



TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS

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CANDACE WHEELER

TAPS Senior Director, Government and Legislative Affairs



Candace Wheeler is the Senior Director of Government & Legislative Affairs for the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS). As a staunch military family advocate with 30 years' experience, Candace is committed to improving support provided by both federal and state governments and advancing policy and legislation to strengthen the families of the fallen.

Candace was instrumental in helping to pass the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act, signed into law on Jan. 2, 2025, and the historic Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act, signed into law on Aug. 10, 2022. Candace represented TAPS before Congress, testified in support of toxic exposure legislation, met with Congressional Members and staff, worked with fellow veteran organizations, participated in rallies and press conferences, and helped build a strategy to secure House and Senate passage. The PACT Act now ensures more than 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, commonly referred to as the “Widow’s Tax”, signed into law in Dec. 2019. Candace created a new strategy, and the TAPS policy team was instrumental in educating Congress, garnering support from veterans and military service organizations, and empowering surviving spouses to advocate on their own behalf.

Candace serves as a Vice President of The Military Coalition (TMC), comprised of 35 organizations representing more than 5.5 million service members, veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors. She is the co-chair of the Toxic Exposure in the American Military (TEAM) Coalition, serves on the Department of Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee on Cemeteries and Memorials, and is a former Chairman of the Board for the National Military Family Association.

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.