The Department of Defense estimates that approximately 71 percent of 17- to 24-year-olds would fail to qualify for military service based on the current enlistment criteria because of physical or mental health issues, low educational attainment or felony convictions.

Out of those who do qualify, many are not interested in serving. A Harvard Institute of Politics survey of 18 to 29 year-olds found, 60 percent support using ground troops against the Islamic State but 85 percent said they would “probably” or “definitely” not join the military.

Infusing our school systems with more influencers who value military service could go a long way to solving military recruitment issues. A 2011 Pew Research Center study shows 82 percent of post-9/11 veterans would advise a young person close to them to join the military. Influencers in a student’s life can make a major impact on the direction that individual takes. Parents, teachers, coaches, and mentors all help shape students to become healthy, productive members of society.

The following are recommendations provided to CSG from Department of Education representatives regarding changes they would make to the K-12 system to engender a greater likelihood that those who influence youth would recommend military, national, and/or public.

1. **Expand Department of Defense's Troops to Teachers Program**

Through Troops to Teachers (TTT), the DoD can systematically place transitioning service members and veterans into teaching positions. TTT provides counseling and referral services for interested service members to help meet the education and licensing requirements to secure a teaching position. TTT is funded and structured as a job placement tool and has been overlooked as a way to enhance national, public, and military service.

Since 1994, TTT has helped over 17,000 veterans become teachers by providing financial assistance to individuals hired as a full time teacher in either an “Eligible” or “High-Need” school. TTT provides the nation’s schools with highly effective teachers who are more likely to remain in the education profession than teachers in general. Our nation’s children deserve great teachers, and veterans have proven that they are some of the very best.

Considering over 200,000 service members transition each year, the Commission on Military, National, and Public Service should explore options to expand TTT eligibility requirements to include all honorable discharged veterans as well as their spouses. In addition, TTT should expand its recruiting efforts for positions in schools to include not only teachers, but also other educational fields, such as principals, administrators, deans, counselors, nurses, teacher aides, and other support personnel. More military-connected individuals working in the nation’s schools could increase youth’s propensity toward military, national, and public service.

1. **Consider Incentives and Education Programs to Enhance and Expand Military, National,
Incentives and education programs to enhance and expand innovative approaches to educate youth about the importance of military service at the state and local level could increase youth's propensity for military. If today's youth are exposed to educational opportunities associated with military service, more youth may consider serving their country in the future. Students could be exposed on a far larger scale to the experiences of service members, veterans, and public servants throughout their time in school. In addition, national holidays and days of remembrance provide good learning opportunities for students to learn about how to serve their country.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides flexibility to states to do what is best for children. Through ESEA, states can incorporate appropriate incentives and activities that teach students about the benefits of military, national, and public service.

1. Promote Multiple Career Pathways to America’s Youth

Today, almost 70 percent of high school graduates are enrolled in colleges or universities. Although higher education is an important investment that can lead to successful outcomes, it can also lead to high levels of student debt if a student does not complete the program of study or chooses a career with insufficient compensation to repay loans. America’s youth need to understand that multiple career pathways exist in today’s 21st century economy, including apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and military service.

Through the President’s Executive Order “Expanding Apprenticeships in America”, the federal government is taking the necessary steps to provide and promote more affordable career pathways. State and local communities, however, are best equipped to ensure students understand the career options available to them. ESSA provides the flexibility to states to make students aware of the variety of career options that are available, including options for military service.