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STATEMENT OF  
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BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
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Chairman Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) commitment to ending homelessness among Veterans. I am accompanied today by Lisa Pape, National Director, VHA Homeless Programs, and Maura Squire, Homeless Veterans Outreach Coordinator, Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Boston Regional Office.

It has been nearly two years since VA officials last testified before this Committee specifically on VA's program to eliminate homelessness among Veterans. In that time, VA has made excellent progress in our ongoing effort to ensure that, as VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki said in November 2009, "Those who have served this nation as Veterans should never find themselves on the street, living without care and without hope."

In addition, VA has undergone a significant shift in the focus of our efforts. Our homeless program is steadily moving from one of rescue and recovery to one of prevention and sustainable independence. I will begin today by detailing VA's many accomplishments over the past year and will outline our program efforts to end homelessness by 2015. This aligns with the objectives stated in *Opening Doors: the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*. I will then discuss what VA is doing to reach out to the growing numbers of women Veterans who face homelessness or the prospect of homelessness. Before I conclude, I will present VA's way forward in our efforts to end Veteran homelessness. And, as you requested in your invitation to this hearing, I will describe some of the legislative measures VA can put into practice only with your ongoing support.

#### Recent Accomplishments

According to a supplement to the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) report, *Veteran Homelessness: A Supplemental Report to the 2010 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress (AHAR)*, "On a single night in January 2010, 76,329 Veterans were living in emergency shelter, in transitional housing, or in an unsheltered place (e.g., on the streets, in cars, or in abandoned buildings)." Since that time, HUD's 2011 Point-in-Time Estimate of Homelessness indicates that VA has experienced a 12 percent decrease in the number of homeless Veterans from 76,329 to 67,495.

VA views this as a significant early step in our goal to eliminate homelessness in Veterans by 2015. In addition, our efforts in fiscal year (FY) 2011 resulted in the following outcomes:

- VA provided services to support approximately 7,500 additional Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Housing Choice Vouchers, made available for use by the most needy and vulnerable Veterans through the HUD–VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program. As of January 25, 2012, there are 29,074 Veterans and family members housed through the HUD-VASH Program. As of same date, 37,549 Housing Choice vouchers have been awarded.
- VA adopted Housing First, an evidence-based practice that prioritizes access to permanent housing, and through which VA provides case management and treatment services that homeless Veterans need to maintain housing and improve health care and quality of life. Adopting the Housing First approach enables VA to improve the lease-up rates for the housing provided by HUD through the HUD-VASH program for which VA provides case management and treatment services. This approach also reduces the frequency and duration of Veteran homelessness.
- In late summer 2011, VA launched a new prevention and rapid rehousing initiative, the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program, designed to serve 22,000 Veterans and their families who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. SSVF awarded 85 grants totaling \$59.5 million to community agencies in 40 states and the District of Columbia.
- The Veteran Homelessness Prevention Demonstration Program (VHPD) sites, a collaborative effort between VA, HUD, and the Department of Labor (DOL), began serving Veterans on March 31, 2011. These sites are located at Camp Pendleton (San Diego, CA), Fort Hood (Killeen, TX), Fort Drum (Watertown, NY), Fort Lewis (Seattle, WA) and MacDill Air Force Base (Tampa, FL).

All five sites are operational and are providing homeless prevention services such as case management, linkage to health care services, and other community-related services.

- Approximately 15,706 Veterans received services through Veterans Justice Outreach (jail and court outreach and case management services, including Veterans Treatment Courts). In particular, 11,679 Veterans were served through Health Care for Re-Entry Veterans (prison outreach and case management) services.
- The National Homeless Registry was populated with 187,000 new entries of current or former homeless, or at-risk Veterans, bringing the total number of names of current and formerly homeless Veterans who have utilized VA's Homeless Programs to 400,000. Although 400,000 Veterans may seem high, this number represents an unduplicated count of all Veterans seen in VA specialized health care programs for homeless Veterans over the last five years.
- Through the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), VA and HUD continue to work to collaborate on reporting Veteran specific information to improve programs, services, and address Veterans' needs.
- VA hired 366 homeless or formerly homeless Veterans as Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists (VRS) in the Homeless Veterans Supported Employment Program (HVSEP) as of September 30, 2011.
- VA increased completed Compensation and Pension claims for homeless Veterans from FY 2010 (7,754) to FY 2011 (11,197) by 44 percent.
- In FY 2012, VA released new procedures for expediting the handling of military record

requests associated with homeless Veterans claims processing, utilizing a specific “homeless” e-mail box for easy identification and processing by the National Personnel Records Center.

- In FY 2011, VA helped 83 percent of Veterans in default retain their homes or avoid foreclosure, an increase from 76 percent in FY 2010.
- VA paid pension benefits exceeding \$4.2 billion to over 500,000 Veterans and survivors in FY 2011. Because pension benefits are paid to Veterans and survivors whose income fall below congressionally established minimum standards, it inherently assists in income issues related to homelessness.

### Overview of Programs Combating Veteran Homelessness

VA, together with Federal and local partners, is making progress toward preventing and eliminating homelessness. For example, HUD-VASH is the Nation’s largest supportive housing initiative that targets homeless Veterans and their families, by providing permanent housing with case management and supportive services to promote successful recovery and housing stability. The HUD-VASH collaboration includes HUD providing Housing Choice Vouchers and VA providing supportive wrap-around case management services. As of January 25, 2012, 37,549 HUD-VASH vouchers were available to house homeless Veterans. Of these vouchers, 34,994 were currently in use: 29,074 Veterans were currently housed, an additional 4,672 Veterans had been issued vouchers and were actively seeking a lease, and another 1,248 Veterans had been referred to a Public Housing Authority and were undergoing validation. This leaves 2,555 vouchers still available to help additional veterans. An additional 10,000 vouchers are expected to become available for use in the coming months.

The Grant and Per Diem (GPD) Program is VA’s largest transitional housing program with over 600 projects providing approximately 14,000 operational beds nationwide. Transitional housing provides participants the support needed to enable Veterans to move into permanent housing. The GPD Program utilizes a community-based transitional model, which includes time-limited, wrap-around supportive services with the goal of transitioning Veterans to independent housing. Last year over 32,000 Veterans were provided services in these projects. In fiscal year (FY) 2011, GPD initiated 111 new projects, providing an additional 2,015 transitional housing beds. In October 2011, VA awarded \$10.3 million to 26 community-based projects to continue to provide enhanced services for special need Veteran populations (i.e., women and women with dependent children, elderly, chronically mentally ill).

In 2011, VA launched the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program. SSVF enables VA to help Veteran families stay together by serving the entire family. This also means children are spared the impact of the Veteran’s homelessness. Under the SSVF Program, VA awards grants and provides technical assistance to private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives that can provide supportive services to very low-income Veteran families residing in or transitioning to permanent housing.

The supportive services are designed to promote housing stability to eligible very low-income Veteran families. The SSVF program gives VA the capacity to fund non-government entities to act before a Veteran family becomes homeless or to act quickly if the Veteran family actually

becomes homeless. By December 31, 2011, SSVF grantees had served 6,291 participants, of whom 3,494 were Veterans; 420 Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn (OEF/OIF/OND) Veterans; 545 women Veterans; and 2,751 children.

VA plans to expand this program in FY 2012 by offering approximately \$100 million in grants to community partners to help at-risk Veteran families maintain housing by gaining access to critical resources, while those who have fallen into homelessness can rapidly exit and be re-housed. For grants awarded in FY 2012, the SSVF program expects to serve 42,000 Veterans and family members.

#### VA's Six Strategic Pillars to End Veteran Homelessness

VA's focus on ending Veteran homelessness is built upon six strategic pillars, which are aligned with Opening Doors: the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness. First, VA is aggressively reaching out to and educating Veterans—both those who are homeless and those who are at risk of becoming homeless. VA does much of this work ourselves but we collaborate with thousands of partners at the Federal, state and local levels to aid Veterans. Second, for those homeless Veterans with acute health care needs, VA ensures treatment options are available, whether for primary, specialty or mental health care, including care for substance use disorders. Third, VA is bolstering efforts to prevent homelessness, rather than responding reactively to the problem after it has become a Veteran's way of life. Fourth, VA is working with community partners to increase housing opportunities and provide appropriate supportive services tailored to the needs of each Veteran. Fifth, VA is providing greater financial and employment support to Veterans, and working to improve benefits delivery for this vulnerable population. And finally, VA is continually expanding its community partnerships, because success in this venture is impossible without the contribution of many partners in the community.

#### Outreach and Education

VA outreach and education initiatives include a national effort to offer Veterans and others a way to contact VA at any time. The National Call Center for Homeless Veterans (NCCHV) provides 24/7 real-time access to VA staff for information, assistance, and local referral support to homeless and at-risk Veterans, family and friends of Veterans, and community organizations and concerned others. NCCHV immediately responds to the calls, and links the callers to VA medical center homeless program staff across the United States and its territories, for help and assistance. NCCHV received over 32,000 calls in FY 2011 and has already received over 14,000 calls in FY 2012.

VA conducts homeless outreach at shelters, community events, and in courts, local jails, and state and federal prisons. VA also collaborates with community organizations at Stand Downs - outreach events designed to connect homeless Veterans with community resources and VA health care and benefits assistance. VA representatives attended more than 200 homeless Stand Downs in calendar year 2011. These efforts also complement one of the most critical methods for engaging homeless Veterans in services: sending VA staff to the streets and shelters to work with

them directly. Many Veterans, but particularly those who have battled chronic homelessness, need skillful and repeated attempts to engage them in the care they need. Along with our community partners, VA has 415 staff members across the country engaged in outreach every day.

#### Treatment

VA recognizes that a plan to end Veteran homelessness will not be effective without a comprehensive suite of services for those with chronic and persistent health, mental health, and substance abuse disorders. Many Veterans who are homeless struggle with substance abuse; in fact, reports have indicated that approximately 55 percent of homeless Veterans have a substance use disorder which, if untreated, can keep them from returning to or sustaining independent living and gainful employment. VA's Health Care for Homeless Veterans Substance Use Disorder (HCHV SUD) Specialists are playing a critical role in homelessness prevention, as they are positioned to provide rapid treatment and stabilization to Veterans in housing who, in the past, would often return to homelessness if they relapsed. At the close of FY 2011, VA saw a 95 percent hiring rate for HCVD SUD Specialists funded in the fiscal year. In addition, VA plans to open three new Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans (DCHV) programs in Denver, Philadelphia, and San Diego. These facilities will provide state-of-the-art, high quality residential rehabilitation and treatment services for homeless and at-risk-of-homeless Veterans, with multiple and severe medical conditions, mental illness, addiction, or psychosocial problems.

#### Prevention and Rapid Rehousing

VA believes the most economically efficient way to eliminate homelessness is to prevent its occurrence. Unlike VA's traditional homeless programs, which focus on the treatment and rehabilitation of the individual Veteran, our homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing efforts address those Veterans and their families who are at immediate risk for becoming homeless, or have recently become homeless. According to the 2010 Veterans Supplemental Report to the Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR), 13 percent of individual Veterans in poverty became homeless at some point during the year, compared to 6 percent of adults in the general population. VA's SSVF Program helps Veterans and their families stabilize following a successful housing placement, by providing the support necessary to ensure that they are able to sustain their housing and have access to VA and other community-based services. For Veterans who have been chronically homeless, such support is ongoing, readily accessible, and attached to housing.

Moreover, through the SSVF Program, VA awarded in FY 2011 nearly \$60 million in funding to non-profit community organizations with strong track records of providing comprehensive services to homeless Veterans and their families. In FY 2012, VA is offering an additional \$100 million in funding for community organizations through the SSVF Program.

Incarceration is one of the most powerful predictors of homelessness; thus, outreach to justice-involved Veterans is a key part of VA's prevention strategy. The mission of VA's Veterans Justice

Programs is to engage Veterans involved in the justice program at any point in the continuum (arrest, involved in a treatment court, incarcerated in jail and prison serving a sentence), in comprehensive VA and community services that will prevent homelessness, improve social and clinical outcomes, facilitate recovery, and end Veterans' cyclical contact with the criminal justice system. In FY 2011, VA served 11,679 Veterans reentering the community after serving a term in prison, and worked with 15,706 justice-involved Veterans in local jails and courts. This includes work with Veterans involved in drug treatment courts, mental health treatment courts, and the 88 Veterans Treatment Courts that local communities have developed around the country, in response to communities' desire to connect justice-involved Veterans with treatment rather than incarceration.

The Veterans Benefits Administration's (VBA) Home Loan Guaranty program helps to prevent homelessness by assisting Veterans who fall behind on mortgage payments avoid foreclosure through intervention early in the default process, and through outreach to Veterans and their loan servicers to pursue all available loss-mitigation options. In FY 2011, VA made over 470,000 contact attempts to Veterans and their loan servicers in an attempt to save defaulted loans from foreclosure. VBA monitors every loan continually, throughout the default episode, to resolve defaults and avoid foreclosures whenever possible. The program will continue this process, and make adjustments as necessary to increase effectiveness and maintain the best possible default resolution rate.

In those unfortunate cases where foreclosure is unavoidable and where VA acquires the property, VA offers Veteran borrowers relocation assistance to assist them in transitioning to alternative housing. Additionally, in any case where VA Loan Technicians know or suspect a defaulted borrower will be homeless after foreclosure, they refer the Veteran to local homelessness counselors for intervention.

### Housing Opportunities

As mentioned above, HUD-VASH is the Nation's largest supportive housing initiative that targets homeless Veterans and their families by HUD providing permanent housing with VA case management and supportive services to promote successful recovery and housing stability. As of January 25, 2012, HUD-VASH houses 29,074 Veterans and their families. In addition, the Grant and Per Diem (GPD) Program is VA's largest transitional housing program with over 600 projects providing approximately 14,000 operational beds nationwide.

VA's Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) program has been successful in developing and expanding contract residential transitional housing services; 131 programs are operational as of the first quarter of FY 2012. These programs provide same-day access to such safe and stable temporary housing for homeless Veterans transitioning from street homelessness, those being discharged from institutions, and Veterans who recently became homeless and require safe and stable living arrangements prior to being re-housed. HCHV has implemented the evidence-based Safe Haven model—a new element in our continuum that targets the population of hard to reach

homeless Veterans with severe mental illness and substance use problems. Safe Haven is a community-based, early recovery supportive housing model that serves individuals who find it difficult to engage in traditional treatment and supportive services.

In addition, VA's Building Utilization Review and Repurposing (BURR) initiative helped identify suitable underutilized or excess land and buildings within VA's real property portfolio that could be repurposed and aid in ending Veteran homelessness, by providing safe and affordable housing for Veterans and their families. As a result of BURR, VA began developing housing opportunities at 34 locations nationwide for homeless or at-risk Veterans and their families prior to the expiration of its Enhanced-Use Lease (EUL) authority, and the Administration will be working with Congress to identify future legislative authorities to further repurpose several additional properties identified by the BURR process.

#### Financial and Employment Support

Homeless and at-risk Veterans need access to employment opportunities to support their housing needs, improve the quality of their lives, and assist in their community reintegration efforts. VA has committed to supporting this critical component to eliminating homelessness through the Homeless Veterans Supported Employment Program (HVSEP). Vocational and employment services are based on rapid engagement, customized job development, and competitive community placement, with ongoing supports for maintaining employment.

HVSEP is jointly operated by VHA's Homeless and Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) Programs. CWT provides vocational rehabilitation services by medical prescription to Veterans, many of whom have extensive barriers to employment. Together, CWT and Homeless Programs provide vocational assistance, job development, job placement, and ongoing employment supports to improve employment outcomes among homeless Veterans. To provide these services, HVSEP hired Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists (VRS), including several Veterans who were homeless, formerly homeless, or at-risk of becoming homeless. As of December 31, 2011, 5,596 Veterans received services through HVSEP. Of this number, 1,591 Veterans were served through HVSEP-secured employment; and 354 VRS positions were filled by Veterans who were homeless, formerly homeless, or at-risk of becoming homeless.

Access to disability compensation and pension benefits is a key component in providing financial support and earned entitlement to homeless and at-risk Veterans and their families. VBA has full-time Homeless Veterans Outreach Coordinators (HVOCs) to oversee and coordinate homeless Veterans programs at the 20 VA regional offices (ROs) whose states have the largest homeless populations. The remaining ROs also have HVOCs with ancillary duties. HVOCs conduct outreach at homeless shelters, community events, and VA medical facilities, assist homeless Veterans with filing claims, and ensure homeless Veterans are properly identified at the ROs to expedite their claims. Furthermore, the HVOCs have an effective network and referral system to VHA's Homeless Coordinators and local community homeless providers to ensure delivery of VA benefits, healthcare, and other supportive services.

### Community Partnerships

VA is committed to fostering strong partnerships with community organizations to prevent and end Veteran homelessness. For example, the GPD Program relies significantly on the expertise, experience, and ingenuity of local community organizations. GPD community providers collaborate to enter Veterans' client level data into the local continuums of care's HMIS system, promoting greater linkages to community services. This allows VA and community partners to respond to the needs of all homeless Veterans participating in local community services. As previously mentioned, through the GPD Program, community partners operate over 600 projects offering over 14,000 beds for homeless Veteran transitional housing.

VA recognizes that no single Federal or state agency of government or local organization can end homelessness among Veterans. To that end, VA has long maintained close working relationships with Federal partners, such as HUD, the Department of Labor (DOL), the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of Health and Human Services, the Small Business Administration, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, and others, as well as state, local and tribal governments. Veterans Service Organizations also fill a critical role, as do community- and faith-based organizations, and the business community. One example of these efforts is VA's work to develop better connections with prosecutors and judges in the criminal justice system. Another is the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP), which involves collaboration with DOL. Through this initiative, DOL's Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) offers funding to community groups to help Veterans return to gainful employment.

Furthermore, each VA medical center and regional office engages in meetings with thousands of individuals and organizations across the country, to enhance collaborations and improve communications. VA is committed to reaching out and building partnerships with reputable organizations and individuals who are interested in being part of a collaborative solution to ending Veteran homelessness.

### Homelessness Among Women Veterans

The number of women serving in the military has grown substantially, doubling from four percent of all Veterans in 1990 to eight percent, or an estimated 1.8 million today. Moreover, the number of women Veterans will continue to increase as those who deployed to the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan leave the active military.

VA is committed to serving the needs of both male and female homeless Veterans through a wide array of programs and initiatives specifically designed to help both segments of the population live as self-sufficiently and independently as possible. Within the population served by VA's homeless programs, women comprise approximately 7.9 percent. In addition, according to the 2010 AHAR, women Veterans are more than twice as likely to be in the homeless population as non-Veteran women. Some of these women Veterans, like their male counterparts, are facing challenges readjusting to civilian life and are at risk of becoming homeless. Many are

accompanied by their children, and have needs particular to keeping both themselves and their children healthy, safe, and secure.

To learn as much as possible about the gender-specific needs of homeless women Veterans, VA included requests for information in the 2011 Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education and Networking Groups for Veterans (CHALENG) survey. In addition, VA has undertaken numerous other efforts to gather information about homeless female Veterans and their needs. For example, VA researchers are specifically looking at the barriers women Veterans face in accessing VA services. Furthermore, VA and HUD have been working in coordination over the past 2 years to jointly collect data for the “HUD Veteran Homelessness: A Supplemental Report to the 2010 Annual Homelessness Assessment to Congress.” VA, HUD, DoD, and community agencies are also collaborating to further analyze the data, to develop a more comprehensive picture of the prevalence and unique needs of homeless female Veterans who may not currently access VA services.

In collecting data about homeless women Veterans and their use of VA homeless services, VA has found:

- Eleven percent of HUD-VASH recipients Veterans are women.
- Among women participating in HUD-VASH, 28 percent planned to live with children when housed.
- More than 200 GPD projects have some capacity to serve women Veterans. Of the projects that have some capacity to serve women, approximately 40 are women-specific. In 2011, five percent of Veterans in the GPD program were women, and six transitional programs provided specific enhanced services for homeless women and women with families.

#### The Way Forward

VA is approaching the midpoint in its 5 Year Plan to End Homelessness among Veterans. Although we have made significant progress to date, we recognize fully that our goal to prevent and end homelessness among Veterans is a complex and difficult task, one requiring consistent, measurable, and sustained effort from VA, other Federal agencies, State agencies, and community partners. Our targeted goals for next two years include:

- Continuing to execute VA’s strategic plan through aggressive outreach and communication to homeless and at-risk Veterans;
- Implementing Homeless Patient Aligned Care Teams (H-PACT) at 32 sites with the goal of eliminating barriers to quality health care, and improving housing outcomes for Veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness;
- Focusing on the prevention of homelessness and rapid rehousing among Veterans by providing \$100 million in community-based grants through the SSVF program;
- Implementing Housing First in 14 high-profile communities. This strategy supports VA’s goal to rapidly house vulnerable and chronically homeless Veterans in HUD-VASH permanent supportive housing;
- Continuing to provide 24/7 outreach through the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans;
- Coordinating with HUD on the release of the 2012 point-in-time (PIT) data on homelessness

among Veterans;

- Working with the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness to secure commitments from other Federal partners to assist Veterans;
- Coordinating the grant review, award development, and notification for Special Needs Grants for Homeless Veterans Service Providers, to continue to deliver enhanced services for homeless Veterans who are seriously mentally ill, women Veterans (including women with children), elderly Veterans, or those who may be terminally ill;
- Coordinating with VBA's Loan Guaranty Service and numerous parties interested in increasing housing availability, with a particular focus on VA foreclosed properties, and increased access to other sources of inexpensive permanent housing opportunities;
- Hiring 200 additional VBA HVOCs to expand prevention-focused outreach and coverage at VHA facilities and in rural areas; and,
- Implementing the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program for unemployed Veterans as authorized in the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011.

VA requests favorable and prompt Congressional consideration to extend the authority for the SSVF Program to prevent/address homelessness. The SSVF Program provides supportive services to very low-income Veteran families in or transitioning to permanent housing. Funds are granted to private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives that assist very low-income Veteran families by providing a range of supportive services designed to promote housing stability. The SSVF Program is the only VA homeless program that is national in scope that can provide direct services to both Veterans and their family members; however, the current law (38 USC § 2044) only provides an appropriation authorization through FY 2012. VA proposes to amend section 2044 to extend the authorization of appropriations to FY 2013 and beyond.

VA is also proposing legislation to extend VA's Homeless Grant and Per Diem Program to support a "transition in place model" toward permanent housing. By allowing Veterans to "transition in place" to permanent housing, the Department would provide a valuable alternative for Veterans who may not need or be interested in participating in HUD-VASH. Proposed legislation would allow VA to fund per diem payments for transitional housing at 1.5 times the maximum per diem rate to enable Veterans to remain in their housing unit, i.e. "transition in place." In addition, VA asks Congress to extend authority to provide expanded services to homeless Veterans. Title 38 U.S.C. § 2033 authorizes VA, subject to availability of appropriations, to operate a program to expand and improve the provision of benefits and services to homeless Veterans. The program includes establishing sites under VA jurisdiction to be centers for the provision of comprehensive services to homeless Veterans in at least each of the 20 largest metropolitan statistical areas. Section 2033 will expire on December 31, 2012; therefore, VA requests that Congress extend this authority through December 31, 2016. VA also asks that Congress extend the authority in section 2041 of title 38, U.S.C., to sell, lease, or donate properties VA obtains through loan guaranty program foreclosures to nonprofits that agree to shelter homeless veterans. If section 2041 is not extended, it will expire December 31, 2012. Finally, VA asks that Congress extend authority for the Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans. VA's authority to operate this committee under title 38 U.S.C. § 2066(d) will expire on

December 30, 2012; VA requests that Congress extend this authority through December 31, 2016.

The BURR initiative, mentioned above, helped identify unused and underused buildings and land at existing VA property with the potential for repurposing to Veteran housing. Although the Department's Enhanced Use Lease authority has expired, VA is prepared to work with Congress on future legislative authorities to enable the Department to further repurpose the properties identified by the BURR process.

In the coming year, VA appreciates Congressional support and interest in efforts to end homelessness among our Nation's Veterans. This concludes my prepared statement, and my colleagues and I are prepared to answer your questions.