



The American Legion
Department of Maine
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PRESS RELEASE

**THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF MAINE CALLS ON THE
LEADERSHIP OF MAINE VETERANS' HOMES TO FIX THE CHALLENGES
OR TO STEP DOWN**

The American Legion Department of Maine considers it irresponsible that The Maine Veterans' Homes considered closing the Machias and Caribou homes.

We, as a veteran's organization, have lost confidence in the CEO of Maine Veterans' Homes based upon these actions and the way they were handled.

The Maine Veterans' Homes system was created by an act of the Legislature in 1977, a system of six homes geographically placed to support an aging veterans population in the state of Maine, it is imperative that Maine keeps these homes viable in our opinion.

The American Legion Department of Maine sincerely appreciates those who have stepped in and offered support of the Machias and Caribou veterans' homes with deeds instead of words. We now ask that all involved move forward and make them viable for future generation of Maine's veterans.

The MVH CEO and board, in our opinion, were put in place is to lead the operation of the homes, keep them open, and keep them viable.

There were three concerns raised by the Maine Veterans' Homes leadership: Funding, staffing, and declining veteran population, which we wish to address.

- **Funding:** Thanks to Governor Janet Mills and Senate President Troy Jackson, it appears we have a start in turning around the funding challenges. Members of the Congressional delegation are standing by as well, according to recent meetings with our Department Legislative Committee.

- **Staffing:** The MVH must be creative in attracting staff. Offer incentives, educational assistance, and/or more competitive wages. This is not a challenge specific to Maine Veterans' Homes; it has been an ongoing result of the COVID pandemic lockdowns and will take a creative approach to resolve.
- **Veteran Population:** We have an aging veteran population in Maine who may need these services in the very near future. A 2020 estimate shows Maine has 109,557 veterans. 50% of these veterans are over 65 years of age (55,214 estimated). Aroostook has an estimated 7,800 veterans and Washington County has an estimated 3,800 veterans with 50% possibly needing services. The next demographic of veterans appears to be the Vietnam veterans. These veterans were treated poorly during the war, shutting down needed homes is another slap in the face to these veterans. Not to mention an aging 9-11 veteran population.

It took decades, and the support of Maine's Veterans Service Organizations, to open the six homes; which include Caribou and Machias. With their closure we will be facing a need with no options left to help our veterans. When future veterans need help, we will not have decades to get new homes built and operating.

Maine Veteran Homes has a mission of caring for those who served, in our opinion, to run these homes, keep them viable, and operational; we think closure contradicts that mission.

We are asking the Governor, the Legislature, Maine's Congressional delegation in Washington D.C., our brothers and sisters in Maine's Military Service Organizations, and the general public to support The American Legion Department of Maine's call to impress upon the MVH leadership to keep these homes open and viable, or to step down.

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