



TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS

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CANDACE WHEELER

TAPS Director, Government and Legislative Affairs



Candace Wheeler joined the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) in 2018 as the Senior Advisor for Policy and Legislation. She is now the TAPS Director for Government and Legislative Affairs. As a military spouse and staunch advocate with over 30 years' experience, Candace works to protect the rights and earned benefits of surviving families.

On behalf of TAPS and as the Co-Chair of the Toxic Exposure in the American Military (TEAM) Coalition, Candace was instrumental in helping to pass the historic *Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022*, signed into law on August 10, 2022. Candace represented TAPS before Congress, testified in support of Toxic Exposure legislation, met with Congressional Members and staff, worked with fellow veteran service organizations, participated in press conferences and rallies, and helped build a strategy to secure House and Senate passage. The PACT Act now ensures over 4 million veterans of multiple generations exposed to burn pits, toxins, and airborne hazards while deployed are provided immediate, lifelong access to VA health care, and benefits for their survivors.

Candace also led efforts to finally eliminate the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) – Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) offset or “Widow’s Tax”, which was signed into law in December 2019. Candace created a new strategy and the TAPS policy team educated Congress, garnered support from veterans and military service organizations, and empowered surviving spouses to advocate on their own behalf. Phased in over three years, nearly 66,000 surviving families now receive their full survivor benefits as of February 2023.

As the former President of The Military Coalition (TMC), Chairman of the National Military Family Association (NMFA), and Spokesperson for the Save Our Benefit Coalition, Candace has championed military and veteran families before Congress, State Legislatures, and Departments of Defense (DoD) and Veterans Affairs (VA). Candace continues to educate federal and state policymakers on veteran, military family, and survivor issues.

Candace earned a Master’s in Political Management from George Washington University (GW) and received the 2018 Founding Dean Arterton Award for academic excellence and professional distinction for her advocacy work on behalf of military families and surviving spouses. Candace holds an Executive Certificate in Nonprofit Management from the McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University, and a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations from the University of Southern California (USC).

The ***Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)*** provides comfort, care and resources to all those grieving the death of a military loved one. TAPS also provides programs to survivors nation and worldwide, and is committed to improving support provided by the federal government through the Department of Defense (DoD), Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Department of Education (DoED), Department of Labor (DOL), state governments, and local communities for the families of the fallen – those who fall in combat, those who fall from invisible wounds, and those who die from illness or disease.