



Elizabeth Dole Foundation

CARING FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

CONGRESSIONAL TOOLKIT
TO SUPPORT MILITARY AND VETERAN CAREGIVERS



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“ There are 5.5 million military and veteran caregivers in the United States.

Countless spouses, mothers, fathers, and other loved ones transform their own lives and set aside their careers to care for their wounded veterans at home. In most cases, caregivers begin this journey in total isolation, without any support.

The Hidden Heroes Campaign is our way of providing these selfless Americans with the help and recognition they deserve. ”

- Senator Elizabeth Dole

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MILITARY AND VETERAN CAREGIVERS

The nation's 5.5 million military caregivers provide nearly \$14 billion worth of health care services annually as an unpaid workforce, an amount that would otherwise be borne by our society.

Military caregivers experience more health problems, depression, legal challenges, debt, strain in family relationships, and workplace difficulties than non-caregivers. Many of these issues affect the 1.1 million caring for post-9/11 veterans—especially those caregivers who are 30 years old or younger—at an alarmingly higher rate.

CAREGIVER STORIES

JESSICA ROOT

"Being a military caregiver means my fiancé Erich is getting the care he needs and deserves, and is not forgotten or left to slip through the cracks. Erich served in the Marines and suffers from PTS, back and knee pain, and hearing loss."

DON PETERS

"I realized I had become a caregiver when my partner blew through \$400,000 and I had to take over her finances. Despite the challenges, being a caregiver is one of the best jobs in the world because I get to take care of another injured service member. Kym served in the Army and suffers from PTS and memory loss."

CAROLYN TOLLIVER-LEE

"As a caregiver, I advocate for my disabled veteran to ensure he receives optimum care, keeping him connected to family while residing in a long-term care facility. Earnest served in the Army and suffers from grand mal seizures and TBI."

SONIA YULFO

"Being a military caregiver means you are an advocate, a planner, and a live-in medical attendant. My father likes to say that I am his life line because I can read how he's feeling better than he can express. Luciano served in the Army and suffers from PTS, TBI, hearing loss, fatigue, balance problems, and chronic illness."

ABOUT THE ELIZABETH DOLE FOUNDATION

The Elizabeth Dole Foundation is the preeminent organization empowering, supporting, and honoring our nation's military caregivers: the family members and friends who provide voluntary care for America's wounded, ill, or injured veterans at home.

The Foundation adopts a comprehensive approach in its advocacy, working with leaders in the public, private, nonprofit, labor, and faith communities to recognize military caregivers' service and promote their well-being.

Our primary programs and initiatives are:

ADVOCACY

The Foundation partners with other organizations supporting veterans and military families to advocate for legislation to help meet the unique needs of the military caregiving community. Additionally, Dole Caregiver Fellows, military caregivers from all 50 states and Puerto Rico, advocate for increased support on Capitol Hill and in their local communities by sharing their personal stories of struggle and resilience.

HIDDENHEROES.ORG

This first-of-its-kind online destination for military caregivers includes testimonials from caregivers who share their personal stories; a vetted directory of valuable resources; the opportunity to join a private virtual community for military caregivers to connect with their peers; and calls-to-action for communities and individuals to get involved.

NATIONAL COALITION

A 300-member coalition comprised of leaders in public, private, nonprofit, and faith communities, who work together to actively develop solutions. Every achievement – each new program, resource, and piece of legislation – represents a joint effort with one or more of our National Coalition partners.

HIDDEN HEROES FUND

In 2017, the Foundation awarded over a half million dollars in grants to 14 nonprofit organizations to expand existing programs or create innovative new services in support of military caregivers.

IMPACT COUNCILS

The Foundation's comprehensive **RAND study**, Hidden Heroes: America's Military Caregivers, identified seven areas of urgent need. In response, the Foundation formed seven Impact Councils that develop forward-thinking strategies to tackle these complex challenges.

HIDDEN HEROES CITIES

A growing network of leaders in states, counties, and cities across America is dedicated to finding the military caregivers in their communities and the resources to support them.



TOOLKIT CONTENTS

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★ **LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

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- Support for and Expansion of the VA Caregiver Program
- Lifespan Respite Care Act
- RAISE Family Caregivers Act
- Expanded Research and New Legislation

★ **DOLE CAREGIVER FELLOWS**

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CALL TO ACTION

JOIN THE BIPARTISAN HIDDEN HEROES CONGRESSIONAL CAUCUS FOR MILITARY AND VETERAN CAREGIVERS

- The caucus is designed to raise awareness and develop legislation to support the millions of military and veteran caregivers tending to ill and injured warriors at home. It is a bicameral caucus co-chaired by Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, Congressman Phil Roe (R-TN), Senator John McCain (R-AZ), Senator Jack Reed (D-RI), and Senator Susan Collins (R-ME).

ENDORSE LEGISLATION IN SUPPORT OF MILITARY CAREGIVERS

- Learn more about the **Military and Veteran Caregiver Services Improvement Act**
 - The bill would bolster a number of services for military and veteran caregivers. Most notably, the bill expands the VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers to include pre-9/11 caregivers, and reauthorizes the Lifespan Respite Care Act.
 - The bill acknowledges the importance of supporting the caregiver and his or her family in all aspects, from child care to flexible work options, to financial planning services. When the family is better supported, our veterans thrive.
- Advocate for expanded support and funding for the VA Caregiver Support Program
 - Endorse budgetary appropriations that increase funding for the VA Caregiver Support Program, and allow the VA to continue to strengthen this program.
 - The VA Caregiver Support Program, which includes the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers, is a valuable clinical intervention that supports a caregiver during his/her care recipient's recovery. VA research shows that a veteran who has a well-supported caregiver will access more health services with substantially better outcomes.

- Reauthorize and Enhance Funding for the Lifespan Respite Care Act (P.L. 109-442). Key funding enhancements:
 - Respite care is the most commonly requested need of military caregivers, and yet it is often unavailable or poorly executed. Since 2009, 35 states and DC have received at least one Lifespan Respite Care Program grant, however funding for this program is insufficient to maintain these grants year over year.
 - Expansion of funding for the program would achieve three key goals:
 - Allow the program to expand to all 50 states
 - Expand the services within the individual states
 - Ensure that these programs continue to run for longer periods of time, thereby serving more families
 - Alongside our National Coalition Partners, the Foundation requests:
 - Funding the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Lifespan Respite Care Program at \$5 million
 - Funding the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Family Caregiver Support Program at \$145 million
- Support the RAISE Family Caregivers Act
 - This bill directs the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to develop, maintain, and periodically update a National Family Caregiving Strategy.
 - The strategy identifies specific actions that providers, government officials, employers, and others can take to recognize and support family caregivers in their communities.
 - The bill helps share evidence-based and promising practices and maximizes the effectiveness of existing programs supporting family caregivers.

- Underwrite expanded research and introduce new legislation
 - In 2012, the Elizabeth Dole Foundation commissioned the RAND Corporation to undertake comprehensive national evidence-based research on military and veteran caregivers. The results illustrated the scope of our country's military caregiving crisis, and revealed the most critical areas to be immediately addressed on behalf of these hidden heroes. Additional longitudinal research is now needed to determine the knowledge required to meet the challenges caregivers will face in the years ahead.
 - Introduce military caregiver-supportive legislation that addresses the gaps in services as determined by the Elizabeth Dole Foundation's evidence-based research.

MEET WITH DOLE CAREGIVER FELLOWS

- Dole Caregiver Fellows are military caregivers carefully selected from each state to represent the Foundation. Leaders in their communities, they share their personal stories to bring vital attention to the tremendous challenges caregivers face.
- Meet with Dole Caregiver Fellows from your state or district to understand the unique challenges caregivers face. Work with these Fellows on legislation that will make a difference for caregivers, both in your area and nationwide.

ENCOURAGE CITIES IN YOUR STATE/DISTRICT TO JOIN THE HIDDEN HEROES CITIES PROGRAM

- The U.S. Conference of Mayors passed an important resolution to encourage communities to increase resources for military and veteran caregivers. To inspire participation, the Elizabeth Dole Foundation established Hidden Heroes Cities, a growing network of states, counties, and cities dedicated to identifying military and veteran caregivers, streamlining services to them, and sharing best practices at the local level.
- Cities who have signed the resolution



HOW THE FOUNDATION CAN HELP YOU

The Elizabeth Dole Foundation is the leading organization supporting our nation's military caregivers. The Foundation can provide detailed facts and figures to further your understanding of the military caregiving crisis and the best practices in serving this population.

Additionally, the Foundation has assembled a network of military caregivers who represent every aspect of the caregiving continuum. These media-trained caregivers advise the Foundation and raise awareness of the military caregiving crisis.

From supporters, faith and nonprofit leaders, government officials, corporate partners, and coalition members, the Elizabeth Dole Foundation has a strong, active and engaged group of constituents. Let us know what you are doing to support military families and how we can activate our supporters to help you.

AN EASY WAY TO GET INVOLVED

- ★ Direct military caregivers living in your district to [HiddenHeroes.org](https://www.hiddenheroes.org) to find helpful information.
- ★ Encourage them to join the [National Registry of Military Caregivers](https://www.nationalregistryofmilitarycaregivers.org), helping the Foundation better understand their unique needs.
- ★ Help bring national attention to honoring and supporting military caregivers. Access [Hidden Heroes materials](#), including PSAs, shareable graphics, and a calendar of key military caregiving moments throughout the year.

If you would like to join the Caucus, get involved with Hidden Heroes Cities, or if you have any questions, please contact [Laurel Rodewald at caucus@hiddenheroes.org](mailto:caucus@hiddenheroes.org) or 202-249-7177