
The Importance of Verizon's Veterans Advisory Board

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As Americans across the country observe Veteran's day, it reminds me of one of my favorite aspects of working at Verizon: the company's steadfast commitment to current and former members of the military.

Veterans face an array of difficult problems. For example, the National Council for Behavioral Health found that roughly 30 percent of active duty and reserve military personnel deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan have a mental health condition requiring treatment, but less than half of returning veterans in need receive treatment. As a result, the Veterans Affairs Department (VA) reports that approximately 22 veterans die by suicide every day.

Homelessness is another major challenge. The Department of Housing and Urban Development estimates that 40,056 veterans are homeless on any given night. Another 1.4 million other veterans are at risk of homelessness due to poverty, lack of support networks and substandard living conditions. Verizon demonstrates its commitment to addressing veterans' issues in several ways. From supporting George Washington University's "The Pitch" (a one day program for military-affiliated students to network and refine their interview skills with local business professionals, including me) to offering generous discounts for members of the military (as well as cadets, veterans and their families), Verizon truly cares about our country's service members.

One of Verizon's initiatives that I'm most proud of is the Veterans Advisory Board (VAB), of which I am a member.

As an employee-driven board, the VAB takes multiple approaches to supporting the more than 11,000 Verizon employees who have served in the military. (This is particularly important in my home state of Virginia, which the VA estimates has the second-highest proportion of veterans – tied with Montana with 10.6 percent).

For one, the VAB advocates for veterans' priorities with Verizon's leadership. These include employment, military leave, health care, changes to the VA's health care and new Congressional legislation. These activities aim to ensure the company upholds the highest standards for veteran policies and practices.

The VAB also assists Verizon's Talent Acquisition Department in recruiting qualified veterans and making sure these newly hired veterans are welcomed. One way the VAB accomplishes this is by giving these veterans input into which military-oriented opportunities and programs Verizon assists through volunteerism, matching gifts, grants and in-kind investments.



Additionally, the VAB serves as a network for veterans to support and share information with each other. We share memories and insights on veterans' rights and attend benefits to attending veterans-focused events together. All of these activities create a strong sense of community of which I am honored to be a part.

My particular community is the VAB Mid-Atlantic. I have been the beneficiary of this remarkable program since I moved to Virginia approximately two years ago. Since then, I have joined colleagues to put wreaths down at Arlington Cemetery during the holiday season and have met fascinating new people, including winners of the Medal of Honor and Purple Heart. But more broadly, as a as a Marine Corp Veteran, I am eternally grateful to the VAB giving me a way to give back.

My job along with my colleges and teams is to support the men and women of the federal government with their mission through thought leadership, technology and innovation. Many of these dedicated individuals that we serve daily are also veterans.

With that in mind, I encourage everyone to volunteer to help communities in need, not just this month but throughout the year. There are many ways to give back: I provided resources to Puerto Ricans during Hurricane Maria and served as a volunteer fireman for years. Whatever you do, I know you will find it rewarding, and the recipients of your goodwill will be appreciated more than you know.

