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STATEMENT

of

RICHARD JONES
AMVETS NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

presented to the

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

regarding the implementation of:

Public Law 107-95, the Comprehensive Veterans Homeless Assistance Act of 2001, and other matters dealing with assistance to homeless veterans.

Thursday, September 12, 2002,
1:30 P.M., Room 340
Cannon House Office Building



A M V E T S

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MR. CHAIRMAN, RANKING MEMBER EVANS, AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

On behalf of National Commander W.G. "Bill" Kilgore, it is my privilege to present AMVETS remarks on assistance to homeless veterans, specifically, Public Law 107-95, the Comprehensive Veterans Homeless Assistance Act of 2001, and homeless veterans programs in general.

According to Department of Veterans Affairs estimates, more than a quarter-of-a-million veterans have no place to call home on any given night in America. Of these veterans, nearly half suffer from mental illness and some seventy percent suffer from addictions to alcohol and drugs. Clearly, it is imperative that we as a society do all that is possible to provide these veterans with healthcare, addiction treatment, and skills training that can help homeless veterans live as self-sufficiently and independently as possible. To this end, transitional housing is a key component in bringing homeless veterans in off the street and empowering them to become productive individuals.

AMVETS supports every reasonable effort to provide emergency shelter, food, employment services, counseling, and affordable transitional housing to assist homeless veterans. It is important to understand that AMVETS does not place the burden of helping our veterans solely on the federal government. AMVETS's departments and posts are engaged across the country in various programs aimed at helping homeless veterans and providing them with shelter, transportation, and help in combating their dependency on drugs and alcohol.

Last year, AMVETS presented testimony and gave support along the way to the successful passage of the Comprehensive Veterans Homeless Assistance Act of 2001. Among the many beneficial provisions of this legislation, now P.L 107-95, is the authority for increased funding of the Homeless Grant and Per Diem Program and HUD-VASH (HUD Veterans Affairs Supported Housing) Program, both critical to getting the job done.

In our view, there are few things more important than ensuring that homeless veterans have a place to shelter. Safe shelter in transitional housing can free those in distress from the fears and intimidation of living on the streets. We firmly believe that this type of transitional housing

works to great benefit for our homeless, and it gives the homeless a measure of dignity, so important, as they work toward getting their lives back in order.

Mr. Chairman, at our recently concluded 58th annual national convention, AMVETS delegates overwhelmingly approved a resolution urging Congress to provide adequate funding for the implementation of P.L.107-95, the Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Assistance Act 2001. In addition, our membership urges Congress to support all related appropriations of funds for homeless veterans programs. By doing this, AMVETS is confident that our nation can give meaningful assistance to those veterans at their time of greatest need. A copy of this resolution is attached for your review.

AMVETS knows that the members of this panel will do all they can to make it possible to help veterans overcome homelessness. We applaud the Committee for holding this hearing and thank the Committee for extending us the opportunity to present written remarks on this important matter. We look forward to working with the Committee to strengthen, enhance, and improve the earned benefits of our nations' veterans and their families.

**Approved by Delegates at AMVETS 58th Annual National Convention August 2002,
Louisville, Kentucky.**

RESOLUTION: Homeless Committee Resolution 02-01

SOURCE: Homeless Committee

SUBJECT: Fund Public Law 107-95 and Support Funding Homeless Programs

WHEREAS, Congress has passed various legislation to assist various homeless programs, such as Public Law 107-95; and

WHEREAS, programs to assist homeless veterans are sorely needed to assist various groups, organizations and the Department of Veterans Affairs to enhance the funding of veterans programs: Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That AMVETS urge Congress to provide adequate funding to implement Public Law 107-95, the Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Assistance Act 2001; and be it further

RESOLVED, That AMVETS urge Congress to support all bills for appropriations of funds for homeless veterans.