

## American Veterans

### Courage Deserving of Honor



the remaining half of all veterans served in the more recent Gulf Wars.

The courage our soldiers display on the battlefield is sobering and their dedication to humanitarian efforts on the international stage is inspiring. As Democrats, we honor those who have served because they swore an oath to the Constitution and have fulfilled their promise to keep our country safe from external threats.

### Continued Need for Support

Since veterans have risked their lives for our country under dangerous circumstances, we should be there to provide financial and emotional support when they return to civilian life.

Many younger veterans suffer from both the physical and psychological scars of combat. In fact, roughly half of younger veterans say they have had emotionally distressing experiences related to their military service, and a third have sought help for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

During World War II, three-fourths of U.S. men in their late teens and twenties served in the military. Today, the military has become a job mostly for working-class men and women who hope to earn some money for college or are looking for a way out of the rural area in which they grew up.

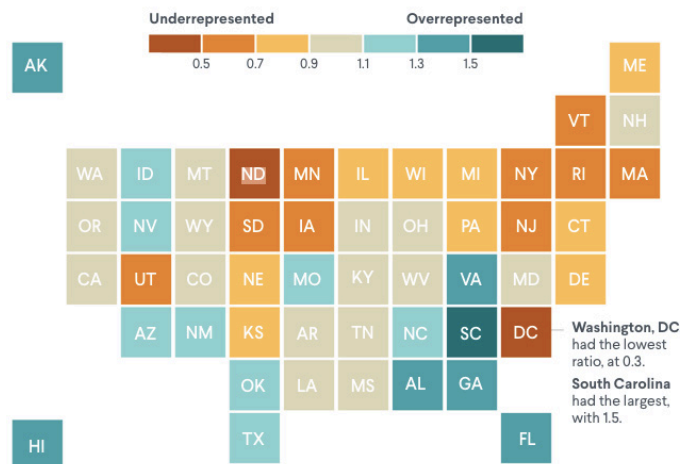
Regionally, the largest share of young enlistees comes from the South (over 40 percent), where local culture is more supportive of the military and where most military bases are located.

Putting these demographics together, we can see that our nation largely has a Southern working-class military at its disposal.

Currently, South Carolina is home to over 400,000 veterans, and 10 percent of Horry County's total population consists of those who have served. Almost half of veterans in the state are 65 years of age or older, and a large majority (40 percent) of those served in the Vietnam War. Around 10 percent of the veteran population are those who served in either the Second World War or the Korean War, and

Also, the transition back into civilian life can be challenging both financially and professionally. Upon reentry, a third of veterans report that they have trouble paying bills and must rely on unemployment compensation to make ends meet.

Perhaps more alarming is that Veterans are twice as likely to die by suicide than Americans who never served in the military, and the death rates hover around 17 daily.



Notes: Coast Guard data not available.

Source: Office of the Undersecretary of Defense.

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***Any Veteran who is in crisis and needs immediate help can call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255.***

Democrats understand that we must always honor the courage and sacrifice our veterans have made on our behalf by providing them with the best quality of life when they return home. No military family should struggle to pay their bills, put food on the table, or access health care and quality housing. To this end, we will work to make sure pay and compensation keep pace with the current economy.

Nationally, we will work to ensure that veterans recovering from deep emotional scars have immediate access to the appropriate counseling and treatment resources. In this determination to honor our veterans, we must also resist any effort to privatize veteran's affairs (VA) facilities, while expanding eligibility for benefits so that all veterans have uninterrupted access. Additionally, we must continue to ensure the G. I. Bill is fully funded so that all returning veterans have an opportunity to earn a college education.

In South Carolina, we are dedicated to providing for older veterans through our three nursing facilities in Anderson, Columbia, and Walterboro. For disabled veterans, we support continuation of a total exemption of property tax through the homestead tax deduction. For the bereaved families of soldiers lost in service, we support free tuition at state schools for their children. For our active duty residents, we support continuation of free hunting and fishing licenses so that they can enjoy the wildlife and natural beauty of our state.

HCDP also supports the continuation of tax exemptions on income for retired military and retired national guard and reserve personnel.

Keeping faith with our veterans and military families, we believe that our force is stronger when we treat our service members, veterans, and their families with the dignity and honor they have earned.

#### **Sources:**

<https://www.defense.gov>

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**HORRY COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY**

**311c Beaty Street, Conway, SC 29526**

**(843) 488-HCDP(4237)**