

POLICY AGENDA 2022



ISSUE 01

Provide a Strong National Defense with a Prudent Foreign Policy

Complete a Full Iraq Withdrawal and End Endless Wars

The War in Iraq has cost America dearly but has not served our vital interests, distracting us from bigger priorities. Keeping U.S. troops in Iraq exposes them to frequent and unnecessary risk. With ISIS' territorial caliphate defeated, it is time to bring our troops home. Policymakers should also pursue a strategy of realism and restraint by drawing down other open-ended deployments in Syria, Yemen, and the horn of Africa, which lack clearly achievable objectives and are not focused on core U.S. interests. The United States should also avoid new security commitments, such as Ukrainian NATO membership, that risk conflict with capable, nuclear-armed adversaries. Finally, Congress should pursue accountability and ensure we learn from our longest war by supporting the efforts of the Afghanistan War Commission.

Rebalance Constitutional War Powers

Congress has ignored its Article I duty to authorize and oversee military action, increasing the risk of entering unwise conflicts and skewing the balance of war powers.

- **AUMF Repeal:** Congress should repeal the 1991 & 2002 Iraq AUMFs. With our troops out of Afghanistan, Congress should also repeal the 2001 AUMF which authorized the conflict. If replacements are needed, Congress should narrowly write, thoroughly debate, and vote on them. Similarly, lawmakers should honor their constitutional duty to vote on when to send American troops into harm's way by rejecting preemptive AUMFs, which hand the power to declare war to the president.
- **War Powers Reform:** Congress should pass the National Security Powers Act (NSPA) to strengthen war powers, arms sales, and emergency declaration oversight. The NSPA provides better guidelines for future AUMFs, preventing their use as overbroad blank checks for military action.

ISSUE 02

Guarantee the Care and Services Promised to Our Veterans

Improve Access and Quality of Care

Veterans deserve access to quality, timely health care. Reports emerged last year of delayed, denied, and cancelled health care appointments at the VA. The VA's failure to follow the policies, procedures, and training from VA MISSION Act law and regulations require robust oversight. Congress should protect health care choice by codifying the established access standards, confirming members of the Asset and Infrastructure Review commission (AIR), and considering long-term solutions that provide full health care choice.

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 ripe for reform and modernization. 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

Secure America's Financial Future

Pursue Responsible Spending at the Department of Veterans Affairs

Even as the total veteran population shrinks, the annual spending at the VA continues to rise dramatically. 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 periodic independent assessments to audit 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.

Smart and Sustainable DOD Spending Reflecting Prudent Strategy

The greatest threat to America's safety and future prosperity is our mounting debt, which threatens our ability to fund a strong national defense. Sustainable defense spending, driven by strategy that wisely focuses limited resources on core U.S. interests, must be part of the conversation about our nation's fiscal health. The next DOD budget should reflect our reduced obligations now that the war in Afghanistan has ended. As such, Congress should reduce the 2023 DOD topline reduced by \$50 billion — the projected amount staying in Afghanistan another year would have cost U.S. taxpayers.