

## Political Party Platforms: Veterans and Defense Issues

*Here's where the two major parties stand on topics of critical importance in the 2008 election.*

ISSUE	REPUBLICAN PARTY	DEMOCRATIC PARTY
<b>VETERANS</b>	Eliminate VA disability claims backlog; reduce waiting times; give vets access to out-of-network providers; modernize VA's disability compensation formulas; provide better women vets' care; recruit highly qualified medical and mental health professionals.	Build a 21st century VA; ensure access to quality health care; address PTSD and TBI; make the disability benefits process more fair, efficient and equitable; reduce the backlog of disability claims; combat homelessness and unemployment; improve transition to civilian life.
<b>ARMED FORCES QUALITY OF LIFE</b>	Give troops and families adequate pay, health care, housing and education; make military medicine "the gold standard" in prosthetic, trauma and eye care; provide adequate counseling for returning vets and families; provide families meaningful death gratuities.	Create a military families advisory board; work for pay parity with private sector; end stop-loss; establish regularity in deployments; screen all troops upon return from combat; protect military families from home-foreclosure.
<b>GUARD AND RESERVES</b>	Maintain current strength; affirm legal right to return to civilian jobs; call for greater transition assistance from employers.	Fund adequately all reintegration programs; elevate the chief of the National Guard to be a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.
<b>MILITARY</b>	Increase size while retaining combat veterans; oppose the draft and women in ground combat units.	Increase the size of the Army by 65,000 troops and the Marines by 27,000 troops.
<b>IRAQ WAR</b>	Deny al Qaeda a safe haven, limit Iranian influence, and bolster Iraqi moderates. Respect advice of military commanders on troop withdrawal.	Remove U.S. combat brigades at the pace of one to two per month within 16 months; keep a residual force in Iraq to perform specific missions.
<b>AFGHANISTAN WAR</b>	Develop a counterinsurgency strategy led by a unified commander; add NATO forces and double the size of the Afghan army; encourage international community to address the problems of illegal drugs, governance and corruption; prevent re-emergence of Taliban and al Qaeda sanctuaries.	Send at least two additional combat brigades; focus on building up U.S. special forces; provide an additional \$1 billion in non-military assistance each year; secure the Pakistan border to take out terrorist camps; crack down on cross-border insurgents; increase non-military aid to Pakistan.
<b>TERRORISM</b>	Reduce the world's nuclear stockpiles; end production of weapons-grade fissile material, improve ability to interdict spread of weapons and materials; reduce U.S. nuclear arsenal to lowest acceptable number and encourage other nuclear powers to do same.	Develop a comprehensive strategy; create a Shared Security Partnership; export hope; reject torture; provide support for democratic institutions; deny safe havens for those who plot to kill Americans; pursue policies that undermine extremism.
<b>HOMELAND SECURITY</b>	Complete border fence; secure ports of entry; adequately fund 911 services and make them universally available; thwart cyber attacks; monitor terrorist activities; protect against espionage and sabotage.	Fund fully and implement the recommendations of the bipartisan 9-11 Commission; establish a Quadrennial Review; develop a comprehensive National Infrastructure Protection Plan.
<b>"DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL"</b>	Retain and affirm the incompatibility of homosexuality with military service.	Repeal "Don't Ask Don't Tell" to allow homosexuals to serve openly in the military.
<b>IRAN</b>	Prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons; increase political, economic and diplomatic pressure; support tighter sanctions against Iran's business partners; oppose presidential-level, unconditional talks.	Prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons by imposing tougher sanctions; direct high-level diplomacy without preconditions; go the extra diplomatic mile; offer meaningful incentives for positive changes.
<b>INTELLIGENCE</b>	Create a single congressional joint committee on intelligence; increase personnel and integrate more human and technological capabilities.	Appoint a director of national intelligence with a fixed term; create a bipartisan consultative group; establish a national declassification center.