

**The Honorable Ted W. Lieu**  
**Remarks: House Veterans Affairs Committee “Member Day”**  
**May 16, 2018 at 1:30 PM**

- Thank you, Chairman Roe and Ranking Member Walz for the opportunity to testify today about an issue that strikes at the core of who we are as a nation – serving those who have served our country in uniform.
- As a veteran and Colonel in the Air Force reserves, I’ve watched as selfless men and women have transitioned out of the military into civilian life, some with ease and some who have faced challenges. I represent the West Los Angeles VA campus in my district – the largest VA healthcare facility in the country.
- Everything we do for our veterans must center on ensuring they have access to the resources they need. It is our duty to make sure we are looking for creative and effective ways to leverage state, local, and federal resources to combat the unique hurdles facing veteran populations, including homelessness, healthcare and mental health treatment, workforce development, and legal challenges.
- Back home in Los Angeles County, we continue to grapple with one of the worst housing crises in the country, which has been particularly devastating for our veterans.
- Los Angeles has the largest homeless veteran population in the country. According to recent reports, the population of veterans experiencing homelessness on any given night rose from 3,071 to 4,828 veterans (57%) between 2016 and 2017.
- To make a real difference, we need to strengthen programs like HUD-VASH, vouchers upon which so many of our service men and women rely. Especially in expensive cities like Los Angeles, this support can mean the difference between sleeping in a home or on the streets.

- We should also be willing to consider creative approaches to temporary housing – a pressing need as we address the challenge of veteran homelessness. Bridge housing offers safe and stable environments for individuals and families while they work with caseworkers to find permanent housing and, in some cases, mental health services.
- When it comes to healthcare, I stand firmly against misguided efforts to privatize the VA. My constituents understand the need to build capacity and work with private partners, but they are loud and clear on privatization: it hurts veterans and strips Congress of crucial oversight.
- In keeping with our belief that community input is key, we continue to hear from our veterans that research into the medical benefits of cannabis is a growing priority. I am deeply grateful for the Committee’s leadership on this issue and commend the Chairman and Ranking Member for introducing the bipartisan VA Medicinal Cannabis Research Act.
- Finally, as a lawyer and a veteran, I am particularly passionate about ensuring adequate legal representation for veterans.
- I strongly urge this Committee to take up the Legal Services for Homeless Veterans Act of 2017, a bill I introduced that allows the VA to enter into agreements with pro bono legal services to help with housing, family law, income support, and criminal defense.
- Despite the significant structural challenges I have outlined, with dedicated partners here in D.C. and on the ground we have been able to affect real, lasting change, starting with the West LA VA campus in my district.
- In 2016, I introduced the Los Angeles Homeless Veteran Leasing Act, which was signed into law by President Obama. This bill authorized the Department of Veterans Affairs to offer enhanced-use leases on the West LA campus to build homes for vulnerable populations, promote peer activities and improve healthcare provision, transportation, and provide legal assistance.

- As a result of stricter oversight and better coordination between partners, we have made remarkable progress in turning this campus around and are currently in the process of implementing the Master Plan to revitalize and improve the campus, a crucial part of which is the construction of at least 1,200 permanent supportive housing units. I look forward to working with the Committee and the Department as we move forward.
- Last but not least, I would like to thank my colleague Representative Dave Bratt for working with me on the PUPPERS Act, a bill we introduced that sets defined parameters for animal testing and ensures we are making medical breakthroughs while protecting puppies from cruel and inhumane treatment.
- Thank you again, Chairman Roe and Ranking Member Walz for the opportunity to be here today and for your work on behalf of our veterans. This work is crucial and we can't let up.
- I stand ready to work with this Committee to ensure that our veterans are receiving the benefits that they have earned and deserve.
- Thank you.