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# Opinion: Housing Our Homeless Vets is a Duty We'll Always Owe

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## **Roles**

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## **Abstract**

As we celebrate Veterans Day across America, we are reminded of President Abraham Lincoln's powerful admonition in the Gettysburg Address regarding what we owe to those who have sacrificed and given of themselves in the defense of the common good. [*excerpt*]

## **Keywords**

Veterans, Veterans Day, Homeless, Homelessness, Homeless Shelter, Affordable Housing, At-Risk Veterans

## **Disciplines**

Community-Based Learning | English Language and Literature | Politics and Social Change | Social Psychology and Interaction | Social Statistics | Sociology | Sociology of Culture

# Opinion: Housing Our Homeless Vets is a Duty We'll Always Owe

By [Christopher Fee and Joshua L. Stewart](#)

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*By end of year, all veterans will have housing, but we can't rest on our success*



*Getty Images*

As we celebrate Veterans Day across America, we are reminded of President Abraham Lincoln's powerful admonition in the Gettysburg Address regarding what we owe to those who have sacrificed and given of themselves in the defense of the common good.

One thing we're confident Lincoln would recognize we owe our veterans is a roof over their heads, and happily, by the end of this year, cities, communities, and states across the country will declare that they have ended veteran homelessness, a goal set five years ago by the Obama administration.

Communities have been working feverishly over the past year as we approach the December deadline. Service providers, health-care systems, police forces, housing authorities, local

governments, nonprofits, and the federal government have all come together to pursue this daunting goal.

Salt Lake City and Phoenix ended chronic veteran homelessness, a specific classification of long-term homelessness, in 2014. Connecticut became the first state to end that type of homelessness among veterans this year. New Orleans and Houston were the first major cities to end all types of homelessness among veterans in 2015.

Americans thus have proven that it is possible to end veteran homelessness — but what does that mean when we have a moving target, when we will always have more veterans in need? Even in communities that have ended veteran homelessness, our work is not finished.

The nature of war means we will always welcome home vets who will have trouble readjusting, who will lose jobs, struggle with addiction or lose housing in a divorce. We need a system designed to prevent homelessness among at-risk veterans and to ensure that episodes of homelessness that we can't prevent are brief and nonrecurring. And this is what the federal guidelines clearly call for.

Happily, in many communities, we have finally gotten in front of the wave. We now have enough shelters, enough money to help people prevent homelessness, enough permanent housing options, and enough knowledge of the problem to manage it. But staying in front of the wave requires continued governmental attention, resources, and local commitment. We know how causes fade from public consciousness; we cannot allow this one to do so.

We have done a great thing, and we should celebrate our ability to support veterans across the nation who need assistance. We no longer ignore the problem. We no longer have a system in which our nation's heroes languish on the streets.

Lincoln's themes of debt and dedication to those who have served this country speak volumes to our responsibilities towards veterans and challenge us that we should "be dedicated here to the unfinished work" of serving those who have served: As long as we have veterans who have been vigilant in service of our nation, we must continue to be vigilant in providing services for them.

As Lincoln put it 152 years ago, it is for us to be "dedicated to the great task remaining before us." We must dedicate ourselves as a nation to continuing the forever unfinished work of housing homeless veterans.

[http://www.marketwatch.com/story/housing-our-homeless-vets-is-a-duty-well-always-owe-2015-11-11?mod=mw\\_share\\_twitter](http://www.marketwatch.com/story/housing-our-homeless-vets-is-a-duty-well-always-owe-2015-11-11?mod=mw_share_twitter)

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