

Washington, D.C. – Last night, the House of Representatives approved legislation that included portions of the Helping Homeless Heroes Act, a bill introduced by Rep. Ted Deutch (FL-19) and Rep. Tom Rooney (FL-16) to strengthen federal efforts to end homelessness among America's veterans.

“While we've made dramatic improvements over the last decade to reduce veteran homelessness, we still have significant work ahead of us to ensure that no one who served is left out in the cold while making the transition to civilian life,” said Congressman Rooney. “This legislation builds on successful support programs to help fulfill our debt to those who put their lives on the line in defense of our country.”

“I am pleased to have my colleagues join me in support of federal initiatives that have successfully helped thousands of homeless veterans get off the streets and back on their feet,” said Congressman Deutch. “As more and more of our troops return from Iraq and Afghanistan and encounter a challenging economy at home, we must ensure that the federal programs responsible for providing job-counseling, housing assistance, health care, and other services are fully funded. We have an obligation to ensure that no veteran becomes a forgotten hero after their mission is complete.”

Over the last decade, significant progress has been made reducing the number of homeless servicemen and women, from more than 300,000 in 2003 to less than 150,000 in 2009. The Veterans Health Care Facilities Capital Improvement Act of 2011 includes language from the Deutch-Rooney legislation to bolster federal programs responsible for much of this success.

Included in the Veterans Health Care Facilities Capital Improvement Act of 2011 are provisions that:

- Renew critical programs like the Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service's Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, the only nationwide employment assistance program dedicated to homeless veterans;
- Reauthorize the repayment of VA's Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program (GPD), a transitional housing program that is the foundation of VA and community partnerships;
- Reauthorize the VA Special Needs grants for the following homeless veteran populations: women, including women who have care of minor dependents; frail elderly; terminally ill; or chronically mentally ill; and

- Reauthorize financial assistance for supportive services for very low-income veteran families in permanent housing. VA's Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program is designed to promote housing stability for very low-income veterans and their families. According to estimates from the National Alliance to End Homelessness, about 600,000 veterans can be classified as extreme low-income, and are therefore at great risk of becoming homeless.

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