the country need.
- With the exception of the \$7 million for Tribal HUD-VASH and the more than \$80 million in increased case management and supportive services funding mentioned above, the President's Budget does not request any additional HUD-VASH vouchers for FY 2017.

Altogether, the VA has requested more than \$1.6 billion in direct funding to support homeless veteran rescue and prevention programs, permanent supportive housing, employment, healthcare, and legal services. NCHV applauds the advances made in this year's Presidential Budget, and will work with Congress to achieve the increases called for, while pushing for increases in other areas.

Stay tuned to these pages and our online newsletter for updates as we progress through this year's funding cycle. And remember, if you are interested in joining the NCHV Advocacy Team, email me at [jstewart@nchv.org](mailto:jstewart@nchv.org) to get on our contact list!