



JIM DESMOND
SUPERVISOR, FIFTH DISTRICT
SAN DIEGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: May 6, 2025

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TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT:
ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

This item was continued from the April 22, 2025 (19) General Legislative Session.

Homelessness remains a critical issue in the County of San Diego, particularly among the veteran population. As one of the largest military communities in the United States, San Diego is home to over 240,000 veterans who have made significant sacrifices in service to our country. However, many face substantial challenges during their transition from active duty to civilian life, including securing stable employment, accessing healthcare, and finding affordable housing in an increasingly competitive market.

The transition to civilian life often results in the loss of the support structures that veterans relied on during their active-duty military service. Combined with the region's rising housing costs, this leaves veterans vulnerable to homelessness.

According to a 2023 study by the Journal of American Medical Association psychiatry, veterans are more likely to suffer from mental health challenges and substance use disorders than the general population. Addressing veteran homelessness is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic priority for the County.

The County has made important strides in recent years to address homelessness, with targeted initiatives specifically focused on reaching functional zero for veteran homelessness. These efforts have yielded promising results, including increased housing placements, improved coordination with service providers, and expanded access to mental health and substance use disorder treatment. However, the scale and urgency of the issue demands a more streamlined, collaborative, and scalable response to accelerate progress and ensure that no veteran is left behind.

By creating a by-name list and targeting landlords via social media, the County will leverage data-driven, evidence-based strategies to expedite access to stable housing and treatment to end veteran homelessness regionwide.

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RECOMMENDATION(S)

SUPERVISOR JIM DESMOND

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to develop a social media campaign that targets landlords to encourage increased participation in the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program and report back to the Board within 180 days with a strategy, cost and funding options. This strategy should include retargeting landlords who have previously participated in the program or expressed interest.
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to develop a strategy to end veteran homelessness using a by-name-list specific to veterans and report back to the Board within 180 days.
3. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to assess the feasibility of establishing a fund to provide landlords participating in the VASH voucher program with financial assurance for property damage caused by VASH tenants and report back to the Board within 180 days.
4. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to collaborate with other jurisdictions to deploy the veteran by-name-list strategy regionwide. Report back with an update on collaboration efforts within 180 days.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Veterans are disproportionately impacted by substance use and mental health challenges, which can make securing stable housing more difficult. By developing a by-name list and engaging directly with landlords, we can improve access to housing and offer those who have served a stronger pathway to long-term stability.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The proposed action to identify funds to increase landlord participation in housing homeless veterans would contribute to the County of San Diego's Sustainability Goal of protecting health and wellbeing. Creating a veteran-specific by-name-list also contributes to the County of San Diego's Sustainability goal of protecting health and wellbeing.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for the actions requested are included in the Fiscal Year 2024-25 Operational Plan based on existing staff time in the Health and Human Services Agency funded by General Purpose Revenue and other funding sources. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years. There may be fiscal impacts associated with recommendations included in staff's report back to the Board, depending on the proposed strategy and feasibility. Any necessary appropriation and funding changes or additions would return to the Board for consideration and approval.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

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N/A

BACKGROUND

The County of San Diego has made significant strides in recent years to address homelessness and support the thriving of its communities. Notably, on August 16th, 2022, the Board voted to implement a by-name list to support homelessness services.

A By-Name List is a real-time tool that includes the name, background, health status, and housing needs of individuals experiencing homelessness—collected with their consent and continuously updated. This approach enables outreach teams to streamline their efforts by aligning services with each individual’s specific needs, resulting in more effective and targeted interventions.

A veteran-specific By-Name List provides an even greater level of insight. By capturing detailed, real-time information about veterans experiencing homelessness, communities can more accurately match individuals with appropriate housing resources, treatment options, and support services. Because veterans often face unique challenges and are eligible for a wide range of specialized programs, maintaining a dedicated By-Name List for veterans is a practical strategy for driving better outcomes.

In 2024, the Office of Homeless Solutions reported a 50% increase in landlord interest form submissions as a result of media ad campaigns, which garnered 780,000 views. This surge in landlord engagement underscores the effectiveness of these outreach efforts. To build on this momentum, it is essential to secure funding to continue these successful campaigns and further raise awareness of the veteran voucher program among landlords in San Diego County.

Additionally, the Office of Homeless Solutions ran a social media campaign featuring 47 posts that reached more than 45,000 views. These efforts directly contributed to the placement of 1,200 veterans in housing, demonstrating the tangible impact of these outreach initiatives.

To further strengthen the program, today’s action would re-target past landlords who have previously participated in the program or expressed interest in doing so. By engaging with these landlords, we can collect valuable data on their experiences, which will help identify and mitigate any challenges they faced. If these landlords are willing to participate again, we can learn from their success stories to enhance future outreach efforts. Conversely, if they choose not to continue participating, understanding the reasons for their decision will provide critical insights to address potential barriers and ensure future placements are successful with minimal challenges.

By identifying the necessary funds to sustain and expand these efforts, we can expect continued growth in landlord participation, directly contributing to the reduction of veteran homelessness. Ultimately, it is crucial that we continue to invest in proven strategies and expand our database of homeless veterans. These proposed initiatives represent key steps toward achieving functional zero and ensuring that all veterans have access to the support and housing they deserve.

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LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today's proposed action supports the Community Safety and Quality of Life Initiative in the County of San Diego's 2025-2030 Strategic Plan by connecting veterans to housing and improving the quality of life for the community by supporting veterans.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Desmond', with a stylized, cursive script.

JIM DESMOND
Supervisor, Fifth District

ATTACHMENTS

N/A