



Statement from Barack Obama, President of the United States, to Vietnam Veterans of America

As veterans of the Vietnam War, you saw our country through one of the most challenging missions we have ever faced, and you did so with exceptional courage and valor. One of the most painful chapters in our history was the Vietnam War—most particularly, how we treated our troops who served there. You didn't always receive the thanks or respect you deserved at the end of your service. You were often blamed for a war you didn't start, when you should have been commended for serving your country with valor.

That is why I have worked tirelessly to let Vietnam veterans know that your service is deeply respected and that your courage must be celebrated. I want to take this opportunity to say to you what we should have been saying from the beginning: You did your job. You served with honor. You made us proud. You came home and you helped build the America that we love and that we cherish.

As your Commander-in-Chief, I have resolved to take care of our veterans as well as they have taken care of America. From the day I took office, I have made addressing the needs of all veterans and military families a top priority, and I am committed to ensuring that veterans are able to obtain the quality jobs, health care, and education they have earned.

To support Vietnam veterans specifically, my administration has opened up eligibility for those suffering from Agent Orange-related illnesses. We've hired thousands of new claims processors to help these men and women receive the help they deserve as quickly as possible, and we're working every day to eliminate the VA's backlog. We've also increased and improved mental health care services to address the often-unseen wounds of war. And we're working tirelessly to end the tragedy of veterans' homelessness, so that every veteran who has fought for America has a home in America.



I also believe that no one who fights for our country should ever have to fight for a job when they come home. Because of initiatives that I signed into law—like the Returning Heroes and Wounded Warrior tax credits—and through my proposed Veterans Job Corps, we are moving veterans of all generations forward with the kind of job opportunities they have earned. And that's why we're transforming the Transition Assistance Program to help our separating service members successfully transition to the civilian workforce.

To put our veterans above politics, in my first year in office I pushed for and signed the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act. Advance appropriations are a policy many of you have been requesting for a long time. My administration fought for it, and I signed it into law because our veterans' health care should never be jeopardized by political gridlock in Washington.

Finally, I know that one of your most important goals as veterans of the Vietnam War is to ensure that another generation of veterans is never treated as you were when you returned home. Rather, our country must welcome them with open arms, and we must provide them with the benefits they earned. That's why, even as we've had to make tough budgetary choices across the government, I have secured historic increases in VA funding since coming into office. And as the wars of the past decade come to an end, my commitment to our veterans will never waver.

We have accomplished much, but much work remains for us to do. As long as I am Commander-in-Chief, I will continue to fight for this country's veterans, ensuring that you receive the respect and admiration you deserve, and the benefits and care you have earned. You are all true heroes, and your service and sacrifice will never be forgotten. ■

Statement from Mitt Romney, Candidate for U.S. President, to Vietnam Veterans of America

As president, Mitt Romney will implement a strategy to get veterans working again, reform the VA system for the 21st century, and ensure that world-class VA health care is available to all veterans who need it.

Since 2008, veteran unemployment rates have been at unacceptable levels, the backlog for disability claims has doubled, and President Obama's devastating defense cuts threaten to strain the VA system even further by directly affecting VA funding and by shifting 200,000 troops out of service and into the VA system. Mitt Romney believes we can do better for our veterans.

GET VETERANS WORKING AGAIN

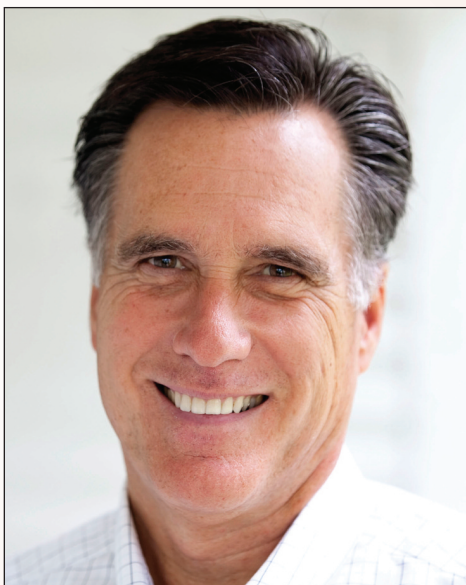
Mitt Romney will unleash the American economy to grow again and create well-paying jobs. He will cut taxes, lift job-killing regulations, and slash debt to encourage job creators to invest and grow their businesses. He will reverse President Obama's defense cuts that could force 200,000 troops out of the service. Veteran unemployment rates—particularly for returning veterans—are at unacceptable levels. It is vital that veterans aren't sent from the front lines to the unemployment lines.

The services veterans provide for our national defense benefit the entire country. Their educational benefits should reflect that dedication. To expand educational opportunities and employment prospects for returning warriors, Mitt Romney would ensure that in-state tuition rates are available to all veterans on the Post 9-11 GI Bill, regardless of their state of residency.

Every year, the military trains a host of new mechanics, engineers, medical technicians, and other desirable skilled laborers. But when they leave service, they often must waste precious time and money going through unneeded training and credentialing processes to meet a patchwork of local and state requirements. Mitt Romney would work with the states to create a common credentialing and licensing standard in targeted fields for skilled veterans, and encourage organizations to recognize and grant credit for military training in order to become licensed or credentialed.

MAKE THE VA SYSTEM WORK

Governor Romney will not allow an entire generation of veterans to lose faith in the VA. Because veterans strongly prefer to receive care within the VA system, focus will be directed toward improving and strengthening that system.



Our troops have two health records, one from active service and one used by the VA. This slows down disability claim processing and creates unnecessary red tape in an already overburdened system. Mitt Romney would create a single electronic medical record—from boot camp to retirement—to expedite and simplify a sluggish system. The Obama administration talks about implementing this reform, but has failed to deliver. Mitt Romney will get it done.

The VA is facing a backlog of veterans waiting for mental health evaluations and treatment. Building up the VA's mental health care is a priority, but veterans should have the opportunity to access the Department of Defense's TRICARE network of mental health professionals to help alleviate the two-month waitlist.

For disability claims that require less documentation to prove injuries, an expedited application process for disabilities commonly incurred or aggravated by military personnel should be created.

MAKE WORLD-CLASS HEALTH CARE AVAILABLE TO ALL VETERANS WHO NEED IT

Mitt Romney will expand the reach of the VA health system to grant more access to the 41 percent of veterans who live in rural areas and speed up the availability of Internet-based consultations, tele-homecare, and tele-monitoring. He will ensure that the VA health system can meet the unique needs of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with debilitating injuries.

REVERSE PRESIDENT OBAMA'S DEVASTATING DEFENSE CUTS

While growing the budget of every other federal agency, President Obama has saddled our military with devastating defense cuts that will total nearly a trillion dollars over the next ten years. Mitt Romney will reverse Obama-era defense cuts and prioritize preserving and protecting the proud Armed Forces that our veterans built. That means stopping cuts that could:

- Force up to 200,000 troops out of uniform and onto an overburdened Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Degrade training, equipment, and leadership needed by our deployed forces in Afghanistan.
- Shrink the military to the smallest Navy since 1916, the smallest Army since 1940, and the smallest Air Force in our history. ■

