



February 26, 2016

To: Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue  
From: Housing Authority of Washington County  
RE: Request to Support HJR 202A

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

My name is Val Valfre. I am the Executive Director for the Housing Authority of Washington County, and serve as a member of the State Housing Stability Council and of the Association of Oregon Housing Authorities. However, today I am speaking to you as a 24-year Air Force veteran and pilot with combat service in Vietnam – who strongly recommends that you support HJR 202A.

Over my many years of service, I have often placed my life in the hands of fellow veterans who skillfully serviced my airplanes, certified the operational readiness of my munitions and guarded the very perimeters wherein I slept. These and countless others are the true heroes who answered their Country's call to service. While I have been very fortunate in the aftermath of my military career, there are far too many servicemen and women residing in Oregon who need your assistance to unlock the nearly \$4 Billion in federal benefits, compensation, health care and services to which they are entitled.

I now proudly serve in a role wherein I can offer a safe and secure place in which our veterans can call "home". Oregon has about 1700 VASH (Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing) vouchers that are administered by Housing Authorities statewide – these vouchers provide stable housing plus wrap-around support services provided by the VA to assist our chronically homeless veterans. While we applaud the outcomes of this positive initiative, most of our veterans are not eligible for these supportive services because they do not qualify as chronically homeless. Without the skills needed to navigate an ever-imposing VA system and access their eligible federal benefits on their own, many have become the new face of the homeless, the under-employed or the very low-income. We are working this issue in Wash Co by partnering with a non-profit developer and local service providers to create 20 units of stable housing for extremely low-income veterans and their families using project-based vouchers. Our success and theirs will ultimately rely on the availability of local Veterans Service Officers to outreach to this population and assist them in securing available VA funds for employment, housing, physical and mental health care, and addiction treatment programs. However, if we are to be successful in accomplishing this effort on a statewide level, we will need HJR 202A to fund greater outreach assistance by additional Veterans Service Officers.

In summary, this bill enjoys broad bipartisan support – in part because it is a smart economic investment that unleashes considerable social benefit but primarily because it is the right thing to do. It will unlock billions of dollars in available but untapped federal assistance, health care and services that would have a profound impact on the lives and well-being of our at-risk veterans, their spouses and children.

Let us help our Veterans to help themselves – by empowering them to access the vital services that they have earned and so honorably sacrificed for.

I strongly urge that you support HJR 202A. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Adolph "Val" Valfre, Jr.

Executive Director

Washington County Housing Authority

**Department of Housing Services**

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*Equal Housing Opportunity*