



## JOINING FORCES

TAKING ACTION TO SERVE  
AMERICA'S MILITARY FAMILIES

JOININGFORCES.GOV

### **PRESIDENT OBAMA, VICE PRESIDENT BIDEN, FIRST LADY MICHELLE OBAMA AND DR. JILL BIDEN LAUNCH NATIONAL “JOINING FORCES” INITIATIVE TO SUPPORT AMERICA’S MILITARY FAMILIES**

*Applaud Major Commitments in Employment, Education, Wellness and Public Awareness*

Washington, DC – President Barack Obama, Vice President Joseph Biden, First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden today launched *Joining Forces*, a national initiative to support and honor America’s service members and their families. The initiative aims to educate, challenge, and spark action from all sectors of our society – citizens, communities, businesses, non-profits, faith based institutions, philanthropic organizations, and government – to ensure military families have the support they have earned.

*Joining Forces* is spearheaded by Mrs. Obama and Dr. Biden, who have been leaders in supporting our nation’s military families and advocating for their priorities. *Joining Forces* was created to address the unique challenges and needs of military families that Mrs. Obama and Dr. Biden have heard firsthand during meetings with military spouses, briefings with military leaders, and many visits to military communities at home and abroad, and through their work on military family priorities. Building on this groundwork, the initiative will focus on key priority areas – employment, education, and wellness, while engaging in a comprehensive effort to raise awareness about the service, sacrifice, and needs of military families.

“*Joining Forces* was created to recognize and serve our nation’s extraordinary military families who, like their loved ones in uniform, serve and sacrifice so much so that we can live in freedom and security,” said **Mrs. Obama**. “This is a challenge to every segment of American society not to simply say thank you but to mobilize, take action and make a real commitment to supporting our military families.”

“There are so many ways that every American can lend a hand and make a difference,” said **Dr. Biden**. “We have met individuals and groups across this country who are supporting our troops and their families and showing all Americans that there are countless ways to help – some large and many small. But all important. And I can tell you from personal experience, all appreciated. That is why we are here today – and why Michelle and I are trying to rally American communities to join us.”

*Joining Forces* also builds upon President Obama’s landmark Presidential Study Directive to establish a coordinated and comprehensive Federal approach to supporting military families.

Released this past January, *Strengthening Our Military Families: Meeting America's Commitment* aims to improve the quality of life of our military families, veterans, and survivors of the fallen. The report details nearly 50 commitments from Cabinet Agencies to reform, strengthen, and better coordinate the Federal Government's support for military families. For example, the Department of the Treasury has established an Office of Service Member Affairs in the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, to address the financial challenges that confront military families. The Departments of Labor, Commerce, Defense and the Small Business Administration are partnering with the business community to make it easier for veterans and their spouses to build a career.

**President Obama** said, "We're here today because these Americans in uniform have never served alone. Not at Lexington and Concord, not in Iraq and Afghanistan. Behind every American in uniform stands a wife or husband; a mother, a father; a son or daughter; a sister or brother. These families – these remarkable families – are the force behind the force."

"I have always said we have lots of obligations as a nation – but only one truly sacred moral obligation: to prepare and protect those we send into harm's way, and to give them every bit of care they, and their families, need when they return," said **Vice President Biden**.

The Administration has made military families a priority across the federal government, but *Joining Forces* recognizes that this can't be the work of government alone. *Joining Forces* will reach out broadly to include commitments and efforts from outside government across many different sectors. As an initial step, the White House convened and worked with leading employers, non-profits and media companies to kick off *Joining Forces* with meaningful commitments to address military families' unique needs in employment, education, wellness and public awareness. Some examples are below:

In employment, Sears Holdings, Walmart and Sam's Club, Siemens Corporation, Goodwill, the Society for Human Resource Management, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Cisco, and Indeed.com have all committed to major hiring and training initiatives for veterans and family members, and/or transportable job options for military spouses.

In education, the National Math and Science Initiative, Discovery Education, National PTA, the Military Child Education Coalition, American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Reach Out and Read, Best Buy's Geek Squad, McGraw Hill, the Better Business Bureau's Military Line, and Intel have all committed to major initiatives to support academic achievement of military children, and to expand education and training opportunities for veterans and military spouses.

In wellness, *Joining Forces* has engaged associations and organizations representing primary care and mental health specialists across military and civilian health services to promote collaboration, sharing of best practices and expansion of exemplary models of care to reach all military families. WebMD, the American Heart Association, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, YMCA, National Military Family Association, Sierra Club, and the U.S. Tennis Association have all committed to expand access to wellness programs and resources for military families.

Commitments also include public awareness activities to ensure that Americans know more about the unique challenges and needs of military families and their strength, resilience and service. *Joining Forces* will work with Sesame Street, NASCAR, A&E Television Networks, AOL, USO, Viacom’s Nickelodeon and Country Music Channel, Disney ABC, Pixar, Major League Baseball, and the four major entertainment guilds on ongoing public awareness campaigns about military families. And, Blue Star Families, the Red Cross, and ServiceNation: Mission Serve have developed an initiative enabling people to honor military families by making pledges of service.

As part of the initiative, a new website – [JoiningForces.gov](http://JoiningForces.gov) – provides ways for all Americans to step up and show their gratitude to our service members and their families. Visitors can send messages of thanks, find opportunities to get involved and share stories of service. The website will highlight Federal Government support and the outstanding American citizens, communities, and businesses that are serving our nation’s military families.

In response to the White House’s call to action, one of the nation’s leading nonpartisan institutions focused on national security, the Center for a New American Security (CNAS), has announced it will be coordinating commitments already made and mobilizing ongoing support for the initiative. The effort at CNAS will be led by a board of distinguished Americans with a life of experience in the armed forces, military families and the private sector. The two initial members of board will be General Stanley McChrystal (Ret.), and Patty Shinseki.

## **“JOINING FORCES” COMMITMENTS**

*Joining Forces* is focused on three priority areas where military families and their advocates have said a national initiative could make a meaningful difference. *Joining Forces* will also engage in a comprehensive effort to raise awareness about the service, sacrifice, and needs of military families.

### **EMPLOYMENT**

In many cases, military spouses move from one community to another when their spouses are assigned to new duty stations. These transfers can make it very difficult for spouses to continue with their careers or to find similar jobs in new locations.

*Joining Forces*:

- Highlights the workforce potential of veterans and military spouses
- Expands employment and career development opportunities for veterans and military spouses
- Helps employers create military family-friendly workplaces

Sears Holdings “PCS” Promise: **Sears Holdings** employs over 30,000 military personnel, veterans, and spouses across all levels of the organization. The “PCS Promise” is an effort that will cover all military personnel and spouses employed at Sears Holdings to provide transfers in the cases of Permanent Change of duty Station (PCS), retirement, or separation, depending on job availability and performance. Sears Holdings will conduct a virtual career fair for military spouses this summer that will enable them to connect online with other military spouses

currently employed across Sears Holdings and get information on employment opportunities at 3,900 locations.

Walmart and Sam's Club Military Family Promise: The Military Family Promise guarantees a job at a nearby store or club for all military personnel, and military spouses, employed at **Walmart** and **Sam's Club** who move to a different part of the country because they or their spouse have been transferred by the United States military. In addition, through Walmart and Sam's Club's Military Family Promise, associates called to active military duty will continue to be paid any difference in their salary if the associate is earning less money during their military assignment.

Siemens Initiative to Support Military Families: **Siemens Corporation** will reserve ten percent of the more than 3,000 open positions in their clean tech industries for veterans. Job training and mentoring through an internal Veterans Network with more than 150 members will be mobilized for these new hires. Additionally, the Siemens Foundation, which funds the Siemens Competition in Math, Science & Technology, the nation's premiere STEM competition, will conduct a summer science program at Fort Dix, NJ for children of military families.

SCORE/Wal-Mart Foundation Veteran Fast Launch Initiative: For over 45 years, **SCORE** has been a leader in providing mentoring and training to entrepreneurs through its network of 13,500 volunteer mentors and trainers. SCORE has created the new Veteran Fast Launch Initiative to help accelerate veterans' ability, along with their family's, to succeed as a small business owner. The new program will be a combined package of services, scholarships and free software (provided by major corporate partners), and SCORE's mentoring program. Assistance will be provided to 16,000 military veterans and their families and help launch 3,000 new businesses during the first year. Partners include: **The Walmart Foundation**, as the primary sponsor, as well as: **American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, AVG, Cisco, Constant Contact, docstoc.com, HP, Intacct.com, Microsoft, Salesforce.com, Squareup.com, and Veterans Business Outreach Centers (VBOC)**. SCORE will work closely with the VBOCs, which last year reached over 45 thousand veterans, service members, and spouses nationally. The Veteran Fast Launch Initiative will also become part of the Startup America Partnership, a private sector effort aimed at maximizing the success of American startups by bringing together a coalition of mentors, advisors, funders, major corporations and service providers to deliver a range of resources that help entrepreneurs start and scale companies.

The Goodwill for America's Heroes and Their Families Program: In 2011, **Goodwill** expects to hire more than 5,000 people and has targeted 1,300 (more than 20 percent) of these positions for military spouses, veterans and their families. Goodwill agencies around the country expect to provide face-to-face career and family strengthening services to more than 15,000 military spouses, veterans and their families, and are also prepared to provide virtual career services that can be linked to military web sites, expanding these services to tens of thousands more people.

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Hiring our Heroes Program: Over the next year, the **U.S. Chamber of Commerce** will conduct hiring fairs for veterans and military spouses in 100 local communities across the country. In partnership with the Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Service, local chambers of commerce in all 50 states, and the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, the Chamber's Hiring our Heroes program will seek to reach 50,000 veterans and military spouses. The Chamber will explore other initiatives in

the coming months to help our nation's veterans and spouses find jobs in the private sector. They include helping veterans and military spouses start or grow a small business; improving certification, licensing, and specialization training; and enhancing the availability of mentors within the business community. To deepen networks of support for the career transition and development of women veterans and military wives specifically, the Chamber will partner with **Business and Professional Women's Foundation** to lead this development and together work on the selection of companies to develop the tools, outreach, and capacity to connect 10,000 mentors with women veterans and military wives by the end of 2012.

Military Spouse Workplace Flexibility: The **Society for Human Resource Management** (SHRM) will engage its 255,000 human resources members on the value of hiring military spouses and creating workplaces supportive of employees with connections to the military. SHRM will educate HR professionals and others about the skills that military spouses bring to the workplace and the challenges faced by military spouses and families. It is committed to sharing information on effective and flexible workplace practices that will allow workplace leaders to incorporate military family-friendly practices in their organizations. SHRM's partner on workplace flexibility, the **Families and Work Institute**, will contribute to the educational effort. SHRM will also highlight tools and resources designed by the federal government and others to help HR professionals find and hire military spouses. SHRM will create a toolkit that offers guidance on building a workplace focus on hiring and meeting the needs of military spouses. The toolkit will be shared with the Society's 50 state councils and more than 575 chapters. SHRM also will host a webcast about supportive workplace strategies and incorporate related programming in its six national conferences throughout the year.

U.S. Military Pipeline Initiative: **Cisco** is partnering with **Futures Inc.** on the U.S. Military Pipeline initiative, a web-based program for helping veterans, transitioning military, wounded warriors and spouses connect with education resources, mentors and employment opportunities. The program has been successfully piloted at Fort Bragg, NC with around 10,000 active users. Today they announced the second phase of the program with the expansion to all eligible users at Fort Bragg, NC and the addition of Fort Hood, TX. This expansion will support more than 20,000 transitioning personnel at Fort Bragg and Fort Hood and over 51,000 spouses affiliated with these bases. The third phase of the program, to be rolled out by the end of the calendar year, will scale to multiple other bases and veterans organizations.

Indeed.com Military Employment Tools: **Indeed** is proud to announce Indeed Military, a new online service dedicated to helping military families find employment. Indeed Military provides tools for employers to connect quickly and easily with veterans and military spouses seeking employment. Indeed will provide employers free access to Indeed Military for one year. This free service will lower cost per hire by thousands of dollars, providing a clear incentive for employers to seek out military family candidates. Indeed will actively promote Indeed Military to the more than 25 million U.S. job seekers visiting indeed.com each month with an estimated reach of 4 million veterans and military spouses.

Public/Private Partnership to Develop Tools to Serve Military Families: **Code for America** is a non-profit that enlists talented web professionals to give a year of service to their country, helping make government work better. A team of Code for America fellows is working with federal agencies to leverage the power of the internet to serve military service members, their spouses, and Veterans with new tools for finding jobs and workforce development programs.

## **EDUCATION**

Military children move frequently due to a parent's reassignment. These moves can make it difficult to transfer records, secure spaces in courses, stay included in extra-curricular activities, and complete required testing on time.

### *Joining Forces:*

- Supports the academic achievement of military children by helping schools become more aware of and responsive to the unique needs of military children and families
- Promotes and supports higher education institutions and programs that expand education opportunities, ease transferability for military-connected students, and expand job training opportunities for military spouses and veterans

Math and Science AP Initiative to Expand to 28 Additional Schools, Impacting over 40,000 Students This Fall: The **National Math and Science Initiative** (NMSI), in partnership with **Military Child Education Coalition** (MCEC) and **Military Impacted Schools Association** (MISA), is leading a campaign to bring rigorous STEM coursework, AP math and science, to public high schools serving a high percentage of military families. This fall, NMSI will expand its Initiative for Military Families to an additional 28 public high schools serving children of military families in nine states. With these commitments, IMF will impact over 40,000 students this fall. In this all-hands-on-deck, corporate, philanthropic and government partners making investments include **BAE Systems, Boeing, ExxonMobil, Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman**, the Department of Defense Education Activity and the Office of Naval Research.

Discovery Education to Deliver to Military Schools Inspiring Digital Content Services Proven to Improve Student Achievement: **Discovery Education**, a division of Discovery Communications, will provide access for DODEA schools to its high-quality curriculum-based digital content services as well as professional development to help educators integrate digital content and educational technologies into their classrooms. Discovery Education also will utilize its presence in over half of all U.S. schools to launch the Help on the Homefront challenge, encouraging classrooms nationwide to implement projects to support military families.

One Million Military Children Provide Focus for National PTA and Military Child Education Coalition Program: The **National PTA** and the **Military Child Education Coalition** (MCEC) are working together to support the more than one million pre-K to 12th grade school-age military children – including those from Active Duty, National Guard, Reserves, Veterans and survivor families – by engaging and mobilizing the schools and communities where they learn and grow. This will include doubling the number of schools nationwide participating in their parent and student engagement programs by the end of the 2011-2012 school year. With emphasis on middle schools, the MCEC and the National PTA will focus community-based efforts, initiatives and mutually developed tools on a select number of states with a large military presence.

Operation Educate the Educators: The **American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education** (AACTE) and the **Military Child Education Coalition** (MCEC) have begun an initiative to enlist 100 colleges and universities, as well as PK-12 schools, for the benefit of military-connected students and their families. This will facilitate processes focused on building

and sustaining supportive school cultures; promoting training for 10,000 pre-service and graduate education professionals; and establishing six partnerships between institutions of higher education and military academies and/or senior military service institutions.

Reach Out and Read to Double Impact on Military Families: **Reach Out and Read** will expand its evidence-based school readiness initiative to serve 200,000 children of military families. Reach Out and Read prepares America's youngest children to succeed in school by partnering with doctors to prescribe books and promote parental involvement. Currently, 47 U.S. military bases participate in Reach Out and Read, serving 90,000 children and families. Within two years, Reach Out and Read will expand to 100 U.S. military bases, serving 200,000 children, effectively doubling its impact on military families. Studies show that children served by the program enter kindergarten with a six-month developmental edge and that children of military families are better prepared to deal with the stress associated with separation and deployment.

Best Buy's Geek Squad Educates and Connects Members of the Military with Their Families: **Best Buy's** tech support task force **Geek Squad** will offer customized education to help members of the armed services and their families connect through technology. Best Buy's Geek Squad will host seminars beginning this summer at 17 military bases to educate military families about using existing and cutting-edge technologies to connect and communicate with loved ones while deployed. In addition to these family-oriented seminars, two-day Geek Squad Summer Academy sessions will be held at five military bases to educate military children about the inner workings of technology and inspire interest in technology careers.

Financial Literacy for Military Families: Together, **McGraw-Hill** and the **Better Business Bureau's Military Line** will develop and deliver financial literacy and consumer protection programs specifically geared toward addressing the unique needs of military families. The campaign builds on six years of BBB Military Line training initiatives and McGraw-Hill's longstanding commitment to financial literacy to provide a full complement of online and on-site financial resources including webinars, mobile applications, workshops and promotions to the military community. The McGraw-Hill/BBB effort will combine resources from a coalition of businesses and volunteers to maximize reach, support and impact.

Expanding the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network to Military Families: **Intel** will provide veterans and military spouses with access to the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network (a collaboration with Museum of Science, Boston and MIT Media Lab) that currently provides an out-of-school learning environment where young people from underserved communities work with adult mentors. Beginning in the Fall of 2011, Intel will pilot an initiative in three of more than sixty clubhouses across the United States, where veterans and their spouses will be able to receive training on resume writing, interview skills and basic computer skills before and after school hours. Intel will work with external organizations to get resources and trainers to attract Intel employees to serve as mentors and assist with training in the clubhouses.

## **WELLNESS**

The stress of war, multiple deployments, and frequent moves can affect the wellness of military families. Children and spouses can experience anxiety, changes in relationships with family and friends, isolation or emotional challenges in dealing with deployments, illness or injury, and high mobility.

*Joining Forces:*

- Calls attention to the critical issues facing veterans and military families
- Expands access to wellness programs, and resources for military spouses and families

Health Care Provider and Consumer Awareness & Education Platform: **WebMD** will build two inclusive online Resource Centers – one for consumers and one for health care providers – empowering them to support military families and their health care needs. The Resource Centers will feature relevant and timely information, interactive resources and useful educational programs designed to build awareness of the needs of military families and enable members of their local communities to enhance their overall well-being and psychological health. Given that the majority of military families live off installations and bases and are integrated into the community, WebMD’s new Resource Centers, (available on WebMD.com and Medscape.com, and across WebMD’s platform including mobile, tablet and at the point of care), will create a network of support that will improve the accessibility of tools and resources available to address the needs of military families and those who support them.

The American Heart Association Supports Military Women: The **American Heart Association** will work to help up to 100,000 military wives and women veterans live healthier lives through its Go Red For Women activities providing guidance and support to reduce incidents of heart disease – the No. 1 killer of women in the United States and to help ensure military wives and female veterans are prepared to help their loved ones in a cardiac emergency by learning CPR. Go Red will also build awareness of military family and women veterans’ issues amongst their more than one million strong members, volunteers, and registrants across the United States.

Helping Military Families Protect Their Children and “Kick the Habit”: The **Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids**, alongside other leading health groups, will launch a new effort to work with military families and commit to reaching over 800,000 people in its first year. As part of the campaign, CTFK will hold 90 Kick Butts Day (youth anti-tobacco) events in military communities over the next two years. They will also create a new youth advocate award and scholarship for children of military families. The **American Legacy Foundation** will use its EX campaign advertising to promote quitting, will leverage its Truth youth smoking prevention campaign and provide technical assistance to the military to develop an integrated approach to tobacco cessation including evaluation mechanisms for existing cessation programs. The coalition of groups helping military families to prevent children from smoking and kick the habit includes the **American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Lung Association, GlaxoSmithKline, and Pfizer.**

Promoting Active Lifestyles for Military Families: The **YMCA** and **National Military Family Association** in partnership with the **Sierra Club Foundation** will get 7,000 military kids and families outside this summer for free at camps in more than 35 states. The National Military Family Association, with added support from **Goldman Sachs Gives**, offers Operation Purple programs to families from all service branches and the YMCA supports families in their communities. The three organizations form the Sierra Club’s Military Families Outdoors initiative and are working to support the First Lady’s Let’s Move initiative, promoting active lifestyles.



United States Tennis Association's Military and Veteran Outreach – Programs, Services and Partnerships to Strengthen Military Families: The **U.S. Tennis Association** will introduce 4,000 National Guard and Reserve service members and families to tennis through festivals at Yellow Ribbon pre-deployment events to help reduce stress and encourage social interaction in the community. USTA will also work with the Department of Veterans Affairs and local VA hospitals to expand tennis programs providing recreational and physical rehabilitation opportunities and family cohesion support to veterans, their families and surviving families. With an initial focus on up to 50 colleges and universities, USTA Tennis on Campus chapters across the United States will engage veterans to support their transition to civilian life.

## **PUBLIC AWARENESS**

**A&E Television Networks** produced *Joining Forces* PSAs featuring the First Lady and Dr. Biden to be aired on all of their networks including **Lifetime, HISTORY** and **A&E**. **ABC, CBS, FOX,** and **NBC** have agreed to support the PSA campaign.

The **Screen Actors Guild, the Directors Guild of America, the Producers Guild of America,** and the **Writers Guild of America West** are forming an inter-guild *Joining Forces* task force committed to providing creative and production support for the variety of PSA's and other programs currently being planned. In addition, the guilds will be using their extensive membership networks and on-line presence to promote awareness of all the issues confronting military families nationwide and what *Joining Forces* hopes to do about them. **Oprah Winfrey, Tom Hanks,** and **Steven Spielberg** will be featured in the upcoming *Joining Forces* PSAs.

*Joining Forces* will work with major entertainment companies on special military families programming, including **Viacom's Nickelodeon** and **Country Music Television,** and **Disney ABC.**

The **Walt Disney Studios** will help honor and support military families through special events designed for the *Joining Forces* initiative, including exclusive screenings of **Pixar's Cars 2** and *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides.*

**Walmart** and **NASCAR** are "joining forces" to develop a cobranded PSA campaign designed to recognize military families for the sacrifices they make when our troops are called to action and to inspire customers and fans to recognize and support the needs of military families in their own communities. The PSAs will feature NASCAR drivers and will be broadcast in 500+ Walmart stores throughout the country.

**Major League Baseball** will work with *Joining Forces* on an ongoing public awareness campaign about military families.

**Sesame Street** will launch a new installment focused on military children's resiliency. Sesame Street will film and produce a PSA featuring the First Lady and Dr. Biden to air during programming. Also, they will film and produce a short video to air at the open of the USO tour designed to bring Sesame Street puppets to military children.

The **AOL Huffington Post Media Group** and **AOL** sites will feature a wide-range of ongoing initiatives across its network dedicated to spotlighting military veterans and their families and

providing them with employment and career resources, including a career development and job placement hub (AOL Jobs) and an intensive, weeklong spotlight on nonprofits helping service families. The effort will kick off with a special AOL “You’ve Got” video featuring the First Lady and Dr. Biden.

The **USO** will launch [USO.org/JoiningForces](http://USO.org/JoiningForces) as a resource to collect messages of support to military families, call for stories from people who have great examples of supporting military families in their local communities, and highlight success stories of volunteerism and connection from all across America. In addition, the USO will work to identify connection opportunities in local communities throughout America and will collect stories about military families and the communities who support them. The USO will also help create toolkits to let Americans know how they can support military families in their towns.

**Blue Star Families**, the **American Red Cross** and **ServiceNation: Mission Serve** have created Operation Honor Cards to encourage Americans to honor military families through service. With the initial goal of securing pledges of five million hours of service by the end of 2011, Operation Honor Cards will collect and deliver messages from the public to military families conveying not only their support, but pledges to perform service as well. Service can benefit military families or honor the service of military families by benefiting the community and country generally. The physical card collection portion of the program will culminate on or before 11/11/11 with ‘Honor Walls’ of pledge cards displayed at public venues around the country. The online pledge, a downloadable Operation Honor Card kit, and Red Cross holiday card efforts will continue indefinitely. Operation Honor Cards will work with the Corporation for National and Community Service and the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs.

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