



# Policy Priorities 2024

In 2024, CVA and its grassroots army will work to protect and expand veterans' health care options, rethink America's foreign policy, and secure the economic foundations of our strength. To achieve these goals, CVA will partner with principled leaders ready to put policy before divisive partisanship.

## Guarantee the care and services promised to our veterans.

**Commit to rigorous VA oversight and accountability:** The Department of Veterans Affairs has systematically failed to follow the requirements of the VA MISSION Act. For years, the VA has pushed veterans away from community care options by manipulating wait time measurements, failing to hold employees accused of misconduct accountable, and diverting administrative resources to other agencies, like ICE and CBP. Congress must ensure the VA follows its mission through robust oversight and personnel accountability legislation.

**Improve access and quality of care by empowering veterans:** The VA MISSION Act offered millions of veterans new pathways to timely and quality care, but too many veterans are still trapped in a broken VA system because the agency has undermined the law. Congress should streamline veterans' access to the treatment options that work best for them and reduce opportunities for VA administrators to deny veterans these opportunities by passing "full choice" legislation.

**Modernize VA services to promote veteran independence:** The DoD and VA devote substantial resources to empowering veterans as they transition to civilian life, but too often, these efforts are ineffective and poorly designed. The bureaucracy of the transition and benefits process is mystifying, and the system is insufficiently attentive to veterans' long-term rehabilitation. Congress should begin a reform conversation by creating an independent assessment and expert commission to provide recommendations, so that the VA can effectively serve injured veterans while helping them achieve their full potential.

## Provide for a strong national defense with prudent foreign policy.

**Ensure alliance commitments advance vital U.S. interests:** America's alliance relationships must be means for advancing U.S. interests, not simply ends in themselves. The United States should maintain friendly relations and cooperate with partners and allies alike, while recognizing where U.S. interests overlap and where they do not.

**Rethink the U.S. Middle Eastern footprint:** In Iraq and Syria, U.S. troops are deployed in isolated and vulnerable positions, handing our adversaries leverage. Our missions in both countries are disconnected from our core security interests but allow our enemies to target U.S. troops more

easily. Policymakers should focus limited American defense resources on the greater threats we face outside of the Middle East and reduce our regional footprint.

**Rebalance constitutional war powers:** Congress has shirked its Constitutional duty to authorize and oversee military action, skewing the balance of war powers and increasing the risk of U.S. entry into unwise conflicts. Congress should reassert its proper role by repealing outdated Authorizations for Use of Military Force and requiring any replacements to feature narrower scope, more detailed reporting, and automatic sunsets.

## Maintain a dynamic economy to support American security.

**Unleash energy abundance to support U.S. foreign policy goals:** American energy abundance strengthens our economy while advancing U.S. security interests. Increased U.S. energy production and exports can reduce our European allies' reliance on Russia and limit American dependence on volatile regions like the Middle East.

**Secure America's financial future by tackling our debt and fiscal uncertainty:** America's mounting \$34 trillion national debt is the greatest long-term threat to our safety and prosperity, threatening the credibility of our security commitments and ability to react to challenges to our vital interests. On current spending trajectories, interest payments could exceed the defense budget as early as 2025. To secure our financial future, we need to overhaul our budgeting process and reduce fiscal uncertainty to safeguard the bedrock of American national power—our dynamic economy.

**Pursue smart, sustainable DoD and VA spending:** Maintaining an effective military and honoring our promises to those who have served are essential to a strong national defense. Unfortunately, our DoD and VA spending patterns are unsustainable and ineffective. The VA's budget has quintupled in the past 20 years even as America's veteran population has declined. Even so, the VA fails to deliver timely and quality treatment, while restricting access to community care options. And despite our \$883 billion defense budget, higher in real terms than peak Cold War spending, our military is overstretched, crippled with maintenance backlogs, and beset by acquisitions disasters. Both agencies need to spend their existing resources better with greater focus on top priorities.