

CONCERNED VETERANS FOR AMERICA

2020 POLICY AGENDA



PROVIDING FOR A STRONG NATIONAL DEFENSE WITH A BETTER FOREIGN POLICY

- **End “Endless Wars”**
The cost of war is high – in dollars spent, lives shattered, and service members who never return home. With this in mind, the president and Congress owe it to the American public and our troops to pursue a responsible foreign policy rooted in realism and restraint, engaging militarily only when there is a clear connection to our vital national interests and when a defined mission and end goal are in place. The United States has been at war for over eighteen years, despite the fact our original goals in Afghanistan and Syria have been achieved. The president and Congress should end these “endless wars” and bring our troops home.
- **Reenergize Constitutional War Powers**
Our Constitution’s framers knew American foreign policy was too important to centralize in one branch of government. Unfortunately, lawmakers have largely neglected their Article I responsibilities to authorize and oversee military actions. It is time to restore a proper Constitutional balance to our foreign policy decision making by encouraging Congress to take up a narrow and explicit authorizing role in individual troop deployments, secure better reporting on ongoing hostilities, and repeal outdated Authorizations for Use of Military Force (AUMF).

GUARANTEE THE CARE AND BENEFITS PROMISED TO OUR VETERANS

- **Ensure Proper Implementation of the VA MISSION Act**
Significant sections of this important law are in the early stages of implementation. In 2020, this includes expanding the Caregivers Program, developing pilot programs for the Center for Innovation for Care and Payment, increasing capacity for the new Community Care Network of providers, and beginning the multi-year asset and infrastructure review process. Congress should provide oversight and feedback during the drafting of regulations and after their effective date, to ensure the VA MISSION Act is implemented as intended.
- **Preserve Accountability and Civil Service Reforms**
The bipartisan VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017 gave the VA the resources and the authority to discipline employees found guilty of misconduct and to protect whistleblowers. Congress should protect civil service reforms that put veterans first and resist efforts to repeal or dilute core components.
- **Modernize and Improve VA Benefits and Eligibility Programs**
It has been too long since eligibility and the structure of disability benefits have been examined, but the veteran population has changed dramatically. After more than eighteen years of war, over 2.75 million troops have deployed to the Middle East and many are now using VA services. Despite this, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) does little to prioritize or distinguish between service-connected and nonservice-connected care. The president or Congress should establish an expert body or commission to propose reforms that ensure sustainable, accessible, and timely care and benefits are delivered to our veterans.

SECURING AMERICA’S FINANCIAL FUTURE

- **Restrain Federal Spending**
The greatest threat to America’s safety and future prosperity is our mounting national debt. Borrowing trillions of dollars makes our country less safe and threatens our ability to fund a strong national defense. Congress should slow the growth of discretionary spending by pursuing a BRAC, mitigating certain costs at the VA, examining the burden-sharing of our allies, stopping Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) budget gimmicks, and ending engagement in conflicts that are not critical to our national interest.