


Senator Jason Schultz: The Schultz Perspective

Schultz's
Comments
by Jason
Schultz,
Iowa
Senator
District 6



have received services called and emailed their concerns

Rep. Feenstra: No veterans should be homeless in America

Guest
Column
by
Rep. Randy
Feenstra,
Iowa
4th District



porter of our veterans, I remain committed to ensuring that our veterans receive the high-quality healthcare and benefits that they have earned because no veteran should be homeless in the United States of America.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that there are nearly 70,000 homeless veterans nationwide. In my book, one homeless veteran is one too many. We owe our veterans an immense debt of gratitude for their service and ensuring that they are housed and cared for is a top priority for me.

To help reduce homelessness among Iowa veterans, I recently voted for the Housing our Military Veterans Effectively (HOME) Act, which passed the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 408 to 10. This legislation – which takes real action to support homeless veterans – is three-fold. First, it would increase the per diem rate that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) pays nonprofit organizations that support homeless veterans from 115% to as high as 200% for rural communities and other areas with higher-than-average rates of veteran suicide. Second, the HOME Act would establish a stipend for homeless veterans to pay for food, clothes, personal hygiene items, transportation, and housing. Third, this legislation ensures that the VA is efficiently deploying its resources to help feed, clothe, and find permanent homes for veterans.

This three-pronged approach helps our veterans afford everyday necessities while delivering the financial assistance that they deserve to live with dignity and respect. By making this meaningful investment in our veterans, we can help those who served our country at home and abroad stand on their own two feet again and weather the crushing impact of inflation – all while working to end veteran homelessness.

Homeless veterans are also more likely to face behavioral health challenges. I've been at the forefront of this issue and have supported legislation over the last several years to connect our veterans with the resources that they need to lead healthy, fulfilling lives. Last year, I voted for the Restoring Hope for Mental Health and Well-Being Act of 2022. This bill included an amendment that I sponsored, which requires the Behavioral Health Crisis Coordinating Office – whose creation is authorized as part of this comprehensive package – to include the Veterans Crisis Line as an entity to provide rapid, post-crisis follow-up care to veterans who need it. More broadly, this comprehensive legislation reauthorizes and strengthens federal programs and grants to support mental and behavioral wellbeing, while also expanding access to opioid treatment and recovery services.

I also supported the Sgt. Ketchum Rural Veterans Mental Health Act – which was signed into law – to expand mental healthcare in our rural communities. This bill requires the Department of Veterans Affairs to establish three new centers of the Rural Access Network for Growth Enhancement (RANGE) program in rural areas that are in dire need of additional resources for veteran mental healthcare. It further encourages the Government Accountability Office to conduct a study and report to Congress on whether the VA has sufficient funds and tools to properly serve rural veterans and address their brain-health needs.

I firmly believe that mental health should be treated just like physical health, and I am glad to have worked to expand critical programs that support our children, our families, and our veterans. It's my promise that I will continue to advocate for greater investments in our mental healthcare infrastructure – particularly in rural Iowa – so that every American who needs lifesaving support can get it as quickly as possible.

As a grateful American, I'm proud to support the HOME Act, and other legislation that benefits our veterans, to uphold our commitment to our servicemembers, fund mental healthcare for those in need, and ensure that every veteran has a place to call home. I will always do my part to support and honor our brave veterans.

about changes to the current AEA structure. The original plan is being modified to show consideration of what we heard. As the bill develops, I'd like to provide a bit of background on why AEAs are receiving high level oversight.

AEAs are large entities created fifty years ago to support our K-12 schools, focusing on a broad range of special education services. Programs you may be familiar with are speech, reading, hearing and vision, autism, physical therapy, and other services. These services help schools, especially rural schools, by providing trained employees so each school does not have to hire for services that do not justify a full-time employee. Private schools can also receive services. While funded by state, federal, and property taxes, AEAs are governed by local-to-the-district public boards.

AEAs are large organizations. There are nine AEAs across the state. Together, they employ 3,400 employees. AEAs receive their funding from the education state aid formula, federal government, and property tax levy. Their state money grows at the same rate as K-12 schools each year. Altogether, Iowa AEAs will receive about \$526 million tax dollars. A person would think that is an incredible amount of financial resources for special education, but the financial reports reveal growing problems.

Only 40.8% of the over half billion tax dollars are going to Student Support Services. The other 59.2% goes to administration, maintenance, staff support services, fund balances, and financing. I know a case can be made that some of the line items in the 60% could be argued to be essential to providing the student services. But if the core mission is to provide special ed services, it seems proper that most of the money would go to serving the local student.

"Administration and Central Support Services" make up a whopping 13.5% of the \$526,600,000. That is much higher than most programs are allowed in other areas. It comes out to \$71,091,000 to administer and manage 3,400 employees.



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Note: for questions related to specific events, contact event leaders.

Event Calendar
Mondays, Jan. 8 - April 1
• Grief Share Seminar/Support Group, 5:30 - 7 p.m. First Baptist Church
Saturday, February 3
• Shelby County Cattlemen's Annual Banquet Doors open at 5 p.m. St. Peter's Hall, Defiance, \$20 per person. * * *

Harlan Community Library Calendar
712-755-5934 718 Court St, Harlan
www.harlan.lib.ia.us
Library and Lunch
Second Tuesday of Every Month, noon - 1 p.m. Harlan Library * * *

Shelby County Extension and Outreach 1- 712-755-3104 * * *

Open Walking
• 8 a.m. - Noon. Veteran's Memorial Aud. 1104 Morningview Harlan, 712-755-3440.

Alcoholics Anonymous
• Fridays and Sundays, 7 p.m. - 8 p.m., St. Michael's Rectory Harlan, lower level.
• Sunday mornings, 8 a.m., Walnut Public Library, 224 Antique City Dr., Walnut
Al-Anon
• Sundays, 7 p.m. - 8 p.m., St. Michael's Centennial Room Harlan, lower level.
Narcotics Anonymous
• Mondays at 7:30 p.m., St. Michael's Rectory, Harlan, lower level. Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., United Methodist Church, Harlan, lower level. Saturdays at 5 p.m., SCCO/Her's Attic, 1105 8th St., Harlan. Currently no local Zoom meetings. A list of virtual meetings are located at <https://iowa-na.org/online-meetings/> (Narcotics Anonymous # 1-800-897-6242)

Harlan Cemetery Association
• Fourth Tuesday of the month, 4:30 p.m., Stowe Red-E-Mix
TOPS- Take Off Pounds Sensibly
• Every Wednesday, 5-6 p.m., Christ's Church, 1205 Lincoln Ave., Harlan
Noon Enthusiasts Toastmasters
• First and third Wednesday of each month from noon - 1 p.m. in Room #010 in Looft Hall on the Iowa Western Community College campus, Council Bluffs.
Gardening Angels Garden Club
• Meets first Monday of every month from April-November. For more info. contact Judy Rasmussen, 712-766-3338 or facebook.com/shelbycountygardeningangels
VFW and Ladies Auxiliary
• Second Monday of the month, 7 p.m., Veteran's Auditorium, Harlan
Harlan Kiwanis Club
• Second Monday of the month. 6 p.m.

Town and Country Credit Union, Harlan. For more info. contact Bob, 402-670-3268.
Shelby County Red Cross Disaster Assistance Team
• Third Monday of each month, 7 p.m., Myrtue Medical Center Cafeteria. All are welcome. Questions, contact 712-747-2617.
Lions Club of Harlan
• Second and fourth Thursday of each month at the Harlan Country Club at 6:30 p.m. For more info. contact Christine, 755-2969.
Ladies Homestead Gathering
• Third Thursday of each month, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Immanuel Lutheran Church, 1700 19th St., Harlan. For 16 years and older.

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BLAND
life would be without knowing what's happening in your part of the world
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