

MARK O. HATFIELD

OREGON

*Copies to Cheryl, Leona, Judy  
& Michael  
original to file*

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

April 20, 1990

Ms. Jerralynn Ness  
9865 N.W. Kaiser  
Portland, Oregon 97231

Dear Ms. Ness:

Thank you for your recent communication concerning housing and the homeless. I appreciate your taking the time to contact me regarding this matter.

I share your concerns for the needs of the men, women, and children whose health and welfare are threatened by the lack of adequate shelter. Across the nation, people are working to help these individuals on America's streets, to nurture respect for their human dignity, and to meet their basic human needs. This is a task of enormous proportion which has brought together community and charitable organizations, dedicated individuals, foundations, and public officials. The job is far from complete and demands more concerted efforts at all levels of government and in the private sector.

From my many trips throughout the State of Oregon, I am well aware that our society faces serious problems in regard to the homeless. Adequate shelter is one of the most fundamental of all human rights. For a person or family to lack such shelter through no fault of their own is more than a disgrace; it is an unconscionable outrage. In the past I have been active in the Congress in seeking additional funding for the Federal Emergency Management Agency which has a program providing food distribution and emergency shelter for the poor and unemployed throughout the country. It is my hope that we can continue to direct our energies toward solving the problems of the homeless through private voluntary efforts and through government assistance programs.

Recently, Congress enacted the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, which provides emergency funding to address the increasing problems of the homeless. Among the federally funded programs are provisions for the food stamp program, transitional housing, emergency food and shelter and mental health services. Concerned with more permanent answers, I successfully sponsored two amendments, both of which provide additional funding to provide services and to study the various causes of homelessness and recommend possible solutions. While this is emergency legislation, these actions are excellent steps in the right direction.

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As in the past, I will consider carefully any proposal which seeks to alleviate the crisis facing homeless individuals and families. Although the current budget constraints limit lawmakers in their ability to create new programs, I believe there are ways we can work together to solve this pressing problem.

To that end, I have cosponsored two pieces of legislation in this session of Congress that will assist the homeless. The first, the Homelessness Prevention and Community Revitalization Act, would add to and complement existing homeless programs by emphasizing prevention and treatment. The second bill I have cosponsored, the Homeless Outreach Act, would require the Social Security Administration to conduct outreach to ensure that eligible homeless people are provided Supplemental Security Income and other benefits.

In addition, in my position as the ranking member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I will do everything I can to see that housing programs receive adequate funding.

Hundreds of Oregonians participated in the "Two cents for Housing" campaign. All funds sent to me in this manner will be forwarded to the Burnside Community Council for use in their homeless shelter.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me. I hope you will continue to share your views with me.

Kind regards.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark O. Hatfield", written in a cursive style.

Mark O. Hatfield  
United States Senator

MOH/bsc