

MISSION  
**ROLL CALL**

# IMPACT REPORT 2023

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

A Letter from Our CEO 03

---

Our Mission 04

---

State of the Veterans in the U.S. 05

---

Actions and Results 11

---

2024 Priorities 15

---



# A LETTER FROM OUR CEO

My name is Jim Whaley, and I recently came aboard Mission Roll Call as its Chief Executive Officer. I am a retired U.S. Army officer, married to an Army Veteran and a father of three daughters — two of whom are currently serving overseas on active duty, and the other serving soldiers and their families at a military nonprofit. My family and I are committed to the cause of serving those who served, which is why I was drawn to the vision of Mission Roll Call. Mission Roll Call brings a unique and dynamic process to being the voice of veterans through advocacy.

Every member that makes up our talented team at Mission Roll Call is passionate about veteran issues. Over half our staff are veterans themselves. We are apolitical and represent the concerns that you, our veterans, have across the nation. We believe that every veteran has a voice that needs to be heard. Almost half of all 18 million veterans within this country are not associated with any veteran service organization or the Veterans Administration.

Mission Roll Call is an unfiltered voice for our veterans, family members and their supporters. We believe using the opinions of over 18 million veterans and their families is a powerful tool to bring to the attention of the American people and demand action by decision makers in government. These opinions are gathered by going where veterans are to hear their voice, such as social media, in-person events and through our not-for-profit coalition partners across the world.

Through our Service-to-Service Initiative, we will provide our veteran community access through podcasts, videos and articles to help address the challenges and concerns they are experiencing. We will be providing educational podcasts covering important subjects, such as navigating the VA, transitioning out of the military and starting a business. This program will provide a platform for insightful discussion from other veteran support organizations, business leaders and veteran entrepreneurs.

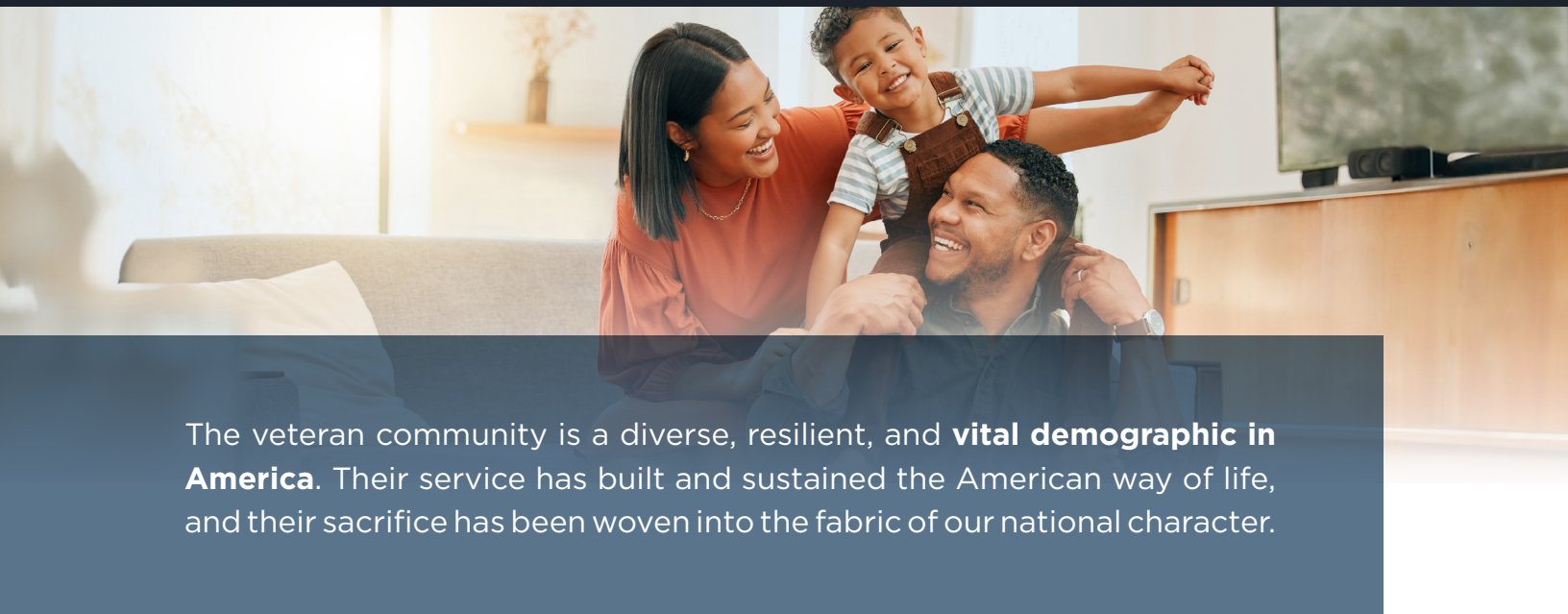
We also do something else that is vital: we give our veterans a community that has purpose. We are creating a coalition of veteran organizations, so that members can find and participate in service events in their local communities. Additionally, veterans, families and supporters who engage with Mission Roll Call, whether it's by participating in one of our polls or sharing their stories in one of our Veteran Voices videos, are doing something tremendously important for their brothers and sisters in arms. They are building a resilient and purposeful community.

The time is now for our nation to hear our powerful voice. We're making a ROLL CALL to our nation's veterans. Please sound off and answer the call.



**Jim Whaley**

CEO, Mission Roll Call



The veteran community is a diverse, resilient, and **vital demographic in America**. Their service has built and sustained the American way of life, and their sacrifice has been woven into the fabric of our national character.

Our nation's veterans deserve more: more efficiency in the healthcare they utilize; more recognition for their sacrifices through sustained existing benefits and unique new ones; more direct advocacy in Washington. These are the fundamental reasons **Mission Roll Call (MRC)** exists.

MRC is a veteran-led nonpartisan movement committed to providing former service members a powerful, unified voice that is heard by our nation's leaders. We feed our community's concerns directly to policymakers to advocate for positive change.

Since launching in 2020, our top three priorities have remained steadfast and vital:



**End veteran suicide.**



**Ensure veteran access to quality healthcare and benefits.**



**Advocate for uniquely underserved veteran populations.**

Less than **one percent** of the U.S. population currently serves in the armed forces. And **fewer members of Congress today have military experience** than in the past. Most of the American public doesn't have firsthand experience with the unique needs of those who ensure our freedoms. That's why Mission Roll Call's work is so important, providing an apolitical platform to transform how American civilians and legislators understand our community.

We use consistent polling, outreach and robust media campaigns to share opinions, stories and concerns with lawmakers who can make a tangible difference to veterans across the country.



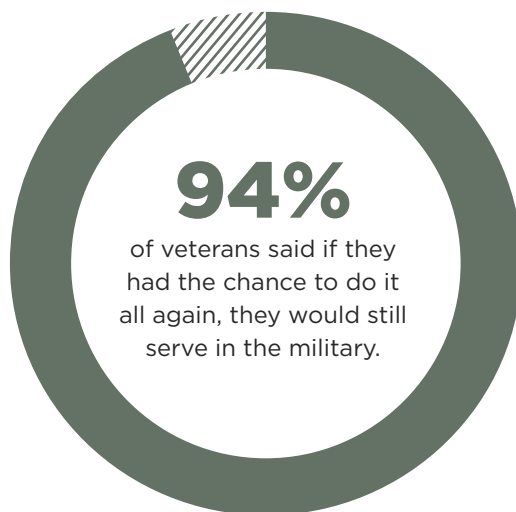
**WE SPEAK UP FOR EVERY VETERAN,  
SO NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND.**



Every year, more than **200,000 men and women** transition from U.S. military service to civilian life. As of September 2023, there were an estimated **17.9 million veterans** in the U.S., representing **about 6% of the population**. And according to a recent Mission Roll Call poll, 94% said if they had the chance to do it all again, they would still serve in the military.

These brave men and women often go on to continue vibrant lives of service in their local communities, taking on roles in law enforcement, medicine, business, emergency management and more. About **9 million** veterans are in the U.S. workforce today, roughly half of all living veterans in America.

Here's a look at the promising trends in the veteran community, along with the challenges MRC is working to address.

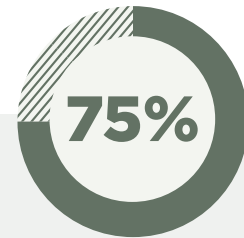




## PROMISING VETERAN TRENDS

### “Vetpreneurs”: Veterans are entrepreneurial.

There are nearly **2 million** veteran-owned small businesses, employing about 5.5 million Americans and contributing **\$1 trillion dollars to the nation’s economy every year**. 65% of veterans say when they left military service, they considered starting their own business (MRC poll).



### Veterans are vital to their communities.

**75%** volunteer at least once a month in their local community (MRC poll).



### Veterans are in demand.

A higher percentage of veterans are employed than non-veterans. In December 2023, the veteran unemployment rate was 3.0%, and the comparable non-veteran unemployment rate was 3.7%. Employers know veterans have a strong work ethic and important transferable skills. In an MRC survey, **97% of Americans said they believe veterans make good employees**.

### Veterans are valued.

**75%** of veterans say veteran issues are a priority for the American public (MRC poll).

### Veterans are diverse.

Since 2000, the percentage of female veterans has grown from 6% to 11%; by 2048, this number is **estimated** to be 18%. 8.6% of veterans are Hispanic or Latino, and 12.4% are African American ([U.S. Census Bureau](#)).





## VETERAN CHALLENGES

**17.5** **Veteran suicide rates.**

Veterans remain at elevated risk for suicide. An average of **17.5 veterans** take their own lives every day. Emerging studies suggest this could be much higher.

### Homelessness.

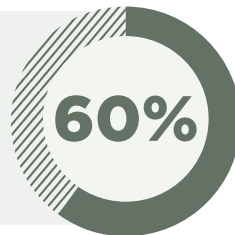
The number of **homeless veterans** rose more than 7% from 2022 to 2023. The data shows that on a single night in January 2023, there were **35,574 veterans** who experienced homelessness in the U.S.

### Transition Assistance.

The DoD's **Transition Programs** do not adequately prepare veterans and their spouses for the complexities of life away from military service. These programs must ensure that veterans and their families have the mentorship, resources and support they need to navigate financial independence, employment, healthcare and mental health challenges they may encounter with the change.

### Mental health.

According to an MRC poll, **60%** of veterans are not satisfied with the VA's current approach and success rate for PTS treatment for veterans.



### Healthcare.

Ensuring veterans have sufficient access to healthcare, especially underserved veteran communities.

For more resources and information visit: [www.missionrollcall.org](http://www.missionrollcall.org)



## MRC'S PRIORITY ISSUES: A DEEPER LOOK

### SUICIDE

According to the VA, suicide risk remains **elevated for years** after a transition from active duty service.

The suicide numbers are rising. There was an 11.6% increase in veteran suicides from 2020 to 2021 (the most recent data), after this number dropped the two years prior. And the suicide rate among women veterans jumped 24.1% — far greater than the 6.3% increase among male veterans.

A staggering number of Global War On Terror veterans have suffered traumatic mental and physical wounds, with **studies** showing they are taking their lives at a higher rate than veterans of previous wars. And according to 2023 MRC research, 53% of the American public think the government has **not effectively** addressed or assisted veterans with suicide prevention.

#### POLL

Not satisfied with the government's care for veterans regarding PTS and suicide prevention

**53%** - of the American public are not satisfied

**60%** - of veterans are not satisfied

Veteran suicide can't be viewed only as a **mental health issue** that can be solved through counseling and prescription medicine alone. This approach is far too shortsighted. Veterans need a holistic approach that also includes employment retention programs, improvements in transition assistance, and greater funding for community providers specializing in veteran needs.





## MENTAL HEALTH

In October 2023, MRC published a report called [The State of Veterans' Mental Health 2023](#), where we highlighted the top mental health issues facing veterans today. These include Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), anxiety and depression, and substance abuse issues.

In a 2022 study, [38% of veterans](#) had a code on their medical record for a common mental health disorder. This number *does not include undiagnosed mental health conditions*. Data from the RAND Center for Military Health Policy Research [shows](#) that less than half of veterans in need of mental health services receive treatment.

A JAMA psychiatry study found that the rate of Post-Traumatic Stress is up to [15 times](#) higher among veterans than among civilians.



Recent legislation, like the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2020, which expands mental health care options for veterans, is an important step toward supporting veterans' mental health care needs, but there is still much to be done. We're especially pushing for more funding for *community-based* nonprofits and businesses that are on the frontlines of veterans' mental health services.



### Why "PTS"?

At MRC, we don't use the term Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). We use PTS, because *Post-Traumatic Stress is an injury, not a disorder*. We're trying to make this the standard terminology in the media and public use. [Officials](#) in the Pentagon have already dropped the "D" from PTSD for several years now. Veterans need to feel comfortable opening up about their experiences, not stigmatized.



## VETERAN TRANSITION AND EMPLOYMENT

In December 2023, the veteran unemployment rate was 3.0%, down from 3.2% the previous year. We are making progress, but there are still hurdles to tackle:

1

According to an MRC poll, 85% of veterans do not feel the military transition assistance program prepared them for leaving military service and entering the corporate work space.

2

In 2020, [The New York Times](#) highlighted one issue that still exists: **“Veterans are working, but not in jobs that match their advanced training.”** Employers (and veterans themselves) don’t always see how their skills can convert to private-sector jobs. Others lack strong professional networks.

3

Veterans with disabilities can face **transportation challenges**.

4

Veteran employment challenges can also be directly connected to mental health. Veterans need strong **mental health resources** so they can be confident and productive in the labor market.



MRC sent out 31 polls and received **256,485** responses from you.  
The number of responses doubled from 2022.

We interacted with **1,000** of you.  
Your voice was featured in a total of **67** unique stories nationwide.

MRC published 128 unique social media posts in 2023, securing more than **23.6 million** paid and organic impressions and **519,460** engagements – plus over **35,500** new followers on our social media channels.

MRC was featured in a total of **67 unique stories nationwide** – including print, TV, radio, podcast and op-eds, including in [Newsweek](#), [The Washington Post](#), [NPR](#), [CNN](#), [Fox News](#), [NBC](#), [The Daily Mail](#) and more.

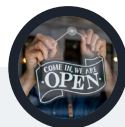
These stories were shared **1,474 times** in various publications nationwide, resulting in a potential reach of **437.4 million**.

Here are some highlights:



### YouTube video

with 88K views (and counting)  
with Tanya Hubbard,  
U.S. Air Force (ret.).



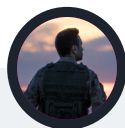
### Blog

about the success of  
veteran-owned businesses.



### Radio

interview about veteran  
homelessness.



### Op-ed

about the impact of the  
Afghanistan withdrawal  
on veterans.



### TV Interview

about mental health care  
benefits for veterans.

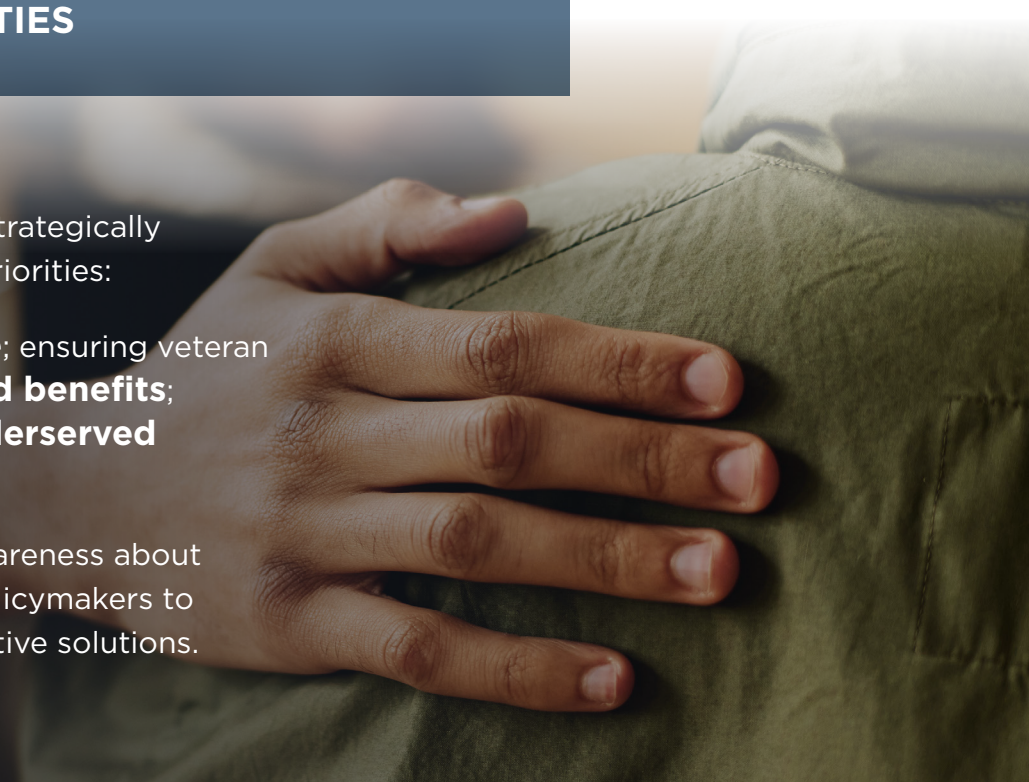


## ISSUES AND PRIORITIES

MRC’s 2023 efforts were strategically framed around your top priorities:

**ending veteran suicide**; ensuring veteran access to **healthcare and benefits**; and **advocating for underserved veteran populations**.

We consistently raised awareness about these issues and urged policymakers to implement practical, effective solutions.



## VETERAN SUICIDE

With your feedback, we called on policymakers to increase VA suicide prevention budget, specifically:

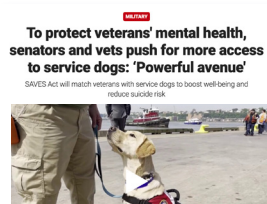
- ★ Increased funding for FOX grants.
- ★ Increased funding for the veteran crisis line (VCL).
- ★ Take the Office of Suicide Prevention out of the Office for Mental Health.
- ★ Our efforts were featured in [The Dallas Morning News](#), [NBC News](#), [Fox News](#), [The National Desk](#) and more.



The Dallas Morning News



NBC NEWS



FOX NEWS



TND



## VA ACCOUNTABILITY

Veterans' Group Decries VA Decision to Abandon Employee-Accountability Tools



We called on Congress to pass an additional VA accountability and whistleblower protection package to ensure bad VA employees are removed on an expedited basis.

Our efforts were featured in the [National Review](#).

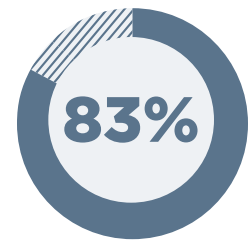
### POLL

Recently, the VA announced it would no longer use the bipartisan 2017 VA Accountability law, designed to make it easier to quickly discipline bad VA employees, citing a series of legal setbacks. Do you think the VA should continue to implement the law?

89% - Yes

## VETERAN 2<sup>ND</sup> AMENDMENT PROTECTION

We called on Congress to pass the VA 2nd Amendment Protection Act, which passed in October 2023. It prevents veterans from losing their Second Amendment right to purchase or own firearms when they receive help managing their Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits. **83% of Mission Roll Call respondents said the law should be amended.**



Your voices guided MRC testify in-person to the [U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Veterans Affairs](#), and the bill ultimately passed the House of Representatives.

## CODIFICATION OF ACCESS STANDARDS UNDER THE MISSION ACT

We called on policymakers to pass the Veteran Care Improvement Act, to incentivize partnerships between the VA and community providers — an important part of improving health and mental health services.

Our efforts were featured in [The Dallas Morning News](#) and [The Washington Times](#).

Community clinics are a lifeline for veterans, but bureaucratic missteps remain



The Dallas Morning News

Congress should prevent Veterans Affairs from 'fixing' what isn't broken



The Washington Times



## ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

We called on Congress to ensure the success of the electronic health record management program (EHRM) by preventing its continued deployment until significant improvements are made to the system.

Our efforts were featured in [The Dallas Morning News](#), [ABC News](#) and more.

### POLL

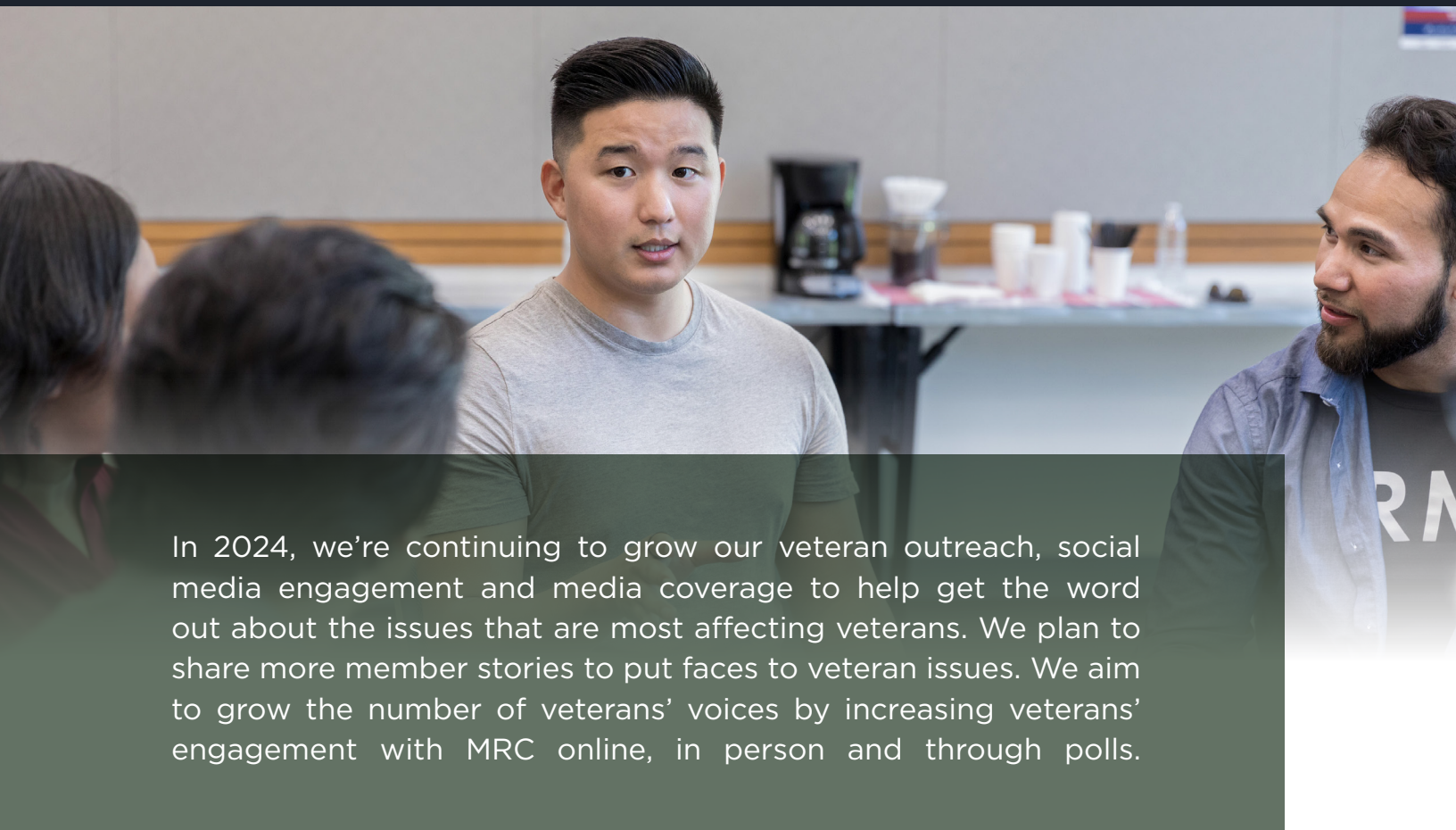
Should the VA EHRM rollout to other VA facilities remain paused until improvements are made and certified, or canceled entirely, forfeiting the billions of dollars already spent on the program?

84% - Remain Paused



### MRC also advocated for:

- ★ Passage of the Richard Starr Act to eliminate offset of VA disability compensation with retirement pay
- ★ Authorization of VA to receive reimbursements from TRICARE and Medicare
- ★ Increase funding for HUD-VASH program to further combat veteran homelessness
- ★ Debate on accreditation standards on for-profit companies handling veteran claims
- ★ Increase burial allowances to account for inflation



In 2024, we're continuing to grow our veteran outreach, social media engagement and media coverage to help get the word out about the issues that are most affecting veterans. We plan to share more member stories to put faces to veteran issues. We aim to grow the number of veterans' voices by increasing veterans' engagement with MRC online, in person and through polls.

## THIS YEAR WE WANT TO BE THE VOICE OF VETERANS TO IMPACT THESE THINGS:

- ★ Veteran suicide prevention as the **top priority**
- ★ Mental Health and Veteran Benefits
- ★ Veteran/Spouse Transition into Employment
- ★ Veteran Homelessness
- ★ Underserved Communities

Add **your voice** to grow our impact.

