



Returning to a War

By Emerson Johnston

Serving our country is one of the most noble careers one can pursue. Whether it's been through active duty, local policing, or government agencies, those who choose to protect the lives of others in the name of our country are some of the most brave people in our world today. That's why it's so surprising that these people, those who chose to protect us, often receive zero protection once they return. Surprisingly, over 1.5 million veterans are currently without a home in our country and while that number is decreasing, it leaves us to wonder why we don't serve them as they have served us.

There are many factors that can attribute to the reality that it is harder and often times more expensive to help a veteran in need. There are many problems facing the homeless today, but those that face the veterans are quite a bit different. Due to the specific circumstances of many of our returning soldiers, it becomes harder for them to find jobs or housing that requires no legal services to obtain. According to a new study from the Department of Veterans Affairs, more than 6,000 homeless veterans and service providers stated that while many veterans are able to secure food, medical services and substance-abuse treatment, problems that require legal assistance including fighting evictions, upgrading military discharge status, or restoring a driver's license leave many veterans without the help they need.

For many cities, this reality hits way too close to home so it's time to look at people like Eric Garcetti, mayor of Los Angeles, to see what we can really do fix this problem. Garcetti says that ending veteran homelessness remains his "highest priority." The city has launched an ambitious \$1.2-billion campaign to build 10,000 units of housing for the homeless by 2026. Additionally, on the March 2017 ballot, a quarter-cent tax proposal to provide \$355 million a year for

homeless services was included to help circumvent the increase of the homelessness population during the project.

March 2017 was a remarkable turning point for the city of Los Angeles and for the homeless communities within it. Not only was the tax proposal accepted but work began on helping the homeless in the city. It's time to follow Garcetti's lead in the other veteran filled cities across the country. No longer should we stand by as the people who chose to risk their lives so we could live a free world live without the basic necessities needed to live in the country they fought to protect. Our veterans deserve much better that what they are getting and after all they have done for us, it's only the least we can do.