

The Armed Forces

Discussion Guide



THE **POLICY
CIRCLE**[®]

Let's Review

At the start of each discussion, review the conversation ground rules for returning and new members alike to set the stage for active participation by all. Use a timer as you go around the room. And don't forget to decide who will take notes and post a discussion recap.

- **Be open and curious:** Everyone brings a unique perspective. Listen first, focus on the facts, and stay curious.
- **Be respectful and engaged:** Ensure everyone has a chance to speak before adding a second comment. Support and encourage participation from all. Remember: What's said in the Circle stays in the Circle.
- **Be focused and concise:** Anchor the conversation to the issue and the Brief. Respect the timekeeper. Use the "Table-It" Rule for off-topic ideas—note them and revisit them in a future session.

Let's Begin

Each member is invited to answer the following questions in a two-minute reaction to the Brief:

- Introduce yourself, and share what "lens of care" you wore when reviewing this Brief (e.g. personal, professional, community, state, nation, global).
- What did you find most interesting or surprising from reading the Brief? What matters most?

Spread the Word: Facts to share during your discussion

- The U.S. military includes about [1.32 million active duty members](#), and there are approximately [16 million living American veterans](#) today.
- The branches of the military include the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, National Guard, and Coast Guard.
- On the global stage, the United States remains the largest military spender in the world, spending [\\$997 billion on defense in 2024](#), more than the next nine countries combined.

Let's Discuss

Below are questions for the group to consider and discuss. For more questions, read our [Conversation Sparks](#) or choose your own.

- **Community:** Is there a military unit or base near your community? If so, what are the social and economic effects of its presence?

- **Government:** Over 12% of the country's budget goes to the military. Do you think the government spends too much, too little, or the right amount on the military? Within the budget, do you think any of the expenses can be directed differently?
- **Business:** Several organizations in the private sector focus on the military, on issues ranging from general healthcare and mental health to defense contracts. Do you know the businesses that partner with the military in your community?

Let's Act

1. **Take it local.** Talk to neighbors, friends, and family who have military experience or a family member serving. Ask how you can support them. Consider hosting another conversation with these community members.
2. **Explore the impact of the military in your community.** On your state's or municipality's website you can find information related to service members in your community. You can search the departments, agencies, and programs related to these areas on your municipality's or state's website.
3. **Investigate community programs** in your state or municipality. Find military installations [here](#), and reserve bases [here](#).
4. **Research your elected representatives' positions** on the armed forces, and their vision for how communities and the Department of Defense can support each other. You can find contact information for federal, state, and local government officials [here](#). Your state or municipality's websites will also have information to contact leaders.
5. **Establish a relationship with your legislators.** It's easy to establish a relationship with your legislators. Start by introducing yourself. You can also learn to write to your representatives or set up a meeting with a legislator on [The Policy Circle website](#).
6. **Consider writing a letter to the editor or an op-ed** on your stance on the state of civic engagement in your local paper. Learn how on The Policy Circle [website](#).

Next Steps for Your Circle

- **Post a Recap:** Summarize your discussion to share thoughts with members not present and share planned actions from group members. Post a meeting recap in your Circle on [the Community](#) and fill out this [form](#).
- **Dive Deeper into the issues.** If this is an area you would like to pursue further, consider taking possible steps to take action. View the [Conversation Sparks](#) for more ideas.