



NEWS

Interagency Council on Homelessness – Mel Martinez, Chairman
Washington, DC Philip Mangano, Director

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Brian Sullivan

(202)708-0685 x7527

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MARTINEZ ENDS TENURE AS CHAIRMAN OF INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS WITH RECOMMITMENT TO END CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

HHS Secretary Thompson assumes chairmanship

WASHINGTON – In his last act as chairman of the Interagency Council on Homelessness, Housing and Urban Development Secretary Mel Martinez today rededicated the Bush Administration to ending chronic homelessness in 10 years. During his term, Martinez gave voice to the Administration’s bold strategy that places a greater emphasis on preventing and ending chronic homelessness.

Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Tommy Thompson succeeds Martinez as the new chairman of the Council. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Anthony Principi assumes the post of vice-chairman.

“No longer will we settle for the old approach of merely managing and accommodating homelessness,” said Martinez. “Instead, we will press ahead in developing and implementing innovative new strategies to eliminate chronic homelessness from the streets of America once and for all.”

Philip Mangano, a longtime homeless advocate and current director of the Interagency Council, said, “When we look back a decade from now and document the decline of chronic homelessness, history will tell us that Mel Martinez was in the forefront of ending this national shame. He will be a part of that legacy which confronted a social disgrace and worked for its elimination.”

During his tenure as chairman, Martinez sought a more coordinated federal response to serving homeless individuals and families. In addition, Martinez emphasized research-based policymaking designed to create more collaborative relationships both in and out of government as a way of meeting the complex needs of those experiencing chronic homelessness.

“The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness is truly a vehicle of out-of-the-box thinking and creative problem-solving,” Thompson said. “Everyone deserves a place to call home, and we can make that a reality by improving access to and coordination of essential services. Through innovative partnership and leadership, I believe we can end chronic homelessness within a decade.”

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Thompson assumes the chairmanship having served as vice chairman for the past year. As a former governor and current Secretary of the federal government's largest service-oriented agency, he brings a wealth of knowledge and creativity to the work of the Council. Mangano added, "Homeless advocates and providers across the country are eagerly awaiting Secretary Thompson's initiatives as chairman."

Leading homeless researchers, advocates and housing developers pledged their support for the Bush Administration's initiative to end chronic homelessness. They include Dr. Dennis Culhane, a nationally recognized scholar on homelessness; the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the country's leading homeless advocacy group; and, the Corporation for Supportive Housing, the largest developer of supportive housing for homeless people.

Persons experiencing chronic or long-term homelessness are generally homeless for over one year and may be living with a disability, addiction or mental illness. Research indicates that 10-to-20 percent of this homeless population utilizes more than half of all federal resources targeted for homeless assistance. By focusing more attention on the needs of long-term homeless persons, more federal resources can be made available to families and individuals who face temporary homelessness.

During today's Council meeting, Martinez also named eight of the 10 regional coordinators who will help replicate this new spirit of interagency collaboration at the state and local level. These regional coordinators will create local councils modeled after the federal Interagency Council to develop strategies to end chronic homelessness in their states and they will encourage and support city efforts to develop 10 year plans to end homelessness. The Cities of Chicago, Phoenix and Indianapolis are among a number of local jurisdictions that have already developed plans to end chronic homelessness.

HUD, HHS and VA are currently soliciting applications for \$35 million in funding to support model programs that will provide permanent housing and supportive services to persons experiencing long-term homelessness. In addition, the Bush Administration's proposed budget seeks to double funding to this program as part of a \$70 million *Samaritan Initiative*. Under this proposed program, HUD would provide \$50 million to fund permanent housing solutions while HHS and VA would each target \$10 million for services such as substance abuse treatment and primary health care.

Congress established the Interagency Council on Homelessness in 1987 to coordinate the activities of the federal government in responding to homelessness. After six years of dormancy, the Bush Administration revitalized the Council last year to forward the strategy to end homelessness. For more information on the Interagency Council, visit www.ich.gov.

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