

Pillar Four: Strategic Leaders for a Changing World

America's capacity for reinvention, driven by talent from every walk of life, is our greatest strategic advantage. Both our values and our interests demand that we find new and better ways of ensuring that every person has the inspiration and incentive to contribute their unique abilities to address our greatest security challenges. This means we must be able to attract, develop, and retain our country's most capable people to positions of leadership in public service, and to ensure that equality of opportunity allows us to use and empower the greatest minds of our generation. Leveraging the pluralism that underpins the strength of our society must be a strategic priority.

Preparing a 21st Century Workforce

To build upon our economic strength and succeed America must cultivate and invest in a workforce that is well trained in the skills needed to compete in the 21st century. The skills and expertise most urgently needed include technical skills for the new information economy as well as global knowledge and cultural understanding critical to prospering in an interconnected world. A new generation of energy leaders and innovators is also needed in order to harness the possibilities of clean and renewable energy and that has and will continue to create economic prosperity, all while confronting the threat of climate change. Investments in education, such as the Post-9/11 GI Bill, are not only providing much earned opportunities for our veterans, but positioning America for success in the future. As new economic partnerships and trade agreements are put in place, we must invest in educational and training programs that protect American workers and offer them opportunities to thrive in the new global economy.

Over the next decades, the global economy will be increasingly one of ideas, and with strategic investments in our human capital, America could be positioned to benefit hugely from this shift. Though we have many assets to leverage in this effort, a critical one will be our community of veterans. Veterans, especially those of the post-9/11 wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, have high degrees of technical expertise, experience with coordination, budgeting, and logistics, and understand creative problem solving in a resource constrained environment. It would not only be a disservice to our veterans but an egregious strategic oversight to leave this talent on the bench rather than employing it in the critical sectors of our economy where it is most needed.

Computers and networked systems are becoming more prevalent, appearing even in new contexts from sensors in our shoes to light bulbs in our houses. As more organizations realize the importance of cybersecurity in their operations, delivery of services, or manufacturing of products, the need for trained professionals and tech-savvy leaders will only continue to grow in the future.

This need for trained professionals extends far beyond the sphere of pure cyberspace. Private providers of critical infrastructure and publicly accessed services are faced with an unprecedented range of disruptive challenges including climatic disruptions, the threat of cyberattack, and how to incorporate the dramatic scale up of renewable energy deployment. A lack of adequately trained staff may soon create real vulnerabilities – especially in our energy infrastructure. Innovators may well seek out employment with tech start-ups that are trying to disrupt public access to energy or water instead of working for entities that protect these resources.

Modernizing critical sectors requires more than investing in the education of our workforce. The market for shared resources benefits greatly from an informed body of consumers. American consumers play a critical role in the transition away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy sources like solar, wind, and biomass. There is a need for increased efforts to educate the public on the security, economic, and social benefits of renewable energy as well as the choices that are available for consumption. Solar, wind, and other renewable energies are growing markets with demonstrated success in offering consumers lower costs and more sustainable energy.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. Encourage veterans to become entrepreneurs.** America's returning veterans are a tremendous talent pool, and they have the potential to lead in the civilian economy just as they did in uniform. The Post-9/11 GI Bill should be amended to allow qualified veterans to convert their educational benefits to start-up capital, upon completion of a Small Business Administration (SBA) certified prep course. Existing programs, like the SBA's "Boots to Business" program, should be expanded. At the local level, city government should incentivize veteran-friendly incubators like The Bunker, an already-successful program in Chicago and Washington.
- 2. Apply veterans' military job certifications to civilian employment.** Veterans have completed rigorous training to qualify for their jobs in the military, yet are often unable to transfer their certifications when transitioning to the civilian workforce. "Concurrent Credentialing" programs that allow servicemembers to earn civilian certifications during military training should be expanded. In some cases, federal assistance may be necessary in order to help cash-strapped and under-staffed state and local governments to recognize military certifications for vocational careers.

- 3. Recruit and train a new generation of cybersecurity professionals.** In order to develop a workforce and talent pipeline that can adequately protect our networks and adapt in a quickly changing environment, an increased focus on technology-related education programs and investment in Information Technology (IT) and cybersecurity human capital is needed. State and local governments should integrate the study of cyberspace into curricula across primary and secondary education, with an increased focus on cybersecurity vocational training programs. To ensure America's security, the U.S. government and energy companies must be able to attract top cybersecurity talent we have trained using recruiting tactics like hackathons, contests and web forums.
- 4. Communicate the risks facing our critical infrastructure.** Public officials should work with private sector entities to develop communications and training programs to explain how the energy grid and other critical infrastructure are vulnerable to disruption. These programs, which should take into account the threats caused by climate change and cyber attacks, should be made available to policymakers, as well as executives and staff of companies that provide key public services, to mitigate risk and ensure preparedness in case of a crisis.
- 5. Create informed energy consumers.** State and local governments should partner with private sector companies that supply public goods like energy and other critical infrastructure resources. These partnerships can educate consumers regarding the sources their local utilities use to supply their everyday energy needs and on the actions they can take to actively manage their energy consumption. Americans across the country should be empowered with the knowledge of what they can do to take individual and collective action to manage their energy decisions.
- 6. Employ veterans to grow the renewable energy industry.** About 200,000 servicemembers will need jobs in the next 5 years as they transition from the military to civilian life. Solar and wind are growing industries that need skilled workers. The solar industry alone is adding an estimated 30,000 jobs per year according to the Department of Energy. In order to not only provide pathways for veteran employment, but also to adopt practices that specifically allow veterans to thrive and to be retained, we should continue to support programs like Solar Ready Vets, which aim to train servicemembers for jobs in the solar industry.

Attracting our Best and Brightest

The next generation of strategic leaders will be Americans who view themselves as global citizens. As citizens, public servants, and leaders, we must work to inspire Americans from all backgrounds to participate in the work of strengthening the nation.

There is also a broad array of ways that Americans can serve and strengthen our country, most of which are outside of government.

21st century leadership also requires a reinvestment in appreciation for service. Programs like the Peace Corps that support American service abroad have a long history of putting a human face on American values in countries and communities around the world. Others, like Americorps, provide similar opportunities to serve communities here at home. By making a new commitment to these initiatives, the United States can strengthen the leadership skills of the next generation, while representing American values at home and abroad.

No one understands the value of service more than our current generation of veterans who have proved themselves on the battlefields of the 21st century. Veterans are highly disciplined, well educated, and skilled; we have already seen what continued investment in this generation of veterans can accomplish in America. The Obama administration's investments in veteran job training and employment programs have narrowed the unemployment gap, but there is still more work to be done. Through continued expansion of public-private partnerships, we can ensure that every veteran has the opportunity to continue to leverage his or her knowledge and expertise in a productive way.

In order to take full advantage of the opportunities of interconnected world, we must first understand it. Both the threats and opportunities we face are in a constant state of change. We must employ the experiences of those who have served on the frontlines fighting for America's interests and security by training and positioning them to continue their service. Whether by running for office or starting NGO's with our assistance, they can help understand the world better and engage it in new and creative ways.

We must also recruit qualified Americans of color and diverse backgrounds to high-level positions in the U.S. foreign policy and national security enterprise. The diversity of our nation ideally positions America to take advantage of and be a leader in a more globalized world. We must create pipelines for leadership development, allowing us to discover and cultivate the much needed but undiscovered talent of underrepresented communities. Our nation must see itself reflected in our institutions and government. We must ensure that all of our talented individuals, from all walks of life, are given an opportunity to make an impact. This strengthens us as a nation, making our communities stronger, safer, and more prosperous by guaranteeing that all have a voice in the decisions that affect our lives.

The success of American foreign policy depends in no small part on the caliber of our foreign and civil servants and the vitality of their organizations. Throughout the government at the local, state, and federal levels, there is a critical need for a new generation of subject matter and regional experts. Throughout the bureaucracy, experts on issues as diverse as the Middle East, public health, and arms control are nearing

retirement age and their offices and programs are faced with a dearth of mid- and early-career policy professionals with the deep knowledge needed to supplement and ultimately replace them. Reforms in government hiring practices, a greater emphasis on human resource development, and more career development opportunities like the Presidential Management Fellowship would provide a major step towards ensuring that institutions are able to find qualified policymakers and implementers. These efforts will provide an outlet for the tremendous untapped potential of many talented and educated Americans.

Regional expertise and language skills will be of increasing importance in this century as well. The urgency of this need is exemplified by the relative lack of Arab and Middle East experts in our government at a time when we are deeply politically and militarily involved in the region. The Middle East and North Africa is a complex and diverse region, and the skills we employ to engage it should reflect this diversity. As our national security rebalances to Asia, it is critical that this shift is coordinated with an intellectual rebalance; one of the best ways to solidify and expand gains made in recent U.S. efforts to rebalance to Asia is to ensure that the U.S. government has the requisite personnel and expertise it needs. Without the right personnel, the administration and Congress will struggle to accurately grasp and respond to emerging developments in a dynamic region.

The U.S. military, too, is working to improve recruitment and of the most talented individuals working towards the success of any mission. At a time when only 25% of the population between the ages of 17 and 24 are even eligible to enlist, the military must enact policies that allow the most talented and able individuals to serve. This means providing opportunities for advancement for all those who qualify, regardless of gender or sexual orientation. Recently, this has included opening up a broader range of military careers to women, which should be applauded. Anyone who can meet the physical and intellectual standards demanded by the role should be eligible to compete for it; only this provides the greatest opportunity for the most qualified individuals to serve.

Lastly, we must work to make sure that we have qualified, thoughtful, and experienced candidates for elected office. In this current era of heightened partisanship and ideological entrenchment, it is particularly critical that we have elected officials who are not just politicians, but proven leaders. Our local, state, and federal offices around the country should be a reflection of our electorate: Diverse, creative, and talented.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. Ask all young Americans to do one year of service.** We should establish a universal system of national service to encourage all young Americans aged 18-28 to complete at least one year of military, government, or civilian national service. As part of the initiative, the Office of Personnel Management should create a national service hiring preference for federal jobs similar to the veterans

hiring preferences.

2. **Create fellowships for veterans in continued public service:** State and local officials should create opportunities for returning veterans to continue their service in local government. A one-year fellowship for veterans in an office of a mayor or state legislator, followed by preferential admission to state university programs, would fill gaps in critical skills and leadership while allowing veterans to gain valuable experience in policymaking.
3. **Cultivate a government that looks like America.** The U.S. government should expand opportunities for minority and low-income students to choose careers in public service by pursuing more active outreach efforts, increasing the number of federal scholarships, fellowships, and financial aid available to minorities, and developing and supporting pipeline and mentoring programs. The government, NGO, and private sectors should solicit participation from a more diverse spectrum of policy experts. This effort should include both encouraging new leaders to enter public service and taking advantage of their unique knowledge and experience, tapping into the unique skills and talents of America's diasporas and communities of color.
4. **Hire for critical priorities.** We should ensure that every U.S. government entity has the appropriate expertise and understanding of regions and issues critical to our national security. There should be a streamlined hiring system for recruits with highly specific skills or backgrounds like critical languages or cybersecurity, and we should evaluate the security clearance process to ensure that non-threatening ties to a specific region do not prevent qualified individuals from serving.
5. **Help the government retain top cybersecurity and IT talent.** Government agencies must be given more flexibility to hire and pay top cybersecurity and information technology professionals and should commit to continued talent development if they are going to compete with the private sector.
6. **Allow women to serve in all military combat roles—no exceptions.** The Department of Defense and military leaders should ensure that every person who wants to defend America by serving in the military is considered, regardless of race, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation. All physical standards should have a direct correlation to the skills and actions necessary to fulfill each occupational specialty.
7. **Raise awareness about the challenges facing frontline civilians.** Frontline civilians and federal agencies must build a new narrative of service. They must convey to the American people that frontline civilians serve their country far from home, sometimes risking their lives to prevent and contain threats.

America needs its most talented and dedicated people to take up this service, which is so critical to our national security.

Broadening Opportunity in an Interconnected World

The engine of American ingenuity is powered by the diversity of our people. The globalization of markets has led to a highly interconnected and intensely competitive world. Geopolitical conflicts aggravated by dwindling national resources have created an increasingly complex security environment. To maintain America's place as the world's indispensable nation, our country needs strategic thinkers and leaders who can accurately assess current threats and understand the potential range of future challenges. To do so, such leaders will need a cultural fluency that enables them to articulate a vision for American security that is principled, innovative, clear, and pragmatic.

The American populace at large must also be given the opportunity and tools necessary to engage with the world. Historically, U.S. efforts to explain the importance of regional connections have focused on the American foreign policy elite. But in order for ordinary Americans to capitalize on today's opportunities, they must begin to think globally and understand what is at stake for them. Failure to do so will ultimately hamstring any U.S. efforts to engage the world, particularly in a resource-constrained environment.

The actual integration of the United States and the world across all fields is currently outpacing the development of U.S. policy knowledge and expertise on global political, economic, cultural issues and foreign languages. The demand for American students who have immersed themselves in foreign regions is greater than the supply. As the United States continues to expand its global ties, additional regional expertise will prove essential. Failure to develop it will leave us ill-prepared for engagement with the world.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. Make global issues relevant to American families.** Public officials should speak more frequently and more directly to the American people about how and why things happening on the other side of the world are impacting their daily lives for better or worse. Examples could include, but are not limited to, senior level officials engaging the U.S. public in "global town halls" where the officials discuss how specific countries and issues, or periodic informal "fireside chats" where the President talks about the importance of global affairs to the United States.
- 2. Increase Americans' international interactions and engagement.** The United States should continue develop and fund programs promoting people-to-people exchanges with countries critical to our national security and our economy. In addition, the U.S. government should partner with think tanks and academic institutions to increase participation in fellowships, study abroad programs and exchanges vis-a-vis critical regions. These programs should provide opportunities

for eager young Americans everywhere – not just those from big cities or elite academic institutions where awareness of critical regions is higher.

- 3. American schools should increase links with schools abroad.** U.S. public and private schools should also expand the number of academic and educational competitions such as the Model UN and adapt such programs to include regional and regional blocs such as North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Arab League, and the Organization of American States. This would increase the number of students that learn about diplomacy, international relations, public speaking, debating teamwork, and leadership each year.

Mandate foreign language study at all levels of education. U.S. educators should make the study of foreign languages mandatory at all levels of education, prioritizing strategic languages to America’s internationalist foreign policy and national security. This shift must occur at the primary, secondary, and collegiate levels.

U.S. Government Talent Retention

Recruitment is not enough; retention is critical. Some data shows that 50% of Presidential Management Fellows—viewed as the "next generation of government and public servant leaders"—have left the Department of State after four to five years of service. United States Agency for International Development has consistently ranked in the lower half of Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey scores for employee engagement and satisfaction.

Diverse leadership is also difficult to retain. Because there are relatively few Americans of color and diverse backgrounds working in the foreign policy and national security space, such individuals are often highly sought after in a variety of fields. Moreover, it can be challenging to thrive in environments where colleagues do not identify with or value culturally credible viewpoints. Critical reforms are needed to begin rectifying this and creating a generation of future public service leaders.

The government and military face a particularly dire challenge as they attempt to manage their IT and cybersecurity human capital. The overall pool of talent is small and they often compete with private sector employers for the same candidates. Given the pay and compensation restrictions that bind federal agencies and the military, it is quite difficult for them to match the offers provided by organizations outside of government. This challenge is compounded by the bureaucratic, hierarchical cultures prevalent in the federal government. This culture is counter to that of the broader technology community and further hinders government and military talent acquisition.

Servicemembers are not the only Americans to serve in or near combat. Another demographic of critical concern is America’s frontline civilians. One of our nation’s first

responsibilities is to ensure the care of the military veterans who have fought and sacrificed over the last decade. In addition, we must invest in the civilians serving around the globe in both conflict states and other frontline situations (e.g. health workers battling Ebola in West Africa). These are talented, patriotic, and selfless individuals willing to take personal risk to serve our national interests. Unfortunately, those who serve in a civilian capacity often leave without significant preparation for the rigors of service and often lack consistent physical and mental health support while deployed. They return home without an easily identified community of those with shared experience, or readily available reintegration services, and they often feel a stigma that prevents them from seeking follow-up mental health care. America must work to improve the frontline service experience. This is the right thing to do, and retaining these skilled professionals is also the smart thing for America's security.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. Address the brain drain in public service.** Federal, state, and local government should give high performing employees the opportunity to compete for a special status that will allow them to return to government employment under an expedited process for a ten year period. They should also create a "Civilian Reserves" program whereby civilians who have served for a minimum number of years can continue to serve as a civilian reservist. This program would allow them to keep some level of security clearance, remain connected to their department, and contribute expertise when needed.
- 2. Increase support for military families.** Servicemembers' families make tremendous sacrifices, and their well-being is critical to readiness and retention. Among other initiatives, public-private partnerships that support military spouses in their own careers despite frequent moves should be encouraged and expanded. Congress should ensure that Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits remain transferable to family members and approve transferability for non-traditional families. The Department of Defense should place renewed emphasis on ensuring military families have access to reliable and safe childcare, especially overseas. The Department of Veterans Affairs statutory mandate should be extended to serve transitioning families alongside servicemembers.
- 3. Protect servicemembers and their families from predatory business practices.** Payday lenders and for-profit colleges both use loopholes in the law to exploit military personnel and their families. The Department of Defense should close loopholes in the Military Lending Act allowing lenders to charge rates far in excess of the 36% APR cap otherwise established by law. Likewise, the current loophole that exempts Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs tuition assistance from caps on the amount of federal aid a college can receive makes servicemembers and veterans attractive targets for unscrupulous for-profit colleges and should be closed.

- 4. Protecting and caring for America's frontline civilians.** Thousands of Americans serve in critical areas of instability, crisis, and conflict as civilians. Too often, these civilians do not receive as much preparation, support, or care as their military counterparts either while in country or when they return home. To care for and honor these civilians, we should provide thorough practical training, encourage dialogue between program and security staff, and create networks and support structures for them when they return home. In addition, we must provide more support for the families of those serving in these roles.
- 5. Prioritize innovation in government agencies.** Every department and agency in the federal government, particularly those working to protect our national security, should emphasize innovation to ensure we counter ever-evolving threats. Agencies could do this by creating a position of Chief Innovation Officer establishing innovation labs (physical spaces designed facilitate creativity and collaboration), and working to ensure innovation does not place undue emphasis on technology at the expense of critical thinking.
- 6. Implement a data-driven approach to hiring and retention.** Departments and agencies must commit to understanding the causes of recruitment and retention problems. Systematic workforce data collection and analysis should inform human resources policymaking, without becoming overly burdensome for program managers. For example, exit interviews should be conducted for all departing government employees to generate a baseline of data and concerns.
- 7. Break down federal government silos.** Government agencies should encourage workers to take on varying roles in both their agency and other agencies. In addition, more must be done to bring together public officials who work as political appointees, civil services, and contractors.