Veterans

Veterans have made great sacrifices for our country. They have protected and served the nation, yet many return home and struggle with poverty and economic insecurity. There are roughly 22.5 million veterans in the United States—many above the retirement age—and more than 1.4 million of them are living in poverty. While the overall unemployment rate for veterans is lower than the national average and has been steadily declining during the recovery, the unemployment rate for recent veterans remains high: It was 9 percent, on average, in 2013. However, for veterans able to find civilian jobs, 1 in 10 are unable to earn a living wage. Fortunately, veteran homelessness has seen a 24 percent decrease since 2010, but there are thousands still struggling and even more who are hungry. We must address the needs of the fastest-growing contingent of economically insecure veterans—namely, single parents, a majority of whom are women. We must continue to enable veterans to enjoy the same opportunities for success that all Americans deserve.

a Veterans in poverty
As of 2009, 6.3 percent of veterans live in poverty in the United States

1.4 million


b Veterans are aging
As veterans age, they need further services and support

64% of veterans are ages 55 and older
41% of veterans are ages 65 and older


c The Great Recession hit veterans hard
Fortunately, the overall veteran unemployment rate continues to fall


b Young veteran unemployment is a persistent problem
Average unemployment rate of veterans by age, 2013

The United States must ensure that veterans’ service is matched with economic opportunity and support. Aside from the moral imperative to assist those who have served our country, the ability of veterans to find employment, provide for their families, and find affordable housing is a crucial component of America’s current and future workforce and economic success.

Moving forward, we need to ensure that the nation’s priorities are straight—veterans cannot continue to go hungry and/or live on the streets. We must strengthen and reinforce crucial services and supports and implement smart public policies—such as raising the federal minimum wage to $10.10 an hour—in order to provide the opportunities necessary to lift veterans out of poverty and ensure long-term growth and shared prosperity.

Veterans at risk of or currently experiencing homelessness can find help and resources by calling the Veterans Crisis Line at 1.877.424.3838 for 24/7 assistance.