

# National Veterans Policy Framework

## THE IMPERATIVES

The imperatives for better serving our veterans and their families are plentiful and urgent. Today, the U.S. military is operating in 40% of the world’s countries.<sup>2</sup> We are expansively deploying our military in the name of our nation’s defense, and yet the sustainability of the all-volunteer force has never been more at risk.

In 2018, the Army missed its recruiting goal for the first time since 2005.<sup>3</sup> The military is stretched thin, and yet the cost of war since 2001 reached nearly \$6 trillion dollars and future costs expect to reach \$15 trillion.<sup>4</sup> Nearly 7,000 US soldiers have died in these efforts, bearing significant social and human costs as well.<sup>5</sup> In other words, the United States is disengaged and disconnected from significant looming financial and security challenges.

All this, and still more veterans have died from suicide than from combat in either Iraq or Afghanistan.<sup>6,7</sup> In the past ten years, the number of military veterans who have taken their own lives totals over 60,000. That’s a suicide every 80-minutes, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Effective, research-backed policy is the way ahead to better serving this population. These guiding principles can guide better policy for veterans, and American society as a whole. Good public policy that better serves veterans will translate to better public policy and services for all Americans.

“If it is our hope that not every young person is called to a draft

If it is our hope that we continue to be safe and secure without bankrupting our nation

If it is our hope that those who have served have an equal chance at a happy and healthy post-service life”

<p><b>1</b></p> <p><b>PRINCIPLE ONE</b>  <b>Good veteran and military family public policy can and should be beneficial for all Americans.</b></p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>PRINCIPLE TWO</b>  <b>Veterans and their families are an asset to our communities and the economy.</b></p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>PRINCIPLE THREE</b>  <b>A thriving veteran population with equal opportunity to pursue their post-service aspirations is the surest incentive to sustaining a capable, all-volunteer force, and the security of the United States.</b></p>
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Policy serving veterans and military families should be bipartisan, unifying American families and institutions around serving those who have served. The VA constitutes the second largest agency in the federal government.<sup>1</sup> Public and social sectors should be more collaborative and efficient. Sharing costs and reducing duplication will provide high quality services at a sustainable cost to the taxpayer.

Veterans represent a strategic opportunity to enhance the American workforce amid the 4th Industrial Revolution and digital era. Veterans possess in-demand technical training and leadership skills critical to a workforce evolving for the future. Connecting veterans and their families with a workforce desperately in need of their skills will help the American economy maintain its global competitiveness. Additionally, Veterans and their families possess values steeped in the idea of service. Often, they seek mission driven causes after service, and are more likely to be civically engaged in their communities. Good policy leverages the civic asset that veterans and their families represent.

All Americans equally benefit from the national security provided by the few who shoulder the burden of war. Therefore, Americans should be more involved in the strategic and moral imperative of ensuring equal opportunity for veterans and their families. A prosperous, thriving veteran population is the surest incentive to sustaining an all-volunteer force capable of fighting and winning our nation’s wars. The quality and effectiveness of programs designed to support veterans and their families post-separation will play a pivotal role in bolstering our military and national security. The decision to serve in the United States military must always be considered wise.

## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup>United States Department of Veterans Affairs. Office of Rural Health. Retrieved from <https://www.ruralhealth.va.gov/aboutus/structure.asp>

<sup>2</sup>Savell, S. (January 2019). This Map Shows Where in the World the U.S. Military is Combatting Terrorism. Smithsonian Magazine. Retrieved from <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/map-shows-places-world-where-us-military-operates-180970997/>

<sup>3</sup>Baldor, L. (September 21, 2018). Army Misses 2018 recruiting goal. AP NEWS. Retrieved from <https://apnews.com/4e920aef0ee41caa152a12df6d89600>

<sup>4</sup>Crawford, N. (November 14, 2018). United States Budgetary Costs of the Post-9/11 War Through FY2019: \$5.9 Trillion Spent and Obligated. Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs. Brown University. Retrieved from [https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2018/Crawford\\_Costs%20of%20War%20Estimates%20Through%20FY2019.pdf](https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2018/Crawford_Costs%20of%20War%20Estimates%20Through%20FY2019.pdf)

<sup>5</sup>Cost of War Project. Summary of Findings. Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs. Brown University. Retrieved from <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/papers/summary>

<sup>6</sup>Yoanna, M. (June 29, 2018). Some 78,000 Veterans and Troops Lost to Suicide Since 2005. KUNC. Retrieved from <https://www.kunc.org/post/some-78000-veterans-and-troops-lost-suicide-2005#stream/0>

<sup>7</sup>Brown, D. (November 9, 2018). Here’s How Many People Have Died in the Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Task and Purpose. Retrieved from <https://taskandpurpose.com/afghanistan-iraq-death-toll>

GETTING TRANSITION RIGHT	NAVIGATION OF SERVICES	VETERAN AND MILITARY FAMILY HEALTH	IMPROVING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES	ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF WOMEN VETERANS AND OTHER KEY SUBPOPULATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting successful transition for service-members and their families is not a government problem alone. There is a need for public, private and nonprofit organizations well-equipped to assist the transitioning service member and their family successfully navigate transition.</li> <li>A successful transition is critical to long-term success and health in post-service life. Conversely, difficulties at the point of transition lead to long and persistent challenges faced by this population.</li> <li>Programs and policy should aim to leverage and coordinate public and private organizations to assist in successful transition for all service members and military families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The number one challenge transitioning service members face is trouble navigating the sea of resources available to support them.<sup>1</sup></li> <li>The difficulties faced by veterans and their families are not mutually exclusive of each other – in fact, veterans rarely face isolated needs or support.<sup>2</sup></li> <li>There is already a sizeable infrastructure of providers across the country, based in communities, that stands ready to support, encourage, and enable veterans and their families to live healthy and productive lives.<sup>3</sup> However, without proper communication or connection to the community or veterans themselves, these services go unknown or inaccessible to the veteran they aim to serve.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Treating the unique physical and mental wellness needs of veterans begins with the VA, but communities and other facets of government must also do more to support the complex health needs of this population.</li> <li>Military spouses, caregivers and children also have distinct mental and physical health needs that require better access to social service providers, care and resources</li> <li>Proactively and effectively addressing these health challenges is critical to ensuring that our veteran population continues to reap the benefits of the covenant they made with the United States government – one that new enlisted servicemembers must be included in as well.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Military service offers intensive training and experience in leadership, managing projects, programs, and people, and technical expertise necessary to carry out the mission of the United States military. All of these are directly applicable and in demand within the civilian economy.<sup>4</sup></li> <li>Ensuring the economic vitality of veterans post-service requires public, nonprofit, and private sector collaboration, investment, and dedication.</li> <li>With advances in technology, the U.S. economy faces a seismic adjustment to the skills and careers that will be in demand. Veterans are well positioned to lead the way on this challenge, possessing necessary skills that will contribute to long-term American economic competitiveness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many women veterans have a very different experience from their male counterparts spanning from their time in the service to their experience during transition and beyond.<sup>5</sup></li> <li>Minority veterans, another fast growing segment of the population, experience serious post-service challenges such as poverty, lack of health insurance, homelessness, unemployment and chronic diseases at higher rates compared with their white counterparts.<sup>6</sup></li> <li>The needs of women veterans and other key veteran subpopulations require specific, tailored programs that address their needs completely that are coordinated to address them holistically.</li> </ul>

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup>C. Zoli, R. Maury, & D. Fay, Missing Perspectives: Servicemembers' Transition from Service to Civilian Life – Data-Driven Research to Enact the Promise of the Post-9/11 GI Bill (Institute for Veterans & Military Families, Syracuse University, November 2015).
- <sup>2</sup>Van Slyke, R. D., & Armstrong, N. J. (2019). Communities Serve: A Systematic Review of Need Assessments on U.S. Veteran and Military-Connected Populations. *Armed Forces & Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X19845030>
- <sup>3</sup>Armstrong, N., McDonough, J., & Savage, D. (April 2015). Driving Community Impact: The Case for Local, Evidence-Based Coordination in Veteran and Military Family Services and the AmericaServes Initiative. The Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University.
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- <sup>5</sup>Maury, R.V.; Zoli, C., Fay, D.; Armstrong, N.; Boldon, N.Y.; Linsner, R. K; Cantor, G. (2018, March). Women in the Military: From Service to Civilian Life. Syracuse, NY: Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University.
- <sup>6</sup>National Center for Veteran Analysis and Statistics. (March 2017) Military Service History and VA Benefit Utilization Statistics. Department of Veterans Affairs.



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