

January 13, 2012

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# Iraq Veterans Are Finally Coming Home: Now We Must Show Support

Posted: 1/13/12 12:47 PM ET

It is a truly momentous occasion in our history: the brave men and women who have served our nation so honorably in Iraq are finally coming home to a grateful nation -- however, just what are they returning to is an unsettlingly open question.

While it is great to see -- and a change from previous, similar situations -- a majority of Americans welcoming our veterans home with open arms, when it comes to providing necessary services that returning veterans require in order to thrive here at home, we are in severe danger of falling short. We must actively show veterans our gratitude in both word and deed: especially now, as [tens of thousands of our veterans](#) are poised to come home.

While the country's national employment rate is finally ticking up, our veterans lag far behind. Currently, there are more than [one million unemployed veterans](#) -- and the percentage of unemployed veterans far exceeds the national average and in some states it has doubled.

Beyond the bleak unemployment picture, over [30,000 veterans](#) are returning home with conditions and injuries that require immediate medical attention. A large number on its own, it does not even take into account the number of men and women who will experience emotional difficulties such as post-traumatic stress, which can lead to depression, substance abuse, domestic violence and, yes, even suicide years after a soldier leaves from the battlefield. During many months over these last years at war, we lost more soldiers to suicide than to al-Qaeda.

This data is stark and scary. But it is important to know that each American has the tools to be able to pitch in and support the brave men and women facing the challenges of transitioning back into civilian life.

Already, there are many remarkable organizations dedicated to providing the support that these servicemen and women and their families need. These non-profit organizations can always use, and deserve, our unwavering and continued support.

- [Disabled American Veterans](#) (DAV) is one example. Each year, this organization offers helps more than 250,000 veterans identify and receive the benefits they have earned from their service and sacrifice. At a time when it's difficult for even the healthiest veterans to support their families, the free services offered by DAV often mean the difference between meaningful lives and hardship for these individuals and their loved ones.
- [Operation Mend](#), established in 2007, has two aims: 1) it gives returning service members with severe facial injuries access to Brooke Army Medical Center, a leading burn and rehabilitation center in San Antonio, Texas. 2) it offers access to the nation's best plastic and reconstructive surgeons at UCLA Ronald Reagan Medical Center.
- [Wounded Warrior Project](#) is dedicated to helping veterans who suffered service-connected wounds, injuries, or illnesses on or after 9/ 11. With a mission to honor and empower wounded warriors, WWP has numerous programs designed to help our warriors as they readjust to a new way of life. It is a first-class organization.
- [Fisher House](#) understands that, for wounded vets, a home away from home surrounded by family can be effective medicine. Founded in 1990, it assists more than 12,000 people each year by providing housing for the families of recovering wounded vets who are receiving treatment or therapy. This program ensures that an active-duty service member or veteran in treatment is with his or her wife, husband, partner, parents or children for the support they need as they heal.

The drastic transition for veterans from service overseas back to their families and civilian life can be more difficult than anticipated, both for them and for the friends and family waiting to welcome them home. This is not charity. It is our duty to provide the tools and resources necessary not just to help our veterans readjust to civilian life, but to ensure that these brave men and women are equipped to succeed. We owe them nothing short of our gratitude, love and respect.