



## Oregon's Heroes Deserve a Safe Place to Call Home

### Support HB 2417 to Provide Safe, Affordable Housing for United States Veterans

Our armed forces accept the responsibility of guarding our freedom. When they return, some face new barriers to meeting their basic needs. Stable, affordable housing is a critical first step in their journey back to a productive life at home.

**Veterans face unique barriers when they come home.** Too many veterans in Oregon struggle to find a safe, decent place to live as they integrate back into their communities. If we don't address these unique struggles, veterans and our communities face difficult realities.

- 1 in 6 people in Oregon's homeless shelters have served our country.<sup>1</sup>
- Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who become homeless do so within 3 years compared with 13 years for Vietnam-era veterans, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs.<sup>2</sup>
- Veterans working in some common jobs available through the Department of Labor's specialized training programs don't earn enough to afford a median-priced home in many Oregon communities.<sup>3</sup>

**We need a comprehensive plan to address veterans' needs.** This bill provides critical, ongoing supports to veterans that will help them avoid homelessness and instability by addressing their unique needs.

- 1) **Funding to prevent and reduce veteran homelessness.** Flexible resources for local partners throughout the state to help homeless veterans find a place to live, and to prevent at-risk veterans from becoming homeless.
- 2) **Funding to build or rehabilitate affordable housing to support veterans.** Many veterans return dealing with disabilities and trauma related issues. We need tailored housing that links them to critical services like case management, health care, job training and recovery support.
- 3) **Resources to help veterans buy or keep their home.** Resources like homeownership classes, foreclosure counseling and down payment assistance are critical to help veterans overcome financial barriers to home ownership. These resources would also help leverage existing tools like the ORVET home loan program.

**Create a dedicated, ongoing funding source to support veterans.** This bill would increase an existing real estate document-recording fee that people pay when they buy or sell a property by \$5. This would raise close to \$6 million in the 2013-15 biennium. **The entire \$5 would be dedicated to veterans**, divided as follows:

- 76% for **Veteran Supportive Housing** – developing affordable, tailored rental housing to support veterans.
- 14% for **Home Ownership** – resources to help veterans keep or buy a home.
- 10% for **Emergency Housing** – flexible resources to prevent and end homelessness among veterans. This would help veterans overcome barriers like security deposits and application fees that prevent them from using federal VASH vouchers that pay for rent, but only after they sign a lease.

**Leverage Existing and Federal Resources.** The federal government has launched programs to address the crisis of veteran homelessness. But gaps in these programs exist at the local level. A relatively modest investment by the state can capitalize on the federal programs, and better meet local housing needs. This bill would help Oregon better leverage federal resources, such as VASH Vouchers, Supportive Services for Veteran Families and the Capital and Per Diem Grant.

#### **ACTION:**

Support HB 2417 to help Oregon's veterans find and keep a safe home, and gain access to critical services that help them get on the pathway to a productive life at home. These critical housing services would be funded by a \$5 increase to an existing document-recording fee that people pay when they buy or sell a home.



## A National Movement to End Veteran Homelessness Support HB 2417 And Help Oregon Leverage Existing and Federal Resources

Many local non-profits serving veterans in Oregon are experts at blending federal, state, and private funding to meet the needs of our nation's heroes. HB 2417 could help local non-profits leverage critical investments from federal resources such as:

- Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) Vouchers
- Capital Grant and Per Diem Program
- Supportive Services for Veteran Families

**Better Connecting Veterans To Federal VASH Vouchers.** Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) is a unique program funded in partnership by the Veteran Administration and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. This program is one of the main tools being used to address veteran homelessness by providing chronically homeless veterans vouchers that supplement their rent. To utilize the vouchers, veterans must have the means for application fees, security deposits, and other expenses associated with renting a home. Some veterans, who have experienced chronic homelessness, need mission-based housing providers.

**HB 2417 Benefit:** The Emergency Housing Account dollars that would be provided through HB 2417 would help address barriers veterans face utilizing VASH vouchers to find a permanent place to live. Also, HB 2417 provides resources for communities to develop affordable housing for hard-to-house veterans.

**Using Emergency Housing Dollars to Connect Veteran's to Federal Stability Services.** Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) is a federal program that helps veterans and their families become stable, linking them to case managers and services such as health care, childcare, transportation, and financial planning. For veterans and their families to utilize SSVF, veterans must have a place to live.

**HB 2417 Benefit:** By blending SSVF funds with the Emergency Housing Account dollars (EHA) that would be provided by HB 2417, local non-profits can put homeless and at-risk veterans and their families into housing quickly so they can then utilize SSVF services that keep them on the pathway to stability.

**Helping Non-Profits Be Competitive for Capital Grants.** The Department of Veteran Affairs awards Capital Grants that build supportive housing for veterans. Veterans who have experienced chronic homelessness, or who suffer from disabilities and post-traumatic stress, often need housing that is tailored to meet their unique needs, such as stoves with timers or in-house access to support groups and case management. For non-profits to apply for a VA Capital Grant, they must have a 35% match requirement of non-federal funding sources.

**HB 2417 Benefit:** The Capital Grant program is very competitive and typically awards funds to less than 10% of applicants. To help ensure applicants have the capacity to fully fund a development project, the program awards points for the amount of non-Veteran Affairs funding applicants can bring to the project. HB 2417 would make more non-profits competitive for these grants, as they would be able to meet or exceed the 35% match requirement.

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<sup>1</sup> HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan, March 27, 2012

<sup>2</sup> US Department of Veterans Affairs

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Employment Situation of Veterans, 2011. Current Population Survey. Table 2A.