

BUILDING BRIDGES:

Veteran Policy in the U.S. and Ukraine



ОСВІТНІЙ ЦЕНТР
ВІЛЬНІ ТА ВІРНІ



PolitiA



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Among the challenges to which Ukrainian society must respond, an important place is the problem of dignified treatment of war veterans, their comprehensive rehabilitation, social support and adaptation to the conditions of peaceful life.

This is important because veterans together with the military make up a significant and active social group, whose position will influence the development of the country. It is necessary to help Ukrainian veterans not only to return to a peaceful life, but also not to lose their potential, the knowledge and skills they have acquired, to involve in the restoration of the country, its movement through the development of democracy and integration into the European community. However, compared to the USA, Ukraine has a short history of veteran policy, and veteran organizations are in their infancy. Therefore, there is an urgent need to develop strategies, goals and tasks of activity and interaction of all participants and components of the process.

For that reason, on the initiative of a number of Ukrainian public organizations and movements, including veterans, as well as with the support of our partners in the USA, the idea was born to start a discussion platform for discussing the problems of veteran policy, studying the experience of American colleagues and forming an action plan for adapting the experience of the USA to Ukrainian realities. We set ourselves the task not only of forming the key problems of the development of veteran policy for Ukraine, but also of determining their main vectors of development.

This document "Building Bridges: Veterans Policy in the United States and Ukraine" was created together with leading experts from Ukraine and the United States of America. The document consists of several parts. The first part presents an overview of United States veterans policy, outlining the main elements and structure of the US Department of Veterans Affairs. The second part presents an overview of veteran policy in Ukraine, outlining its main components. Separately, the document also outlines veteran women's policy in Ukraine and the United States, benefits for veterans, as well as legislation in the field of veteran policy.

We would like to thank all the experts who participated in the development of this document, which outlined the framework for strengthening cooperation between the United States and Ukraine in support of Ukrainian veterans. I hope that our work will bring real change and improvement in the lives of those who have given their prime years and health to the service and defense of our country.

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About the NGO “Vilni ta Virni”:



NGO "Vilni ta Virni" was founded in 2023 on the initiative of the lieutenant colonel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine Vitalii Gersak, a law enforcement officer, public and political figure, volunteer soldier of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. It unites veterans, defenders, as well as volunteers who actively help the Armed Forces, support the rights and social guarantees for veterans, and who care about the future of Ukraine as a sovereign, powerful European state. The NGO also helps IDPs, families of servicemen, as well as those living in the de-occupied territories. Volunteers of the NGO "Vilni ta Virni" work in four regions: Vinnytsia, Odesa, Mykolaiv regions and Kyiv. The geography of our activity will soon cover almost all regions of Ukraine.

About Institute for Democracy and Development “Polita”:

Institute for Democracy and Development “Polita” is a non-profit registered in Ukraine and 501(c)3 in the United States. conducts educational and analytical projects in the fields of democracy development and support for reforms. In the United States, the activity of the institution is focused on communication with decision-makers, providing analytics and solutions much needed during the war between Ukraine and Russia. Since the establishment of the institute, it has formulated solutions for Ukraine’s domestic politics and democracy development, mentored over 5,000 program participants, written over 30 strategy papers, conducted over 200 events with decision-makers.

About White Ribbon Ukraine:

“White Ribbon Ukraine” is an international movement against domestic violence over 90 countries, numerous awarded from the Kyiv City Administration for volunteerism as Top Organizations of the Year and receiving numerous gratitudes from military units. The organization joined the initiative because they are sure that high-quality professional work on the rehabilitation and socialization of veterans today is an antidote to negative domestic violence tomorrow.

Building Bridges: Veteran Policy in the U.S. and Ukraine

1. Overview of the U.S. veteran policy

- The main pillars of the USA veteran policy
- Structure of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

2. Overview of the Ukrainian veteran policy:

- Components of the state veteran policy
- Structure of the Ministry of Veteran Affairs of Ukraine
- The Ukrainian female veteran policy
- Benefits of the Ukrainian veterans
- Professional training and entrepreneurship of veterans

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Overview of the U.S. veteran policy.

The United States has long been recognized for its comprehensive approach to veterans' policy. It is regulated by a very wide scope of legislation presented in the last chapter.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), responsible for overseeing all programs, is projected to reach a record budget of \$325.1 billion for fiscal year 2024 (+5.4% increase above the 2023). With a workforce exceeding 370,000 employees, the VA serves a veteran community surpassing 18 million individuals. Its services encompass not only healthcare benefits through the nation's largest integrated hospital system but also disability and death pensions, education assistance, employment support, and life insurance, among others. Veterans receive preference for civil service positions at the federal and state levels, constituting nearly one-third of the federal workforce despite comprising only about 6 percent of the total population.

Additionally, former soldiers are entitled to various local and state-level benefits, including tax exemptions. Collectively, these programs constitute the so-called "veterans' welfare state," offering a suite of benefits exclusively available to veterans and their families.

The main pillars of USA veteran policy:

Healthcare:

- Comprehensive healthcare services for eligible veterans, including primary care, specialty care, mental health services, women's health services, and preventive care.
- Telehealth and telemedicine services to increase access to care, especially for veterans in rural or remote areas.
- Prosthetics, rehabilitation, and long-term care services for veterans with service-related injuries or disabilities.

Mental Health and Suicide Prevention:

- Comprehensive mental health care services, including individual and group therapy, medication management, and crisis intervention.
- VA Suicide Prevention Program, offering outreach, education, crisis intervention, and support services to at-risk veterans and their families.

Disability Compensation and Pension:

- Disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities, providing tax-free monthly payments based on the severity of the disability.
- Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) for spouses, children, and parents of veterans who died from service-related conditions.
- Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) for veterans with severe disabilities or conditions, such as loss of limb, blindness, or need for aid and attendance.

Education and Training Benefits:

- Various GI Bill programs, including the Post-9/11 GI Bill, Montgomery GI Bill, and Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP), providing financial assistance for education and training.
- Yellow Ribbon Program, which supplements GI Bill benefits for eligible veterans attending private or out-of-state colleges and universities.
- Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program, offering career counseling, job training, employment placement assistance, and supportive services for veterans with service-connected disabilities.

Employment and Transition Assistance:

- Transition Assistance Program (TAP), providing comprehensive assistance to transitioning service members and their spouses, including career counseling, job search workshops, and assistance with resume writing and interview skills.
- Veterans Employment Center (VEC), an online portal connecting veterans with job opportunities, career resources, and employers committed to hiring veterans.
- Veterans' Preference in federal hiring, giving eligible veterans preference in competitive examinations and appointments to federal civil service positions.

Home Loan Guaranty Program:

- VA-guaranteed home loans for eligible veterans, service members, and surviving spouses, allowing for home purchase, construction, repair, or refinance with favorable terms and conditions.
- Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) and Special Housing Adaptation (SHA) grants for disabled veterans to modify or adapt their homes to accommodate their disabilities.

Legal Assistance and Advocacy:

- VA-accredited representatives and attorneys providing free legal assistance to veterans seeking benefits and services from the VA.
- Veterans Treatment Courts, specialized courts that connect veterans involved in the criminal justice system with treatment, support, and rehabilitation services instead of incarceration.

Community Support and Outreach:

- Vet centers and mobile vet centers providing confidential counseling, outreach, and readjustment services to combat veterans and their families.
- Partnerships with community organizations, nonprofits, and businesses to expand access to resources and support for veterans and their families.

Burial and Memorial Benefits:

- Burial in a national cemetery with a gravesite marker or headstone, burial flag, and Presidential Memorial Certificate for eligible veterans.
- Military funeral honors, including a rifle salute, flag folding ceremony, and playing of Taps, provided by an honor guard detail.
- VA burial allowances to help cover burial and funeral expenses for eligible veterans and their families.

The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs is comprised of three organizations that administer veterans' programs:

Name of the organization	Description
<p>The Veterans Health Administration</p>	<p>The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is home to one of the United States' largest integrated health care systems, consisting of 171 medical centers, more than 1,400 community-based outpatient clinics, community living centers, Vet Centers and Domiciliaries. Together these health care facilities and the more than 53,000 independent licensed health care practitioners who work within them provide comprehensive care to more than 9.1 million Veterans each year.</p> <p>VA medical centers provide a wide range of services including traditional hospital-based services such as surgery, critical care, mental health, orthopedics, pharmacy, radiology and physical therapy. In addition, most of its medical centers offer additional medical and surgical specialty services including audiology and speech pathology, dermatology, dental, geriatrics, neurology, oncology, podiatry, prosthetics, urology and vision care. Some medical centers also offer advanced services such as organ transplants and plastic surgery.</p>
<p>The Veterans Benefits Administration</p>	<p>The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) is responsible for initial Veteran registration, eligibility determination and administration of VA's five key lines of non-medical benefits. Major benefits to Service members, Veterans and their families include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home Loan Guarantee • Insurance • Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment • Education • Compensation and Pension

Name of the organization	Description
The National Cemetery Administration	<p>The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) honors Veterans and their families with final resting places in national shrines and with lasting tributes that commemorate their service and sacrifice to our Nation.</p> <p>NCA maintains 4.11 million graves with 689,646 additional developed gravesites available: 339,796 available gravesites for casketed remains, 164,466 in ground gravesites for cremated remains and 185,384 columbarium niches for cremated remains.</p> <p>NCA administers 155 national cemeteries of which 87 are open for all interments and 22 are open for interments of cremated remains only. In addition to VA national cemeteries, two national cemeteries—Arlington and the United States Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery—are administered by the Army. Fourteen national cemeteries are maintained by the Department of the Interior. The American Battle Monuments Commission maintains 26 American cemeteries and monuments outside of the United States.</p> <p>Nearly 23,000 acres from Hawaii to Maine, and from Alaska to Puerto Rico are devoted to memorializing those who served this nation.</p> <p>Nearly 5.3 million people—including 4 million Veterans from the Revolutionary War to the war in Iraq and Afghanistan—are honored with a burial in a VA national cemetery.</p>

Source: <https://www.ruralhealth.va.gov/aboutus/structure.asp>

Overview of the Ukrainian veteran policy

In Ukraine, the issue of social protection for veterans has undergone significant updates in light of the full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation into Ukrainian territory. The influx of a larger number of individuals into the Defense Forces of Ukraine due to mobilization is expected to place an extraordinary burden on this sector in the foreseeable future.

As of February 24, 2022, there were approximately 500,000 individuals directly involved in the Anti-Terrorist Operation and the Joint Forces Operation. When including family members of fallen heroes, including those from the Heavenly Hundred, injured participants of the Revolution of Dignity, as well as other categories such as Second World War veterans or those equated to them, along with all who participated in peacekeeping missions, this figure totals around 1.2 million people.

Regarding individuals with combatant status, their numbers exceeded 770,000. With the commencement of full-scale warfare, the demand for protection services is expected to rise significantly. According to government estimates, the number of citizens eligible for veteran status post-war may increase fourfold, from 1.2 million to 5 million people.

Components of state veteran policy

1. Safety component:

A veteran is an active citizen integrated into ensuring the stability of the community and the nation, ready to defense and national resistance (in case of escalation military threat)

- A single account of former military personnel of the entire force bloc
- Support for readiness to return to military service services
- Legalization and control of the provision of military services for the border
- Involvement in military-patriotic and national-patriotic education

2. Economical component:

A veteran is an employed citizen, taxpayer, competitive in the market labor.

Veteran business - new jobs, relevant areas of activity:

- Creation of conditions for obtaining a civil license specialty in accordance with the needs of the labor market by place of residence
- Entrepreneurship promotion programs that employ veterans and their family members and established by veterans

3. Social component:

- A unified system of accounting for services received by a veteran
- Support of physical and mental health adaptation to civilian life, integration into society, family, community, labor teams
- Support for persons with disabilities due to war, members families of deceased (deceased) defenders of Ukraine
- Housing provision (transitional period)

4. International component:

- Implementation of EU and NATO standards
- Development of veteran diplomacy
- Involvement in international veterans' sports communities

The Ministry of Veteran Affairs of Ukraine is comprised of seven departments and one state institution, Ukrainian veterans fund.

Name of the departments	Subdepartments
DIRECTORATE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert group of strategic planning and institutional development • Expert group for ensuring the formation of state policy • Chief specialist in ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men
DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL IDENTITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of interaction with public associations and the development of the veteran movement • Department of interaction with public associations • Department for the development of the veteran movement • Office of Civil Identity • Department for the Formation of Civil Identity • Department for memorial work and state awards • Department for work with family members of the deceased
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Status granting department • Department for Social Support • Department of formation and provision of service services to veterans • Department for coordination and methodological support in the provision of services in the field of social protection
DEPARTMENT OF ENSURING THE TRANSITION FROM MILITARY SERVICE TO CIVILIAN LIFE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of psychological and medical support • Department of educational programs and professional adaptation • Department of veteran development • Department of Veterans' Sports and Physical Culture and Sports Rehabilitation • Department of interdepartmental cooperation and organizational work • Department of regional cooperation

Name of the departments	Subdepartments
DEPARTMENT OF DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Systems Development Department • Department of system integration • State Register Department • Information Protection Department
MANAGEMENT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of planning and implementation of priority projects • Department of supporting infrastructure projects • Department for Development and Implementation of Housing Programs
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of interaction with international partners • International technical assistance engagement department
Ukrainian Veterans Fund	<p>The Ukrainian Veterans' Fund of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs (MVF) is a state institution under the management of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. Platform for the development of veteran opportunities. The first Fund in Ukraine, which with the funds of the state budget, co-financing of Ukrainian and international partners, supports businesses and startups of veterans, their families, families of fallen defenders, supports projects of public organizations that work with veterans.</p>
Source: https://mva.gov.ua/ua/pro-ministerstvo/struktura-ministerstva-u-spravah-veteraniv-ukrayini	

The Ukrainian female policy

At the time of the large-scale invasion, there were about 493,000 veterans in Ukraine, of which approximately 38,000 were women. With the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Russia, the number of female military personnel who joined the Armed Forces increased. According to the Ministry of Defense, the number of offices has more than tripled from 1,633 in 2013 to 5,112 in 2022. Also, the number of sergeants almost tripled — from 4,784 to 13,747.

The rights of veterans, in particular women veterans, were included in the State Strategy for Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men until 2030, as well as in the Operational Plan for 2022-2024. However, this issue is not currently a priority in veteran policy. Prejudicial attitudes towards women still exist in Ukrainian society, making it more difficult for female veterans to reintegrate compared to male veterans, especially due to stigmatization from the civilian population. This highlights the need for specialized rehabilitation and reintegration programs for female veterans.

Together with American experts, NGO **“Vilni ta Virni”** headed by Vitalii Hersak, Lieutenant Colonel, propose several recommendations to the Ukrainian female policy:

1. When developing social support strategies and programs, it is necessary to take into account the specific needs of veterans, especially women.
2. Contribute to solving the problem of discrimination against women, including the need to create an effective system for combating sexual harassment and gender-based violence in the military sphere. It should be noted that 80% of women after participating in the anti-terrorist operation remained in the army.
3. Develop comprehensive programs for the protection of psychological health for women veterans. Given that female veterans are more aware of the importance of psychological health and are 1.66 times more likely to seek psychological help than their male counterparts, support programs should optimize this aspect.
4. Organize a support service to help women veterans successfully reintegrate into civilian life by providing them with employment and training opportunities.
5. To support organizations of women veterans.
6. Promote the economic integration of women veterans by facilitating labor market adaptation, especially considering issues of competitiveness and loss of skills.

Benefits for veterans

Financial support and other types of social assistance are key to the successful adaptation of veterans to civilian life. Currently, there is some chaos in this area: the lack of a unified approach and insufficient funds lead to a feeling of alienation among veterans who are forced to overcome the challenges on their own. Many existing social guarantees and benefits are outdated and do not contribute to the active reintegration of veterans. However, updating the list of benefits is complicated by the Constitution of Ukraine, which guarantees only an increase, not a reduction, of social support.

These problems indicate the need to reform the system of social support for veterans, which should ensure a comfortable transition to civilian life.

Together with American experts, NGO **“Vilni ta Virni”** headed by Vitalii Hersak, Lieutenant Colonel, propose several recommendations to the social policy of the Ukrainian veterans:

1. To lobby for the adoption of a new law on veteran status and social and legal protection, which will allow to regulate the categories of war veterans and their social protection.
2. Update the list of social benefits for veterans, expanding and improving those that will contribute to their rehabilitation and active reintegration.
3. Constantly update the electronic register of veterans, in accordance with new categories of veterans and social guarantees.
4. Simplify bureaucratic procedures for obtaining social guarantees and benefits
5. Increase the effectiveness of the information policy of the state regarding the social protection of veterans.



Professional training and entrepreneurship of veterans

The state policy strategy defines veterans as active participants in economic processes, but many of them face difficulties in the transition from military service to a civilian career. Veterans often do not have a clear idea of their career plans and needs after discharge from the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU), which leads to uncertainty about their future. The system of social and legal protection does not ensure a proper transition to civilian life, which is critically important for the economic independence of veterans.

Together with American experts, NGO “**Vilni ta Virni**” headed by Vitalii Hersak, Lieutenant Colonel, propose several recommendations for socio-economic policy of Ukrainian veterans:

1. Develop and implement a road map for veterans that would help them plan their civilian career even before leaving the Armed Forces.
2. Legislatively regulate the right of veterans to social and professional adaptation, determining the time frame for its initiation.
3. To increase the financing of socio-professional adaptation programs so that they meet the real needs of veterans.
4. Veteran organizations should more actively seek donor support and other forms of funding to provide veterans with necessary services.
5. Create a strategy for the development of veteran businesses, which would include financial grants, training and support for business activities focused on the veteran community.
6. Provide targeted support to veterans in areas where they have professional experience, including defense, medical, construction, etc. industries This will allow veterans to effectively use their skills and knowledge acquired during military service.
7. Create programs and preferences that will promote the use of military experience of veterans in civilian business without bureaucratic obstacles. For example, veterans with experience driving armored vehicles could be eligible to retrain as carriers and open their own businesses without having to pass additional exams.

These proposals aim to provide veterans with opportunities for successful economic integration by leveraging their unique experiences and competencies.

The U.S. female veteran policy: Empowering Women Who Served

Female veterans represent about 10% of the total U.S. veteran population. In response to the increasing number of women serving in the U.S. military and recognizing the unique challenges they face, policymakers have implemented a range of initiatives to support female veterans across various sectors, including **healthcare, employment, homelessness prevention, and gender-specific services**. These policies are designed to address the specific needs of female veterans and ensure they receive the care and assistance necessary for a successful transition to civilian life.



Healthcare Services

One cornerstone of the U.S. female veteran policy is comprehensive healthcare services provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The Women Veterans Health Program, established in 1988, focuses on addressing the healthcare needs of women who have served in the military. Under this program, the VA has designated women's health clinics at VA medical centers nationwide, staffed by healthcare providers trained to deliver gender-sensitive care.

Additionally, the Women Veterans Call Center provides information and resources to female veterans seeking VA healthcare services.

Furthermore, the Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group oversees the development and implementation of policies to improve access to quality healthcare for female veterans. This includes expanding services such as reproductive healthcare, maternity care, mental health services, and treatment for military sexual trauma (MST). The VA also offers comprehensive primary care services for women, including preventive screenings, immunizations, and chronic disease management.

Recently, VA expanded breast cancer screenings and mammograms for Veterans with potential toxic exposures; supported access to reproductive health services, including contraception, in vitro fertilization, abortion counseling and – in certain cases – abortion care for Veterans and VA beneficiaries; and dramatically expanded one-on-one maternity care coordination for women Veterans. Women Veterans are also enrolling in VA health care at higher rates under the PACT Act, and VA recently hosted its first Women Veterans Experience Action Center, helping more than 340 women Veterans apply for the care and benefits they deserve. Additionally, VA and the Department of Defense are launching a new Women's Health Research collaborative to explore opportunities to promote joint efforts to advance women's health research and improve evidence-based care for Veterans and service members.

Through its Cooperative Studies Program, the VA undertook the most extensive clinical trial involving women veterans, with a sample size of 277 individuals diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The study compared the effectiveness of prolonged exposure therapy to present-centered therapy in this population.

Employment and Education

Another key aspect of female veteran policy is supporting women's transition to civilian life through employment and education initiatives. The Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) administers programs such as the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), which provides female veterans with job search assistance, resume writing workshops, and skills development training. The VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program offers education and training benefits to help female veterans pursue new career opportunities or further their education.

Moreover, the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) provides educational benefits under the GI Bill for eligible female veterans and their dependents, covering tuition, housing, and other educational expenses. This enables female veterans to access higher education and vocational training programs to enhance their skills and qualifications for the civilian workforce.

Homelessness Prevention

Preventing homelessness among female veterans is a priority area of U.S. policy. The VA's Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program provides financial assistance, case management, and supportive services to female veterans and their families who are at risk of homelessness or experiencing housing instability. Through partnerships with community organizations and non-profit agencies, the SSVF program helps female veterans secure stable housing and access essential resources to achieve long-term housing stability.

Gender-Specific Services

Recognizing the unique experiences and needs of female veterans, policymakers have implemented gender-specific services and programs to address their concerns. For example, Veterans Health Administration (VHA) directive requires the appointment of dedicated Women Veterans Program Managers (WVPMs) at each VA medical center to oversee and coordinate healthcare services, outreach initiatives, and advocacy efforts for women veterans. It ensures the availability of knowledgeable and supportive staff to address the unique needs and concerns of women veterans accessing VA healthcare services.

PTSD Treatment Works

Benefits after 8-15 sessions of trauma-focused therapy for PTSD include:

- Reduced PTSD symptoms
- Less depression
- Better sleep
- Healthier habits
- More satisfaction with life

No matter what your trauma or how long you have lived with it, it's never too late.

To find out about trauma-focused therapy at your VA, contact:

- Your provider
- The Women Veterans Program Manager
- The Women Veterans Call Center at 1.855.VA.Women (1.855.829.6636)

www.womenshealth.va.gov
www.PTSD.va.gov

National Center for PTSD
 DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Additionally, the VA's Center for Women Veterans provides information, outreach, and support to female veterans and their families, promoting awareness of available benefits and programs.

Furthermore, the VA offers specialized mental health services for female veterans, including counseling and therapy tailored to address issues such as military sexual trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and combat-related stress. Peer support groups and women's wellness retreats provide opportunities for female veterans to connect with others who share similar experiences and receive support from their peers.

One of the key areas of focus has been women veterans' suicide prevention. VA launched anti-harassment campaigns, such as the White Ribbon Campaign, aimed at eliminating sexual assault and harassment within VA health care settings. Organizations like the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) played a crucial role in supporting these efforts by educating the veteran community about the importance of treating all veterans with respect and dignity.

DAV created videos and a special podcast to disseminate information and resources to its members and audiences. Additionally, DAV maintains an online resource page dedicated to women veterans and regularly shares personal stories related to military sexual trauma (MST).

In February 2024, DAV released a comprehensive report titled "Women Veterans: The Journey to Mental Wellness." This report highlights the unique factors contributing to the high rate of suicide among women veterans and calls for improvements in the mental health care system to better support this population. It builds upon previous reports released by DAV, including "Women Veterans: The Long Journey Home" in 2014 and "Women Veterans: The Journey Ahead" in 2018, which identified gaps in health care, housing, employment, and community support services for women veterans and addressed transition issues following war-time deployments.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has established a public-private partnership aimed at providing legal services specifically tailored to women veterans. This initiative, outlined in Section 202 of the legislation, allocates an additional amount for the Supportive Services for Veteran Families grant program. The purpose is to support organizations that prioritize offering assistance to women veterans and their families, recognizing the unique challenges and needs they may face.

The House Veterans' Affairs Committee's Congressional Women Veterans Task Force was formed in 2019, playing a pivotal role in raising awareness about the challenges faced by women veterans. This initiative led to the passage of significant legislation aimed at addressing the specific needs of women who have served in the military.

VA is fostering the work of Women Veterans Call Center to provide information, assistance, and support to women veterans seeking access to VA benefits, services, and resources. The call center serves as a centralized point of contact for women veterans to address their inquiries and concerns regarding healthcare, education, employment, and other veteran-related issues.

Legislation and Programs for Female Veterans:

The Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948

The act granted women the right to serve as permanent, regular members of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and the recently formed Air Force.

S.319 - Women Veterans and Families Health Services Act

This legislation addresses various aspects of healthcare support for veterans and Armed Forces members, particularly focusing on fertility treatments, counseling, and related programs.

Specifically, the bill mandates that the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offer fertility treatments and counseling to eligible veterans and active duty servicemembers, as well as their spouses, partners, or gestational surrogates. Eligible individuals include severely wounded, ill, or injured former or current Armed Forces members who developed infertility conditions during their active duty service.

DOD is tasked with establishing protocols concerning gamete retrieval and storage, while fertility counseling and treatment are integrated into the range of authorized VA medical services. Additionally, the VA may cover adoption expenses for up to three adoptions for eligible members enrolled in the VA health care system.

Furthermore, the VA is directed to support collaborative research on reproduction and infertility conducted jointly with DOD and the Department of Health and Human Services. The bill also requires the VA to enhance the capabilities of its women veterans contact center to provide assistance and referrals to federal or community resources.

Moreover, the legislation extends and expands a VA pilot program focused on group reintegration and readjustment services for specific women veterans on a permanent basis. Additionally, it offers child care assistance to qualified veterans undergoing mental health care services or readjustment counseling, ensuring access to necessary support services.

VA Healthcare Services for Women

Our primary care and comprehensive women's health services include:



General health care and wellness checks, including routine screenings



Women-specific care for reproductive health (including birth control) and menopause



Management of long-term conditions, like heart disease and diabetes



Pain management and care related to musculoskeletal injuries



Mental health services including medications, counseling, and referrals



Treatment for conditions related to military sexual trauma

Source: <https://www.womenshealth.va.gov/>

Women Veterans Health Program Act

This legislation expands the definition of medical services for federal veterans' provisions to include "well-women care services." Such services encompass various health care offerings tailored to women, including counseling and assistance related to pap smears, breast examinations and mammography, reproductive health care and contraceptives, management of infertility and sexually transmitted diseases, menopause, and addressing physical or psychological conditions stemming from acts of sexual violence.

Additionally, the bill authorizes contracts for hospital care and medical services with non-DVA facilities to provide well-women care services for veterans on an ambulatory or outpatient basis, subject to contract expiration by December 31, 1994.

The Secretary is directed to submit a report to Congress concerning the provision of health care services to women veterans and to promote research into women's health matters.

Furthermore, the Comptroller General is tasked with conducting a study to determine the percentage of all admissions of women veterans to DVA facilities based on a diagnosis of psychotic illness, compared to men veterans. The study aims to provide insights into any disparities in admission rates and diagnose explanations for such differences, if any.

Public Law 103-446

This act establishes the Center for Women Veterans within the VA to serve as a centralized hub for information, resources, and advocacy related to women veterans' issues. The center provides outreach, education, and support services to women veterans, including assistance with accessing healthcare, benefits, employment, and community resources.

H.R.4182 - Women Veterans Support Act 116th Congress (2019-2020)

This legislation establishes initiatives and research endeavors aimed at enhancing mental healthcare services for veterans, with a particular emphasis on women veterans.

Under this bill, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is mandated to collaborate with an independent entity to conduct a comprehensive study on suicide among women veterans.

Furthermore, the VA is directed to conduct extensive outreach efforts on a national, regional, and local scale to prevent suicide among women veterans.

Additionally, the VA is required to institute a five-year grant program designed to support select nonprofit organizations in delivering specified services to women veterans. These services encompass mental health support and financial counseling, among others.

Moreover, the bill stipulates that the VA must offer financial aid to qualifying entities to facilitate the provision or coordination of designated mental health supportive services for veterans seeking mental health treatment. Eligible entities, which may include tribally designated housing entities and certain private institutions, must undergo an application process, with the VA providing training and technical assistance to support the planning, development, and delivery of these services.

Women Veterans Peer Counseling Enhancement Act

It enhances peer support groups and networks specifically tailored to the needs of women veterans to promote camaraderie, mutual support, and wellness. This provides funding and resources for peer-led initiatives that offer emotional support, mentoring, and advocacy for women veterans transitioning to civilian life, coping with mental health issues, or facing other challenges.

**Women Veterans
Peer Counseling
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Peer Support

Information/Appraisal
Sharing information and common experiences; modeling goal behaviors
Emotional
Encouragement; empathy
Instrumental/Mutual reciprocity
Sharing problem-solving;
Giving/Receiving

Increased self-efficacy (SCT)

Improved sense of relatedness (SDT)
Improved understanding of CVD risk reduction behaviors
Increased perceived social support
Improved sense of autonomy (SDT)

CV Risk Reduction Behaviors

Regular Exercise
Healthy Diet
Medication Adherence
Smoking cessation
Engagement in health care

Peer support fosters Veterans' recovery through shared experiences, encouragement, and skill-building, helping them regain hope and engage in their own healing journey. These services, led by Veterans, encompass various activities within mental health and primary care settings, providing vital support and guidance. Peer specialists, drawing from their own recovery journeys, serve as role models, offering assistance in goal setting, problem-solving, and symptom management, empowering Veterans to navigate their path to wellness.

**The Johnny Isakson
and David P. Roe,
M.D. Veterans Health
Care and Benefits
Improvement Act
(Public Law 116-315)**

It is a comprehensive piece of legislation encompassing 22 key provisions from the DAV-supported Deborah Sampson Act. This law mandates the establishment of environment of care standards and inspections specifically tailored to women's clinics at Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers. It also expands legal services for women veterans, enhances the VA's women veterans call center and prosthetic services, improves staffing and training requirements for women's health providers, and requires the development of a comprehensive VA policy to address sexual harassment and assault in VA facilities. Additionally, the law dedicates \$20 million to retrofitting VA medical facilities to better accommodate women veterans.

**The Protecting
Moms Who Served
Act (Public Law 117-
69)**

It allocates \$15 million to the VA's maternity care coordination program and mandates a comprehensive study on maternal mortality and severe complications among women veterans.

**The Dr. Kate
Hendricks Thomas
Supporting
Expanded Review for
Veterans in Combat
Environments
(SERVICE) Act (Public
Law 117-133)**

It expands eligibility for mammography screenings to veterans who served in specific locations during designated periods, including those who served at sites known to have burn pits.

**Equal Access to
Contraception for
Veterans Act**

It provides women veterans access to the same no-cost contraceptive care as their non-veteran counterparts.

**S.Res.267 - A
resolution
designating June 12,
2021, as "Women
Veterans
Appreciation Day"**

The Senate designates June 12, 2021, as "Women Veterans Appreciation Day" to recognize the service and sacrifices of women veterans who have served valiantly on behalf of the United States.

U.S. Veterans’ benefits

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) oversees a range of initiatives offering benefits and support to qualified veterans and their families. These encompass medical care, disability compensation, education, vocational rehabilitation, employment aid, homeless veteran assistance, home loan guarantees, life insurance administration, traumatic injury protection for servicemembers, and burial expense coverage.

HEALTH CARE	<p>The VA offers comprehensive health care services, covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hospital, outpatient medical, dental, pharmacy, and prosthetic services• Domiciliary, nursing home, and community-based residential care• Treatment for Military Sexual Trauma (MST)• Readjustment counseling• Programs for homeless veterans• Treatment for alcohol and drug dependency• Medical evaluations for Gulf War-related disorders or environmental hazards• Specialized health care tailored for women veterans
DISABILITY COMPENSATION	<p>Service-connected disability compensation is a tax-free benefit paid to Veterans for a disability (or disabilities)</p> <p><u>Service Connected Matrix</u> provides detailed list of benefits that veterans are eligible to depending on their disability.</p>
PENSION	<p>Pension is a tax-exempt payment provided to veterans who served during wartime and have minimal or no income, and are either aged 65 or older or permanently and completely disabled due to non-service-related reasons. Veterans who are severely disabled or confined to their homes and receive Pension may also be eligible for extra Aid and Attendance or Housebound benefits.</p> <p>Within the VA, the VBA administers three pension programs for wartime service veterans and their survivors, with specific eligibility criteria based on income and disability:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Veterans Pension (Improved Disability Pension): Assists disabled, low-income veterans.2. Survivors Pension (Improved Death Pension): Supports eligible spouses or children of deceased veterans with limited incomes.3. Medal of Honor Pension: Provides payments to living recipients of this prestigious honor.

LIFE INSURANCE

Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) offers affordable group life insurance coverage for servicemembers, with the option to extend coverage if the servicemember becomes totally disabled.

Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance Traumatic Injury Protection (TSGLI) is automatically included in SGLI and offers payments to servicemembers who experience traumatic injuries resulting in losses such as amputations, blindness, or paraplegia.

Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI) permits servicemembers to convert their SGLI coverage to lifetime renewable term coverage after leaving service.

Service-Disabled Veterans' Insurance (S-DVI) offers life insurance coverage for veterans with service-connected disabilities, with the option for additional coverage if totally disabled.

Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI) provides mortgage protection insurance for disabled veterans who have received approval for a VA Specially Adapted Housing Grant.

HOME LOANS

Guaranteed Loans: VA backs loans for home purchases, improvements, and repairs, aiding veterans in securing financing from private lenders.

Specially Adapted Housing Grants: For severely disabled veterans, grants are available to adapt or acquire housing that accommodates their needs.

Refinancing Loans: Veterans can also benefit from VA-backed refinancing options to lower mortgage rates or access equity in their homes.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Four primary VA education benefit programs:

Post-9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33): This program provides financial assistance for tuition and fees, books, supplies, and a monthly housing allowance. Eligible Servicemembers may also transfer unused benefits to an eligible spouse or child.

Montgomery GI Bill-Active Duty (Chapter 30): This program provides financial assistance for education and training to eligible Veterans who served on Active Duty.

**EDUCATION AND
TRAINING**

Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve (Chapter 1606): This program offers financial assistance for education and training to eligible members of the Selected Reserve.

Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP): REAP provides monthly allowances to help offset educational costs for eligible Reservists and National Guard members called to Active Duty.

EMPLOYMENT

The Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) VetSuccess program by the VA aids Veterans with service-connected disabilities in preparing for, obtaining, and sustaining suitable employment. Initially, VA conducts a thorough evaluation to assist in identifying potential career paths. Following this assessment, VetSuccess offers vocational counseling, job-search support, and additional education and training services. Furthermore, career counseling benefits under VetSuccess are accessible to individuals who have recently separated from the military or are utilizing VA education benefits, even without a service-connected disability.

**BURIAL AND
MEMORIAL
SERVICES**

The VA provides burial and memorial services to honor deceased Veterans in several ways:

Inscribed Headstones or Markers: VA can furnish an inscribed headstone or marker at any cemetery to honor the deceased Veteran.

Burial Allowance: VA offers a burial allowance to partially reimburse burial and funeral costs for certain Veterans.

Provision of an American Flag: VA can provide an American flag to drape the casket of a Veteran, symbolizing their service to the nation.

Burial in VA National Cemeteries: Veterans and their dependents are eligible to be buried in VA national cemeteries, where they receive a final resting place among fellow Veterans with honors and respect.

SUPPORT TO VETS' FAMILIES

The VA offers several benefit programs to honor the sacrifices of Servicemembers' and Veterans' dependents and survivors:

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC): DIC is a monthly benefit paid to a surviving spouse, with additional payments for dependent children. It is available to eligible spouses of Servicemembers who died during active military service or from a service-connected disability, or to spouses of Veterans who were rated totally disabled at the time of death. Parents' DIC is also available based on financial need.

Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA): CHAMPVA provides reimbursement for most medical expenses for surviving spouses and children eligible for DIC.

Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program (Chapter 35): This program offers assistance to dependents of certain Veterans to obtain a degree or pursue other eligible education and training.

Survivors' Pension: This is a monthly benefit payable to low-income surviving spouses and children of deceased Veterans with wartime service.

Veteran entrepreneurship promotion in the U.S.

The Small Business Administration (SBA), established in 1953 under the Small Business Act, plays a crucial role in fostering the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) across the United States. With over one hundred regional offices spanning all states and major cities, the SBA operates with the following key objectives:

- 1. Facilitating access to financial resources for SMEs.**
- 2. Providing informational, educational, and advisory services.**
- 3. Facilitating SME participation in government contracts.**
- 4. Safeguarding the interests of SMEs.**

The SBA elaborates strategies, such as enhancing export opportunities, facilitating technology transfer, and improving access to long-term financing for business expansion and innovation. Additionally, the SBA collaborates extensively with partner organizations, including Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), Women's Business Centers (WBCs), and Offices of Veterans Business Development (OVBD), to support veteran entrepreneurs and their families.

The OVBD serves as the SBA's liaison to the veteran business community, offering policy analysis, reporting, and advocacy services. It provides various programs and services, such as training, counseling, and oversight of federal procurement programs for veteran-owned and disabled veteran small businesses.

SBDCs also play a vital role in promoting veteran entrepreneurship by offering consultations, training, and informational resources in collaboration with the SBA. Moreover, partnerships with organizations like SCORE, a network of experienced business mentors, further enhance support for small businesses in planning, launching, and managing their ventures.

One significant piece of legislation supporting veteran entrepreneurship is the Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act of 1999. This act established the Office of Veterans Business Development within the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to provide resources, support, and assistance to veteran-owned small businesses (VOSBs) and service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses (SDVOSBs). The Office offers counseling, training, and access to capital through loan programs tailored to veterans' needs. Additionally, the act created the National Veterans Business Development Corporation, tasked with such aims as to enhance technical assistance for veterans pursuing entrepreneurship, coordinate resources from government departments and private sectors to support veteran-owned businesses, establish and manage a network of support centers for veterans and the public, present annual reports to the President and Congress detailing its accomplishments, and formulate standardized guidelines for certifying military personnel through a Professional Certification Advisory Board.

Another legislative measure is the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2008. This act expanded contracting opportunities for VOSBs and SDVOSBs by establishing government

wide goals for contracting with these businesses and creating a verification program to ensure their eligibility for set-aside contracts. Additionally, the act established the Center for Veterans Enterprise to oversee these initiatives and provide certification services for veteran-owned businesses. This provision authorizes the Secretary to buy advertising space in national media platforms to raise awareness about veterans' benefits, including vets' business opportunities.

The law provides for the establishment of an interagency task force to coordinate federal efforts to increase capital and business development opportunities, as well as to enter into federal contracts and subcontracts with small businesses owned and controlled by veterans and disabled veterans. Furthermore, the law includes provisions for expanding the number of veteran business centers, developing distance learning and counseling for veterans, and strengthening interagency cooperation.

The Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act of 2015 further enhanced support for veteran entrepreneurship by expanding access to capital, counseling, and procurement assistance programs. It also created the Boots to Business program, which offers entrepreneurship training and resources to transitioning service members and veterans.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Women Veteran-Owned Small Business Initiative (WVOSBI) is dedicated to advancing diversity and championing minority and women Veterans in the realm of business. Established in 2019, VA OSDBU's WVOSBI has been steadfast in its mission to empower women Veterans by offering tailored programs and avenues to economic advancement. WVOSBI endeavors to support women Veterans by facilitating connections to networking opportunities and fostering collaboration with federal agencies, commercial entities, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions. By striving to elevate more women-owned businesses to prime vendor status, WVOSBI aims to aid VA in reaching its contracting goal of 5% with Women-Owned Small Businesses (WOSB).

Federal advisory committees supporting vets' entrepreneurship include:

- The Interagency Task Force for Small Business Development (Task Force) was established on February 14, 2008, through Public Law 110-186 and executed via Executive Order. Chaired by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), it comprises representatives appointed by the SBA Administrator from various agencies, including the Department of Defense (DoD), Department of Labor (DOL), Department of Treasury (Treasury), Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), General Services Administration (GSA), Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and four representatives from veterans' service and military organizations.
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- Public Law 106-50, the Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act of 1999, initiated the formation of the Small Business Administration Advisory Committee on Veterans Business Affairs. This committee serves as an autonomous advisory body, offering counsel and policy suggestions to the Small Business Administration Administrator, the Associate Administrator for SBA's Office of Veterans Business Development, Congress, the President, and other U.S. policymakers. The SBA Administrator is tasked with appointing members to the board, which consists of 15 volunteers, including veteran small business owners and representatives from veteran service organizations.

The efforts to promote veteran entrepreneurship have yielded significant results, both for veterans and the broader economy. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there were approximately 2.5 million veteran-owned businesses in the United States in 2020, employing over 5 million people and generating over \$1 trillion in revenue annually.

Veteran-owned businesses play a crucial role in job creation and economic development, particularly in industries such as construction, professional services, and manufacturing. These businesses not only provide employment opportunities for veterans but also contribute to local communities through philanthropic initiatives and community engagement. Furthermore, veteran entrepreneurs bring unique perspectives and skills to the business world, fostering innovation and driving competitiveness. Their military training instills discipline, leadership, and problem-solving abilities, which are invaluable assets in the entrepreneurial journey.

Relevant legislation	
<u>Veteran Authorities in the Small Business Act</u>	This legislation, also known as the Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act, provides support and resources to veteran-owned small businesses. It aims to facilitate entrepreneurship among veterans and enhance their access to federal contracting opportunities and assistance programs.
<u>Public Law 106-50 Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act of 1999</u>	The Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act of 1999 established the Small Business Administration Advisory Committee on Veterans Business Affairs. This committee advises policymakers on matters concerning veteran entrepreneurship and small business development.
<u>Public Law 110-186 Military Reservist and Veteran Small Business Reauthorization and Opportunity Act of 2008</u>	An act to improve and expand small business assistance programs for veterans of the armed forces and military reservists, and for other purposes.

Overview of U.S. Vet Legislation and Programs

The history of veterans' policies traces back to the British colonial settlers on the North American continent, who followed the precedent set by the Plymouth colony in 1636 by enacting laws to provide assistance to disabled or ill soldiers as an incentive for military service.

Currently legislation ensuring meeting all the needs of veterans is massive. Here is the list of just a few major acts covering a variety of important issues:

- 1 Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (commonly known as the GI Bill): This landmark legislation aimed to provide comprehensive benefits to World War II veterans, including education and training, unemployment compensation, and loans for homes, farms, and businesses. It helped millions of veterans' transition to civilian life after the war and contributed to the economic growth of the nation.
- 2 Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act of 1952 (commonly known as the Korean War GI Bill): Similar to the original GI Bill, this legislation extended benefits to veterans of the Korean War and provided assistance with education, training, and housing. It aimed to support veterans in their transition to civilian life and promote their economic stability.
- 3 Veterans' Pension Act of 1959: This act expanded compensation and pension benefits for veterans with service-connected disabilities. It established a disability compensation system that provides financial support to veterans who have suffered injuries or illnesses related to their military service.
- 4 Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance Act of 1971: This legislation established the Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI) program, which provides mortgage life insurance coverage to disabled veterans. It aims to assist veterans with severe service-connected disabilities in obtaining mortgage protection to ensure financial security for their families.
- 5 Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP) of 1977: Created as a successor to the GI Bill, VEAP provided educational benefits to service members who contributed to a fund while on active duty. It allowed service members to accumulate contributions from their paychecks to fund their education after leaving the military.
- 6 Montgomery GI Bill of 1984: This bill expanded educational benefits for veterans who served on active duty and made contributions to an education fund. It provided financial assistance for higher education, vocational training, and other educational pursuits, helping veterans pursue their academic and career goals.
- 7 Veterans Health Care Act of 1992: This legislation aimed to improve and expand healthcare services for veterans by establishing the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) to oversee healthcare delivery to eligible veterans. It expanded access to medical care and services for veterans and established standards for quality and efficiency within the VA healthcare system.

- 8** Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) of 1994: USERRA protects the civilian employment rights of military service members and veterans. It ensures that service members are not disadvantaged in their civilian careers due to their military service and provides protections for their reemployment rights after completing military duty.
- 9** Veterans' Employment Opportunities Act of 1998: This act aimed to enhance employment opportunities for veterans in the federal government. It established special hiring preferences and incentives for the recruitment and retention of veterans in federal civilian positions, promoting their successful transition to civilian employment.
- 10** Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 (commonly known as the Post-9/11 GI Bill): This comprehensive bill provided enhanced educational benefits for veterans who served after September 11, 2001. It included provisions for tuition assistance, housing allowances, and stipends for books and supplies, helping veterans pursue higher education and vocational training.
- 11** Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014: This law aimed to improve access to healthcare for veterans by expanding options for receiving care outside the VA system. It increased funding for VA healthcare facilities, enhanced accountability measures within the VA, and expanded access to healthcare services for eligible veterans.
- 12** Veterans' Benefits Act of 2003: This legislation aimed to enhance benefits and services for veterans and their families. It included provisions for increasing disability compensation and pension rates, expanding healthcare services, and improving access to education and vocational training programs for eligible veterans.
- 13** Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2004: This act aimed to improve and expand benefits and services available to veterans and their families. It included provisions for increased disability compensation, pension benefits, education assistance, and healthcare services for eligible veterans.
- 14** Veterans' Housing Opportunity and Benefits Improvement Act of 2006: This legislation aimed to improve housing opportunities and benefits for veterans and their families. It included provisions for increased home loan guarantees, housing assistance programs, and support for homeless veterans.
- 15** Veterans' Benefits Act of 2010: This act aimed to improve and expand benefits and services available to veterans and their families. It included provisions for increasing disability compensation rates, expanding educational assistance programs, and enhancing healthcare services for eligible veterans.
- 16** Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2013: This act authorized annual cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for veterans' disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) benefits. It ensured that these benefits kept pace with inflation and provided financial stability for disabled veterans and their survivors.

- 17** Veterans' Access to Care through Choice, Accountability, and Transparency Act of 2014: This legislation aimed to address long wait times and access issues within the VA healthcare system. It provided eligible veterans with the option to receive care from non-VA providers if they faced long wait times or lived far from VA facilities.
- 18** Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014: This comprehensive bill aimed to improve healthcare and benefits for veterans and their families. It included provisions for expanding VA healthcare services, enhancing mental health care and suicide prevention programs, and improving access to education and job training opportunities for veterans.
- 19** VA Mission Act of 2018: This legislation aimed to streamline and improve the delivery of healthcare services to veterans by consolidating and expanding existing community care programs. It enhanced caregiver support, modernized VA healthcare infrastructure, and improved access to timely and quality care for veterans.
- 20** Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2019: This act authorized annual cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for veterans' disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) benefits. It ensured that these benefits kept pace with inflation and provided financial stability for disabled veterans and their survivors.
- 21** Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017: This act was designed to overhaul the appeals process for veterans' disability benefits claims within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). It aimed to streamline and expedite the appeals process, reducing the backlog of appeals and providing veterans with more options for appeal resolution.
- 22** VA MISSION Act of 2018: The VA MISSION Act aimed to improve veterans' access to healthcare by consolidating and expanding existing programs, including the Veterans Choice Program. It also expanded caregiver benefits, enhanced VA infrastructure, and addressed staffing shortages within the VA healthcare system.
- 23** Veterans Benefits and Transition Act of 2018: This act focused on improving transition assistance and employment services for veterans. It included provisions for increased access to educational and vocational training programs, as well as expanded employment assistance and job placement services.
- 24** Veterans Small Business Enhancement Act of 2018: This legislation aimed to support veteran-owned small businesses by expanding access to federal contracting opportunities. It provided resources and assistance to help veterans start, grow, and sustain their businesses, fostering economic empowerment within the veteran community.
- 25** Veterans and Servicemembers Employment Rights and Housing Act of 2018: This act focused on protecting the employment and housing rights of veterans and servicemembers, including protections against discrimination based on military service or status.

- 26** Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2019: This annual act ensures that veterans' disability compensation rates are adjusted to account for increases in the cost of living, helping to maintain the purchasing power of veterans' benefits over time.
- 27** Veterans' Access to Child Care Act of 2019: This act aimed to increase access to childcare services for veterans receiving VA healthcare services. It provided funding for VA medical centers to offer childcare assistance to eligible veterans, making it easier for them to access necessary medical care.
- 28** Women Veterans Health Care Accountability Act of 2019: This legislation aimed to improve healthcare services for women veterans by enhancing oversight and accountability within the VA healthcare system. It focused on addressing gaps in care and ensuring that women veterans receive timely, high-quality healthcare services.
- 29** Supporting Veterans in STEM Careers Act of 2019: This legislation aimed to promote and facilitate veterans' access to education and employment opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. It provided resources and support for veterans pursuing STEM education and careers.
- 30** Deborah Sampson Act of 2020: Named after a Revolutionary War veteran, this act addressed various issues facing women veterans, including gender-specific healthcare services, support for homeless women veterans, and improvements to VA outreach and support programs for women veterans.
- 31** Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020: This comprehensive legislation aimed to enhance healthcare and benefits services for veterans. It included provisions related to mental health care, suicide prevention, caregiver support, and VA infrastructure improvements.
- 32** Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2020: Similar to previous years, this act ensured that veterans' disability compensation rates were adjusted to keep pace with inflation and changes in the cost of living.
- 33** Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2021: Continuing the tradition, this act provided for an annual adjustment to veterans' disability compensation rates to maintain their purchasing power and financial stability.
- 34** Veterans' Access to Child Care Expansion Act of 2021: Building upon previous efforts, this act further expanded access to childcare services for veterans receiving VA healthcare, helping to remove barriers to healthcare access and improve veterans' overall well-being.
- 35** Fairness for Korean DMZ Veterans Act of 2021: This act addressed the unique challenges facing veterans who served in the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) by expanding eligibility for VA benefits and services to include veterans who served in this area during specified periods.
- 36** Veterans' Prostate Cancer Treatment and Research Act of 2021: This act focused on improving treatment options and research initiatives related to prostate cancer among veterans. It aimed to expand access to innovative treatments and enhance support for veterans affected by prostate cancer.

- 37** Veterans' Survivors Claims Processing Automation Act of 2021: This act aimed to streamline and expedite the claims processing system for survivors of deceased veterans. It leveraged automation and technology to improve efficiency and accuracy in processing survivor benefit claims.
- 38** VA Design-Build Construction Enhancement Act: This legislation aimed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of VA construction projects by expanding the use of design-build contracting methods. It sought to streamline the construction process and reduce costs while maintaining quality standards.
- 39** Veterans' Education and Transition Services for Students Act: This act focused on supporting veterans' transition from military service to civilian life by enhancing access to education and vocational training programs. It provided resources and support services to help veterans successfully transition to civilian careers.
- 40** VA Transparency & Trust Act of 2021: This act aimed to establish a trust fund to support veterans' programs and services, ensuring long-term funding stability for critical veterans' initiatives. It provided a dedicated funding source to sustain and expand essential programs and services for veterans.
- 41** Sgt. Ketchum Rural Veterans Mental Health Act of 2021: Named after a veteran who tragically died by suicide, this act focused on improving mental health services for rural veterans. It aimed to expand access to mental health care in rural areas and address barriers to care for veterans living in remote communities.
- 42** VA Employee Fairness Act of 2021: This legislation aimed to enhance protections for VA employees, including whistleblowers, and improve accountability within the VA workforce. It addressed issues related to employee rights, workplace culture, and disciplinary actions.
- 43** Charitable Equity for Veterans Act of 2021: This bill expands the deductibility of charitable contributions to all federally-chartered tax-exempt organizations serving current and former members of the Armed Forces.
- 44** Hire Veteran Health Heroes Act of 2021: This bill requires the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to consult with the Department of Defense to identify and refer members of the Armed Forces with health care occupations for employment with the VA during their separation from the Armed Forces. The VA must refer interested members to a recruiter for consideration of open positions in the member's specialty and geography of interest. Referrals must not be made earlier than one year before the member's separation from the Armed Forces.
- 45** Veteran Overmedication and Suicide Prevention Act of 2021: It demands to conduct an independent review of the deaths of certain veterans by suicide, and for other purposes.
- 46** Post-9/11 Veterans' Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2021: It aims to expand access of veterans to mental health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

- 47** Veterans' Affordable Housing Act of 2021: This legislation aimed to improve access to affordable housing for veterans by expanding housing assistance programs, providing incentives for affordable housing development, and addressing homelessness among veterans.
- 48** Veterans Burn Pit Exposure Recognition Act of 2022: This act aimed to recognize and address the health issues associated with exposure to burn pits and other environmental hazards during military service. It sought to improve healthcare and benefits for veterans affected by burn pit exposure.
- 49** Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Services Act of 2022: This legislation focused on enhancing economic opportunities and transition services for veterans, including access to education, job training, and employment assistance programs.
- 50** Vet CENTERS for Mental Health Act of 2023: It is aimed at enhancing mental health services for veterans by expanding and improving the operations of Vet Centers. These centers provide a wide range of mental health services, including counseling, outreach, and referral services, specifically tailored to meet the unique needs of veterans. The act allocates funding and resources to bolster the staffing, facilities, and outreach efforts of Vet Centers across the country, with the overarching goal of improving access to mental health care for veterans and promoting their overall well-being.
- 51** Veteran Education Empowerment Act of 2023: It aims to reauthorize and improve a grant program to assist institutions of higher education in establishing, maintaining, improving, and operating Student Veteran Centers.
- 52** Veterans Mental Health and Addiction Therapy Quality of Care Act of 2023: It requires a study on the quality of care difference between mental health and addiction therapy care provided by health care providers of the Department of Veterans Affairs compared to non-Department providers.
- 53** Veterans Mental and Behavioral Health Quality of Care Act of 2023: This bill requires the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to use an independent and objective outside organization to study the difference in the quality of care between behavioral and mental health care provided by VA providers and care provided by non-VA providers.
- 54** Veterans' Access to Child Care Act of 2024: This act aimed to improve access to childcare services for veterans, particularly those who are attending VA healthcare appointments or participating in job training or educational programs. It provided funding for childcare assistance programs and support services for veteran families.
- 55** VETERANS ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND TRANSITION ADMINISTRATION ACT of 2024: It establishes the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration responsible for the administration of the following VA programs: Vocational rehabilitation and employment programs; Educational assistance programs; Veterans' housing loan and related programs; The Transition Assistance Program; etc.

These laws and policies reflect the ongoing commitment of the United States government to support and honor its veterans, providing them with essential benefits and services to ensure their well-being and success after military service.

Building Bridges: Veteran Policy in the U.S. and Ukraine



ГОЛОВНА ОРГАНІЗАЦІЯ
ВІЛЬНІ ТА ВІРНІ



PolitiA

