



Veterans and Military Families: Outreach in Your Local Community

Step 1: Create an “I am a veteran/military family member” checkbox on your online sign-up form.

Add an “I am a veteran or military family member” checkbox to the existing online volunteer sign-up form(s) on your candidate’s website. This simple, self-selecting feature allows you to gauge traffic from veterans and military family members to your site, and will simplify your search for committee members.

Idea: Setup a ‘Veterans’ Resources’ page on your site that lists federal, state, and local programs that exist to help veterans.

Step 2: Make contact with your state legislative veterans’ caucus.

If your state has a veterans’ legislative caucus, work with them to conduct research on local military installations, veteran support organizations, and localized resource data.

Step 3: Convene your Veterans and Military Families Advisory Council (VMFAC)

This monthly meeting will be a great opportunity for your candidate or elected official to hear directly about what issues are facing the local veteran community, as well as to discuss future events developed by the VMFAC.

Step 4: Appoint leaders of your VMFAC.

The ideal of a VMFAC has three co-chairs who each fit specific archetypes:

Vietnam Era Veteran: This individual likely won’t do too much organizing legwork (although it’s great if they do!), but still adds gravitas to your VMFAC.

OIF/OEF Veteran: Likely in their early- to mid-thirties, this co-chair is your ‘worker bee.’ They will likely be the central force for organizing events and other activities on behalf of your VMFAC.

Military Spouse: Given our all-volunteer military, when an individual decides to serve, so does their family. Military spouses—particularly in more remote areas—form a very tight-knit community. They are often the member of the family that is most acutely aware of topics like benefits issues because they deal with those things directly while their spouses are serving. Understanding this is concept and having someone with this background on your committee is critical to earning trust in the veteran and military family community.

Idea: Once you have your co-chairs selected, publicly announce the leaders and the continued development of your VMFAC. Truman Project can train your leaders in organizing, communications, and other best practices for putting together your VMFAC.

Step 5: Hold a press conference and issue a press release announcing your VMFAC.

Have your VMFAC co-chairs select the rest of your council. This group should be made up of 8 to 12 cross-generational members of veterans. After the group is finalized, hold a press conference with the members of your VMFAC. Be sure to specify who is authorized to speak for the campaign on which issues.

Idea: Have your VMFAC organize a service day where your candidate or elected official and team spend a day volunteering at a local service-based organization.

Step 6: Organize an event for military families and spouses.

Have your VMFAC schedule a get-together for military spouses in your district, ideally hosted at a council-member's home. This should not be a big event, but rather a small, intimate gathering like a breakfast or tea.

It is critical to leave the press at home. Don't release a statement, either—just go, listen to their stories, share a laugh and food or drink, and then leave. Treating this as a photo-op trivializes this community's unique circumstances. Again, understanding this concept is critical to earning trust (and votes) from the veteran and military family community.

Step 7: Create and publish your national security and veterans/military families policies.

Begin by using this document, the [2018 Truman Security Primer](#), and the advice of your VMFAC to draft the relevant policy pages for your website, including National Security and Veterans/Military Families.

Step 8: Create an op-ed schedule.

This step requires advance timing. Although issues and hot topics shift rapidly in campaign environments, it is important to select three or four national security-related topics for your VMFAC to focus on throughout the campaign. These op-eds should ideally go out on major public holidays such as Memorial Day, July Fourth, or Veterans' Day (as appropriate), and they should be centered on one of your candidate's already-published policy positions. Additionally, you should devise a publishing timetable for your VMFAC co-chairs to write and release their own op-eds on coordinated subjects.

Step 9: Schedule a Military 101 training with Truman.

As you build out your field team, schedule a Military 101 training with Truman so we can prepare you for communicating and organizing within the veterans and military families community.

Step 10: Meet with local service organizations.

Have your VMFAC setup meet-and-greets for your candidate with local service based organizations. Examples include American Legion, Wounded Warrior Project, or the Gold Star Wives of America. A full list of VA-recognized service organizations can be found at www.va.gov/vso.

Step 11: Organize a veterans' town hall or roundtable event.

Have your VMFAC organize a town hall or roundtable event to discuss veterans' issues within the community.

Idea: If you have a college or university within your district, put together a 'College Vets Night' where your candidate can discuss the issues facing the younger veterans on a local campus.

Step 12: Hold a phone bank to reach out to veterans and military families.

Have your VMFAC organize and staff a phone bank where you reach out to local veterans and military families on behalf of your candidate or elected official.

Step 13: Include veterans and military families in your GOTV efforts.

Have your VMFAC reach out to veterans and military families within the district during your GOTV efforts.

Idea: Dedicate a GOTV day specifically your local veterans and military families community.

For more information, please contact:

Mackenzie Cannon
Congressional Engagement Manager
mcannon@trumanproject.org

Anthony Robinson
Director of Training and Public Engagement
arobinson@trumanproject.org