

*“Keeping faith with those who serve must
always be a core American value
and a cornerstone of American patriotism.
Because America’s commitment to its
servicemen and women begins at enlistment,
and it must never end.”*

BARACK OBAMA



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BARACK OBAMA'S PLAN
to
SUPPORT
VIRGINIA
MILITARY
FAMILIES



Thank you for your service to this nation. This pamphlet lays out Barack Obama's positions on military families and veterans and provides resources that may be useful for our military and veteran families.

Our military is built on families. Half of our troops are married. We know that our military families are enduring repeated and uncertain deployments. Spouses on the home front struggle with the loss of emotional support, increased household responsibilities, and real economic challenges. Many couples experience marital difficulties that get worse as deployments continue. Challenges continue after troops come home, when married couples try to pick up where they left off, and service members struggle to reintegrate to life at home. Barack Obama understands that active-duty troops decide whether to re-enlist based largely on how their families are faring. That is why he is committed to investing in services to support them. Barack Obama also understands that our sacred trust with our military families does not end when they leave uniform, which is why he has pledged to build a 21st century Department of Veterans Affairs.

ACTIVE-DUTY FAMILIES

Create a Military Families Advisory Board

Obama will create a Military Families Advisory Board of experts and family representatives to identify and develop actionable policies to ease the burden on spouses and families.

Support Family Readiness Groups

Family Readiness Groups are networks of volunteer spouses who offer day care, legal help and counseling to other spouses. In 2005 alone, Army volunteers logged 632,897 hours of service. Obama will provide better support for these networks, including services and training and paid support staff.

Work to Bring Pay Parity

Military pay has lagged behind civilian wages. As president, Obama will make military pay more in line with that of the private sector. Estimates of this pay gap range from 7 percent to 15 percent.

End Stop Loss

Barack Obama will end the policies that allow a service person to be forced to remain on active duty after his or her enlistment has expired.

Establish Regularity in Deployments

Obama supports plans to increase the size of the Army by 65,000 troops and the Marines by 27,000 troops to allow units to retrain and re-equip properly between deployments and decrease the strain on military families.

Care for Our Wounded Warriors

Obama led a bipartisan effort to remedy both the immediate and more systematic shortcomings that led to deplorable conditions at hospitals like Walter Reed. The Senate passed legislation based on several Obama proposals to improve medical outpatient facilities, slash red tape, reform the disability review process, strengthen mental health care support, and add needed healthcare benefits for family members. The Senate also passed legislation to provide these family members with a year of job protection so they don't have to choose between caring for a loved one and keeping their jobs.

Improve Mental Health Treatment

Service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan are coming home with record levels of combat stress, but our military and VA medical systems are not adequately providing for them. Obama will improve mental health care at every stage of military service:

- **RECRUITMENT:** Recruiting more mental health professionals; improving screening; and guaranteeing that if the military determines on the front end that an individual is fit to serve, that person will not be denied benefits later because of a "preexisting" condition.
- **ACTIVE DUTY:** Placing more mental health professionals with troops as they train, deploy, and return; fighting the stigma of psychological injury; and offering more counseling to family members.
- **RETURN TO CIVILIAN LIFE:** Requiring individual post-deployment mental health screenings; recruiting more VA mental health professionals; making PTSD benefits claims fairer; and expanding Vet Centers in rural areas.

GUARD/RESERVE FAMILIES

Help Military Spouses Cope with Deployments: When guardsmen or reservists are activated, their spouses have to make a tremendous transition to balance work and family obligations. Obama would extend job protection for their spouses to allow them to take time off work to care for family and get their affairs in order.

Let Our Reservists Train and Rest Between Deployments: Uncertain and repeated deployments have strained Guard and Reserve families. Obama would ease this deployment tempo by beginning an immediate redeployment of troops from Iraq and increasing the size of the military. This will allow units to retrain properly and decrease the strain on military families.

Fight Guard/Reserve Employment Discrimination: Federal law protects guardsmen and reservists from job discrimination, but the process is ineffective. A complaint can take months to resolve, leaving veterans vulnerable. Obama will invest additional resources into enforcement and investigation in order to crack down on employers who are not following the letter and spirit of the law.

VETERAN FAMILIES

Ensure a Seamless Transition: Obama will demand that the military and the VA coordinate to provide a truly seamless transition for servicemembers from active duty to civilian life. His administration appointees to the DOD and VA would place veterans at the center of all care and recovery plans.

Expand Vet Centers: Vet Centers provide vets and their families mental health care, substance abuse counseling, vocational and employment assistance, VA benefits information, and social services. Obama will expand and strengthen Vet Centers.

Update GI Bill: Obama has been a long-time supporter of the bipartisan legislation signed into law in June 2008 to update GI Bill benefits. It will cover tuition up to the cost of the most expensive in-state public school, plus a monthly housing stipend and additional benefits. The bill enables transfer of education benefits to spouses or children.

Fully Fund VA Medical Care: Veterans face delays and long wait times in seeking VA health care appointments. Obama will fully fund VA healthcare so it can serve the veterans who need it, when they need it.

Make the VA a Leading Edge of National Health Reform: Obama will make the VA a leader of national health care reform so that veterans get the best care possible. This includes efforts to improve electronic records interoperability, expand effectiveness research, promote wellness programs, and instill more accountability for performance.

Strengthen VA Specialty Care: Obama will expand specialty care within the VA, including additional polytrauma centers as well as centers of excellence for Traumatic Brain Injury, PTSD, vision impairment, prosthetics, spinal cord injury, aging, women's health, and other specialized rehabilitative care.

Reduce the Claims Backlog: There are more than 840,000 claims pending at the VA. Obama will hire additional claims workers and ensure adequate training and accountability for each claims adjudicator so VA benefit decisions are rated fairly and consistently.

RESOURCES FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

As president, Barack Obama will work to increase the support you receive. However, there are many services already available to you:

Military-Wide

MILITARY ONESOURCE
Department of Defense (DoD)
website links.
www.militaryonesource.com

MILITARY HOMEFRONT
Military family support services.
www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/

MILSPOUSE.ORG
Spouse employment, education, and relocation information.
www.milspouse.org/

MILITARY SPOUSE CAREER CENTER
www.military.com/spouse

Branch-Specific

NAVY LIFELINES
www.lifelines.navy.mil/lifelines/index.htm

MY ARMY LIFE, TOO
www.Myarmylifetoo.com

MARINE CORPS FAMILY TEAM BUILDING
www.mccssc.com/mcftb/index.html

AIR FORCE CROSSROADS
www.afcrossroads.com/?site=redirect

Military Family Support Centers

PENTAGON
(202) 782-6563
pentagon.afis.osd.mil

LANGLEY AIR FORCE BASE
(757) 764-3990
www.langley.af.mil

FORT A.P. HILL
(703) 805-3413
www.aphill.army.mil

FORT BELVOIR
(703) 805-4590
www.belvoir.army.mil

FORT MONROE
(757) 788-3878
www.monroe.army.mil

FORT STORY
(757) 422-7311
www.eustis.army.mil/Fort_story

MARINE CORPS BASE QUANTICO
(703) 784-2659
www.quantico.usmc.mil

LITTLE CREEK NAVAL AMPHIBIOUS BASE
(757) 462-7563
cnic.navy.mil/littlecreek

NAVAL STATION NORFOLK
(757) 444-2102
cnic.navy.mil/norfolksta

NAVAL AIR STATION OCEANA
(757) 433-2912
www.cnic.navy.mil/oceana

NAVAL WEAPONS SUPPORT FACILITY YORKTOWN
(757) 887-4606
www.cnic.navy.mil/yorktown

Outside Organizations

MILITARY SENTINEL: Designed for military families to report fraud & abuse.
www.consumer.gov/military/

MILITARY SPOUSE JOB SEARCH:
www.militaryspousejobsearch.org/msjs/app/

GIVE AN HOUR:
Free mental health professionals.
www.giveanhour.org

RESOURCES FOR VETERAN FAMILIES

VA MEDICAL CENTERS
Hampton: (757) 722-9961
Richmond: (804) 675-5000
Salem: (540) 982-2463

OUTPATIENTS CLINIC
Saltville: (276) 496-4433
Tazewell: (276) 988-2526
Alexandria: (703) 313-0694
Danville: (434) 710-4210
Fredericksburg: (540) 370-4468
Harrisonburg: (540) 442-1773
Hillsville: (276) 779-4220
Stephens City: (540) 869-0600
Virginia Beach: (757) 726-6070

VETS CENTER
Alexandria: (703) 360-8633
Norfolk: (757) 623-7584
Richmond: (804) 353-8958
Roanoke: (540) 342-9726

VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION
ROANOKE REGIONAL OFFICE
210 Franklin Rd., SW
Roanoke, VA 24011
1-800-827-1000

US DEPARTMENT OF LABOR – VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICES
(804) 786-7270
www.dol.gov/vets

AMERICAN LEGION
(804) 353-6606
www.valegion.org

AMVETS, DEPARTMENT OF VIRGINIA
(757) 587-4818
www.geocities.com/amvets_va

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
(540) 206-2575
www.virginiadav.org

PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA
(804) 378-0017
www.vamapva.com

UNITED SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS
(757) 788-4984
www.usohr.com

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
(540) 886-8112
www.geocities.com/amvets_va