

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-0533**

January 23, 2015

Chairman Jeff Miller  
Committee on the Veterans Affairs  
U.S. House of Representatives  
335 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Tom Price, M.D.  
Committee on the Budget  
U.S. House of Representatives  
207 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Corrine Brown  
Committee on the Veterans Affairs  
U.S. House of Representatives  
334 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Chris Van Hollen  
Committee on the Budget  
U.S. House of Representatives  
134 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Colleagues,

As a Veteran, I respectfully ask for your assistance in dealing with Veterans' homelessness in my Congressional District and across the country.

Our brethren who served our nation should not be sleeping on the streets. This failure has proven especially true in Southern California. As you may know, the West Los Angeles Veterans Affairs Medical Center (West LA VA) is located in my Congressional District. Covering 387 sprawling acres, it is the largest VA medical center in the nation and provides many critical services to our Veterans, especially those who are experiencing homelessness. This is particularly important in Los Angeles County, which ranks number one in homeless Veterans nationwide. Estimates range from between 5,000 to 6,000 homeless Veterans living on the streets of Los Angeles on any given night. We will have a more precise number after the 2015 Point-in-Time (PIT) count that will be conducted during the last week of January.

The current best practices for housing homeless Veterans is the "Housing First model," in which Veterans are first given stable housing and then provided with intensive services, including job training and mental health care. One of the most valuable tools in delivering this model is the use of HUD-VASH vouchers. These vouchers were created by a joint program between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

In meeting with providers and experts in my district, they report that Veterans would exit homelessness more rapidly if the West LA VA received a larger infusion of HUD-VASH vouchers. Given the extraordinary need, I plan to request a larger allotment of HUD-VASH for the West LA VA in the next allocation cycle.

The lack of adequate housing stock in Los Angeles presents another barrier to finding homes for Veterans. According to a study by the University of Southern California Luskin School of Public Affairs in July 2014, Los Angeles is now the least affordable rental market in the country, based on the portion of income an individual spends on rent. As a result, prospective HUD-VASH landlords are often reluctant to accept these vouchers given the low reimbursement rate they receive from both HUD and the Veteran tenant. Over the past year, we have learned of several instances where we have not lived up to the promise to our Veterans to provide the services they deserve. That is why I would like to ask for your assistance increasing the amount HUD contributes toward HUD-VASH vouchers in Los Angeles.

As we begin our work in the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress, I look forward to working with you to address both the number of and reimbursement rate for HUD-VASH vouchers for Veterans in Los Angeles County.

Sincerely,



Ted W. Lieu

cc:

Secretary Bob McDonald, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein  
U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer  
Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti  
State Senator Isadore Hall, III  
State Senator Fran Pavley  
State Senator Ben Allen  
State Assemblymember Richard Bloom  
State Assemblymember Sebastian Ridley-Thomas  
State Assemblymember David Hadley  
State Assemblymember Autumn Burke  
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Sheila Kuehl  
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Don Knabe  
Los Angeles City Councilmember Paul Koretz  
Los Angeles City Councilmember Mike Bonin