

ALL VOLUNTEER FORCE

FROM MILITARY TO CIVILIAN SERVICE



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Foreword by The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen

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“As we consider the role that unfolds before us, we remember with humble gratitude those brave Americans who at this very hour patrol the far-off deserts and distant mountains. They have something to tell us, just as the fallen heroes who lie in Arlington whisper through the ages. We honor them not only because they are the guardians of our liberty, but because they embody the spirit of service; a willingness to find meaning in something greater than themselves.”

—President Barack Obama
Inaugural Address, January 20, 2009

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The views reflected in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Target or the Case Foundation.

“ Recognize our
usefulness. We are not
charity cases. We are
an American asset. ”

—A veteran from Iraq and Afghanistan

This report is dedicated to
William F. Welch and
Colonel Patrick Martin Fallon
and to the millions of veterans
who have served and continue to
serve our nation.

FOREWORD

This new study, “All Volunteer Force,” reveals in many ways what I have come to see for myself all over the world: the men and women of the United States armed forces are without question the most seasoned and most dedicated cadre of military professionals this or any other nation has ever produced. We are, after eight long years of war, creating not just a new generation of veterans, but a new generation of leaders.

Our troops are being shaped by their combat experience. How they lead will depend on how well we listen to them, how well we learn from what they have to teach us, and how well we care for them and their families. This report is evidence that veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan are ready to reconnect to their communities; they just don’t have access to or knowledge of all the pathways to do so.

All of us in leadership positions — from across the interagency — must do a better job ensuring those pathways exist and remain open. We must help veterans find meaningful service and employment opportunities when they return home. We must help their families deal with the myriad challenges of re-integration. For those acting as caregivers to our wounded, we must ensure they have at their disposal all the tools and the training and emotional support to best support their loved one. And for the surviving family members of our fallen, we can never let them forget that we will never forget their loss.

But it is also vital that communities across the country get involved and reach out to these returning warriors, survivors and families. The bureaucracy can lay out the vision and put the resources behind it, but only through local communities — with real people willing to lend a hand, people who know our veterans — can the vision become a reality.

I like to call this the “Sea of Goodwill,” and I know that sea is wide and deep in our country.

Our young troops and their families have done everything their country has asked of them. Their lives have been changed forever by war, but their dreams haven’t changed at all. They want to raise their children, own a home, go to school, find work and even find new ways to contribute. Most of all, they want to be good citizens. They want to reconnect and renew their relationship to their local communities.

Let us ensure each of them has ample opportunities to do so. We will have a stronger generation of veterans and a stronger nation for it.

— Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen

INTRODUCTION

The dawn of a new century found our nation at war in Afghanistan and Iraq in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on 9/11. Nearly two million Americans have now served in these wars, risking their lives to protect our country and preserve our freedoms.¹ Their service is not mandated by government, but is a voluntary act of courage, conscience, and commitment. These servicemen and women join the ranks of approximately 45 million Americans before them who have served in America's wars from the War for Independence to the present day.² They reflect the ethic of the inspirational Founding Father and pamphleteer, Thomas Paine, whose words inspired a citizen movement for independence and prompted more Americans to take up their muskets to serve — "if there be trouble, let it be in my day, so that my children may have peace." This ethic of service echoes down the ages as a sergeant who lost his leg and was being airlifted out of Kandahar, Afghanistan in 2003 repeated the words of Nathan Hale — that he regretted he had but one life to give for his country.³ When Americans think of service to country, they first think of our nation's veterans.

How our nation treats its returning veterans says a lot about our gratitude for their service and the respect we have for the sacrifices they have made and the skills they have acquired. Rightfully so, much attention has been paid to the mental and physical health, employment status, and family situation of veterans returning from Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), the U.S. Government's designations for the war in Afghanistan and the war in Iraq, respectively. Veterans are a vulnerable population, especially during the transition home.

It has been well documented that many OIF/OEF veterans face significant mental and physical health challenges. For veterans between the ages of 20 and 24, their suicide rate is estimated to be between two and four times higher than civilians the same age.⁴ At this rate the number of suicides among OIF/OEF veterans may exceed their combat death toll, a statistic that cries out for both increased mental health care for our veterans and proven interventions like meaningful service opportunities that increase happiness and well-being, hopefulness and purpose.⁵

It is estimated that almost 3,000 OIF/OEF veterans have sought assistance from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or National Coalition for Homeless Veterans agencies for homelessness.⁶ Given the age of these current veterans, these early numbers do not bode well for the future. The unemployment rate for veterans who have served in the military since September 2001 outpaces the adult unemployment rate, jumping to 11.3 percent in August 2009, up from 9.8 percent the month before, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.⁷ Volunteering

provides veterans with an opportunity to hone skills, or to develop new skills, as well as networking opportunities that can assist in finding paid employment.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness estimates that among 1 million veterans who have served in the military since 9/11, nearly 72,000 are paying more than half of their incomes in rent, instead of building equity in homes.⁸ According to the Defense Commissary Agency, military members and their families redeemed food stamps last year at nearly twice the civilian rate. More than \$31 million worth of food stamps were used at commissaries nationwide in 2008 — an increase of more than 25 percent.⁹

After long absences from home, OIF/OEF veterans also face challenges with their families. One in five service members have filed for divorce since 2001. More than 27,000 service members filed for divorce in 2004, a 44 percent increase from 2001.¹⁰

In addition to being members of our active duty military, national guard, and reserve, these veterans are also husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, and neighbors and community members. Yet, almost no attention has been focused on their civic lives: how they re-integrate into their neighborhoods, what roles civic and religious institutions play in their transitions home, what their attitudes and interests are in continuing to serve on the home front, and what America can do to utilize their talents and skills as they move from military to civilian life. Neuroscience tells us that improving a person's civic health can improve his physical and mental health.¹¹ Studies

have shown how participation in service efforts can boost job prospects.¹² Civic connectedness also can provide additional support to families as they adjust to the transition of having their loved ones back home. Furthermore, veterans are untapped national assets, having acquired experiences and skills while serving in the military that have significant value in the workplace and in communities. They are beacons of hope that can encourage our next generation to serve their country in the military, in government service, in national service, or in traditional volunteering. As our country welcomes home this generation of veterans, we must pay close attention to, and act upon, OIF/OEF veterans' perspectives on their civic lives. In doing so, we can improve the veteran's transition home, engage them in meaningful work and service on the home front, and hold them up as the leaders that they have become to a grateful nation.

This report is based on the first-ever nationally representative survey of OIF/OEF veterans and aims to elevate their voices and share perspectives on their civic lives as they transition from battlefields abroad to communities at home. This survey was distributed to a veteran, taken entirely anonymously, with no monetary incentive, and commissioned by an independent public policy firm, as further described in the Methodology section of this report. The questions focused solely on how these veterans view their civic lives, what they can tell us about their transitions home, and what their attitudes and interests are with respect to continued service on the home front. The questions were largely multiple-choice, but several included free response blanks where veterans could give more context or offer anecdotes to better explain their answers, and many veterans were enthusiastic to share their perspectives. We also

feature four profiles of veterans. Three of the profiles are OIF/OEF veterans who recount the impact of service on their transition home. The fourth profile is of a Vietnam veteran, who offers his story of service and insight on this generation of veterans. We recognize the importance of the interconnectedness of the generations of veterans, and felt it was important to highlight this bond.

The primary purpose of this report is to spark a national effort around the civic engagement of our nation's veterans. We hope this endeavor will promote that dialogue and action in earnest so that we as a nation can look back on this moment as when we truly rallied around veterans — not just with parades and yellow ribbons or job training and health care, but also by unleashing the civic talents of these extraordinary Americans for their own benefit and the benefit of the American people.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The central message of this report is that a new generation of veterans is returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan without sufficient connections to communities, is enthusiastic to serve again, and points the way forward for how our nation can better integrate them into civilian life. Although the 1.8 million veterans are from every corner of our nation, they are strongly united in their perspectives regarding civic responsibilities and opportunities as they return home. What's more, the findings show that OIF/OEF veterans are underutilized assets in our communities, and their continued service is likely to improve their transition home. We believe there is significant potential to increase volunteering and civic engagement among this generation of veterans.

Transition Home

The transition from military to civilian life is critical to the long-term welfare of the veteran. Existing research has appropriately focused on the provision of health care, employment and support for families. What is missing has been an understanding of their civic lives and the roles community institutions and their own service on the home front can play in their successful transition from military to civilian life.

- **Only 13 percent of OIF/OEF veterans strongly agreed that their transition home was going well, and just 9 percent strongly agreed the needs of their family were being met.**
- **Nearly nine out of ten OIF/OEF veterans (89 percent) strongly agreed or agreed that Americans could learn something from the example of service of Veterans, yet only half consider themselves leaders in their communities as a result of their military service.**
- **Nearly seven in ten respondents (69 percent) said that they had not been contacted by a community institution, local non-profit, or place of worship. Fifty-four percent of veterans had been contacted by a veterans service organization. Sixty-nine percent were offered a service, while only 21 percent were asked to serve.** Those veterans who were volunteers were twice as likely to have been contacted by a community organization than those who did not volunteer.

Ready to Serve

The service commitment of the veteran does not end on the battlefield, but continues after the return home. OIF/OEF veterans were united in their views on community service and the obligation of other Americans to serve.

- **Ninety-two percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that serving their community is important to them and 90 percent strongly agreed or agreed that service was a basic responsibility of every American.** Non-white veterans were more likely than white veterans to say that they strongly agreed or agreed that serving the community is important to them (98 percent versus 92 percent) and that public service was a basic responsibility (95 percent versus 88 percent).
- **Even while they were serving in active duty, 70 percent of OIF/OEF veterans felt motivated to volunteer in their communities.** Fifty percent of veterans said they had volunteered since returning from Iraq or Afghanistan, while Census data shows the percentage of Americans volunteering hovers around 27 percent.
- **Veterans were interested in meeting needs in their communities and many wanted to serve on multiple issues, with 95 percent wanting to serve wounded veterans; 90 percent wanting to serve other veterans and military families; 88 percent wanting to participate in disaster relief; 86 percent wanting to serve at-risk youth; 82 percent wanting to help older Americans; and 69 percent wanting to help conserve the environment.**

Motivations and Means

Harnessing the potential of OIF/OEF veterans requires an understanding of their motivations and perspectives on how they can most effectively be engaged.

- **Veterans are self-motivated; almost half of those surveyed (42 percent) indicated their principal motivation for serving was themselves. This greatly outpaces any other influence, such as a friend (13 percent), a spouse (11 percent), or other family member (10 percent).** These findings show greater self-direction among veterans than the motivations to serve among the general public.¹³

- **Nearly seven in ten veterans (69 percent) who have not yet volunteered said it was because they had not been asked to serve and/or do not have enough information on meaningful service opportunities (68 percent).** Only 16 percent said they had no interest in serving. Four out of five (78 percent) of those asked to serve by a veterans organization have volunteered.
- **The greatest increase in volunteering among OIF/OEF veterans occurred when they had been home at least two years. While only 28 percent of veterans who were home less than six months volunteered, 47 percent of veterans who were back one to two years volunteered and 61 percent of veterans who were home two or more years volunteered.** Organizations should ask veterans to serve and establish a relationship between one and two years after they have returned home.
- **Veterans strongly agreed or agreed that they are also motivated to serve by respected veterans (76 percent) and an educational award (65 percent), while only 36 percent strongly agreed or agreed that a small stipend for their service would motivate them.** Existing research shows that, unlike OIF/OEF veterans, civilians cite tax benefits, small stipends and other financial incentives as strong motivational factors for serving.¹⁴

Helping Communities and Themselves

Veterans not only have the capacity and skills to help address problems in communities; there is also good evidence to show that such service will help veterans themselves.

- **Fifty-five percent of respondents who volunteer said their transitions were going well, compared to 47 percent of non-volunteers. The difference held for their family's transition, with 48 percent of veterans who volunteer saying their family's needs were being met, while only 38 percent of non-volunteers said the same.** Our youngest veterans are having the hardest time with their transitions and finding meaningful service opportunities, with 47 percent of veterans 29 years old or younger saying their transitions were

going well, while 57 percent of veterans 30 years or older strongly agreed or agreed with the same statement.

- **Thirty percent of non-volunteering veterans were willing to give 11 hours or more a month (the equivalent of more than three work weeks a year) to serving their communities. Another 32 percent of non-volunteering veterans were willing to give 6-10 hours a month.** In the aggregate, this represents 1.1 million non-volunteering veterans who are willing to give significant time serving their communities.
- **OIF/OEF Veterans have learned skills during their military service that are relevant to meeting the needs of nonprofit organizations, with 61 percent citing management and supervision skills; 61 percent highlighting their ability to lead diverse groups of people; and 63 percent highlighting team building skills.**

Unleashing the Talents of Veterans

The perspectives of OEF/OIF veterans on their transitions home and their interest in serving and connecting to their communities offer a foundation for action on the home front to meet them where they are. This generation of veterans has spoken. It is time for our nation to respond. To help these veterans, we need to:

IN THE NATION

- ***Change our national dialogue and view veterans as civic assets, not charity cases.*** Veterans, policymakers and leaders from various sectors should organize efforts around treating veterans as civic assets in their communities. All avenues to invest leaders in an understanding of veterans toward their civic lives and the common solutions to unleash their talents should be undertaken — including congressional hearings, White House conferences, summits of state and local officials, and public forums among veterans service organizations, non-profit and faith-based institutions, and communities. In all cases, the perspectives of OIF/OEF veterans should be central to the discussions. Such action should include resurrecting the “On the Home Front” initiative taken after 9/11 and enlisting returning veterans and

other volunteers in providing support to military families who need help with everything from home repairs to keeping small businesses operating. A national public service announcement campaign should be conducted to educate the public on how returning veterans are civic assets to their country and should be better integrated into their communities to share their leadership and inspire others to serve their nation.

- ***De-Stigmatize PTSD/TBI, while Maintaining High Screening.*** Working in partnership with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and organizations specializing in PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) and TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury), we must educate non-profit organizations on the need to destigmatize PTSD/TBI and put in place appropriate procedures to engage veterans in volunteer service opportunities, while maintaining standard protocols for screening volunteers. In an effort to further limit the effects of PTSD/TBI and other health issues, new research should be commissioned to marshal existing and new evidence showing that volunteer service and civic engagement can improve job prospects, health and well-being, and family stability.
- ***Provide High Quality Service Opportunities through the Veterans Service Corps.*** The Corporation for National and Community Service should build and implement the Veterans Service Corps by providing high quality service opportunities for veterans that reflect the perspectives of OIF/OEF veterans on how and when they would like to serve their communities and the skills they could bring to various efforts. The service opportunities available through the Veterans Service Corps should reflect the specific interests that OIF/OEF veterans shared, such as working with at-risk youth, helping prepare the nation for disaster relief, assisting older Americans, conserving the environment, and addressing poverty and homelessness. Opportunities should also be provided to veterans through the new Education Corps, Health Corps, Opportunity Corps, Clean Energy Corps and the existing Citizen Corps for disaster relief and homeland security.

- **Expand Troops to Teachers.** Congress should pass the Post-9/11 Troops to Teachers Enhancement Act, which would expand the little-known program Troops to Teachers by decreasing the program's eligibility requirements from six years of active duty in the service to four years to attract younger members of the military returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. A study of Troops to Teachers should examine the impact of these teachers on student attendance and academic achievement and on the well-being of the veterans themselves.
- **Strengthen the Transition of Wounded Warriors.** The Army's Warrior Transition Units and the Marine Corps' Wounded Warrior Units should incorporate community service as a key element of the recovery and transition process. These units are designed to transition wounded service members to productive, meaningful lives beyond their military service. These units should track the progress wounded veterans are making as a result of their greater engagement in volunteer service and civic life.
- **Conduct an Annual Survey of Veterans and Civic Life.** The National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC), a Congressionally-chartered nonprofit created after World War II to strengthen citizenship on the home front and that annually releases the Civic Health Index, should make returning veterans a central focus of its annual survey. The NCoC should test what indicators relating to veterans might be useful to include in the annual collection of civic health data by the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Engage Veterans in Social Innovation.** Working in partnership with the new White House Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation and non-profit groups like New Profit, efforts should be undertaken to raise awareness in the social entrepreneurship community about this generation of veterans — their attitudes and behaviors about civic engagement and the unique skills they bring from their military training and experience. This will enable social entrepreneurs to both chart innovations around the needs of veterans and their families, while also utilizing veterans as assets in their efforts.

IN STATES

- **Replicate Successful Models among Governors.** States, such as Minnesota and Washington, have launched innovative initiatives to engage veterans throughout their states in meaningful service activities. Governors should examine the benefits of creating models similar to Warrior to Citizen, VetCorps or Veterans Service Corps at the state level.
- **Incorporate Veterans into the Cities of Service Initiative.** Mayors across America are initiating new efforts to mobilize volunteers to help tackle local challenges, especially in tough budget times. Veterans, who have unique skills and leadership qualities, should be systematically engaged in these new service efforts.

IN COMMUNITIES

- **Create 10 Community Pilots.** Working in partnership with the Cities of Service initiative where Mayors are already engaged, efforts should be undertaken to create 10 community pilots, many in places where there is a strong military presence, such as Norfolk, Virginia; San Diego, California; Fayetteville, North Carolina; Jacksonville, Florida; San Antonio, Texas; Clarksville, Tennessee; Oak Harbor, Washington; and Fort Riley, Kansas. Pilots should also be created in rural areas where returning veterans often face the highest sense of isolation. These pilots should be partnerships between the military, nonprofits, veterans service organizations, faith-based groups and elected officials that aim to ensure veterans have meaningful opportunities to serve alongside fellow citizens.
- **Engage Faith-Based Institutions in Veterans Outreach.** One weekend in 2010, every church, mosque and synagogue in America should encourage the minister, rabbi or imam to dedicate a portion of the service to introducing a military service member to the congregation. The faith leader could highlight the service member's role in the community and suggest that civilian members of the congregation, and military members of the congregation share a meal together in the next month. Faith-based institutions should intentionally reach out to veterans with meaningful service opportunities for them and their families.
- **Strengthen College Efforts around the GI Bill and Federal Work Study Program.** Working with Campus Compact, coalitions of colleges, community colleges, HBCUs and HSIs should be built around the GI Bill to support veterans returning to college campuses, and ensure those coalitions think critically about service opportunities for students who are veterans. Best practices should be shared among colleges that are successful in integrating veterans into campus life, especially through leadership and service opportunities. The Federal Work Study program should make special efforts to engage OIF/OEF veterans on campus in leading or participating in community service activities.
- **Facilitate Veterans Service and Innovation Online.** We must ensure that organizations looking to engage OIF/OEF veterans meet them where they are: online. Community organizations should work in partnership to ensure that service opportunities are available to veterans online, and other means of online communication are utilized to better connect veterans. A summit on Technology and the Veteran should be held to bring together the most innovative thinkers and organizations around how to use technology to enable veterans to recreate communities of veterans who can communicate with one another, highlight their needs and those of military families, and find opportunities to work together in communities.
- **Recognize Veterans for their Service on the Home Front.** Veterans have uniforms that are full of commendations for their military service. Efforts should be undertaken to provide recognition for their outstanding service on the home front. More nonprofits should be made aware of two honors — the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal and the President's Volunteer Service Award — and the steps they can take to ensure veterans receive proper recognition for their service to the community, while making it easier for nonprofits to nominate service members for these two honors and for all branches to bestow those honors on deserving individuals.

SONIA MENESES OIF VETERAN

Sonia Meneses is a 12-year Army veteran. Originally from Azores, Portugal, she moved to the United States at the age of 13. Sonia deployed on two combat tours to Iraq while assigned to the 541st Transportation Company. During her deployments, Sonia regularly drove in ground convoys. On many occasions her convoys were attacked by enemy insurgents. Repeated exposure to weapons fire and explosions caused significant hearing loss. Other symptoms, including loss of consciousness, progressed to the point where Sonia required medical evacuation from Iraq. Eventually, Sonia was diagnosed with Ménière's Disease. Sonia is now totally deaf in one ear and has 80 percent hearing loss in the other. As of July 2008, she received a medical retirement from the Army. Sonia has been awarded a fellowship from *The Mission Continues*, an organization that provides veterans with financial stipends to offset the costs of volunteering full-time. Through the fellowship, Sonia has been volunteering and mentoring at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Clarksville, Tennessee. Following her fellowship, Sonia plans to return to school to become a registered nurse. Sonia has a five-year old son.

IMPACT STATEMENT — IN HER OWN WORDS

The Mission Continues gave me the opportunity to believe in myself again and helped me realize that just because I am injured, and have my own disabilities that I can still be a great help to someone. I volunteer at Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) of Clarksville. I also volunteer to do community activities, which help children in our community. BBBS works hard to make things happen in our community and let our children know that we care, and that we are here for them. I love to see them smile and accomplish something that they never thought they would be able to. Seeing the difference that one person can make to a child's life has given me the greatest motivation and the strength to keep going, just knowing that someone out there is counting on me, it means the world to me.

Until I started with The Mission Continues I was having a hard time with myself. I felt like I was a failure, I felt that I didn't get to finish my mission because I was medically evacuated before my unit came home. It was hard for me to believe that I could do something, I just felt sorry for myself and fell into this depression, thinking that something that I loved to do so much had to stop. I loved being a soldier, I always loved helping others, and I was great where I was at, at that point in my life. But things changed, and I was just willing to give up. My son gave me the encouragement not to give up, and The Mission Continues made it possible for me to take the first step forward.

Every day is a new challenge. With Meniere's it's hard to know when it's going to hit you, but I wake up every morning, and I keep my head up, and I try my hardest not to give up on myself. It's great to hear children say that I am their role model, because it means I have to be doing something right. I do know that when you work at your fears, and don't give up, it makes you a stronger person. I can honestly say that this past month and a half has made me a stronger person, because I have worked through some of my fears of not being able to have a regular life, or that there was nothing else for me out there, because there is. There is so much out there, you just have to motivate yourself to not give up, and realize some little person is counting on you today.

“ Until I started with *The Mission Continues* I was having a hard time with myself. I felt like I was a failure, I felt that I didn't get to finish my mission because I was medically evacuated before my unit came home. ”

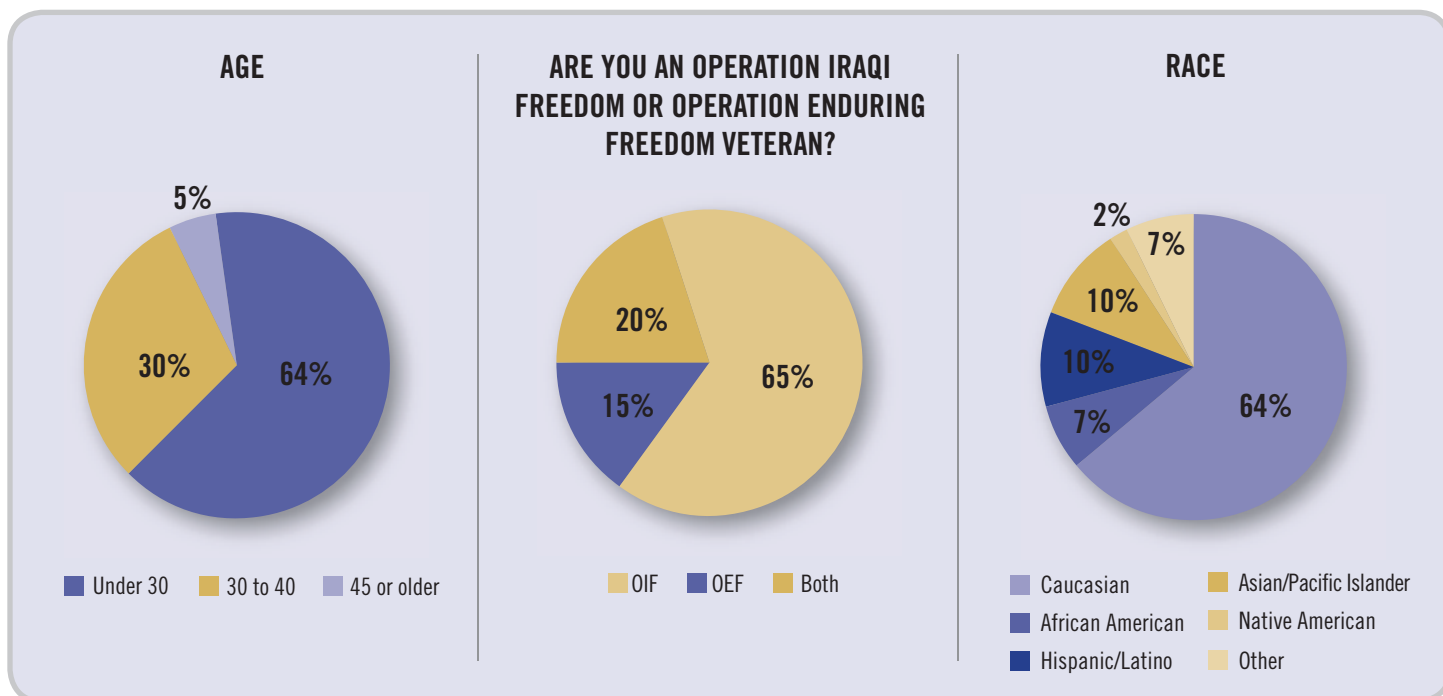
WHO THEY ARE

The 1.8 million OIF/OEF veterans rebut conventional wisdom that they serve because society has offered them few alternatives. Members of our all-voluntary military are more likely to have a high school diploma or other advanced degree and come from high-income neighborhoods than their non-military counterparts. Minorities are not disproportionately over-represented and though the percentage of women serving is still significantly less than males, that number has been consistently growing for officers and enlisted.¹⁵ We controlled our sampling to ensure our respondents mirrored this generation of veterans. Therefore, the data here represents a cross-section of veterans who demographically look like OIF/OEF veterans on the whole.

Interestingly, OIF/OEF veterans reflect, demographically, World War II veterans much more than they do Vietnam veterans. OIF/OEF veterans and WWII veterans' average age, marital status, and number of children per service member are very similar.¹⁶ That said, 12 percent of the US population served in WWII, 2 percent served in Vietnam, and less than 1 percent is serving in OIF/OEF. Given the extraordinary civic legacy of the Greatest Generation upon returning home — called the “long civic generation” that would actively participate in civic and religious groups, give to charities and volunteer their time, trust other people and key institutions, and participate in politics — it is crucial that

we work to connect subsequent generations of veterans to similar opportunities. We also note that every generation of veterans from the last century generally outpaced the general population in their habits of service and civic engagement.¹⁷

Most OIF/OEF Veterans are under 30, almost all are high school graduates with a regular diploma, and more than half of our respondents said they sustained some physical or mental injury during their service.¹⁸ Many veterans, 22 percent of our respondents, are unemployed and, with the new GI Bill, increasingly are students.¹⁹ OIF/OEF veterans are the parents of millions of children.



The following demographic information is of our respondents, and are reasonably representative samplings of all OIF/OEF Veterans:

- 89% Male, 11% Female
- 64.3% are under 30 years old, 30.4% are between 30 and 44, and 5.3% are over 45.
- 74% White, 26% non-White.
- 10% Latino, 7% African American
- 48% are married
- There are almost 6 million children of OIF/OEF veterans
- 15% have a Bachelor's degree, 93% have at least a regular high school diploma
- 11% Officers, 89% Enlisted
- 65% of survey respondents were OIF veterans, 15% OEF veterans, and 20% both (meaning they have served at least two deployments, one in Iraq and one in Afghanistan).
- 65% of respondents have been deployed once, 24% have gone twice, and 12% have gone three or more times.
- 16% have been back for less than 6 months; 14% for 6 -12 months; 23% for 1-2 years; and 47% have been back for more than 2 years.
- 51% of respondents report sustaining some sort of mental or physical injury during their deployments.
- 44% were involved in reconstruction projects in Iraq or Afghanistan.
- Presently, 30% of respondents are still on active duty; 36% have other full-time employment; 12% have part-time employment; and 22% are not employed.
- 39% of the sample considers themselves students (27% are full-time students, and 12% are part-time students).

This demographic lens begins to tell the story of the diversity of this generation of veterans. They come from every corner of our nation. The remaining discussion focuses on the veteran's transition home and their ethic of service.

KENT PARK OIF VETERAN

Major Kent Park has been serving in the Army for more than a decade. Born in Seoul, Korea, Kent and his family moved to Texas when he was 8 years old. A graduate of West Point, in 2005 Kent deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in Mosul and Baghdad as Commander of Charlie Company, 2-1 Infantry Battalion, 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team. Since returning home, Kent has received his Masters in Public Policy from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. He is currently assigned as an instructor of American Politics at West Point. Upon returning home from Iraq, Kent volunteered for the Education Resources Institute COACH program at the Parkway Academy for Technology and Health in Roxbury, Massachusetts where he helped high school juniors and seniors prepare for the SAT and apply to colleges.

IMPACT STATEMENT — IN HIS OWN WORDS

My four years at West Point was the first time I was introduced or exposed to the idea of service. When you're thinking about your normal high school education, you don't really think about service, and no one really asks you to serve. But at West Point, you're constantly exposed to this idea of service, service to country, duty, and honor. This whole idea of selfless service and making sacrifices — it really resonated with me and I thought this would be a good way to live my life.

Deploying to Iraq was a significant event in my life. It had a big impact. As a company commander, I had a lot of soldiers underneath me. They were young soldiers: 18, 19, 20 years old. They're all volunteers and they're all serving their country and doing their part. There was something about being in that group with a community of people with a common interest, a common idea, a common vision of service. Not everybody agreed with the Iraq war, but it didn't matter. It was all about being there for each other and serving our country. I was incredibly inspired by all the young men and women who were in service and I was very humbled by the experience. That really inspired me to continue to serve even afterwards. I think a lot of veterans coming out of military service feel that way. A lot of them want to continue to serve but there aren't very many opportunities. You may think that's odd, but there are very few opportunities for veterans to continue to serve in a leadership role in the civilian sector.

While I was in graduate school, I started researching more and more about some of the domestic issues facing the United States. That was when I volunteered for a program called COACH. The experience was very eye opening, even after having heard about all the problems with public education. Putting faces and names

to these kids who face so many challenges was overwhelming. They had a peace rally once for one of their classmates who was killed while he was walking home from school. I could not imagine that when I was in high school. It's a whole different learning environment when you have to worry about potentially getting shot going back and forth from school. I heard about all these things and realized that you have to do something and you can't wait for the government to do it because they may take forever and it might not be what we want. So I'm a firm believer in the idea that people have to do more. Being a law-abiding, tax-paying person is the absolute bare minimum of being a citizen. You have to be an active participant by giving back to your community and doing your part. It's like the Adlai Stevenson quote, "Patriotism is not short, frenzied outbursts of emotion, but the tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime." That's what being a citizen means. It's a lifetime of steady dedication to service.

“Being a law-abiding, tax-paying person is the absolute bare minimum of being a citizen. You have to be an active participant by giving back to your community and doing your part.”

TRANSITION HOME

It is well-documented that the transition home is critical to a veteran's successful reentry into civilian life. As a backdrop to the willingness of OIF/OEF veterans to serve on the home front, it was important to understand how their transitions were going. Respondents were split on their own transitions, with half strongly agreeing or agreeing that it was going well, and with the other half either neutral or disagreeing that their transitions back to community were going well. A mere 13 percent of veterans strongly agreed that their transition was going well. And, only 43 percent felt the needs of their family were being met, with only 9 percent strongly agreeing that this was true. One important issue that emerged from this discrepancy, and was echoed in the free response section of the survey, was how a service member's transition can go well if their family's transition was not. Many of the concerns expressed in the free response section dealt with family issues. Some veterans needed access to marital or family counseling; others were concerned with the burdens placed on spouses while they were away; and still others were concerned about the impact of their absence on their children. One respondent said, "Our wives need the most support with the kids while we are gone. Just having a day to themselves to re-charge their batteries."

Outreach

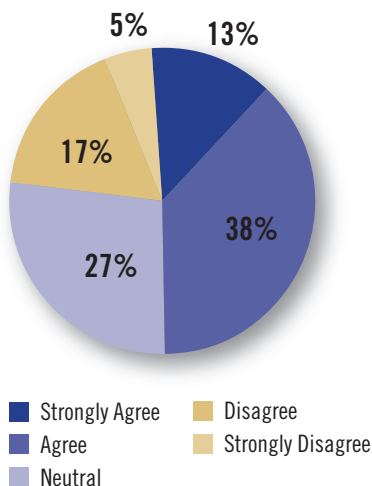
To understand what, if any, organizations are a part of veterans' transitions home, we asked whether they had been contacted by any community organizations (including faith-based and local nonprofits). Only 31 percent of OIF/OEF veterans said they had been contacted and more than two out of three veterans (69 percent) said they had not been reached by a community institution. The numbers were higher for outreach by veterans service organizations (VSO). Fifty-four percent of veterans had been contacted by a VSO. Interestingly, 69 percent were offered a service while only 21 percent were asked to serve. Those veterans who volunteered were twice as likely to have been contacted by a community organization than those who did not volunteer.

Nearly nine out of 10 OIF/OEF veterans (89 percent) strongly agreed or agreed that Americans could learn something from their example of service. What they epitomized on the battlefield was the ethic of service they also

brought home to their communities. Yet, only 50 percent of veterans considered themselves leaders in communities as a result of their military service, which suggests a significant disconnect between what they believed they could teach other Americans and the opportunities they were given to do so.

The open-ended responses from veterans gave us a sense of how community organizations and veterans service organizations can make a real impact in their lives. Responses from the veterans who had not been reached also identified roles for these institutions to play. Faith-based institutions provided some of the most powerful examples of the impact that community institutions can have on the transition of veterans. One veteran said, "My church and pastors have mentored me and my family in dealing with and coping with the transition home." Another spoke to the role played while deployed, "My church family stepped in to help my wife with day to day things while I was deployed." Veterans often need counseling and supportive services

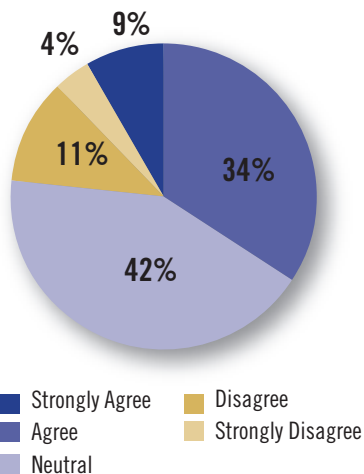
MY TRANSITION BACK TO MY CIVILIAN COMMUNITY IS GOING WELL



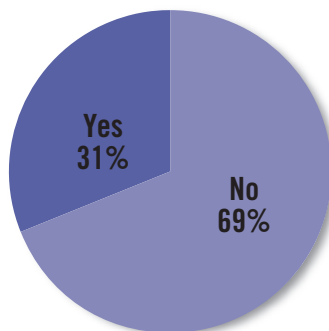
during the transition home, for themselves and their families. This is especially true as many of our respondents have had multiple deployments or are preparing to deploy again. One veteran spoke to the power of simply listening, urging others to: “Be more visibly supportive. Listen to our stories. Try to understand we may be having a tough time readjusting.” Many veterans spoke to their gratitude for the simplest of acts, with one veteran saying, “They just took the time to see how I was doing.”

As we consider the transition of veterans home, we must not only think about how organizations can reach out to veterans, but how veterans can reach out to their communities and the leadership roles they can be enlisted to play. Given the time to reconnect and strengthen community ties, veterans as a whole have shown an interest in being champions of service. As the next section of data will show, this is a generation of veterans that is eager to serve again, and recognize the needs in their own backyards.

THE NEEDS OF MY FAMILY ARE BEING MET



HAVE ANY NONMILITARY COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS, LOCAL NONPROFITS, PLACES OF WORSHIP, ETC REACHED OUT TO YOU OR YOUR FAMILY?



READY TO SERVE

The majority of the survey explored the attitudes and behaviors of OIF/OEF veterans as they relate to an ethic of service and service opportunities upon returning home. Ninety-two percent of veterans strongly agreed or agreed that serving their community is important to them, an expectation they hold for all Americans, with 90 percent of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing that public service should be a basic responsibility of everyone. Indeed, even while they were serving in active duty, 70 percent of respondents felt motivated to volunteer in their communities. Active duty, national guard, and reserve posts provide critical services to the communities well beyond the support they give military families and veterans.

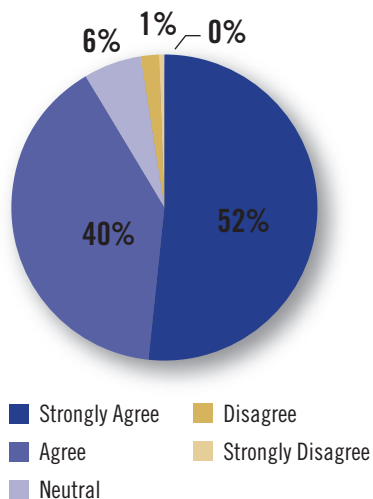
In the open-ended questions, many veterans said they had a strong desire to serve their country as civilians. As one veteran put it, “We all volunteered to serve our country. It is up to veterans to educate our community on how it can better serve itself through our example of leadership.” When asked if they had volunteered since returning from Iraq or Afghanistan, 51 percent of respondents said they had. The U.S. Census Bureau shows that the rate of volunteering for Americans at large hovers around 27 percent.²⁰ This is in keeping with generations of veterans before them, who, when compared with the American public, were more likely to have gone to a community meeting in the past 12 months, worked on a community project, or worked with a neighbor to solve a community problem.²¹

According to Census data, veterans have volunteered at a higher rate and greater intensity (more hours) than Americans as a whole. In looking at the general veteran population aged 18-50, Census data show that approximately 29 percent of the veteran population volunteers, three percentage points more than the general public.²² The general veteran population was also more likely to fix something in the neighborhood compared to the general public (9.3% versus 8.5%)²³. Data from the Civic Health Index (which surveyed all veterans of all generations) also showed these trends.²⁴ Veterans were much more likely to say they would donate to help change policies and donate volunteering time (as well as other civic activities) compared to the

general public.²⁵ What has been missing is concrete information on what service opportunities would appeal to veterans, as a unique cross-section of Americans.

Because this newest generation of veterans is also largely made up of Millennials (those who are 16 to 28 years of age, who have shown a significant aspiration to serve and to create opportunities of their own invention), it was important to gather data with that context in mind. To better understand these opportunities, it was crucial to understand the causes about which they are passionate, the time they are willing to give, the current barriers to volunteering, and their motivations to volunteer. OIF/OEF veterans had clear and strongly-held views on these subjects.

SERVING MY COMMUNITY IS IMPORTANT TO ME



Understanding Needs of Their Communities

This generation of veterans is keenly aware of and ready to serve on the most significant issues facing communities across the country. More than 70 percent of OIF/OEF veterans felt a diverse range of issues were very important or important to them. Somewhat predictable issues like serving military families and wounded veterans were in the high 90th percentile for veterans, but just behind those issues was everything from disaster relief (88%) and serving at risk youth (86%) to helping older Americans (82%) and the environment (69%). This is a generation of veterans who is mindful of the range of issues their communities face and eager to serve on multiple fronts.

Beyond the broad issues they care about, OIF/OEF veterans identified roles they would be willing to play in their communities. These responses especially reinforced the desire of OIF/OEF veterans to work with at-risk youth in their communities in a variety of ways.

It is also notable that 8 percent of respondents wanted to run for elected office or be a leader at a local nonprofit. These numbers of respondents were not great enough to be statistically significant, but when cross-tabbed, the respondents interested in these high-leadership opportunities included enlisted men and women as well as officers. For those veterans who said they would like to be a leader of a local non-profit, 90 percent were enlisted, and 10 percent were officers. For those veterans who said they would like to be an elected official, 84 percent were enlisted and 16 percent were officers. As a reminder, 89 percent of these respondents were enlisted, whereas 11 percent were officers.

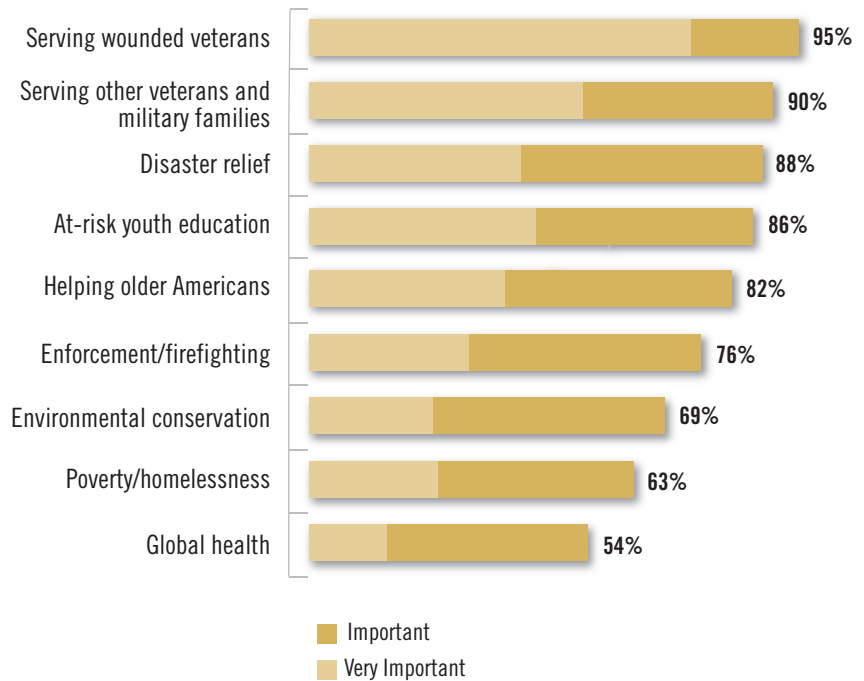
Fellow Veterans

This is a generation of veterans that continues to grow and is still being defined as this report is written. Service members are being deployed (some for the second and third times) and returning home every day. Interestingly, the respondents felt their fellow veterans would be passionate about many of the same issues they are. They thought OIF/OEF veterans would especially want to serve on issues like the high school dropout crisis, helping wounded veterans, and disaster relief.

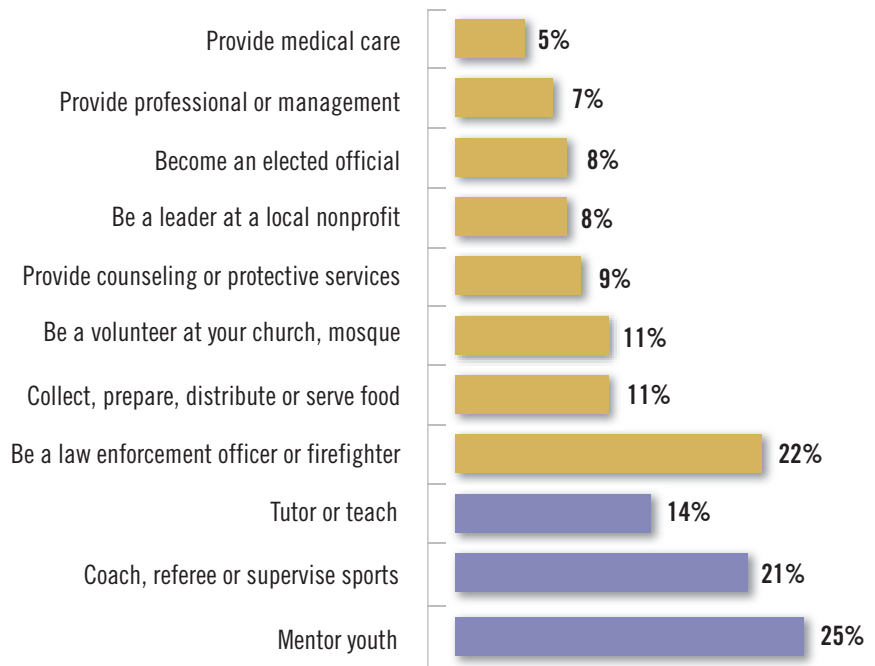
Many veterans spoke of the sense of purpose that meaningful volunteer opportunities give an individual. As one veteran put it, "The community doesn't have to serve us as veterans. We are a part of the community. If everyone did their part, the world would be in a better state." There was also an awareness of what veterans bring to the communities to which they return. One veteran said, "Recognize our usefulness. We are not charity cases. We are an American asset."

Another theme echoed throughout the survey was the difference fellow veterans can make in whether someone serves. When a veteran service organization asked a veteran to serve, 78 percent did. Veterans told us that one of the most powerful

WHAT ISSUES MATTER TO VETERANS?



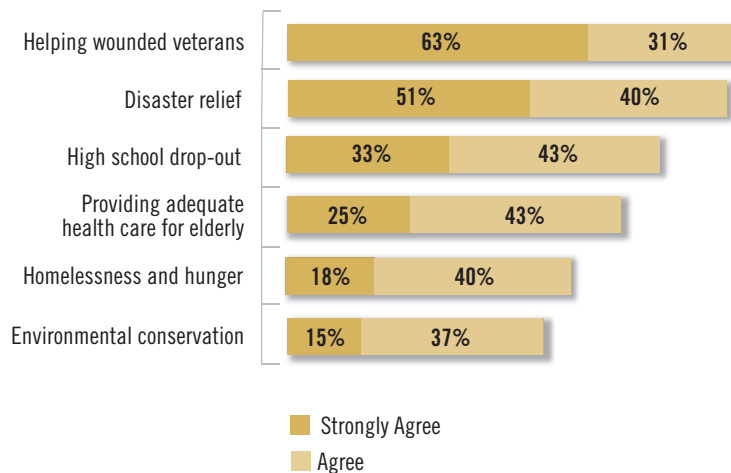
WHAT DO YOU SEE YOURSELF DOING FOR SERVICE?



Note: The blue bars represent activities that are focused on youth.

“asks” to serve could come from fellow veterans. One veteran spoke to the appeal of serving with other veterans when he said, “Although there are many programs out there, I wish it was easier to meet veterans and find organizations to do things, such as serving the community, together as veterans.” We note that historically members of the U.S. military have played roles in major national service initiatives. President Franklin Roosevelt’s Civilian Conservation Corps, which engaged more than three million mostly young, unemployed men to strengthen public lands and resources across the nation, drew on reserve officers and other assets of the military to administer components of the program.²⁶

WHAT ISSUES OIF/OEF VETERANS WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS...



TOM BRAATEN VIETNAM VETERAN

Retired Major General Tom Braaten served in the Marine Corps for 36 years. He was raised in Phoenix, Arizona and joined the Marine Corps at the age of 18 following high school. He began his career as a ground radar technician, before going to officer candidate school and flight school. He flew helicopters in Vietnam for a year. During his time as a Marine helicopter pilot he was stationed in California, Hawaii, Virginia, England, Japan, and Panama. He commanded a CH-46 squadron in Hawaii, and was the Commanding Officer of the Marine Corps Air Station at Tustin, California. He was the Deputy Commander of II MEF at Camp Lejeune. He spent several years at Headquarters Marine Corps as Director of Facilities then Director for Programs. Later, he returned MCAS Cherry Point in North Carolina to serve as Commander of Airbases on the east coast. Upon retiring in 2001, he became CEO of the Twin Rivers YMCA in New Bern, North Carolina, which he led for five years. He is currently Airport Director of the Coastal Carolina Regional Airport. Major General Braaten is married and has one daughter and one granddaughter.

IMPACT STATEMENT — IN HIS OWN WORDS

I first learned about service at home. I had two brothers and two sisters and my parents always insisted service was important. Whether it was Boy Scouts, or at the church, or just getting involved in the community to help those less fortunate, service to others was stressed. Watching Marines willingly put their lives on the line on a daily basis in Vietnam took service to a whole new level. Putting the well-being of fellow Marines, their families, and their country in front of their own survival was the norm, true selflessness. Later on in my career, as we moved between bases, I immediately noticed the things civilians were doing: cooking a meal for Marines and sailors or the spouses of deployed service members, or inviting service members to celebrate a holiday meal in their homes. In turn, Marines would get involved in coaching, working at a soup kitchen, giving a little back for the nice things they did for us. The more senior I got, the more I could appreciate how communities are incredibly supportive of the troops. I also saw how sometimes folks aren't sure how to say thank you. My service in the Marine Corps and being a part of these communities has taught me that life is good for those who make it good.

I do a leadership class with a local electric co-op, and I always take a wounded non-commissioned officer, recently back from a deployment, to talk to the kids. I have him talk about the top two to three things he needed to know to be successful in Iraq and Afghanistan. We have kids 18 or 19 years old with more responsibility than CEOs of companies — we need to help them develop skills that will help them excel, like listening, communication, and caring.

If a business or non-profit is looking for someone who is trustworthy, responsible, not afraid of hard work under tough conditions, good at building a team and leading, and putting all those things together under stressful conditions, that's what these veterans bring to the table. I don't think the community always realizes the skill sets they have. They're engineers, mechanics, electricians, logisticians, and have managed complex systems. They will work around the clock if that's what needs to be done. They can follow or lead, and they know how to work as a team.

Serving in the community does a lot of things for veterans; it allows them to meet other people, especially in a place where there aren't a lot of military around, and to serve as a positive role model. But mainly, it makes them feel good about being there and fulfilling a purpose. In the military, you get two families: the one at home and your unit. As a veteran, there's a hole there you need to fill. You can do an amazing amount of good in a community with that time.

“In the military, you get two families: the one at home and your unit. As a veteran, there's a hole there you need to fill. You can do an amazing amount of good in a community with that time.”

MOTIVATIONS AND MEANS

When asked what factors would motivate veterans to serve, most spoke of self-motivation. Though some identified a spouse, faith-based leader or friend as someone who could be a strong influence in their decision to volunteer, most said that the motivation would come from themselves. This clearly aligns with the ethic of self-motivation in an individual's military service. As one veteran explained, "You might casually recommend to a friend that they become a Big Brother. I don't think you'd recommend they become a Marine in the same way. Our initial decision to serve has to be personal."

Information & Meaningful Opportunities

Another threshold question for OIF/OEF veterans was why 50 percent of them have not volunteered yet. Overwhelmingly, veterans told us it was simply because they have not been asked to serve (69 percent) and/or do not have enough information on meaningful service opportunities (68 percent). Only 16 percent said they had no interest. This aligns with the 92 percent of veterans who said that serving the community was very important or important to them.

When to Make the Ask

Veterans go through a transition home that is unique to their circumstances. Comparing when a veteran started volunteering with when they arrived home, however, gave a strong indication of when organizations should make "the ask." Veterans need time to get settled and organizations need time to build their relationships with veterans. The greatest increase in volunteering among OIF/OEF veterans occurred when the veteran had been home two years or more. Making the initial ask when the veteran has been home around a year indicates that many more veterans will be serving by the two-year mark. This gives the veteran time to decompress and acclimate to being home, but is not too great a time gap before they are given a meaningful opportunity to serve again.

Veterans Service Organizations Matter

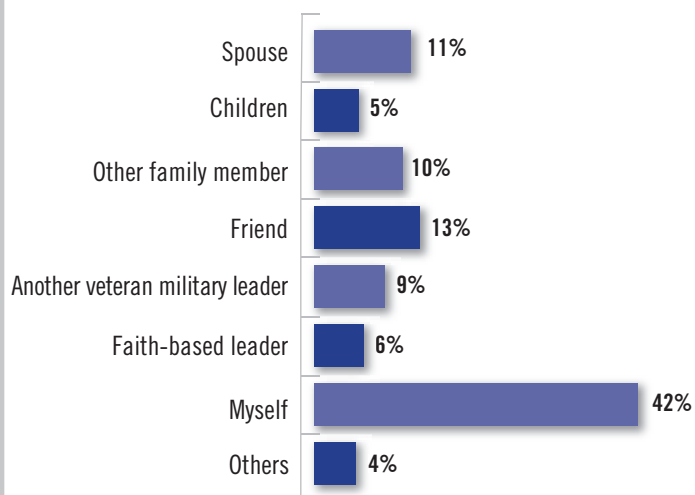
Veterans service organizations matter greatly. Not only are they currently reaching more veterans than traditional community organizations, but when they ask this generation of veterans to serve, veterans serve in remarkably high numbers. Seventy-eight percent of OIF/OEF veterans that are asked to serve by a VSO go on to volunteer. This lines up with the findings that veterans, in extremely high numbers, want to serve wounded veterans (95 percent) and military families (90 percent). These are the very service opportunities VSOs often provide. A fellow veteran who asks can be one of the greatest inducements for veterans to serve.

Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric K. Shinseki highlighted this strong tradition of volunteering in his remarks around the recent "United We Serve" Campaign. He spoke about the 80,000 people, many of whom are veterans, who volunteered more than 11 million hours in service to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. They fulfilled roles ranging from driving patients to appointments, welcoming home veterans, helping homeless veterans, and maintaining 128 veterans cemeteries.²⁷

Motivational Factors Beyond Themselves

We asked the veterans what motivational factors mattered beyond the initial ask. We offered many of the same choices

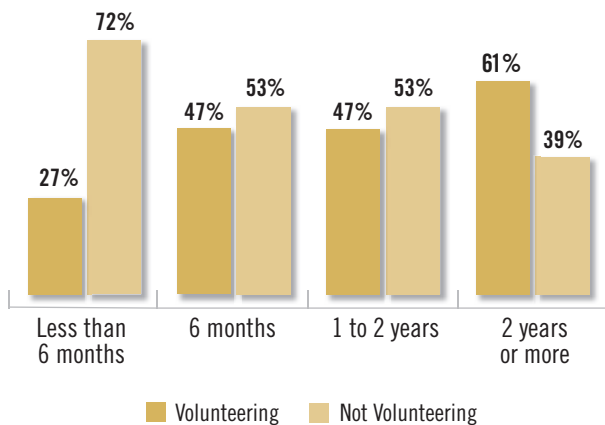
WHO WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT INFLUENCE IN YOUR DECISION TO DO PUBLIC SERVICE VOLUNTEERING?



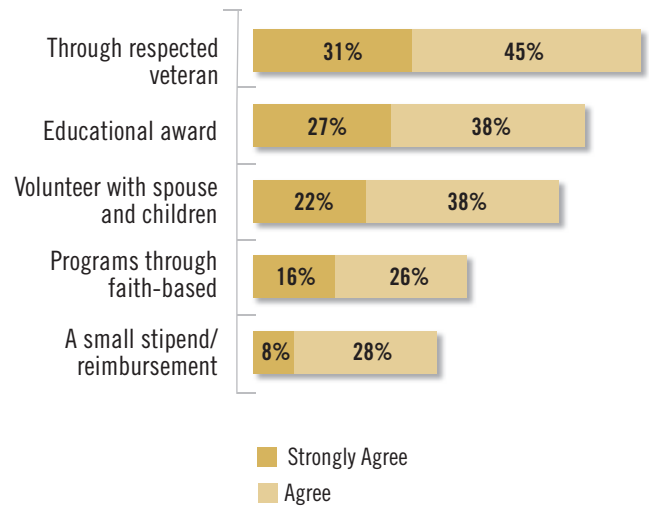
that are offered on broader civic data sets for all Americans. Interestingly, veterans were less motivated by financial incentives than Americans at large. Americans overwhelmingly cite tax benefits, small stipends and educational awards as strong motivational factors.²⁸ In addition to self-

motivation, Veterans were also motivated by the education award (though often to pass onto a spouse or child), and were strongly motivated by a respected veteran, the chance to serve with a family member, and if the opportunity was offered through a faith-based institution.

PERCENT OF VETERANS VOLUNTEERS BY TIME BACK IN U.S.



WHAT ARE SOME MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS?



HELPING COMMUNITIES AND THEMSELVES

The data also gives us an even deeper understanding of who these veterans are, what can improve their transitions home, and what it will take to ensure they are lifted up as assets in their communities. We have an entire generation of veterans coming home. A critical component of providing them a lifetime of support will be service opportunities and integration into communities that can improve transitions home, life prospects, and health and happiness.

Veterans Who Volunteer Have More Successful Transitions

The data show that volunteering matters during the critical transition home. As a nation, we rightfully focus on important factors in the transition of OIF/OEF veterans, such as their physical and mental health, employment status, and the well being of their families. That said, these data show that veterans who volunteer have more successful transitions home than those who do not. Fifty-five percent of veterans who volunteer said their transition was going well versus 47 percent of non-volunteers. The discrepancy held for their family's transition — 48 percent of veterans who volunteer say their family's needs are being met while only 38 percent of non-volunteers said that was the case.

Furthermore, our youngest veterans are having a tougher time transitioning home and finding meaningful service opportunities. These data show that only 47 percent of OIF/OEF veterans 29 or younger (young veterans) said their transition is going well, whereas 57 percent of veterans 30 years old or older (older veterans) agreed or strongly agreed with the same statement. Older OIF/OEF veterans were also more likely than younger OIF/OEF veterans to say the needs of their family were being met.

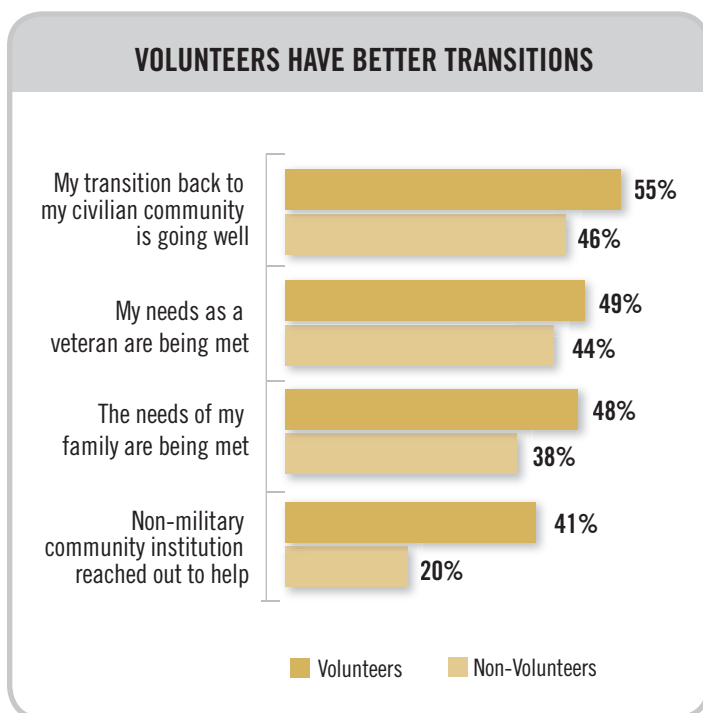
Our data show that part of this age discrepancy was that younger veterans were less likely to have been asked to serve and were less aware of meaningful opportunities. Seventy-four percent of young veterans had never been asked to serve, whereas only 63 percent of older veterans had not been asked. Seventy-five percent of non-volunteering young veterans said they do not have access to meaningful opportunities, whereas only 58 percent of older non-volunteering veterans said the same thing. These data are a clear call for more support of the youngest of OIF/OEF veterans and for ample opportunities for them to serve again.

Younger veterans point the way for what these service opportunities should look like. They are highly motivated by the chance to serve with a respected veteran, and are also more likely than older veterans to give more than five hours a month if given an opportunity that is meaningful enough.

When our nation considers a veteran's transition home, it should provide meaningful opportunities for them to serve communities. Service is fundamental to how these men and women define themselves. When those opportunities are given to them, they and their families have more successful transitions.

Willing to Make Serious Time Commitments

This generation of veterans is ready to make a serious time commitment to serve at home. We asked those OIF/OEF veterans who said they had not volunteered since returning home how many hours they would be willing to give a month if they found a meaningful service opportunity. Thirty percent of non-volunteer respondents were willing to give 11 hours a month or more,



the equivalent of more than three work weeks a year. It is reasonable to assume that those OIF/OEF veterans who have already volunteered since returning home would be willing to serve at that rate. That could be 540,000 skilled volunteers, which is larger than any national service corps today, such as AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, or all the volunteers in our national parks. Another 32 percent or 576,000 veterans would be willing to give 6-10 hours. That means that 62 percent (1.1 million veterans) are willing to give more than 5 hours a month. This is literally an army of potential volunteers, with diverse interests, an incredible ethic of service, and useful skills who are ready to serve in communities across the country.

Skills Veterans Have and Nonprofits Need

Another aim of the survey was to match skills these men and women gained through their military service with skills nonprofits need. OIF/OEF veterans identified many skills they have that they believe would be valuable to their communities:

- 64 percent cite their management and supervision skills;
- 61 percent cite their ability to lead diverse groups of people;
- 63 percent cite their team-building skills;
- 57 percent cite their operational skills; and
- 40 percent cite their logistics skills.

Nonprofits across the country need these very skills to fulfill and expand the basic services they provide every day. Whether they are operating food kitchens in a large urban area; helping at-risk youth clean up a polluted river that runs through their neighborhood; leading a home-build in a community struck by natural disaster; or driving a wounded veteran to a doctor's appointment; skilled volunteers are desperately needed to both coordinate and execute these essential services. This is more critical in tough economic times. These cumulative data on our newest generation of veterans strongly suggest that veterans should be key leaders in the new era of service. We note that the recently

passed Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act recognizes this fact by creating a new Veterans Service Corps, specifically to engage veterans in full time national service and traditional volunteering.

Roles in Iraq & Afghanistan Matter in Service at Home

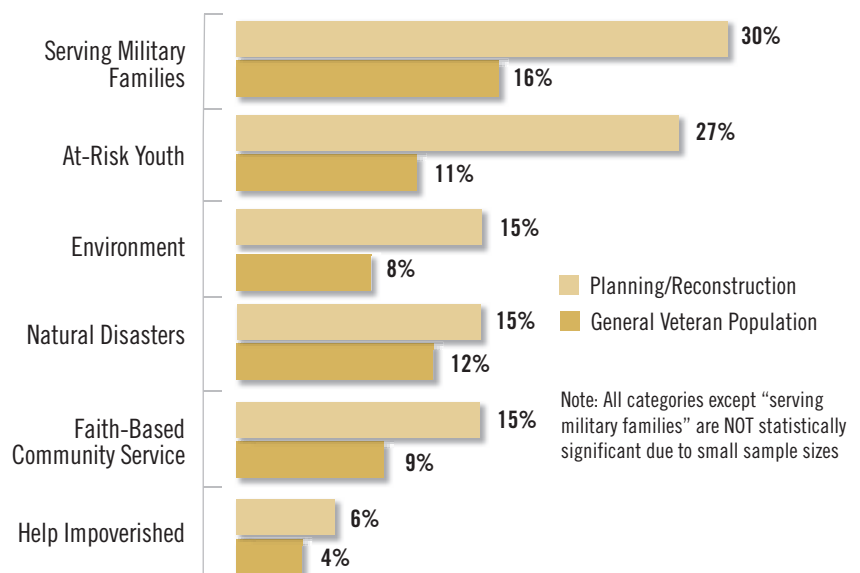
Finally, these data highlight a correlation between what the veteran did while serving in Iraq and/or Afghanistan, and the rates at which they volunteer upon returning home, as well as the issues about which they care most. The skills a service member uses in Baghdad are not left behind when he or she comes home to Baltimore, Topeka, or San Diego.

Veterans who principally did reconstruction work, interrogation, negotiation or combat were more likely to volunteer than those who had other tasks. Furthermore, there is a correlation between the veteran's role in Iraq and/or Afghanistan and what issues they engage in when they return home. For example, there is a high correlation between veterans who did reconstruction efforts abroad who want to serve military families and at-risk youth upon returning home.

In addition, being a part of "hearts and minds projects," which seek to build community institutions like schools and health clinics in war torn areas, gave these veterans unique skill sets, ones that would be highly useful in disaster relief and environmental efforts. Additionally, veterans who were involved with interrogation and negotiation had high levels of volunteering. These veterans, along with those veterans who spoke informally with Iraqis and Afghans, had high rates of volunteering with at-risk youth back home.

This specific data should help community organizations and veterans service organizations work to better serve and make "the ask" of this generation of veterans. The data is instructive in what service opportunities will be most appealing to these veterans and how we can use their military service to better match them with service opportunities here at home. Better understanding the skill sets this generation of veterans has to offer their communities and harnessing them to meet pressing needs will be crucial to ensuring each and every OIF/OEF veteran has a strong transition home.

VOLUNTEER INTERESTS OF OIF/OEF VETERANS WHO DID RECONSTRUCTION WORK



MIKE PEREIRA OIF/OEF VETERAN

Mike Pereira is a 27-year-old combat veteran of the US Army who has deployed for combat duty in both Iraq and Afghanistan as a sergeant. He continued his work as a contractor in Iraq for an additional year following his tour in Central Asia. During this time Mike worked as an analyst supporting multiple special operations elements throughout the theater. After two consecutive years in the desert, Mike returned to Bellingham, Washington with his fiancé to attend college and continue his life as a civilian. Within a month, however, Mike began experiencing symptoms associated with a complex anxiety disorder compounded by Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

After months of adjusting to his new civilian environment and dealing with the effects of PTSD, Mike was helped by fellow veterans to determine the next steps he would take. Doing *The Mission Continues* fellowship with the Whatcom Volunteer Center, Mike has been able to help lead over 50 fellow veterans in continued community service projects assisting those with the most need in Whatcom County, Washington. By providing service to others, Mike has been able to re-establish himself in his community and regain the confidence he once had as a soldier in uniform. Mike has gone on to serve as *The Mission Continues* Fellowship Coordinator.

IMPACT STATEMENT — IN HIS OWN WORDS

The majority of my wounds are inside my mind. When I was in the desert several events occurred that my mind would not register. Not only did my mind go numb but later, when I tried to figure out what I was seeing, smelling, etc., in order to make sense of it, I had to abandon almost everything I was told up to that point what was "right."

To this day I see my role in the veteran community as targeting the enemy so the troop can come home. I cannot do anything else because nothing else means anything. I cannot work at a store or sell cars. I cannot study law and be a lawyer. I still feel responsible for those I feel are on my watch. I have spent hours and hours in jails, psych-wards, slums, homeless shelters, Canadian AWOL safe-houses, the VA, etc. My fellow veterans are there and I need to give it everything I have to bring them home.

I would tell others that deal with this sort of thing to first be relieved that they are not the only ones going through it. We did the desert together; we can do this together. Just because you don't wear the uniform anymore doesn't mean that you can hang up your obligation. Reach out to others. When you help others you help yourself. Hang in there, you're needed to make this world a better place. Start with your neighbor, friend, or family member. Start small and you'll see the feelings and confidence you once

had will return to you. We are warriors and must live our lives like it.

Veterans are today's gateway to truth and tomorrow's way to a better community. Veterans are responsible to continue their service in their lives and the communities around them. Service and sacrifice in the military are no different than the service and sacrifice all citizens must make in order to ensure a strong and healthy community body. A wounded veteran sets the example with a higher standard and takes away the excuse of others that will not or feel they cannot step up. They achieve in the face of obstacle and that makes them an inspiration to the human heart.

“ Just because you don't wear the uniform anymore doesn't mean that you can hang up your obligation. Reach out to others. When you help others you help yourself. ”

UNLEASHING THE TALENTS OF VETERANS

This newest generation of veterans is a civic asset and numerous stakeholders have clear roles to play in ensuring that all veterans return home with meaningful opportunities to serve again. This report provides recommendations at the national, state and community levels. Within these recommendations are roles for everyone — for veterans, nonprofit and faith leaders, business executives, elected officials and other Americans across our nation.

In the Nation

CHANGE NATIONAL DIALOGUE AROUND VETERANS

We must work to foster a culture that views veterans as important contributors to communities across America, not just challenges to address. As one of the veterans surveyed said, “We are not charity cases, we are assets.” While veterans and their families do need essential services, these veterans are also leaders with skills and talents to share. We should further honor their service by asking them to continue to serve their communities and nation. In so doing, we will help their transition home and use their skills to strengthen our country.

Members of the military often join because they are service-oriented.²⁹ We have an opportunity to help these honorable men and women process their experiences and put to good use their skills and leadership abilities. It is vital for our service men and women, their families, and communities, to recognize that everyone is affected by war and combat. Our military members are experiencing normal reactions to abnormal, horrific circumstances. With proper guidance and counseling, the majority will be able to return to normal, healthy, and productive lives in which they can continue to give back to others.

Giving back allows veterans to recognize how far they have come. It is therapeutic to help someone else and research shows that volunteer work boosts self-esteem, by helping people feel good about contributing to the community, while reducing anxiety and depression and promoting happiness and well-being.³⁰

Action Steps:

1. Veterans, policymakers, and leaders from various sectors should organize efforts around treating veterans as civic assets in their communities. All avenues to invest leaders in an understanding of the attitudes and behaviors of veterans toward their civic lives and the common solutions to unleash their talents should be undertaken — including congressional hearings, White House conferences, summits of state and local officials, and public forums among veterans service organizations, non-profit and faith-based

institutions, and communities. In all cases, the perspectives of OIF/OEF veterans should be central to the discussions and each forum should promote not only dialogue but action to integrate our newest generation of veterans into the communities to which they return home.

2. After 9/11, the USA Freedom Corps in The White House organized an effort called “On the Home Front” to provide support to military families who faced lengthy and repeated deployments of a loved one, such as keeping small businesses operating, help with tax preparation and home repairs, and meeting every day needs of families and children, such as child care. Such an effort, working again with key government agencies and veteran service organizations, should be resurrected and scaled, using OIF/OEF veterans themselves as a corps of volunteers for such purposes, given their strong interest in helping military families. We believe such a concrete effort will help spark the national dialogue around veterans as civic assets.
3. A national public service announcement campaign should be conducted to educate the public on how returning veterans from all wars are civic assets to their country and should be better integrated into their communities to share their leadership and talents and inspire other generations to serve their nation. Such a public service announcement campaign can show the public how engaging veterans in community life can be one of the most significant contributions a person or organization can make to a returning veteran.

DE-STIGMATIZING PTSD/TBI, WHILE MAINTAINING HIGH SCREENING

According to a recent survey conducted by the RAND Corporation, more than 300,000 veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan suffer from PTSD. The vast majority of them continue to lead productive, meaningful lives.³¹ PTSD is rarely an all-or-nothing disability;

its effects vary greatly, and only the most severe cases should raise concerns among organizations seeking volunteers. Many nonprofits already have screening processes in place to identify mental health disorders. These same procedures can be used to identify veterans with severe and debilitating cases of PTSD.

Men and women in the military generally value and are drawn to service. After they return from deployment, continuing to serve within volunteer organizations makes sense for them. As one veteran said, "Service is really what veterans want to do. A lot of them leave the military reluctantly. They were injured, medically retired, or retired for family reasons. But those people don't want to sell insurance or work in retail. They won't find the same sense of purpose they had in the military. If you put them in a place where they can be in front of children and serve, they can really make a difference. I wish there were more opportunities like that." While there may be a small percentage of people with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or a Traumatic Brain Injury who may pose a danger to themselves or others, this should not preclude all veterans with PTSD or TBI from volunteer opportunities. Organizations should utilize trained mental health professionals to assist with screening potential volunteers.

Today's veterans face hiring challenges, partially because of the economy and partially because of the stigma associated with post-traumatic stress. By enlisting returning veterans as volunteers, we help reduce the stigma, instead of reinforcing it. This stigma is what prevents veterans from seeking the help they need.

Action Steps:

1. Educate nonprofit organizations on the need to de-stigmatize PTSD and put in place appropriate procedures to engage veterans in volunteer service opportunities by asking the local Department of Veterans Affairs or nonprofits like Give An Hour for information regarding PTSD and the unfair stigmatization of veterans. Standard information, questions and answers, and protocols for screening volunteers should be developed and widely disseminated.

2. Nonprofit, community-serving, and other organizations should recognize the power of engaging veterans in their missions and treat veterans as you would any other category of volunteer in terms of background checks and other screenings.
3. Commission new research that brings together the existing evidence that shows that volunteer service and civic engagement will benefit the veteran in multiple ways, including improved job prospects, health and well-being, and family stability.

VETERANS SERVICE CORPS

With the passage of the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, the service field is poised for unprecedented growth and impact. With an effort to increase national service slots from 75,000 to 250,000 in the next five years, and the leveraging of millions of Americans in traditional volunteering through that expansion, veterans have an important role to play. For the first time in the history of national service, there is a specific allocation for veterans in a new Veterans Service Corps and fellowships for veterans.

The Veterans Service Corps represents a sea change we envision: to transform the view of the returning veteran from someone to be served into someone whose extraordinary service can continue. The Veterans Service Corps exists to provide veterans with opportunities to continue serving their communities and their country. It leverages the experience and social reach of other service organizations to maximize impact and expand veterans' opportunities nationwide. It also raises awareness among the general population about the roles veterans can continue to play as assets to our nation.

Participation in the Veterans Service Corps should be open to all military veterans, regardless of the length and dates of service and regardless of their age. The Corps should make special efforts to engage younger veterans and those who are wounded and/or disabled. In order to facilitate the greatest level of participation, the Veterans Service Corps should use its new structure to offer veterans an array of service options, from hour-of-service

events for traditional volunteers to full-time or part-time national service opportunities. It should also include meaningful service opportunities on a range of issues beyond serving other veterans or military families, which appropriately remain a top national priority. The interests identified by OIF/OEF veterans in this report — at-risk youth and education, disaster relief, helping older Americans, environmental conservation, poverty and homelessness, and others — should form the basis of expanded service opportunities to engage veterans.

The Veterans Service Corps should develop close partnerships among key federal agencies and offices, such as the Corporation for National and Community Service, the White House Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and the U.S. Department of Defense (especially the Warrior Transition Units and Wounded Warrior Units). The Corps should also foster collaborations with nonprofit organizations that have engagement of veterans as part of their missions and with businesses, faith-based institutions and other organizations that can help establish the veteran in communities with new opportunities to serve.

Action Steps:

1. Build and implement the Veterans Service Corps by providing high quality service opportunities for veterans that reflect the perspectives of OIF/OEF veterans on how and when they would like to serve their communities and the skills they could bring to various efforts. The service opportunities available through the Veterans Service Corps should reflect the specific interests that OIF/OEF veterans shared, such as working with at-risk youth and on education, helping prepare the nation for disaster relief, assisting older Americans, conserving the environment, and addressing poverty and homelessness.
2. The Veterans Service Corps should also work in partnership with the new Education Corps, Health Corps, Opportunity Corps, Clean Energy Corps, and the existing Citizen Corps for disaster relief and

homeland security to engage veterans in those national and community service efforts as well.

3. Forge partnerships among key government agencies and offices, as well as community institutions, to identify meaningful service opportunities for veterans.

WOUNDED WARRIOR TRANSITION

Veterans tell us that service gives purpose and direction to returning veterans, while strengthening ties to the communities they seek to rejoin. For wounded veterans in particular, service should be made an essential element of their transition to civilian life. It is important we make service an institutional component of every wounded service member's recovery. So often, the doctors who work with these veterans highlight what they see veterans need the most. Dr. Harold Wain of Walter Reed said, "These guys are very proud of what they've done, and they don't want people to feel sorry for them. They want people to support them."³² These units can build on current programs such as *The Mission Continues'* Warriors in Service project.

All too often Wounded Warrior United and Warrior Transition Units do not have the proper infrastructure to give wounded veterans the chance to serve again. That said, there are some hopeful examples of units that have integrated service into their core mission. The Wounded Warrior Unit at Marine Corps Base Hawaii, used to engage in bi-weekly days of service. Marines who were able would go into the community to take on projects as part of *The Mission Continues'* Warriors in Service initiative. They built a horse trail at an equitherapy center; they refurbished a 5-inch Marine gun on the Battleship Missouri; and they volunteered at a charity golf outing. High turnover in leadership, however, can make initiatives like this hard to maintain. The field grade officers who are charged with command of these units face numerous challenges. From media attention, to suicide prevention, to general soldier behavioral issues, they can easily be overwhelmed just meeting the requirements of their higher commanders. We need to ensure it is easier for officers to integrate service into their units and

ensure they have the proper community nonprofit supports to have meaningful service opportunities for all our veterans.

Action Step:

1. The Army's Warrior Transition Units, and the Marine Corps' Wounded Warrior Units, should incorporate service as a key element of the recovery and transition process. These units are designed to transition wounded service members to productive, meaningful lives beyond their military service. These units should track the progress wounded veterans are making as a result of their greater engagement in service and civic life.

ANNUAL SURVEY OF VETERANS AND CIVIC LIFE

This is the first-ever nationally representative civic data set of OIF/OEF veterans, but it should not be the last. Service members are returning home and being deployed every day. We need regular information on how their transitions are going, who in the community is reaching out to them, how they are finding meaningful service opportunities, and what impact that chance to serve again has on their communities and on the veterans themselves, such as employment, health, family stability, and other indicators of successful integration into civilian life.

Action Steps:

1. The National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC), a Congressionally-chartered nonprofit created after World War II to strengthen citizenship on the home front and that annually releases the Civic Health Index, should make returning veterans a central focus of its annual survey. The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act gave the National Conference on Citizenship the authority, working in partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service, to issue annual reports on a set of national civic health indicators collected every year by the U.S. Census Bureau. The NCoC should test what indicators relating to veterans might be useful to include

in the annual collection of civic health data by the U.S. Census.

2. Veterans continue to return home from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In order to keep the survey data collected for this report up to date and as robust as possible, we invite veterans who did not have a chance to take this survey to do so by going to: <http://CEVetSurvey.questionpro.com>.

SOCIAL INNOVATION

By engaging veterans in social entrepreneurship, and by directing social entrepreneurs' efforts toward veterans and their families, communities across the country and around the world will be strengthened. Social entrepreneurs develop innovative approaches to address critical social needs. They recognize and resourcefully pursue opportunities to solve problems; work closely with partners in the private sector, philanthropy, and government, and engage Americans in community and national service.

Social entrepreneurs come from all walks of life. They often begin with an "entrepreneurial insight," a new way of doing business that, if proven effective, could transform an entire field. By pursuing this insight with a passion for innovative, impact-driven approaches, and a commitment to accountability, veterans have the potential to tackle pressing challenges in areas such as workforce development, education, and public health. Veterans also can engage in social entrepreneurship by serving in organizations led by social entrepreneurs. Many of these organizations rely on citizen service to deliver their programs. By bringing their diverse talents and unique skill sets to the field, veterans could provide critical support to these organizations in their efforts to solve social problems.

The work of social entrepreneurs has begun to transform society, by drawing top talent into the teaching profession, pioneering the field of national service, changing the ways we make charitable contributions, and impacting many other spheres.³³ Yet, while many social entrepreneurs already address critical areas of need for veterans such as education, employment, families services, housing,

and disabilities services, much more can be done. By focusing their programs on veterans and their families, social entrepreneurs can use their innovative, proven approaches to help veterans overcome many challenges. Furthermore, by ensuring this newest generation of veterans has ample opportunities to become social entrepreneurs, we will draw on their vast skill set to address our most pressing problems in new and creative ways.

Action Step:

1. Raise awareness in the social entrepreneurship community about this generation of veterans — their attitudes and behaviors about civic engagement and the unique skills they bring from their military training and experience. This new data will enable social entrepreneurs to both chart innovations around the needs of veterans and their families, while also utilizing veterans as assets in their efforts. Organizations like New Profit and Echoing Green, as well as the White House Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation, will be crucial to integrating veterans into efforts that promote social innovation.

In the States

REPLICATE SUCCESSFUL MODELS AMONG GOVERNORS

A nonpartisan coalition in Minnesota has launched a campaign called “Warrior to Citizen” to ensure returning veterans are fully engaged in the communities to which they return home. Government, faith-based institutions, the military and business are all represented in the coalition, but there is a strong sense that the most important coalition members will be the citizens themselves. This effort includes a virtual community for OIF/OEF veterans, a job fair that focuses on the skills veterans gained in Iraq/Afghanistan, community dialogues, and financial planning support. It challenges all Minnesotans to think actively and creatively about how returning veterans can contribute their skills and insights to organizations, businesses, schools, local governments, and communities as citizens. By engaging veterans in education, faith, civil service, and

community life, Minnesota offers veterans a unique way to reconnect with the communities they left behind. A subcommittee of the Warrior to Citizen Campaign is coordinating a fall workshop, exclusively for veterans, that provides safe space and confidentiality where their stories can be told and acknowledged.

The Washington Commission for National and Community Service (WCNCS) has partnered with the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) to launch “VetCorps” that will engage 32 AmeriCorps members in a one-year pilot program serving veterans, service members, and their families. AmeriCorps members serving in the VetCorps will tap the knowledge, skills and abilities of veterans by engaging them in AmeriCorps national service positions; engage veterans and soldiers assigned to the Warrior Transition Battalion in community-based efforts to meet the needs of military families; connect with OIF/OEF Veterans attending colleges and universities in Washington State so they can organize, partner, volunteer or serve on local service projects; connect OIF/OEF Veterans who are recovering from Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) to engage them in service opportunities to aid others in recovery from TBI; and utilize AmeriCorps members to organize and publicize volunteer opportunities for active duty military and members of the national guard and reserve that would enable corps members to qualify to receive the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal and/or the President’s Volunteer Service Award.

These state models point the way for states looking to better engage their returning veterans, especially as local communities can take ownership of facets of a state plan. By looking to not only provide the necessary services to veterans, but also to enlist veterans as crucial citizens in the communities to which they return home, they are ensuring their states will fulfill their commitment to the men and women who have served in their active duty, national guard, and reserve installations.

INCORPORATE VETERANS INTO THE CITIES OF SERVICE INITIATIVE

Mayors across America are mobilizing volunteers to help tackle local challenges,

especially in tough budget times. Veterans, who have unique skills and leadership qualities, should be systematically engaged in these new service efforts. Cities of Service is a bi-partisan coalition of the mayors of large and small cities from across our country working together to engage citizens and address the great challenges of our time. Founded in New York City on September 10, 2009, the coalition will respond to the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act’s historic call to action. As mayors draft comprehensive plans and look for local leaders to help drive these initiatives, they should look to veterans in their community.

Action Steps:

1. Explore with Governors the opportunity to create models similar to Warrior to Citizen, VetCorps or Veterans Service Corps at the state and community levels, drawing on both public and private support, including grassroots campaigns from citizens to support service opportunities for veterans in their local communities. These models should work in partnership with the ten community pilots we recommend below.
2. Incorporate veterans in the Cities of Service initiative, matching veterans with service opportunities that reflect their interests and skills and drawing on the leadership skills of veterans to help organize and lead service projects.

In Communities

NONPROFITS/MILITARY WORKING TOGETHER IN 10 COMMUNITIES

Although OIF/OEF veterans represent less than one percent of the American population, their spouses, children, parents and siblings number close to 20 million and are present in every community. A 2008 poll found that 74 percent of Americans between the ages of 18 and 29 said that they knew someone who had served in Iraq or Afghanistan.³⁴ Because the skill sets and interests of the veterans are diverse, forming a community campaign to reach these veterans and offer them a chance to serve makes the most sense.

We recommend 10 community pilots,

many in places where there is a strong military presence — cities like Norfolk, Virginia; San Diego, California; Fayetteville, North Carolina; Jacksonville, Florida; San Antonio, Texas; Clarksville, Tennessee; Oak Harbor, Washington; Tacoma, Washington; and Fort Riley, Kansas. It is also crucial that these pilots include rural areas where returning veterans often face the highest sense of isolation. In communities where military bases are few and far between and hostility to the war runs high, it can be especially difficult for veterans to feel embraced.

These pilots should be partnerships among the military, nonprofits, veterans service organizations, faith-based groups, and elected officials that aim to ensure veterans have meaningful opportunities to serve alongside fellow citizens. These pilots will enable communities to work towards a model of care that addresses the needs of our veterans across their lifetime, one that is integrated and comprehensive. By creating this type of comprehensive system of care — especially one that speaks to veterans' interest in service — we increase the likelihood that they will be happy, healthy, and productive. We will also save our nation millions of dollars that go to medical care, mental health treatment, suicide, and lost productivity.

Furthermore, organizations that provide services to veterans and their families should make an effort to include an opportunity to serve with every service provided. Give an Hour, a national nonprofit providing free counseling and other mental health services to our military community, encourages those who veterans receive help to give back. Though there is no requirement, Give an Hour recognizes the importance of offering individuals who receive help and assistance the opportunity to "pay it forward."

By showing how a local community can embrace veterans that return home, in large part by making meaningful asks for them to serve again, and helping veterans find those opportunities, we will better understand what a model of successful engagement looks like.

Action Steps:

1. An organization with national reach should help galvanize this movement of community-based

pilots and provide tools to communities, such as a guidebook to use in drafting a strategic plan, that collects and shares best practices, and offers technical assistance and training to coalitions on the ground.

2. Community leaders should initiate public campaigns to reach out to and identify veterans who need to be better engaged in civic activities, build partnerships to better enlist veterans in meaningful service, and set concrete goals for their enlistment in volunteer service and integration back into community life.

FAITH-BASED INSTITUTIONS

Faith-based institutions are present in every community and this generation of veterans, like many Americans, are connected to them. The free response section of the survey was filled with anecdotes of the roles churches played, both while the service member was deployed, and while they transitioned home. Churches helped service members' spouses with everything from babysitting, to mowing the lawn, raking leaves, and making utility bill payments. During the transition home, veterans said that churches often continued that support with counseling services. Beyond offering these supports, faith-based institutions are poised to be on the front lines of re-integrating these veterans into communities. They can offer veterans meaningful service opportunities and spark conversations in their congregations to raise awareness of who these veterans are and the skills they have to share.

Action Steps:

1. One weekend in 2010, every church, mosque and synagogue in America should encourage the minister, rabbi or imam to dedicate a portion of the service to introducing a service member to the congregation. The faith leader could highlight the service member's role in the community and suggest that civilian members of the congregation, and military members of the congregation take the time to share a meal together in the next month.

2. Faith-based institutions should intentionally reach out to veterans in their congregations with meaningful service opportunities for them and their families. They should also strongly consider veterans when looking to fill leadership positions in their service outreach. Organizations such as the Interfaith Youth Core could organize service efforts among veterans of different faiths.

COLLEGE CAMPUSES

This year's passage of the GI Bill marked a historic investment in a new generation of veterans and recommitment to the education, empowerment, and engagement of our civic and military leaders. It is crucial that we work to bridge the gap between the important advocacy work being done nationally and the recipients of that important funding on a local level. The most important step we can take to ensure the effective implementation of the GI Bill is to work in local coalitions that include campuses, military services, faith-based communities, and family service programs to educate the service men and women on the process of taking advantage of the GI Bill. These coalitions should work in partnership with campus administrators, who must recognize the tremendous talent veterans from this Millennial Generation have, and plan accordingly to engage all of their students, including OIF/OEF veterans, in leadership-building community service by providing new service opportunities and strengthening and expanding the ones they already have.

On a national level, we must push for expedited payment of all tuition subsidies. Given the already fragile economic state of young Americans, we cannot further delay this much needed and much deserved assistance to our veterans. Our elected officials, local and federal, must make this a priority. Americans, as the grassroots support behind these veterans, must demand it.

Furthermore, we should make service a part of the Yellow Ribbon Program, which is designed to close the gap between GI Bill benefits for public and private universities. For some private universities,

the gap between what the GI Bill covers and tuition can be almost \$40,000 a year.³⁵ As the Department of Veterans Affairs works to ensure college campuses have the resources they need, it will be crucial that service opportunities exist for veterans. This will be the shared responsibility of the college communities, Veterans Affairs and the veterans themselves. As the President of Trinity College noted, "Beyond the money, the real challenge for universities will be deciding what supports veterans need and how to develop it." As Brian Hawthorne, a student at George Washington University noted, veterans face different issues than other students. They are often juggling young families, jobs, injuries that might make it tough to get around campus or more difficult to learn, and emotional scars from combat.³⁶ Service is a foundational element of college campuses and can be common ground for students and student veterans to meet on.

Finally, when Congress passed the Federal Work Study program to enable students to pay off their college loans by working on campuses and in communities, one of the principal purposes of the legislation was to enable students to serve in community organizations to help meet needs. It was not simply intended to put students to work cleaning up college dorms and cafeterias, as many students do today. Veterans represent a powerful pool of volunteers on college campuses that could be engaged in service to local non-profits and other community organizations.

Action Steps:

1. Build coalitions around the GI Bill to support veterans returning to college campuses, and ensure those coalitions think critically about service opportunities for student veterans.
2. Share best practices of colleges that are successful in integrating students into campus life, especially through leadership and service opportunities. Organizations like Campus Compact, an organization dedicated to promoting community service on college campuses, would be well positioned to facilitate this.

3. Ramp up the community-serving opportunities of the Federal Work Study program on college campuses and make special efforts to engage OIF/OEF veterans on campus in leading or participating in such service activities.

TECHNOLOGIES FOR MILLENNIAL VETERANS

This newest generation of Veterans includes hundreds of thousands of members of the Millennial generation; a generation that is 80 million strong and technologically savvy.³⁷ Those traits will empower our service men and women to use existing social networks, and create their own, to address unique needs while abroad and when returning home. Current figures estimate that 76 percent of Millennials use the internet on a daily basis, and project that 90 percent of their generation will use it on a daily basis by 2011.³⁸ There is an opportunity in this technological age to engage veterans from the platforms from which they already communicate and the groups to which they already belong, whether it is on Twitter, Facebook or a veterans-only social network such as Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America's Community of Veterans.

Technology also provides the opportunity to further stretch the Millennial generation's definition of service, through new applications that allow users to contact their elected officials, donate money, virtually tutor a child, or connect within our global community. It is clear from this data that returning veterans are asking to be engaged in meaningful community service that builds upon their previous service, and technology has a pivotal and important role in creating those opportunities and sustaining those networks. Veterans in our survey also signaled their strong interest in continuing to serve side-by-side with their fellow veterans. Technology can provide the links to bring veterans back together to engage in this service with one another.

On November 11, 2009, the Veterans Innovation Center, in partnership with Military.com launched the "Warrior Gateway," a veterans branded one-stop service

clearinghouse that allows veterans to both search for service opportunities in their communities that match their interests and register to be notified when service opportunities that match their interests are posted.

Action Steps:

1. Ensure that organizations looking to engage OIF/OEF veterans meet them where they are: online. Nonprofit and other community organizations should work in partnership with organizations such as Military.com to ensure that service opportunities are available to veterans online. Other means of online communication should be utilized to help veterans engage in social networking, form MeetUp groups, and connect with their fellow veterans to serve.
2. A summit on Technology and the Veteran should be held to bring together the most innovative thinkers and organizations around this question: How do we use technology to enable veterans to recreate communities of veterans who can communicate with one another, highlight their needs and those of military families, and find opportunities to serve together in communities?

MEDALS OF RECOGNITION

The Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal, (MOVSM), established in 1993, recognizes those members of the military (active duty, reserve, and national guard) who perform substantial volunteer service to the local community above and beyond the duties required as a member of the United States Armed Forces. The medal stipulates that the volunteer service must be made in a sustained and direct nature towards the civilian community, must be significant in nature to produce tangible results, and must reflect favorably on the military service and the United States Department of Defense (DoD).

The President's Volunteer Service Award was created in 2003 to provide Presidential recognition to Americans who made significant contributions of time serving in their communities. Nonprofit organizations certify that volunteers serve

a certain number of hours, such as 100 hours of service, to qualify for Presidential recognition. Such recognition could be provided to veterans and incorporated into the array of service commendations they wear on their uniforms.

It is important that we raise the awareness of these medals and awards in civilian communities, so that nonprofits that are grateful for the service members who volunteer can alert the appropriate person in the military command that recognition is deserved. It is also important that we raise awareness in the military that these awards exist and should be awarded consistently to deserving service members. The definition of volunteer service is left intentionally vague, allowing for a wide variety of activities and volunteer duties that would qualify a service member for

the MOVSM or the President's Volunteer Service Award. There is no official minimum time commitment required for the MOVSM, however most awarding authorities require that the volunteer service must exceed three years in length and/or 100 hours of service. Since the decoration is classified as a service medal, there is no citation that accompanies the award, however most commanders will present a personal letter to those who receive the medal.

Action Step:

1. Ensure more nonprofits are aware of both honors — the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal and the President's Volunteer Service Award — and the steps they can take to ensure veterans receive

proper recognition for their service to the community. Make it easier for nonprofits to nominate service members for these two honors and more consistent for all branches to bestow those honors on deserving individuals.

Conclusion

We hope this report will prompt a national dialogue about the civic roles that veterans can plan as they return home and the obligations of our nation, states and communities to reach out to them in effective ways. We need robust public policies, new initiatives, and the strengthening of existing structures to unleash the civic talents of our nation's veterans for the benefit of our country and themselves.

METHODOLOGY

The Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom Veterans Survey (OIF/OEF Veterans Survey) was designed by Civic Enterprises with extensive inputs from veterans themselves, practitioners, advocates, and policymakers who work with OIF/OEF veterans. This survey was intended to better understand OIF/OEF veterans' assets, potentials, and needs so that their skill sets and willingness to serve can be fully harnessed once they return home and veterans could be better integrated into civilian communities throughout the United States.

The OIF/OEF Veteran Survey was administered online, using a snowball recruitment strategy. The survey was completed online by a total of 779 OIF and/or OEF veterans. The rate at which veterans who started the survey completed it was 67 percent. The survey was live from January 27, 2009 to March 9, 2009. In snowball sampling method, a core group of participants reach out to their own networks to expand the sample. At the 95 percent confidence interval, the statistical margin of error associated with the sample is ± 3.5 . Civic Enterprises worked with more than 30 leaders who reached out to their networks of other OIF/OEF veterans. This methodology was used because it

is considered the best method to reach a target population that is normally difficult to identify, such as recent veterans. In order to correct for under- and over-representation by subgroups of respondents in the raw sample, the raw data were weighted by age group, gender, race (white or non-white), Latino/Non-Latino, college degree, and rank. The data were stratified to match the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of American (IAVA) data on the Demographic Profile of *Service Members Ever Deployed Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom*.

The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) assisted Civic Enterprises in data management and analysis. Though weighting allowed for a population estimate of the OIF/OEF veterans from this sample, the sample cannot be considered a comprehensive representation of the entire OIF/OEF population, as bias is sometimes attributed with the snowball sampling strategy. Because we do not have Census data specifically on OIF/OEF veterans, we also lack an accurate comparison base. However, it is the best available and largest dataset on civic engagement and attitudes toward service among OIF/OEF veterans to date.

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The views reflected in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Target and the Case Foundation.

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Mary is Chief of Staff at Civic Enterprises, working on issues ranging from education reform and poverty, to national service and civic engagement. Before joining Civic Enterprises, she was a Governors Fellow for Governor Mitch Daniels of Indiana. She graduated with distinction from the University of Virginia. Mary is married to Ensign Ryan Yonkman, United States Navy. He is currently stationed in Pensacola, Florida for flight training.

Mary would like to dedicate this report to her grandfather, William F. Welch. Mr. Welch served in the Pacific during World War II, aboard the U.S.S. Indianapolis (CA-35), as a Navy Supply Corps Officer. He returned home to Indiana where he has lived a long and distinguished civic life. This report was inspired by his example, and the millions of veterans like him who have given a lifetime of service to their country, in uniform and out.

JOHN MARSHALL BRIDGELAND

John is President & CEO of Civic Enterprises. He works on issues such as the high school dropout crisis, national parks, and malaria. He is vice chair of Malaria No More. Most recently, John served as Assistant to the President of the United States and the first Director of the USA Freedom Corps. Prior to that, he served as Director of the Domestic Policy Council at the White House. He began his professional career by practicing law at Davis Polk & Wardwell. John graduated with honors in government from Harvard University and received his J.D. from the University of Virginia School of Law.

John would like to dedicate this report to his uncle, Colonel Patrick Martin Fallon, who served in World War II, flew 125 combat missions in Korea and volunteered to serve again in Vietnam, where he was Vice Commander of the 56th Special Operations Wing. He flew 100 combat missions in Vietnam, received a Purple Heart and a Distinguished Flying Cross. On July 4, 1969, Colonel Fallon was shot down from his A-1 Skyraider and has been missing in action ever since. He was civically very active and did not have the opportunity to return home to his wife, two daughters and the life of his community. This report is dedicated to him and the more than one million veterans like him who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

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