

## FEATURED LETTER



Homeless veteran Harleigh Marsh mops the floor of the dining room at the Scott Place shelter last year in Fairmont, W.Va. —CHARLES DHARAPAK/AP

## Homeless veterans need our help

On Nov. 11, Americans all over the country will honor the past and present sacrifices of our soldiers on our national Veterans Day. Yet, over half a million of our veterans will be homeless at some point during this year. One out of every three homeless men in our cities and towns has worn the uniform. As more and more soldiers return from Afghanistan and Iraq, this dire situation will only get worse. We must do better.

Hopefully, there will be a time when no American is homeless. There are 37 million Americans who call the State of Poverty home: 14.3 million women, 13 million children, and 3.5 million are homeless. They all need help regardless of the reasons and causes for their poverty. But surely we can all agree that those who have served in the military and defended our nation deserve a place to call home.

Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois has introduced two pieces of legis-

lation in the Senate that combat this crisis. The first is the Sheltering All Veterans Everywhere Act (S.1180), which expands federal homeless veteran programs that serve more than 100,000 homeless veterans annually. The second bill is the Homes for Heroes Act (S. 3475), which would give more

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homeless veterans access to long-term affordable housing. By allocating \$225 million to the Homes for Heroes Act, more veterans would be able to purchase, build or rehabilitate homes and apartments.

But our efforts cannot end with housing. Employment must be addressed as well. Transitional job programs would be extremely use-

ful in this regard. A large percentage of homeless veterans exhibit the sorts of employment-blocking problems that transitional jobs programming successfully addresses. Sen. Evan Bayh of Indiana has introduced the Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Families Act of 2006 (S. 3607) that would set aside federal grants for states to create those programs. Our fervent hope is that Congress makes all three of these items a priority.

To truly support our troops, we must not only support them when they are abroad, but also when they come home. After all, we as Americans have a solemn obligation, as Abraham Lincoln put it, "to care for him who shall have borne the battle." We must provide homes and hope for the hundreds of thousands of our veterans who seek shelter and employment every day in America.

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