

# POLICY AGENDA

## 2021

**ISSUE 01**

### Provide a Strong National Defense with a Prudent Foreign Policy

#### **Complete a Full Afghanistan Withdrawal and End Endless Wars**

The war in Afghanistan has cost America dearly and no longer serves vital U.S. interests. Our troops achieved our principal objectives long ago, but 19 years of nation-building continues to put them at risk while distracting us from more important priorities. It is vital the president and Congress preserve the conditions of the 2020 Afghanistan agreement by completing a full withdrawal. Policymakers should also support a strategy of greater realism and restraint by drawing down other open-ended deployments, such as those in Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and the Horn of Africa, which lack clearly achievable objectives, in favor of focusing on core U.S. interests.

#### **Rebalance Constitutional War Powers**

Congress has shied away from its Article I duty to authorize and oversee military action, skewing the constitutional balance of war powers. Congress should reform the War Powers resolution to require future Authorizations for the Use of Military Force (AUMFs) to automatically sunset and more narrowly identify the mission at hand and its geography—not to become blank checks for future military action. Congress should repeal the outdated 2001 and 2002 AUMFs, which have been stretched far beyond their original intent and no longer reflect the issues underlying today's conflicts.

**ISSUE 02**

### Guarantee the Care and Services Promised to our Veterans

#### **Improve Access and Quality of VA Health Care**

Two years into implementation of the VA MISSION Act, major progress has been made to define eligibility, establish networks of community providers, expand the Caregivers Program, and implement the urgent care benefit. For Congress, the VA MISSION Act priorities for 2021 should include providing oversight to ensure compliance with access standards and confirming members of the Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) Commission. To continue progress toward a modern VA system, Congress should also pass legislation to provide full health care choice to service-connected veterans.

#### **Modernize VA Services to Promote Veteran Independence**

Despite generous resources from the VA and DOD to empower veterans once they transition to civilian life, too often barriers hold them back from success. The transition process is bureaucratic, rehabilitation is an afterthought, and the structure of VA disability benefits is long overdue for reform. Congress should start by establishing an independent assessment and expert commission to provide recommendations for reforming disability benefits. The VA should provide necessary services for the seriously injured while promoting policies to help them achieve their full potential.

**ISSUE 03**

### Securing America's Financial Future

#### **Pursue Smart and Sustainable Defense Spending**

The greatest threat to America's safety and future prosperity is our mounting debt, which threatens our ability to fund a strong national defense. In the National Defense Authorization Act of 2022 and through the appropriations process, Congress should work to secure our interests by putting defense spending on a more sustainable course. Ending Overseas Contingency Operations budget gimmicks, avoiding excess acquisitions, supporting an overdue BRAC round, continuing the DOD audit, and ending military engagements not critical to our national interests will aid this process. These savings can help support modernization and a reoriented U.S. force structure that better protects vital interests by harnessing U.S. strategic advantages.

#### **Protect Veterans Health Care with Responsible VA Spending**

In the last decade, spending at the Department of Veterans Affairs has doubled. Today a new generation of veterans is entering the VA and changes to how the VA prioritizes and delivers care and benefits is overdue. Congress should seek to align VA spending and pursue an external audit of the VA. Too many programs and services are set to autopilot without evaluating their effectiveness or measuring whether they are a good use of VA resources.