

# The Armed Forces

## Discussion Guide



## Let's review

*At the start of each discussion, review the conversation ground rules for returning and new members alike to set the stage for active participation by all. You may want to use a timer as you go around the room.*

*And don't forget to decide who will take notes and post a discussion recap.*

- **Be open and curious:** Everyone has a unique perspective, so listen and be prepared to hear a different point of view. Remember, you do not need to share your political affiliation; this is a discussion and exchange of ideas, not politics.
- **Be respectful and engaged:** Be sure that everyone has a chance to speak before adding a second comment or perspective. Encourage each other's participation.
- **Be focused and concise:** Keep the conversation centered on the issue and the brief.

**The "Table-it" Rule:** If the group has gone off-topic but the area is of interest, the group can table the conversation and save it for another time to be addressed in a different manner.

## Let's begin

- Take five minutes to review the [Executive Summary](#) and walk through the brief. Highlight the main point of each section and key statistics.
- Each member is invited to answer the following questions in a **two-three minute reaction** to the brief:
  - Introduce yourself, and share what "lens of care" did you wear when reviewing this brief (e.g. personal, professional, community, state, nation, global)?
  - What did you find most interesting or surprising from reading the brief? What matters?

## Spread the word: facts to share during your discussion

- There are over [2 million uniformed service members](#) stationed at almost 1,200 domestic and international installations, and an estimated [18-20 million American veterans](#).
- The branches of the military include the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, National Guard, and Coast Guard.
- On the global stage, [world military expenditures](#) passed \$2 trillion for the first time in 2022. The U.S., China, India, the UK, and Russia accounted for 62% of those expenditures.

## Let's discuss

*Below are questions for the group to consider and discuss, or choose your own.*

- **Community:** Is there a military unit or base near your community? If so, what are the social and economic effects of its presence?
- **Government:** Over 12% of the country's budget goes to the military. Do you think the government spends too much, too little, or the right amount on the military? Within the budget, do you think any of the expenses can be directed differently?
- **Business:** Several organizations in the private sector focus on the military, on issues ranging from general healthcare and mental health to defense contracts. Do you know the businesses that partner with the military in your community?

## Let's act

1. **Take it local.** Talk to neighbors, friends, and family who have military experience or a family member serving. Ask how you can support them. Consider hosting another conversation with these community members.
2. **Explore the impact of the military in your community.** On your state's or municipality's website you can find information related to service members in your community. You can search the departments, agencies, and programs related to these areas on your municipality's or state's website. Try using search words such as "armed forces" in the search bar. These options may also be available in a dropdown menu.
3. **Investigate community programs** in your state or municipality. Find military installations [here](#), and reserve bases [here](#).
4. **Research your elected representatives' positions** on the armed forces, and their vision for how communities and the Department of Defense can support each other. You can find contact information for federal, state, and local government officials [here](#). Your state or municipality's websites will also have information to contact leaders. Try looking at the drop-down menu for a *Government* tab.
5. **Establish a relationship with your legislators.** It's easy to establish a relationship with your legislators. Start by introducing yourself. You can also learn to write to your representatives or set up a meeting with a legislator on [The Policy Circle website](#).
6. **Consider writing a letter to the editor or an op-ed in your local paper.** Learn how on [The Policy Circle website](#).

## Next Steps for Your Circle

- **Post a Recap:** Summarize your discussion to share thoughts with members not present, and share planned actions from group members. Designate who will post a meeting recap on your circle page.
- **Decide your next meeting topic.** Want to discuss a related brief at your next meeting? Suggestions include:
  - [Entitlements](#)
  - [Healthcare](#)
  - [Mental Health](#)
- **Dive Deeper into the issues.** If this is an area you would like to pursue further, consider taking possible steps to influence policy. The Policy Circle offers resources for [developing a message about your issue](#) and [organizing a petition](#) to amplify your voice and raise awareness. Don't miss our [latest events](#) that help you dive deeper on this issue and more.