



February 26, 2016

To: Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue
From: Oregon Housing Authorities
RE: Request to support HJR 202

Chair Hass, Vice-Chair Boquist, and members of the Committee,

The Oregon Housing Authorities support HJR 202. This joint resolution will put to the voters a ballot measure that will allocate 2% of lottery revenue to veterans issues. Here are some reasons why putting additional funds toward veteran services makes sense for Oregon:

The ratio of claimed to unclaimed disability payments to veterans is directly linked to the advocacy of Veterans Service Officers representing veterans attempting to claim the benefits from the VA that they've earned through their service. Currently, roughly 60,000 veterans receive disability compensation in Oregon. This brings in \$1.3 billion per year to Oregon. It is estimated that Oregon's veteran population is over 330,000. Investing in veteran outreach and support to veterans who have not claimed their benefits has enormous potential for economic and social benefit. This resolution would allow for funds to increase the reach of Veteran Service Officers and connect more veterans to the benefits they've earned.

In addition to bringing funds to Oregon, this work corresponds to other general fund savings, particularly when veterans come off of state safety net resources and onto federal veteran benefits. The Housing Authorities work closely with veterans on a daily basis through programs such as the Veteran Administration Supportive Housing voucher program, and see the need for additional resources to support this population and the shared benefit in their success.

Finally, This 2% would come from funds that are currently not allocated to any other specific purpose, so would not reduce current allocations to education or parks. In fact the use of these funds is defined to cover a broad range of issues that impact veterans, including education, housing, mental health and addictions treatment and employment. This broad use provides lawmakers great flexibility in determining how best to allocate these critical resources.

Sincerely,

The Oregon Housing Authorities