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Title: A MOTION establishing as a top priority for the King County council's state and federal legislative agendas as urging the President of the United States and the Congress as well as the Governor of Washington State and the Legislature to provide full funding for health care and relief programs for veterans in the United States.

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A MOTION establishing as a top priority for the King County council's state and federal legislative agendas as urging the President of the United States and the Congress as well as the Governor of Washington State and the Legislature to provide full funding for health care and relief programs for veterans in the United States.

WHEREAS, the veteran population in the United States and Puerto Rico is 26,549,704, according to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs year 2000 census, of which approximately 641,000 live in Washington State and 180,900 live in King County, and

WHEREAS in 1995, the United States government reneged on its promise of free lifetime health care benefits for soldiers and their dependents, and

WHEREAS, the federal Department of Veterans Affairs ("DVA") says it is struggling to keep up with health care costs because those costs are increasing and veterans, on average, are older and sicker than the

general population, and

WHEREAS, the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans estimates that 23 percent of the homeless population are veterans and that there are approximately 500,000 veterans homeless at some time during the year. Yet, the DVA reaches only 20 percent of those in need leaving 400,000 veterans without supportive services, and

WHEREAS, the federal Task Force to Improve Health Care Delivery for Our Nation's Veterans on May 26, 2003, identified insufficient funding as a major obstacle in meeting the nation's commitment to veterans, which, if left unresolved, will delay access to care and threaten the quality of health care for veterans, and

WHEREAS, with the rising cost of health care and insurance premiums, veterans have been seeking alternative ways to pay for their health care causing a growing number of veterans to seek health care from the DVA, and

WHEREAS, the 2006 federal budget had proposed raising veterans' health care copayments and eligibility requirements, and

WHEREAS, the American Legion and nine other veterans' organizations have requested a \$3.5 billion increase in health care spending in fiscal year 2006, and

WHEREAS, there are currently approximately 130,000 troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan who will ultimately become veterans after their tours of duty are completed, and

WHEREAS, in Washington State, counties are required to designate a portion of their regular property tax levy to provide veterans' relief, which in King County is approximately \$2.5 million in 2005, and

WHEREAS, numerous studies and reports indicate that the health and human service needs of military veterans and their families in King County are not being adequately met by current programs and funding, and

WHEREAS, our country owes an enormous debt to those who have served in our Nation's Armed Forces. Providing veterans and military retirees with timely access to the full range of health benefits earned through service to their country is a central part of our national obligation, and

WHEREAS, the cost of health care and relief programs for veterans is an ongoing expense of war, and

WHEREAS, each year the King County council develops state and federal legislative agendas to establish priorities and guide lobbying efforts for the coming year;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

The King County council establishes as a top priority for the council's state and federal legislative agendas as respectfully urging the state and federal governments to provide full funding for health care and relief programs for veterans in the United States

by enacting a fiscal year 2006 budget and appropriations package that fully funds these services.