GOING HOME
HELPING VETERANS TRANSITION TO CIVILIAN LIFE

HOW WE REMEMBER:
State Veterans Memorials

WOMEN VETERANS:
Filling the Gap in Needed Services

Keeping Veterans’ Voices in Legislatures

“Our National Guard members bring more to the workplace in many cases than an employee that has never served in the military.”

Maryland Adjutant General
LINDA SINGH
CSG Congratulates
the 2015 Toll Fellows Class!

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Admin. Office of the Courts | Kentucky

Catherine Toll
Representative | Vermont

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Commissioner, Dept. of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services | Oklahoma

Applications

For the 2016 Toll Fellows Class will be accepted Oct. 1, 2015–April 1, 2016. The 2016 Toll Fellowship program will be held Aug. 26–31.

For more information, visit www.csg.org/TollFellows.
ON THE COVER
Maryland Adjutant General Linda L. Singh believes that the diverse capabilities, leadership skills and international experience that America’s service members bring to the workplace give employers a competitive advantage in the global market.

Photo Courtesy SSG Michael E. Davis Jr., Maryland National Guard

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Defending the U.S. against national security threats is the primary mission of the U.S. Department of Defense, but providing care to service members and their families is of equal importance. The Defense-State Liaison Office is reaching out to the states to help in this effort.

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We have a responsibility to those who have served—and continue to serve—in the military. Veterans need more than applause.

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42 VETERANS EMPLOYMENT
In honor of the sacrifices and service of American soldiers, several members of CSG’s Associates Program have undertaken programs to recruit, train and hire the brave men and women who defend our country every day. In the process, these companies have learned that hiring veterans isn’t just a way of doing good. It makes good business sense, too.

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Saluting State Leaders

With the busy legislative sessions coming to a close in many states, it’s time to begin gearing up for summer’s most memorable events—the Fourth of July holiday, perhaps a trip to the beach (or two) and, of course, CSG regional meetings. Here at CSG, we’re looking forward to several events during the summer.

Here’s what’s happening at CSG in July and August 2015.

1. CSG Announces the 2015 Toll Fellows Class.
   CSG started its summer by saluting 48 emerging state leaders from across the country. Members of the Henry Toll Fellowship Program Class of 2015 represent 33 states and Puerto Rico, with 35 representing the legislative branch, four serving in the judiciary and nine hailing from the executive. The class will come together Aug. 28–Sept. 2 in Lexington, Ky., for what is known as one of the nation’s premier leadership development programs for state officials.

2. CSG Regional Meetings
   The CSG Regions are gearing up for their annual meetings and we hope to see you there!
   - CSG Midwest: Midwestern Legislative Conference (MLC)—70th Annual Meeting
     July 12-15 | Bismarck, N.D.
   - CSG South: Southern Legislative Conference (SLC)—69th Annual Meeting
     July 18-22 | Savannah, Ga.
   - CSG West 68th Annual Meeting
     July 28-31 | Vail, Colo.
   - CSG East: Eastern Regional Conference (ERC)—55th Annual Meeting and Regional Policy Forum
     Aug. 16-19 | Wilmington, Del.

   The Council of State Governments will continue a long tradition of “sharing capitol ideas” with the publication of the 2015 edition of The Book of the States later this summer. The 2015 volume includes 150 in-depth tables, charts and figures illustrating state government operations. It also includes 29 articles from state leaders, innovative thinkers, noted scholars and CSG’s in-house policy experts on topics such as aligning postsecondary education with workforce needs, state finances, environmental bills of rights in state constitutions and the legality (or illegality) of ballot selfies in voting booths.

4. CSG on the Move.
   We’re moving … but not far. After several years of planning, our dream for a 21st century work space for CSG is nearing completion. The CSG headquarters building built by the Commonwealth of Kentucky in 1969 has undergone a massive renovation project that will provide the CSG staff with a dynamic and creative work environment in which to better identify and share capitol ideas with the states. We look forward to moving into our newly renovated space at the end of the summer and we hope you’ll stop by to see our beautiful location!

5. CSG to Release State Pathways to Prosperity Report.
   CSG’s National Task Force on Workforce Development and Education will soon publish its final report, “A Framework for State Policymakers: Developing Pathways to Ensure a Skilled Workforce for State Prosperity.” The framework offers policy options that aren’t always considered when states look at economic development, including military and veterans’ issues, criminal justice, hunger and nutrition, and children and youth. The framework was developed through CSG’s two-year State Pathways to Prosperity initiative, led by CSG’s 2014 National Chair, Senate Majority Leader Mark Norris of Tennessee, and CSG’s 2015 National Chair, Sen. Carl Marcellino of New York.
The idea that we would say to a veteran, ‘Thank you for your service to our country, but we don’t give a damn if you lose your SNAP benefit and can’t put food on the table’... is unconscionable.”

» U.S. Rep. Jim McGovern of Massachusetts, as quoted by Politico, discussing the potential expiration of SNAP benefits for some military veterans.

“I DON’T THINK THERE’S ANY OTHER DEMOGRAPHIC IN MY CONSTITUENCY THAT IS AS FRUSTRATED.”

» U.S. Rep. Tom Rice of South Carolina, as quoted by The State newspaper, during a May visit to a local veterans affairs clinic in Myrtle Beach.

The word veteran has a very male-dominated stigma associated with it. My dad’s a veteran. I think when people think of veterans, they automatically think of men first.”

» Commissioner Heather French Henry of the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs discussing Kentucky’s “Year of the Woman Veteran” initiative.

REMEMBER, SOLDIERS DON’T MAKE FOREIGN POLICY, THEY SERVE AMERICA.”

» Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary and veteran soldier John A. Scocos, as quoted by the Hudson Star-Observer.

Veterans are often the most highly skilled and well-trained workforce available. But for the lack of a certificate or degree, they could readily seize opportunities afforded by the emerging economy. Tennessee now embraces prior learning assessments which yield such credentials and help our vets connect more quickly.

» Tennessee Senate Majority Leader Mark Norris

Nothing should disturb us more than the continued high rate of homelessness among former service members.”

» Delaware Gov. Jack Markell at an American Legion event in May discussing Delaware’s commitment to end veteran homelessness.

WE NEED TO MAKE SURE EVERYONE IS SINGING FROM THE SAME HYMNAL.”

» Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper as quoted by The Gazette, referring to a recent report released by his office in response to the possible closure of military bases in Colorado.
HEALTHCARE COMPENSATION
The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reported in May that Pennsylvania hospitals are not being paid for much of the care they provide. A study found the state’s 171 general acute care hospitals provided $1.07 billion in uncompensated care during the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2014. It was a 2.2 percent—or $22 million—increase from the previous year.

INCOME TAX
The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in May that Maryland’s income tax law is unconstitutional because it does not provide a full tax credit to residents for income tax paid outside the state. According to The Washington Post, the court upheld a Maryland Court of Appeals ruling that said the state’s failure to offer credits on county income taxes resulted in double taxation for residents with out-of-state income.

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE
Vermont Gov. Peter Shumlin signed an assisted suicide bill in May during a ceremony at South Burlington’s Healthy Living Market, the Burlington Free Press reported. Certain provisions of a 2013 physician-assisted suicide law, such as a mandatory waiting period, were set to expire this summer but are now permanent.

WELFARE
Maine Gov. Paul LePage wants welfare benefits denied to people with felony drug convictions. According to the Portland Press Herald, LePage also wants applicants screened for substance abuse problems. The newspaper reported in May that civil liberties and social service organizations are concerned the bill could hurt the children of addicts—as well as recovering adults—and further stigmatize a population that struggles to find adequate treatment in Maine.

BAR EXAM
Next summer, New York will begin using the standard bar examination given in 15 other states. The state’s chief judge, Jonathan Lippman, told The New York Times that he expected the move to result in a “domino effect,” with the remaining states adopting the same examination because of New York’s prominence in the legal world.

Tobacco Enforcement Unit Fights Cigarette Bootlegging
The Connecticut Department of Revenue Services has established a tobacco enforcement unit to halt the trafficking of bootleg cigarettes from low-tax states into lucrative Northeast markets, according to an April story by the Associated Press. “Periodically, we’d bust somebody for sales out of a store,” said revenue Commissioner Kevin Sullivan. “But we’re equally confident that we really weren’t doing what other states like New York, Massachusetts and Rhode Island were doing in terms of actually interdicting the product before it ever got into anybody’s hands, before it got loaded out of a truck, before it got sold out of a back of a van.”

Connecticut had the fourth-highest cigarette taxes in the nation last year, according to the Tax Foundation. In 2013, it ranked No. 11 among the states in smuggled cigarettes. Neighboring states New York and Rhode Island are also top targets for cigarette smugglers—ranked first and fifth in the country, respectively.

Connecticut wants to stem an annual tax loss of nearly $60 million from cigarette bootlegging, said Patrick Bernardo, a former U.S. Postal Service inspection service official hired in November as program manager at the tax department’s enforcement unit. The unit will work closely with neighboring states through an I-95 working group to share law enforcement information in an effort to crack down on the illicit trade and trafficking of cigarettes.
**THE DRIVE SOUTH**

Volvo announced in May that the automaker would build its first North American manufacturing facility outside Charleston, S.C., reaffirming the South’s increasing dominance in the nation’s automobile manufacturing landscape. According to *The Post and Courier*, the company’s $500 million investment may create up to 2,000 jobs over the next 10 years and as many as 4,000 jobs by 2030.

**LOCAL CONTROL**

Texas Gov. Greg Abbot signed legislation in May that will pre-empt local efforts to regulate a wide variety of drilling-related activities. The governor declared a need to avoid a “patchwork of local regulations” that threaten oil and gas production, *The Texas Tribune* reported. The law attempts to clarify where local control ends and state law begins. The bill was the most prominent of several measures filed in response to the city of Denton’s November vote to ban hydraulic fracturing within city limits.

**SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam signed a bill that will give parents of severely disabled children more than $6,000 a year to spend on education therapies, *Education Week* reported. The funding has state and local backing and can be used for private school tuition, approved therapies and tutoring. The state board of education will promulgate rules and determine a list of approved vendors.

**PENSION LAWSUITS**

A recent Illinois Supreme Court decision striking down the state’s attempts to cut the pension benefits of state employees and retirees may have enormous implications for Louisiana, *The Times Picayune* reported. Both states have constitutional provisions that deem pensions to be contractual obligations that must be guaranteed. State Supreme Court decisions are not precedent setting elsewhere, but can inform precedent in states like Louisiana, where none has been set.

**FINDING DROPPOUTS**

A new law in Kentucky increasing the high school dropout age from 16 to 18 has school districts across the state contacting 16- and 17-year-old dropouts to notify them that they must obtain a GED by June 30, 2015, or return to school. The *Lexington Herald-Leader* reported in May that each school district in the state received a grant of $10,000 from the Kentucky Department of Education to implement the law.

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**ALABAMA GOVERNOR SIGNS CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORMS INTO LAW**

Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley signed a package of criminal justice reforms into law in May that could reduce the state’s prison population by roughly 4,200 prisoners over the next five years. According to AL.com, the state currently houses nearly 25,000 prison inmates in facilities designed to hold about 13,000.

The new law follows months of work by the state’s Prison Reform Task Force, comprised of state policymakers and practitioners. With assistance from The Council of State Governments’ Justice Center, the task force studied options for reducing the state’s prison population, containing growing corrections costs and reinvesting in strategies that bolster public safety, and drafted recommendations based on research and data analysis.

During the 2015 session, the Alabama Legislature overwhelmingly passed a collection of criminal justice reforms that were based on recommendations made by the task force. The reforms include reducing punishments for some nonviolent crimes and expanding diversion programs and programs to reduce recidivism.

“Im extremely proud of this legislation and what its potential is for our criminal justice system here in Alabama,” Bentley said at the bill signing ceremony in May.

According to Jefferson Dunn, commissioner of the Alabama Department of Corrections, the reforms will reduce recidivism among inmates and increase safety and security in facilities for staff and inmates alike.

“This legislation is as much about them and their working conditions as it is about the welfare of those who are in their custody,” said Dunn.

Implementation of the prison reforms is estimated to cost $26 million annually. While funding for the new law was not included in the House budget plan, amendments to the budget plan are anticipated to be made in the Senate. The new laws will take effect on Jan. 30, 2016, contingent upon funding by the legislature.
GAS TAX
State lawmakers in Nebraska overrode Gov. Pete Ricketts’ veto and approved in May an increase in the gas tax. The (Omaha) World-Herald reported that the gas tax would increase 1.5 cents on Jan. 1, and would increase an additional 1.5 cents every year until reaching a 6-cent increase. The state’s current gas tax of 25.6 cents per gallon hasn’t increased since 2008. The state, counties and cities will share the money generated from the increase—about $75 million per year—to use for repair and maintenance of bridges and roads.

DEATH PENALTY
Bipartisan legislation in the Ohio Senate seeks to prohibit the death penalty for people convicted of murder who have been diagnosed with a serious mental illness that impaired their ability to exercise rational judgment, follow the law or appreciate the nature of their crime. According to the (Cleveland) Plain Dealer, the law even would apply to individuals found competent to stand trial and those who did not meet the standard to be found not guilty by reason of insanity.

ROAD MAINTENANCE
Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder, the House and the Senate agreed in May to spend $400 million on the state’s crumbling roads in the 2015-16 budget year, according to the Detroit Free Press. The $50 million originally budgeted for film industry incentives are expected to be cut in half in the $54 billion fiscal plan, which will begin Oct. 1, in order to invest in infrastructure.

PRESCHOOL FUNDING
Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton vetoed an education funding bill that did not provide money for his top priority of universal pre-kindergarten, according to MPR News. Dayton had lobbied legislators to add spending for his pre-K plan for 4-year-olds. The legislature increased funding for education by $400 million over the next two years, including $60 million for early education, but it did not fund universal preschool.

ELECTION FRAUD
The Kansas House gave final approval in May for a bill that gives Secretary of State Kris Kobach and his successors the authority to prosecute alleged election fraud in criminal court, according to The Wichita Eagle. Senate Bill 34 grants Kobach power to bring cases against alleged illegal voters when local prosecutors do not. The bill also allows the attorney general to overrule a local prosecutor’s decision not to file criminal charges in election cases.

HOLOGRAMS PROMOTE SEAT BELT USE IN NORTH DAKOTA
North Dakota officials hope an educational tool using hologram technology will help drivers and passengers better understand the importance of wearing seat belts.

The hologram displays depict a rollover crash in which an unbelted driver is thrown from a pickup truck and lands several feet from the vehicle, The Dickinson Press reported in May. A projector creates 3-D images that viewers can walk around and see four different stages of the crash. A belted driver remains inside the truck.

The hologram displays are being used in driver’s education classes. According to Ashlee Doan, spokeswoman for the North Dakota Department of Transportation, the displays allow driver’s education instructors “just to kind of give a different perspective of the importance of wearing your seat belt.” The displays also will be used in other events across the state to educate citizens on the importance of buckling up.

The department has purchased four displays, which North Dakota Highway Patrol Lt. Tom Iverson said are more mobile and easier to use than the state’s rollover-crash simulator.

The rate of seat belt use in North Dakota was 81 percent last year, up from about 78 percent in 2013, according to the DOT and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. North Dakota is among 16 states that have not enacted a primary enforcement seat belt law that authorizes law enforcement to stop a driver solely for not wearing a seat belt.

State law enforcement officials hope the hologram displays help convince more North Dakotans to buckle up.

“Statistics show that it does make a difference, and more often than not it will save your life,” Iverson said.
UNSOLVED HOMICIDES
The Colorado Bureau of Investigation has distributed playing cards featuring photos of unsolved homicide victims in an attempt to get more information from the public. The Associated Press reported in April that the cards include a few details about each case and a phone number to contact police. There are 1,600 unresolved cases in Colorado, including 1,330 homicides.

TUITION
Tuition will soon increase for new undergraduates at the University of Arizona and Northern Arizona University, but not for current students in guaranteed-tuition plans, according to The Arizona Republic. At Arizona State University, in-state students will pay a one-time $320 surcharge for next year. The Arizona Board of Regents passed the increases, which were approved by Gov. Doug Ducey, to help make up for $99 million in state funding cuts to higher education.

TEACHER PAY
The Hawaii State Teachers Association, which represents 13,500 public school teachers, announced in April that it had reached an agreement with the state for increased salary and benefits for the remaining two years of the teachers’ current contracts. The Honolulu Star-Advertiser reported that the deal, which needs to be funded by the legislature, would give teachers lump-sum bonuses, a base salary increase and additional professional development hours.

HEALTHCARE MAP
California officials hope to create a “Google Maps for health” by combining patient information, clinical data and scientific know-how in order to better target therapies to patients. According to the San Francisco Business Times, Gov. Jerry Brown launched the California Initiative to Advance Precision Medicine, led by the University of California, with an initial $3 million commitment from the state. The initiative will cross-reference privacy-protected patient data across the UC healthcare system with clinical trial data as well as genomic, environmental, socioeconomic and health patterns, and mobile technologies, such as the Apple Watch.

TEACHING LICENSES
Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval signed a bill in May that will make it easier for immigrants with temporary legal status to get a Nevada teaching license, according to the Associated Press. Existing law allowed the state superintendent to give a teaching license to a noncitizen who has a work permit, but only when there is a teacher shortage for a subject the person can teach. The new law allows immigrants to get a teaching license when there is any kind of teacher shortage in a district.

MONTANA ADOPTS HIGHER SPEED LIMITS
The speed limit on Montana’s interstate highways will increase to 80 mph—up from 75 mph—the Billings Gazette reported. Montana Gov. Steve Bullock signed the speed limit increase into law in May. The law goes into effect Oct. 1.

Drivers also will face bigger fines if they violate the highway speed limit. Fines will double for drivers speeding up to 10 mph along interstates—from $20 to $40. Those speeding along the state’s highways will face a jump in fines from $40 to $70 for going 11–20 mph over the limit, from $70 to $120 for going 21–30 mph over the limit and from $100 to $200 for going more than 31 mph over the limit.

Col. Tom Butler, who leads the Montana Highway Patrol, said he doubts the higher limit will change how the patrol enforces the speed limit along the state’s highways and interstates. He said the circumstances of a traffic stop are left to the judgment of individual officers.

The limit will not change in every location. The speed limit will remain 65 mph through areas of more than 50,000 people and 70 mph on two-lane highways. The state transportation department will analyze which sections of the interstate system should maintain a lower speed limit, such as through mountain passes or canyons. The department will report its findings to the Transportation Commission, which will make final determinations on setting lower speed limits in recommended areas.

Idaho, Wyoming, South Dakota and Utah also have adopted an 80 mph speed limit on interstate highways.
With the winding down of the United States’ engagement in conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, communities across the country are welcoming home a new generation of veterans. And while this new generation of service members may look somewhat different from those who served in World War II, Vietnam and the Persian Gulf—including an increasing number of female and minority service members—the challenges they face remain very much the same. Unemployment. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The transition—of soldiers and their families—to life back at home. States are at the front lines of addressing these and many other needs. To our veterans and service members, and to the states that serve them, we salute you.

STATES SERVING VETERANS

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How States Can Help Veterans

by Katherine Barrett & Richard Greene

Returning veterans often have a difficult time transitioning to civilian life. Finding a job, obtaining educational benefits and getting housing can be a challenge.

Inspired by a patriotic loyalty toward veterans—combined with a desire to help foster economic development and limit the need for additional services to veterans—states across the country have undertaken efforts to address these challenges. Often, policymakers have dedicated resources to programs that ensure veterans receive the information and services they need for a smooth transition to civilian life.

In the past five years, in fact, at least 10 states have created a commission or task force to aid returning veterans. Sometimes, the solution to the difficulties veterans face is not one of creating new benefits or services, but is more in creating easier access to programs that already are available.

Agency coordination, strong community partnerships and outreach are all key components to successful state veterans’ programming. The kinds of programs that can help veterans find jobs and access the benefits that are due to them include the following, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures:
• Over the last five years all of the states have passed laws to help both veterans and active duty service members get necessary licenses and certifications for the jobs they are seeking.
• Tax credits are one of the most direct incentives states can provide to companies to get them to employ vets. At least 13 states provide them, according to the NCSL.
• It can be difficult to find direct matches between businesses looking for new employees and veterans with the necessary skills. As a result, some states are making the effort to communicate with employers about their needs. This allows them to guide their vets toward fruitful arenas.
• Helping veterans to pay in-state tuition in a variety of universities can ease their path to advanced education. The majority of states now waive residency requirements, so that vets can enroll in their universities, at in-state tuition, without having to live in-state for any period of time.

Unfortunately, it can be very difficult to measure the results of many of these programs, as effectiveness is typically gauged by outputs like the number of veterans reached. Though these can be useful indicators for some purposes, without actual results data it’s impossible to know whether a program has actually accomplished its goals. A 2013 Michigan audit, for example, indicated that the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency, “did not have a reasonable basis for assessing veteran service organization performance, for evaluating ... effectiveness, and ultimately for awarding future State grant funds.”

This has inspired the state to explore more evaluation efforts. Based on its new standards for performance reporting, Michigan will now report monthly about work accomplished, work to be accomplished and – perhaps most importantly – anticipated problems and notification of deviation from agreed-upon work plans.

In order to dig deeper into the ways that states are trying to assist with the economic plights of veterans, we took a deep look at three of the states that are undertaking particularly interesting initiatives to better serve veterans. We were aided in this effort by our research consultant, Aidan Davis. Brief reviews of these three states–Virginia, Utah and Michigan–follow:

Virginia

In 2010, former Gov. Bob McDonnell issued an executive order requiring the Virginia Department of Veterans Services to take steps to reduce veteran unemployment in the commonwealth.

Valuing Vets

Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden, spoke at the George W. Bush Institute at Southern Methodist University in 2014 during a summit on helping veterans transition back into civilian life. States are trying a variety of tactics to help former soldiers readjust after they leave the battlefield. © AP Photo / LM Otero

One of the first major discoveries was “there were a lot of services already in place to assist veterans in the state, but very few, if any, were dedicated to educating and training employers on what veterans can bring to the table,” said Andrew Schwartz, a program manager with the Virginia Department of Veterans Services.

A new program, dubbed the Virginia Values Veterans Program—or V3—was designed to fill that gap. The state developed a series of training programs, based on nationally recognized best practices, to show businesses how they could improve their performance by hiring vets.

More than 275 companies have been trained in these practices in the last 30 months and, “they realized that there’s a valuable talent pool out there that they had not previously tapped into,” Schwartz said. Participating companies have pledged to hire 11,700 veterans, and to date, some 9,000 of them have been hired.

This is the first state program of its kind, but several states have approached Virginia to learn from its experience. Schwartz said that state programs generally have been “focused on assisting the supply side of the equation (the veterans); this program focuses on the demand side of the equations (the employers and business community).”
Utah

Utah has long built its programs on a solid base of information. So, it’s not a surprise that the state’s policymakers are taking this tack for veterans programs. The key mission of Utah’s Coordination Services Bill, which was passed in 2013, is to work with state agencies to discover what various departments are doing to help veterans be successful and how well those programs are working.

Those efforts were expanded last October with the Utah Veterans Owned Business Partnership. This program focuses on veterans who want to or have already started a business, offering education about the services available to veterans to help them open their own company.

Cory Pearson, veteran services coordinator for the Utah Department of Veterans and Military Affairs, said the program aims to be the “career one-stop shop to get veterans where they want to go.”

Utah also is seeking to improve the educational attainment of veterans, a demographic that suffers from a high dropout rate from postsecondary educational institutions. Two statewide conferences were held in the last year to teach universities and their staff about veterans and resources available to help them.

Of course, it may not be easy to gather veterans in one place in order to educate them about the services for which they are eligible. With that understanding, the Department of Veterans and Military Affairs is taking its services right to vets with outreach specialists.

“(This kind of service) allows the department to become entrenched within the communities,” Pearson said. “This level of engagement and trust is important to veterans.”

These men and women offer a regional focus on benefits and claims, education and employment services.

“(This kind of service) allows the department to become entrenched within the communities,” Pearson said. “This level of engagement and trust is important to veterans.”

In 2014, the 12-member Military Affairs Commission was established and authorized to act for five years to provide recommendations to the legislature about issues like veterans’ employment, finances and health. Its predecessor, called the Veterans Task Force, only had a one-year term, which led to lack of continuity. Pearson said that this was “a great development because they no longer have to start fresh every year,” and that “anything discussed can now more easily move into legislation.”

“(This kind of service) allows the department to become entrenched within the communities,” Pearson said. “This level of engagement and trust is important to veterans.”

© AP Photo / Northwest Herald, Kyle Grillot
A 2013 report from the National Center for Veteran Analysis and Statistics showed that Michigan’s outreach to veterans was one of the five worst in the country, an improvement from 2010 when it ranked last among all 50 states. Even with the improvement, this wasn’t great news for Michigan, especially since the state has the 11th biggest veteran population in the country.

Since then, Gov. Rick Snyder has been pushing the state to take a look at the problem and find solutions. At the time, the state’s efforts to help veterans seemed like a jigsaw puzzle coming out of the box—many disjointed pieces, with a lot of work required put them together to form a full picture. Fourteen state departments and agencies had services for veterans, which meant that there were 14 different access points for veterans to solicit help within state government, alone.

And that was just the tip of the iceberg. It turned out that there were a total of some 450 private organizations targeting their resources at vets, as well, creating the commonly cited “sea of goodwill,” in which veterans could easily drown while searching for the right program or service to meet their unique needs.

In 2013, Snyder created the Veterans Affairs Agency, within the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. The larger department’s mission had been diffuse and included getting troops ready for combat. The new Veterans Affairs Agency brings the state a new laser focus on issues that affect the lives of veterans.

Jeff Barnes, director of the Michigan Veteran Affairs Agency, pointed with particular pride to two standout programs.

The first has been the Michigan Veteran Resource Service Center, which was launched in September 2014. It is a 24/7, 365-day hotline service designed to provide a “no wrong door” customer service experience to veterans and their family members. To date, there have been roughly 10,000 callers and 50,000 unique visitors to the Web portal.

In addition, in 2014, the state initiated the Veterans Action Team program in a couple of regions to create an integrated service network to help inspire cooperation among communities and offer the best combination of state, federal, philanthropic and nonprofit community resources. This includes those not necessarily designed for veterans, like the Red Cross or the United Way.

One overriding message that comes clear through observation of these three states is that it’s not necessarily the existence of any specific program that is the key to better lives for veterans. Often, it’s coordination and communication among all the potential players that matters, including the programs, the state, potential employers and veterans, themselves.
Hiring Veterans, One at a Time

Sitting in traffic, I was struck by what a tremendously decent person this is. How many times have you heard anyone say he worked to put a sibling through college? People work to put their children through college, not siblings. Then, after doing that, this quiet young man went to Iraq to defend his country. Following his time in the desert, he came back home with the modest assumption that a company would at least take a serious look at his resume.

That moment was when I understood that all most veterans want is a simple opportunity to work to build a new life when they take off the uniform. It isn’t really a complex concept. It’s now up to companies like Walmart to not only hire veterans but also drive national awareness that veterans make great employees and deserve the chance to transition back into civilian life with dignity and a paycheck.

Walmart announced in 2013 that it would hire 100,000 veterans over five years. The company also committed to guaranteeing a job offer to any veteran who had been honorably discharged from active duty in the past 12 months. Walmart is likely to hit that 100,000 mark in two years, rather than five. More than 8,000 of the nearly 100,000 men and women veterans the company has hired through this program already have been promoted.

With more than 1 million associates working in its U.S. stores, Walmart understands that not everyone leaving the service wants a career in retail, but everyone leaving the service deserves a job while they figure out what they want to do next.

With thousands of stores, logistics facilities and Sam’s Club locations spreading from Maine to California, Walmart’s primary need is for talent. A typical Walmart Supercenter manager oversees an operation with more than 300 associates and $80 million in annual sales. Feeding the talent pipeline is always a challenge.

The business case for hiring veterans is that veterans make great associates. At Walmart, we recognize veterans as high performing associates who understand how to manage large numbers of people and a complex supply chain. They also understand leadership and how to perform well under pressure.

As it undertook its commitment to hiring veterans, Walmart leaders learned a lot along the way. They worked to continue a program started several years earlier that guarantees a job in a new location to a Walmart associate whose active duty spouse is transferred.

Walmart put systems in place to have veteran associates hired through the program to mentor newly hired veterans. And Walmart hired Gary Profit, a dynamic, retired Army brigadier general who has been the company’s voice on the issue. Among other things, Gary has helped Walmart translate how specific military skills listed on a resume may convert to private sector employment.

Walmart also learned over time that employers can move the needle by keeping the issue visible both internally and externally. Walmart executives constantly talk about veteran hiring in speeches, at stakeholder events, on digital properties and at events across the country. The fact that Walmart hosts a large Veterans Day event is another reminder that the issue always has been a company priority.

While the hiring continues in stores, the Walmart Foundation announced in 2011 that it would grant $20 million to veterans’ causes by 2015. In 2014, the foundation committed another $20 million to be spent by 2019. This $40 million in much-needed funding goes to nonprofit organizations across the United States that are helping veterans with education, housing, employment and the transition back to civilian life.

Walmart approaches its foundation work differently than some companies. The company has a team of foundation experts who find programs that can make a difference, and they stay involved by tracking the outcomes of the work against larger goals defined by the foundation. Organizations like Goodwill and Swords to Plowshares are on the front line each day in dozens of cities using this money to help veterans find work. These organizations are helping brave men and women who, like the young man in the cab, merely want an opportunity to show what they can do.

When we finally made it through rush hour traffic and arrived at dinner that night in Washington, D.C., the young store manager trainee and the CEO of Walmart U.S. were making Marine vs. Navy jokes within five minutes of our arrival. Both the dinner and the event at the White House the next day went very well.

Veterans’ employment in the United States is certainly about large Walmart numbers like 100,000 hires or $40 million in foundation grants, but it’s also very much about a smaller number. It’s about one company giving an opportunity—and a chance to work—to one American veteran at a time.

Joe Quinn is senior director of public affairs and government relations for Walmart.

It was raining in Washington as the young Walmart store manager-in-training and I jumped into a cab. We were headed to meet a group of senior company executives for dinner to talk about a veterans event the next day at the White House. The trainee was nervous about sitting on stage at the White House and a little worried about feeling comfortable at the upcoming dinner.

To relax him, I made small talk and asked questions about his life. He quietly said, “After I finished high school, I worked for a few years to help put my sister through college, then I joined the Marines and went to Iraq. After about six years in the service, I got out and started job hunting. I sent more than 50 resumes out and wasn’t hearing from anyone. I was pretty discouraged. Finally, Walmart called and asked me to interview.”
Last year, the Department of Veterans Affairs reported its doctors had seen more than 270,000 veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars for potential post-traumatic stress disorder. This disorder, also known as PTSD, is one of the costliest disabilities in terms of medical services and disruption of lives for veterans and their families.

Experts believe that many more veterans probably suffer from PTSD. “Families look for the same person to come back from war—but they don’t,” said Dr. Gina Maiocco, a clinical associate professor of nursing at West Virginia University. Maiocco, a veteran herself, has studied veterans’ needs and founded an organization to work with female veterans on her campus.

Many veterans reintegrate into their communities with little trouble, she said, but for others the transition is more difficult. PTSD and depression may develop when veterans return to their civilian lives. “Most veterans don’t receive care through the VA,” Maiocco pointed out. “Instead the care comes from community providers.”

Several states are enacting new programs and legislation to help make that readjustment easier.

“Families look for the same person to come back from war—but they don’t.”

» Dr. Gina Maiocco, clinical associate professor of nursing, West Virginia University
West Virginia Veteran Surveys Lead to Action
As early as 2007, the West Virginia legislature started paying attention to its veteran population and funded a study of 1,000 returning veterans in the state.

“The West Virginia legislature was the only legislature in the country to conduct such an extensive survey,” according to West Virginia Delegate Barbara Fleischauer. “The survey indicated that symptoms of depression and/or PTSD were experienced by nearly 48 percent of those who responded.”

Five years later, a second study surveyed veterans of all ages, sampling 1,200 veterans and collecting 12 million data points, Fleischauer said. “The most critical finding was that about 20 percent of the surveyed veterans were at a clinically significant risk of suicide,” she said.

Inspired by the research findings, West Virginia passed legislation and helped secure funding in a number of areas. Laws in 2010 and 2013 required state colleges and universities to become more veteran friendly. In 2012, state licensing boards were required to take into account military service for licensure requirements. Social workers were added to the state Veterans Affairs budget to assist veterans and service members in obtaining mental health treatment in their communities and receiving other benefits to which they are entitled. In 2014, continuing education requirements for health care providers were changed to include training providers to ask if patients are veterans or related to veterans and to screen all patients for depression, PTSD, suicide and grief.

States Adopt Specialty Veterans’ Courts
A number of states around the country have established veterans’ courts to provide tailored services for veterans who find themselves involved with the justice system. Judges in these courts handle numerous veterans’ cases and are supported by multidisciplinary staff to better understand the issues a veteran may be struggling with—including substance abuse, PTSD and traumatic brain injury—according to Justice for Vets, an organization advocating for the development of veterans’ treatment courts.

The first veterans’ treatment court was founded in Buffalo, N.Y., in January 2008 by Judge Robert Russell after he noted an increase in the number of veterans appearing on his drug and mental health dockets. The latest data from Justice for Vets locates at least one jurisdiction with a veterans’ court in 36 states.

The idea quickly caught on in Texas, a state with large numbers of veterans. Texas adopted a law in 2009 authorizing the creation of veterans’ courts. Veterans are eligible if they have been arrested or charged with any misdemeanor or felony and suffer from a traumatic brain injury, PTSD, or other mental illness or disorder that is a result of military service in a combat zone or other hazardous area and affected the criminal conduct at issue.

A spokesperson in Gov. Greg Abbott’s office said there are at least 21 veterans’ courts in Texas, with a few more developing each year. Other judges may operate a veterans’ court without a specialty court designation.

Judge Brent A. Carr, who established a veterans’ court in 2009 in Tarrant County, summed up the philosophy of the court in a KERA News radio report.

“OK, Mr. and Ms. Veteran, we’re not here to say this is a free pass,” he said. “But because of your service, we’re going to give you an opportunity, but you’re going to have to carry the pack on your shoulder. We’re going to put you into the right direction. We’re going to give you the resources to be successful. If you finish this program, then you will have earned the right to have your good name restored.”

Carr’s veterans’ court has an 87 percent success-completion rate in diversion. Only five of 133 program participants have reoffended.

One key to the success of the veterans’ court is the unique experiences of a veteran are taken into consideration. Other veterans often are involved as court staff and service providers.

Maiocco said veterans are more likely to respond to other veterans who share some of their experiences. Time and understanding are important for veterans, she said, especially for one who seems to have mental health issues.

“Say thank you (for your service),” Maiocco said, “but take the time to hear their story—where they have been and where they want to go—to allow healing. Let them tell their story.”

In 2007, nearly half of West Virginia veterans surveyed experienced symptoms of depression and/or PTSD.
Moving Again?
Military Children’s Compact Helps Resolve Education Transitions

by John Matthews

“We’re moving again?!” July has arrived and another military family is on the move to their next duty station.

Children of military families face a great many challenges with each permanent change of station. They have to start over in a new town, make new friends and be the new kid at school yet again. Enrolling, attempting to transfer school credits from school to school and being placed into similar courses adds stress to the adjustment process. Until recently, getting credits transferred for classes already completed has been a huge struggle.

The average military student faces transition challenges more than twice during high school; most will attend six to nine different school systems from kindergarten to the 12th grade. The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children seeks to make transitions easier for the children of military families so they are afforded the same opportunities for educational success as other children and are not penalized or delayed in achieving their educational goals.

In August 2014, the Military Interstate Children’s Compact Commission—also known as MIC3—completed a journey that started in 2008, with the Compact being adopted by all 50 states and the District of Columbia. It was the second interstate compact to expand to all 50 states in 2014 and only the fourth in the past 50 years. The Interstate Compact—which was developed jointly by The Council of State Governments’ National Center for Interstate Compacts, the U.S. Department of Defense, numerous national associations, and federal and state officials—eases education transition issues faced by the children of active duty service members transferring between school districts and states.

Initial discussions about the Compact began in 2006 and drafting began early in 2007. It was first available for legislative consideration in 2008, meaning the Compact language was adopted in all 50 states and D.C. in just six legislative sessions.

“MIC3 is justifiably excited on the adoption milestone in all 50 states and extremely grateful to those members
of the individual state legislatures who made this possible,” said retired Brig. Gen. Steve Hogan, who serves as executive director of the Interstate Commission for Educational Opportunity for Military Children. “The impact of universal adoption on this effort cannot be underestimated, as it ensures interstate collaboration on education transition issues in every instance involving military changes of station. In this, the entire nation has shown its commitment to the military family, and it is truly awe inspiring to represent this commitment.”

While the Compact is not exhaustive in its coverage, it does address the key issues encountered by military families, including eligibility, enrollment, placement and graduation. The Compact provides for the uniform treatment of military children transferring between school districts and states.

As part of the agreement, the Military Interstate Children’s Compact Commission was established to administer the Compact and support families transferring between school districts.

“Before the Commission existed, there was not a common standard or practice to gain the information and navigate the nuances between local education agencies to address these transition issues of highly mobile military children,” Hogan said. “This Commission provides this resource, and is the agent of collaboration for assistance to military families.”

Since establishment of the MIC3 in 2008, the Interstate Compact has been utilized to resolve many education transition issues for military families. This impact is not just being seen by military families but by other members of the military and school officials.

“Had it not been for the direction and guidance of the MIC3 staff, we would not have known who to turn to in assisting our daughter in recognizing her educational accomplishments as we traveled from state to state,” said Col. Michael P. Hughes of the U.S. Air Force. “We’ll now work with the local county officials to ensure her school records accurately reflect her achievements and past accomplishments. Virginia’s implementing guidance of the charter goes a very long way in ensuring local school officials understand exactly what we’re talking about when we (as a military family) mention the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.”

While MIC3 headquarters receives calls and emails related to the Interstate Compact, many more issues are handled at the state and local levels by the state commissioners, state councils, school liaison officers and school administrators. For every person who knows of the Interstate Compact and how it can help, many more still are learning of its existence. We owe it to all the families that serve this great nation to continue resolving these issues.

For more information on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children or the Military Interstate Children’s Compact Commission, please visit the MIC3 website at www.mic3.net.

About the Author

W. John Matthews III is a program specialist with the Military Interstate Children’s Compact Commission, or MIC3. MIC3 is an affiliate of The Council of State Governments.
Deborah Sampson of Massachusetts dressed up as a man in 1782, took the name Robert Shurtleff and enlisted in America’s fledgling army. She fought side by side with men for more than a year during the Revolutionary War—even wounded in a skirmish—before being discovered and given an honorable discharge.

It’s much easier for women today to serve their country. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, there were more than 2 million women veterans in September 2014.

Although women now serve alongside men on the battlefield in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, there is one place where male and female soldiers may not be getting the same treatment. That place is after they return home and become veterans.

Differences

While men and women may share the same types of events in the military, how those events affect them can be quite different, said Joy Ilem, deputy national legislative director for Disabled American Veterans, an organization that provides services to and advocacy on behalf of veterans.

“The research that’s out there on women veterans and how they experience their military experience (shows that it) differs from men,” she said. “How they come back and integrate into the community is somewhat different.”

Last fall, Disabled American Veterans released a report looking at federal services provided for veterans by the departments of Defense, Labor and Veterans Affairs. The report said researchers “identified serious gaps in every aspect of the programs that serve women.”

“The majority of these deficiencies really resulted from just a disregard of the different needs of women veterans,” Ilem said. “There’s been this historic focus on programs for the men who have been prominent in the military, as veterans, in war time and in the public consciousness.”

The report found issues such as one-third of VA medical centers didn’t have a gynecologist. Programs to house homeless vets often cannot provide shelter for children. Women also seem to have a harder time translating their military experience into the civilian job market.

“I think that it’s a really important issue that needs to be addressed,” Ilem said. “States are very interested in wanting to provide services to their veterans. I think that the report can also translate into thinking about those programs and services (on the state level), … making sure that they’re really thinking about, is there some difference for women.”
Kentucky Spotlights Women

Kentucky’s Department of Veterans Affairs has named 2015 the Year of the Veteran Woman. The state also hired its first full-time women veterans coordinator in April, LuWanda Knuckles, who is a member of the Kentucky National Guard and has served in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

“This is just to highlight women and only women, because you don’t hear a lot about it,” Knuckles said. “There are tons of women over the seven branches that do wonderful things, but you don’t hear anything about that as often as you do with males.”

Margaret Plattner, Kentucky’s deputy commissioner for veterans affairs, said state officials are doing many things to reach women veterans. A women veterans’ committee is being formed to advise the department about issues female veterans face; regional support groups are being established and the department held a statewide women veterans’ conference that drew in 200 attendees.

“We just felt like we need to be paying more attention to our women veterans,” Plattner said. “They may be under-recognized and we want to be reaching out to them more aggressively.”

Home Base Iowa

Robert King, executive director of the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs, said his state is looking more at programs that benefit veterans overall.

Gov. Terry Branstad signed the Home Base Iowa Act last Memorial Day. It offers a variety of incentives for veterans, such as a tax exemption for military pensions, home ownership assistance and preferences for veterans in hiring practices. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation named Iowa as an All Vet State in 2014.

“I’ll be an advocate for any veterans as is applicable to the cause,” said King, “whether it be male, female, homeless, the disabled, whatever. If there is a cause that we can help support that makes life better for those veterans, we will get engaged.”

Virginia Stresses Communication

John L. Newby, commissioner of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services, said even identifying women veterans can be difficult. Virginia, with more than 107,000 female veterans, has the nation’s fourth-largest female veteran population.

“The difficulty is many women don’t view themselves as veterans,” Newby said. “If you ask them the question, are they a veteran, they may say no. If you ask them if they served, then they may say yes. … Many women and some men think that, ‘Well, I didn’t serve in combat, or I didn’t deploy.’

“Then it becomes incumbent on the state to get out and just broadcast what we have available for them and formulate our message, not necessarily directed at veterans, but to all who served. It tends to capture more people when you phrase it that way; ‘Did you serve?’”

Newby said Virginia is trying to position itself as a leader in women veterans’ issues. State officials are planning their third women veterans’ conference next year and a committee composed of the federal VA, VA medical center directors and Newby focused one of its regular meetings on women veterans.

“We, as state folks and policymakers, see the train coming down the track squarely,” he said. “We just want to position ourselves to make sure the word is getting out to female veterans that we are here for them and there are some services directed to them.

“This is not catching Virginia by surprise at all and I don’t think it’s catching many other states by surprise, either. The thing about it is, to know about it is one thing, to actively reach out to female veterans and say, ‘Hey, we’ve got your back,’ is a different thing.”


5 States with largest percentage of vets who are women

1. Alaska 13.9%
2. Virginia 13.7%
3. Maryland 13.2%
4. District of Columbia 13.1%
5. Georgia 12%

5 States with smallest percentage of vets who are women

1. West Virginia 6%
2. Iowa 6.5%
3. Vermont 6.7%
4. Massachusetts 6.9%
5. Minnesota 6.9%

... IT IS MY PASSION THAT FUELS ME’
MARYLAND’S ADJUTANT GENERAL SAYS NATIONAL GUARD IS CRITICAL STATE ASSET

by Carrie Abner

What are the two biggest challenges facing the men and women who serve in the National Guard today—both in Maryland and around the country?

“Personally, the biggest challenges are the balance between family and work, but professionally it is trying to work in a resource-constrained environment that is not always using our talents and skills to the maximum extent possible—which then leads to career development challenges.”

As someone who became a citizen soldier early in life—following difficulties in your youth that included periods of homelessness—what did the Guard mean to you then and today?

“Then, the (National) Guard was a job, a way to make ends meet, a necessity. But now it is my passion that fuels me. My passion for serving in a way that many of us take for granted.”

You are the first African American and the first female serving as Maryland’s adjutant general. With the number of women and minorities in leadership posts increasing, what changes do you see for the armed services?

“The biggest changes I see for the armed services is redefining how we see our greatest asset—our people and the capabilities they bring as part of being diverse. Ultimately, we will see more diversity at senior levels and we will be a better organization because of it. We will be better because we will look more like the people we serve and we will be more diverse in thought and ideas.”

How can states best maintain the National Guard’s preparedness to respond to any situation while relying primarily on citizen soldiers?

“The first (way) would be to maximize training opportunities that may be available, such as overseas training and exercises with other components to include our civilian agencies. While many don’t consider the requirements for these types of activities, there are many parallels that are similar—if not the same skills—that we would use to deploy to theater. It is all in the way you think about the various tasks and purpose.”
What skills did your military experience provide that helped in your civilian positions?

“First would be (my) leadership skills. While this may seem very basic, there is a distinct difference (between) being a manager and being a leader. It is clear that my leadership skills are a key differentiator. Second, global and international experience is critical when working for organizations that have a broad global client presence. This is especially important when linking the business understanding with the military experience in these environments.”

Employers don’t receive the same incentives for hiring members of the National Guard as they do for hiring veterans. How can states help encourage businesses to support National Guard employees?

“The best thing is to focus on the quality of the employee that the employer is getting. Our National Guard members bring more to the workplace in many cases than an employee that has never served in the military. Focusing on the diverse capability, leadership skills and the global experience that many of our personnel bring should be thought of as a competitive advantage for employers, as well as a business imperative for a diverse talent pool.”

How can state and federal leaders better serve veterans once their service is complete?

“The most important level of support is in transition—by helping veterans transition smoothly through good, integrated programs. There are so many great organizations that want to help, but the challenge for many is (identifying) which ones are best suited for the need of the specific veteran. The other area that is critical … (is) veteran benefits, such as education, health and other programs that can really improve the quality of life for our veterans.”

The U.S. Army has made significant reductions of troops and more may be on the horizon for 2016. What is the impact of this for National Guard forces?

“We need to remember that the National Guard is a component of the Army and Air Force, so we are also experiencing the effects of the reductions to the point that we see the lowest numbers for troop strength that I have ever seen in my career. This will have an impact across our force. The challenge for the (National) Guard is not only dealing with the force reduction, but (also) the steadily declining budget. Amidst all of this turbulence, the one thing that I feel very confident about is, the (National) Guard is still well trained, operationally ready, focused and prepared to do whatever mission comes our way.”

How does the Maryland National Guard’s participation in overseas operations and conflicts impact the state?

“During the height of the war, at any given time there was one-third or more of our force deployed. While it was tough, this never impacted our ability to support our state mission. The training for federal missions … (and) our state mission does overlap in many areas, but the most important item is that the (National) Guard is even better suited for their homeland mission because of overseas deployments. In my view, this should not be an either/or, but is necessary based on the roles that we fill abroad as part of our state partnership program, in a deployed environment and other missions.”

You have spoken about the need to protect your soldiers and airmen from risks such as sexual assault, mental illness and suicide. Why is this so important to you?

“First, it is important because as a leader, we have a responsibility to ensure that our service members can serve in an environment that is supportive of them and their needs, but also an environment that is safe. Over my career and life, I have experienced a wide variety of things, but the worst thing anyone can face is when the system that is supposed to be there to support you lets you down. It is important to me to ensure that I do whatever is within my power to ensure my soldiers and airmen get the support they need without them having to worry about whether they will be judged or punished.”

RESTORING ORDER

BALTIMORE—Maj. Gen. Linda Singh, adjutant general of Maryland, speaks alongside Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan during a press conference in front of the 5th Regiment Armory during Operation Baltimore Rally in April. Singh oversaw the deployment of more than 3,000 Maryland National Guard troops during the mission to restore peace and order to the city in response to protests following the death of Freddie Gray while in police custody.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Michael E. Davis Jr., Maryland National Guard Public Affairs Office
U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL
As of 2013, the U.S. military—including both active duty service branches and reserve forces—was 3.6 million strong, according to U.S. Department of Defense data. This number was down slightly from total military service members in 1995—with active duty services 9 percent smaller and selected reserves—consisting of the Army National Guard, Army Reserve, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve and the Coast Guard Reserve—down nearly 12 percent between 1995 and 2013. But certain sectors of the military, like female active duty officers and minority service members, are on the rise. Here's a look at who serves in today's U.S. armed services.
The U.S. active duty population is stationed throughout the world—from Iraq and Afghanistan to Germany and South Korea. More than 87 percent of the U.S. active duty force, however, is stationed within the United States and its territories. Here are the 5 states that had the highest active duty military populations in 2013. Combined, the active duty military populations of these states represented nearly half (49 percent) percent of the total active duty personnel stationed in the United States in 2013.

**FEMALE SERVICE MEMBERS**
Females comprise nearly 15 percent of the U.S. Department of Defense active duty force. While the proportion of active duty enlisted members who are females is slightly down in recent years—falling from 14.7 percent in 2000 to 14.5 percent in 2013—the percentage of active duty officers and select reserve members who are females has increased during this timeframe.

**AGE OF SERVICE MEMBERS**
While only 13 percent of all active duty officers are 25 years old or younger, young people comprise about half (49.4 percent) of all active duty enlisted service members. Overall, the majority of the U.S. military is comprised of people who are 30 years old or younger.

**TOP 5 STATES FOR ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY POPULATION (2013)**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Active Duty Population</th>
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<tr>
<td>California</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>125,477</td>
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<td>Texas</td>
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<td>104,942</td>
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<td>Georgia</td>
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It can be difficult for a member of the military or their family to vote while serving overseas. Luckily, both the federal and state governments are putting programs in place to help ensure military members’ voices are heard at the ballot box.

Matt Boehmer, director of the Federal Voting Assistance Program, has one message he likes to share with military service members, their families and civilians living overseas. “Don’t let your vote get lost in the transition shuffle,” he said.

The Federal Voting Assistance Program, also known as FVAP, is a U.S. Department of Defense agency that provides voting assistance to all military members, their families and U.S. citizens residing outside the United States. While there can be challenges for those living abroad to vote in U.S. elections, one of the biggest challenges facing active duty service members concerns their transition back to civilian life.

The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act covers active duty military members and their eligible family members who are absent from their voting jurisdiction. But once they separate from the military, they are no longer covered by the act and must register to vote locally. Transitions can be time consuming and stressful.

“From housing to job hunting, there is a lot to consider, and it’s easy to forget updating your voting status,” Boehmer said. “FVAP provides the tools and resources to vote absentee throughout their military service, and can provide them with the necessary information required to make voter registration part of your military-to-civilian transition.”

by Kamanzi Kalisa
State policymakers also are addressing the various challenges to ensure votes are counted for members of the military, including those in the National Guard and Reserve.

Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon is urging the state legislature to support a bill making it easier for members of the National Guard to vote. Minnesota election law provides special voting procedures for members of the military, but the definition of “military” excludes members of the National Guard when they are called to duty by the state. The bill would expand the definition to include members of the National Guard activated for state service and would allow them to use the special Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act procedures for voting.

“This bill would allow members of the National Guard to receive their ballot by email (which must be returned by mail) and reduce paperwork,” Simon said. “I am committed to making it easier to vote for all eligible Minnesotans, especially for those serving our country at home and overseas. We should always be working to find ways to reduce the barriers men and women protecting our country face when it comes to participating in our democracy.”

Ohio Secretary of State Jon Husted tried to make it easier for military members and their families with the Military Ready-to-Vote initiative, which created a ballot delivery and tracking system for U.S. military and overseas voters registered to vote in Ohio elections. This system makes it easy for service members and their families to receive ballots quickly and ensures they have all the tools necessary—regardless where they are in the world—to return their ballot by mail in time for it to count. Through the initiative’s website, ohiomilitaryvotes.com, overseas voters can access everything they need to participate in an election, from voter registration forms to absentee ballots. Voters can even sign up for email reminders about upcoming elections and track their ballots through the site.

So far, Ohio military and overseas voters have used this tool from 81 countries, four territories, 48 states, 86 Ohio counties and even seven Navy ships to request, submit and track their ballots in local, state and national elections. The Ohio Secretary of State’s office also maintains a military liaison department that specifically works with military members and their families to provide important voting information and solutions, as well as to collaborate with military groups and organizations to provide helpful information and reminders.

“Our service members shouldn’t miss any important deadlines, even when voting may not be on the forefront of their minds. Members of the military and their families should rest assured that their vote matters.”

—Ohio Secretary of State Jon Husted

Kimball Brace, president of the political consulting firm Election Data Services, is a nationally recognized expert on redistricting. Brace said if a military member reports living at base housing on their Census form, that person is counted at that location in the normal population counts.

“While base populations are accommodated in state redistricting efforts, as is any other piece of geography, some local jurisdictions may or may not include the numbers when they draw their local districts, dependent upon their own laws,” Brace said.

Since 1980, the U.S. Census Bureau also has made efforts to establish counts of military members and citizens living overseas. For the military members living overseas, their information is obtained from their “home of residence” information collected at the time of induction.

“The counts of military overseas are included in the numbers used to allocate the number of congressional districts given to each state for the apportionment process;” Brace said. “But, once a state starts the redistricting process, the overseas counts are not used to draw the districts.”
Making the transition between military service and civilian life can be a difficult challenge for service members. Many find themselves without a job or the means to support a family without returning to school to further their knowledge and skills. But making the move from a battlefield to a college campus can be a difficult, isolating experience for student veterans.

“The biggest challenge is the military/civilian cultural divide,” said Dawn McDaniel, a member of CSG’s Subcommittee on Veterans’ Concerns and president of Bravo/Delta Consulting, a firm that advises companies on how to help veterans assimilate. “Leaders and lawmakers must first fully understand the military culture before pathways can be identified and effective.”

According to the American Council on Education, more than 5 million post-9/11 service members are expected to transition out of the military by 2020. In its 2014 report, “Higher Ed Spotlight: Undergraduate Student Veterans,” the council found 4 percent of all undergraduates were student veterans, but that number is surging. Since the enactment of the post-9/11 GI Bill in 2008, more than $42 billion has been spent on educational services for veterans.

The University of Arizona saw a need to increase its services for student veterans and opened the Veterans Education and Transition Services Center, or VETS Center, in 2008. The center recorded a 31 percent increase in numbers of students accessing services from fall 2012 to fall 2013, when more than 10,000 recorded visits by student veterans occurred during that academic year.

The university opened a second VETS Center in 2014 at the Arizona Health Sciences Center. The first of its kind in the nation to open within a health sciences center, the center offers support for veterans who are pursuing careers in health care fields.

“The VETS Centers offer individualized service to improve the experience of all veterans attending the University of Arizona,” said Melissa Vito, senior vice president for student affairs and enrollment management, and vice provost for academic initiatives and student success. Vito was testifying before the U.S. House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs’ Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity in May 2014.

“We provide a step-by-step ‘in-processing’ or ‘on-boarding’ guidance for student veterans who are applying or have been recently admitted to the institution,” she said.

The University of Arizona also houses the Disability Resource Center, which provides transitional resources to student veterans. In 2008, the U.S. Department of Education provided the university with a congressionally directed grant to identify challenges to successful higher education experiences for student veterans.
student veterans with disabilities and support campus-based services to overcome those barriers. Vito said receiving that federal grant allowed the university to emerge as "a leader for disabled veterans in higher education, producing research-based best practices for use on college campuses."

To increase engagement with the traditional student population, the university received a grant in 2012 from the Paralyzed Veterans of America to design an adaptive athletics and college learning camp for student veterans with spinal cord injuries. Due to the success of the grant, UA received a second grant in 2014 to develop an education and wellness camp to increase access to and success in higher education for student veterans with physical disabilities.

Arizona also offers transitional courses to assist student veterans. The Supportive Education for Returning Veterans program is a set of three general education courses designed to ease the oftentimes-difficult transition from life in the armed forces to life on a college campus. The courses are compatible with the GI Bill and the curriculum helps ease the transition into college life and integrates military knowledge, skills and experiences into student veterans’ college programs. Courses teach resiliency and stress management, effective learning strategies for college courses and leadership to prepare student veterans for success.

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— Dawn McDaniel, president of Bravo/Delta consulting and a member of CSG’s Subcommittee on Veterans’ Concerns

“Each service member brings with them a unique military experience,” said Jan Del Signore, associate vice chancellor of military affairs for Florida-based Keiser University and board member of the National Association of Veteran Program Administrators, or NAVPA. “Supporting (student) veterans will help the student reach their academic goal of graduation, helping with their transition back to the civilian sector.”

NAVPA members include campus- and community-based administrators who implement Veterans Education Assistance Programs focused on education and opportunities for veterans.

As part of CSG’s State Pathways to Prosperity initiative, the CSG National Task Force on Workforce Development and Education developed state policy options to assist student veterans with degree completion. Those suggestions include:

• Accepting credit for military training, education and experience toward academic degree completion through the use of prior learning assessments or experiential credit for military and National Guard members.
• Directing institutions to increase transparency and protect veterans and National Guard members by disclosing policies on acceptance of credit for service and transfer of credit from other institutions for military members and their families.
• Directing institutions to provide flexibility in enrollment and priority registration for student veterans.
• Providing tax credits for public/private partnerships for veteran job and career advancement training and entrepreneurship.
• Ensuring institutions comply with federal law for offering in-state tuition for active, reserve veterans, National Guard members and their families.
• Reducing or waiving tuition for veterans who have exhausted their benefits.
• Offering a waiver of fees for professional certificates or licensure for veterans.

These and other policy options are highlighted in a soon-to-be-published report by the task force, “A Framework for State Policymakers: Developing Pathways to Ensure a Skilled Workforce for State Prosperity.” The framework also will offer policymakers opportunities to advance success in advocacy, identification of veterans, under-employment, entrepreneurship and challenges related to housing during transitions to civilian life.

“The subcommittee was passionate about veterans and took a comprehensive look at veteran and military family challenges and transition concerns,” McDaniel said. “As a result, I feel we have provided sound policy recommendations that will benefit both veteran/service members and states alike.”
Regional Defense Liaisons, Legislators Collaborate to Address Military Needs

by Col. Marcus Beauregard, retired

While defending the United States against threats to national security is the primary mission of the U.S. Department of Defense, providing care and assistance to assure the quality of life for service members and their families is of equal importance to achieving that mission. During the extended deployments of the previous decade, the Department of Defense, or DOD, recognized that some of the issues important to military families were more effectively dealt with by states, rather than the federal government. In short, the department recognized service members and their families need the help of the states where they reside to fully support their service.

The DOD created the Defense-State Liaison Office, or DSLO, in 2004 to educate state policymakers on the impact of state statutes and regulations on the lives of service members and their families. Charged with seeking policy changes to improve the well-being of service members and their families, the DSLO is working directly with the states on efforts such as assigning an identifier for military children in education data systems; standardizing relationships among local courts, agencies and military communities for child advocacy; providing out-of-state National Guard members with employment protections during state-sponsored activation; and allowing military family members...
to retain their earned priority for receiving Medicaid home and community care waivers.

The Defense-State Liaison Office is currently working on a list of 14 priority issues impacting the readiness of the armed forces, the well-being of service members and their families, and the transition of service members and their families out of military service. To accomplish these wide-ranging goals, DSLO placed eight liaisons in regions across the country who are working with state policymakers to address these key issues and build relationships with stakeholders. In addition to advocating for the members of the U.S. Armed Services, National Guard and Reserves, these liaisons serve as a critical resource to state lawmakers by identifying best practices from other states and providing information and testimony during hearings.

Over the past 11 years, the Defense-State Liaison Office has found that state policymakers take a keen interest in supporting service members, their families and the readiness of the force. Annually, DSLO supports more than 100 bill sponsors who have enacted an average of 81 bills each year for the past five years. These legislators and their staffs have provided invaluable assistance by drafting solutions that fulfill the requirements within their state structure, which DSLO has shared with other states as best practices. The net result has been innovative solutions to meet the unique needs of service members and their families.

Some of the Defense-State Liaison Office’s priority issues have received national attention, leading to the promulgation of federal legislation. For example, after 36 states already had approved changes, Congress passed legislation to provide service members and their families with access to in-state tuition rates for colleges and universities in the states where they were assigned. Similarly, modifications to state payday lending laws brought about the Military Lending Act, which gave the DOD the authority to draft regulations defining the credit to be limited by the law.

State initiatives, such as ensuring military service is not a sole determinant in child custody cases and improving absentee voter assistance, have been subjects of uniform laws as well as federal legislation. Other initiatives, such as license portability for military spouses and recognition of service training/education toward occupational licenses and academic degrees, have received White House support toward gaining state approval. To date, 49 states have taken action to improve license portability for military spouses and 50 states have improved obtaining licenses and academic degrees for recently separated service members.

“The changes made by state officials have reduced unintended barriers experienced by service members and their families and have improved the ability of both the DOD and state governments to provide collaborative solutions toward their well-being.”

Retired Col. Marcus Beauregard (USAF) is chief of the Department of Defense-State Liaison Office.

About the Author

Retired Col. Marcus Beauregard (USAF) is chief of the Department of Defense-State Liaison Office.

Time in Legislature: 11 years | Service Branch: U.S. Marine Corps
Rank: Colonel | Time in Military: 26 years

Washington state Rep. Jay Rodne thinks his time in the military has given him invaluable leadership experience. He has served in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Desert Storm and Operation Restore Hope in Somalia.

“Oh absolutely,” he said. “First and foremost, it’s given me a perspective that I think is unique. It’s given me the ability to deal with a broad diversity of issues with lots and lots of different people.

“Quite honestly, a lot of those interpersonal relationship skills are very applicable to legislative service. So much of what we do in the legislature is dependent on personal relationships. It’s dependent upon one’s ability to form relationships and to meet different needs of different individuals and different constituencies.”

Rodne said in Washington, there are only seven or eight veterans serving in the House. But, he said, he’s more worried about the lack of veterans in Congress.

“I think that is a significant concern at the federal level,” Rodne said. “You’ve got very few representatives and U.S. senators having served and yet they’re formulating policy and enacting legislation impacting the armed forces on a national level.”
South Carolina state Rep. James Smith said he thinks it’s important to have veterans of current conflicts bringing their ideas and perspectives to legislatures. He did a tour of duty in Afghanistan, where an improvised explosive device blew up his truck, costing him his hearing in his right ear.

“I’m very proud to be part of that community,” Smith said. “I do foresee a dwindling number of veterans in the general assembly. … When I first got there, (there were) a number of sitting legislators/active guardsmen. There were nearly a dozen that I can recall when I first arrived. Now we’re down to two.”

Smith said it’s important for all voices to be heard in the state capitol.

“They all bring their experiences to bear on the work that we do on behalf of the people we serve,” he said. “In the case of a veteran, I think there’s a very specific culture that is brought to bear, which is important.

“It’s a culture of service and commitment that gave everything, that brought to life our rights and protections and liberties. It is so fundamental, I think, to who we are as a nation, that I think it is absolutely critical we have a veterans’ perspective in the general assembly. All of this (in the state constitution) would be just mere words on a page if we didn’t have the men and women willing to give up everything to make them real.”

New Hampshire state Sen. Sharon Carson said she believes legislatures are losing something due to the shrinking number of veterans in their ranks.

“When I was first elected back in 2000,” she said, “there were a number of World War II vets that were serving in the (New Hampshire) legislature. In fact, one of my favorites was Rep. Alf Jacobson of New London, who was a survivor of Iwo Jima. And every year on the anniversary of the battle, he would get up and he would speak about his experiences, just to remind people of what he had gone through and things we should never forget.

“Since that time, the representative has passed on and those stories are slowly being forgotten. We need young veterans to get into the legislature here in New Hampshire.”

Carson said even though there are fewer veterans serving in state legislatures and Congress every year, she thinks the numbers soon will start picking up.

“We welcome our veterans home with open arms, but then you look at some of the bills that are coming through in Congress and a lot of vets are unhappy because they see the federal government trying to balance the budget on the backs of vets,” she said.

“I think slowly but surely, more and more veterans are going to start paying attention. I think they already are. I think there was just a lull and I really think these folks are going to start coming up to serve again.”

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New Hampshire State Sen. Sharon Carson

Time in Legislature: 15 years | Service Branch: U.S. Army, Retired
Rank: Sergeant First Class | Time in Military: 17 years

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South Carolina State Rep. James Smith

Time in Legislature: 19 years | Service Branch: U.S. Army
Rank: Captain | Time in Military: 19 years | Decorations: Purple Heart, Bronze Star

South Carolina state Rep. James Smith said he thinks it’s important to have veterans of current conflicts bringing their ideas and perspectives to legislatures. He did a tour of duty in Afghanistan, where an improvised explosive device blew up his truck, costing him his hearing in his right ear.

“I’m very proud to be part of that community,” Smith said. “I do foresee a dwindling number of veterans in the general assembly. … When I first got there, (there were) a number of sitting legislators/active guardsmen. There were nearly a dozen that I can recall when I first arrived. Now we’re down to two.”

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The U.S. is home to hundreds of memorials across the states dedicated to veterans who have served the country since revolutionary times. While some of these beautiful spaces are dedicated to specific wars, individual branches or special achievements, each seeks to help us remember and pay respect to those who have helped shape our nation.

We have chosen 12 unique and diverse memorials to showcase in this issue. However, we encourage you to make time to visit as many of these powerful and remarkable spaces as possible as you travel throughout the country.
STATE SOLDIERS’ AND SAILORS’ MONUMENT
Indianapolis A timeless symbol of the city, this monument towers 284.5 feet over downtown traffic, making it a mere 15 feet shorter than New York City’s Statue of Liberty.

© Smontgom65 | Dreamstime.com

VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK
Hudsonville, Mich. The park features six life-size statues that represent each branch of the military, as well as a military mother comforting her child.

© Bmosh99 | Dreamstime.com

PENNSYLVANIA VETERANS MEMORIAL
Annville, Pa. Housed at the Indiantown Gap National Cemetery, the memorial is designed to evoke “the ruins of a war-torn building centered in a land of solemnity.”

© Llmckinne | Dreamstime.com

NEW JERSEY KOREAN WAR MEMORIAL
Atlantic City, N.J. Standing at the intersection of Boardwalk and Park Place in historic Atlantic City, bronze statues represent those fighting, those wounded and those mourning their fallen comrades.

© Rorem | Dreamstime.com

VETERANS WAR MEMORIAL TOWER
Mount Greylock, Mass. Located in the Berkshire Mountains, the tower stands atop Mount Greylock, the highest geographic point in Massachusetts. The granite tower is topped with a glass globe that remains lit as a tribute to the state’s war veterans.

© Joyce Vincent | Dreamstime.com

KENTUCKY VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL
Frankfort, Ky. A giant sundial is inscribed with the names of 1,103 Kentuckians who gave their lives during the Vietnam War. The shadow of the sundial pointer falls over the name of each veteran on the anniversary of the veteran’s death.

© Endau | Dreamstime.com

VETERANS PLAZA
Memphis, Tenn. The centerpiece of the plaza is the “Doughboy” statue, which is composed of copper melted down from pennies donated by area children.

© Rickgranger | Dreamstime.com
The gleaming black granite of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial stands proudly on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. The memorial became known as "The Wall" shortly after it was built in 1982. Engraved there are the names of more than 58,000 Americans who laid down their lives during the Vietnam War.

I know a great deal about The Wall. In 1979, I decided that there should be a national memorial to those who served in Vietnam and that it should be engraved with the names of the fallen. I established the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. I had no money, no influence and absolutely no idea of what I was doing, yet in 1982, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was built and dedicated—a record unmatched in Washington, D.C., for speed in going from idea to reality. Building the right team and staying determined were critical components to its success.

Those of us who served in Vietnam were vilified upon our return. People were angry about the war and many took it out on returning service members. There are far too many stories about veterans being insulted at airports upon arriving home after a very tough year.

Less often told was something more hurtful—we had a tough time finding employment. A great example is Marsh Carter, a decorated Marine officer. He sent out hundreds of resumes without a single job interview. He finally caught a break, however, and eventually became the CEO of State Street Bank and, later, chairman of the New York Stock Exchange.

Many Vietnam veterans became successful in business and in government. Craig Venter was a medic in Vietnam who wondered why some patients survived while others did not. He later helped unravel the mystery of deoxyribonucleic acid, more commonly known as DNA. Fred Smith watched same day delivery as a Marine in Vietnam. Now his company, FedEx, is synonymous with efficiency.

You may have heard of Secretary of State John Kerry or former Georgia Sen. Max Cleland—both Vietnam veterans. Sen. John McCain and former Virginia Gov. Chuck Robb both served with distinction in Vietnam. The number of Vietnam veterans who became mayors, state assembly members and civil servants is staggering. Many are now retiring.
However, their impact on our country will be felt for years to come.

I believe we have a responsibility to those who served—and continue to serve—in the military. They need jobs. Those who served in and during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan need to be encouraged to participate in government. Why? Each soldier has been trained to make things happen through successful teamwork. Each knows the basic rule of showing up on time. They have been exposed to the military culture and its values. Service, duty, courage, honor and integrity are critical to the military, which remains a most trusted institution by the American public.

When my generation came back from Vietnam, it took a long time to get our lives together. Many of us endured injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD. Yet, we were more successful on average than those who avoided serving, despite our delayed entry into the workplace. Returning from Vietnam, I was determined to graduate college. I did it while working multiple jobs, including security guard, janitor and car wash attendant. I worked to earn a master’s degree in education, as well as a law degree.

I was given a couple of breaks here and there, and I remember them to this day. If you can give a break to a veteran, please do so. We owe them the chance to start their careers. The more veterans who can be persuaded to extend their public service by entering state government, the more dividends it will pay for our communities, our states and our nation.

One veteran who saw heavy combat in Afghanistan made an interesting comment to me recently. “Why do people stand up and applaud for us at baseball games? Don’t they know we need jobs more than applause?”

It’s nice to applaud and thank a veteran for their service. Let’s take it a step further. 

About the Author:

Jan C. Scruggs is the founder and president of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. A decorated veteran of Vietnam, having served in the 199th Light Infantry Brigade of the U.S. Army, he returned home and conceived the idea of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in 1979. The memorial is now one of the most visited memorials in Washington, D.C.
The following is an adaptation of a speech delivered in 2011 by Kansas Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley to the American Legion Boys State.

I participated in 11 Boys State sessions, including the year I was a Boys Stater, and was elected to Boys Nation in 1970. Founded in the 1930s by the American Legion, Boys and Girls State programs provide education to high school students with the ultimate goal of developing tomorrow’s political leaders today. Each participant in the program becomes part of the critical operation of local, county or state government. Students learn, through an intensive process, the duties and responsibilities we have as citizens as well as the privilege and honor of public service.

The Boys and Girls State experience is democracy in action. I believe my participation in Boys State and Boys Nation influenced me to successfully pursue my interest in politics and public service.

I know there are cynics who think that all politicians are crooks and dishonest.

But after spending nearly 40 years in the political and legislative process and starting out at an early age in that process, I still believe that public service is very important.

Too often, that cynicism overwhelms the political process and becomes the personal belief in people that there is nothing one man or one woman can do against the problems they face.

You hear it all the time: I don’t care. My one vote doesn’t count. Why should I get involved?

Let us never forget that many of the world’s great movements—of thought and action—have flowed from the dreams and work of a single person.

Thomas Jefferson proclaimed that all men are created equal. Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. Elizabeth Cady Stanton organized the first event of the women’s rights movement, the Seneca Falls Convention. Rosa Parks refused to take a seat in the back of the bus.

Another issue people face in regard to becoming involved in the political process is being afraid of rocking the boat. Few people are willing to brave the disapproval of their peers, the censure of their colleagues or the wrath of society.

I recently watched again the movie “To Kill a Mockingbird.” Perhaps you’ve seen it or read the book. Atticus Finch—a small-town, white lawyer—takes on the defense of Tom Robinson, a black man, in the alleged rape of a white woman. His moral courage in the face of ridicule and hatred from his peers in that racially divided southern town is a classic example of what I’m talking about.
Moral courage is a rarer characteristic of the human experience than bravery in battle or great intelligence. It was moral courage that led to the organized labor movement of the 1930s and 1940s, and to the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

Finally, people do not become involved in the political process because democracy is hard work—and very often thankless, hard work. There will always be the temptation to follow the easy paths of personal ambition and financial success. That is particularly true for those of us who enjoy the privilege of education.

“I’ve always believed that politics and public service are about making a difference in the lives of ordinary people. And it is about improving the quality of life for those who need our help, especially for our disabled and older citizens, our veterans who have given sacrifice so that we might live in a free society, and our children.”

— Kansas Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley

When I think of following the easy path, that famous phrase of John Kennedy comes to mind. It is a phrase that we’ve all heard before, but in my opinion it still means a lot. “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.”

Unfortunately, in today’s political climate there is more emphasis given to issues that divide us rather than those that unite us. Guns, abortion, gay marriage and many other controversial issues consume the headlines and the nightly news.

But, I’ve always believed that one of the reasons I’m involved in politics is to go beyond what I call the “wedge” issues—the issues that put a wedge between people.

I’ve always believed that politics and public service are about making a difference in the lives of ordinary people. And it is about improving the quality of life for those who need our help, especially for our disabled and older citizens, our veterans who have given sacrifice so that we might live in a free society, and our children. These are lessons that I learned through my experience at Boys State as a youth—lessons I carry with me to this day in the Kansas Senate.

Through the Boys and Girls State programs, the American Legion—the country’s largest wartime veterans service organization—continues to have a positive influence on our nation’s youth, preparing them to participate in the future in our political process, either as a voter or as a candidate for public office. While we look back at the sacrifices of our veterans and political leaders in years past, through this critical program, we are able to take a look forward to the bright leaders of tomorrow.
HOW CAN STATES POSITIVELY IMPACT THE LIVES OF VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES?

CONNECTING VETERANS

“With the enthusiastic support of Gov. Rick Scott, the cabinet and legislature, Florida provides award-winning, long-term health care through seven state veterans’ homes with more in the works. … Florida offers unique benefits, such as in-state tuition rates for veterans and their families using the Post-9/11 GI Bill, several layers of property tax exemptions, expanded veterans’ preference, and extensive benefits, licensure and fee waivers for many activities and occupations. Connecting veterans to their earned services and benefits, while expanding access to Florida’s network of medical centers, outpatient clinics, vet centers and national cemeteries, is critical to this endeavor.”

MIKE PRENDERGAST
Colonel, U.S. Army, retired
Executive Director, Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs

ADVOCACY AND HONEST ANSWERS

“Real advocacy based on trust, honesty and integrity is the greatest support a state can give. … States can and should integrate veterans and veteran-stakeholders by leading efforts that genuinely benefit veterans; connecting veterans to the right resources in the shortest amount of time; linking federal, nonprofit, provider and community services; continually educating communities about veteran-specific needs; preserving and promoting the legacy and purpose of military service; and being appropriately critical of programs that waste time, energy and resources. In order to do that, you have to truly listen to your veterans and give them straight, honest feedback in return. Veterans expect it and deserve it.”

ADRIA HORN
Director, Maine Bureau of Veterans’ Services
HOW CAN STATES POSITIVELY IMPACT THE LIVES OF VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES?

TRAINED EXPERTS

“States can positively impact the lives of our veterans and their families by ensuring they receive all the benefits they earned through service to our country. The federal government established numerous programs that enhance the quality of life and helps build a foundation for success. The biggest hurdle to the earned programs is application requirements. … The best place to start in each state is with the veteran service officer corps. These experts are highly trained and know the paths to take to ensure success. … The best way a state can serve those who have served is through a strong service officers corps and by servicing one veteran at a time.”

SUPPORTING VETERANS AND FAMILIES

“Our mission is to serve those who have served—including supporting our veterans’ families. We do this through the work of our veteran service officers, who bring in tens of millions of dollars annually in federal benefits for our veterans. We also oversee $306 million in GI Bill benefits and support over 220 nonprofits, agencies and activities through Illinois Veteran Cash Grants. We are helping to grow Illinois Joining Forces, a statewide, public-private network of organizations collaborating to help military, veterans and their families navigate the ‘sea of goodwill.’ Finally, at our veterans homes, we provide quality care for more than 900 aging veterans. We’re focused on improving the lives of our veterans—today, tomorrow and for generations to come.”

STATE-LEVEL COLLABORATION

“As a rule, states have a far greater impact on the lives of veterans and their families than does the federal government. Housing, health care, employment, education, law and other critical support happens in hometown America—more so than in the offices of our nation’s capital. … States serve as collaborators, convening national, state and local leadership to address service gaps. Nevada’s Gov. Brian Sandoval demonstrated this commitment through the creation of an Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs that brings together state agencies to develop policy recommendations and execute action plans that improve veterans’ lives. State-level collaboration is the key to veterans receiving the care their service has earned them.”

VERDIE BOWEN
Director, Alaska Office of Veterans Affairs

KATHERINE MILLER
Colonel, U.S. Army, retired
Director, Nevada Department of Veterans Services

ERICA JEFFRIES
Director, Illinois Department of Veterans’ Affairs

TRAINED EXPERTS

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straight talk
Members of the U.S. armed services sacrifice so much in the protection and defense of our country, but their return home from the battlefield can be challenging. For the nearly 600,000 unemployed veterans in 2014, the transition to civilian life was complicated by the struggle to find a job and earn a paycheck.

To honor the service of our soldiers, several members of CSG’s Associates Program have undertaken programs to recruit, train and hire the men and women who defend our country every day. In the process, these companies have learned that hiring veterans isn’t just a way to do good. With the unique skills and experiences they bring, hiring veterans makes good business sense, too.

**CSG ASSOCIATES HELP VETERANS FIND JOBS**

2,600+ veterans were hired by Amazon in 2014.
The Amazon Military Talent Partnership, a team of military recruiters including veterans from all branches of the armed forces, attended more than 70 recruiting events in 2014 to help veterans find jobs at Amazon.

10,000 veterans, reservists or National Guard members are employed by Bank of America.
10,000 more will be hired during the next few years.
Bank of America’s Military Support and Assistance Group includes 6,300 employees, 32 chapters, one in the United Kingdom.
1,700 homes have been donated to military support organizations.
$1 million has been raised in the bank’s 2014 Express Your Thanks campaign.
$14 million+ has been provided to military nonprofits since 2009.
2 million military and veteran households currently are served by Bank of America.
Bank of America’s Enterprise Military Benefits Unit helps active duty customers apply for Servicemembers Civil Relief Act benefits, answers their SCRA questions and services their SCRA-qualified products.
In 2014, UPS employees volunteered more than 40,000 service hours to veterans’ causes. UPS has committed to surpassing the 50,000 service hour mark by 2018.

UPS employs more than 25,000 veterans—7.5 percent of UPS’ domestic workforce—and supports more than 900 employees in active service.

UPS has committed to hiring 50,000 veterans by the end of 2018 as part of the White House’s groundbreaking Joining Forces Initiative.

The National Beer Wholesalers Association, in an April 2015 survey of membership, found 90 percent of respondents had at least one veteran on staff.

3,234 students who completed a degree through Bridgepoint Education in the 2014–15 academic year were either military or military family members.

Approximately 19,000 members of the military or their family members have completed degrees at Ashford University, operated by Bridgepoint Education, since 2005.

12,286, or 23.9 percent, of Ashford University’s current students are either military or their family members are military.

Between April 2013 and May 2015, U.S. Bank donated eight bank-owned homes to military service organizations, which in turn renovated the homes and donated them mortgage-free to wounded veterans and their families.

About 1,700 veterans work at U.S. Bank, including National Guard and Reserve members.

Approximately 1,500 veterans were hired by U.S. Bank between January 2012 and December 2014.
George C. Marshall’s impact on the 20th century is without parallel. What he did and how he did it are considerations that all Americans should know, revere and from which be inspired.

In the popular mind, Marshall is remembered as the man who lent his name to the Marshall Plan—more properly known as the European Recovery Program. This initiative helped stabilize and rebuild the war-shattered economies of Western Europe in the aftermath of World War II and also provided a bulwark against the further incursions of Soviet-style communism.

Marshall’s ability to survey the broad challenges of post-war Europe and devise an effective and all-encompassing strategy to deal with its multi-faceted challenges was unsurpassed. What is likely less well known today is that the same breadth and depth of vision Marshall brought to bear when approaching the situation he faced in post-war Europe was apparent throughout his long career, within the Army and without.

Marshall is one of very few leaders who made the transition from war to peace, from military leadership to civilian, in seamless fashion. Fewer still are those leaders whose achievements in war and in peace compete for primacy. As Army chief of staff under President Franklin Roosevelt, Marshall accomplished the astonishing feat of building, within just a few years, a military force of some 11 million men and women from an initial base of just 200,000. It would be these armed forces that would play a decisive role in the defeat of both Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany.

As secretary of state, a post he stepped into soon after he left a long and productive Army career, Marshall’s efforts to conceive and then to realize the Marshall Plan led to the victory in wartime being translated into the long-lasting victory in peace. Few indeed are the leaders who manage to move so effortlessly between those disparate realms and fewer still are those whose achievements are so substantial in both.

At the George C. Marshall Foundation, we spend a lot of time thinking about Marshall. Our latest endeavor is the Marshall Legacy Series, which explores the distinct and discreet aspects of Marshall’s long career to reveal those salient characteristics that served him so well. Its tagline sums up his genius and his achievements: Visionary in War and in Peace.

We define these characteristics in five words:

**Servant Leader**

by Rob Havers
1 Candor
Marshall was known for his willingness to speak honestly and responsibly. As an officer in the Army’s First Division in France in World War I, Marshall reminded General John J. “Black Jack” Pershing forcefully and repeatedly of the challenges his unit faced in preparation for combat. Marshall’s bluntness, far from earning him a rebuke, resulted in promotion to Pershing’s own staff. In WWII, Marshall challenged Roosevelt about his intention to build 10,000 airplanes, calling the idea a waste of resources and a strategic folly. Roosevelt, too, responded by repaying Marshall with his trust, naming him Army chief of staff and, in effect, making him a leader of the military buildup and the strategy for leading the war to follow.

2 Commitment
Marshall’s adherence to what he believed to be right was unwavering. He remained true to his commanding officers, whether civilian or military, and to his men. As secretary of state, Marshall was committed to rebuilding Europe—an unpopular idea, following a long and costly war for America, but necessary. He testified before Congressional committees and subcommittees nearly 100 times in order to gain passage of the European Recovery Act that enabled execution of the Marshall Plan.

3 Courage
Marshall’s courage was amply demonstrated across the world on countless occasions. From leading his men as a platoon commander in the Philippines to standing firm in negotiations with the Soviet foreign minister, his courage was unflinching. Marshall knew also of the need to be bold in speech and deed. His famous 11-minute address at Harvard introduced the idea for the Marshall Plan as what HAD to be done, not what COULD be done. He demonstrated the courage of his conviction to pursue not the popular path, but the right one.

4 Integrity
Marshall was known for his integrity. His frequent testimony to Congress during WWII helped calm the fears of the legislators and helped the American people believe victory would come. A former speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives said of Marshall, “He would speak the truth even if it hurt his own cause.” Marshall famously claimed never to have voted, believing that his calling—and that of any officer—must be beyond the reach and influence of partisan politics.

5 Selflessness
For all his modesty, Marshall also was an ambitious man and earnestly wished to be named the supreme allied commander overseeing Operation Overlord, the code name given to the D-Day invasion of Normandy in June 1945. He did not, however, lobby President Roosevelt for the role, instead asking only that the president make his decision based on what was best for the nation. Roosevelt selected General Dwight D. Eisenhower. Had Marshall been selfish in seeking the appointment to command, I would be writing from the George C. Marshall Presidential Library. That’s not the case, however; because of all the many strong leadership traits Marshall possessed, it was his selfless service that grounded him as the consummate servant leader.

For more information about the George C. Marshall Foundation, visit http://marshallfoundation.org/.

BUILDING PEACE
YALTA, Crimea—George Marshall was one of the delegates and world leaders who attended the first meeting of the Yalta Conference in 1945, during which the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union made plans for the shape of the post-World War II world. To the right, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt sits with U.S. Army Chief of Staff General George Marshall and U.S. Navy Admiral William Leahy. Marshall would be instrumental in creating what came to be known as the Marshall Plan, which helped stabilize and rebuild post-war Western Europe. (Copyright Bettmann/Corbis / AP Images)
AAPCA Report Reviews States’ Comments on Proposed Air Quality Regulations

The Association of Air Pollution Control Agencies, or AAPCA, released a new survey report in June, “State Environmental Agency Perspectives on Background Ozone & Regulatory Relief.” This report includes a review of all state environmental agency comments on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s proposed revision to National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ground-level ozone.

The results indicate a majority of state environmental agencies view background ozone as a potential challenge for implementing and achieving the proposed standards. While EPA has stated that there are “tools for air agencies to address exceedances of an ozone standard potentially caused by background ozone,” this survey found significant limitations and several common concerns with Clean Air Act tools designed to address exceptional events, international transport and rural transport areas.

EMAP Awards Accreditation to State and County Governments

The Emergency Management Accreditation Program announced in April the state and county governments, as well as other entities, which earned emergency management accreditation during the 2015 Spring EMAP Commission meeting in Denver.

Through an array of international, federal, state and local governments, as well as institutions of higher education, EMAP accreditation serves as a common link between vastly different professional emergency management programs.

The EMAP process evaluates emergency management programs on compliance with requirements that form the foundation of an emergency preparedness system. EMAP is the only accreditation process for emergency management programs.

For more information, visit www.emap.org.
//CSG Overseas Voting Working Groups Take on Technology, Policy Challenges

The Council of State Governments’ Overseas Voting Initiative convened meetings of its Policy and Technology Working Groups in Pensacola, Fla., in April. These meetings included time at the Naval Air Station Pensacola for the Working Group members to discuss military voting topics with the station’s commanding officer and voting assistance officer. In addition to the individual group meetings, the first ever joint meeting of the initiative’s Policy and Technology Working Groups was hosted at the office of Escambia County Supervisor of Elections, David Stafford.

//CSG Hosts Fifth Annual Transportation Leaders’ Policy Academy

Eight state legislators attended the Fifth Annual CSG Transportation Leaders Policy Academy May 11–13 in Washington, D.C. The group met with members of Congress and officials at the U.S. Department of Transportation, toured transportation projects in Northern Virginia, and received high-level briefings on the status and future of the federal-state-local partnership on transportation from a variety of stakeholders and experts. They also participated in activities around Infrastructure Week, for which CSG served as an affiliate organization.
JIM AND AMANDA BANKS
A Family of Service

For spouses of deployed military members, taking on the tasks of their loved ones while they’re away is a common reality. But for Amanda Banks, this role happened to include taking on her husband’s Indiana State Senate seat. Jim Banks was re-elected to the Indiana Senate in November 2014, two months after deploying to Afghanistan as a supply corps specialist for the Navy Reserve.

Rather than resigning his seat or leaving his constituents unrepresented, Banks invoked an obscure state statute that allows elected officials to be temporarily replaced during deployment. And, he said, the Senate leadership had someone in mind to take on the interim position—Banks’ wife, Amanda. At first she declined, but the idea grew on her. “The thing that put me over the top and made me make the decision to pursue it, I thought, was a chance for me to make a meaningful contribution while he was away,” she said. After applying, she was selected by a caucus of precinct committee officials tasked with appointing the interim position. For Jim Banks, who returned in May, supporting military members and their families will continue to be a priority of his legislative platform. “My wife is a shining example of the tens of thousands of military spouses who step up to the plate and do very difficult things while the other spouse is deployed in service to our country,” he said. “Our story is unique in that my wife stepped into the role of being a state senator, but overall our story is not unique in the sacrifices that military families make.”

Do you know someone in state government who deserves a shout out? Email Carrie Abner at cabner@csg.org.
WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU SOON!
COMING IN CAPITOL IDEAS’ NEXT ISSUE!

STEM Education Becomes STEAM

SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY ENGINEERING MATH

ART