

# AMERICAN COALITION FOR INJURED VETERANS



www.Working4Vets.org

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## Blinded Veterans Find Strength Through Wounded Warrior Program

(NewsUSA) – A lethal roadside bomb wounded Master Sergeant Jeffrey Mittman on July 7, 2005, in Baghdad, Iraq. Though within 30 minutes of the attack Mittman was airlifted to a hospital in Baghdad, he sustained permanent bodily damage. When he awoke one month later at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., he was blinded in his left eye, his right arm was badly damaged, and he had lost his nose, lips, and most of his teeth.

After the U.S. invaded Afghanistan in 2001, tales like Mittman's have become increasingly more common. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq created more injuries resulting in blindness than any conflict since the Civil War. Advanced medical technologies have enabled more service personnel to survive serious injuries, which in prior wars would have resulted in fatalities.

Back at home, Mittman faced many roadblocks to rehabilitation. Today, as it was back then, 70 percent of working-age people who are blind cannot find jobs. Mittman chose to become involved in a training program with National Industries for the Blind (NIB) through the Warrior in Transition Program; in this role he supports a critical mission of employment for people with disabilities. He recently received the prestigious "Oz Day" award, presented to a federal employee or member of the military who demonstrates exceptional service in promoting employment opportunities for people who are blind or severely disabled.

"I decided long ago — I can either own [my experiences] and learn from these experiences or I can let them own me. I chose the former," said Mittman. "I am humbled and proud to receive this honor, and I am eager to continue to be an example to our wounded warriors and other individuals with disabilities, showing them what is possible."

Through the Wounded Warrior Program at NIB, wounded veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts can become informed about training, job placement and career opportunities within NIB and 90 associated nonprofit agencies across the country. NIB's mission is to enhance the opportunities for economic and personal independence of persons who are blind, primarily through creating, sustaining, and improving employment.

For more information about the Wounded Warrior Program, visit [www.nib.org](http://www.nib.org)

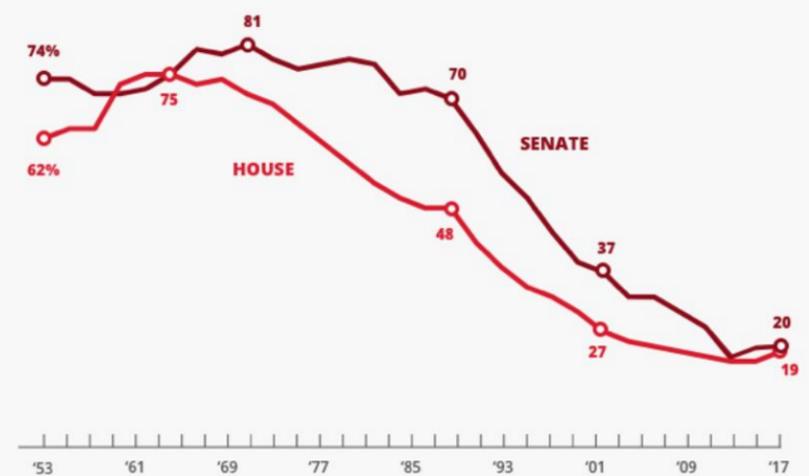
## Facts you may not know about Veterans

- 3 states are home to more than a million veterans: California (1.8 million), Florida (1.5 million), and Texas (1.7 million).
- The unemployment rate of post-9/11 veterans (aka "Gulf War-era II veterans") is 6.2%.
- Nearly 10 million veterans are age 65 or older.
- There are currently over three million disabled veterans in America
- There are about **125,000 homeless veterans in America**
- Veterans make up 12% of the adult homeless population.
- 70% of homeless veterans suffer from substance abuse, while 50% experience mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which makes it harder to maintain relationships and hold down a job.
- Many homeless veterans end up living on the streets for 8 or 9 times the length of their deployments.

## WE NEED TO ELECT MORE VETERANS

### Fewer Veterans in Congress

% of members with previous military experience



### Many of the most effective American leaders have been veterans.

31 out of 44 U.S. Presidents served in the armed forces.

Veteran representation in Congress is at historic lows.

### Veterans in public leadership are essential to our future.

Effective public service requires sacrifice. Veterans have a proven history and willingness to serve something that is larger than themselves.

This newsletter is published by the **American Coalition of Injured Veterans**. Through your much needed donations, we will push for the election of politicians and passage of legislation that support all of our nation's Veterans and their families. Some of these issues are:

- To advocate for the expansion and extension of the Department of Veterans affairs Vocational Rehab and Employment program, in order to put more of our Heroes back to work.
- To push for legislation and funding to expedite our Veterans Compensation and Pension exams, our Heroes sacrifice their mind and body for us and we owe it to them to expedite these services.
- Prioritize increased Mental Health support and benefits to all Veterans coping with PTSD
- Supporting legislation that will give our Veterans increased preference points when applying for Federal employment and make Veterans preference points a priority when negotiating Federal Government Contracts.
- Advocating in the halls of congress for an expansion of all aspects of the GI bill, to put our Heroes through college.

### Contact your U.S. Representative and Senators to ask them to co-sponsor

#### S.1526 - Veterans Access to Care Act

The bill expands: (1) eligibility for the VA family caregiver program to include members of the Armed Forces or veterans who were seriously injured or became ill on active duty prior to September 11, 2001; and (2) services to caregivers of veterans under such program to include child care, financial planning, and legal services.

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