



MISSION STATEMENT

As retired senior military leaders, we have spent our lives in service to our country. We understand the challenges we face at home and abroad. We are proud that America has the most highly-skilled, best-equipped, and most professional military in history.

Today we are confronted by a sobering statistic from the US Army: 75% of 17-to-24 year-old Americans do not qualify to serve under the American flag because of school failure, criminality, and/or physical fitness.

Maintaining the strength of our military and our nation will depend on new generations of young people who are willing and able to serve America with courage, compassion, and sacrifice.

Competent, educated, and healthy young people are the future patriots tasked with defending America's national security and prosperity.

We need a bold strategy to inspire our young people to do better, and to increase the chances that they will succeed.

Long-term research shows that quality early childhood education raises graduation rates by up to 44%. This means more young adults who can read, write, and finish what they start.

Not only does quality early childhood education increase graduation rates, it also cuts crime, saves lives, and saves money. Research shows that kids who don't get it are 70% more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18, making them potentially unfit for service and a threat to their communities. Furthermore, every dollar invested in these programs can save \$16.

We must invest now in the next generation to preserve our nation's security, freedom, and opportunity. The safety of our country demands urgent and intelligent action. We call on all policymakers to ensure America's national security by supporting interventions that will prepare young people for a life of military service and productive citizenship; this includes fully funding early childhood education programs, improving graduation rates, supporting families in ways that improve parenting skills and reduce child abuse, improving child nutrition and mental health services for juveniles, and helping troubled kids get back on track.

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"The U.S. Army today faces an imminent and menacing threat to our national security. We are engaged in a struggle that will determine our future. The threat? The lack of fully qualified young people to serve in the military. Faced with these declining numbers, we have two choices: Lower the military admission standards or raise the health and education standards for our young people."

General (Ret.) William Wallace
Former Commanding General, US
Army Training and Doctrine
Command, Fort Monroe, VA