



## MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

- ★ **Ensure community alignment:** Continue to pursue a public health approach that coordinates action from all government as well as public-private partnerships. Programs to help veterans address invisible wounds from service, including the Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program, Mission Daybreak, and the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide, should be sufficiently funded and aligned.
- ★ **Increase focus on opioid and substance use disorders:** Promote stronger care and coordination for opioid and substance use disorders, as well as co-occurring mental health disorders, by enhancing internal VA capacity, post-care planning, and referrals to community providers.
- ★ **Improve access to residential care:** Ensure that veterans in need of inpatient residential care can access it in a timely and efficient manner. VA case coordination services should promote efficient connection to VA and community-based resources when veterans are ready to enter treatment.
- ★ **Continue to leverage telehealth:** Connect more veterans to care by addressing issues such as broadband access, IT infrastructure, VA care access points, and interstate medical practice rules for community mental health providers.



## WOMEN VETERANS

- ★ **Promote access to gender-specific care:** Continue to improve accessibility and ubiquity of women's health care by increasing resources for essential services, adapting facility operations, and optimizing channels of care such as telehealth and the Community Care Network.
- ★ **Provide ongoing support and community for military to civilian transitions:** Ensure that Service members receive adequate preparation and support prior to separation. Strengthen community and mental health support during the first transition year to minimize challenges and help veterans navigate a successful transition with emphasis on peer connection, mentorship, professional networks, and streamlined connections to VA benefits and care.
- ★ **Improve care, benefits, and services for veterans affected by military sexual trauma (MST):** Enact greater coordination across government agencies and disciplines to improve awareness, access to benefits, and quality of care for MST survivors. Assist with oversight of new MST laws addressing peer support, claims processing, and medical examinations.



## FINANCIAL SECURITY

- ★ **Pass the Major Richard Star Act:** In 2004, Congress passed a law allowing military retirees with at least 20 years of service who are rated at least 50 percent disabled to collect their full DoD retired pay and their full VA disability compensation benefits with no offset. The Major Richard Star Act would allow veterans who were retired for combat-related injuries with under 20 years of service to do the same.
- ★ **Maximize the impact of VA's Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) program:** Pass legislation that would allow VR&E to operate at its highest potential and expand access to more disabled veterans. These improvements should include veteran-friendly policies for when the program can be used, transparency about eligibility determinations, and more consistent training for VR&E counselors.
- ★ **Modernize claims file access:** Improve the disability claims process by providing an easy and secure way for veterans to electronically request and receive their claims files by passing legislation to update current policies that require veterans to submit a request by mail or fax, or travel to a VA Regional Office to physically view their claims files.



## TOXIC EXPOSURE

- ★ **Ensure full PACT Act implementation:** Work with Congress and VA to support full implementation of the recently passed Honoring Our PACT Act, the WWP-championed toxic exposure law that represents the largest expansion of veterans' health care and benefits in decades.



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## BRAIN HEALTH

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- ★ **Expand research on Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI):** More can and should be known about the expected course of neurological and cognitive functioning after TBI and how veterans can rely on VA for long-term care and support. Committing to research and policies to identify and expand access to effective treatments and community-based supports are an effective step we can take now to better prepare for the future.
- ★ **Promote long-term care and support:** Support policies to promote the utilization and success of VA's long-term care programs for younger veterans, including those who have suffered TBIs in service.

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## CAREGIVERS

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- ★ **Monitor caregiver program eligibility and appeals:** Support the continued expansion of the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers to veterans of all generations. Continue to monitor program changes to ensure that veterans and caregivers in need of heightened support receive the resources and care they require to live healthy and fulfilling lives.
- ★ **Address caregiver needs:** Being a caregiver for a veteran often takes a toll on the caregiver's mental health. Advance policies to ensure that caregivers are provided with adequate services for mental health and wellness, as well as resources to ensure that they can support themselves should their caregiving roles change.
- ★ **Plan for financial future:** Many caregivers place their career ambitions on hold to support their loved ones and face long-term financial uncertainty, particularly into typical retirement age. Advance policies to help caregivers establish financial security as their caregiving roles evolve over time.



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## ENHANCED QUALITY OF LIFE

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- ★ **Increase support for rural veterans:** Improve the ability of rural veterans to access quality care and receive preventive care by improving access to broadband, increasing accessibility to quality community care, providing innovative health care delivery models, and decreasing IT burdens.
- ★ **Reduce healthcare disparities for underserved populations:** Ensure that underserved veterans have equitable access to care and preventive services by focusing on social determinants of health, reducing health care disparities, and improving outreach to underserved veterans.
- ★ **Encourage independent living and accessibility:** Remove barriers for warriors accessing adaptive recreational sports equipment through VA to help them improve their physical fitness and overall well-being. Support federal oversight of ADA compliance at state and local parks and recreational facilities to ensure accessibility for all warriors. Make air travel more accessible by supporting policies that improve the ability of veterans and other people with disabilities to travel on commercial airlines with dignity and safety.



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## DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS WORKFORCE & MODERNIZATION

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- ★ **Support VA workforce improvements:** Despite sustained efforts, VA continues to face a workforce shortage and high turnover rates, resulting in longer wait times and disjointed care for veterans. Support policies that allow VA to recruit and retain high-quality talent to improve veterans' experience at VA and improve health outcomes.
- ★ **Improve case coordination services:** While the number of Service members catastrophically injured in service has decreased in recent years, the needs of severely injured Service members and veterans have not diminished over time and will, in many cases, grow. Support policies to help these individuals navigate the health system and promote a broad community effort to address overlapping resources and nonuniform availability of federal, state, and local resources.
- ★ **Electronic health record and infrastructure modernization:** As VA's health system continues to care for millions of veterans and aspires to serve even more, its information systems and brick-and-mortar facilities must be fully optimized to deliver the best care possible. Congressional oversight of these processes is essential.