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.² 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 2005.³ 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.⁴ Nearly 7,000 US soldiers have died in these efforts, bearing significant social and human costs as well.⁵ 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.⁶ ⁷ 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.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. PRINCIPLE ONE
   Good veteran and military family public policy can and should be beneficial for all Americans.

   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.¹ 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.

2. PRINCIPLE TWO
   Veterans and their families are an asset to our communities and the economy.

   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.

3. PRINCIPLE THREE
   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.

   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

³Baldor, L. (September 21, 2018). Army Misses 2018 recruiting goal. AP NEWS. Retrieved from https://apnews.com/4e920aeff0ee41caa152a12df6d899030
SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY’S INSTITUTE FOR VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES (IVMF) is the first national institute in higher education singularly focused on advancing the lives of the nation’s military, veterans and their families. Through its professional staff and experts, the IVMF delivers leading programs in career and entrepreneurship education and training, while also conducting actionable research, policy analysis, and program evaluations. The IVMF also supports veterans and their families, once they transition back into civilian life, as they navigate the maze of social services in their communities, enhancing access to this care working side-by-side with local providers across the country. The Institute is committed to advancing the post service lives of those who have served in America’s armed forces and their families. For more information, visit ivmf.syracuse.edu.

LEADING TOPICS

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<td>• 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.</td>
<td>• The number one challenge transitioning service members face is trouble navigating the sea of resources available to support them.1</td>
<td>• 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.</td>
<td>• 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.4</td>
<td>• 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.2</td>
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<td>• 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.</td>
<td>• The difficulties faced by veterans and their families are not mutually exclusive of each other – in fact, veterans rarely face isolated needs or support.2</td>
<td>• Military spouses, caregivers and children also have distinct mental and physical health needs that require better access to social service providers, care and resources</td>
<td>• Ensuring the economic vitality of veterans post-service requires public, nonprofit, and private sector collaboration, investment, and dedication.</td>
<td>• 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.4</td>
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<td>• 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.</td>
<td>• 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.3 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.</td>
<td>• 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.</td>
<td>• 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.</td>
<td>• 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.</td>
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REFERENCES
1. 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).