



Policy Priorities 2023

In 2023, CVA and its grassroots army will look to defend VA reforms and expand health care options for veterans, rethink America's foreign policy to promote long-term prosperity, and encourage action to foster a more secure financial future for our country. To achieve these goals, CVA will partner with principled leaders to affect change by putting policy before divisive partisanship.

ISSUE 01

Guarantee the care and services promised to our veterans

Commit to rigorous VA oversight and improve access and quality of care: The Department of Veterans Affairs has systematically failed to follow the requirements of the VA MISSION Act law and regulations, while being unresponsive to warranted questions about these discrepancies. Robust VA oversight must be a top priority of the 118th Congress. Veterans and lawmakers deserve answers from the VA about its abject failures to accurately measure wait times or meaningfully implement community care options. Congress must also act to protect and expand veterans' health care choices so veterans' individual needs, not bureaucratic prerogatives, are at the center of VA decision-making. Congress should proactively protect existing choice by codifying the VA MISSION Act's established access standards and seek solutions to provide full health care choice for veterans. Finally, Congress should modernize VA services and facilities by passing legislation to revive the Asset and Infrastructure Review Commission, providing an adequate timeline for commissioners to complete their work once confirmed.

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 artificial 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, streamlining, 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 02

Provide for a strong national defense with a prudent foreign policy

Ensure alliance commitments advance U.S. interests: The United States should maintain friendly relations and cooperate with our partners and allies, while clearly defining where U.S. interests overlap and where they do not. America should avoid new permanent security commitments, such as adding Ukraine or Georgia to NATO, that significantly raise the risk of conflict with nuclear-armed adversaries. Our European allies are wealthy and capable enough to secure themselves against a weakened Russia. Instead, substantial U.S. deployments in Europe encourage allies to underinvest in defense and depend on America for security. Higher U.S. priorities suffer as a result. Policymakers should ensure alliance relationships support U.S. interests by reinstating burden sharing reports, drawing down U.S. troops in Europe, and transforming America's NATO role from frontline defense to logistical support.

Exit Iraq and rethink the U.S. Middle Eastern footprint: Heavy simultaneous military footprints in the Middle East, Europe, and Asia are overstressing limited American resources at a time when we face increasing domestic and international constraints. Policymakers need to prioritize vital U.S. interests by ending endless wars in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa that are disconnected from those interests. At its 20th anniversary, the War in Iraq has cost America dearly without making us safer. The ongoing U.S. military presence in Iraq distracts from larger priorities while exposing our troops to frequent and unnecessary danger. ISIS' territorial caliphate is long defeated—it is time to bring our troops home. Policymakers should also draw down U.S. deployments in Syria, Yemen, and Somalia, which similarly lack clearly achievable objectives and are not focused on core U.S. interests.

Rebalance constitutional war powers: Congress has neglected its Article I duty to authorize and oversee military action, skewing the balance of war powers and increasing the risk of the U.S. entering unwise conflicts. Congress can reassert its proper role by repealing outdated and unnecessary war authorizations, such as the 2002 Authorizations for Use of Military Force (AUMF). With our troops home from Afghanistan, Congress should also sunset the 2001 AUMF, which authorized the conflict and has no textual connection to current operations. Congress can honor its proper role in any replacement discussions by requiring future AUMFs to be narrowly written, regularly sunset, and be thoroughly debated and voted on. Legislators should also reject preemptive AUMFs, which bypass Congress' constitutional role and effectively allow the president to unilaterally declare war.

ISSUE 03

Securing America's financial future

Pursue responsible spending at the Department of Veterans Affairs: Even as the total veteran population shrinks, annual VA spending continues to rise dramatically. Today, a new generation of veterans is entering the VA and changes are overdue to how the VA prioritizes and delivers care and

benefits. Congress should seek to align VA spending with veterans' needs 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 the best use of limited VA resources. Congress can responsibly modernize the VA and spend its limited resources most in line with veterans' needs by supporting the work of an improved Asset and Infrastructure Review Commission.

Smart, sustainable, and strategy-focused DoD 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. Sustainable defense spending is a necessary part of any broader national strategy to restore fiscal responsibility. Current U.S. defense spending is higher than our peak Cold War levels in adjusted dollars despite the U.S. enjoying a significantly more secure position. The best way to safely right-size U.S. defense spending is for the DoD budget to advance a strategy that focuses limited U.S. resources on core interests. Reducing defense resources spent in the Middle East and Europe can aid this process. Overall, the 2024 DoD topline should be reduced to reflect the end of the war in Afghanistan, and Congress should avoid adding additional defense spending beyond the Pentagon's own annual budget requests.

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