

HIRING HEROES: JOB CREATION FOR VETERANS AND GUARD/RESERVE MEMBERS

FIELD HEARING

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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HIRING HEROES: JOB CREATION FOR VETERANS AND GUARD/RESERVE MEMBERS

MONDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2011

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:00 a.m., at Waterloo Community Schools' Education Service Center, 1516 Washington Street, Waterloo, Iowa, Hon. Marlin A. Stutzman [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Stutzman and Braley.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN STUTZMAN

Mr. STUTZMAN. Good morning. I would like to welcome everyone this morning to start this oversight hearing of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity. I want to welcome every one of you this morning. Thanks for being here.

Delighted to be here in Waterloo. My name is Congressman Marlin Stutzman. I am from Indiana, from the Fort Wayne area. And so, it is a delight to be here.

And I want to especially thank your congressman, Congressman Braley, for hosting us today and for bringing us here to the district.

I am the chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, and I represent Indiana's Third District. And I actually have quite a few Iowa ties. And so, I was talking to my parents about the connections here, and I actually found out that my great-aunt is actually buried just not too far from here in Dunkerton, and my grandparents were married in Dubuque as well. And I had some relatives that were born here in Iowa, and they made their way back to Indiana.

So it is a privilege to be here again. My district is very similar to Iowa's First Congressional District. We are very proud of our Midwestern values and proud of America. So it is a privilege to be here with you all. And I know that you are very proud of the veterans that you have here, as well as we are in northeast Indiana, where we have about 48,000 veterans who served our Nation from the Third District.

It is also a privilege to serve alongside Congressman Braley. I call him a friend as well as an advocate for veterans issues, as well as a great Member of Congress. And so, thank you again for your service.

We are here today to hear from Iowans about the employment difficulties facing far too many members of the Iowa National

Guard, the Reserves, and those returning from active duty. While the unemployment rate for all Iowa veterans in September was 5.8 percent, data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show that 35.6 percent of America's Gulf Era II veterans ages 20 to 24 were unemployed, while 8.8 percent of Gulf Era II veterans ages 25 to 54 were unemployed.

More shocking is information that as much as 30 percent of returning members of the Guard and Reserves do not come home to a job. Clearly, we need to find ways to reduce all of those numbers.

The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs has taken a first step towards that end last week by passing House Resolution 2433, a bill that would provide up to a year of Chapter 30 GI bill benefits to unemployed veterans between the ages of 35 and 60. The bill now goes to the Senate, and we hope to get the bill to the President by Veterans Day, along with several other improvements to veterans benefits.

Again, I am delighted to be here with you today. We are anxious to hear from you all who are going to be testifying, and at this time, I will yield to the gentleman whose office is actually just right next door to mine as well in Washington, a good friend, the Honorable Bruce Braley.

[The prepared statement of Chairman Stutzman appears on p. 41.]

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BRUCE BRALEY

Mr. BRALEY. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And welcome home. We are delighted to have you back in Iowa.

And I want to make sure that we welcome everyone to the hearing and let you know how important this field hearing is to the ongoing work of the Economic Opportunity Subcommittee that Chairman Stutzman and I are proud to serve on. Our Subcommittee literally is the point line of how we address the important challenge of finding work for every veteran who wants to work, and it is an issue that we struggle with every day, based upon some of the enormous challenges that the Chairman identified.

I am very proud to welcome all of you to my hometown of Waterloo, Iowa, home of the five Sullivan brothers, home of the Iowa Veterans Museum, which we are very proud of, and a city that knows about sacrifice and service.

One of the things I tried to do to prepare for this hearing is think back on how the challenge of finding work for veterans has affected me and my family personally. So one of the things I brought to the hearing were my dad's discharge papers from the Marine Corps when he came home from Iwo Jima. And it is really instructive in how far we have come in dealing with the issue of separation of people from the military looking for work, and yet how far we have to go.

My dad was discharged on May 3rd of 1946 from the Marine separation center at Great Lakes Naval Training Center in Illinois. And on the back of this form, he was required to list his employment and nonservice educational data. And I am sure that many people in your district in Indiana filled out similar forms with similar types of information.

Under job summary, he wrote “drove steel-type tractor while working, a general farm hand, works with father and brother on 240-acre farm, did plowing, cultivating, and harvesting of crops and livestock.” Under preferences for additional training, he listed “college,” which he never pursued. And under job preference, “farming for self.”

I think of my dad as a 19-year-old Marine who had never worked outside of the home, and what he must have been going through as he was preparing to get on that train with a train ticket back to Grinnell, Iowa, and probably not much more than that to help him face the enormous challenge of an unemployed veteran who was looking to make his way in the world.

We have some Iowa veterans who are going to be testifying on our first panel about some of the challenges they are facing, and I am very proud of the fact that we have implemented much more comprehensive programs to help veterans preparing for that transition to the civilian workforce. And, some of those programs have been highly successful, but we have a long way to go before we reach the objective that we all want to happen.

Because I think that the thing we should be focusing on today is on imagining what it would say about our country if every veteran who wanted a job had a job. And the bottom line for me is the best way to thank a veteran is to hire a veteran. And what we are going to focus on at this hearing today is ways that we can try to bridge that gap between the civilian employment marketplace and the needs of our returning veterans who are looking for work and unable to find it at this time.

So I welcome all of you here. We want to be talking not just about how we can put together programs through the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs, but also how we create incentives for employers to look at veterans as a hiring opportunity that is going to make their workplace a better place for all their employees.

And that is why I was proud to introduce the Combat Veterans Back to Work Act, modeled on the highly successful Back to Work Act we had in the civilian workforce that gives employers incentives to put an unemployed veteran on their payroll and gives them further incentives if they keep them on that payroll for up to a year.

So I welcome all of you. We look forward to the testimony of our witnesses, and with that, I will yield back.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Bruce Braley appears on p. 41. Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you, Congressman Braley.

And one of the things I just want to say quickly before we invite the first panel here is that the reason this hearing is important to both of us is that with the economy so—the difficulties that we are facing in the economy right now, one of the areas that we believe success has to happen is with our veterans. And so, this really is an opportunity for us to highlight to our colleagues back in Washington how we can help those who are serving our country, the challenges that they are going to be having when we have more veterans coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan.

And if we can have success here, we can hopefully translate that into success other places within our economy. But what greater place to serve those who have served us in protecting our freedom?

So, with that, we want to invite our first panel to come forward to the witness table this morning. We are joined by Staff Sergeant Nathan Rose and Captain Aaron Robinson. Appreciate your service to our country.

Thank you for being here, first of all, and we are looking forward to your testimony, and we want to give each of you 5 minutes to share with us your statements. And why don't we begin with Staff Sergeant Nathan Rose

**STATEMENTS OF STAFF SERGEANT NATHAN ROSE, ARNG,
NORTH LIBERTY, IOWA; AND CAPTAIN AARON L. ROBINSON,
ARNG, DES MOINES, IOWA**

STATEMENT OF NATHAN ROSE

Sergeant ROSE. Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley, and Members of the Subcommittee, I would like to extend my gratitude for being giving the opportunity to testify at this hearing today. It is an honor to lend my voice to fellow veterans in the ongoing economic struggles we face.

My name is Nathaniel Rose. I am currently a staff sergeant in the Iowa Army National Guard, as well as a senior at the University of Iowa.

I have been deployed to Iraq, and I have just returned from a deployment to Afghanistan in July. To help pay for my studies, I currently receive the GI bill, along with State and Federal tuition assistance.

I speak based solely on my experiences in the Iowa Army National Guard and experiences of those that have served with me. I cannot accurately speak regarding any other branch of service or any other State's National Guard.

I decided to join the National Guard during my freshman year of college, looking for adventure, but also for economic reasons. I come from a hard-working, middle-class family, and if I wanted to attend college, I would have to pay for it myself.

I did not receive many scholarships, and I did not want to incur a large amount of student loan debt. So I joined the National Guard because the tuition assistance and GI bill would pay for my education.

If it wasn't for tuition assistance and the GI bill, I might have quit going to school or not have joined the National Guard at all. Joining the military is a very hard decision to make, but the benefits one might receive helped make the decision easier.

The GI bill has been one benefit that I have come to appreciate more over time. When I first began receiving the benefit, it was not a large amount. This was fine because State and Federal tuition assistance paid for all my tuition and fees, and I could use the GI bill for other things.

After two deployments, I now receive a much larger amount because it is prorated based off the active duty amount and how much time I have spent deployed. The amount is actually enough, when coupled with my drill pay every month, that I do not have

to work. I am able to concentrate completely on my studies, which any senior will tell you is a hard thing to do.

I, however, do not have all the obligations that a number of soldiers I know have. I have no wife, no children, no car payments, and so on. Many National Guard soldiers cannot go to school full time and take care of their family with tuition assistance and GI bill alone, especially if they have not been deployed and receive a smaller, prorated amount. This forces them to work while attending school.

Now there is nothing wrong with working while going to school, but for some soldiers I know personally, they have had to stop going because they needed to move to full time at work, their grades were slipping, or they weren't spending as much time with their family as they wanted to.

The post-9/11 GI bill has attempted to address some of these issues by paying basic allowance for housing to students. The only problem with that is that, once again, it is prorated for National Guard soldiers.

One solution to this problem might be to have National Guard members pay into the GI bill like active duty members do. Another possible solution would be to put everyone on the same level and not prorate the payments. Neither of these solutions is perfect, but they might be a good starting point.

Education benefits to me seem more complicated. If a soldier doesn't sit down with an expert, it is hard to figure out the ins and outs of benefits. The difference between the five GI bill programs is not easily ascertained by looking at the Web site or reading pamphlets.

If soldiers are better informed about their benefits, it is easier to make decisions about whether they can afford to go back to school or not, especially those with families. The GI bill needs to take into account that soldiers do have families. They may not be able to support a family and go to school at the same time.

The National Guard has delayed my education twice, but I cannot fault them for that because they are essentially paying for it. Also, I believe that the National Guard has made me a more marketable person, and when my education is over, I hope being more marketable aids me in securing not just a job, but a career.

The problem with this is how do I convey to potential employers the significance of what I have done, experienced, and learned in the National Guard? Resumes are the most popular way of conveying these things. Some of my experiences are difficult to put in a resume.

If I put "led over 150 combat missions in Afghanistan" in my resume, most employers would not understand the significance of that, nor would many soldiers know how to convert that into a resume-friendly statement. One way soldiers could translate their skills into civilian terms would be to get help from a resume-writing professional. I could receive help on my resume from the career center at my school, but I feel that they don't understand what I have done either. So the significance of it won't be conveyed in my resume if they help me.

I am lucky enough to go to a school that has a large veteran population. Someone is always available to critique my resume if need

be. Many National Guard soldiers are not that lucky and must either drive long distances or email resumes to more qualified help.

Educating job recruiters or resume helpers better on military may help remedy the problem but is easier said than done. I believe that by bringing in military resume-writing professionals on drill weekends or by incorporating them more at demobilization sites might better help the soldiers.

I am set to graduate in May, and I have been exploring job possibilities of what I am qualified for. The economy may be down, but there is a plethora of job postings on Internet job search sites, companies' Web sites, and newspapers, et cetera. The hard part becomes determining what employers are looking for and if I am qualified.

I have spoken to many soldiers since returning from Afghanistan, and this process is the only one that they are having the most trouble with. A suggestion that a fellow veteran presented to me would be to bring the job recruiters from the mobilized units area to the demobilization site and recruit from there.

Soldiers and recruiters would have a chance to speak about qualifications, job descriptions, and even do interviews if need be. Even if soldiers did not get hired, they would have an understanding of what employers are looking for and how to better prepare themselves for the job search once their mobilization is over.

I appreciate what the Government and the military have done for me, but I think more can be done to help soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines. I have noticed things improving in my 6 years in the military, from drill to drill and deployment to deployment. There are many new programs starting up throughout the country and within our Government that are dedicated to helping veterans, which is a sign of forward progress.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. I would be honored to answer any questions that the Committee might have.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify, and thank you for all the Committee does for my fellow veterans.

[The prepared statement of Nathan Rose appears on p. 42.]

Mr. STUTZMAN. All right. Thank you.

Captain Aaron Robinson, we will take your testimony.

STATEMENT OF AARON L. ROBINSON

Captain ROBINSON. Good morning. My name is Aaron Robinson. I live with my wife and my two children in Des Moines. I am a commissioned officer with the Iowa Army National Guard, and I have recently returned from a 1-year deployment in Afghanistan.

In my civilian career, I am currently pursuing jobs related to project management and data analysis. I want to share with you some of the impressions that I have had.

Is that better? Okay.

I would like to start today with three impressions I have had looking for a job post deployment. First, repeated military deployments have given Iowans like me world-class skills and experiences, but these are not widely recognized or rewarded when searching for civilian work in our home State.

Second, employers are nearing the exhaustion part of their patriotic feelings towards veterans. Despite the laws existing protecting

against discrimination based on military service, employers seem to shy away from hiring citizen soldiers.

Third, searching for a job while deployed overseas is next to impossible, and waiting until after deployment adds stress to an already stressful situation, reintegrating with family and friends. Let me tell you where I am coming from.

I grew up on a farm approximately an hour west of Des Moines in Yale and graduated from Perry High School in 1992. I studied mass communications at Grand View College in Des Moines. And after college, I bounced around to various retail jobs.

I enlisted in the Iowa National Guard in 1998. I was trained as a tank mechanic. In 2002, I continued my time with the National Guard, and I commissioned as an officer in armor. I married my wife, Kate, in 2003 and was deployed to Kosovo. My child, Amelia, was born at the same time.

When I returned home, I transferred to military intelligence and attended multiple military schools. In my civilian career, I worked as an employment counselor for homeless veterans and as a general manager for a convenience store. After that, I spent a number of years on temporary full-time active duty status here in Iowa, helping train and mobilize more than 16 National Guard units for overseas training.

Last year, I was deployed to Afghanistan, where I served as the intelligence officer for the 113th Cavalry Squadron. The experiences I received there were excellent, and I could not have received them anywhere else.

Since coming home to Iowa in July, I have been steadily looking for work. As of today, I have been unable to find any. I know I am not alone.

For example, an enlisted soldier of mine that was our database manager for our security clearances—and that was 500 pieces of information, that is about the size of a small company—wasn't able to find a job. To add insult to injury, he can't even find work in his old civilian application as a welder.

I face similar challenges as my friend, trying to figure out how to translate my military language into human resource speak. After some resume coaching, I found that work in intelligence most closely applies to business analysis and project management.

However, unlike my purely civilian counterparts, I am not necessarily versed in the latest business acronyms and buzzwords, which increase my likelihood of getting through H.R. filters. Also, while I am proficient in military computer software and hardware, I am not specifically trained in systems most familiar to potential civilian employers.

Employers, politicians, and even the media talk up certain ideas about veterans. They are hard working. They are motivated, that we are mission focused and people focused, and we handle pressure extremely well. Beyond this and the occasional job fair and welcome home, we don't seem to get a lot of practical help getting hired.

I had said this many times. Everybody wants to help, but no one really seems to know how. I have received lots of well-intended suggestions, sometimes conflicting. But none of them have gotten me much farther in my job search.

Maybe employers are getting burned out. Ten years of war and Iowa's river floods and blizzards and other State emergencies might do that. Maybe they are worried that I am going to deploy again. Maybe they really don't see the economic values inherent to my military skills and experiences.

I know times are tough for a lot of Iowans. I don't want to get a job just because I am a veteran. But I would like to at least get a chance to get an interview and prove that I am a good employee. I also want to keep my family in Iowa to give my kids the same values and experiences that I had.

But for now, my family's life is on hold. The military gave me time after deployment to unwind and reintegrate and get into a normal life. I don't feel like I have done that. I plan on going back to school. I have been putting it off because of the lack of stability in my life and the life of my family.

Interviewers don't ask me about my military experience, but they know it is there. If I didn't put it on my resume, they would know from talking to me. I am proud of the work I have done and some of the people I have served with. I am just an Iowa farm kid that got a chance to do some exciting things in some pretty unpleasant places with some really great people.

I just want to get back to my civilian life, get a normal job, and be a regular person for a while. My wife and my kids would like that, too.

Thank you for my opportunity to share my experiences.

[The prepared statement of Aaron L. Robinson appears on p. 44.]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Well, thank you.

And I would like to ask a couple of questions, and then Congressman Braley has some as well.

First of all, thank you just to both of you again for your service. Your stories are very compelling, and I am sure, as you said, there are others that have the same stories. I grew up as a farm kid as well. So I know the background that you have, but the challenges that you face are, obviously, very frustrating, I am sure, to you and your family.

To both of you, what type of transition services have you received from the Iowa National Guard or DoD following your deployment?

Sergeant ROSE. At demobilization site, they give us briefings on different help that is available, as well as overviews of that help. And then we have what is called a "Yellow Ribbon event," where we go to more briefings that tell us about all of the services that are available to us or if we need help where to go.

Captain ROBINSON. Can I piggyback on that?

Sergeant ROSE. Yes.

Captain ROBINSON. Okay. Of course, my experiences are very similar to his. I have had the opportunity to also talk with Iowa Workforce Development and their vet reps out in Des Moines. They have been great.

I have talked with JSEP. I sent my resume to them for some resume critiquing. Those are probably the big ones.

The Yellow Ribbon event was a really good job of putting all the information I think that you really need to know in one spot. But if you didn't want to run it down, I don't know if you really got it.

Because a lot of people come in and say, "We will help," but I didn't really see—

Sergeant ROSE. It seems like it is just more of an overview, like, "This is available to you," but you have to go do it on your own. You have to go find it on your own.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Well, Staff Sergeant Rose, you mention in your testimony that "a suggestion that a fellow veteran presented to me would be to bring job recruiters from the mobilized units area to the demobilization site and recruit from there." Can you kind of follow up on that a little bit more and how that works?

Sergeant ROSE. Well, his idea was that like since a lot of—in Iowa, you could bring in the companies from like Des Moines, Waterloo, the bigger areas that are actually recruiting, and you could bring their recruiters up to demobilization site. And then, once there, while we are going through the process of demobilizing, you could also have them there.

So the people that need jobs or are going to look for jobs once they come off active duty, they could talk to them there. And then if the recruiters liked what they saw, they could set up interviews, maybe hire from there. If not, at least people would know what is out there, what is needed to actually get a job when they come back.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. And then, Captain Robinson, have you utilized the services provided at the One-Stop by DVOP or LVERs? And if so, did you find these services helpful at all?

Captain ROBINSON. I don't believe I have at this time.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Do you know what those—the DVOPs and LVERs were. Were those presented to you at all?

Captain ROBINSON. You know, they throw so much stuff at us in such a short period of time that you do almost get—it almost becomes white noise. I know what DVOP is. I have been lucky enough to work with them on the periphery before. But I haven't used them.

Really, one of the bigger things I have used since I have been home is the Iowa Workforce Development.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. That is who they work for? Yes. So you should be working with—you say you are working with Workforce Development? That is what we call it in Indiana?

Captain ROBINSON. Yes, absolutely.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. And then, what was your civilian job before you went on your most recent deployment?

Captain ROBINSON. Well, I went on active duty operational support back in I think it was—might have been '08. I was on long enough everybody thought I was active duty. I was actually working for a convenience store.

I had gone—I was working for the convenience store. They were great. While I went to active duty operational support, they downsized themselves by about 36 stores, and they liquidated all the employees. So there is no job there anymore.

Prior to that, like I said, I have worked with the Department of Labor, HVRP, Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, and that is probably the one I put more towards. I worked with them for about a year and a half.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Now did you mention you were a welder or your friend was a welder?

Captain ROBINSON. My friend was a welder, sir.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Your friend was a welder. What happened with him?

Captain ROBINSON. The company that he was working with is not hiring. He also came on early. We brought him on early to do our database management for our security clearances. He came on early, and when he went back to his job, they said they weren't hiring.

I think he probably falls into what you call an "underemployed." "Oh, well, if I lose my job while I am gone, I don't really care. I am not going to make a fight out of it. I am going to be gone for a year and a half" is kind of what he was thinking. When he came back, now he kind of—when he could have run something down earlier, I think he lost that opportunity.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Yes. I mean, would you feel that you or him, your rights were violated under USERRA as far as a job?

Captain ROBINSON. I don't think that my rights—I can't comment to this soldier, but I can comment to mine. I don't think my rights were violated. I think they have had 10 years to find new and creative ways not to violate your rights, if you are somebody who is going to be an issue. H.R. people, I am sure, figured out the way.

But I don't think necessarily my rights are violated. And honestly, I don't want to go back to a company that was going to make it a big deal. I want to work for a company that wants to have me.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Right.

Captain ROBINSON. I don't want to have one I have to fight to stay with.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Yes. I appreciate that.

Congressman Braley.

Mr. BRALEY. Thank you.

I want to thank both of you for your eloquent testimony. You both touched on something that we hear over and over at our Economic Opportunity Subcommittee hearings. Staff Sergeant Rose, you said in your statement, "How do I convey to potential employers the significance of what I have done, experienced, and learned in the National Guard?" which was incredibly eloquent.

And Captain Robinson, you said that you are trying to figure out how to translate military language into civilian human resources speak. And as I am sitting here, I am thinking what we really need is a Rosetta Stone program for people coming off of active duty or Guard and Reserve service and for human relations employees and companies who are looking to hire them.

Because so much of what you did and the experiences you had have valuable application in the civilian work setting, but we seem to have an extraordinary challenge of bridging that gap between the two worlds. So do either of you have suggestions on what we can tell civilian employers to help them better understand how you were shaped by your experiences and why that makes you a valuable employee?

Captain ROBINSON. I will go first. Okay. I think your use of the term like a "Rosetta Stone" is a great idea. I think everyone under-

stands, especially when they talk about officers—NCOs, staff sergeants, and above—equals leadership. And I have never met anybody that doesn't go, okay, well, yes, you obviously have leadership skills.

That is great. I also can do database management. I have also worked negotiation skills. I have worked with multiple different countries while I was deployed. And some kind of Rosetta Stone, yes, that would say "if I am an intelligence officer, this is what skills I picked up" would be great.

Same thing with a mechanic or an infantryman or a medic I think is the way we need to go because when I say mechanic, you know kind of what he or she can do if they were in the service. But when I say intelligence officer, outside of the snickers that come from everybody else that has ever been in the military, you don't really know what I am doing.

[Laughter.]

Captain ROBINSON. And how to translate those less parallel ones would be great.

Mr. BRALEY. Staff Sergeant Rose.

Sergeant ROSE. It is tricky. It is easy to identify problems, but it is hard to come up with the solutions. Maybe just employers need a better understanding of the military overall because like you said, like officer and NCO is a leadership position. But if I tell someone I was a noncommissioned officer, they are either going to go Google it and read the first thing that, okay, he is a noncommissioned officer. You led people in Afghanistan or Iraq.

But then, still, that is not telling them what I did. It is just a real quick overview. It is a very broad view of what I have done. If they had some better process of me being able to list what I have done and then have better understanding of that, they may be able to translate it better what they are thinking. Like I said, it is a tough problem to solve.

Mr. BRALEY. But do you think that programs like the one that I saw down at Camp Shelby where civilian employers were actually given the opportunity to travel to your pre-deployment training area and get to experience more of the world you were preparing to enter and spend time with you, do you think those programs are helpful in terms of bridging some of the gaps of understanding you have identified?

Sergeant ROSE. I think so because then they actually get to see us in the environment we work in. Even though it is training, but it is training to be in the actual theater. But I believe it would be helpful.

They would see how—what officers do for their men, what NCOs do for their men, what the privates and the specialists and all of them do out there in the training environment and what they are actually responsible for and things like that. So, yes, I believe that it would be extremely helpful.

Mr. BRALEY. Captain Robinson, as I was reading from my father's discharge papers, could you identify with some of those things, as a farm kid growing up in Iowa?

Captain ROBINSON. I did. And I will be honest, I never would have wanted to go back to farming. But—

Mr. BRALEY. The reason I ask you that is you made a comment in your statement that veterans don't seem to get a lot of practical help in getting hired, and I think this is one of the biggest problems I hear of. We hear of this on the Committee all the time.

We had General Petraeus's wife, Holly, testifying at one of these get-togethers, and they were all talking about what we can do to better inform veterans when they are being demobilized of all of their legal rights and how to protect themselves. And I said, you know, back in Iowa, we would just give somebody a refrigerator magnet, and they would have that on the refrigerator. And when they needed that 800-number, they would know where to find it.

And Senator Rockefeller was at that meeting, and he was, I think, pretty shocked by the fact that a refrigerator magnet might be an actual practical thing to help people in a time of need.

Captain ROBINSON. It is right there. I mean, you are absolutely right. I like to start with the fact that if I knew what the golden answer was to being able to be employed, I wouldn't probably be here today. I know it is a tongue-in-cheek statement, but it is absolutely true.

It is amazing how just in the few months that I have been home how my job search has changed from for some reason, when I first came home, I felt like it was the most important thing I needed to get done. And then I tried to take a breath and tried to really enjoy being home with the family.

And then, once again, I am coming back to, oh, yes, I need to have a job because if I don't have one not only am I not working, but I am driving my wife insane, and it is time to go away—for anybody who has ever been there. But being able to call somebody when it is time to look for work I think is a great idea.

Mr. BRALEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Captain Robinson, I would like to ask just a couple of questions yet. Have you had any interviews since you have been back?

Captain ROBINSON. Ironically, the only interview I have had I got from a conversation I started while I was in Afghanistan, and then my second one will be tomorrow. I am not getting interviews. And I have actually talked to my civilian counterpart friends, saying the interviews aren't coming for anyone, or at least they aren't where I am looking and in the venue I am.

So I don't really get any feedback. I never know if my resume is good. I don't know if I am putting the wrong thing out there. And that is the hardest thing. With no feedback, I don't know if I am right or wrong. I could be completely off base.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Yes. Because that is what I am wondering. What are the reasons for not furthering their interest in you? Are you hearing anything from any of your friends, either one of you, on some of the reasons why they may not be hiring?

I know we are in a tough economy and things like that. That doesn't make the job any easier for anybody. But I mean, both of you, I mean, represent a lot of men and women across this country that people should be looking to to hire.

Captain ROBINSON. I believe it is a hard time just of the year to hire, to be honest. As we get closer to the end of the year, more

people take more time off. H.R. people aren't nearly as vested in that. So I think that plays into it.

But everyone I have talked to, and I have gotten phone calls and texts and every other version of communication we have these days, on people saying, "I am not getting calls back either." I am putting out. I know people who have put out 15 resumes and haven't gotten a call back.

So these are all veterans. I mean, we are all in the same boat. But like I said, I don't know if it is because we are veterans or if it is just because nobody is getting a call back.

Sergeant ROSE. I have talked to quite a few veterans as well that echo that statement. They are not getting calls back. I have talked to one soldier. He has expanded his search from the Iowa/Minnesota area to the whole country, and he is still not getting calls back. And he is not sure why.

I mean, he has used the resume help. He has done things like that, but he is just still not getting calls.

Mr. STUTZMAN. If we were able to offer the active duty Transition Assistance Program at locations around Iowa, do you think you would take time or others that you know would take time to attend any of those?

Captain ROBINSON. I can say for myself, I would. I am also lucky enough to live relatively close. Living in Des Moines, it is very easy when one of those things pops up because it is probably going to be close to me.

But if you live in Waterloo and it is in Des Moines, if you live in Sioux City and it is in Des Moines, I think it is even harder out there. Because of the squadron, a lot of people are in Sioux City, and that is the people I talk to. I would absolutely go.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay.

Sergeant ROSE. Oh, I was also going to say that I feel that some of the younger soldiers don't quite fully understand the importance of programs like that. So it is really tough to get them to go to events like that because they are still young. They still have that kind of carefree attitude.

I am not saying all of them are like that, but I am saying a lot of them that I know are. So it is very tough to get them to voluntarily go to a program like this when it is tough to see a year or two down the road for them.

Mr. BRALEY. Well, I am just struck by the fact that you are referring to people as younger soldiers, Staff Sergeant Rose.

[Laughter.]

Mr. BRALEY. Because from where I sit, you look like a young soldier. But I had the great privilege of traveling home from Atlanta with Staff Sergeant Rose and getting a chance to meet Captain Robinson today. I would just say that any employer would be lucky to have either of you.

And if you are representative of the people we are producing in the Iowa National Guard, this State should be very proud. And we thank you and wish you the best of luck in the future.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you to both of you, and appreciate your testimony. It has been very helpful to both of us and our staff. And at this time, you are excused.

And please feel free to keep in contact. I am sure Congressman Braley would love if you stayed in contact with his office, and anything that we could ever do to help. But we really appreciate you, and at this time, we will excuse both of you and invite our second panel now to join us.

The second panel is going to consist of Ms. Stacy Litchfield with Deere and Company. Mr. Kerry Studer—I hope I said that right.

Major STUDER. Studer.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Studer, okay. It is kind of like Stutzman—“Stootzman,” “Stutzman.” And he is with the Principal Financial Group. Ms. Stacey May with Honkamp, Krueger and Company. And finally, Mr. Tim Carson with Rockwell Collins.

I want to welcome all of you to this hearing and thank you for your time this morning, and we are anxious to hear what you all have to say. And we will start with Ms. Litchfield with Deere and Company. Each of you will have 5 minutes to share your testimony with us.

So, Ms. Litchfield.

STATEMENTS OF STACY LITCHFIELD, REGIONAL MANAGER, TALENT ACQUISITION AND PERFORMANCE CONSULTING, DEERE AND COMPANY, MOLINE, ILLINOIS; MAJOR KERRY M. STUDER, USA, ASSISTANT MANAGING DIRECTOR, COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE DIVISION, PRINCIPAL FINANCIAL GROUP, WATERLOO, IOWA; STACEY MAY, MANAGER, TAX CREDIT PROGRAM, HONKAMP, KRUEGER AND COMPANY, P.C., DUBUQUE, IOWA; AND TIMOTHY J. CARSON, MANAGER, VETERANS INITIATIVES, OFFICE OF DIVERSITY, ROCKWELL COLLINS, INC., CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA

STATEMENT OF STACY LITCHFIELD

Ms. LITCHFIELD. Thank you.

Congressman Braley and distinguished Members of the Committee, my name is Stacy Litchfield. I am the U.S. regional manager for talent acquisition with Deere and Company. On behalf of John Deere, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on this important topic.

John Deere is a worldwide leader in providing advanced products and services for agriculture, forestry, construction, turf care, landscaping, and irrigation. We are a leading manufacturer of off-highway diesel engines and one of the largest equipment finance companies in the United States. We have operations in 30 U.S. States.

As an employer, we focus on attracting, developing, and retaining the best global talent from all backgrounds. At times, our recruiting efforts focus on access and visibility to specific groups. One is veterans.

We identify organizations that provide the broadest reach and help our staffing team leverage various military recruiting initiatives and related events. John Deere staffing participates in several recruiting events targeting veterans, including career fairs, conferences, and virtual career fairs.

We also work directly with the military when appropriate, and we have participated in the Army Partnership for Youth Success, PaYS, Program since its inception. Young men and women can

enter the service knowing that they will receive specialized training and develop skills that are in demand in the private and public sectors, and Deere gets access to a pool of skilled candidates.

John Deere is also active in a variety of outreach programs and job boards that help us connect with veterans who offer a broad array of skills and experiences. We also work with military staffing organizations to recruit veterans. For example, the Army Partnership Program, a job posting and resume database, has provided us with candidates for both mid-career and wage positions.

Along with employing veterans, we support programs that help veterans start businesses and become suppliers to companies like ours. Our suppliers include about 200 veteran-owned businesses and about 50 businesses owned by service-disabled veterans.

At John Deere, we recognize that engaged employees working together create a competitive advantage. We cultivate an environment of inclusive teamwork through programs such as our employee networks. One of these resource groups is composed of employees who have a connection to the U.S. military. The group brings employees together to build relationships, provide support, and sponsor military outreach activities.

Deere also has military leave of absence provisions for Reservists and Guardsmen who are called up for active duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. To help ease the financial hardship endured by these soldiers and their families, Deere voluntarily provides up to 2 years of differential pay, where applicable, along with health benefits, life insurance, and other benefits.

The impact on retention has been significant. Since 2001, more than 200 Deere employees have been deployed. Over 96 percent of those soldiers still work for John Deere.

Even though veterans are purposely included in our recruiting, development, and retention efforts, we do face challenges in effectively bringing them into our organization. First, with the variety of organizations and job boards available, it is difficult to determine the best way to connect with job candidates from the military workforce.

Our recommendation would be a central data source that offers links to standardized job, industry, and geographic classification codes to other reported Federal labor, employment, economic, and census data. This would help improve results for job posting visibility among the right candidates.

Additionally, many veterans are challenged to translate their education and skills to fit requirements for nonmilitary positions. Transitioning military may also be at a disadvantage without accreditation or certification required by some professions.

To remedy this, all levels of government could implement solutions that effectively balance current challenges with educational system gaps, the accreditation of job seekers, and the fiscal demands and resources of employers.

In closing, I want to highlight again the importance, priority, and demonstrated focus John Deere places on hiring, outreach, skill development, and training of veterans. Thank you again for the opportunity to share our views and on improving employment opportunities for veterans.

I would be happy to answer any questions.

[The prepared statement of Stacy Litchfield appears on p. 45.]
 Mr. STUTZMAN. Good. Thank you.
 Mr. Studer.

STATEMENT OF KERRY M. STUDER

Major STUDER. Thank you.

Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Principal Financial Group's commitment to protecting the rights of veterans and our Guard and Reserve members.

I am Kerry Studer, a recently deployed Army major and assistant managing director at Principal Financial Group in their Commercial Real Estate Division. I have been mobilized on deployments 3 times over my 22-year military career and had the opportunity to see firsthand how two different civilian employers and one university handled those such deployments.

Principal, as an employer with more than 200 veteran and military employees, with the experience of having 9 employees on emergency leave in the last 2 years, Principal is committed to protecting the job rights of employees who serve their State and country through the uniformed services. I am here today to talk about that such commitment.

I have submitted a formal written statement, which I would like to summarize in these verbal comments today with really three primary areas of focus. One, what we are doing on the front end in getting more veterans within our Principal ranks. Two, what we are doing to support our current veterans and employees that are currently within our ranks. And three, and probably most importantly, what are currently doing to increase awareness of corporate and community outreach within central Iowa.

Recruiting and retention. The Principal has clearly targeted outreach efforts in order to attract and retain military employees and veterans. We have a successful hiring process of previously deployed soldiers with a specific target on really focusing on co-ops and internship programs of those students that are currently in or completing their 4-year degree.

Over the last 10 years, there is a lot of soldiers that have not had the opportunity to sit, unannounced, in a 4-year academic institution and complete their degree. Whether it be one or two deployments, we find that this is a current process. When hiring constraints tend to be tough, we have really focused in on these co-op opportunities. It is a 9-month snapshot to bring them in-house, get them out of their academic curriculum and get them exposed to corporate America before they complete their degree to give them a little bit more snapshot and guidance in corporate America.

We also proactively participate in veteran-focused career fairs, such as the upcoming Hiring Heroes event scheduled in early November. And we think it is important not only to have H.R. support there, we took a step above, and we are sending 30—over 30, actually, current veterans that are within our ranks at Principal to really act as ambassadors of what it is like to work at Principal. And sometimes we feel that these veterans do a better job of bridging that gap between deployed veterans and the H.R. area.

Our internal support of our military and our military families, what I call kind of creating a culture, it is well documented. We are a recent Freedom Award recipient. But I wanted to highlight just a few things about Principal and what they did to me as my deployment.

Not only did my company support me, my family, and my unit, they took the time to understand what the deployment did to both the soldier and the families back at home. While H.R. guidelines and corporate support are all important to success in supporting deployed soldiers, we think the very best companies take that personal approach to company support and extend that assistance at a very personal level. It is that personal touch that, in my personal opinion, solidifies the relationship both to and from that soldier and corporate America.

We think awareness is the key to driving additional support. Our CEO, Larry Zimpleman, is very involved in supporting the Guard and Reserves. A member of our senior management, usually which is Larry, provides a keynote address every year near Veterans Day to our current employees. The nature of this event varies from year to year. But this year, we are providing all of our units, all of our veterans within our ranks a military coin that just says "Thank you from Principal."

While this may seem like a small token from senior leadership, I have personally been to these events. It is a way that veterans can get together within the ranks not only to talk about their experiences, but to talk about other veterans that they know and how we can bridge the gap in getting more veterans into our ranks.

Most veterans are generally humble in nature, but our senior executives take the time each and every year to remind each of the veterans of their personal sacrifice and the fact that our company generally appreciates their service.

Community outreach and support. Senior leaders at the Principal, I can attest personally and publicly, express the support of their military employees, family members, and veterans through a number of things. When I think one of the most important items that we do is we recently did a hosting of an Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve statement at a workshop event.

While these happen across all States and they have happened certainly within Iowa, I think the components of this in bringing other corporate citizens to an event, highlighting one corporate supporting this with the right people, the right members, the right venue, and the right passion, we have seen that these events can spread the word within corporate America on what value these veterans bring to the table and what ways we can do to attract and do best practices of bridging those gaps.

To close, as I mentioned earlier, I have been mobilized or deployed 3 times in my 22 years of military service. Without question, the Principal has set itself apart from all others in supporting me and my family. The cumulative effect of all the programs, events, and activities I have mentioned today is a work environment where military and veteran employees feel supported in their military leave while they are away and of value for the service they have provided for their State or country once they return.

While senior management can lead with the support and encouragement, each department and every individual at all of our companies plays a vital role in creating that supportive culture. I can't say enough about the commitment that the leaders and employees have shown personally and publicly by expressing support of the military and veterans at Principal and beyond.

I am lucky to be a citizen of this great country. I am now a retired major in the United States Army and an employee of the Principal. I feel I have benefitted from the best-case scenario in terms of the relationship between my military service and my employment at Principal.

What we need now is for more companies to step up, create a platform for even more best-case scenarios so that they can become the norm, not the exception. I look forward to that happening, and I am happy to help in any way.

I am honored to be here today. Thank you for your time.

[The prepared statement of Kerry M. Studer appears on p. 46.]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you, and thank you for your service as well.

Ms. May.

STATEMENT OF STACEY MAY

Ms. MAY. Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

I am Stacey May. I work at Honkamp Krueger out of Dubuque, Iowa, and we have a little bit different take than some of the other committee members today, or people doing testimony. Honkamp Krueger has a service that we provide to our clients that benefits veterans, and so that is what I am going to talk about today.

According to the Department of Labor, the unemployment rate for veterans ages 18 to 24 in 2010 was 20.9 percent. Even more astonishing is that veterans as a whole accounted for a total 1.02 million people looking for work in the United States.

To make matters worse, on October 5th, Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke warned, while addressing Congress, that the economic recovery, as it currently stands, "is close to faltering". He later stated, "We need to make sure that the recovery continues and doesn't drop back and that unemployment rate continues to fall".

To sum it up, we need action, action to keep this economic recovery going and action to make sure businesses continue to hire, otherwise, the unemployment rate for veterans and the country as a whole will continue down a path toward higher unemployment and further economic turmoil.

I believe the core part of the action needed to sustain a continued recovery is a permanent employment tax credit that incentivizes business to hire. The Work Opportunity Tax Credit does just that. The WOTC program is a perfect example of a successful Government program that rewards businesses for hiring employees from certain target groups that have consistently faced barriers in seeking employment.

These groups, known as target groups, include veterans, people on Government assistance, the disabled, ex-offenders. According to

the Department of Labor, the WOTC program processed 849,868 certificates in fiscal year 2010 that allowed employers to claim the tax credit on their income tax return. Currently, employers that hire qualifying employees generally may be eligible for a 1-year Federal income tax credit worth anywhere from \$1,200 to \$4,800 and, in some cases, a 2-year credit worth up to \$9,000.

Unfortunately, the WOTC program is set to expire at the end of the year, December 31, 2011, which would be an additional blow to the veteran community when seeking employment.

I believe that we can get our unemployed veterans back to work with the WOTC program by making three changes. One, make the Work Opportunity Tax Credit permanent. Since its creation in 1996, the WOTC program has been up for renewal eight times. By making the program permanent, it would add stability in the hiring process.

Two, expand the program by adding a target group for hiring unemployed veterans. President Obama mentioned this in his proposed American Jobs Bill, naming it the "returning heroes tax credit." It would allow unemployed veterans to qualify their employer for WOTC.

Three, increase the maximum tax credit amount an employer may receive for hiring qualified veterans. Increasing the tax credit amount would further incentivize employers to hire veterans.

The unemployment rate for the veterans in our country is too high. We need action by our leaders in Washington to help veterans who served our country get back to work. With modifications to the WOTC program, such as making the WOTC program permanent, creating an unemployed veterans target group, and increasing the tax credit for hiring veterans, it will not only fuel employers to create jobs, it will fuel employers to hire our brave veterans.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Stacey May appears on p. 50.]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Carson.

STATEMENT OF TIMOTHY J. CARSON

Mr. CARSON. Thank you.

Congressman Stutzman, Congressman Braley, my name is Tim Carson, and I serve as a manager of veterans initiatives with the Office of Diversity at Rockwell Collins, a global aerospace and defense company headquartered in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

In my position, I work closely with Rockwell Collins human resources organization and a variety of external partners to promote outreach to veterans and veterans organizations. I am pleased to have the opportunity to talk to you today, and I appreciate that you are taking time to listen to the perspectives of business and the community.

It is particularly germane to this State, which has one of the highest number of per capita Reservists serving on active duty of any State in the union. And on behalf of Rockwell Collins, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the invitation to speak about the importance of helping veterans secure meaningful employment.

The valuable service these men and women provide is undeniable and so are the core skills they developed in the service—leadership, discipline, responsibility, and technological savvy—that can be invaluable to civilian employers.

However, today more than 870,000 young veterans are unemployed, a rate higher than the national unemployment rate, according to the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. And the wind-down of engagements abroad will lead to an additional million seeking civilian employment in the next 5 years.

When Rockwell Collins talks about these soldiers, we are not just speaking about them as a simple subpopulation amongst all of today's unemployed. We are talking about the people that we serve. They have relied upon our communication technology to stay connected with their leadership in harsh, remote settings around the globe.

They have used our navigation systems to ensure the pinpoint accuracy of weapon systems in areas where civilians and combatants often live side by side. They have identified friend and foe with our helmet-mounted displays, and they have given us feedback based on their own experiences to make these systems better for the next generation of warfighters.

We are grateful for their service and are dedicated to helping them successfully transition from their military service and bring their skills and experiences to the civilian workforce. To that end, Rockwell Collins has always prioritized the hiring and retention of veterans and advocates that businesses across the State and Nation do so as well.

We also believe it is important for us and other companies to partner with local and national organizations to ensure veterans receive the counseling, training, and guidance that they need to secure and make the most of meaningful employment opportunities.

Today, I am going to talk about some of the initiatives Rockwell Collins has pursued to build our veteran workforce and the partnerships we maintain. These aren't necessarily the only answer. In fact, I am sure there isn't one single answer to this challenge. But we recognize that you are seeking a breadth of ideas, and I think we have some good ones.

Internally, our company has practices and policies in place to ensure that we attract and retain veterans and their spouses as employees. Nearly 8 percent of our domestic workforce is made up of veterans, and at any given time, a number of them are serving active duty through the Guard and Reserve. In fact, we are a strong advocate of the principles of the Iowa Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, or IESGR, which has been mentioned.

The organization calls for companies to adhere to and go beyond the provisions of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, including maintaining benefits, contributing to employee 401(k)s during military active duty, and maintaining vacation accrual and raises. Because Rockwell Collins follows these guidelines and also promotes these principles to others in the community, we have earned a five-star rating from the IESGR.

We also recognize that legal issues can be a burden on Iowa servicemen and women before, during, and after their deployment and provide ongoing support of the Iowa Returning Veterans

Project to provide them with free legal assistance. Our human resources group has a full-time recruiter devoted to identifying and hiring military talent, and we allocate a specific and growing percentage of our annual recruitment advertising budget to military outreach.

Through these efforts, we have consistently grown our share of veterans as a part of our total workforce, including a 4 percent increase over the past fiscal year. But there is more to go.

Our leadership has identified the hiring of even more of yesterday's warriors as a key business goal for fiscal year 2012. And we are launching an enterprise-wide strategy to increase our outreach, recruitment, hiring, and retention efforts for veterans and veterans with disabilities.

Once hired, we further the well-being and retention of these individuals through a veterans employee network group, corporate networking opportunities, and special engagements such as transition think tanks and PTSD seminars. We collaborate with the Veterans Administration and other subject matter experts to ensure that the necessary supports and services are made available and are also accessible to our employees.

We also recognize the importance of supporting veterans through our business contracting with suppliers. Year-to-date, Rockwell Collins has spent \$57 million, nearly 5 percent of total corporate spending, with suppliers with veteran-owned small businesses and \$13.6 million with service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses.

Now, we are fortunate to have gained some recognition for these efforts. Rockwell Collins has been named a top 100 military-friendly employer by GI Jobs magazine for the past 2 years, and we strive every day to continue to deserve that recognition. Beyond our own hiring practices, Rockwell Collins seeks to support initiatives that promote hiring of veterans across the Nation.

We are a proud corporate sponsor of the jobs and internship program, a partnership championed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Student Veterans of America. In fact, we recently made a significant contribution to the Chamber, specifically earmarked for their partnership with the SVA and development of the Hiring Our Heroes Initiative.

We attended the SVA's leadership summit and career fair this past summer in Madison, Wisconsin, and we will support the SVA's national conference this December as a corporate partner, exhibitor, and employment panel participant.

An initiative that is a personal passion for me, we also work to bring disabled veterans into the workplace through a relationship with the National Organization on Disability, known as NOD, and its Wounded Warriors program. As a primary sponsor of the organization, one of our senior executives sits on the board for NOD and is engaged in communicating core messages, events, and opportunities for Rockwell Collins to both support and influence.

And we continue to seek additional relationships or opportunities to promote veteran hiring wherever we do business and to talk about it at every opportunity, like we are here today.

Now there is no one, single solution to the complex challenge to veteran unemployment, and it is a pleasure to hear from the other

participants today and to get new ideas to consider. But I hope that my and Rockwell Collins' contribution to the conversation is helpful as you consider the public and private strategies to tackle this issue.

These men and women willingly accepted one of our Nation's most vital and precious responsibilities of protecting the country from harm, and in turn, we commit to fulfill our responsibility to help them put the unique and desirable skills they developed in that endeavor to work for the well-being of themselves, their families, and their future.

I welcome any questions you may have today, and I also encourage you to contact Rockwell Collins if you would like to know more specifics about some of the initiatives that I have outlined for you here today.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Timothy J. Carson appears on p. 51.]

Mr. STUTZMAN. All right. Thank you very much to each of your testimony. It has, again, been very helpful.

A couple of questions. Ms. Litchfield, I will start with you. First of all, we have all John Deere on our farm. We do have a couple of red ones. They are just for show, but—

Ms. LITCHFIELD. I am glad to hear that.

[Laughter.]

Mr. STUTZMAN. In your written statement, you talked about the difficulties in matching veterans with the appropriate positions due to the numerous boards that are available. I am sure that is a challenge. Can you talk a little bit about have you ever used the National Labor Exchange's job board, run by the Direct Employers Association, and kind of how can you—has one board been more successful than another?

Ms. LITCHFIELD. I can't speak specific to the job board success or nonsuccess, but we are in a partnership with Direct Employers Association. So we do use that particular job board.

In regards to matching skill sets with openings that we have, I think it relates back to the comments we heard from Captain Robinson and Staff Sergeant Rose related to being able to clearly articulate what those skills and experiences are and as they relate to specific job openings.

Each of our jobs are posted with specific requirements and experiences that we are looking for in candidates. And much of the process is an automated process, not an individual looking through that. So sometimes it is difficult to get a direct match when you are looking for key words or experiences on those resumes. And so, that does become a challenge for us.

We have a number of openings right now in the U.S., and many of them are targeted around specific technical skills that we are hiring for. And sometimes we don't get access to the candidates within the U.S. as well.

So those are some of the challenges that we are facing.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. And Ms. May, you talked quite a bit about the tax credit, and I would like to follow up a little bit more on that because I like where you are going with that. And one of the complaints that we have heard, though, is the intensive paperwork that goes along with that.

I mean, can you touch on that, and anybody else on the panel touch on that?

Ms. MAY. It is only two forms.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Two forms?

Ms. MAY. It is two forms. Two forms get added to the H.R. paperwork, and they complete those when they do their new hire paperwork. So when they are doing their W-4, they have these two forms. They answer a few questions, and based on that, we process and determine who is qualified and who is not. So it is not that complicated, not too bad.

Mr. STUTZMAN. It doesn't sound too bad.

Ms. MAY. No.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Coming from an accounting background as well, that doesn't, I mean, sound terribly hard.

Ms. MAY. No, now computing the credit can get a little bit complicated because there are different target groups and different levels, and the legislation continues to change. And right now, there is pending legislation to add these two new target groups.

So that is what we keep up on. So that makes it a little complicated if you are trying to do it in-house and do it on your own. But—

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. So doing it in-house might be more difficult?

Ms. MAY. It may be because you would probably have to have a specific person dedicated to doing it and keeping up with the forms, sending them off to the appropriate State, then waiting for a certificate to come back and then processing the credit.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. If I am a small business owner and I am looking to use the credit—which I am a small business owner and didn't even know about the credit until becoming a Member of Congress and a part of this committee—what, do you find very many people interested in the credit, and how do they usually hear about it?

Ms. MAY. They hear about it various ways. There are still businesses out there that aren't doing it, yet it is something that gets promoted. You know, of course, there are different Government representatives talking about it. President Obama has been talking about this, in particular. He hasn't actually said the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, but yet when you are talking about adding the veterans credit, it is specifically for that program.

So, is there acknowledgment of the program out there for businesses? Yes. There are some businesses—retail, manufacturing, staffing, call centers—they are the ones that are more prevalent doing that program. But small businesses can benefit, too, because if they get one credit, if they are hiring one veteran, they could get a credit of \$2,400, \$4,800.

Mr. STUTZMAN. And you mentioned increasing the tax credit. Any number that you have in mind?

Ms. MAY. \$5,600 for unemployed veterans and \$9,600 for hiring unemployed veterans with a service-connected disability is what is out on the table right now.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. And it is currently \$2,400?

Ms. MAY. Correct. There is two veteran credits right now currently with WOTC, and it is for a disabled veteran and for some-

body who has been on assistance and is also a veteran. So those exist currently.

And then, a year ago, they actually had an unemployed veteran as a target group, and that went away as of last year. Which is what they are trying to bring that one back and then increase the credit.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Do you find very many employers utilizing those credits?

Ms. MAY. Definitely.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Yes?

Ms. MAY. And making thousands and thousands of dollars in 1 year, in 1 tax year. So there are a lot of companies that are benefiting from the Work Opportunity Tax Credit program. It would be a shame for it to go away.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Sure. Yes.

What do we normally extend it? You said in your testimony that we have renewed it eight times since '96. So——

Ms. MAY. Typically, it is a 2-year renewal.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Yes.

Ms. MAY. Last time, because they extended—they didn't renew it until December of the year that it needed to get renewed. So because of the big delay, they did 3 years. And so, that took us to the end of this year. And now the legislation is for another 3-year extension.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Mr. Braley.

Mr. BRALEY. Well, Mr. Chairman, I am certainly not going to let you upstage me on tractor discussions in my hometown of Waterloo.

[Laughter.]

Mr. BRALEY. And Ms. Litchfield, that steel-type tractor my father was driving was green. So let us just get that on the record.

Ms. LITCHFIELD. Okay.

[Laughter.]

Mr. BRALEY. One of the things that I was very interested in is your job title because you are listed as the manager of talent acquisition, and that got me thinking about the whole focus of this hearing. Because most employers that I talk to, when they are looking for someone to add to their workforce, they are looking for someone who is highly motivated, who has highly developed critical thinking skills, who has creative problem-solving experience, and who is disciplined.

Does anybody disagree on this panel with what I just said?

[No response.]

Mr. BRALEY. And yet it seems like the two young men that we heard from earlier certainly meet that criteria. Most of the people who have experienced combat would not survive unless they had some level of experience with all of those criteria. Yet we have this enormous challenge of bridging the gap between military service experience and civilian workforce demands.

So what can you share with us about those real world challenges that employers face in trying to identify workers who meet their job criteria and people like the two witnesses we heard from on our first panel, who are ready, willing, and able to work? How do we solve that problem?

Let us start with you, Ms. Litchfield.

Ms. LITCHFIELD. Well, one of the challenges that I think we face is there is a number of job boards that are available for us to use to get access to military veterans and individuals interested in working for our organization and others. And I think if we could find a way to streamline how we get access to the right candidates for the right type of skills, that helps us then, in turn, get to a job opportunity for that individual and for us to get access to talent to help support our business objectives.

And so, I think one of the challenges that we do face is there is a broad array out there for us to target and knowing which ones get you the best access to the right candidates. We have limited resources, just like any other organization does, and so we want to make sure we are spending our money around our advertising and our efforts targeted for recruiting on the right types of activities.

So that would be one area that I think if we could come together and figure out how we get access to the right skills and capabilities to match up with the opportunities that we have to offer.

Mr. BRALEY. I was kind of joking about that Rosetta Stone thing, but in reality, the Chamber is putting a lot of money into trying to help address this very problem.

Ms. LITCHFIELD. Right.

Mr. BRALEY. And it seems to me that the DoD and Veterans Affairs Departments, working in conjunction with private employers, could do a better job of trying to bridge this gap.

Ms. LITCHFIELD. Absolutely.

Mr. BRALEY. Major Studer.

Major STUDER. Sure. I think it is obviously multiple front. I have been impressed with the ESGR work. There is some resume-building things that I think they have tapped into corporate America on. Send H.R. people in a non-interview mode to get soldiers over—most soldiers tend to be fairly humble.

When you come through and say, hey, how am I going to compete for this job and orate the differences between what this guy is doing in the civilian sector and what I have just done for the last 12 months? I think there are a lot of things to trump. But navigating and cross that bridge, they talked about a lot of the previous testimony as kind of white noise, but that last 30 days—

Mr. BRALEY. Death by PowerPoint?

Major STUDER. A little bit. But the last 30 days in country and then the first 90 days that you are back here, soldiers are going through a lot. I think there are bridges to be built between corporate America and not necessarily trying to reach individual soldiers. But they all have a chain of command, a peacetime chain of command.

We knew 3,500 soldiers were coming back to Iowa in a fairly finite amount of time. I would like to say all corporate citizens were as proactive as we should have been, but it is kind of looking in building the bridge between I think the military chain of command. They all have full-time civilian staff.

That is one of the first people soldiers go to. "Hey, my unit administrator or my first sergeant, I need work." They know about it there. It is just how do we get "I need work" from the unit itself

to a corporate? A lot of endeavors on how to bridge that, but it starts at the unit, and it ends at the employer.

And that is where if we could have more, my opinion, more resources dedicated to—some companies don't know the Reserve units that are local to them. Some companies don't know how many veterans they currently have employed. It is increasing the awareness and starting the push.

Mr. BRALEY. Well, and let us face it. We have three of Iowa's largest employers represented here, and the resources your companies have to commit to this type of an outcome can be different than a small mom-and-pop business that may be no less patriotic in their commitment to hiring veterans, but just doesn't have access to the same resources to help them make these choices.

Ms. May.

Ms. MAY. I would agree with Mr. Studer. I mean, the time to do it would be the time before they come back because there is downtime. My husband was deployed, and there is time at that point because of their downtime. I would think that would be the great opportunity to start working with them and talking about their resumes.

I mean, the people that are going to need to get jobs, they do need to have the skills to be able to match up what is needed in corporate America versus what their military experience is, and I think that is key, and being able to do that before they come home. Because when they come home, there is a lot of challenges. Medically, there can be a lot of mental things going on.

So if you try to do those things before they come back. Plus, I think that would give them peace of mind. Having a job and being employed is one of the most important things when you come back.

Mr. BRALEY. Mr. Carson.

Mr. CARSON. Yes. So I would say that some of the challenges that we heard from the first panel are no different than those that I faced 20 years ago when I got out of the Army, trying to translate military experience and training and schooling into the civilian workforce.

What, of course, amplifies that today is our economy. And I think that it would be very helpful to continue to have these public discussions maybe in town hall forums on a drill weekend out at a Reserve center and get some of the larger employers there, where we walk through the facilities and H.R. representatives, hiring managers are able to see our soldiers in action, in drill, and understand what they do and then have a town hall discussion about that publicly.

Mr. BRALEY. Well, and you and Ms. Litchfield both talked about the very important component of your companies' businesses, which is small business suppliers who hire veterans.

Mr. CARSON. Yes. Exactly.

Mr. BRALEY. And I know, Ms. May, your company works with many small businesses, and not every veteran wants or is prepared to go to work for someone. And I think one of the unaddressed issues that we need to spend more time talking about is how we provide veterans who want to start their own small business the resources to be successful when the rate of failure for small business is so high and what types of different programming we need

to be offering them so they can achieve their dreams of being a self-employed veteran some day, too.

I see my time has expired, and so I will yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Thank you very much.

I guess I would just like to ask all of you on this particular panel. I mean, you heard the challenges that Mr. Rose and Mr. Robinson are having, and I know there are many more men and women that have the same challenges. But would, just asking as maybe a committee here, just if you could talk with them. And Mr. Rose mentioned challenges with his resume and I know Mr. Robinson is looking for a job—any ideas?

Because I think that with their commitment to what they have done for our country and also your commitment to what you have done for job creation in this part of the country is crucial. But also connecting people is really what a lot of this is about.

So I want to say just thank you to all of you for what you do do. Because I know we are going through some very difficult times, and your testimony has been very helpful. Appreciate the comments on tax credits and the challenges of connecting people. We are just going to continue to have to work at it, and I believe that we can be successful.

So, with that, we will excuse all of you. Thank you again for coming.

And at this time, we would like to welcome our third and final panel. Our third group of witnesses includes Colonel Benjamin Corell with the Iowa National Guard. This would be personal comments with Mark Hennessey, which I will explain in a little bit.

And then Ms. Teresa Wahlert with Iowa Workforce Development and Mr. Anthony Smithhart with the U.S. Department of Labor.

Of course, all of these will have 5 minutes. We had some issues logistically with Mr. Hennessey's testimony. So he is appearing on his own behalf today.

Mr. HENNESSEY. Yes, sir.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Which we appreciate you being here, and we do want to hear from you personally.

So we will begin with Colonel Corell, and thank you for your service, and we recognize you for 5 minutes.

STATEMENTS OF COLONEL BENJAMIN CORELL, COMMANDER, SECOND BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, IOWA NATIONAL GUARD, JOHNSTON, IOWA; MARK HENNESSEY, IOWA COMMITTEE FOR EMPLOYER SUPPORT OF THE GUARD AND RESERVE, JOHNSTON, IOWA; TERESA WAHLERT, DIRECTOR, IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, DES MOINES, IOWA; AND ANTHONY SMITHHART, IOWA STATE DIRECTOR, VETERANS EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

STATEMENT OF COLONEL BENJAMIN CORELL

Colonel CORELL. Yes, sir. Chairman Stutzman, Congressman Braley, I am Colonel Ben Corell. I am the commander of the Second 34th Brigade Combat Team just returned from service in Af-

ghanistan, brought back about 3,100 troops to Iowa here in the July time frame.

I am from a small town, too, and I take things in bite-sized chunks, and up in the Strawberry Point area. Congressman Braley knows this. But I look at what is the problem that we are trying to identify here?

And from Ben Corell's perspective, I think we are looking at Reserve and National Guard employers. And that is really my framework here. I think that includes veterans, but I think it is different when we talk about those coming off active duty. They have ended their service. They are reentering the workforce with really an active duty background behind them.

As I look at what we have done in the Reserve and National Guard in the last 10 years, it is different because we continue to go back to the well. We continue to ask our employers to sacrifice as we continue to mobilize our Guard and Reserve for contingency operations, whether it be combat, peacekeeping, and in some cases, we have domestic responsibilities that we have within the borders of our own States.

So I look at that a little bit differently. It is still the same problems that we have as far as how do we keep those soldiers employed? And how do we incentivize it to those Guard and Reserve employers that says I am going to go through that sacrifice?

Because at some point, the patriotic aspect of it loses its attraction. You have to put some type of incentive that says I clearly want to keep this not because of all those other things that we talked about already in this hearing today about discipline and hard work, but because it is now costing my business something.

I will give you a little bit of my background. I have deployed four times. The first time that I deployed, well, my first 15 years in the Reserve components, I did just like the commercial said, 1 weekend a month, 2 weeks in the summer. And I went to the schooling requirements that I had.

In 2000, I had the opportunity to deploy into Saudi Arabia as part of Operation Southern Watch. We secured Patriot missile batteries. I thought that was my one and only opportunity to deploy onto active duty outside the United States and serve my country. So I took that with pride.

I came back home. And that fall, 9/11 happened. At that time, I owned a small business. My brother-in-law and I were in partnership together. We had a BP-Amoco tank wagon business up in Strawberry Point, Iowa.

I deployed again in 2003–2004 to do a peacekeeping mission in the Sinai. Came back. 2005, I deployed again as a battalion commander to Iraq. We got extended. I was gone 1 week short of 2 years.

When I came back to my small business, my brother-in-law said to me, "You know, this isn't what I signed up for. We built the business for both of us to operate and make a living off of. It no longer fits my business model." So I said I will go find something else to do.

But I think that is reflective of others who are small business owners or who work for those small mom-and-pop companies that

only have a handful of employees. When one is gone, it is a significant impact on that business.

And then I just returned from my fourth deployment as a brigade commander into Afghanistan.

Our Nation's military has sacrificed a lot in the last 10 years. One percent of our population has served in uniform. Take that out of the Reserve and the National Guard, I don't believe that we could have been successful as a military without the Reserve and National Guard with what we have added to the fight, just based on my experience. And I think most of my brothers on active duty would echo those same comments.

I think that we have spent a lot of time working very hard on building resume-writing capabilities. We do job fairs for our soldiers. We have a great team of ESGR representatives. A lot of volunteers that go in, and we do lunch and learns. We do those BOSS lists that Congressman Braley talked about.

But I think it has got to go beyond that. I think we have to identify how do we make an incentive for an employer to hire a Reserve and National Guardsman. I think the veterans piece of it has to be included in that, but I think it is even more difficult when we talk about Guard and Reserve, who continue to be drawn away for different requirements.

At some point, the well starts to go dry. And I think as we lay it out, if everything is equal, if I am that hiring board member, if everything is equal, I am not sure that being a member of the Guard and Reserve is a bonus when I look at that. Even though they may have some additional leadership qualities, that I don't really know how I quantitate that because I think we have discussed that already.

But if everything else is equal, I am probably going to lend the vote to this person that isn't in the Guard and Reserve because I know they are going to be there every day, and I know that I can count on them to be there. With what we have done with the Guard and Reserve in the last 10 years, we can't always say that.

So whether that is some type of tax incentive, whether that is a grant, whether that is a forgivable loan, I think that is where the focus has got to be so we have some type of a reward. In my career, I worked in recruiting. And I know that when times get tough, everything is the same, people are going to join the Guard and Reserve because of patriotic commitment, because it is in their family lineage, or it is just something that they always wanted to do.

Once you run out of those folks, then everything equals out, and you have to have some sort of incentive for those people to come in and say, well, I want to go to college, what can you give me? I want to help put food on the table, what can you give me? What incentive do I have to do something different to join the Guard and Reserve, compared to going and getting a part-time job somewhere else?

And that is really what I see is the problem, how we identify that piece. I think that is all I have. I have submitted my written comments, and I will stand by for your questions.

Thanks for the opportunity here.

[The prepared statement of Benjamin Corell appears on p. 54.]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Hennessey, we will go ahead and recognize you just for some personal comments, if you would like?

STATEMENT OF MARK HENNESSEY

Mr. HENNESSEY. Absolutely. Thank you, gentlemen.

My name is Mark Hennessey. I live in Robins, and I am just here as a concerned civilian.

My father was an Army vet. My father-in-law was a Navy vet. I have numerous friends that have served and several friends that are still active members of the Guard and Reserve, and just somebody that has talked on both sides of that with local employers in the Cedar Rapids/Iowa City area, as well as veterans, and how to bridge that gap and get those two parties together, help them understand the needs that the employers have.

And as we talked about translating that military resume to the civilian world, doing things that expand the initiatives, such as the ESGR initiative, such as the BOSS lists, those things like that. And so, it is just something that I hear echoed throughout the community.

I am very involved in a lot of networking events. So I talk with a lot of people, and that is something that I regularly hear is how do we bridge that gap?

[The prepared statement of Mark Hennessey appears on p. 54.]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Smithhart, you are recognized for your testimony.

STATEMENT OF ANTHONY SMITHHART

Mr. SMITHHART. Thank you, Congressman.

Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley, and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify before the Committee about the work we are doing at the Department of Labor to address important issues of decreasing unemployment rate for veterans, National Guard, and Reservists.

We also appreciate the—with over 240,000 veterans living in a State, it is critical that we provide them with the services and support they need to find and obtain good jobs. My name is Tony Smithhart, and as Iowa State director for the Department of Labor's Veterans Employment Training Service, I am dedicated to helping our veterans and servicemembers returning and achieve that goal.

VETS proudly serves veterans and transitioning servicemembers by providing resources and expertise to assist and prepare them to obtain meaningful careers, maximize their employment opportunities, protect their employment rights. We do this through a variety of nationwide programs that are an integral part of Secretary Solis's vision of good jobs for everyone.

I would like to begin by briefly discussing some of the programs along with initiatives to assist America's veterans in getting to or back to work from, and then focus specifically on the information from Iowa that you requested.

The first program I would like to highlight for you is the Jobs for Veterans State program. Under this program, the department offers employment and training services to eligible veterans by allocating funds to the State workforce development agencies.

The Jobs for Veterans program funds two programs, the Disabled Veterans Outreach Specialist and the LVERs. Congressman Stutzman, you had mentioned and asked I think it was Captain Robinson about that in Iowa. In Iowa, we absolutely have the two programs, but it is primarily DVOPs, and we call them veteran representatives. We put almost all of our positions are DVOP. So when they come in, they see a DVOP, they provide intensive services.

So if he is being seen by one of our veteran representatives within the workforce, he is being case managed or receiving intensive service, effective October 3rd. But we call them vet reps, and there is a delineation, but they are DVOPs because we only have one and a half LVERs. The rest are DVOP. So absolutely we do that.

Last year, nationwide, the Jobs for Veterans State grant provided services to nearly 589,000 veterans, 201,000 of those found jobs. To meet the needs of homeless veterans and help reintegrate them into the workforce, VETS administers the Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program. Through HVRP, the department provides competitive grants to States and local workforce investment boards, State agencies, local public agencies, and private nonprofits.

HVRP grantees provide an array of services utilizing a holistic case management approach, directly assists homeless veterans, provide training services to help them successfully. Program year 2009, we had over 14,000 homeless veterans participating in the program. Ninety-six grants, 8,470 were placed into employment. The 2010 numbers are still not available.

Here, in Iowa, we are very fortunate. We have two programs, both of them located in the Iowa City area, with services being provided in the Iowa City/Cedar Rapids and in the Quad Cities. The Iowa City one is really new. This is their first year. It started August 5th. And the other one, the Quad Cities, is very successful and love to show you that program if you would like to take time to tour the facilities and meet with the veterans. A really good program.

I think you can all read, and my time is running low. So I will go to the information you asked about Iowa. You requested information about veterans in Iowa. While some specific data is unavailable, we have nevertheless been able to provide current information.

As you know, Iowa operates the Public Labor Exchange and funded by the Department of Labor to assist veterans. While it is available to all populations, veterans are given priority within the services. The services and assistance offered range from employment preparation, comprehensive employment placement services, to intensive services through case management.

The levels of education, in the past year, 19,687 veterans received services through Iowa Workforce Development. Of those, 1,074 were less than a high school education; 9,000, or 45.7 percent, had a high school degree; and 31 percent had above that or a certificate.

Talk about the average wage and the length of unemployment. We are not able to provide that, as far as how many—if there is a correlation between the age and the number unemployed.

The USERRA cases you could read there. Since 2007, you have seen a decline. One of the things, we work really hard with the Employer Support for Guard and Reserve, the Chamber of Commerce, the employer groups, the gentleman from Principal, and Kelly. We do presentations to employers to really talk about what the law requires and to try to be proactive versus reactive, as far as taking care of issues.

So our cases have gone down. Now one of the anomalies, of course, is the big deployment. So coming back, we will see if all our work has paid off. So far, it has. Our number of cases are down.

Right now, I have only got one active case. So good things are happening. So, any questions?

[The prepared statement of Anthony Smithhart appears on p. 56.]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you.

Ms. Wahlert.

STATEMENT OF TERESA WAHLERT

Ms. WAHLERT. Thank you.

My name is Teresa Wahlert, and I am the director at Iowa Workforce Development.

I am not going to read through my testimony. I am just going to recognize a couple of things that we are doing at Workforce Development.

I know, of course, you have heard a lot from the representatives here on any number of issues, which, of course, are all contained in my written testimony. But the one area I would really like to talk about here today is the area of new deployment of technology that Iowa Workforce Development has been involved in for the past 6 months or so.

One of the things we recognized at Iowa Workforce Development was the issue of connectivity between a veteran or a National Guard/Reservist and the working world and how to really connect people with jobs. And so, we thought that it might be a great opportunity to really go out and visit with the National Guard as to how do they really connect their servicemen and women back into the community when they come home?

And it is through those discussions that I am proud to say that on the 27th of July, we announced the first in the Nation partnership with the Iowa National Guard. With our access point technology, we are going to deploy services to veterans and returning Guard members in all of their 43 armories. So we are really trying to put access to services onto the campuses and in the areas where returning soldiers are most comfortable.

I am also proud to say that, as of this past Friday, we have deployed 261 of these access points throughout the State of Iowa. We have over 850 new workstations that people can use. So not only at the armories, but in all of these other locations throughout the State of Iowa.

We have a current list of about 120-some to install here in the next 2 or 3 weeks, and we have a list of interested partners outside of the National Guard, which include over 900 more partnerships throughout the State of Iowa for access to this technology, where we have things like job openings, things like career services, things

for unemployment, opportunities for businesses to also see where there are services there for them.

Although we are a small State and have a small grant, we do deploy our DVOPs into all of our integrated centers. We have 16 integrated centers where we have specialists in all sorts of areas to assist and help not only all job seekers, but specifically, as Mr. Smithhart mentioned, veterans and National Guard folks.

We have brochures that go throughout the State. I have some of them out at the front table. And it lists, of course, on the back of the brochure where each one of our 16 One-Stop shops are. The important thing about this is we have extended our hours so that people on their own time frame can then access our specialists, either by a toll-free call or by a live chat opportunity session through a computer.

Our hours now are 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Monday through Friday, and 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Saturdays. And it is interesting, although this is a pilot program, we are finding that most of the interest and where we see our volumes increasing ever more are on Saturdays, a day we have never been open in the past until about the last 3 months.

So we are really involved with this intensive deployment of services through technology, with also making our individual specialists open and available for questions, long hours and on Saturdays. Currently, we have converted 9 of the 43 armories that we have in the State, and within the next 2 weeks or so, we will have the rest of our armories converted to our new technology.

The reason this is important is because we are putting this technology and this access onto the Federal system, and so the National Guard actually had to carve out some broadband capacity in order for us to be able to deploy our services, which they did successfully accomplish in the last couple of weeks. And so, it will only take us about another 10 days to get through to each one of the other armories.

I am proud to say that our folks have worked very hard with National Guard and ESGR and many other organizations that do help our returning soldiers to get a connection back in the working world, and we will continue to try to do that throughout the rest of the time that I intend to be working at Iowa Workforce Development.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Teresa Wahlert appears on p. 60.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you.

A couple of questions, and I will start with Colonel Corell. Could you talk just a little bit about your veterans? How many are unemployed, who they are, the challenges that they have, and what they are hearing as they are out pursuing work.

Colonel CORELL. I will do the best I can, and when I can, I will pass to Mark. He has, I think, got some of that data for me as well.

There was three specific questions that when I got this were kind of contained of what your question is right now. Current level for unemployment, members in the Iowa National Guard, and this goes back as an aggregate of Army and Air Guard collectively, the most recent data we have is in August, which probably isn't a good

representation of those of the brigade combat team that just came back.

At 7 percent unemployment in August, I believe that what we are tracking today, for those members of the brigade combat team that just came back, we had 630 that were unemployed prior to the mobilization and 721 that we are tracking post mobilization, post deployment that are unemployed, looking for work. So somewhere in the figures of before deployment, 15 to 20 percent unemployment to now 20 to 25 percent unemployment within that small group.

Reasons why? I think probably, you know, I think the increase, just like Captain Robinson indicated, was we had a lot of people that were on duty that had a job for a couple of years prior to the mobilization. And we knew the brigade was going to go out the door within this window. So with that comes the resources and Federal funding to bring more people on to get the organization ready to go out the door. So I think that is a significant number.

I think when we go through the Yellow Ribbon process—we have completed Yellow Ribbon 1 events across the brigade combat team. I think as we go into the Yellow Ribbon 2, I think that as we track that information, I think we are going to be a little bit healthier than what these numbers indicate because I believe that, in some cases, people are going to go back to school because of the benefits that they have earned.

It is in their best interest, number one, to get the education. But number two, with the incentives from the GI bill, post-9/11, they can get paid a pretty decent wage just to go to school as well. So I think that will mitigate some of that and get us through these difficult times that we are in, plus make them more marketable with a higher education as well.

Did I answer what you were looking for?

Mr. STUTZMAN. Yes, and Mr. Hennessey, any personal observations?

Mr. HENNESSEY. Just from personal observations, what I am hearing is that individuals that are coming back, some of them feel that they are underemployed now. That they had a command role or a leadership role in the Guard and Reserve or active duty and have come back and have decided, no, this is not—my civilian job is not really what I am looking for right now. And then, again, it is how to translate that experience and find that right opportunity.

We see a lot of opportunities. One of the things that I have seen out there, we talked earlier about job boards. One of the things, just for future reference, if you look at a job board called “indeed.com” and do a search just on your local area, I think you will be amazed at the number of openings that are out there.

So there are jobs out there for individuals that really want to work. The problem is matching those up with those individuals that are looking for the work and then getting the employers to find those individuals.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Mr. Smithhart, how many veteran job placements did Iowa State Workforce complete in the last year, roughly?

Mr. SMITHHART. I did not bring that information with me, but I will provide it to the Committee.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Okay, that is fine.

And then, Ms. Wahlert, what—and I will maybe reference this back to Mr. Smithhart. And I guess one of the comments that Captain Robinson mentioned about his friend the welder, and I think any time whenever men and women go into the military and they come out, obviously, we want them to better themselves and move on to better employment.

But the welder situation, did that cause any concern with you about the situation, him coming back and not having a job?

Mr. SMITHHART. Absolutely, sir. A lot of the information that Captain Robinson and the staff sergeant said really hit home because every day that is what we deal with. You know, we really want to help those folks.

And especially in the Des Moines area, for that welder person, we have John Deere there that is hiring. They probably have 40 or 50 openings. I don't know if Stacy could tell me. In the Ankeny office area, we have a lot of openings and work really closely with them to do that.

So it is really—there is a shortcoming in ours, within the Department of Labor and Workforce, of trying to match those individuals and for them to identify their skills and make sure that that match is what the employer needs. Because there are seats out there. We just have to be able to get that person.

Now we are working with our current initiatives. In the Des Moines area, we are going to do a State-wide job fair on November 8th with the Employer Support for Guard and Reserve. And to start that, on November 5th, we are going to have an employment program that will teach people how to present themselves, how to demilitarize their resumes.

We are going to bring in—with the Employer Support for Guard and Reserve, we are going to bring in civilian employers to do mock interviews that afternoon to help those individuals do that. We are going to follow that up with a seminar on how to market yourself at a career fair, at a job fair. And then we are going to have the big job fair November 8th.

And it is a State-wide one. So it is going to include from all, from Dubuque. You have employers from all over the State. Right now, we have 50 employers.

Now the key is, as Colonel Corell and a lot of other individuals have said, it is getting the individuals to attend. We did the series of these seminars around the State. Did one in Waterloo on September 13th. We had to cancel it. We didn't have enough participation.

We just canceled one this week in Sioux City, again because we only had two individuals that signed up in that area. The ones that have come, they have been very happy. We have tested it, refined it. And so, it is really—the captain and the staff sergeant really hit home. It is to get the individuals that could use it and benefit, to get them to actually produce because unlike the active duty folks, these folks don't get paid to be there.

And Colonel Corell can attest, on a weekend drill, there is a lot of activities going on there that can we fit this in? That is the command's thing, and I don't know. So there is a lot going on. It is just—it is really we are missing getting it to the right individuals.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Sure.

Mr. SMITHHART. But the employers are there. The soldiers are there to match them, I don't know.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Sure. Okay.

Mr. Braley.

Mr. BRALEY. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

One of the things that I need to do is embarrass Colonel Corell at this point because he has been a great asset to me during my entire period serving in Congress. But one of the things that was not mentioned was that all three of his sons are members of the Iowa National Guard and have deployed and served under their father in either Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom.

And that is an extraordinary part of the legacy of Iowa's proud military heritage. I can't think of any place better to recognize that service than here in the home of the five Sullivan brothers.

And Mr. Chairman, on Memorial Day weekend of 2007, CBS News devoted its entire 60 Minutes program to the extraordinary work of the Iowa National Guard in a program called "Fathers, Sons, and Brothers" that won an Emmy. And I think that it was a great way to honor the incredible sacrifice that all of our men and women in uniform make. But we are very, very proud of our National Guard, and I just wanted to make that point.

To follow up on another point you raised, Colonel, and that is the extraordinary burden placed on our Guard and Reserve units even when they are not deployed in combat. And all you have to do is look at my brief career in Congress, and I just was thinking about this.

February of 2007, I was sworn in in January. We had an ice storm that cost 500,000 people power in this State, and the Guard was out helping. I worked with them. Then you had the demobilization from Iraq, and all the welcome home ceremonies and all of the same things we are dealing with now after this Afghanistan demobilization.

2008, in May, we had the worst tornado in the country here in this district, followed by the worst flooding in our State. And the Guard was active and involved in that. June of 2010, more flooding in our State, and the mobilization to Afghanistan with an extraordinary burden on the Guard. And then, this year, we have the demobilization and more record-setting flooding in our State.

And I think that is a microcosm of the challenges that you were talking about when employers are constantly being stressed on their own level from all of these natural disasters. They have their own workforce being disrupted, and I think we don't talk enough about these challenges and the extraordinary work that employers do who continue to live up to their commitment under USERRA.

So, with that as a backdrop, how does that impact the work you and the other people at Camp Dodge are doing to try to keep this cohesion together?

Colonel CORELL. I think the employers that we work with—through the dedication of the ESGR folks, the dedication of the leadership of the Iowa Guard—doing the outreach to inform and educate, I think it has bought us a lot. My concern is at some point, we are going to run out of that goodwill, and I think we are right on the edge of that, if we are not already past it.

And I think it comes back to there has got to be some incentive, and whatever that is, whether it is small, it doesn't matter. But something that you can go in and leverage from an employer standpoint of those people that are out seeking veterans or National Guard and Reserve soldiers, looking to fill those vacancies in the workplace. There has got to be some leverage tool, and I will let you guys figure out the nug work on it. I can't tell you what that incentive is, but I think it has got to be something.

Day to day, we are out working it. It is just like those soldiers that continue to refine their resume. You can only do that so long. You can only send it out so many times before you reach the point of frustration. You can only go to so many job fairs. There has got to be a way to stick a pole in there and move yourself up the ladder of potential candidates, and the way to do that is to make some sort of incentive to do it.

So is it hard work? Are we concerned about it? Every day we are. And that is why there is so much effort that has been put into our relationships with our employers, relationships with the Workforce Development folks to bring those access points into our armories. Because we know how critical it is because, number one, just because of the cost, you take the cost effectiveness of the Guard and Reserve, when you look at the cost of manning a full-time military.

And you all know that better than what I do. But we have to have a way for those National Guard/Reserve component soldiers to feed their families in the interim when we don't need them to be called up for some type of a peacekeeping mission, combat operation, or a domestic need here at home. And that is really what we are focused on and why we are here today and why this is so important to us.

Mr. BRALEY. Well, I appreciate that, and we have talked previously about the Work Opportunity Tax Credit. And one of the things that I have introduced in Congress is a bill called the Combat Veterans Back to Work Act, modeled on the previous back to work incentives we had for employers to hire unemployed workers by giving them a break on their FICA taxes on the front end if they hire an unemployed worker, in this case an unemployed veteran, and then if they keep them on the payroll for a year, another modest, but important incentive so that we get more longevity out of those initial hires.

And I think you are right. It is not going to make somebody decide to hire an employee, but if they are thinking about expanding their workforce, and we give them added incentives to get an unemployed veteran back to work, I think it can make a difference.

Colonel CORELL. I agree, and I think the panel number two that had our friends in the corporate world here, they touched on it a little bit. Once they get those either former active duty military veterans in the door or the members of the Guard and Reserve in the door, they are great employees. And they are so good and so valuable to them, they are going to give them a pay offset when they do get called back to active duty that they will match whatever money shortfall there is between what they are making in the military and what they would make at their civilian job.

Give us the opportunity. I think that is what we are saying is get us the incentive to get us in the door. We will sink or swim

on our own merits, but we are looking for a leverage point, an incentive to get us in the door. And that is the difference that I am talking about.

Mr. BRALEY. Thank you.

Ms. WAHLERT, I want to thank you for the tremendous work that your office is doing to try to address this. And you talked a little bit about some of the unique challenges a State like Iowa has.

And you have talked about how you are deploying new technology and trying to make it available in more service areas. One of the things you talked about was the deployment of 261 workstations. And since we have 45 armories and 16 veteran representative offices, can you give us some examples of where those other workstations might be?

Ms. WAHLERT. Let me just—I would love to, Congressman. Let me just first clarify that 261 are new offices, new locations. We have over 800 workstations within each one of those new opportunities.

For instance, we have also partnered with the Veterans Affairs offices. They are in every county seat. We are in courthouses. We are in halfway houses. We are in correctional institutions. We are at the three regent colleges. We are on many private university and college campus in the State of Iowa. We are in 13 of 15 community colleges and all of their campuses.

We are at Goodwill. We are at faith-based organizations. We are at any place that can have public traffic other than the National Guard because we understand the special nature of the National Guard with soldiers and their families.

So the thought here is the next place we are going to try to deliver the technology is through all of the high schools within the State of Iowa. There are 359 high schools. And the point of this is to, first, be able to have access to services, but to also have people understand what the expectation is of the corporate world when they go into the corporate world, whether it be out of high school or whether it be coming back from Afghanistan.

The other important thing I just wanted to mention that seems to be ironic. I am from the business world, and so I bring kind of panel two with me when I came into this opportunity. And you would be amazed over the last 3 or 4 months. I have had new incentive business outreach by all of Workforce Development, and we have had a number of calls from small and medium-sized businesses who are crying for welders throughout the State.

And who are crying for a lot of the kinds of technical programs and project management that you would assume that a returning serviceperson would have in their resume. And many of these companies have never thought of or considered hiring a veteran.

And so, of course, we are now instituting an outreach from our office to help businesses, and the first folks we call, of course, are veterans within that geographical area. We can also understand where they are from, from their zip code area. But one of the things you really always need, and we have discussed this with the Guard on several meetings, and that is you need to have that continual hook back to the veteran, back to the Reservist so that when they have their downtime, when they are coming back into the community and reenergizing themselves, sometimes there is just

not the effort to go to an office or to get in the car and go somewhere.

And part of the process we do is we make sure everybody has an email account. And so, that if it is midnight or if it is 2:00 a.m. or whenever the right time is for that person to go and to look at jobs or to work on their resume or to actually see what is new for them in their area, we have a way to connect with them. All those email services are free, just like our toll-free number and our live chat options as well.

And so, the connection we make is really important. My goal is by the end of the year, Congressman, to have it so that there is no city or town in the State of Iowa that you drive through that there are not access points in.

Mr. BRALEY. Great. Thank you very much.

And I will yield back.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Thank you.

This concludes our oversight hearing today. I just want to say in closing to our Iowa veterans that the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs is committed to this issue, and I know Congressman Braley and I especially are very interested and want to help make sure that any veteran who wants a job gets one.

And I know it is a tall order, but our chairman, Jeff Miller from Florida, has said that he wants to reduce unemployment for veterans to less than 5 percent or half of what it is currently. So that is a tall order, but I believe, working together, we can all accomplish that.

And one final thing, and I know that the Colonel will appreciate this. Last week, the House passed a bill that was introduced by Congressman Tim Walz of Minnesota that will allow retirees of the Guard and Reserves to be called veterans.

You know, it seems like a long time coming. But we passed that in the House, and I know while this bill doesn't bestow any additional benefits, I definitely believe that it is worthy and needs the recognition. You all deserve the recognition to be called veterans for your service.

Mr. Braley, any closing remarks?

Mr. BRALEY. No, I just want to comment on that last statement because former Sergeant Major Tim Walz from Minnesota worked very closely with me and other Members of Congress to get much-needed benefits for the Iowa National Guard when they came home from Iraq. And because of his real world experience in that capacity, he had an extraordinary voice, and we were very proud that we were finally able to make that happen last week.

But I do also want to apologize to Mr. Smithhart and Mr. Hennessey. Because of the lack of time, and I know the chairman has to catch a flight, I did want to highlight a very important event that is coming up that you mentioned, Mr. Smithhart.

And that is there is a State-wide Hiring Our Heroes job fair in Des Moines on November 8, 2011. It is going to be at Hy-Vee Hall from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and the U.S. Chamber, the Greater Des Moines Partnership, the Employer Support of Guard and Reserve, and DMAC and others are going to be there. And I hope that this is the first step in a very long process to address some of the concerns we have talked about here today.

Thank you both for your willingness to be here today and share your testimony with us, and to all the great witnesses who joined us today.

And I will yield back.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Thank you.

I want to thank everyone for being here today—to the witnesses for your testimony, to those who have served, thank you for your service. Thank our staff as well for their hard work in helping set this meeting up.

And looking forward to having Mr. Braley in Fort Wayne. You will find the same hospitality, I am sure, in Indiana as I have here in Iowa. And I have enjoyed being here, and it feels very much like home.

So I want to ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks.

Hearing no objection, so ordered.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you again, and this hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:55 a.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

Prepared Statement of Hon. Marlin Stutzman, Chairman, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

Good morning. I am delighted to be here in Waterloo with your Congressman, Bruce Braley and I thank him for bringing us to his district. My name is Marlin Stutzman. I am the Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, and represent Indiana's 3rd Congressional District in northeast Indiana. I have Iowa ties- my great-grandparents lived in Washington, Iowa, and are buried there. My aunt was born on Independence Day in Independence Iowa, where she lived alongside my grandparents. My district is very similar to Iowa's first Congressional District. We are very proud of our Midwestern values and proud of America. In northeast Indiana, we are especially proud of our 48,000 veterans who have served our Nation. I am honored to serve as their voice in Congress and serve alongside Ranking Member Bruce Braley, who is a great member, veterans advocate, and a friend.

We are here today to hear from Iowans about the employment difficulties facing far too many members of the Iowa National Guard, the Reserves, and those returning from active duty. While the unemployment rate for all Iowa veterans in September was 5.8 percent, data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show that 35.6 percent of America's Gulf Era II veterans ages 20 to 24 were unemployed, while 8.8 percent of Gulf Era II veterans ages 25-54 were unemployed.

More shocking is anecdotal information that as much as 30 percent of returning members of the Guard and Reserves do not come home to a job. Clearly, we need to find ways to reduce all of those numbers. The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs has taken a first step toward that end last week by passing H.R. 2433, a bill that would provide up to a year of GI Bill benefits to unemployed veterans between the ages of 35 and 60. The bill now goes to the Senate and we hope to get the bill to the President by Veterans Day along with several other improvements to veterans benefits.

Again, I am delighted to be with you today and I will now yield to the gentleman whose office is next to mine, the distinguished Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, my good friend, the Honorable Bruce Braley.

Prepared Statement of Hon. Bruce L. Braley, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

I am honored to hold this field hearing today here in Waterloo and would like to welcome Chairman Marlin Stutzman to my hometown, my district and the great state of Iowa. I know you will enjoy your visit here with the good folks from Iowa.

In July and August of this year, over 3000 Iowa National Guard troops returned from active duty in Afghanistan, and we have a number of these hard working Guardsmen looking for jobs. Iowa and our servicemembers, National Guard, Reservists, and veterans are not immune to the economic hardships facing the rest of the country. That is why I am glad to have the opportunity today to hear about these growing concerns surrounding veterans; specifically, employment, transition, and education matters affecting National Guard Members, Reservists and veterans in Iowa, and across the Nation. This is a great opportunity to be part of an open discussion to find solutions to these problems.

Transitioning services are critical for the success of our men and women in the Armed Forces. Joining the military is not just about following orders and completing the mission, it's a way of life. But when it's time to join the civilian world, it can sometimes be a challenge to translate skills learned in the military into talking points on a job resume. That's why it is crucial that transitioning services should be provided to everyone leaving the military.

An education can help you learn a new skill or reinforce the skills you already know, but it can also help you adapt as a civilian. The Committee recognizes the importance of servicemembers and veterans pursuing an education which is why we continue to fight so hard to improve education benefits. Current education benefits allows certain veterans to attend school full-time while getting a housing stipend, thus allowing veterans to be fully engaged in academics.

We are all well aware of the current employment crisis facing our Nation. With an unemployment rate of 6.1 percent in Iowa, I am constantly working with my colleagues in Congress to find solutions to the recent economic downturn. I understand how these hardships can be, and I find the high unemployment rate for veterans unacceptable.

Earlier this year I introduced a bill to cut payroll taxes for businesses that hire unemployed veterans. The Combat Veterans Back to Work Act provides employers with a payroll tax break if they hire recently returned veterans who are unemployed. After their distinguished service in Afghanistan and Iraq, we should do all we can to help veterans and members of the Iowa Guard find employment in their communities. This legislation will support our friends and neighbors in the Iowa National Guard, Reserves, and other military branches who have recently returned home and face a difficult job market.

Today I look forward to hearing from Iowa National Guard Members about some of the challenges they face as they make the transition back into society after serving overseas. I have invited local businesses to testify to hear about initiatives they are taking to get veterans back to work. I also look forward to hearing from different agencies and the work they are doing related to veterans employment.

I hope we can all have an open and honest dialogue about problems and concerns facing our veterans today that will continue after this hearing in Washington, DC as we work together to address these issues. Servicemembers and veterans are dedicated and hard working. Their experience is invaluable. Thousands of Iowans have returned home after serving proudly overseas this past year alone. Now we must support them and help them transition their great experience and talent back into the Iowa workforce.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to this hearing. Thank you and I yield back.

**Prepared Statement of Staff Sergeant Nathaniel Rose,
ARNG, North Liberty, IA**

Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley and Members of the Subcommittee. I would like to extend my gratitude for being given the opportunity to testify at this hearing today. It is an honor to lend my voice to my fellow veterans and the ongoing economic struggles we face.

My Name is Nathaniel Rose. I am currently a Staff Sergeant in the Iowa Army National Guard as well as a senior at the University of Iowa. I have been deployed to Iraq and I have just returned from a deployment to Afghanistan in July. To help pay for my studies I currently receive the GI Bill along with state and Federal tuition assistance. I speak based solely on my experiences in the Iowa Army National Guard and experiences of those that have served with me. I cannot accurately speak regarding any other branch of service or any other state's National Guard.

I decided to join the National Guard during my freshman year of college, looking for adventure, but also for economic reasons. I come from a hard working middle class family and if I wanted to attend college I would have to pay for it myself. I did not receive many scholarships and I did not want to incur a large amount of student loan debt so I joined the National Guard because the tuition assistance and GI Bill would pay for my education. If it wasn't for tuition assistance and the GI Bill I might have quit going to school or not have joined the National Guard at all. Joining the military is a very hard decision to make but the benefits one might receive help make the decision easier.

The GI Bill has been one benefit that I have come to appreciate more over time. When I first began receiving the benefit it was not a large amount. This was fine because state and Federal tuition assistance paid for all my tuition and fees and I could use the GI Bill for other things. After two deployments I now receive a much larger amount because it is prorated based off the active duty amount and how much time I've spent deployed. The amount is actually enough, when coupled with my drill pay every month, that I do not have to work. I am able to concentrate completely on my studies, which any senior will tell you, is a hard thing to do.

I, however, do not have all the obligations that a number of soldiers I know have. I have no wife, no children, no car payments and so on. Many National Guard sol-

diers cannot go to school full time and take care of their family with tuition assistance and GI Bill alone, especially if they have not been deployed and receive a smaller pro-rated amount. This forces them to work while attending school. There is nothing wrong with working while going to school but for some soldiers I know personally they have had to stop going because they needed to move to full time at work, their grades were slipping or they weren't spending as much time with their family as they wanted to. The Post-9/11 GI Bill has attempted to address some of these issues by paying basic allowance for housing to students. The only problem with this is that once again it is pro-rated for National Guard members. One solution to this problem might be to have National Guard members pay into the GI Bill like active duty members do. Another possible solution would be to put everyone on the same level and not pro-rate the payments. Neither of these solutions is perfect but they might be a good starting point.

Education benefits, to me, seem more complicated. If a soldier doesn't sit down with an expert it's hard to figure out the ins and outs of the benefits. The difference between the 5 GI Bill programs is not easily ascertained by looking at the Web site or reading pamphlets. If soldiers are better informed about their benefits it's easier for them to make decisions about whether they can afford to go back to school or not, especially those with families. The GI Bill needs to take into account that soldiers do have families. They may not be able to support a family and go to school at the same time.

The National Guard has delayed my education twice but I cannot fault them for that because they are essentially paying for it. Also I believe that my time in the National Guard has made me a more marketable person and when my education is over I hope being more marketable aids me in securing not just a job but a career. The problem with this is how do I convey to potential employers the significance of what I've done, experienced and learned in the National Guard?

Resumes are the most popular way of conveying these things. Some of my experiences are difficult to put in a resume. If I put "led over 150 combat missions in Afghanistan" in my resume most employers would not understand the significance of that nor would many soldiers know how to convert that into a resume friendly statement. One way soldiers could translate their skills into civilian terms would be to get help from a resume writing professional. I could receive help on my resume from the career center at my school but I feel that they don't understand what I've done either, so the significance of it won't be conveyed in my resume if they help me. I'm lucky enough to go to a school that has a large veteran population, someone is always available to critique my resume if need be. Many National Guard soldiers are not that lucky and must either drive long distances or email resumes to more qualified help. Educating job recruiters or resume helpers better on the military may help remedy the problem, but it is easier said than done. I believe that by bringing in military resume writing professionals on drill weekends or by incorporating them more at demobilization sites might be the help that soldiers need.

I am set to graduate in May and I have been exploring job possibilities and what I am qualified for. The economy may be down but there is a plethora of job postings on internet job search sights, companies' Web sites, in newspapers, etc. The hard part becomes determining what employers are looking for and if I am qualified. I have spoken to many soldiers since returning from Afghanistan and this process is the one that they are having the most trouble with. A suggestion that a fellow veteran presented to me would be to bring job recruiters from the mobilized units' area to the demobilization site and recruit from there. Soldiers and recruiters would have a chance to speak about qualifications, job descriptions and even do interviews if need be. Even if soldiers did not get hired they would have an understanding of what employers are looking for and how to better prepare themselves for the job search once their mobilization is over.

Another cause for problems is that many civilian employers don't know enough about the military to effectively hire or help a veteran. If soldiers can learn to effectively market themselves and civilian employers can learn more about the military both sides could reach a common ground so soldiers aren't passed over for jobs and employers don't miss opportunities to hire great workers.

I appreciate what the government and the military has done for me but I think more can be done to help soldiers, sailors, airman and marines. I have noticed things improving in my 6 years in the military, from drill to drill and deployment to deployment. There are many new programs starting up throughout the country and within our government that are dedicated to helping veterans which is a sign of forward progress. Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. I would be honored to answer any questions that the Committee might have. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify and thank you for all that this committee does for my fellow veterans.

**Prepared Statement of Captain Aaron Robinson,
ARNG, Des Moines, IA**

My Name is Aaron Robinson. I reside with my wife and two children in Des Moines. I am a commissioned officer in the Iowa Army National Guard. I recently returned from a 1-year deployment to Afghanistan. In my civilian career, I am currently pursuing jobs related to business, Project Management or data-analysis.

I want to share with you today three impressions I have from looking for a job, post-deployment.

First, repeated military deployments have given Iowans like me world-class skills and experiences, but that these are not widely recognized or rewarded when searching for civilian work in our home state.

Second, employers are nearing the exhaustion of their patriotic feelings toward veterans. Despite the existing laws protecting against discrimination based on military service, employers seem to shy away from hiring citizen-soldiers.

Third, searching for a job while deployed overseas is next to impossible—and waiting until *after* deployment adds more stress to an already stressful situation: reintegration with family and friends.

Let me tell you where I'm coming from:

I grew up on a farm approximately an hour west of Des Moines in Yale, and graduated from Perry High School in 1992. I studied Mass Communication at Grand View College in Des Moines. After college, I bounced around various retail jobs. I enlisted with the Iowa National Guard in 1998, and was trained as a tank mechanic.

In 2002, I commissioned as an officer specializing in tanks and other armored vehicles. I married my wife Katie, in 2003 and I deployed to Kosovo, where I commanded a platoon. My first child, Amelia, was born while I was overseas.

When I returned home, I transferred to Military Intelligence and attended multiple military schools. In my civilian career, I worked as an employment counselor for homeless veterans, and as a general manager of a convenience store. After that I spent a number of years on temporary full-time active-duty here in Iowa, helping train and mobilize more than 16 National Guard units for overseas deployment.

Last year, I was deployed to Afghanistan where I served as the Intelligence Officer of Iowa's 113th Cavalry Squadron. The experiences that I received there were excellent and I could not have received them anywhere else. Since coming home to Iowa in late July, I have been steadily seeking employment. As of today, however, I have been unable to find work.

I am not alone.

For example an enlisted soldier friend of mine was the database manager for our unit's personnel records pertaining to security clearances. (That's 500 records—the size of a good-sized company.) However, now that he's back at home, civilian employers don't seem to recognize his abilities to learn new computer systems, and to manage highly sensitive data on a daily basis. To add insult to injury, he can't even find work in his old civilian occupation—he's a welder.

I've faced similar challenges to that of my friend, trying to figure out how to translate military language into civilian Human Resources-speak. After some resume coaching, I found my work in intelligence most closely applies to business analysis and project management. However, unlike my purely civilian counterparts, I'm not necessarily versed in the latest business acronyms and buzz-phrases, which decreases the likelihood of getting through H.R. filters. Also, while I am proficient in military computer software and hardware, I am not specifically trained in systems most-familiar to potential civilian employers.

Employers, politicians, and even the media talk up certain ideas about veterans: that we're hard-working and motivated, that we're mission- and people-focused, and that we handle pressure extremely well. Beyond this, however, and the occasional job-fair and "welcome home" PowerPoint show, veterans don't seem to get a lot of

practical help in getting hired. I have said many times that everyone wants to help, but no one seems to know how. I have received lots of well intended suggestions, sometimes conflicting, but none of them have gotten me much farther in my job search.

Maybe employers are getting burned out. Ten years of war—and Iowa's river floods and blizzards and other state emergencies—might do that. Maybe they're worried that we're going to get deployed again. Maybe they really don't see the economic values inherent in our military skills and experiences.

I know times are tough for a lot of Iowans. I don't want to get a job just because I am a returning veteran, but I would at least like a chance to get to an interview and prove I am a good employee. I also want to keep my family in Iowa, to give my kids the same kind of values and experiences I had.

For now, however, our life is on hold. The military gave me time off after the deployment to unwind and reintegrate into "normal" life. I do not feel like I have done that. I plan to go back to school, but I am putting that off because of a lack of stability in my life and the life of my family. Interviewers do not ask me about my military experience, but they know it is there. If I didn't put it on my resume, you would be able to tell just from talking to me. I am proud of the work I have done and the people with whom I have served.

I'm just an Iowa farm kid that just got a chance to do some exciting things, in some pretty unpleasant places, with some really great people. I just want to get back to my civilian life, get a normal job, and be a regular person for a while.

My family would like that, too.

Thank you for this opportunity to talk about my experiences looking for employment.

**Prepared Statement of Stacy Litchfield, Regional Manager,
Talent Acquisition and Performance Consulting,
Deere & Company, Inc., Moline, IL**

Congressman Braley and distinguished Members of the Committee, my name is Stacy Litchfield. I am the United States Regional Manager, Talent Acquisition for Deere & Company. On behalf of John Deere, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on this important topic.

John Deere is a worldwide leader in providing advanced products and services for agriculture, forestry, construction, turf care, landscaping and irrigation. We're a leading manufacturer of off-highway diesel engines and one of the largest equipment finance companies in the United States. We have operations in 30 U.S. states.

Attracting Veterans at John Deere

As an employer, we focus on attracting, developing and retaining the best global talent from all backgrounds. At times our recruiting efforts focus on access and visibility to specific groups. One is veterans. We identify organizations that provide the broadest reach and help our staffing team leverage various military recruiting initiatives and related events.

John Deere staffing participates in several recruiting events targeting veterans, including career fairs, conferences and virtual career fairs.

We also work directly with the military when appropriate. We've participated in the Army Partnership for Youth Success (PaYS) Program since its inception. Young men and women can enter the service knowing that they will receive specialized training and develop skills that are in demand in the private and public sectors, and Deere gets access to a pool of skilled candidates.

John Deere is also active in a variety of outreach programs and job boards that help us connect with veterans who offer a broad array of skills and experience. We also work with military staffing organizations to recruit veterans. For example, the Army Partnership Program, a job posting and resume database, has provided us with candidates for both mid-career and wage positions.

Along with employing veterans, we support programs that help veterans start businesses and become suppliers to companies like ours. Our suppliers include about 200 veteran-owned businesses, and about 50 businesses owned by service-disabled veterans.

Developing and Retaining Veterans at John Deere

At John Deere, we recognize that engaged employees working together create a competitive advantage. We cultivate an environment of inclusive teamwork through

programs such as our employee networks. One of these resource groups is composed of employees who have a connection to the U.S. military. The group brings employees together to build relationships, provide support and sponsor military outreach activities.

Deere also has military leave of absence provisions for reservists and guardsmen who are called up for active duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. To help ease the financial hardship endured by these soldiers and their families, Deere voluntarily provides up to 2 years of differential pay where applicable along with health benefits, life insurance, and other benefits. The impact on retention has been significant. Since 2001, more than 200 Deere employees have been deployed. Over 96 percent of those soldiers still work for John Deere.

Decreasing Unemployment among Veterans

Even though veterans are purposely included in our recruiting, development and retention efforts, we face challenges in effectively bringing them into our organization.

First, with the variety of organizations and job boards available, it's difficult to determine the best way to connect with job candidates from the military workforce.

Our recommendation would be a central data source that offers links to standardized job, industry, and geographic classification codes to other reported Federal labor, employment, economic and census data. This would help improve results for job posting visibility among the right candidates.

Additionally, many veterans are challenged to translate their education and skills to fit requirements for non-military positions. Transitioning military may also be at a disadvantage without accreditation or certification required by some professions.

To remedy this, all levels of government could implement solutions that effectively balance current challenges with educational system gaps, the accreditation of job seekers, and the fiscal demands and resources of employers.

In closing, I want to highlight again the importance, priority and demonstrated focus John Deere places on hiring, outreach, skill development and training of veterans.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share our views on improving employment opportunities for veterans. I will be happy to respond to any questions.

Prepared Statement of Major Kerry M. Studer, USA, Assistant Managing Director, Commercial Real Estate Division, Principal Financial Group, Waterloo, IA

Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Principal Financial Group's commitment to protecting the job rights of veterans and Guard/Reserve members.

I am Kerry Studer, a recently deployed Army Major and assistant managing director in the commercial real estate division of the Principal Financial Group. I have been mobilized for deployments three times in my military career and have had the opportunity to see firsthand how two different employers and one university handled my time away from the office or school. My most recent deployment was in 2009-2010 when I was employed with the Principal Financial Group.

The Principal Financial Group, based in Des Moines Iowa, is a FORTUNE 500 company and a retirement and global investment management leader. We have roughly 8,900 employees in Iowa and more than 13,000 worldwide.

The Principal offers businesses, individuals and institutional clients a wide range of financial products and services, including retirement, investment services and insurance.

As an employer with more than 200 veteran and active military employees and the experience of having nine employees on emergency military leave in the last 2 years, The Principal is committed to protecting the job rights of employees who serve their state and country through the uniformed services.

I am here today to talk with you about that commitment.

We, as employers, have clearly come a long ways in supporting Soldiers and families since my first deployment in 1990 for Desert Shield/Desert Storm. While I have clearly seen improvements over my 22 years of military service, I had the opportunity during my last deployment to command over 300 Soldiers from 19 different states, and I saw firsthand how Soldiers view their civilian employer while they are deployed.

Personally, I had the benefit of working for an exceptional company that clearly supported me, my family and my unit. Given this experience, I was asked by our

Chairman, President and CEO, Larry Zimpleman, to testify here today to discuss insights on how employers can successfully support their Soldiers whether they are deployed or serving in a peacetime mission.

Recruiting and Retention

The first step in the process is recruitment and retention. The Principal has targeted outreach efforts in order to attract and retain members of the military. We maintain an innovative action plan for covered veterans and actively pursue good faith efforts in recruiting practices to target veterans and individuals with a military background.

Specifically:

- Our recruiting team receives education and awareness through our partnership with Iowa Works, Iowa ESGR and U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs.
- In return, our recruiting team is available to train Iowa veterans on interview and resume writing skills as they re-enter the workforce.
- We post job opportunities on military-specific Web sites, and recruitment representatives attend military related job fairs.
- We have a designated H.R. department that manages military leaves, USERRA requirements, etc. In addition, we provide USERRA information to leaders to raise their awareness.
- We have a very active internship/co-op program, which I personally do a fair amount of recruiting for, with the help of our campus relations group in Human Resources. We have been successful in hiring previously deployed veterans who are currently completing their 4-year degrees. These students have already had to delay their education due to the deployment, and we see great benefit in providing an internship or co-op to these young veterans. These internships/co-ops greatly benefit the student/Soldier in providing a corporate experience and give us as an employer an insight as to how we can attract some of the best talent available before they graduate from college.

Benefits for employees who are Servicemembers

For employees who are servicemembers, our military leave policy ensures full pay for eligible emergency military leave for 30 days. In addition, we pay a differential for the remainder of the first year. This is something we've chosen to do-not only to comply with the letter of the law, but what we believe to be the spirit of the law.

Regarding all other benefits:

- Medical, vision and dental coverage continue for the employee and their dependents for 12 months.
- Regarding our pension plan, military service is counted for vesting and accrual service.
- With our 401(k) plan, military service is counted for vesting service. When you return from leave, you may make up missed elective deferral contributions, and the company will make the corresponding match based on the salary you would have received had you remained active with the company. The time period to make up missed payments is three times the period of military service (up to a maximum of 5 years).

In addition, reservists who volunteer for active duty are eligible for continued pay, and we cover all servicemembers in any military branch.

Benefits for military family members

The Principal ensures military family members are taken care of. In addition to the community of support I'll discuss later, two specific benefits help this group:

- **Military Family Active Duty Leave** This program allows up to 12 work weeks of unpaid leave in a calendar year in the event an eligible family member is called to full-time covered active duty or is on full-time active duty. The program is designed to allow for management of family, child care or financial matters that may arise because of a family member's covered active duty military service.
- **Military Family Leave to Care for a Covered Servicemember or Veteran** Employees are allowed up to 26 work weeks of unpaid leave in a calendar year to care for their spouse, parent, child or next of kin who is a covered servicemember. This leave applies if the covered servicemember has a serious illness or injury sustained in the line of military duty and is on active military duty. It also applies if a veteran, for up to 5 years after he/she leaves the military,

has a service related injury or illness that was incurred or aggravated while on covered active duty.

Internal support of our Military and Military Families

In addition to employee benefits, a number of other resources contribute to a supportive environment for employees who are members of the military, as well as their families:

- As a 2011 winner of the Freedom Award from the Employer Support of the Reserve and Guard (ESGR), based upon my personal nomination, our internal support for Soldiers and military families is well documented. But I wanted to highlight just a few examples of what sets The Principal apart from other companies.

Not only did my company support me, my family and my unit, they took the time to understand what deployments do to both the Soldier overseas and also the spouse/children back home. While I-IR guidelines and corporate support are all important to supporting deployed Soldiers, the very best companies take a personal approach to company support and extend assistance at a very personal level. It is this personal touch that solidifies the commitment both to and from the Soldier and his/her family.

Here is a brief list of examples of those personal touches with the Soldier, the family and the unit:

- Occasionally bringing over food to the family just to say hello and ask if anything is needed
- Taking the dependent children to high school and college sporting events
- Offering to assist with lawn care/snow removal
- Raising money to purchase unit specific physical fitness uniforms for the unit overseas
- Designing and purchasing unit coins that were distributed to Soldiers overseas
- Sending countless care packages not only to the deployed Soldier but also to other Soldiers within the unit who maybe do not receive as many care packages
- Providing the occasional babysitter for the state-side spouse to enjoy some time away from the everyday grind of being a single parent

In addition:

- Employees returning from military service receive education and support as they transition back to work.
- Employees may network with other employees via the Military Family Support Special Interest Public Folder in our email system.
- Employees returning from military service and their families receive support from their departments and individual employees. For instance:
 - Various departments have honored those serving in Iraq and Afghanistan by promoting Red Shirt Day and creating care packages.

Raising awareness at The Principal The Principal ensures its entire employee population supports its commitment to active military and veteran employees through a number of initiatives.

- Our Chairman, President and CEO Larry Zimpleman annually sends a personal note of thanks to all employees who are veterans, military, guard and reserve.
- During National Veterans Awareness Week, employees who are veterans or Guard/Reserve members are invited to a special event honoring them for their service. A member of senior management provides the keynote address each year. In addition, we seek ways to honor veterans each year-the nature of which vary from year to year. This year we're providing all veterans with a unit coin.
- While this may seem like a small token from senior leadership, I can assure you that this one event has a great impact with our currently employed veterans. Not only do you get to hear firsthand from our C-level executives, you clearly leave knowing that your military service is valued within the halls of the Principal Financial Group. It is also a time for all the veterans to get together and discuss their respective experience and service within the military ranks. Most veterans are generally humble in nature but our senior executives take the time every year to remind each of the veterans of their personal sacrifice and the fact that our company genuinely appreciates our service.

- Human Resources representatives, department leaders and senior leaders have participated in ESGR's Boss Lift. This event familiarizes employers with the National Guard and Reserve's role in our Nation's defense by letting them experience some of what their employees in the Guard or Reserve go through. During the 2010 event, one of the participants blogged about her experience for the company's intranet so all employees could gain appreciation for the Guard and Reserve.
- Our internal communications regularly highlight military employees, veterans and military family members for their service and sacrifices and to share their experiences and lessons learned.

Community Outreach and Support

In addition to supporting our own military and veteran employees, we encourage other companies in the communities in which we have locations to develop similar programs which we believe benefit the veterans, their families and the community at large.

Senior leaders at The Principal personally and publicly express support of military employees, family members and veterans through:

- **Hosting an Employer Support of Guard and Reserve Statement of Support and workshop event.** This past January, our Chairman, President and CEO Larry Zimpleman hosted an event where he encouraged attendance from other local businesses to sign the SGR Statement of Support and to learn more about ESGR and the services they offer, including hiring of those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.
- I was personally invited to this event and witnessed the amount of positive influence that one company can have on other companies within a community. Larry's comments clearly demonstrated his and our company's sincere commitment to the members of the Guard and Reserve. The event provided a venue for companies to discuss and ask what we can do better to support our local military. We would encourage more of these types of events with broader participation. If done correctly with the right participants and support, the awareness of supporting the Guard and Reserve will be increased exponentially.
- **Participation in Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad's inaugural event** saluting the Iowa National Guard. Ralph Eucher, senior vice president of human resources, attended on behalf of The Principal.
- **Participation in Gov. Branstad's** recent ESGR event to recognize the three Iowa nominees for the National Freedom Award. Dan Houston, president-retirement, insurance and financial services at The Principal, accepted the award on behalf of The Principal.

Our support extends to the community in other ways, including:

- Placing an ad in the *Des Moines Register*, thanking our veteran and military employees and retirees
- Offering a Military Appreciation Day during The Principal Charity Classic, one of the top golf Champions Tour events
- Encouraging employees to use their 8 hours of Volunteer Time Off each year, which they can use to volunteer at an organization of their choosing, including military-related causes
- Providing financial and in-kind contributions to non-profit military-related organizations through our Foundation, including the following:
 - Children of Fallen Servicemembers Scholarship fund (The Principal donated \$25,000 as part of the Branstad-Reynolds Scholarship Fund.)
 - Iowa National Guard Officers Auxiliary
 - Sight for Soldiers
 - Iowa Gold Star Museum
 - Fort Des Moines Museum and Educational Center
 - Veterans of Foreign War
 - Disabled American Veterans
 - Honor Flight to Washington, D.C.

Recognition

In recent years, The Principal's commitment to military and veteran employees has been recognized by several organizations, including:

- The Above and Beyond Award: The Principal received the “Above and Beyond” Award from the ESGR in 2010 and 2011. The award recognizes employers at the state and local level that have exceeded the legal requirements for granting leave and providing support for military duty for employees who serve in the Guard & Reserve.
- The Patriotic Employer Award: The Principal received this honor from the ESGR in 2009.
- The 2011 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award: The Principal is one of 15 recipients for 2011 out of a field of 4,049 nominations submitted by Guard and Reserve servicemembers. Freedom award recipients distinguish themselves by going to extraordinary lengths to support their military employees.

As I mentioned earlier, I have been mobilized or deployed three times in my 22+ years of military service. Without question, The Principal has set itself apart from all others in supporting me, my family and my unit.

While all deployments are hard on families and Soldiers, I personally experienced what actions can be taken by a proactive company committed to supporting deployed Soldiers. It is clearly these actions that will be remembered by both the Soldier and his/her family long after the deployment is over and the Soldier is back at work.

Because of the support from The Principal, I was able to focus completely on the critical tasks at hand in Iraq with the knowledge that my family was taken care of, my job was waiting for me when I got back and my co-workers were rooting for me, praying for me and supporting me. It made all the difference.

With this type of support, you are able to be a better Soldier and a better employee when you return.

That's why I felt compelled to nominate The Principal for the Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award. I'm so proud they were selected from thousands of nominations to get the recognition I feel they so richly deserve.

Call to action

The cumulative effect of all of the programs, events and activities I've mentioned today is a work environment where military and veteran employees feel supported in their military leave while they're away and valued for the service they've provided to their state/country once they return. While senior management can lead with their support and encouragement, each employee plays a role in creating that supportive culture.

I can't say enough about the commitment our leaders and employees have shown, personally and publicly, by expressing support of military and veteran employees at The Principal and beyond.

I'm lucky to be a citizen of this great country, a Major in our great Army and an employee of The Principal. I feel I've benefited from a best case scenario in terms of the relationship between my military service and my employment at The Principal.

What we need is for more companies to step up and create a platform for even more best case scenarios, so they can become the norm, not the exception. I look forward to that happening, and I'm happy to help in any way I can.

I'm honored to be here today, Thank you for your time.

Prepared Statement of Stacey May, Manager, Tax Credit Program, Honkamp Krueger & Co., P.C., Dubuque, IA

Hire Heroes

According to the Department of Labor, the unemployment rate for veterans ages 18 to 24 in 2010 was 20.9 percent. Even more astonishing is that veterans, as a whole, accounted for a total 1,020,000 people looking for work in the United States. To make matters worse, on October 5, Federal Reserve Chairman, Ben Bernanke warned, while addressing Congress, that the economic recovery, as it currently stands, “is close to faltering.” He later stated, “We need to make sure that the recovery continues and doesn't drop back and that the unemployment rate continues to fall.”

To sum it up, we need action, action to keep this economic recovery going and action to make sure businesses continue to hire, otherwise, the unemployment rate for veterans and the country as a whole will continue down a path toward higher

unemployment and further economic turmoil. I believe the core part of the action needed to sustain a continued recovery is a permanent employment tax credit that incentivizes businesses to hire. The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) does just that.

The WOTC program is a perfect example of a successful government program that rewards businesses for hiring employees from certain groups that have consistently faced barriers in seeking employment. These groups, known as target groups, include veterans, people on government assistance, the disabled and ex-offenders. According to the Department of Labor, the WOTC program processed 849,868 certificates in fiscal year 2010 that allowed employers to claim the tax credit on their income tax return. Currently, employers that hire qualifying employees generally may be eligible for a 1-year Federal income tax credit worth anywhere from \$1,200 to \$4,800 and in some cases a 2-year credit worth up to \$9,000. Unfortunately, the WOTC program is set to expire at the end of the year, December 31, 2011, which would be an additional blow to the veteran community when seeking employment.

I believe that we can get our unemployed veterans back to work with the WOTC program by making three changes.

1. Make the Work Opportunity Tax Credit permanent
 - Since its creation in 1996, the WOTC program has been up for renewal eight times. By making the program permanent, it would add stability in the hiring process.
2. Expand the program by adding a target group for hiring unemployed veterans
 - President Obama mentioned this in his proposed American Jobs Bill, naming it the Returning Heroes Tax Credit. It would allow unemployed veterans to qualify their employer for WOTC.
3. Increase the maximum tax credit amount an employer may receive for hiring qualified veterans.
 - Increasing the tax credit amount would further incentivize employers to hire veterans.

The unemployment rate for the veterans in our country is too high. We need action by our leaders in Washington to help veterans who served our country get back to work. With modifications to the WOTC program, such as making the WOTC program permanent, creating an unemployed veterans target group, and increasing the tax credit for hiring veterans, it will not only fuel employers to create jobs, it will fuel employers to hire our brave veterans.

**Prepared Statement of Timothy J. Carson, Manager,
Veterans Initiatives, Office of Diversity,
Rockwell Collins, Inc., Cedar Rapids, IA**

Executive Summary

As a global company pioneering innovative communication and aviation electronic solutions for both commercial and government/defense applications, Rockwell Collins is deeply invested in the well-being of military personnel, and that concern continues after their active duty is complete. The high rate of veteran unemployment—which is higher than the national average—demands private and public response.

In that spirit, Rockwell Collins pursues an aggressive veteran recruitment strategy internally, and works with a number of organizations externally to extend this approach to other employers across the Nation.

The components of this strategy include:

- Support of organizations that advocate for employee rights and benefits during active service with the Guard and Reserve such as the Iowa Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (IESGR).
- Support of organizations offering legal assistance to servicemen and women before, during and after deployment.
- A full-time recruiter devoted to identifying and hiring military talent and advertising budget targeted toward veteran recruitment.
- Support and retention efforts such as Rockwell Collins' Veterans Employee Network Group, corporate networking opportunities and special events, and collaborations with the Veterans Administration to ensure necessary supports and services are available.

- Working with suppliers that are veteran-owned and service disabled veteran-owned small businesses.
- Support for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Student Veterans of America's jobs and internship program and "Hiring Our Heroes" initiative.
- Collaboration with the National Organization on Disability's Wounded Warriors Program.

We hope the ideas embedded in this multi-pronged strategy contribute to the important national discussion surrounding this issue and help move businesses and policy makers closer to a strategy that reduces the veteran unemployment rate and helps veterans put the unique and desirable skills they developed to work for the well-being of themselves, their families and their future.

Prepared Remarks

Thank you, Congressman Braley and Congressman Stutzman. My name is Tim Carson. I serve as a manager of veterans initiatives with the Office of Diversity at Rockwell Collins, a global aerospace and defense company headquartered in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. In my position, I work closely with Rockwell Collins' human resources organization and a variety of external partners to promote outreach to veterans and veterans organizations.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to talk to you today, and appreciate that you are taking time to listen to the perspectives of business and the community. It is particularly germane to this state, which has the one of the highest number per capita of reservists serving on active duty of any state in the union.

And on behalf of Rockwell Collins, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the invitation to speak about the importance of helping veterans secure meaningful employment.

The valuable service these men and women provide is undeniable. And so are the core skills they developed in the service—leadership, discipline, responsibility and technological savvy—that can be invaluable to civilian employers.

However, today more than 870,000 young veterans are unemployed—a rate higher than the national unemployment rate, according to the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. And the wind-down of engagements abroad will lead to an additional million seeking civilian employment in the next 5 years.

When Rockwell Collins talks about these soldiers, we're not just speaking about them as a simple subpopulation amongst all of today's many unemployed. We're talking about the people we serve.

They've relied upon our communication technology to stay connected with their leadership in harsh, remote settings around the globe. They've used our navigation systems to ensure the pinpoint accuracy of weapons systems in areas where civilians and combatants often live side by side. They've identified friend and foe with our helmet-mounted displays. And they've given us feedback, based upon their own experiences, to make these systems better for the next generation of warfighters.

We are grateful for their service, and are dedicated to helping them successfully transition from their military service and bring their skills and experiences to the civilian workforce.

To that end, Rockwell Collins has always prioritized the hiring and retention of veterans, and advocates that businesses across the state and nation do so as well. We also believe it's important for us and other companies to partner with local and national organizations to ensure veterans receive the job counseling, training and guidance they need to secure and make the most of employment opportunities.

Today, I'm going to talk about some of the initiatives Rockwell Collins has pursued to build our veteran workforce, and the partnerships we maintain. These aren't necessarily the only answer; in fact, I'm sure there isn't one single answer to this challenge. But we recognize you're seeking a breadth of ideas, and I think we have some good ones.

Internally, our company has practices and policies in place to ensure we attract and retain veterans and their spouses as employees.

Nearly 8 percent of our domestic workforce is made up of veterans, and at any given time a number of them are serving active duty through the Guard and Reserve. In fact, we are a strong advocate of the principles of the Iowa Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, or IESGR. The organization calls for companies to adhere to, and go beyond, the provisions of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, including maintaining benefits, contributing to employee 401(k)s during military duty, and maintaining vacation accrual and raises. Because

Rockwell Collins follows these guidelines and also promotes these principles to others in the community, we have earned a five-star rating from the IESGR.

We also recognize that legal issues can be a burden on Iowa's servicemen and women before, during and after their deployment, and provide ongoing support of the Iowa Returning Veterans Project to provide them with free legal assistance.

Our human resources group has a full-time recruiter devoted to identifying and hiring military talent, and we allocate a specific and growing percentage of our annual recruitment/advertising budget to military outreach. Through these efforts, we have consistently grown our share of veterans as part of our total workforce, including a 4 percent increase in the past fiscal year.

But there's more to go. Our leadership has identified the hiring of even more of yesterday's warriors as a key business goal for FY 2012, and we are launching an enterprise-wide strategy to increase our outreach, recruitment, hiring and retention efforts for veterans and veterans with disabilities.

Once hired, we further the well-being and retention of these individuals through a Veterans Employee Network Group, corporate networking opportunities and special engagements such as Transition Think Tanks and PTSD seminars. We collaborate with the Veterans Administration and other subject matter experts, to ensure that the necessary supports and services are made available and are accessible to our employees.

We also recognize the importance of supporting veterans through our business contracting with suppliers. Year to date, Rockwell Collins has spent \$57 million—nearly 5 percent of total corporate spending with suppliers—with Veteran-Owned Small Businesses, and \$13.6 million with Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Businesses.

We are fortunate to have gained some recognition for these efforts. Rockwell Collins has been named a "Top 100 Military-Friendly Employer" by *G.I. Jobs* magazine for the past 2 years, and we strive every day to continue to deserve that recognition.

Beyond our own hiring practices, Rockwell Collins seeks to support initiatives that promote hiring of veterans across the Nation.

We are a proud corporate sponsor of the Jobs and Internship Program, a partnership championed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Student Veterans of America (SVA). In fact, we recently made a significant contribution to the Chamber, specifically earmarked for their partnership with the SVA and development of the "Hiring Our Heroes" initiative.

We attended the SVA's Leadership Summit and Career Fair this past summer in Madison, Wis., and will support the SVA's National Conference this December as a corporate partner, exhibitor and employment panel participant.

In an initiative that is a personal passion for me, we also work to bring disabled veterans into the workplace, through a relationship with the National Organization on Disability, known as NOD, and its Wounded Warriors Program. As a primary sponsor of the organization, one of our senior executives sits on the board for NOD and is engaged in communicating core messages, events and opportunities for Rockwell Collins to both support and influence.

And we continue to seek additional relationships or opportunities to promote veteran hiring wherever we do business, and to talk about it at every opportunity, like we are today.

Now, there's no single solution to the complex challenge of veteran unemployment, and it's a pleasure to hear from the other participants today and get new ideas to consider.

But I hope my and Rockwell Collins' contribution to the conversation is helpful as you consider the public and private strategies to tackle this issue.

These men and women willingly accepted one of our Nation's most vital and precious responsibilities, of protecting the country from harm. And in turn, we commit to fulfill our responsibility to help them put the unique and desirable skills they developed in that endeavor to work for the well-being of themselves, their families and their future.

I welcome any questions you may have today. I also encourage you to contact Rockwell Collins if you'd like to know more specifics about some of the initiatives I've outlined for you today.

Thank you again for your time and attention.

Response to House Rule XI clause 2(g)(5): Tim Carson did not receive any Federal grant or subgrants thereof during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years.

**Prepared Statement of Colonel Benjamin J. Corell,
Commander, 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry
Division, Iowa National Guard, Johnston, IA**

Executive Summary

I appear in front of you today to ask for your help in addressing the continued issue of high unemployment rates for returning Reserve and National Guard veterans of our Nation's wars. I know that addressing this issue and applying additional resources to help solve this problem is the right thing to do. Our Nation has been at war now longer than any other armed conflict in the history of our country. This last decade has been a long, tough fight for our military forces. I, like others have personally answered the call to duty time and time again. I have witnessed our hard-earned success in both Iraq and in Afghanistan. I have seen the sacrifice required by our men and women in uniform and by our families. Reserve and National Guard employers have quietly sacrificed at great costs with little thanks and no financial incentives to hire and retain our veterans.

The burden of carrying out the directives of our senior leadership and prosecuting these conflicts has been borne by less than 1 percent of our Nation's population. These are the dedicated men and women of our Nation's military. Never before has our Nation asked for so much from an all-volunteer military. Never before has our Nation and the senior military leadership asked so much of the Reserve and National Guard. Not since the days of a national draft and conscription for World War II have we asked so much from our civilian employers. They have gone without some of their best and brightest who have left to support the war effort as we call up our Reserve Component servicemembers. I am here today to ask you to start the process to produce incentives for those employers who hire and retain our veterans in their workforce. In addition, we need to find a way to provide incentives for small business owners who are members of our Reserve Components in order to help these veterans sustain their livelihood after they return from answering our country's call.

Our Nation and our people are currently in challenging financial times. Hard discussions and difficult decisions about spending are occurring not just in Washington DC, but across this Nation. These same hard discussions are taking place at every business, large and small and at kitchen tables across our country. Our returning veterans, our Reserve and National Guard members have repeatedly answered the call to duty serving in these current wars. It is because of their continued sacrifice that America has remained safe while allowing the pursuit of these wars with a smaller active military force and with no draft. These veterans have skills and experience that many employers desire. The aggregate unemployment rate for our veterans is habitually higher than the national average rate of unemployment. I need your help to correct this. All of the job fairs and resume writing workshops in the world will only get my fellow veterans so far. I believe that we need to review and update the 1994 Cold War-focused Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994. Concurrently we must develop and implement legislation that will provide real incentives to the business sector and for those veterans that own small business or private professional practices. Once that is completed, we need to market it to employers and ensure that it is enforced.

This effort will introduce true benefits for hiring and retaining our veterans and enable veterans who own a business to remain competitive in today's challenging environment. I need your assistance to do this, and I ask for your help today.

**Prepared Statement of Mark Hennessey, Iowa Committee for
Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, Johnston, IA**

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve
Iowa Committee for Employer Support
Johnston, IA.
13 October 2011

The Honorable Marlin Stutzman,
Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity
335 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: "Hiring Heroes: Job Creation for Veterans and Guard/Reserve Members."
Chairman Stutzman,

Executive Summary

The primary missions of Employer Support of the Guard and Reserves (ESGR) are to educate, provide consultation to, and assist with reemployment challenges for Iowa employers, National Guard members, and Reservists. The Employment Initiative Program (EIP) was added to our mission in the fall of 2010 and is designed to facilitate employment opportunities for unemployed and underemployed servicemembers and their spouses.

The Iowa National Guard's returning 2nd Brigade Combat Team survey results of 2,356 Soldiers, 721 consider themselves unemployed on their return. Prior to their deployment 630 of them considered themselves unemployed according to the Civilian Employment Information (CEI) data. Statewide statistics are less comprehensive. Data has not been effectively gathered from servicemembers outside of the Brigade deployers.

Each military component enters CEI data into separate systems that eventually are filtered into the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) where employment information is managed. The different entry system's of each military component creates challenges when attempting to draw accurate statistics. What it does provide is a picture of the % of fulltime vs. part time jobs, top occupations, types of employers that most often hire servicemembers, and types of industries.

ESGR have partnerships with Employer Partnership of the Armed Forces (EPO), Iowa Workforce Development, the National Guard and Reserves, Job Connections Education Program (JCEP) and a large number of Association groups. These partnerships are solid and will be vital to assisting our servicemembers in their employment search. ESGR volunteers are also be a link statewide and can assist in the efforts by directing servicemembers and employers to the sources that will benefit them both.

The Iowa ESGR team will continue to facilitate with our partners Employment Assistance Training Events statewide. We will also continue to participate and assist in the promotion of job fair activities through our Guard and Reserve contacts.

The primary missions of Employer Support of the Guard and Reserves (ESGR) are to educate, provide consultation to, and assist with reemployment challenges for Iowa employers, National Guard members, and Reservists. The Employment Initiative Program (EIP) was added to our mission set in the fall of 2010 and is designed to facilitate employment opportunities for unemployed and underemployed servicemembers and their spouses. This program is an outgrowth of our ESGR Outreach Programs, corresponds with the current economic realities in our state, and is consistent with our President's New Veterans Employment Initiative.

This past July, the Iowa National Guard's 2nd Brigade Combat Team recently returned home from a 1-year deployment to Afghanistan. As they were out processing from this deployment at Ft. McCoy, Wis., 2,356 of these Soldiers completed a survey regarding their employment status. 721 Soldiers responded they considered themselves unemployed on their return to Iowa. According to the Civilian Employment Information (CEI) data collected from these same Soldiers prior to the deployment, 630 of them considered themselves unemployed. CEI data is entered into the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) by the servicemembers and is only as accurate as the information they entered. We are able to request data through National ESGR regarding statistics on the "not" employed status of our servicemembers of all services.

National ESGR has partnered with the Employer Partnership of the Armed Forces (EPO) under the EIP program. EPO specializes in identifying civilian employers that are seeking to hire servicemembers and their spouses. They also assist servicemembers and spouses in all phases of the job search process. This organization is one resource ESGR refers servicemembers and employers to in order to match job seekers and job providers for civilian employment positions.

Iowa ESGR has also partnered with Iowa Workforce Development (IWD), offering free Employment Assistance Training (EAT) workshops to servicemembers and their spouses. These workshops are designed to teach job search skills to job seekers. Topics covered include the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), resume' writing, job interview skills training, and online job search techniques. Civilian human resources representatives volunteer to provide constructive critiques on prepared resumes and also provide practice interviews for participants with immediate feedback of their interview.

Since September 2011, ESGR and IWD have offered employment events around the state in Waterloo, Des Moines, and Iowa City. These locations were selected based on the survey results acquired in July during Soldier out processing at Ft. McCoy. Unfortunately the Waterloo event was canceled due to a low number of RSVPs. Individuals interested in attending the Waterloo event alternatively sched-

uled individual sessions with the local Veterans Representative at IWD. The Des Moines event had 18 registrations with 9 actual attendees. Iowa City had 10 registrations, with 7 individuals participating in the training. When compared to the survey results and the fact that more than 400 2nd Brigade Combat Team Soldiers expressed interest in receiving employment assistance while out processing at Fort McCoy, the rate of participation is much lower than expected. From our perspective potential reasons for the low participation could be that the employment events were scheduled too soon after their return home, Soldiers are not in a duty status and simply want a break from the military, knowledge and use of unemployment benefits, or they simply are not ready to think about finding a job.

Iowa ESGR is working with Guard and Reserve units to promote not only the training events, but job fair opportunities throughout the state. ESGR volunteers have briefed the job search opportunities and training events during the Yellow Ribbon post-mobilization events (reintegration briefings and activities) and also during unit annual briefings. Information regarding upcoming employment events is consistently emailed to all interested individuals, including command and staff of the Guard and Reserves, Guard and Reserve members returning from deployments, and ESGR military outreach volunteers.

The Iowa National Guard has worked closely with the National Guard Bureau to hire an individual to work one-on-one with unemployed Guard members as they search for employment. This individual will assist servicemembers on resumé writing and job search resources. They will also build relationships with employers statewide to encourage the hiring of our qualified servicemembers. ESGR will also work closely with them, sharing resources, contacts, and strategies to build a productive employer network.

ESGR has a long and successful history of helping Guard and Reserve servicemembers and their employers understand their rights and requirements under the Uniform Servicemembers Employment and Re-Employment Rights Act (USERRA). Now, with the Employment Initiative Program and associated partnerships, we have the opportunity to assist servicemembers and employers connect more effectively and more often.

**Prepared Statement of Anthony Smithhart, Iowa State Director,
Veterans' Employment and Training Service, U.S. Department of Labor**

Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Committee about the work we are doing at the Department of Labor (DOL or Department) to address the important issue of decreasing the unemployment rate for Veterans, National Guard, and Reservists. We also appreciate the opportunity to discuss the work we are doing here in Iowa. With over 240,000 veterans living in the state, it is critical that we provide them with the services and support they need to find and obtain good jobs.

My name is Tony Smithhart, and as the Iowa State Director for the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS), I am dedicated to helping our Veterans and returning Servicemembers achieve that goal.

VETS proudly serves Veterans and transitioning Servicemembers by providing resources and expertise to assist and prepare them to obtain meaningful careers, maximize their employment opportunities and protect their employment rights. We do this through a variety of nationwide programs that are an integral part of Secretary Solis's vision of "*Good Jobs for Everyone*."

I would like to begin by briefly discussing some of those programs along with other initiatives that assist America's Veterans in getting to or back to work and then focus specifically on information for Iowa you requested in your invitation.

Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program

The first program that I would like to highlight for you is the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) Program. Under this grant program, the Department offers employment and training services to eligible Veterans by allocating funds to State Workforce Agencies in direct proportion to the number of Veterans seeking employment within their state.

The Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program funds two occupations, the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program specialist (DVOP) and the Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER). DVOP specialists provide outreach services, and intensive employment assistance to meet the employment needs of eligible Veterans. LVER staff conducts outreach to employers and engages in advocacy efforts with

hiring executives to increase employment opportunities for Veterans, encourages the hiring of disabled Veterans, and generally assists Veterans to gain and retain employment.

Last year, the JVSG provided services to nearly 589,000 Veterans, and 201,000 Veterans found jobs.

Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program

To meet the needs of homeless Veterans and help reintegrate them into the workforce VETS administers the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP). Through H.R.VP, the Department provides competitive grants to state and local workforce investment boards, state agencies, local public agencies, and private non-profit organizations, including faith-based organizations and neighborhood partnerships. HVRP grantees provide an array of services utilizing a holistic case management approach that directly assists homeless Veterans and provides training services to help them to successfully transition into the labor force.

In Program Year (PY) 2009, over 14,000 homeless Veterans participated in this program through 96 grants, and 8,470 were placed into employment. Data for PY 2010 is not yet available, as figures for the 4th quarter are still being verified. Here in Iowa, the HVRP has touched many lives and helped hundreds of homeless Veterans because of grants to programs such as the Goodwill Industries of the Heartland and Shelter House Community Shelter & Transition Services.

Veterans' Workforce Investment Program

Yet another way the Department is working to help Veterans get back to work is through the Veterans' Workforce Investment Program (VWIP). Through VWIP, the Department awards competitive grants geared toward focused training, re-training and employment opportunities for recently separated Veterans, Veterans with service-connected disabilities, Veterans with significant barriers to employment and Veterans who served on active duty during expeditions or campaigns for which specific badges were awarded. These grants are awarded to meet the needs of employers for qualified workers in high demand industries, particularly those occupations requiring a license or certification. These grants also promote the integration of public, private, and philanthropic organizations with the workforce system to create synergy and encourage innovative strategies to serve our Veterans better.

In FY 2009, VWIP was refocused to provide training and employment services in green energy occupations as envisioned in the Green Jobs Act of 2007. There are currently 22 grants serving 4,600 Veterans.

Transition Assistance Program

Our primary program for assisting individuals with their transition from the military to the civilian workforce is the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). TAP is an interagency program delivered via a partnership involving the Department of Defense, DOL VETS, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Department of Homeland Security. VETS provides an employment workshop that is a comprehensive two and a half day program during which participants are provided relevant skills and information, such as job search techniques, career decision-making processes, and current labor market conditions.

Currently, VETS uses a mix of contractors, VETS Federal staff, DVOPs, and LVERs as TAP facilitators. Starting in late 2012, VETS will transition to all skilled contract facilitators.

As you know, VETS is currently in the process of redesigning and transforming the TAP employment workshop. We are creating experiential, effective, and enduring solutions for a successful transition from military to civilian life and employment. The new TAP will be based on established best practices in career transition.

Last year, nearly 130,000 transitioning Servicemembers and spouses attended a TAP employment workshop given at one of 272 locations world-wide.

Employer Partnerships

VETS is also implementing a new approach to employer outreach that involves pilot programs and partnerships with the private sector, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). These partnerships are giving us much broader access to employers so that we can communicate the value of hiring a Veteran and how to access this extraordinary source of talent. It also allows us to educate employers about the unique skills Veterans bring with them based on their military experience. Connecting the talent pool with the

many companies looking to hire Veterans allows for a more efficient hiring process for many Veterans and employers.

The Chamber is working to hold 100 hiring fairs exclusively for Veterans, transitioning Servicemembers and their spouses. In the partnership, the U.S. Chamber and its affiliates focus primarily on securing the participation of employers while the VETS team focuses on obtaining participation by Veterans, transitioning Servicemembers and their spouses.

In fact, VETS is participating in our State-wide 2011 “*Hiring Our Heroes*” Job Fair in Des Moines, Iowa on November 8th, 2011. The event will be held at the Hy-Vee Hall (Hall “C”), 730 Third Street, Des Moines, Iowa, 50309 from 10:00AM–4:00PM and is being put on by the Greater Des Moines Partnership, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce along with the Iowa Works, the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), Des Moines Area Community College, and the Military Services.

VETS is working with SHRM to identify opportunities for VETS state managers to meet with local SHRM chapters to connect Veterans seeking employment with companies who are hiring. For VETS this is an effective and efficient way to connect employers and Veterans. We are also working with SHRM in the development of an H.R. Toolkit that will provide employers with the methods and procedures to establish a Veteran hiring program and to hire Veterans.

Iowa Specific Information

In your letter of invitation, you requested certain information about Veterans in Iowa. While some specific data is unavailable, we have nevertheless been certain to provide the most current information available. As you know, Iowa operates a Public Labor Exchange primarily funded by the U.S. Department of Labor to assist all job seekers with their employment needs. While it is available to all populations, Veterans are given priority of service. In Iowa, the Public Labor Exchange is known as the Iowa Workforce Development (IWD). The services and assistance offered at IWD range from employment preparation and comprehensive employment placement services, to intensive services through a case management approach for Veterans with special needs.

Level of Education of Veterans Seeking Employment Assistance

Over the past year, 19,687 Veterans have received services through IWD. Of the total population of Veterans served through the public labor exchange, 1074 or 5.5 percent reported less than a high school diploma while 9,000 or 45.7 percent have a high school degree or a GED. The total number of Veterans reporting achievement of a post-high school degree or certification is 6144, or 31.2 percent. (See table below.)

Data Element	Iowa	Per-cent
Total Number of Vets, Eligibles and Transitioning Servicemembers	19,687	
Total Number of Vets, Eligibles and Transitioning Servicemembers who were not HS Graduates	1,074	5.5%
Total Number of Vets Eligibles and Transitioning Servicemembers who had a HS degree or GED	9,000	46%
Total Number of Vets, Eligibles and Transitioning Servicemembers who had a Post-Secondary degree or are Certified	6,144	31%

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration Form ETA 9002 A: “Services to Participants” July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011. U.S. Department of Labor, and Employment and Training Administration Form ETA 9002 D Services to Participants, April 1, 2010 through March 31, 2011.

Education level is not a required field when registering with the One-Stop Career Center system; therefore, the breakdown by education level does equal the total number of Veterans served.

Average Placement Salary by Level of Education for Veterans.

In Iowa, the 6 month Average Earnings for veterans are; \$15, 346 or \$30,692 per annum. The principle source of information for this data element is the U.S. Department of Labor's, Employment and Training Administration from the ETA 9002, Services to Participants for Program Year Period July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011. While specific *placement salary data by education level* are not available, the ETA 9002, Performance Outcomes for Veterans, Eligible Persons and Transitioning Servicemembers does provide Average Earnings data.

Length of Unemployment for Veterans by Education Level

The Current Population Survey provides national data about the employment status of the civilian non-institutional population by educational attainment, age, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino and Non-Hispanic ethnicity. The same source provides data for unemployed persons by duration of unemployment, educational attainment, sex, and age as an annual average for the general population. However, data for length of unemployment by education level for Veterans as a separate population is not available.

Rate of Unemployment for Veterans by Education Level

In terms of unemployment rates for the general population, the Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) reports a 6.1 percent rate for Iowa in 2010. Comparatively, the Current Population Survey (CPS), collected by the Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics, shows that the unemployment rate for Veterans was 6.4 percent in Iowa in 2010. Unemployment rate data by education level by state is not available. (See table below.)

Data Element	Iowa
Unemployment Rates:	6.1%
Calendar Year 2010 (LAUS) General Population	6.1%
Calendar Year 2010 (CPS)-Veterans	6.4%

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Number of Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) Complaints Filed

VETS is honored to serve our Nation's Veterans. One of the agency's top priorities is to protect the employment rights of servicemembers when called to serve on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces. The goal of the USERRA is to ensure that no member or prospective member of the U.S. Armed forces endures any disadvantage or discrimination in employment because of their affiliation with the military, and to secure the reemployment rights of members of the military after active duty service.

VETS works closely with DoD's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Reserve Affairs' Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) to ensure that servicemembers are informed on their USERRA rights before and after they are mobilized. We conduct continuous USERRA outreach to educate and inform servicemembers and employers of their rights and responsibilities under the law.

The use of the National Guard and Reserves has increased dramatically in recent years, with more called to active duty than any other time since the Korean War. This has increased the complexity of issues resulting from the challenges faced by servicemembers and their families due to lengthier and multiple deployments. This is true for all servicemembers but because many National Guard and Reserve Units, in particular, contend with civilian employment issues, the claims activity post 9-11 has increased dramatically nationwide. Employers face equal hardships in the reintegration of servicemembers into the labor force as they deal with lengthy and multiple absences.

Your invitation asked for the number of USERRA complaints filed in Iowa. Below, is the breakdown of complaints filed within the last 5 years. Despite the increase nationally, the number of complaints have decreased in Iowa over this time period.

Data Element	Iowa
USERRA Complaints Filed:	
Federal Fiscal Year 2007	38
Federal Fiscal Year 2008	39
Federal Fiscal Year 2009	34
Federal Fiscal Year 2010	24
Federal Fiscal Year 2011	19

Source: USDOL/VETS Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act Information Management System

Conclusion:

Thank you again for allowing me to testify today and for your tireless support and commitment to our Nations Veterans. DOL and VETS look forward to continuing to work with you and your staff on Veterans' employment initiatives. I look forward to responding to your questions.

**Prepared Statement of Teresa Wahlert, Director,
Iowa Workforce Development, Des Moines, IA**

Strengthening Veteran Employment Opportunities in Iowa

Throughout the country countless men and women have dedicated their lives and made extreme sacrifices for the safety of everyone. Hundreds of thousands of Americans have deployed to serve our great country, yet when they come home a fundamental step in returning to a civilian life is difficult to obtain: employment. Iowa is one of the few states without an active military installation; however our National Guard and Reservists have been deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan and other world locations in record numbers, often for multiple deployments.

Iowa receives a small grant for the veterans program within our 16 one-stop integrated centers. As such, we have developed creative alternatives to ensure our entire workforce staff members are trained in providing priority of service activities for Iowa's veterans. This allows our targeted veteran staff members to focus on active case management for veterans in need. This level of case management has developed new meaning with the record number of returning servicemembers over the last few years. Recently, Iowa welcomed home nearly 3,000 servicemembers from Afghanistan follow a long deployment. While this should be a time for celebration for our returning heroes, the Adjutant General of the Iowa National Guard, Major General Tim Orr, recently noted that nearly 25 percent of these individuals would be seeking full-time employment. Unfortunately, our servicemen and women have faced hiring difficulties and problems with USERRA compliance upon their recent return. Although Federal regulations require veterans be returned to their former positions, frequently this is not the case. Further promotion of USERRA requirements is needed to ensure our veterans are treated appropriately.

Iowa is working to develop a new service delivery model that benefits all job seekers, including veterans. The integration service delivery model works to identify the needs and barriers of job seekers early on to ensure the client receives all of the benefits of programs within the workforce system. This allows staff members to quickly identify veterans to ensure their immediate connection to a veteran specialist. A significant barrier for individuals transitioning to civilian employment is translating the military skill set to civilian skills. It's difficult for the veteran who is so entrenched in military language to develop the talking points to sell his/her skill sets as valuable within the civilian workforce. Iowa's veteran specialists work diligently on a daily basis to assist with this process and to educate employers on the benefits of hiring veterans.

Although Iowa is a smaller state, time and time again we've been recognized for our outstanding efforts in providing services to veterans. Our staff developed a veteran's services guide that details programs and services for veterans in a format that is easy to navigate and understand. Additionally, the department instituted a

peer-to-peer case review system on a quarterly basis to provide ongoing training and develop best practices for all program specialists to use throughout the state. Both of these initiatives have been replicated by states throughout the country.

On July 27th, Iowa Workforce Development announced a first in the Nation partnership with the Iowa National Guard. The state's workforce access point technology is being introduced onsite at the 43 National Guard Armories across the state. This is the same virtual service deployed across Iowa in hundreds of new sites. Veterans will have immediate access to job search technology, résumé development software, labor market information, veteran specific resources, unemployment information and access to one-stop workforce specialists via live chat or a toll free number from 8:00AM to 8:00PM Monday through Friday and 10:00AM to 2:00PM on Saturdays all from an environment where the veterans currently seek a variety of services and contacts.

Although Iowa is a small state with a limited grant, we've taken innovative approaches to maximize the funding for the entire state. Iowa focuses its staffing dollars towards the DVOP case management side and trains everyone on our business outreach teams to educate employers and promote the hiring of veterans. Our entire workforce team works to educate employers on the benefits of hiring veterans. This provides our state with a larger portion of resources to direct at intensive case management activities. This process has been recognized by other states such as Oregon, Nevada, Connecticut and others as a best practice for ensuring veterans receive dedicated services. Every year, states are allowed to use 1 percent of their veteran services grant as incentive awards to the regional one-stop centers. Iowa Workforce Development uses this opportunity to reward our specialists who go above and beyond in service delivery and develop creative means for reaching veterans in the community. The incentive awards are used in a variety of ways including providing bedding for local veteran homeless shelters, purchasing gas cards to ensure the veteran has the means to attend an interview, sponsoring honor flights and more. In 2010, a DVOP specialist received the distinguished national Mark Sanders Award for outstanding service to disabled veterans in Iowa.

While Iowa and other states have taken creative steps to assist veterans, more needs to be done to ensure that veterans find successful, sustaining employment opportunities that meet their unique needs and allow each individual to utilize the skills developed during their selfless service to the country.

**Prepared Statement of Rear Admiral T. L. McCreary, USN (Ret.),
President, Military.com**

Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for your focus on the critical issue of veteran employment.

As a 27 year veteran of the Navy and the current President of Military.com, I have experienced the issue of veteran employment from both sides. As such, I would like to share with you what our organization is doing to help veterans find career opportunities as well as our belief that aligning government and the private sector will best connect our servicemembers with jobs.

Post-WWII our country experienced what can be called the "Golden Age of Higher Education." Armed with their GI Bill Benefits, 4.4 million servicemembers went to college to build the foundation for a better life.

While today's veterans and servicemembers in transition are still pursuing their educational dreams with the enhanced GI Bill, a weakened economy makes it tougher to find excellent job opportunities. There is a disconnect with the private sector on the transportability of military skills and our veterans are finding it more difficult than ever to translate their total military experience into a civilian career.

The numbers are disturbing. The unemployment rate for all veterans remains stubbornly at 9 percent, the unemployment rate for post 9/11 veterans is roughly 11 percent—higher than the national average. Young male veterans between the ages of 18 to 24 had an unemployment rate of 21.9 percent in 2010 and female veterans face unemployment at a rate of 13.5 percent, versus 8.4 percent for non-veteran women.

Many Americans enter the military because of the opportunity to acquire marketable skills along with the ability for advanced degrees. Yet when the time comes to transition today, they are not finding as much opportunity in today's economy. Worse yet, the connection between unemployment and homelessness is irrefutable. Right now the VA estimates there are over 100,000 veterans who have no home.

The reality is, as we continue to reduce our troop end strength, more veterans will be looking for civilian employment while job growth has not accelerated as much as hoped.

Competition will be stiff and we already know that unemployment is higher for veterans than for civilians.

Military culture, language and job skills are not easily translated to the civilian world. Potential employers have very little understanding of the diverse jobs and skill sets one can learn in the military. Additionally, our veterans are coming out of the service with little experience in writing a civilian resume and no exposure to private sector business culture or language.

There is no doubt that given the service these veterans have provided us during wartime, we owe them the best support possible in their post-service life.

So how do we do that?

First, programs that allow those who have served in uniform and who desire to continue their government service in a civilian capacity should be embraced. There is great value in the government competing for these outstanding men and women.

But the majority of transitioning servicemembers do look to the private sector for employment so focus should be put on public, private efforts to land veterans jobs.

So to assist, military personnel need more exposure to the private sector before they leave the service. That exposure needs to happen in the form of enhanced Transition Assistance Programs (TAP), where the focus needs to be on the veteran getting ahead rather than just getting out. The employment curriculum of TAP needs to be taught by human resource professionals from the private sector with some military knowledge so instructors can provide the best chance for the military member to find the best opportunity on the outside. It must include skill-specific resume writing services, information on private sector business culture and hands-on training on how to use all available private sector resources so veterans can get in front of the employers and compete in the human resource networks that exist in the private sector. And it must teach networking and where to find those who can help and give our veterans insight into the marketplace.

Post-service employment preparation should be focused on how to enter the civilian job market rather than trying to create stand-alone programs run by the government. The vast majority of companies in the private sector have very good and generally very efficient ways to find good talent. The key must be to help the veterans get into that system, be identified as veterans . . . and compete.

Second, if government wants a program they can sink their teeth into, it should fund training for those in the field of human resources on how to understand military skill sets and how those skills apply to the civilian world. This training needs to include explanations for primary, secondary and tertiary duties an individual may have had in the service. The Department of Labor has a basic program around this but it could be greatly enhanced.

Third, a better understanding of how military certifications translate to civilian professional certifications should be addressed with all state governments.

My Military.com director of community outreach visited a number of military installations overseas in February of this year. During his visit to Marine Corps Base Camp Butler in Okinawa Japan, he met a Navy Hospital Corpsman Second Class who had recently returned from his second tour in Afghanistan. The Navy Corpsman earned a Bronze Star with a Combat "V" for his heroic efforts in performing a tracheotomy on a wounded Marine during a firefight engagement with insurgents. This Navy Corpsman has the exceptional skills and abilities to perform such a task under extreme hazardous conditions and do it effectively, yet does not warrant becoming a qualified emergency medical technician in the civilian community unless he goes through a full training and certification program where he probably is more qualified than the instructor.

It astounds me that a soldier, sailor, airman, Marine or Coastguardsman can perform surgery on the battlefield but not be certified an EMT in the civilian world without starting from scratch. An all-out effort between VA, Labor and DoD with the 50 states could probably develop a program of what knowledge, skills and abilities would be accepted as certifications within all states with a very short testing period.

Finally, leveraging the expertise of private companies like Monster.com and Military.com is crucial to sustaining any successful, long-term veteran employment efforts.

Military.com knows the private sector; with our parent company, Monster.com we can and do specialize in harnessing the best technology along with the most effective methods to connect our servicemembers with employers. And while most employers don't tell us how many vets they hire, we do know they continually search

resumes with veteran status and continually advertise their positions on Monster and Military.com

While the government assists servicemembers with getting out through the Transition Assistance Program, we at Monster.com and Military.com help them get ahead by tapping into our large data base of jobs and providing the guidance needed to enter the civilian job world.

Military.com was founded in 1999 by a young Navy reservist to revolutionize the way our 30 million Americans with military affinity stay connected and informed.

Today, Military.com is the largest military and veteran membership organization with more than 10 million members and we're one of the largest news destination sites on the Internet. Our free membership connects servicemembers, military families and veterans to each other and to all the benefits of service at all stages in their lives — government benefits, resources and career services, education information and scholarships, discounts, news and discussion forums to share the great stories and challenges inherent in military life, and more.

In 2004, Military.com joined forces with Monster Worldwide to accelerate our growth and change the playing field for career and educational opportunities for active duty personnel, as well as Guard and reservists, veterans and military spouses. We work hard every day to serve those who serve our country and we're committed to helping our members find work and enter into career paths that will compliment and build on the skills they acquired in the military.

We do this both online and offline.

Online, we offer a comprehensive offering of services, resources and information to support every stage of a military career, from recruitment to boot camp to promotions, retirement, education and second careers.

Military.com created a veteran career center using technology to successfully deliver a personalized experience with a variety of interactive tools and resources. We offer the largest veteran job board in the world featuring military-friendly employers as well as hundreds of thousands of job postings available through our Monster.com database.

We also offer personalized email alerts for new postings that match a veteran's resume and job interests, as well as resume writing tools, education and training information, mentoring through our Veteran Career Network, and electronic newsletters with news and employer information.

To help veterans begin their new career search, we developed our Military Skills Translator. We use the Department of Labor's online resource known as "O-Net," or Occupational Data Network as a baseline to translate current and older military occupational specialty codes into civilian occupations

Then Military.com is taking it one step further. We present the veteran with equivalent jobs currently posted on the Monster job board, including those posted by thousands of military employers specifically looking for veterans. The veteran can immediately apply to one of these jobs from our site or review the job postings and learn what specific experiences, skills, education, and training employers are seeking for this type of position. This information can help the job seeker better "civilianize" their military experience on their resume and best communicate the skill, knowledge, and abilities they acquired while in service. Over the last year, we had over 250,000 separate individuals use our translator an average of 4-5 times per person.

Through the Military Skills Translator, not only are veterans empowered to apply to currently available jobs, they can also see members of our Military.com's Veteran Career Network who have indicated they held that same Military Occupational Specialty.

One of our fastest growing services that is still in beta form is this mentor network that connects veterans seeking new careers with employed veterans as well as military supporters. Military.com members who volunteer for this feature create a profile containing details about their military experience, professional interests, and their current job position and employer.

Veterans using this feature can find a career network mentor by company, government agency, career field, industry or geographic location. Once the veteran job seeker has identified someone with whom they would like to network, he or she can contact a mentor directly through our secure Military.com email tool.

Since the implementation of our Veteran Career Network in 2007, over one million Military.com members have signed on to network with other veterans and help transitioning servicemembers jumpstart their civilian careers.

Our members also access financial information and guidance. Our Finance Channel drew over 450,000 views in March 2011 because of the comprehensive information VA home loans and our relocation guide which helps military families through their mandatory moves.

For example, in March of 2011 alone we had 3 million views on our Benefits and Education Channel which includes information on Tricare, GI Bill, VA health care, survivor benefits and information on PTSD resources and support.

We keep our members in touch with the latest information about their benefits and interests with our email newsletters, of which 35 million are sent each month to our members who subscribe to them. Our most popular newsletters are the Veterans Insider with over 8 million subscribers, our Careers newsletters with over 800,000 subscribers and our Active Duty Insider with over 4 million subscribers. These newsletters offer tailored content and feature relevant information and resource links for our audience.

Offline, we actively engage with the communities we serve through in person events.

Currently we host, in conjunction with our non-profit partner, the Non-Commissioned Officers Association, over 40 career expos a year.

In 2010, over 15,000 members attended our 33 career fair events across the country. Since January of this year, we have held 11 career fair events, attended by more than 3500 veterans and transitioning servicemembers. We have also recently begun hosting Veteran Power Seeker Workshops in advance of our career fairs to help attendees write resumes, acquire interviewing and networking skills and research employers so they are prepared to most successfully engage with employers at the event.

These career fairs are important because it gives us one to one interaction with both employers and transitioning servicemembers. Here we are able to walk job seekers through the interview process, review resumes and counsel them about the many opportunities outside of the government that they may not have known they were qualified for. Conversely we get the chance to meet with employers and “decode” the military skills or vernacular they are seeing on resumes and point out what skills sets will best fit their needs.

If you question the ability of the private sector to embrace and assist our veterans in their job search, look no further than Military.com and the solid relationships we have created between our servicemembers, veterans and employers.

In conclusion, we no longer have finite wars with treaties being signed on the deck of a battleship. Today’s changing global environment means that any time our military can be called to action, tapped for humanitarian assistance or used to quell instability around the globe.

As such, we have a much longer-term obligation to understand veterans and the employment they seek. Rather than the “home from war” mentality of previous generations, we now have to see veteran’s employment as a rolling responsibility that will remain a permanent fixture on our national landscape.

Just as the Post WWII generation enjoyed the “Golden Age of Education” we can and should see this as our opportunity to create the “Golden Age of Employment” for those who have served our Nation so proudly. We are fortunate enough here in our country to have an all-volunteer force, one that emerges from, and ultimately goes back into the civilian population.

It stands to reason that a crucial component in ensuring jobs for those veterans who return to civilian life is leveraging the expertise and involvement of the private sector.

Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Subcommittee, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

**Prepared Statement of Jennifer J. Suchan, Assistant Registrar
and Coordinator, Veterans Student Services, University of Northern Iowa**

OCTOBER 21, 2011

The Honorable Marlin Stutzman, Chair
House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity
The Honorable Bruce Braley, Ranking Member
House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

Dear Congressman Stutsman and Congressman Braley:

The University of Northern Iowa commends the Committee for its commitment to economic opportunity for returning veterans. Education is directly related to an individual’s economic opportunity. On behalf of the University, I would like to share with you our commitment to veterans, as well as provide for your consideration some recommendations to further assist returning veterans.

The University of Northern Iowa established the Veterans Student Services Committee in fall 2009. The 21 members include students, faculty and staff, officers with the ROTC program, and members of the Cedar Valley community. Preference for appointments are given to individuals who are veterans, who have particular research or content knowledge about veterans' matters, or who have professional responsibilities related to military service.

In the 2 years since its creation, the Committee has:

- Conducted a survey to determine the needs and desires of student veterans
- Launched the UNI Student Veterans Association
- Initiated participation in the Yellow Ribbon Program
- Initiated campus-wide recognition activities for Veterans Day

In July 2011, I was appointed Coordinator, Veterans Student Services (VSSC). Among my duties is serving as Chair of the Veteran Student Services Committee. The following goals have been set for the 2011–12 academic year:

- Conduct a faculty and staff awareness survey
- Create a university veterans-specific Web site
- Establish a faculty/staff-to-student veteran mentoring program
- Launch UNI VETS (UNI Veterans Educating Tomorrow's Students)
- Add elements into the existing orientation programming to meet the specific needs of veterans

The VSSC is comprised of four Subcommittees: (1) Communications and Outreach; (2) Education and Assessment; (3) Transitions and Retention; and (4) UNI Student Veterans Association. Each Subcommittee has a number of goals and initiatives that they work to accomplish. Today's hearing sheds light on some additional goals that could be pursued: A job fair and on-campus interviews specific to student veterans; resume-critiquing and mock interviews to aid student veterans in translating their military skills, training, and experience in civilian terms; and encouragement of student-veterans to partake in the many internship opportunities that are available.

UNI is also proud to announce that it was included in the 2012 Military Friendly Schools List published by G.I. Jobs magazine. The list recognizes the top 15 percent of colleges, universities, and trade schools that are supporting the educational pursuits of veterans. Criteria for inclusion in the Military Friendly Schools List include a strong commitment to recruiting, retaining, and providing financial, academic, and social services to student veterans.

Recommendations:

We are committed at all levels to supporting the transition from “boots to books,” and as a result, support measures that contribute to a more seamless transition from military to civilian life. Colleges and universities should be urged to provide an office or staff person to serve as coordinator for veterans services and to expand the availability of training on veterans' needs and issues for campus officials, faculty and staff.

We would be pleased to meet with you and Members of the Committee to discuss further these comments, as well as to respond to questions and provide additional information.

Sincerely,

Jennifer J. Suchan
Assistant Registrar and Coordinator,
Veterans Student Servicesq02

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

**QUESTION FOR THE RECORD FROM
CHAIRMAN STUTZMAN TO MR. SMITHHART**

Mr. STUTZMAN. How many veteran job placements did Iowa State Workforce complete in the last year, roughly?

Mr. SMITHHART. For the period ending on December 31, 2011, the number of Veterans/eligible persons that were reported as entered employment in Iowa was 6,209.

