

Senator says cuts to homeless veterans housing program should be rejected

By [Amanda Getchel](#), San Bernardino County Democrat Examiner
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An estimated 10,000 homeless veterans could lose housing assistance if the Republicans' proposed spending cuts were initiated.

California Democratic Sen. Barbara Boxer joined with Senate Democrats and veterans advocates on Thursday to criticize the House GOP's budget plan to cut \$61 billion for the remainder of the 2011 fiscal year.

"The House Republicans' decision to slash funding for housing assistance to thousands of homeless veterans shows a total lack of humanity," Boxer said in a [press release](#). "These cuts would be devastating to veterans in California, which has the largest population of homeless veterans. These brave men and women deserve the best."

The cuts would affect a program the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development started that provides housing assistance to help homeless veterans get off the streets and into private rental housing. Veterans who participate in the program also receive support services, which include job training and education.

Even though the program affects about 10,000 homeless veterans, the number of total homeless veterans is greater than that. According to the [Department of Housing and Urban Development](#), California has the largest population of not only homeless veterans but also the largest population of total veterans. The state has a little more than 2 million total veterans and about 19,500 homeless veterans as of 2009, the most recent data collected – nationwide, there are roughly 23 million veterans and almost 75,500 homeless veterans.

Boxer's press release mentions that during the last three years California has received 4,555 housing vouchers through the housing assistance program, with thousands more homeless veterans who need the assistance – San Francisco, for example, had more than 400 applicants for 100 vouchers last year.



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During the press conference denouncing the cuts, Boxer spoke about the harm the cuts would do to the men and women who risked their lives serving their country. She also vowed to do everything possible to stop the cuts from being enacted.

“So when we stand here today, it’s not about a number, it’s about real people who have put it all on the line for this country,” she said. “And I have to say, if we don’t stop cuts like this, we have failed the people of this country. And we’re gonna stop these cuts.”

Ginger Miller, a Navy veteran and veterans advocate, spoke of her family’s financial difficulties where she had to work three jobs and go to school full-time while living in “substandard conditions.” She said that at the time she had never heard of programs that could help her, but knowing how difficult it could be to get by, she also urged the funding for the housing assistance program be reinstated.

“It’s not giving veterans a handout, but it’s giving them a hand up,” she said.

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