



NATIONAL COALITION *for* HOMELESS VETERANS

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Policy and Legislative Update: Budget Uncertainty and Flat Re-authorizations

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The appropriations process and veteran homelessness

In what is becoming accepted practice, Congress missed the September 30th deadline for passing appropriations bills that would fund the federal government through Fiscal Year 2015, and instead passed a temporary continuing resolution (CR) that funds the government through until December 11th of this calendar year. At press time, we at NCHV do not have a reliable prediction as to how the remainder of this year's budget battle will turn out.

If Congress decides to have the federal government operate under a long-term CR that covers the entire 2015 Fiscal Year, then homeless programs are very likely to see flat funding. This means that the appropriations figures for this year will match those from last year. This would make available \$75 million for new HUD-VASH vouchers, \$235 million for the GPD program, \$300 million for the SSVF program, and \$38 million for the HVRP program.

Should Congress instead decide to fund the federal government through a new appropriations package, then current legislation indicates that veteran's homeless programs will likely receive a boost.

Despite disagreement in the House regarding the funding levels of some other poverty reduction and housing initiatives, both the House and Senate versions of the Transportation and Housing and Urban Development bill contain \$75 million for an additional ~10,000 HUD-VASH vouchers for Fiscal Year 2015. This will bring the total number of available HUD-VASH vouchers up to more than 78,000 vouchers by the end of FY 2015.

The Military Construction and Veterans Affairs (MilConVA) appropriations bill passed in the House makes \$250 million available for the Grant and Per Diem (GPD) program for FY 2015, and \$300 million available for the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) for the same year. This constitutes a \$15 million increase in the GPD program. Because of the two year schedule of MilConVA appropriations bills, the House also voted to appropriate \$253 million for GPD and \$500 million for SSVF in FY 2016. The FY 2016 appropriation for the SSVF program represents an over 700% increase in funding over the last five years.

When we are sure which course of action Congress will take, NCHV will communicate the results with you via our eNewsletters and "email blasts."



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The re-authorization of veteran homeless programs

Just as appropriations bills appropriate from the Treasury funds for the government to expend on programs, authorization bills provide – you guessed it – the authority for the government to spend that money. But whereas the discussion of appropriations bills above included talk of this Fiscal Year as well as Fiscal Year 2016, the following discussion of authorization bills will only relate to this Fiscal Year.

Unlike the CR, Congress did in fact pass a timely re-authorizations package for veteran homelessness programs. That bill (H.R. 5404) was passed by both Houses and signed by President Obama before the new Fiscal Year began on October 1.



Representative Lamborn (R-CO) represents the Majority on the House floor as he delivers remarks in support of H.R. 5404. The bill passed the House by a voice vote just a few minutes later, after members of both parties spoke in support of passage.

This bill - now law - re-authorized the HVRP, GPD, and SSVF programs among many others. These re-authorization set the top end limit of what could be spent by the various Federal Departments on each specific program. Across the board, this bill provides for no growth of these programs. The same spending limits of (respectively) \$50 million, \$250 million, and \$300 million were retained from last year.

While NCHV applauds Congress for its timely action on the re-authorization question, the fact of the matter is that by failing to increase the authorization for the SSVF program to \$500 million dollars as the Obama administration requested, Congress has limited the recent SSVF “surge” funding. This Congressional action prevented up to \$200 million dollars of SSVF grants from reaching an estimated 50 high-need communities and serving upwards of an additional 50,000 veteran families.

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While the shortfall between the President's budget request and Congressional action is substantial, it should be remembered that we are still at historically high funding levels for all veteran homelessness programs and the projected appropriations figures for next Fiscal Year will put us beyond those levels.

Despite this historically high level of funding NCHV will continue to advocate for an expanded SSVF program, and for a return to a full commitment by Congress to the effort to end veteran homelessness by 2015.

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