

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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**MaineHousing**  
Maine State Housing Authority

February 25, 2008

Senator Lynn Bromley, Chair  
Representative Nancy Smith, Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Business, Research and Economic Development  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Dear Senator Bromley, Representative Smith, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Business, Research and Economic Development:

Pursuant to Resolve 2007, Chapter 90, "Resolve to Assist Homeless Veterans in Need of Shelter," attached please find MaineHousing's response to the reporting requirements outlined in the Resolve. The report outlines our progress in working with stakeholders across the state in expanding outreach and funding strategies to meet the housing needs of Maine's homeless veterans. At the Committee's request, we would be glad to formally present our report and answer any questions they may have.

Sincerely,

Dale McCormick  
Director



**REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS, RESEARCH AND  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ON  
L.D. 662, "Resolve, To Assist Veterans in Need of Shelter"**

**February 21, 2008**

**I. Introduction**

During the First Regular Session of the 123<sup>rd</sup> Maine Legislature, Representative Janet Mills submitted a bill entitled, L.D. 662, "Resolve, to Assist Veterans in Need of Shelter." The resulting Resolve 2007, Chapter 90, directs Maine State Housing Authority to work with the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management, Bureau of Maine Veterans' Services to reach out to identify and promote housing and shelter services throughout the State for veterans of the United States Armed Forces who are experiencing homelessness in Maine. A copy of Resolve, Chapter 90 is included as Appendix A.

Further, the Resolve includes a directive to the Maine State Housing Authority to convene a group of stakeholders involved in veteran's affairs with a goal of improving outreach efforts to homeless veterans throughout Maine and to facilitate efforts of Maine non-profit housing and service providers in drawing down available grant funds intended to support the needs of homeless veterans. A report to the Joint Standing Committee on Business, Research and Economic Development on the progress of these outreach efforts was included in the directive. This report is Maine State Housing Authority's response to that directive.

**II. Background**

About nine percent, or 459 individuals, of the persons experiencing homelessness who spent time in Maine's emergency shelters during the past year were self-identified veterans. Half of the veterans spent time in Portland shelters where they made up 17 percent of the total shelter population, 20 percent were in Bangor, and 30 percent were in various locations throughout the remainder of the state. These numbers do not include individuals who were doubled up with others because they do not have a home of their own, or who are living in vehicles and other places not meant for human habitation. There is no way to accurately count this segment of the homeless population. However, homeless service providers and veterans' organizations believe the number is significant.

A report released by the National Alliance to End Homelessness in November 2007 indicates that nationally, the percentage of veterans experiencing homelessness is greater than the percentage of veterans in the general population. According to the report, veterans made up 11 percent of the adult population in 2005, but 26 percent of the homeless population. Maine statistics vary from national estimates in that veterans make up approximately 13 percent of the total adult population in the state and between 9 and 11 percent of the state's homeless population.

### **III. Outreach Progress**

Since the Resolve to Assist Veterans in Need of Shelter was enacted in June 2007, Maine State Housing Authority has convened a stakeholders group and has met with them on September 19<sup>th</sup>, October 16<sup>th</sup>, and January 9<sup>th</sup>, with a fourth meeting scheduled for April 9, 2008. These meetings provide a conduit for better and more coordinated outreach to Maine's homeless veterans. The stakeholders group is made up of representatives from the Veterans Administration at Togus, Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services, Maine State VFW, American Legion Department of Maine, the Maine National Guard, United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, U.S. Department of Labor, a member of the Governor's staff, and several Maine's homeless shelter and service providers.

Interestingly, our initial stakeholder meetings pointed out a strong disconnect between veteran constituency groups and the service network intended to serve them. These meetings now provide an excellent communication and relationship building vehicle for these stakeholders, where none previously existed. In fact, the list of stakeholders has grown over time as word of the group's networking value has spread. The resulting relationships help enable a more coordinated response to the multi-level needs of homeless veterans in our state.

In an effort to improve outreach actions and strategies within and outside this new network, the stakeholders first focused on getting to know each other through information sharing. To facilitate this process, a contact list and resource matrix was developed and shared as a networking tool. The matrix serves as a handy reference for name, organization, contact information, and organizational website links. A copy of the Contact and Resource Matrix appears as Appendix B of this report.

The stakeholder group's next step was an assessment of outreach strategies currently undertaken by each stakeholder. This assessment helped us to understand and therefore proactively utilize existing communication vehicles for information and outreach efforts through individual agencies' email and mailing lists, newsletters, and organizational websites, and others. The assessment has helped to identify outreach and communication gaps which the group will ultimately work to fill. As a first step toward that goal, working with individual stakeholders, MaineHousing is facilitating the cross linking of organizational websites to broaden information and resource access to stakeholder constituency groups and the general public who may be seeking information via the internet.

Nancy Fritz, the Governor's Director of Homeless Initiatives has actively sought and implemented ways to engage individual stakeholders, as appropriate, in the meetings and subsequent activities of the statewide and regional homeless councils. Ms. Fritz has provided information about the dates and times of all meetings and has included discussions about the needs of homeless veterans at a recent Statewide Homeless Council meeting. Representatives from the Veterans Administration at Togus, the Disabled American Veterans in Maine, the Training Resource Center, and a housing development agency that operates a Veterans Career House transitional living program participated. Staff members from the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program operated by the Training Resource Center have made presentations at Regional Homeless Council meetings. Additionally, all of

the members of the Homeless Veterans Stakeholder Group have been provided copies of Maine's Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness and have been asked to offer ideas and suggestions for specific strategies that could address the needs of Maine's veterans experiencing homelessness.

#### **IV. Funding Access**

Through our focus on funding at our upcoming April meeting, we hope to actively engage housing and service partners in applying for grant funds available through the recently announced Veterans Administration Grant Per Diem Program NOFA (Notice of Funding Available).

This NOFA, the Veterans Administration (VA) Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program, is offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Programs and provides funds for community agencies offering services to homeless veterans. The grant's purpose is to promote the development and provision of supportive housing and services with the goal of helping homeless veterans achieve residential stability, increase their skill levels as well as income, and realize greater self-determination. The program has two levels of funding: the Grant Component which is limited to 65% of the costs of construction, renovation, or acquisition of a building for use as service centers or transitional housing for homeless vets and the Per Diem Component through which the VA pays a daily rate for each night a homeless veteran spends in an approved housing program. The current maximum rate of reimbursement is \$33.01 a night. This national competitive grant is offered annually (as funding permits) and allows a 3-5 year window for development, construction, and service implementation. Nationally, the VA expects to award \$25 million in grant monies and an additional \$12 million in per diem funds through this NOFA.

Additionally, we understand that the Veterans Administration has recently received word from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) informing them that they will soon receive 30-35 Section 8 vouchers. When available, these vouchers will serve as a valuable resource to help meet the housing needs of veterans.

Other funding opportunities for housing and service development are available through the annual Continuum of Care application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD will be announcing its NOFA for these funds within the next several months. Also, within the next few months, MaineHousing will be releasing a Request for Proposals for developing supportive housing for populations experiencing homelessness.

#### **V. Next Steps**

At our recent stakeholders meeting held on January 9, 2008, participants agreed that due to the value of these meetings as a vehicle for ongoing outreach, communication and relationship building in meeting our mutual goal of serving Maine's homeless veterans,

the group will continue to meet on a quarterly basis. MaineHousing will continue to facilitate these meetings.

In addition to convening and facilitating ongoing Homeless Veterans Stakeholder meetings, MaineHousing has acted as a clearinghouse for news and information on issues related to homeless veterans that are brought to our attention. Stakeholders have expressed appreciation for our role as a conduit for this information sharing. As time goes on, however, the group may find that another organization is better suited for this role.

## **VI. Conclusion**

MaineHousing is pleased to have been involved in convening interested stakeholders in this important initiative to improve outreach and assistance to Maine's veterans experiencing homelessness. We are confident that the resulting interactive and coordinated network and its ongoing work will serve to improve our individual and collective reach and service to homeless veterans in Maine. We welcome the opportunity to present this report and its supporting documentation to the Committee and respond to any questions the Committee may have. We look forward to our continued work in facilitating enhanced communication and outreach through our work with the Homeless Veterans stakeholders.

## Resolve Chapter 90 Report- Appendix A

RESOLVE Chapter 90, 123rd Maine State Legislature  
Resolve, To Assist Veterans in Need of Shelter

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### **Resolve, To Assist Veterans in Need of Shelter**

**Sec. 1 Maine State Housing Authority and homeless veterans. Resolved:** That the Maine State Housing Authority shall work with the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management, Bureau of Maine Veterans' Services to reach out to identify and promote housing and shelter services throughout the State for veterans of the United States Armed Forces who are homeless; and be it further

**Sec. 2 Outreach efforts; report. Resolved:** That the Maine State Housing Authority is directed to convene a group of stakeholders involved in veterans affairs to find methods for improving outreach efforts to homeless veterans in all regions of the State and facilitate efforts of nonprofit organizations to draw down any available federal grants to assist in meeting the needs of homeless veterans in the State. By January 15, 2008 the authority shall report on the progress of the outreach efforts pursuant to this resolve to the Joint Standing Committee on Business, Research and Economic Development.





## Homeless Vets Stakeholder and Resource List

Contact	Organization	Title	Email
Charles Bennett	American Legion	Past Post Commander	<a href="mailto:chben48@Yahoo.com">chben48@Yahoo.com</a>
Donald Simoneau	American Legion	Veteran's Advocate	<a href="mailto:amlegion1a@msn.com">amlegion1a@msn.com</a>
Dennis Tully	Veterans Administration	Homeless Coordinator	<a href="mailto:Dennis.Tully@va.gov">Dennis.Tully@va.gov</a>
Bob Duranleau	City of Portland	Director of Social Services	<a href="mailto:rmd@portlandmaine.gov">rmd@portlandmaine.gov</a>
Peter Ogden	Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services	Director	<a href="mailto:mainebvs@maine.gov">mainebvs@maine.gov</a>
John O'Brien	U. S. Interagency Council on Homelessness	New England Regional Coordinator	<a href="mailto:John.J.O'Brien@hud.gov">John.J.O'Brien@hud.gov</a>
Ron Sailor	Maine American Legion State Headquarters	Adjutant	<a href="mailto:legionme@me.acadia.net">legionme@me.acadia.net</a>
Andre Dumas	Maine State VFW	State Adjutant	<a href="mailto:thedumas@gwi.net">thedumas@gwi.net</a>
Tom Nickerson/Barry Peaco	Training Resource Center (TRC)	Executive Director	<a href="mailto:Tom.Nickerson@trcme.com">Tom.Nickerson@trcme.com</a>
Lance Boucher	Governor's Office of Redevelopment, Re-Employment, and Business Support	Director	<a href="mailto:Lance.Boucher@maine.gov">Lance.Boucher@maine.gov</a>
General John Libby	Maine National Guard	Commander	<a href="mailto:John.W.Libby@maine.gov">John.W.Libby@maine.gov</a>
Jon Guay	U. S. Dept. of Labor	Homeless Veteran's Employment Coordinator	<a href="mailto:Guay.Jon@dol.gov">Guay.Jon@dol.gov</a>
Nancy Fritz	Governor's Office/MaineHousing	Director of Homeless Initiatives	<a href="mailto:Nfritz@mainehousing.org">Nfritz@mainehousing.org</a>
Wayne Desjardins	Disabled American Veterans- Maine	Commander	<a href="mailto:mecdr@davfrat.org">mecdr@davfrat.org</a>

## Homeless Vets Stakeholder and Resource List

Contact	Organization	Title	Email
Jim Doherty	Togus	Assistant to the Center Director	<a href="mailto:james.doherty@va.gov">james.doherty@va.gov</a>
Dennis Marble	Bangor Area Homeless Shelter	Executive Director	<a href="mailto:bahs@gwi.net">bahs@gwi.net</a>
Cullen Ryan	Community Housing of Maine	Executive Director	<a href="mailto:cullen@maine.rr.com">cullen@maine.rr.com</a>
Kathy Poulin	MaineHousing	Special Projects Coordinator	<a href="mailto:kpoulin@mainehousing.org">kpoulin@mainehousing.org</a>
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Susan Whittington	Veterans Administration-Togus	Per Diem Grant Liaison	<a href="mailto:susan.whittington@va.gov">susan.whittington@va.gov</a>
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Bill Kilde	American Legion	Homeless Vets Committee Member	<a href="mailto:kildeow@supship.navy.mil">kildeow@supship.navy.mil</a>