



**CCJ** Council on  
Criminal  
Justice

# Veterans Justice Commission

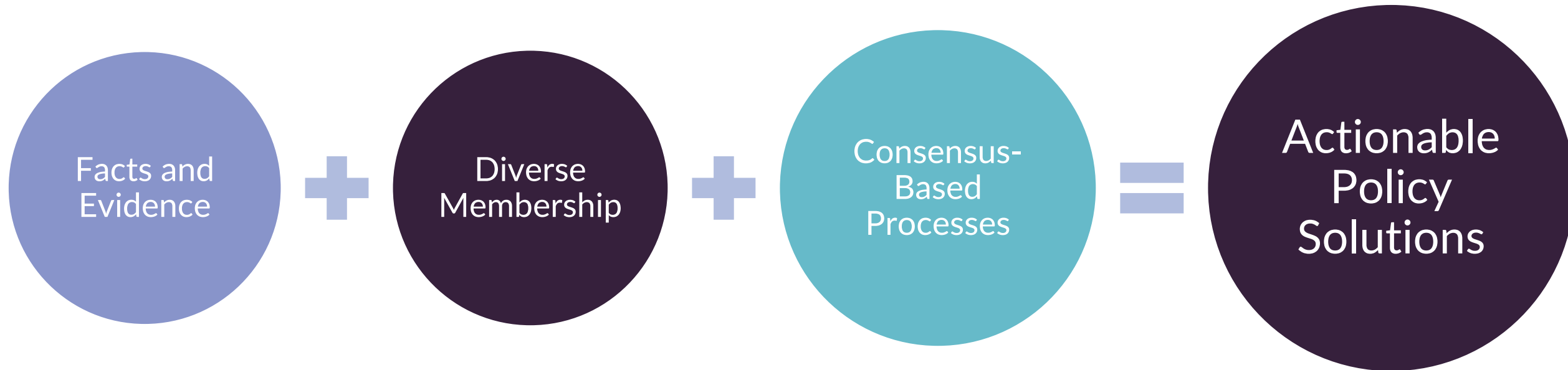
# Introduction



[Learn more about the Veterans Justice Commission](#)



# Forum for Building Common Ground



# The Mission



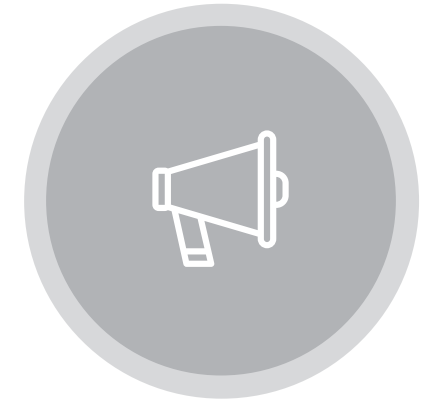
## **BUILD A COMMISSION**

Establish and facilitate a high-level, diverse Commission to develop a research agenda and reach consensus on findings and actionable policy recommendations



## **CONDUCT RESEARCH AND OUTREACH**

Engage respected researchers to establish key facts that guide the Commission's deliberations, along with field hearings and site visits to gather testimony from veterans and other stakeholders



## **DISSEMINATE FINDINGS**

Aggressively disseminate findings and recommendations via multiple channels to the public, CCJ members, the field at large, key agencies, and national policymaker and practitioner organizations

# Veterans Justice Commission

<p><b>Chuck Hagel (Chair)</b> 24th Secretary of Defense, U.S. Department of Defense</p>		<p><b>Greg Hamilton</b> Chief Customer Officer CIVICTEC; Sheriff of Travis County, Austin, Texas (ret.)</p>		<p><b>Leon Panetta</b> 23rd Secretary of Defense, U.S. Department of Defense</p>	
<p><b>Chief Justice Michael P. Boggs</b> Supreme Court of Georgia</p>		<p><b>Major General Mark Inch</b> Corrections Consultant, Mark 2.54, LLC; United States Army (ret.)</p>		<p><b>Master Chief Petty Officer Vincent W. Patton III</b> Senior VP for Leadership Development, NewDay USA; Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard (ret.)</p>	
<p><b>Carla Bugg</b> Criminal Justice Services Coordinator, Recovery Organization of Support Specialists</p>		<p><b>Sergeant Major Alford McMichael</b> 14th Sergeant Major Marine Corps (ret.)</p>		<p><b>Major General Angela Salinas</b> CEO, Girl Scouts of Southwest Texas; United States Marine Corps (ret.)</p>	
<p><b>Dr. Andrea Finlay, PhD</b> Research Health Scientist Center for Innovation to Implementation VA Palo Alto Health Care System</p>		<p><b>General Maryanne Miller</b> United States Air Force (ret.)</p>		<p><b>Ronald Self, PhD</b> Founder, Veterans Healing Veterans from the Inside Out</p>	
<p><b>Pelicia Hall</b> Senior-Vice President for ViaPath Technologies</p>		<p><b>Justice Eileen C. Moore</b> Associate Justice, California Court of Appeals</p>		<p><b>Dr. Jo Sornborger, PhD</b> Executive Director, UCLA Health Operation Mend</p>	

# Veterans Justice Commission 2022-Present



- Three Sectors of Work
  - [Transition from Military Service](#) Report
  - [Arrest through Sentencing](#) Report
  - Corrections and Re-Entry Report – Sept 2024
- What We Know – Echoes of War – Data on JIV
- Dissemination of Findings & Recommendations in 2025



# Transition from Military Service – Recommendations

1. DoD - make successful transition a priority mission
  - Validated risk-needs assessment
  - Joint Transition Centers
2. DoD - integrate evidence-based practices
3. VA - 1944 GI Bill; automated healthcare records & nationwide enrollment in VA health care

# Transition from Military Service

- DoD - make successful transition a priority mission

**5X**

The proportion of veterans receiving an other than honorable discharge has increased fivefold since World War II.

**6%**



Veterans with other than honorable discharges make up approximately 6% of all discharges ...

**18%**



but 18% of all incarcerated veterans.

**3X**

Veterans with other than honorable discharges are three times more likely to be at risk of suicide than veterans with honorable discharges.



# Arrest through Sentencing – Recommendations

1. Define and identify veterans in CJ system
2. Incentivize and improve veterans' diversion from incarceration
  - Model Policy Framework Committee
3. Create the National Center for Veterans Justice

# Hector's Second Chance Story



# Rationale for the Framework



**Recommendation:** Federal & state governments should adopt statutory frameworks that incentivize and improve veterans' diversion, deferred adjudication, participation in treatment courts, sentencing mitigation, & record clearance.

## Why is this needed to complement existing Veterans Courts?

1. Many veterans cannot access a Veterans Treatment Court (VTC).
  - 6.8M veterans live in a county without a VTC
  - DOJ: VTCs designed to serve only 10-15% of justice-involved veterans
  - 25% of VTCs require "honorable" discharge; 43% bar violent offenses
2. VTCs vary widely in their practices; some lack significant legal incentives.
3. VTCs are resource-intensive and difficult to scale.

# VJC Model Policy Framework



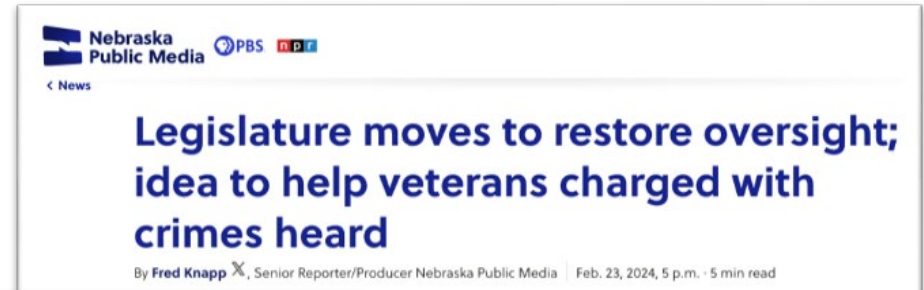
Establish state public policy to:

Recognize the burdens veterans carry from military service, and provide pathways to treatment & healing via justice system intervention.

1. Broad Eligibility Criteria & Judicial Discretion
  - Maximizes participation / judges determine eligibility & terms of supervision
2. Standardized Veteran Sentencing Option (VSO)
  - For probation-eligible charges: pre-trial/probation with treatment instead of conviction/incarceration
3. Evidence-based Case Plan Approach
  - Implements evidence-based standards used by accountability courts

# Nebraska is First to Adopt

- Several states filed bills related to the VJC Model Policy Framework in spring 2024
- Nebraska requested technical assistance from VJC in February and the legislature unanimously adopted LB 253 in April 2024



# Momentum

- Engaged with champions and organizations in over a dozen states
- National attention
  - [The New York Times](#)
  - [Governing](#)
  - [Route Fifty](#)
  - [Military Times](#)
  - [Washington Examiner](#)
  - [The Washington Post](#)
  - [Associated Press story](#) appeared in more than 300 outlets, including The Washington Post, CBS News, and ABC News.



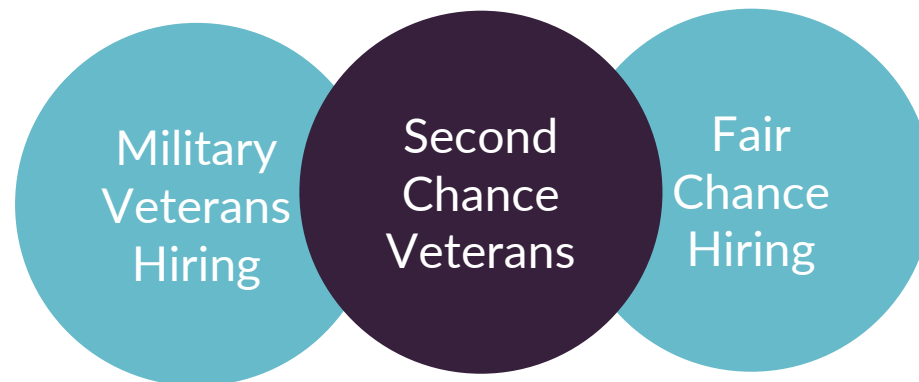
# Corrections and Re-entry Advisory Committee

- Recently concluded & Commission report release in Sept
- Explored challenges of current & former incarcerated veterans
  - Specialized veterans housing units
  - Healthcare
  - "Second Look" policies (original judge reconsideration)
  - Barriers to re-entry: housing and debt from VA overpayment
  - Technology and corporate policies (education and hiring)



# Corporate hiring policy for “Second Chance Veterans”

- Developing sample policy for companies.
- Seeking examples of "best practices" for hiring policies that target Second Chance + Veteran populations.
- Collaborating with Second Chance Business Coalition



# VJC Recommendations & Next Steps

- Corrections and Re-entry Report—September 2024
- Final Report—November 2024
- Dissemination of Findings & Technical Assistance—through 2025

Interested in implementing the Framework in your state?

- We can provide education to organizations/lawmakers
- Email us at [LKirchhoff@counciloncj.org](mailto:LKirchhoff@counciloncj.org) / [JSeward@counciloncj.org](mailto:JSeward@counciloncj.org)