



United Veterans Committee of Colorado
2018 Federal Goals
Approved 12/12/17



Introduction to UVC Legislative & Executive Committees:

The following document contains the 2018 Federal Legislative Goals that were approved by a unanimous vote of the membership of the United Veterans Committee of Colorado at their General Membership Meeting on Tuesday, December 12, 2017.

Definition of General and Specific Legislative Goals:

General Goals: General Legislative Goals are statements of broader policy guidance to enable to UVC to evaluate and take positions on specific legislation in advance of the ability to get a vote of our members. Additionally, the general goals provide guidance to elected officials as to the UVC's likely position on specific legislative proposals.

Specific Goals: Specific legislative goals are more detailed proposals that address actual or proposed legislation. As specific pieces of legislation are introduced that are not included in the 2017 goals, the UVC members will vote whether to add such legislation to its goals.

UVC Positions on Legislation:

The UVC is an active observer of and participant in the legislative process at both the state and federal levels. We consider each bill or budget proposal that may have a positive or negative impact on veterans, active duty service members, members of the Guard and Reserve, and their families. Based on a unanimous vote of our members, we decide whether to SUPPORT, OPPOSE, or MONITOR each bill that comes to our attention.

General UVC 2017 Federal Legislative Goals :

1. Oppose any and all efforts to privatize the VA Healthcare System.
2. Support funding to assure that the Dept. of Veterans Affairs has the capacity to effectively serve the needs of current and future veterans and their eligible family members.
 - A) Provide advance appropriations for all Dept of Veterans Affairs' discretionary appropriations accounts, including benefits administration, operations, construction, research, and information technology.
 - B) Ensure adequate funding and personnel to reduce the backlog of veterans' claims awaiting decisions for health care, compensation, and other benefits for all eligible veterans that they have earned and are entitled to receive.
 - C) Fully fund the VA health care system so that a full range of health care services can be provided in a timely manner for all eligible veterans.
 - D) Ensure the provision of lifetime medical care to eligible veterans and retirees in military hospitals or VA facilities, or other health care facilities.
3. Oppose sequestration and other cuts to Department of Defense and VA budgets that negatively affect the readiness and effectiveness of our military and the quality of life for veterans.

4. Support efforts to assist Veterans transitioning into civilian employment.
5. Support the provision of alternative PTSD & TBI services that are recognized by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) as being evidence-based.
6. Support legislation and funding that will help student veterans succeed in getting fulfilling employment at a livable wage, including such efforts as peer mentor programs, greater transference of credits, Learning Assessment/Portfolio Assessments, and greater transference of credits between 2-year and 4-year degree programs.
7. Support legislation to create national standards that equitably assign credit for experience and knowledge gained through service, military education programs, and civilian education throughout time in service by advancing the work of the American Council on Education (ACE) and other accreditation organizations.
8. Support legislation, and increased funding and education to address the specific and unique healthcare needs of female veterans.
9. Strengthen professional and technical licensing and certification for military spouses, especially teachers who transfer with their spouse.
10. Support legislation to address veteran homelessness, including such efforts as affordable housing, livable wages, drug prevention, mental health care, job and career training, education.
11. Support legislation and appropriations to improve benefits and address the inequities in financial support to veterans with disabilities and their families.
12. Support efforts to improve the VA Healthcare System, including reforms to the “Choice” program or other methods to utilize qualified private providers.
13. Support the retention, funding, and maintenance of the Selective Service System.
14. Establish a requirement for universal military or civil service for all citizens.

Specific UVC 2017 Federal Legislative Goals:

1. Repeal the requirement to deduct DIC benefits from the Survivor Benefit Plan.
2. Repeal the “Disabled Veterans tax” (concurrent receipt) for all disability rating levels.
3. Change the eligibility criteria for VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) benefits, to include survivors of former POW’s with 100% service-connected disability rating who died prior to Sept 30, 1999. Reduce the 10-year requirement to 1-year on the number of years a veteran must have had the 100% rating to be eligible for DIC benefits.
4. Authorize TRICARE to include within their benefits “Silver Sneakers” or a similar prevention and wellness program.
5. Provide needed funding for the replacement of the CLC Rehab and PTSD facilities at the Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center.
6. Allow military retirees to pay health insurance premiums with pretax income and allow a deduction for TRICARE and Medicare supplemental premiums.
7. Assure DIC benefits of VA disability compensation for a 100% disabled veteran is consistent with other survivor benefits plans.
8. Support legislation that provides active duty time credit for Guard/Reserves for GI Bill purposes.
9. Support legislation to extend GI Bill benefits to foster children of military personnel and veteran who meet specified eligibility criteria.
10. Repeal the Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provisions for government and military retirees

11. Support legislation to increase benefits for military retirees under Federal Employees' Health Benefits Program options so that the benefits are equitable with those provided for civilian retirees
12. Require the payment of certain compensation to a member of the armed forces who is retired or separated due to a combat-related injury to which they otherwise would be entitled.
13. Support legislation to establish eligibility for veteran's benefits to individuals who served in combat situations in the U.S. Merchant Marines.
14. Authorize travel cost reimbursement for non-service-connected catastrophically disabled veterans when required to travel for treatment.
15. Support legislation that returns presumptive and direct exposure to herbicide to qualified Blue Water Navy Vietnam veterans who were exposed while serving in waters offshore Vietnam
16. Support legislation that would make exposure to herbicide (Agent Orange) presumptive for all Veterans that served on Air Force Bases in Thailand that were boots on the ground, the same as boots on the ground veterans that served in Vietnam.
17. Support legislation to change the requirement for eligibility for VA Health Care Services for dental care from 100% disabilities rating to 70% disabilities rating to put it in alignment with the disabilities rating requirements of other VA Health Care Services.