

Petition to reduce N.C. Veteran Homelessness

Background Information

1. In 2014, there were 9,859 homeless veterans in North Carolina and on any given night, the number is 1,092. This represents a 10% increase of our rate since 2010 and the number has grown each year. Approximately, 33% of veterans endure long-term chronic homelessness and 67% experience homelessness for short-term periods or episodically. The estimate is that veterans are 20% of the entire North Carolina homeless population. North Carolina is home to over 800,000 veterans and the greatest number of ground troops on the East Coast.
2. Per the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and comparatively speaking, across the entire country, around 131,000 veterans are homeless each night. They also say wars from 1940 onward are represented. Sadly, 89% have actually received an Honorable Discharge
3. North Carolina has few resources available to veterans who are making the transition from military life and/or combat to the civilian sector. As there is a shortage of transitional beds available statewide, the process for receiving help is difficult in this state. Currently, the only operational transition housing facility dedicated to veterans is in Asheville.
4. Per the Enlistment document (DD Form 4/1), all active duty can be required upon orders to serve in combat or other hazardous situations and take an enlistment oath knowing they are required to obey such orders. Various separation codes on the DD214 can include drug abuse, misconduct, alcoholism, offenses, or other reasons that can hinder their access to assistance.
5. Three years ago, Connecticut vowed to end homelessness among their veterans and as of August 2015, they were able to declare the only state in the union to do so.
6. A contributing problem to veteran homelessness is their treatment within the court system. Veteran Courts have been established in several states but only one exists in North Carolina. The programs these courts have been cited as reducing both criminal recidivism and homelessness among veterans.
7. Resources: Veterans Leadership Council of North Carolina, North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness, National Coalition for the Homeless, www.huffingtonpost.com, www.thedailybeast.com, www.abajournal.com