

AMERICA FIRST POLICY INSTITUTE PRESENTS

# AMERICA FIRST

## *Nominees*

### PETE HEGSETH

United States Secretary of Defense



Pete Hegseth, a former military officer, author, and Fox News host, combines a distinguished record of service and advocacy with a passion for public discourse. Born and raised in Forest Lake, Minnesota, he graduated as valedictorian of his high school class before earning a degree in politics from Princeton University and a Master of Public Policy from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Serving as a Major in the Minnesota Army National Guard, Hegseth completed tours in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantanamo Bay, earning two Bronze Stars for his service. His experiences in the military led him to become a vocal advocate for service members and veterans. After honorably completing his military service, Hegseth led organizations such as Vets for Freedom and Concerned Veterans for America, in which

he was a leading national voice in the effort to promote conservative values in service members and veterans' affairs. A published author, Hegseth has written *In the Arena: Good Citizens, a Great Republic*, and *How One Speech Can Reinvigorate America* (2016), *American Crusade: Our Fight to Stay Free* (2020), and *The War on Warriors: Behind the Betrayal of the men Who Keep Us Free* (2024), contributing to the national conversation on freedom and security.

### AMERICA FIRST CREDENTIALS

## *What Does Pete Hegseth Stand For?*

#### SUPPORTS

- ✓ **Revitalizing Military Excellence**  
Advocates for a [military culture](#) centered on meritocracy, lethality, accountability, and excellence, emphasizing the need to eliminate policies that detract from combat readiness.
- ✓ **Peace Through Strength**  
Believes that a [robust and capable military](#) is essential for ensuring long-term peace and stability, deterring adversaries through demonstrated strength.
- ✓ **Patriotic Education in Military Schools**  
Plans to implement [educational reforms](#) within the Department of Defense Education Activity to promote patriotic principles and classical education and counteract perceived leftist ideologies.

#### OPPOSES

- ✗ **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Initiatives in the Military**  
Criticizes the [prioritization of diversity and inclusion efforts](#), arguing that they undermine the military's core mission and effectiveness.
- ✗ **Military Industrial Complex**  
Calls for a 10-year ban on retired generals working for defense contractors, aiming to reduce the influence of the [military-industrial complex](#) on defense policies.

AMERICA FIRST POLICY INSTITUTE PRESENTS  
**AMERICA FIRST** *Nominees*

**PETE HEGSETH**

United States Secretary of Defense

AMERICA FIRST ACHIEVEMENTS

**Advocacy for Veterans' Rights**

Spearheaded [key initiatives](#) as the executive director of a prominent [veterans' organization](#) to reform the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). These efforts included advocating for landmark legislative reforms, such as the Veterans Choice Act, which expanded healthcare options by allowing veterans to seek care outside the VA system when needed. Additionally, efforts were made to increase accountability within the VA, pushing for better oversight of its operations to ensure efficiency and responsiveness to the needs of veterans.

The initiatives prioritized improving mental health services and addressing critical issues like the high rates of veteran suicide and post-traumatic stress disorder. Under this leadership, a comprehensive approach to veteran care was championed, encompassing medical treatment, job training, and community reintegration. These contributions significantly enhanced the overall quality of services and access to care for millions of veterans across the United States.