

**THE WHITE HOUSE**

Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

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**Contact: Rebecca Neale**  
**202-456-7348**

**WHITE HOUSE *COMPASSION IN ACTION* ROUNDTABLE HIGHLIGHTS EFFORTS  
TO ADDRESS NEEDS OF OUR NATION'S VETERANS**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – The White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (OFBCI), joined by U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs James B. Peake, today convened a *Compassion in Action* policy roundtable titled, “Serving Those Who Have Served: The Vital Role of Faith-Based and Community Organizations.” Hosted by OFBCI Director Jay Hein, the roundtable highlighted the important work of local nonprofits working to address the challenges of men and women who have served our Nation in uniform and explored ways to further expand partnerships with these organizations.

Keynoting today’s event, Secretary Peake highlighted ways the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) engages America’s faith-based and community organizations and volunteers to more effectively meet the needs of America’s 24 million veterans and their families. He indicated that President Bush’s Faith-Based and Community Initiative (FBCI) has enabled VA to expand and develop new partnerships with service organizations through efforts like the expanded Grant and Per Diem program, which now supports 8,000 beds for veterans in faith-based and community service residential programs. The number of faith-based and community organizations funded through this program to serve homeless veterans between 2002 and 2007 rose from 176 to 506, a 287 percent increase.

“Today, VA provides more services to veterans most in need in more communities thanks to our growing partnerships with non-profit organizations -- President Bush’s “Armies of Compassion” dedicated to housing the homeless, feeding the hungry, putting the jobless to work and easing troubled minds,” Secretary Peake said. “The President’s Faith-Based and Community Initiative enables VA to fully engage America’s non-profits in addressing and meeting the needs of our veterans in the communities where they live. It enables us to share resources with grassroots service organizations in new, effective and exciting ways.”

Secretary Peake also noted that the number of homeless veterans is dropping as a result of collaborative partnerships with faith-based and community organizations. As of last year, the Department estimates that the number of homeless veterans was cut nearly in half over just five years. Partnerships with organizations like Goodwill Industries and others represented at today’s roundtable are helping to build more stable lives for veterans of all ages who face challenges like homelessness, disabilities and transition to civilian life.

“In communities across our country, organizations of compassionate Americans offer a helping hand to veterans struggling to get back on their feet,” said OFBCI Director Jay Hein. “We lift up these organizations, learn from their leadership and explore new ways to extend their reach into the lives of our Nation’s veterans.”

Joining with the VA in efforts to help address the needs of our Nation's veterans by engaging the nonprofit sector are Federal agencies that provide critical services including food stamps, substance and mental health treatment, housing assistance and job preparation and placement assistance. Moreover, organizations participating in today's event including Catholic Charities, Lilly Endowment, the Maryland Center for Veterans Education and Training, McGuire Outreach Ministry, Way Station, Inc., and others represent the thousands of dedicated community organizations across the country that help enhance government efforts to provide significant resources to veterans and their families.

President Bush's Faith-Based and Community Initiative (FBCI) is built from the conviction that the most effective way to address our communities' great needs is to draw upon the unique strengths of every willing community and faith-based partner. He launched the FBCI upon taking office in January 2001, to strengthen America's nonprofit sector and extend its work in partnership with government. Since January 2007, the OFBCI has convened monthly Compassion in Action policy roundtables to discuss issues of interest faith- and community-based organizations and highlight honor the successes of dedicated Americans helping their neighbors in need.

For more information on the OFBCI and the President's compassion agenda, visit:  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/government/fbci/>.

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