

INFORM. INSPIRE. DEVELOP CIVIC LEADERS.

# THE POLICY CIRCLE

## THE ARMED FORCES



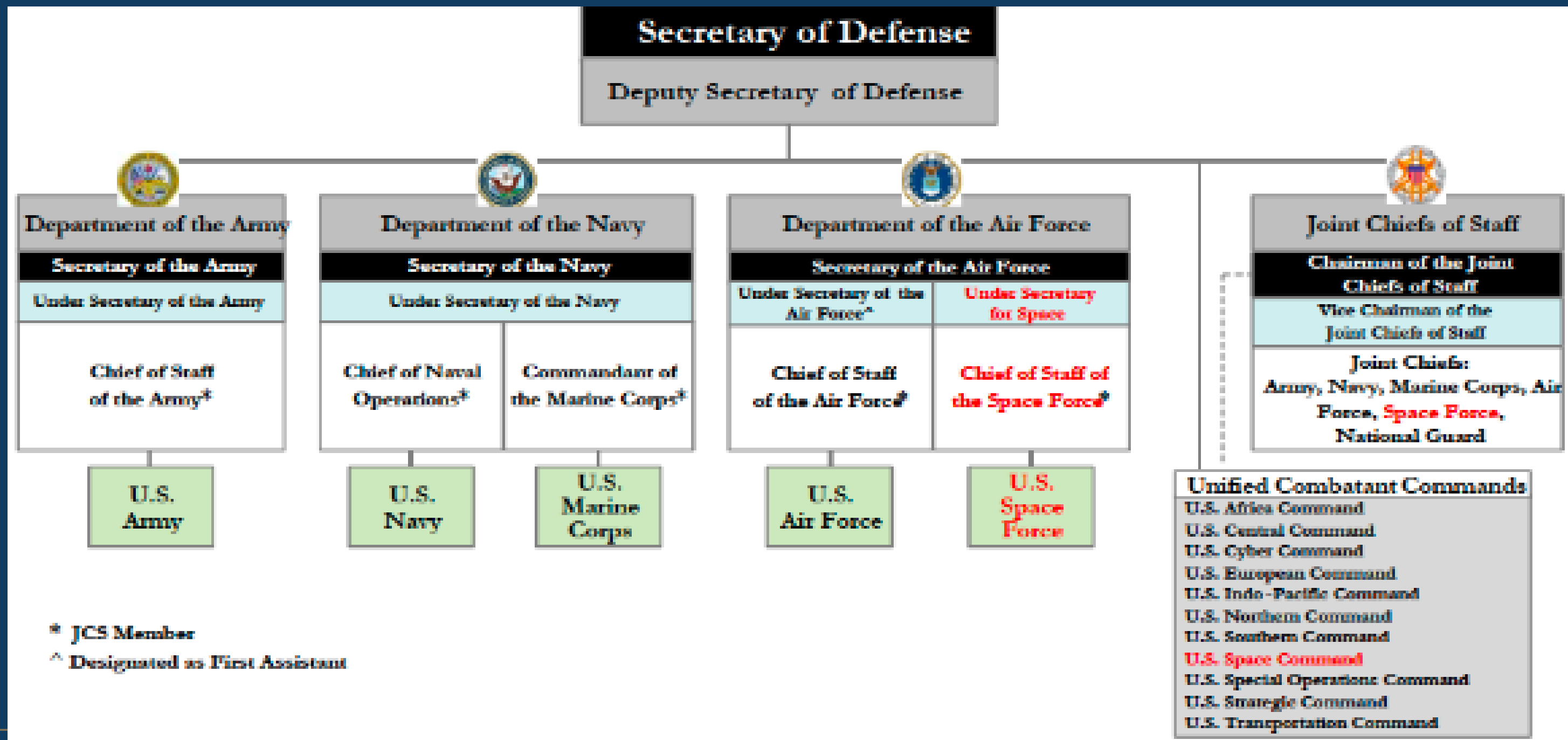
# ➤ UNDERSTANDING AMERICA'S MILITARY ◀

PROVIDING NATIONAL DEFENSE IS ONE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S KEY CONSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES, BUT MANY AMERICANS ARE UNFAMILIAR WITH THE VARIOUS BRANCHES OF THE MILITARY AND THE EXPERIENCES OF SOLDIERS AND VETERANS.

THE MILITARY HAS A LARGE ECONOMIC EFFECT, WITH BILLIONS OF DOLLARS OF THE FEDERAL BUDGET DEDICATED TO DEFENSE AND DEFENSE TECHNOLOGIES THAT FREQUENTLY IMPROVE CIVILIAN LIFE. THE MILITARY ALSO SERVES AS A CAREER PATH FOR MANY AMERICANS, AND PROVIDES FOR CURRENT AND FORMER SERVICE MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES.

# THE BRANCHES OF AMERICA'S MILITARY

AMERICA'S MILITARY HAS CIVILIAN LEADERS. THE PRESIDENT IS THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES. THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE IS SECOND IN COMMAND, AND THE PRESIDENT'S CHIEF ADVISOR ON DEFENSE ISSUES.



# ➤ FACTS TO KNOW ◀

THERE ARE 1.3 MILLION ACTIVE DUTY SERVICE MEMBERS IN THE ARMY, NAVY, AIR FORCE, COAST GUARD, AND SPACE FORCE. ANOTHER ONE MILLION AMERICANS MAKE UP THE BRANCHES' RESERVE FORCES, OR SERVE IN THEIR STATE'S NATIONAL GUARD.

AROUND 18 MILLION AMERICANS, OR 7% OF AMERICANS, ARE VETERANS, AND THE AVERAGE AGE OF AMERICA'S VETERANS IS 65. FROM 1980 TO 2018, THE PROPORTION OF FEMALE VETERANS DOUBLED, FROM 4% TO 9%. WOMEN HAVE BEEN ABLE TO FLY COMBAT MISSIONS AND SERVE ON NAVY SHIPS SINCE THE 1990S, AND SERVE IN DIRECT COMBAT POSITIONS SINCE 2015.

NEARLY 80% OF TODAY'S MILITARY POSITIONS ARE CLASSIFIED AS NONCOMBAT; THESE CAN INCLUDE MECHANICS, ADMINISTRATIVE AND CLERICAL WORKERS, INTELLIGENCE AND COMMUNICATION SPECIALISTS, LINGUISTS, AND MEDICAL PERSONNEL. THE MILITARY ALSO EMPLOYS 600,000 CIVILIAN PERSONNEL IN THE PENTAGON AND EACH OF THE INDIVIDUAL BRANCHES OF THE MILITARY.

THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY (CIA) AND THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY (DHS) ARE SEPARATE AGENCIES THAT DON'T REPORT TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE. NO SINGLE BRANCH OF THE MILITARY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SECURITY OF AMERICA'S NUCLEAR ARSENAL: THAT ROLE IS PLAYED BY BY THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY.

# ➤ GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES ◀

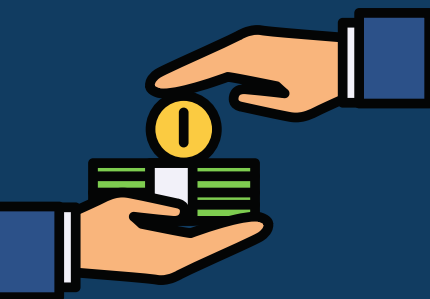
THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE'S (DOD) \$777 BILLION DOLLAR BUDGET FOR FY2022 GOES TOWARD FUNCTIONS RANGING FROM RESEARCH TO PROCUREMENT TO HEALTHCARE FOR ACTIVE DUTY SERVICE MEMBERS. THE DOD IS COMPLEX ENOUGH TO BE CALLED A MINI-GOVERNMENT IN ITS OWN RIGHT, WITH SEVERAL SMALLER AGENCIES THAT SERVE THESE DIFFERENT ROLES.

ABOUT 14.5% OF THE FEDERAL BUDGET WAS DEDICATED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD) IN FY2022. THE DOD TAKES THE THIRD LARGEST PORTION OF GOVERNMENT SPENDING AFTER MEDICARE AND SOCIAL SECURITY, AND ACCOUNTS FOR ABOUT HALF OF ALL DISCRETIONARY SPENDING.



THERE ARE MORE THAN 420 MILITARY BASES ACROSS U.S. STATES AND TERRITORIES WHICH BRING BILLIONS OF DOLLARS INTO LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND PROVIDE THOUSANDS OF JOBS FOR CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES AND CONTRACTORS. IN THE AVERAGE CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT, DIRECT SPENDING BY THE ARMY CREATES \$375 MILLION IN ECONOMIC OUTPUT AND 4,000 JOBS.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SPENDS \$10 BILLION DOLLARS PER YEAR ON EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS FOR VETERANS. THE TYPICAL ENLISTED SERVICE MEMBER LEAVES THE MILITARY AGE AT AGE 23, WITH LITTLE EDUCATION OR WORK EXPERIENCE, AND VETERANS' BENEFITS EXPAND OPPORTUNITY FOR AMERICANS TO ATTEND COLLEGE OR A TRADE SCHOOL. THE GI BILL ALSO PROVIDES VETERANS ACCESS TO LOW-INTEREST MORTGAGES AND BUSINESS LOANS.



# ➤ FRAMING THE ISSUE ◀

THE SHIFT FROM FOCUSING ON COUNTERTERRORISM TO COUNTERING STRATEGIC COMPETITORS IS ONE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE'S (DOD) PRIMARY CHALLENGES. GREAT POWER COMPETITION, NAMELY WITH CHINA AND RUSSIA, IS A MAJOR FACTOR IN CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUNDING LEVELS, STRATEGY, PLANS, AND PROGRAMS. BUILDING AND MAINTAINING ALLIANCES AND PARTNERSHIP WILL ALSO BE AN IMPORTANT PIECE OF ADDRESSING AGGRESSION.

ABOUT 1/5 OF THE MILITARY'S BUDGET IS SPENT ON PROCUREMENT, AN AREA WITH FREQUENT PROJECT DELAYS AND COST OVERRUNS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE F-35 FIGHTER JET, ONE OF THE MOST EXPENSIVE DEFENSE PROJECTS, IS AROUND \$741 MILLION OVER BUDGET AND 3 YEARS BEHIND SCHEDULE. THE DOD HAS NOT PASSED ITS ANNUAL FINANCIAL AUDIT SINCE AUDITS BEGAN IN 2017, AND IT IS IN THE MIDDLE OF A YEARS-LONG REFORM PROCESS TO ACCOUNT FOR HOW IT SPENDS TAXPAYER DOLLARS.

VETERANS FACE MAJOR CHALLENGES RELATED TO HOMELESSNESS, MENTAL HEALTH, AND ADAPTING TO CIVILIAN LIFE. VETERANS WHO HAVE BEEN IN THE MILITARY HAVE VERY LITTLE EXPERIENCE WITH PERSONAL FINANCE, AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT CAN BE A MAJOR CHALLENGE WHEN ENTERING CIVILIAN LIFE. TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT POLICIES RELATED TO AMERICA'S VETERANS, SEE THE POLICY CIRCLE'S VETERANS BRIEF.

ALTHOUGH THE PRESIDENT IS THE MILITARY'S COMMANDER, ONLY CONGRESS CAN DECLARE WAR. IT IS UNCLEAR HOW MUCH AUTHORITY THE CONSTITUTION GIVES TO EITHER IN RELATION TO THE OTHER. OVER THE PAST SIXTY YEARS, PRESIDENTS HAVE CLAIMED AUTHORITY OVER A WIDE RANGE OF MILITARY ACTIONS WITHOUT CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL. CONGRESS'S ENDEAVOR TO ADDRESS PRESIDENTIAL POWER WITH THE 1973 WAR POWERS RESOLUTION HAS FALLEN SHORT.



# POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

## SUPPORTING AMERICA'S VETERANS

VETERANS FACE MAJOR CHALLENGES RELATED TO HEALTHCARE AND MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES. REPORTS OF VETERANS WAITING WEEKS OR MONTHS TO SEE A DOCTOR HAVE BEEN MAJOR ISSUES FOR THE VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION, AND TRANSPARENCY AROUND WAIT TIMES REMAINS A MAJOR GOAL OF VA REFORMS. VETERANS ALSO FACE SIGNIFICANT MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES. ONE IN EVERY SIX VETERANS FACES MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES LIKE DEPRESSION AND PTSD, AND VETERANS' SUICIDE RATES ARE TWICE THAT OF THE GENERAL POPULATION. THE VA, VETERANS' GROUPS, AND COMMUNITIES WHERE VETERANS LIVE ALL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN ADDRESSING THIS ISSUE.

## FINDING THE PROPER LEVEL OF DEFENSE SPENDING

AMERICA'S DEFENSE SPENDING IS NOT JUST THE WORLD'S HIGHEST, BUT ALSO LARGER THAN THE NEXT NINE COUNTRIES COMBINED, MANY OF WHOM ARE U.S. ALLIES LIKE FRANCE AND THE UK. SOME COMMENTATORS BELIEVE THAT THE U.S. NEEDS TO SPEND MORE ON THE MILITARY TO COUNTER ADVERSARIES LIKE RUSSIA AND CHINA. ON THE OTHER HAND, SOME CRITICS OF U.S. POLICY ARGUE THAT THE U.S. CAN CUT DEFENSE SPENDING BY REDUCING THE NUMBER OF TROOPS STATIONED ABROAD AND URGING ALLIES TO SPEND MORE ON THEIR OWN NATIONAL DEFENSE.

## WAR POWERS REFORM

ALTHOUGH THE PRESIDENT IS THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF, THE CONSTITUTION GIVES CONGRESS THE POWER TO DECLARE WAR. MANY OF AMERICA'S POST-9/11 CONFLICTS DID NOT INVOLVE A FORMAL DECLARATION OF WAR, AND CONGRESS HAS NOT EXERCISED ITS CONSTITUTIONAL ROLE TO SUPERVISE WHERE AND FOR HOW LONG THE PRESIDENT CAN DEPLOY TROOPS. A BIPARTISAN COALITION OF WAR POWERS REFORM SUPPORTERS IN CONGRESS ARGUE THAT THE U.S. SHOULD FORMALLY END THE WAR ON TERROR AND CONGRESS SHOULD EXERCISE ITS CONSTITUTIONAL ROLE BY SUPERVISING THE PRESIDENT'S FOREIGN MILITARY DEPLOYMENTS.

# ➤ WHAT YOU CAN DO ◀

## MEASURE -

IS THERE A MILITARY BASE IN YOUR COMMUNITY, OR NEARBY IN YOUR STATE? DO YOU KNOW HOW LARGE THE POPULATION OF VETERANS IS IN YOUR COMMUNITY? IS THERE A VA LOCATION IN YOUR COMMUNITY?



## IDENTIFY -

DO ANY OF YOUR STATE'S CONGRESIONAL REPRESENTATIVES SERVE ON A COMMITTEE WITH JURISDICTION OVER DEFENSE POLICY? ARE THERE ANY VETERANS-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS IN YOUR COMMUNITY? WHAT STEPS HAVE YOUR STATE AND LOCAL OFFICIALS TAKEN?



## REACH OUT -

ALL IT TAKES IS A SMALL TEAM OF TWO OR THREE PEOPLE TO SET A PATH FOR REAL IMPROVEMENT. FOR EXAMPLE, THIS HIGH SCHOOL CREATED A SCHOLARSHIP TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO STUDENTS WITH A PARENT OR GUARDIAN SERVING IN THE MILITARY.



PLAN -  
SET MILESTONES BASED ON YOUR STATE'S LEGISLATIVE CALENDAR OR LOCAL COMMUNITY CALENDAR.



## EXECUTE -

CONSIDER VOLUNTEERING WITH A VETERAN-SERVING ORGANIZATION IN YOUR COMMUNITY.  
TALK TO LOCAL BUSINESS OWNERS OR REACH OUT TO YOUR LOCAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE TO FIND OUT ABOUT VETERAN EMPLOYMENT.  
ACKNOWLEDGE MILITARY FAMILIES IN THE SCHOOLS AND BUSINESSES THAT YOU ARE PART OF.

