



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
HOUSE OF DELEGATES
RICHMOND

M. KIRKLAND "KIRK" COX
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COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:
APPROPRIATIONS
AGRICULTURE, CHESAPEAKE, AND
NATURAL RESOURCES
RULES

January 22, 2009

Mr. Philip A. Leone
Director
Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission
Suite 1100, General Assembly Building
Richmond, Va. 23219

Dear Phil:

I would like the **Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to study ways to reduce homelessness among veterans in the Commonwealth**, and for this issue to be included in the Commission's 2009 Work Plan. As you know, I have always been supportive of efforts to improve services available for our veterans. I realize that you have a number of pressing study priorities and resource constraints. Therefore, I am suggesting that you complete this study as soon as practically possible, but not later than July 1, 2010. I have attached a Joint Leadership Council (JLC) paper that provides background information on this important issue.

Thank you for giving this study issue your prompt attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kirk Cox".

Kirk Cox
Chairman
Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission

Homeless Veterans Study

1. **OBJECTIVE:** To begin the process of reducing homelessness among veterans in the Commonwealth by: 1) identifying gaps in current services; 2) developing an improved service-delivery model that better integrates federal, state, local, and private resources; and 3) identifying the resources needed to implement the improved service-delivery model.

2. **BACKGROUND:**
 - An estimated 900 veterans are homeless in Virginia at any one time
 - 500 in Hampton Roads
 - 200 in Central Virginia
 - 50 in the Roanoke Valley and Southwest Virginia
 - 150 in other parts of the state
 - In addition to the factors affecting the general homeless population, veterans experience homelessness due to the lingering effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and a lack of family and social support networks
 - “(Nationwide) veterans make up a disproportionate share of homeless people. They represent roughly 26 percent of homeless people, but only 11 percent of the civilian population 18 years and older. This is true despite the fact that veterans are better educated, more likely to be employed, and have a lower poverty rate than the general population.”
National Alliance to End Homelessness
 - A variety of specialized programs are available for homeless veterans through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (the VA) and other federal agencies, including:
 - Grant funding for transitional and permanent supportive housing
 - Employment assistance and compensated work therapy
 - Medical care
 - Substance abuse counseling
 - Disability compensation

3. **DISCUSSION:**
 - While a wide variety of specialized services are available to homeless veterans (in addition to the services available to the general homeless population) there is a perceived:
 - Lack of coordination between service providers (for example, between community providers and the VA). This has left critical gaps in services that could be provided for homeless veterans, if there was a community partner who was 1) willing to provide those services, and 2) had the resources to do so
 - Lack of knowledge among community service providers about services available from the federal government and how to connect homeless veterans to those services
 - Lack of knowledge among community service providers about the funding opportunities available from the federal government and how to access those funding sources
 - Because of the lack of a coordinated service delivery program for homeless veterans, community organizations in Virginia have generally been unsuccessful when competing for federal grant resources

4. **RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and General Assembly fund a study to:
 - 1) examine the current level of services provided to homeless veterans in the Commonwealth of Virginia; 2) identify gaps in service; and 3) identify the need for and cost of additional services as part of a coordinated service delivery model.