

# Leading the Charge: Rep. Adam Smith

Last Modified on 12/04/2019 4:46 pm EST

Now in his 12th term in Congress, Rep. Smith was once the youngest state senator in the country, serving in the Washington State Senate at the age of 25. He became chairman of the House Armed Services Committee in January 2019.

ADC: As chairman, you have the unique opportunity to engage with service members and their families across the world. From these interactions, what do you see as the biggest challenge to the quality of life for our military families? Smith: It varies and often depends who you ask—which service they're tied to, their assigned duty location, whether they are single or married, with or without children, etc. Military personnel concerns range from access to affordable child care services, to the quality of the schools their children attend as well as quality housing, spouse employment, and in some cases, comparable wage earnings to provide for their families. We take seriously our role to provide oversight of the department's programs that affect the quality of life for military members and their families. When families are taken care of, our servicemembers can focus on the task at hand—to protect our nation's security interests at home and abroad.

ADC: What are your priorities as it relates to military family quality of life? Smith: Military families are the backbone of a military member's service. A member's decision to stay in the military or leave, is weighed by the entire family; the services they are provided—and that Congress helps protect—are factors into their decision making process. All of these services are important, but we do prioritize our focus on military family housing, the unemployment and underemployment of military spouses, safe and accessible child care centers and ensuring adequate compensation and benefits for all services but particularly as they relate to our younger, lower-ranking enlisted service members.

ADC: Quality of life for military families depends on the collaboration of state and local government and a variety of community organizations. Are there programs or organizations that serve as good examples of how collaboration can support military family quality of life? Smith: King County Veterans Consortium (KCVC) is a great example of collaboration between city, county and state partners. KCVC convenes diverse groups of service organizations that support veterans and their families.



*(Above) Rep. Smith shakes hands with Marine Corps Gen. Thomas Waldhauser before the start of the House Armed Services Committee hearing on Capitol Hill. Photo by Associated Press.*

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