

Military Spending and Homelessness

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“In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military industrial complex.”

-Dwight D. Eisenhower, Farewell Address, Jan. 17, 1961

The President’s Budget request for FY10 suggests giving the Department of Defense a budget of \$533.7 billion. The Budget includes funding to increase the size of both the Army and the Marine Corps by sustaining permanent forces. Additionally, there is a request for \$130.0 billion in supplemental appropriations in order to draw troops away from Iraq and into Afghanistan (Department of Defense).

The amount that the government spends on the war compared to what it spends on affordable housing and taking care of its war veterans alarmingly show where the values of our nation lie. As we have seen from our history with the Vietnam War and the War on Poverty, armed conflict distracts our nation from the dire domestic problems.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development has a remarkably smaller budget compared to the Defense budget at request at \$46.3 billion for FY 2010. Only \$1.79 billion from the entire budget is devoted to “homeless assistance grants”. This amount might be able to alleviate homelessness in one state.

For the Department of Veterans’ Affairs, the President has a budget of \$112.8 billion for FY 2010, increasing 15% from 2009. The Department of Veterans Affairs also boasts that its homeless assistance programs constitute the largest integrated network of services in the United States.¹ Veterans’ Affairs budget allocates \$3.222 billion to combating homelessness (Department of Veterans Affairs). The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans says that of the 400,000 homeless veterans on the street any given night, the Department of Veterans Affairs reaches only about 25% of them.²

Obviously, the federal government has the resources to provide significant aid to homeless people but still lacks the will to end homelessness in America.

Resources:

Veterans’ Affairs. “VA 2010 Budget Fast Facts,” 2009. 1722 I Street N.W. Washington D.C., 20421.

National Coalition for Homeless Veterans. “Background & Statistics,” 2005. 333 ½ Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, Washington, DC 20003-1148.

Eisenhower National Historic Site: <http://www.nps.gov/archive/eise/quotes.htm>