

Policy and Legislative Update: Congressional Support for Appropriations Secured

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Congress Supports Veteran Homelessness Programs: Appropriations Process Advances

March is always a busy month for the Appropriators of Congress – those members of the House of Representatives and of the Senate which sit on the Appropriations Committees. They receive endless streams of letters from their colleagues which support various types of programs and sources of funding. Among the issues being supported is the cause of veteran homelessness. We had a particularly good year this time around, with very strong bipartisan support for letters in both the House and Senate.

In the House, a letter co-written by Representatives Greg Walden (R-OR), Kathleen Rice (D-NY), Ryan Costello (R-PA), and Brad Ashford (D-NE) garnered the support of 67 Members from both sides of the aisle. The letter encouraged the House Appropriators to robustly fund the Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP) for the upcoming fiscal year. NCHV joins them in encouraging Appropriators to fully fund the President's Budget request for the HVRP program at \$50 million, which would be an increase over the last several years budget.

In the Senate, a letter coauthored by Senators Mazie Hirono (D-HI) and Mike Crapo (R-ID) called for robust funding for the Grant and Per Diem (GPD), Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, and the HUD-VASH program. This letter was also signed by an additional 28 Senators of both the Republican and Democratic parties, as well as a Senator affiliated as an Independent. NCHV joins them too in their support of these programs, and calls for the full funding requested in the President's Budget- \$300 million for SSVF, \$247.5 million for GPD, and an increase of \$47 million for the HUD-VASH program over last year's request.

NCHV thanks every one of the 97 Members of Congress who either authored or signed the two letters to Appropriators this year. As we progress through the appropriations process this year, we hope that the input from these Members will help make the President's Budget request numbers a reality. If you would like to view the letters mentioned above, please go to <http://nchv.org/index.php/policy/policy/write-ups/>.

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.

We will be doing preparatory work leading up to the Annual Conference this month 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?