

Historical Perspective of the Veterans Service Community

Taking care of our veterans has been a core value throughout U.S. history – initiated by the Pilgrims; promised by President Abraham Lincoln; and sustained by contemporary organizations and their programs and services.

As early as 1636, when the Pilgrims of Plymouth Colony were at war with the Indians, the Pilgrims passed a law for disabled soldiers to be supported by the colony. In 1776, the Continental Congress encouraged enlistments during the Revolutionary War, by providing pensions for disabled soldiers. In 1811, the Federal Government authorized the first medical facility for veterans.

But it was President Abraham Lincoln who declared a promise "to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's veterans. As a result, after the Civil War, the government established homes for veterans and provided medical and hospital treatment for all injuries and diseases.

In 1917, when the U.S. entered World War I, Congress established a new system of veterans benefits that included programs for disability compensation, insurance for service persons and veterans, and vocational rehabilitation for the disabled. By the 1920s, the benefits were administered by three different Federal agencies and needed greater collaboration. So, in 1930, Congress authorized President Herbert Hoover to “consolidate and coordinate Government activities affecting war veterans” – uniting the three agencies into one, with the establishment of the Veterans Administration.

This umbrella agency secured a commitment to all veterans and stimulated new opportunities for service organizations to sustain that government focus with additional services and programs. In 1958, the Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH) was chartered by Congress to do just that – providing medical, mental health, educational and vocational support and assistance for all veterans and their families, whether or not the veteran has been wounded or received the Purple Heart medal.

Today, MOPH and other veterans organizations maintain our historic commitment to honor our veterans with our service. For a complete list of Veterans and Military Service Organizations, download the [2013/2014 Directory](#).