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State of Maine  
 ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE  
 COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

**MEMORANDUM**

**Date:** April 9, 2008

**To:** Peggy Rotundo, Senate Chair  
 Jeremy Fischer, House Chair  
 Members, Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

**From:** Lisa Marrache, Senate Chair  
 John Patrick, House Chair  
 Joint Standing Committee on Legal and Veterans' Affairs

**RE:** **Table Priority**

The Joint Standing Committee on Legal and Veterans' Affairs is unanimous in support of our top priority of LDs to be placed on the Appropriations Table. LD 1985 An Act to Meet the Emergency Needs of Veterans is the highest priority of committee with a fiscal note of \$250,000. This bill, as amended will appropriate funds to support a Veterans Services Officer (VSO) in Portland as well as a VSO that will travel across the state. These positions are crucial in connecting our honored veterans with the federal Veterans Administrations dollars to which they are entitled. Without VSOs to provide the necessary outreach to unenrolled veterans and navigation of the federal system, millions of dollars in federal benefits are not being distributed to Maine veterans.

- Funding a Portland VSO: Once claims are received and adjudicated with the federal VA will result in approximately \$6 million in benefits annually.
- Funding a traveling VSO: Once claims are received and adjudicated with the federal VA could result in approximately \$3-\$5 million in benefits annually.

As we noted in our report on the supplemental budget, these dollars will be spent in the communities where veterans live and will likely result in less demand on state and local services by veterans that we believe includes MaineCare. Again, honoring veterans and ensuring that they receive all benefits to which they are entitled is the number one priority of the committee on Legal and Veterans Affairs.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter.

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