The Military Women’s Coalition

2018

Inaugural Meeting Report

Inaugural Meeting in Atlanta, GA.
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INTRODUCTION & COALITION CONCEPT

Scope of the Problem

Women have served and fought in every conflict since the American Revolution, yet despite their critical contributions to our country, they continue to face barriers of bias, harassment, and sexual assault while they serve, and experience similar barriers while trying to access the Veterans Administration (VA) benefits they have earned. Today, over 220,000 women actively serve in the U.S. armed forces and 2 million women are veterans. While women in United States military comprise 16 percent of its forces, they are 18% of veterans under the age of 45 and are the fastest growing demographic in our military and veteran populations. Currently, we have identified 150 disparate women's groups at the local, state and national level that serve women veterans, National Guard and Reserve and active duty service women in various capacities.

Our Solution

To address serious issues of injustice and well-being for military women¹ we are asking these organizations to coalesce and join the Military Women’s Coalition, which will unite and amplify our voices. We held our very first national meeting in Atlanta, Ga., this year on September 7, 2018.

We are excited to provide this post-event report to capture what we did in Atlanta and to chart a way forward for the Military Women’s Coalition. The meeting was a huge success and was attended by more than 170 people representing over 70 different organizations. Over 130 people traveled to Atlanta to attend in person, and 40 joined us via live stream. If you missed the inaugural meeting don’t worry, it was graciously recorded by the IT team at King & Spalding and can be accessed here.

¹ We use the term Military Women to include any woman who is currently serving or has ever served in the US Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps or Coast Guard.
COALITION COMMUNITY INTERST SURVEY RESULTS

The Coalition Advisory Group, a small group of eight organizations that formed in the Spring of 2018 to explore the idea of a coalition, conducted a community interest survey in May, June and July, 2018 to gauge the level of interest in creating a coalition. In total, 81 people completed the survey, representing over 70 organizations. The results of the survey follow:

- 78 (96%) respondents said they would be interested in joining a coalition
- 67 (82%) said that their organization primarily serves military women
- 29 organizations identified as local organizations, 15 identified as state organizations and 34 identified as national organizations

When survey participants were asked what they believed the top three priorities for a Military Women’s Coalition should be the following topics were identified.

- 44 (54%) Military Sexual Assault & Harassment
- 43 (53%) Military and VA Culture Change
- 30 (37%) Mental Health

Organizations were asked to identify their primary area of work on behalf of military women.

- 33 (41%) Education & Training
- 32 (40%) Social
- 28 (35%) Grassroots Advocacy
- 17 (21%) Employment
- 15 (19%) Sexual Harassment & Assault Prevention and Treatment
- 14 (17%) Culture Change
- 13 (16%) VA & Benefits Claims
- 12 (15%) Housing

When asked, “what would most benefit your organization” the following responses were provided.

- Raise awareness about the issues facing military women
- Exchange knowledge, ideas, strategies and expertise
- Engage in collective action

When asked how frequently their organization would you attend a coalition meeting the following responses were provided.

- Annually-15
- Twice a year-22
- Quarterly-30
- Monthly-13

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During the inaugural meeting three working groups convened to work on key components of forming a coalition. The working groups met for two hours in the afternoon to discuss and agree upon a set of founding principles and documents.

**Working Group 1: Coalition leadership and membership**

Working group facilitators were: Amy Stevens, Georgia Military Women; and Becky Burke, Protect Our Defenders.

**Leadership Structure**

An acting director will be named for an initial 2-year time frame. The Service Women’s Action Network will be the fiscal sponsor and provides the initial 2-year leadership team for the MWC, commencing October 15, 2018.

An Executive Committee will be comprised of the heads of 11 organizations. Committee members will serve for 2-3 years with staggered terms. The Committee will have the following characteristics.

- Women only
- Regional representation
- Diversity of mission
- Any organization can serve, size is not a factor, commitment level is critical

Executive Committee members are required to attend monthly meetings either in person or virtually. The initial Executive Committee begins with the Service Women’s Action Network, Women in Military Service for America, Protect Our Defenders, GA Military Women and Women Veterans United, Inc. The MWC is seeking six additional organizations to complete the Executive Committee.
Membership

Members are the lifeblood of a coalition – without them, there is no organization at all. In most coalitions, the majority of members represent organizations because coalitions desire the rich resources, commitment, and accountability that an entire organization can bring to the coalition table. Most coalitions do have some individual members who self-select into the group or are recruited because their particular expertise, experience, skills, or connections are valued. The working group agreed that the MWC membership will be a tiered structure. The working group established the following types and levels of coalition membership.

**Organizations** whose primary mission, 80% or more of the organization’s people and assets support military women, are encouraged to join the coalition as organizational members whether they are local, state, regional or national organizations. These organizations are considered primary members and will provide the principle governing body, leadership and voting members.

**Individual members** will be allowed to join as active supporters but will not be allowed to vote unless they are elected to a governing committee or board.

**Allies of the MWC** are military and veteran support organizations who support the work of the Coalition but they will not have leadership or voting roles in the MWC.

**Friends of the MWC** are corporations, foundations and individuals who provide support to the MWC.

**Working Group 2: Founding principles**

Facilitators: Dee Ann McWilliams, Women in Military Service For America; and BriGette McCoy, Women Veteran Social Justice Network.

We are happy to report that the attendees agreed upon a final title, mission, vision and tagline for the MWC.

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3 Letters of Commitment are at Appendix A.
Our **Mission**: The Military Women’s Coalition is a national group of formal and informal organizations who work collaboratively to serve and support US active duty, reserve, Guard, Veteran and retired service women by uniting and elevating their voices to influence policy and improve their well-being.

Our **Vision**: Military women are fully integrated, equally respected, honored and supported members of the military and veteran communities and their contributions are recognized as essential to national defense.

Our **Values**: Teamwork, Honesty, Integrity, Diversity, Respect

Our **Tagline**: Standing United!

**Brand**: The group agreed that a new graphic design is needed for the brand. The current design is in the header of this document. If you would like to submit a new design to be voted on for adoption by the Executive Committee please send your design to ellen@servicewomen.org. The brand should capture the essence of the Coalition and not be the same or similar to an existing brand.

**Working Group 3: Coalition strategy**

Facilitators: Patti Kiger, Coalitions Work; and JoAnn Fisher, **Women Veterans United** Committee, Inc

The strategy working group began their session by conducting a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis of the Coalition. Their findings follow and highlight many more strengths and opportunities than weaknesses and threats. Participants were also asked to identify strategic issues for the Coalition to tackle. They came up with a list of 27 separate issues which were then grouped by the type of work they represent in order to focus the work of the Coalition. The topics and five focus areas are outlined below.
## SWOT Analysis

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERNAL</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Level of</td>
<td>17. Strength in numbers</td>
<td>5. Personal bias</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Common good:</td>
<td>20. We are women</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>empowering women</td>
<td>21. Commitment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Organized</td>
<td>22. Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>process</td>
<td>23. Education</td>
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<td>9. Efficiency</td>
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<td>10. Contacts</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Organization</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXTERNAL</th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>constituency</td>
<td>8. Influence legislation</td>
<td>2. Being non-inclusive (of men) poses legal threat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>corporations</td>
<td>11. Timing is now</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>can give money</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Women’s</td>
<td>12. Other non-veteran women’s organizations to network</td>
<td>5. Violence/resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>movement</td>
<td></td>
<td>6. Exclusion of active duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. More women</td>
<td></td>
<td>7. Covert retaliation</td>
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<tr>
<td>running for</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>office</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Consensus</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>with other</td>
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<tr>
<td>organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>not present</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. March</td>
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<tr>
<td>(women’s)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Strategic Issue Areas

Legislation: 7, 3, 23, 32, 18, 5
7. Sexual Harassment/Treatment
3. Activism
22. (23) Sexual trauma
26. (32) Sexual assault in the military and the way it is treated by the VA
18. National Women’s Veterans Day/Week (want to celebrate & use as a means of awareness of issues)
5. Suicide Prevention

Education: 5, 9, 6, 14, 20, 19
5. Suicide Prevention
6. Public Awareness of the Coalition
9. Educate at TAPS
14. Public perception
19. Military culture change
20. Recognition

Activism: 1, 14, 6, 17, 18, 19, 8
1. Legislation
6. Public Awareness of the Coalition
8. VA Benefits
14. Public perception
17. Root causes (of sexual harassment, etc.)
18. National Women’s Veterans Day/Week (want to celebrate & use as a means of awareness of issues)
19. Military culture change
20. Recognition

Networking: 12, 31, 15, 30, 10,
10. Economics pipeline
12. Broader database
15. Create internal support system
24. (30) Employment
25. (31) List resources by state

Economic Pipeline: 11, 22
11. Research
21. (22) Housing

COALITION COLLECTIVE ACTION

One of the actions the MWC will take is joint efforts to highlight problems facing military women within the Department of Defense and at the Department of Veterans Affairs. At the inaugural meeting thirty-five organizations signed letters to the Senate and House Veteran Affairs and Armed Services Committees, and to the Secretary of the VA demanding action related to recent findings of
a VA’s Office IG Report. The letters demand support and action on behalf of Military Sexual Trauma survivors whose claims were inappropriately processed by the VA. The letters were delivered to the appropriate offices and can be accessed at the links below.

MST IG Report Letter to HASC
MST IG Report Letter to HVA Committee
MST IG Report Letter to SASC
MST IG Report Letter to SECV
MST IG Report Letter to SVA Committee

**THE WAY FORWARD**

The next step of the Military Women’s Coalition is to sign members on to the Coalition and to establish the 11-member Steering Committee. If an individual or organization is interested in joining the coalition they must complete and sign one of the Commitment Letters found in Appendix A. Steering Committee Members must participate in all monthly meetings.

Monthly meeting dates will generally be the last Thursday of each month at 1300 with the first meeting being 29 November 2018. Except as noted below the meetings will be virtual meetings. There will be two on site meetings for Steering Committee Members each year and one Annual Conference.

November 29, 2018
December 27, 2018
January 31, 2019
February 28, 2019
March 28-29, 2019 Steering Committee Strategy Session, Washington, DC
April 25, 2019
May 30, 2019
June 27, 2019
July 25, 2019
August 29, 2019
September 26-27, 2019 Annual Conference, Location Dallas, TX
October 31, 2019
November 28, 2019
December 26, 2019
ORGANIZATION LETTER OF COMMITMENT

Our organization, ___________________________, is committed to being an active member of the Military Women's Coalition (MWC). We are committed to the mission, vision, values and the goals, objectives and strategies that have been decided by the coalition. We are committed to the planning and collaboration that such an effort will undertake and understand that it will take time. We acknowledge the contributions and expectations of the other coalition partners. Benefits of membership include: newsletter, access to the MWC webpage, other social media, its resources, educational events, connection to other partners and to priority populations with whom the coalition partners.

As general evidence of our commitment, we agree to do the following:

• Appoint a representative(s) to attend full coalition meetings and specific work group meetings and activities

• Authorize that representative to make decisions on our behalf of the organization, except for decisions regarding _______________________________________________________[specify exceptions]

• Read minutes, reports, and newsletters to keep abreast of the MWC decisions and activities

• Disseminate relevant information to organizational members or employees through listservs, websites, and newsletters

• Keep the MWC informed of our organization’s related activities

• Commit resources as we are able [see reverse of this agreement for a list of needed resources]

Resource Commitment

The MWC is funded by grants and in-kind donations. Most funders will only consider supporting coalition or partnership work if partners are willing to collaborate on grants, either by serving as the lead agency, a co-principal collaborator, a collaborating partner willing to sign a letter of commitment to the funded work, or some similar partnership commitment. The Service Women’s Action Network, the lead agency, has significant expertise and support for the administrative work that accompanies grant-funded opportunities. Signing on as a co-principle collaborator, or a committed partner, should not be a burden for a partnering organization, and it will be needed at times. Additionally, partner organizations have been willing to provide funding for specific items or events, or to use their connections to ask for funding from other businesses or agencies. Finally, partner organizations have provided facilities, supplies, refreshments, printing, awards and other in-kind support as a demonstration of their commitment to the partnership. These are the ways in which partner organizations can help to develop resources to sustain the MWC. How is your organization willing to assist?

_____ In-kind staff time. Primary appointed voting partner:
___ Publicize the need for volunteers within your organization if needed
___ Materials (paper, folders, pens, partner certificates or awards, etc.)
___ Meeting space
___ Meeting refreshments
___ Incentive items
___ Printing/copying
___ Speakers’ gifts
___ Collaborate on grant seeking, grant writing, required partner commitments
___ Other. Please list other resources you may be able to contribute below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATION NAME (print)</th>
<th>AUTHORIZED ORGANIZATIONAL SIGNATURE</th>
<th>PLEASE PRINT NAME &amp; TITLE</th>
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</table>
INDIVIDUAL LETTER OF COMMITMENT

I, ___________________________, am committed to being an active member of the Military Women’s Coalition. I am committed to the mission, vision, values goals, objectives and strategies. I am committed to the planning and collaboration that such an effort will undertake and understand that it will take time. I acknowledge the contributions and expectations of the other Coalition partners. Benefits of membership include: newsletters, access to Coalition webpage, and other social media, its resources, educational events, connection to other partners and to priority populations with whom the Coalition partners. The greatest benefit is the ability to meet the needs of Military Women’s in a manner far greater than I could accomplish alone.

As general evidence of my commitment, I agree to do the following:

• Attend full Coalition meetings and specific work group meetings and activities that I join
• Read minutes, reports, and newsletters to keep abreast of the MWC’s decisions and activities
• Disseminate relevant information to my personal network of organizations, friends and family through one-to-one contact, telephone calls, social media, listservs, websites, and newsletters
• Keep the MWC informed of relevant and related activities within my social network
• Commit resources as I am able [see below for a list of needed resources]

Resource Commitment

The MWC is funded by grants and in-kind donations. Most funders will only consider supporting coalition or partnership work if partners are willing to collaborate on the grant, either by serving as the lead agency, a co-principal collaborator, a collaborating partner willing to sign a letter of commitment to the funded work, or some similar partnership commitment. The Service Women’s Action Network (SWAN), the lead agency, has significant expertise and support for the administrative work that accompanies grant-funded opportunities. Signing on as a co-principle collaborator, or a committed partner, should not be a burden for a partnering individual, and it will be needed at times. Additionally, partners and partner organizations have been willing to provide funding for specific items or events, or to use their connections to ask for funding from other businesses or agencies. Finally, partners and partner organizations may be asked to provide facilities, supplies, refreshments, printing, awards and other in-kind support as a demonstration of their commitment to the partnership. These are the ways in which partner organizations can help to develop resources to sustain TMWC. How are you able or willing to assist?

___ In-kind time
___ Publicize the need for volunteers within your network
___ Materials (paper, folders, pens, partner certificates or awards, etc.)
___ Meeting space
___ Meeting refreshments
___ Incentive items
___ Printing/copying
___ Speakers’ gifts
___ Collaborate on grant seeking, grant writing, required partner commitments
___ Other. Please list other resources you may be able to contribute below:

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<th>PRINT NAME</th>
<th>SIGNATURE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
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ALLY OF THE MILITARY WOMEN’S COALITION

LETTER OF COMMITMENT

Our organization, ____________________________, is committed to being an Ally of the Military Women’s Coalition (MWC). We are committed to the mission, vision, values and the goals, objectives and strategies that have been decided upon by the Coalition. We are committed to the planning and collaboration that such an effort will undertake and understand that it will take time. We acknowledge the contributions and expectations of the coalition members. Benefits of being an Ally of the Coalition include: newsletters, access to the MWC webpage, other social media, its resources, educational events, and connection to other members and Allies.

As general evidence of our commitment, we agree to do the following:

• Appoint a representative(s) to attend the annual coalition meeting

• Authorize that representative to make decisions on our behalf, except for decisions regarding ____________________________[specify exceptions]

• Read minutes, reports, and newsletters to keep abreast of the MWC decisions and activities

• Disseminate relevant information to organizational members or employees through listservs, websites, and newsletters

• Keep the MWC informed of our organization’s related activities

• Commit resources as we are able.

Resource Commitment

How is your organization willing to assist?

___ Publicize the need for volunteers within your organization if needed

___ Meeting support: space, refreshments, etc.

___ Collaborate on grant seeking, grant writing, required partner commitments

___ Other. Please list other resources you may be able to contribute below:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATION NAME (print)</th>
<th>AUTHORIZED ORGANIZATIONAL SIGNATURE</th>
<th>PLEASE PRINT NAME &amp; TITLE</th>
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Appendix B: Organizations Database

The following organizations have entered their data into the Military Women’s Coalition database. The database is intended to capture organizations which support military women in a single, searchable repository that is available to anyone seeking information about military women support organizations. The database is available here. If you would like to add your organization to the database email alee@protectourdefenders.com

1. Combat Female Veterans Families (CFVF) United
2. DSL Coaching Group, LLC
3. Final Salute, Inc.
4. Georgia Military Women
5. Georgia Secretary of State Office in the Elections Division
6. Grace After Fire
7. Lambda Beta Alpha Military Sorority, Inc
8. Minority Veteran of America
10. Navy Women’s Network (NavyWN)
11. New York Legal Assistance Group
12. Noncombat Wounds Veterans
13. Northeast Florida Women Veterans, Inc
14. PROMOTE
15. Protect Our Defenders
16. Red Feather Ranch
17. San Diego Women Veterans Network
18. Service Women’s Action Network (SWAN)
19. The Pink Berets
20. The Valkyrie Foundation
21. Tri-County Women Veterans
22. U.S. Army Women’s Foundation
23. VA Advisory Board & IAVA
24. VETERAN SISTERS
25. Veteran Women’s Enterprise Center
26. Veterans Empowerment Organization of Georgia
27. Villagers For Veterans
28. Women in Military Service to America Memorial
29. Women of the Armed Forces & Veterans Empowerment (W.A.V.E.) Campaign
30. Women Veteran Social Justice
31. Women Veterans of America
32. Women Veterans of New Mexico
33. Women Veterans of San Antonio
34. Women Veterans of the Ark La Tex
35. Women Veterans Organization of the CSRA
36. Women Veterans Support Services, Inc. (WVSS)
37. Women Veterans United Committee, Inc.
38. Service: Women Who Serve
Appendix C: Military Women’s Coalition Annual Budget

Salaries
Organization CEO .05% 6,000
Program Director .50% 22,050
Communications Director .10% 7,500
Administration .10% 5,000
Total $40,550

Overhead (Website/CRM/Rent/Graphic Design/Publications & Printing)=4,000

Semi-Annual 2-Day Steering Committee Meeting (15 participants)

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<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>15,000 (15 X $1,000 travel stipend per steering committee member)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venue x 2 Days</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>750 (15 X $50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$20,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Annual 1 Day Conference for 100 participants to coincide with semi-annual 2-day Steering Committee Meeting (3 days total)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>15,000 ($1,000 travel stipend per steering committee member)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venue x 3 Days</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food x 3 days</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$26,000</td>
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Total Projected Annual Budget $91,050