

ENDORISING FIVE FUNDAMENTALS TO PREVENT AND END HOMELESSNESS:
A CHALLENGE TO CANDIDATES FOR PUBLIC OFFICE

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Introduction

On November 4, 2008, the presidency, all seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and one-third of U.S. Senate seats will be up for election. Additionally, governors, mayors, county executives, state and local legislators, and some judges will be elected across the United States.

On this same election night, even as confetti drops at victory celebrations across the nation, an estimated 745,000 United States citizens and residents will suffer from lack of a safe place to live. Over the course of a year, an estimated 3.5 million Americans will experience homelessness.

Mass homelessness has persisted in the United States for over 20 years. It is imperative that all sectors of society, especially our government – at all levels - take action to eradicate this social evil and national shame.

Candidates for public office make commitments to all number of actions – largely in response to requests from vocal constituencies. With that in mind, an assembly of national organizations concerned with homelessness has developed an opportunity for candidates to pledge to prioritize the prevention and end of homelessness by endorsing *Five Fundamentals to Prevent and End Homelessness*.

Five Fundamentals to Prevent and End Homelessness

The twentieth anniversary of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act on July 22, 2007, marked the onset of the third decade of the national government response to mass homelessness in the United States. An assembly of nonprofit organizations concerned with homelessness used the occasion of the McKinney Act anniversary to declare five fundamental principles that must animate public policy in a nation without mass homelessness:

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- I. McKinney-Vento homeless assistance programs should be reauthorized.
- II. The supply of affordable housing must be dramatically increased.
- III. Health care, education, and social services must be provided to all who need them.
- IV. Personal incomes must be sufficient to pay for the necessities of life.
- V. Discrimination against homeless persons must be prevented.

Take Action

It is imperative that individuals and organizations concerned about homelessness challenge all candidates for public office to take action to prevent and end mass homelessness. The five fundamentals are a suitable basis for issuing such a challenge. Action steps to consider include:

- o Send an organization or individual letter to all candidates for public offices representing your geographic area to endorse the Five Fundamentals to Prevent and End Homelessness. Be sure to invite all candidates for the office(s) to make the endorsement. Do not limit your request to the incumbent. It is critical that you direct your action to candidates from all political parties. (see *instructions for identifying candidates for public office, sample letter, and pledge form*)
- o Invite your members, supporters, family members and friends to also take action. (see *action alert*)
- o Circulate a petition requesting candidates to endorse the Five Fundamentals to Prevent and End Homelessness (see *petition*)
- o Host a community forum on homelessness and invite candidates for public office to participate in speaking roles. (see *forum guide*)
- o Attend candidates' outreach events such as town hall meetings, coffees, and meet-and-greets. (see *suggested candidate questions*)

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- o Invite candidates to tour a homeless assistance program. (see *tour guide*)
- o Ask candidates to take the Homeless Challenge. (see *candidate homeless challenge guide*)
- o Publicize your results so that others in your community will know which candidates for public office have pledged to take action to prevent and end homelessness. (see *Sample News Release* and *Take Action Report Form*)

Action Tool Kit

We have developed a tool kit to assist organizations and individuals concerned with homelessness to issue candidate challenges on the Five Fundamentals. Materials included in the Tool Kit are:

- o Five Fundamentals Statement
- o Instructions for Identifying Candidates for Public Office
- o Sample Five Fundamentals Invitation Letter to Candidates
- o Five Fundamentals Candidate Pledge Form
- o Sample Five Fundamentals Action Alert
- o Sample Five Fundamentals Petition
- o Candidate Forum Guide
- o Candidate Program Tour Guide
- o Candidate Homeless Challenge
- o Sample News Release for Organizations
- o Take Action Report Form

