

PAUL L. EVANS
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 20



HJR 202
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**From the Desk
of
Rep. Evans**

Paul L. Evans
19 Feb 16

February 19, 2016

Oregon House of Representatives
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Colleagues:

The events of this week remain heavy upon our hearts. Today we shall consider a resolution that would, if passed by the People of Oregon, implement the most consequential investment in veterans' care and services in Oregon History. This measure, House Joint Resolution 202A, is a referral empowering the voters with an opportunity for expanding the impact of the Oregon Lottery and set-aside 2% of Lottery Revenues for veterans' outreach and programming. Please note: this concept is not new, it is not rushed. It has been advanced by members from both parties over past sessions: it is a tool for "unlocking" as much as \$4 Billion in federal benefits, compensation, health care, and services for our military families and veterans residing in each, every district throughout the State of Oregon.

This month, and throughout the past Legislative Sessions, the Oregon Legislature has passed resolutions honoring the sacrifice and service of fallen. And it is appropriate we do this. Words matter. But so do deeds. This measure attends to the living. At present it is estimated that as many as 350,000 veterans reside in our cities, towns, and rural areas. Of these 350,000 the US Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) provides services for less than 100,000. We have become largely immune to the almost regular reports of abuse and malfeasance within our federal VA programming. The bravery and courage of our military has become page 18 news, when reported at all. Each of us knows our nation has failed to keep faith with the men and women we sent – and continue to send – into Harm's Way on our behalf. And yet, the past doesn't have to be prelude: we can change our course.

The State of Oregon cannot afford to provide all the care our veterans deserve, nor should we try. In an era of tight budgets we are duty-bound to target the vast majority of our scarce general funds upon our Constitutional responsibilities. However, we can – and must – play a role. We can leverage available federal resources to engage veterans; to facilitate partnerships for at-risk populations; and to assist our military families in navigating the byzantine structures and systems of the modern VA. This will yield better care for veterans and increased access to critical services for non-veterans as well. The purpose of HJR 202A is to unlock the \$Billions we "leave on the table" annually. It is a smart economic development investment; it is a smart investment in expanded human services capabilities (through transfer of clients/patients onto VA care); and it is the right thing to do for the families who have done so much for us.

Every now and again what we do in this building facilitates the beginning of something big, something important: this is one such instance. With a targeted plan for optimizing outreach and assisting local and community service providers in securing available VA funds for employment, health care, housing, and transportation – we can stretch the anticipated revenues associated with passage of this measure (and its passage at the ballot) and make a profound difference in the health, opportunities, and lives of hundreds of thousands of military families. Your support for HJR 202A is critical. Every member of the House Veterans' and Emergency Preparedness Committee – Democrat and Republican alike – are co-signers on this measure. We are united in our belief that this plan is necessary and warranted.

Together, today, as one voice, The Oregon House of Representatives can send an important signal to veterans past, present, and future with a loud, unanimous "yes" for this measure. I ask you to consider what we have asked of the men and women we sent – and continue to send – into Harm's Way and to support this measure today – and at the ballot box in the fall.

Respectfully

Paul L. Evans
State Representative

