

EXAMINING 21ST CENTURY PROGRAMS AND STRATEGIES FOR VETERAN JOB SEEKERS

HEARING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY OF THE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS SECOND SESSION

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15, 2016

Serial No. 114-73

Printed for the use of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs



Available via the World Wide Web: <http://www.fdsys.gov>

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

25-184

WASHINGTON : 2018

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Publishing Office
Internet: bookstore.gpo.gov Phone: toll free (866) 512-1800; DC area (202) 512-1800
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EXAMINING 21ST CENTURY PROGRAMS AND STRATEGIES FOR VETERAN JOB SEEKERS

Wednesday, June 15, 2016

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
U. S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, D.C.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:37 p.m., in Room 334, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Brad Wenstrup [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Wenstrup, Zeldin, Costello, Takano, Rice, and McNerney.

OPENING STATEMENT OF BRAD WENSTRUP, CHAIRMAN

Mr. WENSTRUP. Good afternoon, everyone. The Subcommittee will come to order. I want to thank you all for joining us here today for our hearing entitled "Examining 21st Century Programs and Strategies for Veteran Job Seekers."

I am excited for today's hearing, which is designed to be a continuation of the discussion we had at the Subcommittee hearing last month, where we examined how we can help veterans find careers in the tech industry, but today, we will focus more on the general veteran job seeker, and how we can work together in a more holistic approach to connect them to meaningful careers across the economy.

As I mentioned last month, the unemployment rates among veterans continue to decline or remain stagnant. But seeing as there is still an unemployment rate and lower workforce participation rate for our Nation's veterans of all generations, it is clear that more work still needs to be done.

One issue that we have heard from transitioning servicemembers and veteran job seekers in the past is that when they throw themselves into the job search, they find that the process is often daunting, and finding a sustainable meaningful job is, in fact, a job in and of itself.

I know that this is the case among all Americans as they try and enter the workforce after college, or at a certain time in their lives, but veterans often face a greater uphill battle when searching for a job in the civilian sector than what their civilian counterparts face. Often, due to the many avenues and platforms currently available in the job searching space, they are unsure where to even start the process of finding the best job for both themselves and their families.

We have also heard concerns that veterans and transitioning servicemembers are often unsure as to how to facilitate the connec-

tions and networks they built during their military service to help them find a job outside the military.

And lastly, one of the largest issues we continue to hear is that veterans are not always aware of how advantageous their military careers and skills can look on a resume for a civilian sector job. We need to help veterans articulate and advertise these skills in a way to prove that they are a competitive candidate for the job.

So great strides have been made over the past several years to help the men and women who have worn the uniform to bridge this gap between their military experience and translatable skills for civilian jobs, but more work needs to be done at the Federal, State, and local levels to build this bridge in a more meaningful way, while also ensuring employers in the private and public sectors understand the advantages of hiring veterans.

Further, while the unemployment rates have declined, the rate did increase over the past month for female veterans overall, and for post-9/11 males, which is a trend that is not new. And while it is unreasonable to believe that the unemployment rate will completely drop to zero overnight, we need to examine why women veterans have an overall higher unemployment rate than their male counterparts, and what we can do to work with groups like those testifying before us today, to continue to work at chipping away at the unemployment rates for all of those who have served.

As we have said in the past, it is also important that we discuss how employers can better recruit servicemembers for jobs earlier on in their transition to lessen the likelihood of a lapse in employment and a steady income as they leave the military. The best way to beat unemployment is to ensure that there is not even the briefest of windows for it to occur in the first place.

I hope that with the expertise of the witnesses before us today, we can have a meaningful conversation about how to address these concerns; the continued overall unemployment rates for veterans; and feedback we have heard over the years from veterans and other stakeholders to improve the overall experience and outcomes for veteran job seekers.

I will now yield to my colleague, Ranking Member Takano, for any opening statement he may have.

OPENING STATEMENT OF MARK TAKANO, RANKING MEMBER

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing today to talk about veteran employment in our contemporary economy.

Veteran unemployment is at a historic low at 3.4 percent overall, down from 5 percent this time last year, and down from a high of 9.9 percent just 5 years ago. Veteran unemployment has remained lower than, or just about equal to the national average for 24 months.

This excellent news is thanks to the combined efforts of the administration, this Committee, public and private sector employers, nonprofit advocates, and, of course, thanks to the hard work and determination of veterans themselves. And while we have made significant progress, we all need to do more to make sure that every veteran job seeker is able to find work that pays well, and is aligned with that veteran's strengths.

This is particularly the case for women veterans and younger veterans, as we will hear today. As the fastest-growing military cohort, women veterans face a persistently higher rate of unemployment than men, although the reasons for this difference are not fully understood. Given that approximately 200,000 women are expected to leave the military over the next 5 years, it is imperative that we identify and implement a strategy to better support women veterans in their effort to find employment.

Post-9/11 veterans under the age of 25 also face an unemployment rate that is higher than the national average. A variety of factors contribute to this problem. Our Subcommittee Members on both sides of the aisle want to listen and discuss ways to improve outcomes for younger veterans.

We also know that military spouses continue to face difficulties in finding the right job and keeping it when they have to move. I would appreciate your recommendations to address this challenge and improve employment outcomes for military spouses.

As our military prepares for a significant drawdown in the coming years, it is critically important that we have in place employment programs and services that effectively help transitioning servicemembers find satisfying and stable civilian jobs. I am looking forward to listening to our witnesses' testimony regarding their efforts in this matter, as well as their thoughts on how the Federal Government can help improve job outcomes for all veterans.

I want to thank each of these witnesses for their commitment to connecting transitioning servicemembers, veterans, and military spouses, with high-quality civilian jobs.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you, Mr. Takano.

I now want to recognize our first and only panel of witnesses today. With us today, we have the Honorable Michael Michaud, Assistant Secretary For the Veterans' Employment and Training Service for the U.S. Department of Labor; Mr. Eric Eversole, Senior Adviser and President for Hiring Our Heroes at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation; Mr. Terry Howell, Senior Director for Military.Com; Mr. LeRoy Acosta, Assistant National Legislative Director for the Disabled American Veterans; and Mr. Greg Call, Head of LinkedIn's Veteran Program.

Assistant Secretary Michaud, it is great to have you back with us again. Let's begin with you. You are now recognized for 5 minutes for your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF HONORABLE MICHAEL H. MICHAUD

Mr. MICHAUD. Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished Members of the Committee. I am very excited to be here this afternoon to tell you what we are doing at the Department of Labor. I appreciate the opportunity to report on the Department of Labor's efforts to provide better services that led to improved employment outcome for our Nation's veterans.

Through the collective and sustained efforts and partnerships with many public, private organizations, the employment situation for veterans continues to improve, and veterans' unemployment rates are trending down. The unemployment rate for veterans has fallen from a high of 9.9 percent in January 2011, to 3.4 percent

in May of 2016. It remains lower than the nonveterans' unemployment rate of 4.4 percent in May of 2016.

The charts displayed before you show that this considerable improvement also applies to veterans age 18 to 24, and to female veterans. While the overall veterans' unemployment rate continues to trend lower, we at the Department of Labor will not rest as long as any veteran needs assistance finding meaningful civilian employment. To that end, VETS has pursued six integrated lines of efforts.

First, we engage our servicemembers before they are transitioning into civilian life. We continue to improve the Department of Labor's employment workshop as part of TAP to ensure it remains relevant to the needs of transitioning servicemembers. We have expanded the ability of servicemembers at risk of successful transition to meet with DVOPs, and are working closely with DoD to connect them with the American job centers before they leave active duty.

We are actively connecting our employer network to DoD through its Skill Bridge Program that allows servicemembers meeting certain qualifications to participate in civilian jobs and employment training in their last 180 days of active duty. VETS is also engaged with Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, ESGR, programs to assist Reserve servicemembers when connecting to their local American job centers so that they can obtain local employment while still retaining the ability to support the mission of their assigned units.

Second, we are providing a lifetime of employment support for our veterans, for all veterans regardless of where they serve. Jobs for Veterans State Grants support veterans-focused staff in the public workforce system in all 50 States and four territories through American job centers in local communities. We have improved our intensive service rates to nearly 90 percent nationwide to ensure that our veterans receive the help they need to connect to the civilian workforce, and I am pleased to report that the employment retention rate for JVSG participants has increased to 82 percent.

Third, we are engaging and mobilizing communities to establish collective partnerships to better support our veterans where they live. VETS is working with a variety of national base constituencies, including the National Association of State Workforce Agencies, the National Governors Association, and the National Conference of State Legislatures, to address local employment obstacles like the unique requirements to obtain professional licenses and credentials. We are also partnering with the VA in their MyVA Community Initiative to encourage community-driven solutions for veterans, and to ensure that the public workforce provides the employment foundation for these communities.

Fourth, we continue to work to end homelessness among our veterans by providing services that help them establish a stable, long-term employment. And I am happy to note that the President supported our request for an additional \$12 million in fiscal year 2017 to fully fund our homeless veterans reintegration program in recognition of its measurable impact.

Beginning in July, we will require grantees serving homeless veterans to co-enroll participants in the public workforce system through their local American job centers, and we are working with faith-based organizations to further expand the resources available to these important, but vulnerable population.

Fifth, we are addressing the skill gap between veterans and employers who are seeking employees with industry-recognized credentials and helping veterans receive occupational, classroom, and on-the-job training. On June 1, we published the results of a 2-year study with the National Governors Association on steps States can take to accelerate professional licensing and industrial credentials for veterans. We continue to work with DOL's Office of Apprenticeship to encourage companies to establish registered apprenticeships that can help veterans earn while they learn in new careers.

And sixth, we have dramatically expanded employer outreach to make it easier for companies to find and hire veterans by leveraging Federal, State, and local resources. VETS Office of Strategic Outreach, fully manned just a year ago, is now working with nearly 600 companies across the country on active veterans hiring campaigns. This team provides valuable bridges between the national and regional employers who are eager to hire veterans and workforce development staff at the AJCs, who build local employment relationships and assist veterans in finding meaningful employments in their communities.

We also rolled out our Veterans.Gov Web site on May 1. Veterans.Gov was built in response to the veterans and employers' feedback. It is a critical resource that will help connect veterans to civilian employment and help connect employers to job-seeking veterans through the public workforce system.

VETS is committed to reducing veterans' unemployment nationally by helping each veteran through individual services. And by bringing together our partners for this important mission, VETS is leading the way in helping our veterans find meaningful civilian employment today and tomorrow.

So Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Takano, Members of the Committee, thanks again for inviting me here today. I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHAEL H. MICHAUD APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Mr. Eversole, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF ERIC EVERSOLE

Mr. EVERSOLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Takano. My name is Eric Eversole. I am the president of Hiring Our Heroes, a program of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, and we are honored to be here to testify about the tremendous value that veterans and military spouses bring to our workforces across America.

I think before we really start talking about the "Examining 21st Century Programs and Strategies for Veteran Job Seekers," I think it is also important to talk for just a couple of minutes about the tremendous progress that has been made in this space. As both the

Ranking Member and the Chairman noted in their opening comments, there has been tremendous work done in this space, and that work should help guide us as to what we need to do to continue to serve the veterans and military spouses that are continuing to struggle, because there are segments of that veteran and military spouse population that are struggling, they haven't found the opportunities they have desired, and that has created some real challenges, both in the near term and the long term, to ensure that those young men and women who raise their hand are delivered the promise of better economic opportunities once they have ended their military service.

One of the things that we have learned from, from really the outset of our efforts from a program perspective, we have hosted more than 1,000 hiring events in the last 5 years, and we have done that in every State in the country, the territories, overseas locations, and really, pretty much anywhere where we can find a veteran or military spouse who is struggling.

And the one thing we have learned from day 1 of our efforts is that it is a community effort. It is a collaboration between both the private sector and the public sector, between nonprofits and companies, to help ensure that we are making meaningful connections to those young men and women who are looking for those opportunities.

There is no magic bullet in this space. It takes a community effort, and it is the collective efforts of those organizations and groups like Department of Labor VETS and the Federal agencies as well as the State and local agencies, nonprofits, that are really going to make a difference in this space. And that is where we have seen the most success.

The other thing that we have really learned, is that you have to avoid taking the "Field of Dreams" approach to helping veterans and military spouses find meaningful employment opportunities. You can create great job opportunities with lots of pay, but there are a lot of young men and women who don't understand fully what real economic opportunity looks like in this country.

They come from those low- and middle-income families, like my family, as a first-generation college student from the midwest, who really have one of two options back in your hometown. If you want a better life, you are going to do one of two things: You are going to join the military or you are going to go to college.

But a lot of these young men and women, after that 4 years or 6 years or 8 years of military service, still don't know what that economic opportunity looks like. They still need that extra hand to find that meaningful opportunity, because they know what service is, they know what commitment is, they know what hard work looks like, but they don't necessarily have the connections or the background that is going to help them take that tremendous experience and then sell it to the civilian sector.

And that really leads to my third point, which I think is equally critical: Digital programs play an incredibly important role in this space because they have the ability to connect servicemembers and military spouses with great employers at a moment's notice, regardless of where they are stationed in this world.

At Hiring Our Heroes, we have created a number of digital programs, like our Virtual Job Scout, our resume engine, our Career Spark for Military Spouses, that helps to make those meaningful connections. And we have seen tremendous success to be able to reach people, whether they are in Germany and looking for a job in the United States, or they are located in California and they are looking for a job in northern California.

Regardless, we can make those connections, but you still have to have a ground game. You still have to have people that are involved and are going to help those young men and women who don't know what they don't know to take that next meaningful step. We have found our programs to be most effective when we integrate them with the on-the-ground approach, and we have seen good success.

With that said, I will yield the remaining amount of my time and look forward to the panel's questions. Thank you.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF ERIC EVERSOLE APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

Mr. WENSTRUP. Well, thank you very much.

Mr. Acosta, you are now recognized for 5 minutes. I am sorry, Mr. Howell is next.

Mr. Howell, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF TERRY D. HOWELL

Mr. HOWELL. Thank you very much. Thank you, Chairman Wenstrup and Ranking Member Takano, and the other Members of the Subcommittee, for inviting us here today to talk about this important subject.

My name is Terry Howell, and I am the Senior Director for Editorial Operations and Strategic Alliances for Military.Com. I joined Military.Com in 2003 after serving the Coast Guard for 20 years. In 1999, Military.Com was founded with the premise and the purpose of connecting servicemembers, veterans, and their families with the benefits of service. Those benefits include not just the Federal and State benefits, but discounts, scholarships, and other opportunities that come with having served their countries. Since we were founded, we have grown to over 10 million members, and we have 7 million unique visitors a month.

In 2004, we joined forces with Monster Worldwide, and in doing so, we were able to team up together to take on quite a few projects for the government. We have worked on transitioning employment programs and online tools for the Department of Defense, the Veterans Affairs, private corporations, and State agencies. Over the years, we have developed several online tools to help connect employers and veterans, and aid in the transition process.

Our most widely used tool is our Military Skills Translator. As we referred to earlier, technology is a big part of it, though it is not the only answer. We are very proud of the fact that we have created the skills translator that is being currently used by over 60 different companies. We share, at no cost, with nonprofit organizations like the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and we also provide it for organizations like the Northern Virginia Technology Council, who use it, teamed up with junior colleges in

their area and other means to help provide opportunities for veterans to find jobs within the high-tech fields.

We recently made significant changes to improve people's awareness of what we are doing in these areas. We have created new tools to help people apply for jobs online or at the desktop, whereas before, it was kind of a complicated process. We have simplified these processes to make it simpler and easier for veterans to apply for jobs.

We have also added a new skills—or correction, we will be launching a new transition app which essentially takes the TAP process and puts it in a mobile device giving them personalized checklists and reminders and notifications through their device of when they need to reach certain milestones, certain accomplishments they have to hit before they are ready to transition. And we are very proud of that tool. It will be launching hopefully in the next few weeks.

Let's see, we also, each year, create the Veteran Talent Index. This is an annual report that kind of gives us a snapshot of what—not only the BLS data, but also surveys of what employers and servicemembers and veterans have to say about the veteran experience as far as in the job searches and transition. In fact, let me—I did bring a copy with me. I would like to submit it for the record with your permission, sir. Thank you.

So one of the things that came from our study is that—and this may seem like a no-brainer—but employers who actually commit to hiring veterans have a much better record of hiring and retaining veterans than those that don't. And what I mean, is it is easy for a company to say they want to hire veterans, but we have found that companies who truly commit to it by installing veteran-specific hiring practices, bringing on tools and interfaces on the Internet that are specifically catered to veterans, and building the culture within their companies and support systems within their companies, have a much higher rate of success, especially in the retention area than those that don't.

So I will just wrap by saying it is our belief that there is no single solution. It has already been said, right. But the problems are as diverse as the members of the veteran community that we serve. So it would be foolish of us to sit here and say that my skills translator is the only thing that is going to work. And it is foolish for anybody to say one thing.

We have found that it is a collaborative effort, that works together. Of all these organizations here at the table today, the Federal Government and Congress, have brought us a long ways down the road to success in this area. But it is not time to lighten up on the pedal. There is still—again, as mentioned earlier, there is women veterans and younger men veterans, post-9/11 veterans, who are currently still suffering from lack of employment. If we were to lighten up now based on our successes, we wouldn't be seeing the job all the way through.

So it is my belief that, through innovation and collaboration, we continue to move this forward. And when I speak about collaboration, we have worked several times with the Federal Government to come up with some very innovative fixes, but it is also going to require collaboration between the private sector—or I am sorry. It

is going to take a lot of collaboration between all the private sectors in the room too, because it can't be just done in one area.

So at this point, I thank you for inviting me to speak today, and I conclude my statement, and I am open to any questions you may have. Thank you very much.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF TERRY D. HOWELL APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you, Mr. Howell.

Mr. Acosta, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF LEROY ACOSTA

Mr. ACOSTA. Thank you. Chairman Wenstrup, Ranking Member Takano, and Members of the Subcommittee, DAV appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony for this hearing to outline just a few innovative and effective employment transition programs. We look forward to working with this Subcommittee to ensure that the men and women who stood up for America have the tools, resources, and opportunities that they need to competitively enter the job market and secure meaningful employment.

In 2014, DAV empowered America's veterans by establishing a national employment program and committed more than \$800,000 to its startup so the program could begin work immediately. DAV's employment program connects transitioning active duty, Guard and Reserve members, veterans and their spouses, with employers nationwide.

Through our partnerships with Recruit Military and Veteran Recruiting, DAV has sponsored more than 130 all-veteran career fairs in cities nationwide, as well as three virtual events to connect veterans with employers who are committed to hiring them. Visitors to Jobs.DAV.Org will find a schedule of future all-veteran career fairs. In addition, our job search database has over 250,000 employment opportunities. Our Web page, Jobs.DAV.Org, averages about 15,000 hits per month.

Since the inception of DAV's employment program, over 54,000 participants have connected with more than 7,000 exhibitors, and this has led to nearly 16,000 job offers. Outside of the DAV, another program specialized in military-to-civilian reintegration is a nonprofit San Diego-based National Veterans Transition Services, Incorporated. NVTSI emphasizes the need to resocialize transitioning veterans via a reverse boot camp.

NVTSI's signature 3-week reboot workshops conducted across the Nation are innovative, evidence-based, and intensive. A DAV member that participated in reboot last year commented that reboot helped ease their focus on transition from military to civilian life by providing purposeful time to make deliberate career choices, and to build a strong network to create a program for life beyond the military.

The third program I will discuss is concentrated on reducing unemployment for women veterans. The nonprofit New York City-based Operation Reinvent was founded in 2013. Operation Reinvent is dedicated to providing expert guidance and resources to help transitioning military women identify career paths that suit their skills, education, goals, and interests. An Operation Reinvent

workshop occurred last week at the soldiers support centers at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Fifty women soldiers attended each location. The first day of the workshop was Webcast to both locations in realtime from CBS studios in New York City. Nationwide Webcast in each time zone are being planned.

Mr. Chairman, DAV appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony. I would be pleased to address any questions you or Members of this esteemed Committee may have regarding the topics I have covered today. Thank you.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF LEROY ACOSTA APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you very much.

Mr. Call, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF GREG CALL

Mr. CALL. Chairman Wenstrup, Ranking Member Takano, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify today. My name is Greg Call. I am the head of LinkedIn's Veterans Program. LinkedIn is a professional network with over 433 million individuals around the world, 128 million in the United States, and over 2.1 million veteran and military members.

LinkedIn's vision is to create economic opportunity for every member of the global workforce by providing networks, insights, skills needed to succeed in the workplace. To achieve that vision, we are building the world's first economic graph, a digital map of the global economy that includes every member of the global workforce, their skills, all open jobs, all employers, and all educational institutions.

In my oral remarks, I will focus on two things: First, I would like to talk about my own story as a veteran, and the experience that I had after leaving the Marine Corps; second, I will talk about LinkedIn's Veterans Program, which may be impactful for our veterans as they transition from military service to civilian professional life.

I became a Marine officer in March 2008 at the age of 28. During my service in the Marine Corps, I had the privilege of leading hundreds of Marines in combat environments, and on the home front. The young Marines that I led inspired me every day with their can-do attitude and their commitment to duty, service, and sacrifice. I transitioned out of the Marine Corps in 2012 after two deployments and over 4 years of honorable service.

During this transition, it was extremely important for me to keep my mission-driven life that I loved about being a Marine officer. The Marines made me the individual that I am today. However, like many transitioning servicemembers, I had no civilian professional identity or professional network after leaving the military. LinkedIn allowed me to reinvent myself as a veteran entrepreneur where I founded two tech companies. It empowered me to connect with people and organizations to support my new mission in life.

In my current role, one of the projects that I led was our first annual report on veterans. Our team analyzed the professional experience, skills, and education of the 2.1 million military personnel

and veterans that are members of LinkedIn, as well as veteran employer data. Among other insights, the report demonstrates that today's veterans represent in-demand talent, and that more than 186,000 veterans identify themselves as executives, vice presidents, or owners on LinkedIn.

We recognize that according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate for Gulf War II-era veterans, our youngest generation of veterans, is higher than the national rate, at 5.8 percent versus under 5 percent for the general population. And the numbers for Latinos and African Americans as well as women veterans are higher. So there is more that we can do, and it is one of the reasons why I really appreciate the opportunity to talk to you more about LinkedIn's Veterans Program.

Our Veterans Program is designed to set veterans up for success and transition, and close the gap between military service and civilian employment by empowering veterans to build professional identities, strong networks, civilian careers, and workplace skills.

We do this by the following: One, providing access to a network of 2.1 million military personnel and veterans on LinkedIn; two, helping veterans build a digital professional profile or a living expression of their experience, education, and skills; three, providing a 1-year premium service subscription to LinkedIn; and lastly, providing a 1-year subscription to Lynda.Com, a leading online learning platform that helps anyone learn business, technical, or creative skills.

Lastly, I just want to highlight one key recommendation for the Subcommittee. LinkedIn has worked with the Transition Assistance Program to assist servicemembers with access to post-military opportunities. Among other things, we recommend a stronger integration of professional tools like LinkedIn before a servicemember departs from the military.

Imagine if a servicemember has built an online civilian profile, has support from mentors, and access to our network while in service. They would be better positioned to identify skills gaps and to connect with recruiters long before they transitioned from the military, and would be set up for success in their post-military career.

We at LinkedIn stand ready to work with Congress to expand opportunity for every veteran in the United States. This is our duty, our mandate, and fundamentally tied to our mission and vision at LinkedIn. Thank you.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF GREG CALL APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

Mr. WENSTRUP. I thank you all for your remarks. And I am now going to yield myself 5 minutes for some questions. But first, I would like to make some comments. I really do appreciate the testimonies that we have heard here today, and I would like to comment on them, if I may, from this position.

You know, Mr. Eversole, I think you brought up a good point. You know, many of our young veterans, as they get out, use their GI bill, and many of them go and use it for a 4-year degree, and that is great. But that is not for everybody. And I am concerned in this country we have made that too much of the standard that the American dream doesn't exist unless you get a 4-year degree.

And I would disagree; neither of my parents have a 4-year degree, and my guess is yours might not either. And what we can accomplish through work and the opportunity to grow isn't always for everyone to get a 4-year degree. So I appreciate what you had to say in that.

And Secretary Michaud, I appreciate the work you have done with VETS.GOV. I think it has come a long way and certainly an opportunity for so many. And I appreciate the reaching out to faith-based organizations. You know, these are people operating, really, outside of religious beliefs, but as Americans trying to make things better for fellow Americans. And that is greatly appreciated.

Mr. Howell, I want to comment on the importance of public/private partnerships that we have to engage in, because we are going from basically being public to private, and in that transition should include both sides.

And Mr. Acosta, I appreciate the work on transition. As a veteran, I have a little bit of concern with the word "reboot." As a veteran, I don't feel like I needed to be rebooted, because I am concerned that word by itself may detract somewhat from the decision that our young men and women are making to serve their country. I do not believe they need to be rebooted, but need to be transitioned.

And that leads to what you had to say, Mr. Call, which was, you know, you are mission-driven, and that is what you want to continue to do. And I appreciate the opportunities for people to have a place to go to establish a mission and to drive that mission onward.

So I think there has been very good testimony today from all of you, and I appreciate it.

To questioning, what is the number one thing that this Subcommittee could do to improve opportunities for veteran job seekers? Looking at us, what we can do. And I would be glad to go down the line if we can. Mr. Secretary.

Mr. MICHAUD. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I know both you and the Ranking Member had talked about women veterans issues and how you compared it with men's issue. And here is, first, a comment on that and what the Committee might be able to do to help that.

If you look at the chart comparing women veterans to female non-veterans, you can see in that chart that actually the female veterans' number is lower than the female non-veterans. I asked my staff how can we analyze what is happening with the women's veterans population?

Number one, the women veterans tend to be younger, and they are more likely to be of minority status. At the same time, they are more likely to be enrolled in school while seeking employment than their male veterans counterparts. And when you look at the male veteran' counterparts, the bulk of the unemployment is actually in the higher age limit. So you really can't compare women veterans with male veterans, but when you compare women veterans in the same category as non-veteran women, you will see actually they are doing extremely well.

One area where actually Congress can help, and it is one area that my staff had highlighted is Title 38, because at the time that

Title 38 was passed into law, there were fewer women veterans. And right now, when you look at the definitions, it is different in different statutes. What would be very helpful is if you did a thorough analysis of Title 38, and actually bring it to sync the definition of women veterans. That would be very helpful as far as helping us out over at the Department of Labor VETS. Whether Congress does it or CRS does it, that would be extremely helpful.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you. I appreciate that.

Mr. EVERSOLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think that one of the things that is absolutely critical is that we don't lose sight of the fact that there are veterans and military spouses who continue to struggle, even though the unemployment rate has been cut in half over the last 5 years for most segments of the military population. We can't just wipe our hands and say that we can declare victory. We have a lot more work that needs to be done.

And I think this issue, the issue of finding and helping servicemembers and veterans find meaningful employment opportunities is really one of national security, because as we look and have to—at some point in the future have to have—continue to have an all-volunteer force, we need young men and women who are willing to raise their right hand for the promise that it is going to somehow lead to better economic opportunities.

And if we can't deliver that as a country, and that next time that we need to make that call, it may be more difficult for our services to find those young men and women who are willing to raise their right hand. So from a national security perspective, but it is also—from a business organization, it is absolutely critical that we take these talented young men and women and make sure that they have meaningful opportunities.

It is absolutely critical for America's workforce that these highly motivated, highly skilled, highly trainable, young men and women are that next generation of leaders in those companies. And we have certainly seen from the business community that there is a groundswell of support and really of a fight to find those young men and women.

But hearings like this and continuing to focus on these issues is absolutely critical in the near future.

Mr. HOWELL. Thank you for the question.

I think that, first of all, so much of what your Committees have done and are working towards have been effective, and so, I don't want to lose sight of the fact that the VOW Act, and some of these other things have had an impact. Recently, we spoke with—or I have been speaking with employers who, when we opened it up to, was it 20/20, the VOW Act or the coverage for the tax incentives, that created another round of excitement towards us.

And that may be not the right word, but the idea is that so many companies had been kind of thinking, well, this is going to go away, so I am not going to invest because of that. But now that there is a longer road to this, it is starting to get a lot more interest with employers. So I want to encourage, you know, continuing those kind of programs and incentives, and looking for new ways to try to incentivize it. At the same time, I know that that can backfire and become, you know, another entitlement issue that we don't

want to get into, but I think off the top, that is one of the things that I would continue to pursue.

The other thing is, and I know we haven't talked much about it, but when a servicemember transitions out of the military, typically—let's pick an E-5—they are going to be stepping out from a situation where they have housing and everything covered, typically a single income at the E-5 level. When they step out, it is very difficult to step right back into that E-5 pay level, plus they all of a sudden have the weight of the economy on them, the cost of housing and all these sort of things.

We have to keep in mind that there is two people that transition, if not more, when it comes to military family, and it is the spouse employment issues that we should also be considering. I know that it is not necessarily a veterans' issue, but when it comes to impacting a veteran's quality of life and their opportunities, looking out for the spouse as they transition, I think, would be an important factor to consider moving forward.

Otherwise, like I said, the biggest issues that we have seen veterans talk about are—and more so, we are trying to listen more to employers is a lack of understanding of what the military servicemember brings to their company, a lack of understanding of exactly the incentives for why they would want to hire them, and we are working very hard to create a curriculum to help bring employers up to speed on how to hire veterans, how to retain veterans, and by using the best practices that we have learned from organizations or companies, like Verizon, who are doing a fantastic job of hiring and retaining veterans, looking at what they are doing and then trying to teach that to other employers.

I don't know how that impacts legislation, but I thought I should share that while I had the opportunity. Thank you.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Acosta.

Mr. ACOSTA. Chairman Wenstrup, DAV members, at our last convention, affirm DAV resolution number 136, which calls on Congress to work with the Department of Labor, the Department of Defense and, track the results and status of people that go through the Transition Assistance Program, the transition GPS, and to make any changes based on what they may see on that data.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you.

Mr. Call.

Mr. CALL. You know, when I get the opportunity to mentor, you know, servicemembers that are thinking about transitioning out, I always use the analogy of, in the military, you don't learn how to fly an F-18 the day before you are stepping into that cockpit, in an F-18. And so don't learn how to develop a professional identity and develop a professional network that you are going to have to leverage when you are transitioning right when you are going to transition. Do it much earlier than that.

So anything we can do to drive awareness and promote a lot of the programs you are hearing about today a lot earlier in the servicemember's life cycle, in their career, I think will be hugely beneficial to them as they transition out of the military.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Well, thank you, all.

And I thank my colleagues for obliging me going over a little in time. I will be glad to extend the same to each one of you.

Mr. Takano, you are now recognized.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome, Secretary Michaud, Assistant Secretary Michaud. You have certainly hit the ground running in your new role as head of DOL VETS, and we are always pleased to see you back before this Subcommittee or Committee. And congratulations on the team you have assembled in such a short time, and we truly appreciate your testimony today.

Veteran employment rates are low overall, but one of our priorities today is to look a little closer at the higher unemployment rate for women veterans. And as you know, I am sponsoring a bill to study the Transition Assistance Program, which if passed, will take a look at whether TAP can be improved to meet the needs of women veterans, disabled veterans, and insular veterans.

In your opinion, what are the main reasons for the lower employment rate for women veterans?

Mr. MICHAUD. If you look at, I think, the lower unemployment rate for female veterans versus the non-veteran female population, it is a combination of all the efforts collaboratively done by, both public, and private sectors to bring that unemployment rate down.

As far as the TAP, we are constantly reviewing the TAP curriculum. As far as how effective it is—I was actually asked before I came in here if the VOW Act has been effective. How can you quantify that? It is very hard to quantify because there is so much being done at the local, State, and Federal level, to say this is what really caused it to drop.

All I can say, if you look at the charts that I have given you, those three charts, the VOW Act was passed in 2011. It was into the TAP curriculum in 2013, and then you can see how the numbers have been going. So whether it is all because of the VOW Act, it is pretty hard to say.

You know, there have been several comments about trying to help servicemembers early in their transition. That is an issue, and we actually established and implemented a senior sergeant major professional military education initiative. We have a full-time sergeant major that works over at the Department of Labor VETS that actually helps us with the sergeant majors.

My deputy assistant secretary, Terry Gerton, and Sergeant Major Coleman actually spoke at the Sergeant Major's Academy to really impress upon them the importance of trying to get those that are in the military, as soon as they are sworn in, into an American job center so they can start that process early on.

The other issue that actually dealt with that same information, is the Veterans Data Exchange Initiative. This is the first of its kind, an MOU, that I signed earlier this year with the Department of Defense, to actually get the information from those members who are in the military. We were getting 10 years' worth of information and on. So we can actually better analyze what is happening in the military as they go through, so we can actually establish policies that will help them as they get ready to transition out of the military.

Mr. TAKANO. So you are looking at other ways to gather data and information. On a slightly different topic related to women veterans, and this is not so much the unemployment rate, it is inter-

esting that they have a lower unemployment rate for women veterans. But we know that they don't—women veterans don't access their benefits as much as other veterans. Maybe they are going to work instead. Maybe they are taking up the Chairman's notion that you don't go to school, but you go into work. Maybe that is what is happening with our women veterans.

But we have a suspicion that might also have to do with the fact that they don't identify, they are reluctant to identify themselves as veterans. Can you shed any light on whether it is a reluctance to identify, whether they are going into the workforce? Why is it that they are not accessing their benefits as much as the male veterans?

Mr. MICHAUD. This is speculation. Actually, when Judge Russell came to speak before this Committee a number of years ago, when I was on the Committee, he asked the audience how many were veterans, and hands went up. When he rephrased the question, how many here served in the military? More hands went up. And the issue is some veterans, whether it is male or female, they don't self-identify themselves as veterans because of different reasons.

And within our female veterans population, it is more problematic than in the male population as far as self-identifying whether they are veterans. One of the things I stress as I go around the country and to the American job centers, rather than ask if you are a veteran, ask them whether or not they served in the military. That will actually, I believe, will help us identify those who served. It depends on how you phrase the question on what the response you are going to get.

Mr. TAKANO. Well, along those lines, let's turn to the American job centers. Do you feel that the DVOPs and the LVRs at the American job centers are adequately trained to help employers understand the unique and positive aspects of recruiting and hiring women veterans?

Mr. MICHAUD. Absolutely. Our focuses are on all veterans, women veterans of all different ages. The DVOPs and LVERs have done a tremendous job. I am very proud of them. And with VETERANS.GOV that we initiated, there is a site. If you click on the site, "Hire a veteran," you go to the next page, there is a "get one-on-one assistance" button, and if the employer needs X amount of employees in a certain category, they get a response back within 1 day. One day they will get a response back from LVERs of what is out there. I am very proud of the customer service that we are able to provide for the employers that actually call Department of Labor VETS or go to our VETERANS.GOV Web site.

Mr. TAKANO. Just one more question, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Call, I want to thank you for spending a little time with me yesterday afternoon. And I certainly want to thank you for your service as a Marine and thank all the gentlemen who have served our country, all of you.

You know, the Chairman and I, you know, we did a lot of work on examining our TAP—the TAP process, and how effective the Transition Assistance Program is in helping our veterans transition. Veterans often say that a TAP refresher after 6 months from separating from the military is beneficial to them. And one of the problems with this is that unless they have applied for benefits, the

VA doesn't necessarily know where all the separated servicemembers are.

Are there ways that LinkedIn might work with DOL and the VA to inform veterans on how to reconnect with TAP resources and/or Soldier For Life personnel?

Mr. CALL. Thank you for that question, Congressman.

Like many of the gentlemen have already said up here, you know, our program at LinkedIn, we don't look at it as the only solution. We look at it as part of the solution with a lot of the programs that have been mentioned today. So we are always looking for ways to collaborate and to partner with any organization that has the best interest in the veteran community at heart.

We do have a very solid community, a very engaged veteran community on LinkedIn. And it would be, you know, a privilege of ours to be able to promote other programs that are highly beneficial to that community.

Mr. TAKANO. Well, specifically, it seems to me that the VA Assistant Secretary Michaud could really use your help in identifying and making known things like the TAP refresher course. Because my experience is servicemembers are in such a hurry to get out, there is such a lot of information coming in, and then only after they have been out for a while do they realize, oh, you know, I don't really know all the services. I didn't even know that was available and, you know, this program or that program. But it seems to me that such you have such an extensive network through LinkedIn that this might be a way for us to reach those veterans and identify them.

Mr. CALL. Yes. And we have been in touch with the Secretary's team. They have been wonderful to work with, and we look forward to broadening that collaboration moving forward in the future for sure.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That concludes my questions.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Ms. Rice, you are now recognized.

Miss RICE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Michaud, is it Secretary? Assistant Secretary. I am trying to give you a promotion. Sorry about that.

Mr. MICHAUD. If Secretary Perez is looking at it, he might be a little nervous.

Miss RICE. Speaking of him, you know, we were talking about the rate of employment among women veterans versus the greater veteran population. I have had conversations with Secretary Perez in the past on the opportunities that apprenticeships offer for women and minorities. And I wonder how you think we can encourage more women veterans to seek out apprenticeships?

Mr. MICHAUD. That is a very good question, Congresswoman. And that is one area that, as I go around talking with businesses or with the garrison commanders on the different bases I attend, apprenticeship is an important tool. It is a tool that, thanks to Congress, DOL has \$90 million more for apprenticeships. We have been aggressively promoting apprenticeships among the business community, among the VSOs, and looking at the skill gaps that are currently out there, and how we can fill those particular skill gaps in establishing an apprenticeship program, if there is not one avail-

able, and look at—the women veterans populations, is to fill the skill needs. It is a very important tool.

Miss RICE. Great. Well, I obviously couldn't agree more.

Mr. Call, I want to thank you for coming and meeting with me this morning. You definitely did your homework by meeting with Members of the Committee. I think that is very helpful to us to get to know all of you and exactly what you are doing.

So you had mentioned this morning, you discussed your meeting with the Department of Defense Secretary Ash Carter. And you said that during that meeting that he suggested that servicemembers should set up their LinkedIn profiles earlier on in their military careers when they are active so that they have fully developed online—they have a fully developed online presence and professional network, or at least time to build a professional network by the time they are transitioning.

So can you just tell the Committee what your plans, what LinkedIn's plans are with DoD, the VA, DOL VETS to start encouraging servicemembers to do that?

Mr. CALL. Yeah, sure. And just a quick clarification on that meeting, we were very honored to have Secretary Carter come to LinkedIn. It was a great meeting with him and all of his team, and that was one of the topics that definitely was discussed during that meeting. I am not positive if Secretary Carter initiated that conversation, but it was something that was discussed for sure.

Miss RICE. Well, then I will give credit to you since he is not here.

Mr. CALL. But yes, so we have actually created—I mentioned Lynda.Com, the online learning platform, that we now offer 1-year free subscription to servicemembers and veterans that are members of LinkedIn.

We actually created a course called LinkedIn for Veterans, and this was—the course was intended to remove the barrier to really trying to figure out a way to establish a professional identity and professional network so that you could connect to opportunity. So it takes you from A to Z and gives you excellent demonstrations and practical application that you can do on the platform in a real interactive way. So that—integrating that course into a servicemember's training earlier on in their life cycle can be hugely beneficial for them to both understand why they should be on LinkedIn, but also how to utilize it.

Miss RICE. Let me just say that I just want to acknowledge LinkedIn. I mean, there are a lot of—you know, we talk today about companies that talk about hiring or trying to convince the private sector about how important it is to hire. And you are a perfect example, Mr. Call, in my opinion, of the benefits that companies get by hiring someone like you who you don't forget the men and women that you served with. And you come back into the private sector and you are doing everything that you can to help them.

So I want to thank LinkedIn for giving opportunities to, you know, great Americans like you who have served our country and deserve an opportunity to put all the wonderful skills that they have to use, not just for their own, you know, professional benefit, but for those of their fellow colleagues as well. So thank you.

And just one more question, Mr. Chairman, if I may. You know, Long Island, where I am, Mr. Howell, has a large population of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam vets. Now, because I am curious, how do you attract older veterans who might be less comfortable using, you know, the new technology? I mean, when I try to explain to kids when I was a DA that when I was growing up there was one phone in the house and it was attached to a wall, they look at me like I am a Martian.

So how do you do your best to bring that generation of veterans into this universe?

Mr. HOWELL. It is a very good question, and I have got to tell you that, surprisingly, that is our most active group. Vietnam era and backwards are the most active group on Military.Com as far as commenting on articles, engaging with one another. They seem unstoppable at some point; it is impressive.

I think that there are programs where—because obviously, we are finding just a snippet of those, the vet population, because there are quite a few who are technology, you know, phobic, so to speak. But I think that what we have done in our areas, and I think other opportunities for others to draw them in are through organizations like—there is an organization in Oregon right now who is actively going out and interviewing and filming World War II veterans and Korea War veterans, getting their stories before they pass.

And I know that the Legion has a program like that, but I am working directly with the Foundation right now in Oregon where we are gathering these stories and trying to build an archive. They are actually building curriculum around those veteran stories so that their stories aren't forgotten.

So as we do that, then, if we can't get them to come to the site, at least we can get them on the site as far as their presence and their experience, but like I said, as a whole, we don't suffer from having a lack of interaction with our older veterans.

Miss RICE. Great. Thank you. And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. McNerney, you are now recognized.

Mr. MCNERNEY. I thank the Chairman for holding this hearing, and I just want to say how impressive the results have been. It wasn't that long ago that it looked like a veteran unemployment was going through the roof, and now it seems to be controlled, at least, and continuing to move in a good direction. So you all deserve a lot of credit for that and a lot of other people do, too.

So Michaud, I have heard that some States are experiencing a problem with the timing on the money they received for the jobs for veteran State grants. The JVSG funding which pays for the DVOP and the LVERs. We serve veterans out of American job centers, we hear that many States are hiring fewer of these DVOPs and LVERs in anticipation of delayed funding.

Have you heard about these concerns, and do you have any thoughts on how we can better ensure that this funding is provided so as not to cause disruption on the hiring?

Mr. MICHAUD. Thank you very much, Congressman, for that question. As I go around the country, and meet with State agencies, with veterans service organizations, and others, the issue that comes up when we talk about Jobs for Veterans State grants actu-

ally is two issues. The first issue is that States want flexibility, particularly rural States, as it relates to LVERs and DVOPs. I was able to actually provide that flexibility about a month ago to allow them to better manage DVOPs and LVERs.

The second issue is the one that you asked me about that constantly comes up in every State whether it is a large State like California, or Texas, or small State, like Maine or Massachusetts.

The funding is an issue. It is a timing issue. JVSG is the biggest funding program, and money goes directly back to the States. And when Congress doesn't pass a budget on time, that causes concerns for the States. And some of the solutions that actually have come up when I talk to folks is, how can we close that gap, because what is happening with some States is they are not hiring DVOPs and LVERs, not knowing whether Congress will provide the funding, or when it provides it. And the solutions that some States have proposed is to either put the JVSG program, similar to other DOL programs, like the Wagner Piazza on a program year, that is one option.

Another option that has come up is dealing with advanced appropriations. For a State like California, for instance, California receives \$19 million for JVSG funding. And if they do not get the funding on time on a monthly basis, I believe it is probably a little over \$1.5 million. So it is an issue.

When I was in Colorado, I actually had a roundtable discussion with Congressman Lamborn. That issue came up in Colorado as well. I know Congressman Lamborn was going to look into it.

Mr. MCNERNEY. Thank you.

Mr. MICHAUD. We look forward to working with the Committee to help.

Mr. MCNERNEY. Find solutions.

Mr. MICHAUD. Find a solution.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Howell and Mr. Acosta, I few years ago, I think there was a feeling that some of the veterans were feeling discriminated against because of concerns about post-traumatic stress and other sorts of stigmas. Is that a problem or has that more or less dissipated? And if not, what can we do about that together?

Mr. ACOSTA. Thank you. That is a wonderful question. PTSD of course is a prevalent problem among—an issue among veterans, wounded and ill veterans, disabled veterans especially. Those veterans are focused on and looked at the VA health care system, and they are treated there.

As far as their needs, we can assess their needs when they come in and talk to us and determine what is best going to be the outcome for them, and what kind of resources we can shed light on for them.

Mr. MCNERNEY. Are employers sort of stigmatizing, and maybe discriminating against veterans for that sort of fear—for fear of that sort of problem?

Mr. HOWELL. That was a concern we had—pardon me for jumping in here. Thank you for the question—that was a concern that we had a number of years ago as—especially when we kind of peaked on the unemployment. We worked with DAV and other organizations to get a lot of content, a lot of information out there

to try to destigmatize that to kind of put it in the real terms that it isn't a danger that an employer has to necessarily prepare for or plan for or be aware of. I think that over time, that we have seen that conversation wane with our discussions with employers. It didn't seem to be at the forefront of their concerns like it may have been a few years ago.

So while I don't think there is an active thing we can do, it is just a matter of keeping it out on the open and talking about it, and kind of taking the stigma away from it in our conversations, both here and outside.

Mr. MCNERNEY. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. WENSTRUP. I thank you. I am curious as to maybe on that very topic that Mr. McNerney brought up, maybe employment and a sense of purpose reduces some of the symptoms of PTSD. We may find that it may change the dynamic and actually be helping rather than being a concern. Anecdotally at least, that may be the case. Hopefully that is the case, and we can continue that.

Before we close, I ask unanimous consent that LinkedIn's annual veterans' inside report be included in today's hearing record. Hearing no objection, so ordered.

Mr. WENSTRUP. And I want to thank you all for your testimony today. I think this was an outstanding hearing. And I appreciate your thoughtful responses to our questions today. I appreciate everything that each of you is doing to connect veterans to meaningful jobs as they exit the military. All your hard work is paying off as the national unemployment rate amongst veterans continues to decrease. As was said earlier, and I think we would all agree, that we as a country still have more work to do to ensure that all the men and women who have served this Nation, and want a meaningful career after uniform are able to do so.

I look forward to our continued partnership going forward, and I hope that all levels of government and the private sector continue to collaborate to help veteran job seekers across this country.

Finally, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks, and include any extraneous material on today's hearing. Without objection so ordered. The hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:45 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

Prepared Statement of Michael H. Michaud

Introduction

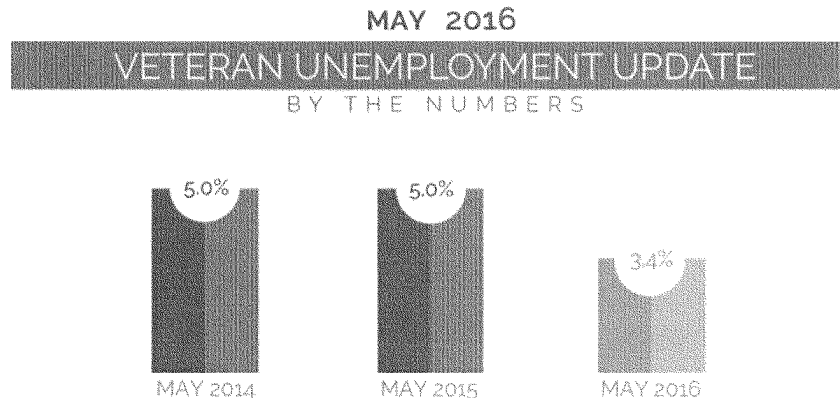
Good afternoon Chairman Wenstrup, Ranking Member Takano, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's hearing. As Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans' Employment and Training, I am excited to report on Department of Labor (DOL or the Department) efforts to provide better services that lead to improved employment outcomes for our Nation's veterans.

I want to take this moment to personally thank every member of this Subcommittee and the Committee for their strong support of our armed forces, our veterans, and their families. I have been in this job for six months, and I greatly appreciate that we are all partners in promoting opportunities for veterans and in protecting their rights. Thank you.

I am especially excited to inform you about our new 24/7 online resource, VETERANS.GOV. VETERANS.GOV is a critical resource that will help connect veterans and their spouses to civilian employment as well as employers seeking to hire veterans and their spouses. I will discuss this in more detail later in my testimony.

Through the collective and sustained efforts and partnerships of many public and private organizations, the employment situation for veterans continues to improve and veterans' unemployment rates are trending down.

The unemployment rate for veterans has fallen from a high of 9.9% in January 2011 to 3.4% in May 2016; lower than the nonveteran unemployment rate of 4.4% in May 2016. The chart on the next page shows that this is considerable improvement from this time in previous years.



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2016 Employment Update

While the overall veteran unemployment rate continues to trend lower, we at DOL will not rest until all veterans have access to meaningful civilian employment. DOL is fully committed to supporting veterans of all ages. In addition to supporting veterans under 25 and those approximately 200,000 Service members who transition to veteran status every year, we also make sure that veterans over 45 have the sup-

port they need for employment success. Among the 495,000 unemployed veterans in 2015, 57% of them were age 45 and over.

As I mentioned, the overall declining rates are the result of the integrated efforts of many public, private, and nonprofit organizations to connect veterans with employers and, perhaps most importantly, the result of our veterans once in a workplace, proving to be valuable employees.

The mission of the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) is to prepare America's veterans, Service members, and their spouses for rewarding careers, provide them with employment resources and expertise, protect their employment rights, and promote their employment opportunities. Before I go further, I would like to take this opportunity to mention that other agencies share DOL's commitment to improve employment opportunities for our veterans. One example is the Department of Agriculture, whose Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 Budget includes several programs to assist veterans.

We are working hard to improve our performance in support of our veterans, customers, stakeholders, and partners alike. Our efforts have contributed to improved employment outcomes for veterans and strong interagency collaborations. While we recognize there are challenges and much work ahead of us, we seek continued improvement with an approach to build and sustain partnerships and programs that focus on the following key areas:

- Engaging our Service members before they transition into civilian life;
- Providing a lifetime of employment support to our veterans, from the Gulf War II era veterans who have recently transitioned to previous-era veterans who have been out of uniform for many years;
- Engaging and mobilizing communities to establish collaborative partnerships to better support veterans nationwide;
- Ending homelessness for veterans;
- Addressing the skill gap between veterans and employers who are seeking employees with industry recognized credentials and helping veterans receive occupational, classroom and on-the-job training; and
- Conducting employer outreach to make it easier for companies to find and hire veterans by leveraging federal, state, and local resources.

Pre-Transition: Proactive Engagement with Transitioning Service Members

Erik, a United States Marine (Active Reservist), used tips and skill builders from the DOL Employment Workshop Participant Guide and contacted Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist Earl Thompson at an American Job Center (AJC) in Utah. Earl provided one-on-one coaching and helped Erik translate his military skills, develop a resume, and prepare for an interview. Erik quickly landed a job as a Security Monitor at Vivint, a military-friendly smart home technology provider, and his military experience helped him secure a wage that increases upon completion of his initial work period.

During the peak of the veteran unemployment crisis in 2011, the President established the Veterans' Employment Initiative (VEI) Task Force to ensure the career readiness of transitioning Service members. The Task Force consists of joint representation from DOL, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Department of Defense (DoD), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Department of Education (ED), the Small Business Administration (SBA), and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The President approved the Task Force's plan to strengthen and build upon the existing Transition Assistance Program (TAP) aimed at providing separating Service members and their spouses with the training and support they need to transition successfully to the civilian workforce.

We have provided previous testimony on the evolution of TAP, particularly on the improvements to the DOL Employment Workshop. In conjunction with the TAP Senior Steering Group Curriculum Working Group, VETS completed a full review of the DOL Employment Workshop curriculum in FY 2016. The new curriculum was implemented on April 1, 2016. DOL engaged industry representatives and veteran services organizations to participate in the curriculum review to ensure we leveraged expertise external to the Agency. Additionally, Service members from six military installations who were participating in the DOL Employment Workshop were interviewed and all Service member participant survey data was reviewed. In FY 2017, a new biennial review cycle will begin. Year one of the cycle calls for a technical review, in which the Agency ensures all names and sources of references (websites, resources, etc.) remain up-to-date. As FY 2017 closes, VETS will prepare for year two, which is a full-scale curriculum review and update.

Another important component of the revised TAP is the implementation of the Military Life Cycle (MLC) model. MLC will initiate a Service member's transition preparation at the onset of their military career (both Active Duty and Guard/Reserve). The model outlines key points in time, or "touch points," throughout a Service member's career to align their military career with their civilian career goals. It promotes awareness of the Career Readiness Standards Service members must meet long before separating from Active Duty and enables transition to become a well-planned, organized progression of skill building and career readiness preparation.

In order to better support the MLC and ensure that the first time military leaders learn about transition resources is not when they themselves are separating from active duty, VETS implemented the Senior Sergeant Major Fellow Professional Military Education (PME) Initiative. This Initiative involves a U.S. Army Sergeant Major acting at VETS as a Senior Military Fellow on a full-time, one-year rotational basis.

Additionally, VETS established a formal relationship and routine presence at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy. This effort includes a mutual academic relationship, in which students of the academy's Sergeants Major Course conduct staff studies on the MLC and transitioning Service member programs, presenting their results in a formal briefing to DOL VETS leadership each semester. This is a great opportunity for both organizations as it enables future senior enlisted leaders to interact with another federal agency and provides DOL insight and best practices from senior leaders in the Army. VETS is seeking to extend this collaboration to the other military services.

VETS' engagement in support of transitioning Service members and their families is not limited to the Employment Workshop. The following Service members are some of the populations eligible to receive intensive services from DVOP specialists: Service members who are referred via a Capstone "warm handover" or those who have not met Career Readiness Standards (CRS); all transitioning Service members 18–24 years old, regardless of whether they meet CRS; and active duty Service members being involuntarily separated through a service reduction-in-force. Additionally, those Service members who are wounded ill, or injured and receiving treatment in military treatment facilities or warrior transition units as well as their spouses or other family caregivers may also receive intensive services from a DVOP specialist.

Additionally, military spouses who are unable to continue employment due to permanent change of station orders or as the result of military deployment, and certain transitioning Service members within six months of separation are eligible to receive employment and training assistance under the Department's National Dislocated Worker Program.

DOL supports the opportunities under the DoD SkillBridge initiative that promotes DoD's authority to offer civilian job training to transitioning Service members. Service members meeting certain qualifications can participate in civilian job and employment training, including Registered Apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and internships in their last 180 days of active duty. Tremendous potential exists for Service members, companies, trade unions, and others to leverage this new DoD authority and smooth the path from active duty to civilian employment.

In addition to the above outreach efforts, DOL is working with the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) program to assist reserve Service members with identifying and connecting with AJCs while providing local staff the opportunity to benefit from relationships with military-friendly employers that ESGR has cultivated over the years. ESGR will continue to grow its partnerships with the DOL's AJCs, Service-based hiring programs, and state-based hiring initiatives to fulfill the employment information and referral mission. To date, five states (Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, and Iowa) have moved forward with the project, while all states have assessed their existing partnerships to serve our valued reserve component Service members and families.

DOD's Office of Warrior Care Policy (OWCP) ensures recovering wounded, ill, injured, and transitioning members of the Armed Forces receive equitable, consistent, and high-quality support and services. OWCP helps our wounded warriors and their families through effective collaboration efforts, pro-active communication, responsive policy, and program oversight. VETS is honored to support this organization and those they serve. We provide information briefings to their Regional Care Coordinators to ensure that the wounded warriors and their families are aware of the personalized employment services provided at AJCs nationwide.

In 2013, DOL signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) to launch a nation-wide Financial Literacy Coaching Program for transitioning Service members and spouses. The program is a joint effort

between DOL and the CFPB to place specially trained coaches in select AJCs to provide financial advice to recently separated veterans. Under the Program, CFPB has placed financial coaches at a total of 60 AJCs.

As part of the agency's Veterans Data Exchange Initiative (VDEI), VETS has worked with DoD's Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) to develop a "first-of-its-kind" Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreement to transfer several years of exiting military Service member data to DOL for analysis. VETS has engaged the DOL's Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) in the development of a system to securely store and analyze the Service member data which includes demographic and service-related characteristics of separated Service members. With the MOU completed, VETS is working with DMDC to transfer the first data and begin initial analysis in the coming months. This aggregated data and analysis will assist VETS in our policy development to better support veterans' employment and training needs and improve outcomes.

Outside the Federal government, VETS' staff participate at hiring events nationwide including sitting on panels and conducting "American Job Center: Path to Veteran Employment" workshops at the transition summits cohosted by DoD and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation Hiring Our Heroes program. DOL works closely with Hiring Our Heroes staff, Service representatives and Service organizations such as Soldier For Life (SFL) and Marine For Life (M4L) to communicate with Service members and connect them to DOL resources before they separate from active duty.

VETS will continue to focus on our proactive engagement of our Service members before they transition into civilian life with effective engagement and services that lead to meaningful employment.

Post Transition and the American Job Center Network

Bradley, after serving ten years in the United States Army as a Military Police Officer, found the civilian job market to be much different from when he first enlisted. After an initial visit to an AJC in Las Vegas, NV, he received help updating his resume and translating his military skills into a format that would be attractive to employers. Bradley is now a Regional Representative in the Las Vegas office of U.S. Senator Dean Heller.

The public workforce system includes a nationwide network of nearly 2,500 AJCs, a network operated in partnership by Local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs), State Workforce Agencies (SWAs), and DOL (primarily the Employment and Training Administration - ETA) and is the next natural step for our transitioning Service members when they complete the DOL Employment Workshop component of TAP. Veterans receive priority of service at AJCs.

VETS' Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) Program provides funding to 54 states and territories for DVOP specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) staff, located in AJCs. DVOP specialists provide intensive services to veterans and eligible populations, including homeless and formerly incarcerated veterans, through individualized case management. This includes comprehensive and specialized assessments of skill levels and needs, development of individual employment plans, group and individual career counseling and planning, and short-term skills development (such as interview and communication skills). LVER staff promotes the hiring of veterans in communities through outreach activities that build relationships with local employers, and provide training to workforce center staff to facilitate the provision of services to veterans.

We have improved the Intensive Service rate as well as employment placement rate for all veterans served by JVSG. The percent of JVSG participants receiving intensive services has increased from 22 percent in FY 2010 to 85.7 percent in FY 2016 as of March 31, 2016 - half-way through the fiscal year. For the same time period, the entered employment rate for JVSG participants increased from 48 percent to 59.5 percent. Further, the employment retention rate of JVSG participants, or those who retained employment six months after program exit, has increased from 74 percent in FY 2010 to 82.3 percent, and the average six-month earnings of these participants rose from \$14,751 to \$16,697.

I have made it a point in my first six months in office to visit JVSG programs in over a dozen states and in all of DOL's regions around the country. Last month, I also had the opportunity to visit the National Veterans' Training Institute in Denver, CO to observe the training program for JVSG-funded staff (including DVOP specialists and LVERs).

State Partnerships

VETS has continual interaction with the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA). They provided state information for our VETERANS.GOV website and have assisted in evaluating our training programs for LVERs and DVOP specialists. DOL also sponsored a recently published study conducted by the National Governors Association (NGA), entitled “Veterans’ Licensing and Certification Demonstration and Cost Study: A Summary of State Experiences, Preliminary Findings, and Cost Estimates,” (hereinafter referred to as the DOL L&C Demonstration and Cost Study) on which we testified before this Subcommittee in September 2015. I will provide additional information about the report later in this testimony. We are also engaged with the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) which will be engaging state legislatures to consider the recommendations of the DOL L&C Demonstration and Cost Study.

Representatives from the NASWA, NGA, and NCSL are all members of VETS’ Advisory Committee on Veterans’ Employment, Training and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO). ACVETEO is a Congressionally-mandated advisory committee authorized under Section 4110 of Title 38, U.S. Code, and is subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). The ACVETEO: Assesses the employment and training needs of veterans and their integration into the workforce; determines the extent to which the programs and activities of DOL are meeting such needs; assists me in carrying out outreach activities to employers with respect to the training and skills of veterans and the advantages afforded employers by hiring veterans; and makes recommendations to the Secretary, through me, with respect to outreach activities and employment and training needs of veterans. The recommendations of ACVETEO will help DOL promote opportunities for veterans and their spouses, and VETS continues to track progress on the recommendations submitted in the FY 2015 ACVETEO Annual Report to Congress.

Outreach Through the Web and Digital Media

Because our veteran clients and stakeholders requested it, VETS now provides a 24/7 online resource easily accessible to all veterans as well as to employers who want to hire veterans. On May 1, 2016, VETS officially launched VETERANS.GOV. The site is designed to be the virtual “first stop” for veterans, transitioning Service members, and their spouses in the employment search process - and for employers in the hiring process. The site brings together job banks, state employment offices, AJCs, opportunities in top trending industry sectors, and employer assistance all in one online spot. There also are links to several platforms that veterans can use to help translate their military skills into skills for the civilian workforce. We are leveraging the Department’s Facebook and Twitter accounts as part of our efforts to reach veterans and their families. For veterans, Service members and their spouses looking for their first civilian job after the military, wanting a career change, or hoping to start their own business, VETERANS.GOV is a critical resource that will help connect veterans and their spouses to civilian employment. We believe this new website will be very useful to veterans and their families, and it is another sign of the Department of Labor’s commitment to assist veterans and transitioning Service members in every way possible with training and other opportunities to find meaningful employment and build bright futures for their families.

Our federal partners also are represented on VETERANS.GOV to assist the respective agencies’ veteran employment efforts and to advocate careers in their respective employment sector. On the VETERANS.GOV landing page, there are links to the SBA, and Departments of Agriculture, Transportation, Homeland Security, and Energy’s veteran pages as well as a link to OPM’s Feds for Vets page that provides information on how to apply for a federal job. As an example of federal and state coordination, users can click on a map of the United States on VETERANS.GOV to quickly receive state-specific veteran employment information. In addition to VETERANS.GOV, the Department also maintains a mobile app, CareerOneStop Mobile, available on both Apple and Android devices. CareerOneStop Mobile provides veterans and non-veterans alike on-the-go access to many of the tools found on VETERANS.GOV such as job banks, military-to-civilian skills translation, local training opportunities, salary data, and an AJC finder.

VA & DOL Partnership

DOL and VA are working closely to ensure our respective services complement each other so that veterans are better served. Our agencies agree that the successful readjustment of veterans with disabilities into the civilian workforce is a mutual responsibility and concern. VA’s Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E)

Service and VETS have focused since 1995 on improving services for our shared veteran clients. A unified team approach between VA VR&E, VETS, and State Workforce Agency (SWA) staff, documented through Memoranda of Understanding, is fundamental to a seamless, positive experience for Chapter 31 veterans as they move through evaluation, training, job search, and employment. A true partnership capitalizes on the strengths of the involved agencies and fosters the ideals of exemplary customer service.

VETS and VA routinely update their MOU regarding service protocols for veterans served under the VR&E program. The most recent MOU and Technical Assistance Guide (TAG) were published in February and April of 2015. The DOL VETS and VA VR&E Joint Working Group (JWG) recently mandated that VETS, VA VR&E, and SWA staffs develop local MOUs to facilitate communication and share information between agencies. A key component of this project is VA's referral of veterans found to be entitled to Chapter 31 benefits to their SWA and AJCs for Labor Market Information. This information is essential in tailoring their individual rehabilitation plans prior to entering training. A second referral to AJCs occurs near the end of the veteran's training program when the AJC provides employment services to achieve better employment post-training outcomes. The JWG is updating earlier guidance to now direct the majority of referrals, with some exceptions, of Chapter 31 veterans to AJCs.

The AJCs also assist in providing Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEAs) to transitioning veterans who receive Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Servicemembers (UCX), as well as claimants who have been identified as most likely to exhaust their unemployment insurance benefits and are in need of reemployment services. The Budget also includes almost \$190 million to provide in-person reemployment services to Unemployment Insurance (UI) beneficiaries most at risk of exhausting their benefits, as well as all returning veterans who are receiving UI. Evidence suggests these services are a cost-effective strategy that gets workers back into jobs faster with higher wages.

Women Veterans

Our VETS Women Veteran Program (WVP) monitors the overlapping considerations of working women and working veterans, makes policy recommendations as appropriate, and conducts public engagement to ensure DOL's employment services are meeting the needs of women veterans. Based on WVP analysis and recommendations, the definition of homeless as a Significant Barrier to Employment for JVSJG services was expanded, in 2015, to include persons fleeing domestic violence. To address the lack of awareness of VETS free employment services among women veterans and confusion related to eligibility for services, the WVP continues to promote the Free Employment Assistance for Women Veterans Webinar, available at <http://www.dol.gov/vets/womenveterans>.

WVP also serves in an advisory role on the status of women veterans and employment for VA's Advisory Committee on Women Veterans and interagency workgroups including the White House Council on Women and Girls - Women Veteran Working Group. The WVP also maintains collaborative relationships with VA's Center for Women Veterans, Center for Minority Veterans, Office of Rural Health, and non-profit organizations that also provide services to women veterans and others to ensure that service providers and other influencers of women veterans are educated on the full suite of employment services that their women veteran clientele may need.

Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act

In addition to these extensive and personalized employment resources available to veterans through the AJCs, the Department protects veterans' employment and reemployment rights by administering and helping enforce the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA), 38 U.S.C. 4301–4335. We have testified many times before this sub-committee on the USERRA program and provide a report annually to Congress enumerating our cases and outcomes. VETS is particularly proud of the strong customer service it provides to its stakeholders through these investigations—which was supported by the GAO's findings in its November 2014 report. VETS seeks to continually improve the services it provides to Service members, veterans, and employers. To that end, VETS implemented this year a customer satisfaction survey similar to that used in the U.S. Office of Special Counsel-VETS demonstration project in order to better identify best practices and areas for improvement.

Unemployment Among Homeless Veterans

Doug is a 53 year old male who served on Active Duty as a rifleman in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1981 to 1984. After discharge, Doug found himself homeless and unemployed after years of substance abuse. An HVRP Jobs Coordinator first met him when he was living in an emergency shelter for homeless veterans in Hempstead, NY. Doug was referred to HVRP grantee Beacon House for employment training. During this time he completed his outpatient treatment and a 6-week course given by VA for training to become a house manager for group homes. Doug was offered and accepted a position as a house manager in the Grant and Per Diem Program at Beacon House. He more recently was promoted to the position as Director of Housing for Beacon House. During his employment with Beacon House, Doug received his Associates Degree in Science, got married and now lives in his own home in New York.

The Department is committed to the Administration's goal of ending homelessness among veterans. Our Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) addresses unemployment among one of the most vulnerable veteran populations, those who are homeless. VETS administers the HVRP to provide employment and training services to homeless veterans so that they can be reintegrated into the labor force, and to stimulate the development of effective service delivery systems which address the complex problems homeless veterans face. The HVRP is the only nationwide federal program focusing exclusively on helping homeless veterans to reintegrate into the workforce.

In the last full program year, VETS' HVRP grantees placed 69% of the veterans they served into employment. The FY 2017 President's Budget includes a nearly \$12 million increase for HVRP and related programs from \$38.1M to \$50M. If Congress increases the HVRP appropriation to \$50 million, VETS estimates the number of veterans served could increase from approximately 17,000 homeless veterans to approximately 22,000 homeless veterans.

Beginning in Program Year 2016 (July 1, 2016), VETS is requiring all grantees serving homeless veterans to co-enroll participants in the public workforce system through the local AJC while they are receiving services through VETS' homeless veterans program grantees. The expectation is to create a sustainable partnership in which participants' employment needs are met. The heart of the public workforce system is the AJC, the access point for employers to qualified workers and the access point for veterans to the employment and related services they need to find meaningful employment.

Community Engagement

After Service members transition from military service, they relocate to communities across the nation. I believe the long term key to veteran employment support is to engage and mobilize communities to establish collaborative partnerships with coordinated, community-based support to veterans, Service members and their families. VETS supports the MyVA Community Model that includes Community Veterans Engagement Boards (CVEBs) that bring together local resources and capabilities to improve outcomes for veterans, transitioning Service members, and those who support them. As we continue to enhance our national workforce system engagement and veteran employment efforts across the nation, we acknowledge the importance of VA's existing national and local partnerships. VA expects to see 100 MyVA Communities throughout the country by the end of this year as a result of ongoing engagements with community leaders and existing groups with similar missions. The goal is to seek integration with existing community collaborative groups, and encourage local community leaders to adopt the MyVA Communities model where gaps may exist.

Because Local Workforce Development Boards (LWBDs) oversee their local AJCs, we believe it is imperative that LWBD representatives are members of the CVEBs. This relationship ensures that the workforce development system is integrated into the community model. Our VETS State Directors (DVETS) are connecting with the local VA Regional Office Director or local VA representatives to be part of the MyVA Community movement and are working to connect our state workforce system partners and local WDBs with the existing local CVEBs.

DOL and VA share a common mission to improve economic outcomes and opportunities for our nation's veterans. Leveraging our existing state workforce system and the nearly 2,500 AJCs in communities across the Nation will strengthen the community-based support to our veterans and their families.

DOL's Center for Faith-Based & Neighborhood Partnerships (CFBNP), another community engagement program, reaches out to faith-based groups, community organizations, and neighborhood leaders to provide information and seek input on the important work that DOL performs on behalf of workers and job seekers. CFBNP

seeks to build lasting community partnerships between these groups and DOL's workforce development and worker protection agencies. The CFBNP focuses its efforts on worker protection, job club initiatives, and grant partnerships, many of which focus on meeting the needs of veterans. These initiatives allow this community of practice to better serve disadvantaged and underserved workers and job seekers.

Addressing the Skill Gap

I had the honor of meeting a class of Marines at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, CA that were taking part in the Veterans in Piping program. This class was made up of a few Marines that had a military specialty related to welding, but many of them also had Military Occupational Specialty backgrounds in logistics, infantry and motor transport. This nationwide initiative graduates students into a solid private-sector job with good pay and benefits, and continuing education through world-class apprenticeship training programs.

I have spoken to many employers and industry associations who want to hire transitioning Service members and veterans, but often the job seeker does not have an industry recognized credential required by the employer. Leveraging DOL's federal and state resources to effectively address this "skill gap" through training and education will lead to better employment outcomes for transitioning Service members, veterans and their spouses. VETS' focus is to leverage Registered Apprenticeship and On-the-Job Training (OJT) Programs, and to accelerate the attainment of licenses or certification requirements for veterans with appropriate skills and experience attained during military training and service.

VETS works very closely with ETA to engage businesses and stakeholders on advancing apprenticeships and OJT opportunities for veterans. Work-based training, including Registered Apprenticeship and OJT, is a critical component of the Administration's job-driven training strategy - a strategy to ensure workforce training programs combine strong employer engagement with high quality training to create pathways for workers into high-growth occupations. The goal is to provide millions of Americans with secure jobs that lead to long-term employment with good wages and that meet employers' needs for skilled workers.

Registered apprenticeships are among the surest pathways to provide American workers from all backgrounds with the skills and knowledge they need to acquire good-paying jobs and grow the economy. The "earn and learn" Registered Apprenticeship training model provides the opportunity for workers seeking high-skilled, high-paying jobs to be placed with employers seeking to build a qualified workforce.

We believe Registered Apprenticeships are a proven strategy for veterans to advance into productive careers. Approximately 37,000 veterans are actively participating in Registered Apprenticeships, in 2014, and 2,200 veteran apprentices completed their apprenticeship in the 25 states managed by DOL. The employment outcomes for Registered Apprenticeship programs are impressive. In fact, according to DOL data, 91 percent of apprentices are employed after completing their programs, with an average starting wage above \$50,000. Apprenticeships have also been shown to increase a worker's lifetime compensation by over \$300,000 compared to their peers. Apprenticeships are good for employers as well. The return on investment (ROI) for employers is also impressive - international studies suggest that for every dollar spent on apprenticeship, employers may get an average of \$1.47 back in increased productivity, reduced waste and greater front-line innovation. And, for the United States, the ROI on apprenticeships is even better—for every public dollar spent on apprenticeship, we see \$27 in benefits.¹

Expanding apprenticeship programs expands opportunities for our veterans. President Obama has set a goal of doubling the number of Registered Apprenticeships in the coming years. And we're already making substantial progress toward that goal - adding more than 80,000 apprenticeships in a little over two years, the largest increase in a decade. The Administration also made a historic investment of \$175 Million to 46 public-private partnerships to build on the solid foundation of apprenticeship in America, and expand the model into new industries -like health care, IT and advanced manufacturing. We anticipate this investment will create approximately 34,000 new apprenticeships - creating additional opportunities for our transitioning Service members, veterans, and spouses.

I was very pleased that Congress appropriated \$90 million to expand apprenticeship opportunities in FY2016. This infusion of resources will be the catalyst for

¹ Source: Reed, D. et. al. (July 25, 2012). An effectiveness assessment and cost-benefit analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States. Retrieved from <http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/FullText—Documents/ETAOP—2012—10.pdf>

building opportunities for employers to start to expand registered apprenticeship programs and for workers to gain the skills they need to succeed.

VETS has focused on greater outreach to companies that wish to hire veterans in apprenticeships, and collaborated across the government - including with VA and ETA - to ensure that veterans can succeed in apprenticeship opportunities and receive the benefits they've earned under the GI Bill.

Eligible Post 9-11 veterans can learn a trade through apprenticeships and use their GI Bill benefits to receive a tax-free monthly stipend paid by VA. This stipend gradually decreases as veterans' wages regularly increase throughout the Registered Apprenticeship period and ends once the veteran attains journeyman status and pay. Post-9/11 GI Bill recipients can also receive a books and supplies stipend during their Registered Apprenticeship. This is a vital way to help veterans meet their expenses while in a training program.

The Department thought that we could do better to help both companies and veterans learn about the benefits that the GI Bill can provide in a Registered Apprenticeship and two years ago began a joint campaign with VA to encourage Registered Apprenticeships to be "Approved for the GI Bill." We continue this close collaboration with VA and its State Approving Agencies - to ensure that newly-Registered Apprenticeship programs can receive the VA certification for GI Bill benefits at the same time of registration.

The Department's expanded outreach to employers has motivated companies from several industry sectors to have their apprenticeship programs approved and registered with DOL. They join the family of approximately 20,000 apprenticeship programs across the country that are training over 450,000 apprentices nationwide for jobs in demand - while securing a thriving and skilled workforce for the future.

Licensing and credentialing also are a key part of the Administration's overall job training agenda. This month, the Department released its "Veterans' Licensing and Certification Demonstration: A Summary of State Experiences, Preliminary Findings, and Cost Estimates," (hereinafter referred to as the DOL L&C Demonstration and Cost Study). The purpose of the DOL-sponsored 18-month demonstration project conducted by the National Governor's Association (NGA) was to identify civilian occupational skills for licenses or certification requirements that could be satisfied (in whole, or in part) by military training and experience; and accelerate the attainment of civilian credentials by veterans with appropriate skills and experience. Section 237 of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, which amended 38 USC 4114, required VETS to conduct a cost study on occupational credentialing and licensing. The study required VETS to examine the costs incurred by DoD for military occupational skills training and compare them with the costs expended by DOL and VA for the job training and educational assistance provided to Service members.

The NGA engaged six states (Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Nevada, Virginia, and Wisconsin) to participate in the 18-month study. The NGA worked with the six demonstration states to: 1) design and implement a model or framework for matching state-specific license and credentialing requirements with some or all of the military training to satisfy state requirements; 2) address gaps for subsequent civilian training through state strategies; and 3) identify and compare the training and employment-related costs after military service.

The DOL L&C Demonstration and Cost Study identifies a number of barriers that affect the ability of Service members and veterans to attain civilian credentials on a timely basis. Key state demonstration findings on challenges and strategies for licensing and credentialing address:

- Equivalency challenges - states can assess the equivalency of military training courses and use official documentation to permit veterans with fully or partially equivalent training and experience to sit for civilian licensure examinations or license veterans by endorsement (officially recognize military training and experience to meet civilian requirements).
- Training gaps - states can work with education institutions to set up accelerated programs for veterans that bridge gaps, provide veterans advanced standing in existing programs, or offer bridge courses that prepare veterans to enter existing programs.
- Administrative or process challenges - states can assess any non-skill related requirements that might disadvantage veterans, such as fees or length of experience, or take steps to make civilian employment pathways friendlier to veterans through concerted outreach to both

Given the vast array of possible occupational skills sets to study, and multitude of state licensing boards and higher education programs, VETS and ETA in consultation with demonstration states and the DOD and VA determined that the estimation of costs to transitioning Service members and veterans for attainment of ci-

vilian licenses and credentials could be examined at the benefits level for veterans. The NGA consulted with the demonstration states to conduct an analysis of federal costs associated with the demonstration states efforts. These potential cost savings include:

- Less time spent in training can lead to potential deferred federal government costs in the form of fewer dollars expended by VA under the Post-9/11 GI Bill for tuition and monthly housing allowance benefits;
- Less time spent securing employment can lead to potential cost savings for the federal government in the form of fewer dollars expended by the DOD for Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Service members (UCX) benefits and by the DOL for the delivery of employment services.

Moving forward, the Department plans to continue working with its federal/state partners and stakeholders to continue to improve the challenges veterans face with licensing and certification. The Department thanks the six states in the report for their work and will reach out to the remaining states to encourage them to incorporate the best practices to help veterans bridge the gap between skills they have learned in the military and those needed for state certifications.

In addition, this year the Department plans to award \$7.5 million to support one or a few national or regional organizations to form and work with consortia of states to examine licensing portability across state lines. States in the consortia will objectively analyze the relevant licensing criteria, potential portability issues, whether licensing requirements are overly broad or burdensome, and the impact occupational licensing requirements may have on Service members, veterans, and their families.

Employer Outreach

VETS has initiated a robust employer outreach effort to make it easier for companies to find and hire veterans by leveraging federal, state, and local resources.

VETS' Office of Strategic Outreach (OSO) was chartered to develop a National-to-Local engagement and integration strategy that informs and coordinates action among government, private sector and local communities to enhance veterans' employment opportunities and leverage the national workforce system. OSO conducts engagements with federal, state, and local governments; private sector employers and trade associations; institutions of higher learning; non-profit organizations; and veteran service organizations to establish and develop a network that enables Service members, veterans, and families to successfully integrate into their communities. VETS also works closely with Joining Forces; organizations such as "Warriors for Wireless," "Troops to Truckers" and "Helmets to Hardhats"; and various trade associations and labor unions in developing industry-wide veteran hiring initiatives, to include apprenticeship programs. This office provides a valuable bridge between national and regional employers who are eager to commit to hiring veterans and workforce development staff at AJC who are tasked with building local employer relationships and assisting veterans in entering gainful employment.

VETS has actualized the regional-to-local portion of the engagement and integration strategy by placing six Regional Veteran Employment Coordinators (RVECs) at our Regional Offices nationwide. The RVECs coordinate National-to-Local employment resources and expertise, through outreach to businesses, employer groups, veterans' organizations, state workforce partners and government agencies to promote veterans' employment and training opportunities. The partnerships and working relationships initiated and developed to facilitate veteran employment have been significant, with nearly 600 employers now actively engaged in veteran hiring initiatives. In addition, OSO staff work with other federal departments to build veteran recruiting initiatives around entire business sectors through the Departments of Energy, Transportation, and Agriculture. As this capability matures OSO will increase its promotion of programs that help bridge the skills gap for veterans looking for civilian employment.

VETS is working closely with federal and state partners to provide coordinated information and services to job seekers and employers as we seek to continually facilitate and develop meaningful employment and training opportunities for transitioning Service members, veterans and military families. VETERANS.GOV enables employers to directly contact a RVEC to request assistance in hiring veterans.

Conclusion

VETS is committed to reducing veterans' unemployment nationally by helping each veteran through individual services - or as Secretary Perez likes to say, "Helping each veteran where we find them." Creating opportunities for our veterans,

transitioning Service members, and their families to thrive in the civilian economy through meaningful employment is a priority for VETS, for DOL, and for the entire Administration. VETS will continue to work with these partners to strengthen TAP and promote civilian recognition for skills gained in the military; to build strong partnerships with the state workforce agencies and the nearly 2,500 AJCs through JVSG and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA); and to work with employers of all sizes - from large national employers to small and medium sized businesses that are the backbone of America's economy, to help them hire veterans. By bringing together our partners for this important mission, VETS is helping to lead the way for our veterans to find meaningful civilian employment today and tomorrow.

Prepared Statement of Eric Eversole

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation (USCCF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce dedicated to strengthening America's long-term competitiveness by addressing developments that affect our nation, our economy, and the global business environment. USCCF presents a broad range of programs that promote a greater understanding of economic and public affairs issues.

The Foundation conducts research and produces events on issues facing business now and in the future. Through its initiatives, the Foundation builds skills, drives innovation, and encourages growth.

Good afternoon, Chairman Wenstrup, Ranking Member Takano, and distinguished members of the Committee. My name is Eric Eversole and I am the president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring Our Heroes program.

Founded in 2011, Hiring Our Heroes is a nationwide initiative of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation which assists military veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses in finding meaningful employment opportunities in a 21st century workforce. The program accomplishes this goal in a number of different ways, which include hiring fairs, multi-day on-base transition summits, campaigns in partnership with sponsor companies and nonprofit associations, and a robust suite of online digital resources.

In March of this year, we celebrated our five-year anniversary, and we are proud to announce that since our program's launch, we have held more than 1,000 hiring events in the United States and around the world. From those hiring events alone, we've confirmed nearly 30,000 military veteran and spouse hires in the civilian workforce. This does not include the hundreds of thousands of other meaningful connections that our program has made for job seekers through our various other resources, such as workshops, training programs, our online properties and more.

The past several years have been a time of tremendous growth in the military hiring community, as private sector companies have admirably stepped up their hiring efforts for veterans and military spouses. When Hiring Our Heroes was first started more than five years ago, the employment outlook for veterans and military families was incredibly bleak. In many ways, the nation was in a crisis situation with regards to the employment struggles faced by so many individuals who had sacrificed so much for our country. However, with the business community meeting the challenge of finding jobs for this population, the unemployment rate for them has continued to drop precipitously.

This has resulted in what is currently the lowest unemployment rate yet for military veterans at approximately four percent. There are, however, segments of the military community which continue to struggle. For example, post-9/11 veterans under the age of 25 face an unemployment rate that is higher than the national average. Military spouses also face a high unemployment rate of anywhere between 20 and 30 percent, depending on the demographic. Couple that with the fact that more than 200,000 service members make the transition off of active duty annually, and it becomes very clear that there is still a great deal of work to be done.

We know that hiring veterans is not just the right thing to do for the country, but it makes good business sense. Veterans bring incredible value in both the tangible and intangible skills to companies who hire them, from extensive training backgrounds in their military occupational specialties to the less concrete characteristics such as loyalty, discipline, and a work ethic that is not rivaled elsewhere in the economy - all being crucial to a productive work environment.

We also recognize that this is not solely an economic issue for our country, but a national security concern. If young Americans believe that their service adds a stigma to them when entering the workforce and not an accolade, it will be more

difficult to recruit high-quality people into the next generation of the all-volunteer force.

BACKGROUND ON HIRING OUR HEROES

When Hiring Our Heroes was first created, we had a very simple mission - carry out traditional hiring events, and connect with state and local chambers to find opportunities for military job seekers across the country.

Although we know that some veterans and their families are still struggling, the landscape itself has changed, and we have had to adapt our operations in accordance with that change to continue our effectiveness in what we do. We've become more strategic in our approach and programs, and more focused on not only finding jobs for these individuals, but ensuring that they are finding the right jobs.

Knowing that part of this strategic approach encompasses a broad-based effort to engage the private sector, in 2012, together with Capital One, we launched the "Hiring 500,000 Heroes" campaign to secure half a million commitments by various employers to hire veterans and military spouses. Once businesses who joined this program committed, we worked with them to translate those commitments into hires. We're proud to say that in June of 2015, we surpassed the 500,000-hire mark for veterans and military spouses who were hired as a result of this initiative. Ultimately, companies have committed to hiring a total of more than 700,000 veterans and spouses as part of this.

Hiring Our Heroes also developed and continued to improve our robust array of digital tools and online resources for both job seekers and employers. With support from our generous sponsors, including Toyota and USAA, we provide tools such as the Personal Branding Resume Engine, My Career Spark for military spouses, the Employer Roadmap, Fast Track, and others free of charge for all users, whether job seeker or employer. All of these state-of-the-art online tools are designed to ensure that our target audiences have easy access to the most up-to-date information and best practices when they enter into this unique and often challenging environment.

Lastly, we know that the military spouse population faces its own unique set of challenges when searching for employment. While a service member will typically only transition off of active duty once in his or her career, military spouses make multiple transitions while serving alongside their service member, making it all the more challenging to find stable and meaningful employment.

Our Military Spouse Program, which has been in place since 2012, is incredibly active in this community, engaging spouse-specific hiring fairs, networking receptions, roundtable discussions, workshops, and more.

Of course, we must recognize that all of our work is made possible by the generous donations of the companies on our Military Spouse Employment Advisory Council, to complement its counterpart, the Veteran Employment Advisory Council.

What Employers Can Do

Companies of all sizes approach our organization on a regular basis facing the issue of being incredibly enthusiastic about their desire to hire veterans, but not knowing exactly where to start.

For employers who are eager to get started but find themselves experiencing trouble navigating the complicated landscape of the military hiring community, we have a number of different programs and resources that they can engage and utilize. Our online tool Employer Roadmap is multi-faceted resource which gives companies a customized experience based on their experience level to help them learn best practices and programs for recruiting, hiring, and retaining veterans and military spouses. Information and guidance on how to develop complete military hiring strategies and military-friendly job descriptions, as well as understanding what the military community brings to companies in the way of experience is easily available through this wide-ranging web site.

Our Business and State Engagement department is our direct link into the business community, and works to engage our partner companies, as well as our expansive network of state and local chambers across the country to ensure that they are constantly dialed in to our program and have the access that they desire to military job seekers.

With the economic landscape looking better in the last year to veterans, there are some companies who may assume that the entire problem of veteran unemployment has been solved and ask: "What else is there to do?"

To answer that question, it is worth revisiting that while great strides have been made over the last several years, there still exists a significant struggle for certain segments of the veteran population to find employment. We encourage companies to start military affinity groups within their organizations, as we have seen that mentors, resource groups, and personal relationships are key to breaking down bar-

riers to success and critical to retaining veterans for longer periods of time. For some companies, this is a new concept, while others, such as Coca-Cola, have had longstanding veteran affinity groups and programs which date back decades.

Also, as mentioned earlier, our belief is that it is imperative for companies to not forget about military spouses when developing these internal initiatives. Simply put, if you have a military hiring strategy that focuses solely on veterans, you only have half of a strategy.

Additionally, we cannot stress enough the importance for companies to market, promote, and most importantly “sell” their industry to the military community. Many military job seekers have misperceptions or outdated concepts of what a certain industry may actually look and feel like in the 21st century. While we encourage them to reach outside their comfort zone and explore job opportunities with which they may not be familiar, it is crucial for companies to be active in this space to ensure the job seeker population is educated on what being a part of a certain job field actually means. Our digital resource Fast Track is a place for job seekers to inform themselves on new and fast-growing industries, as well as a platform for companies to post their jobs in a live feed fed through the National Labor Exchange.

Our combined effort to focus on both the job seeker education as well as the employer side will continue as our program evolves in the months and years ahead. And we will continue to position ourselves as leaders in this community to the further benefit of all of our target audiences.

Partnerships

Creating and maintaining valuable partnerships for our program has been crucial to our success. Hiring Our Heroes is in a unique position in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation to have influential connections to thousands of state and local chambers, which provides us with tremendously effective grassroots teams across the country to engage with military job seekers in their communities. The enormous impact that we have seen at every level has been extremely beneficial to our mission.

Our program has also been able to develop key partnerships with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the U.S. Department of Labor, the U.S. Department of Defense and many of its services, as well as the Small Business Administration, in order to expand our messaging base and reach the service member and military spouse population, connecting employers to them wherever they are in the world.

The relationships that we maintain with other nonprofit organizations within this military hiring community have been integral to our success as well. Our work with groups such as the Institute of Veterans and Military Families, Student Veterans of America, Blue Star Families, Got Your 6, and many others has furthered our reach and strengthened our ability to provide networking and training opportunities for job seekers, and make valuable connections for them with employers who are hiring.

One of our greatest achievements of last year was when we partnered with the George W. Bush Institute’s Military Service Initiative as well as a broad array of public, private, and nonprofit partners to create the Veteran Employment Transition Roadmap, a comprehensive guide for transitioning service members and military veterans to help them become better equipped to navigate the complex landscape that they will encounter when leaving the military to pursue new careers. This document, which is available in hard-copy as well as online, is unique in that there is nothing else like it that exists in this military employment space. It outlines best practices and checklists for job seekers to consider, as well as an overall list of resources that are available to them from across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors that are available to them when making this transition.

Moving “Left of Transition”

One of the key lessons we have learned over the last four years is that many of the challenges that military veterans face when transitioning off active duty is primarily due to a lack of preparation. Far too many service members have traditionally viewed transition not as a continuing process but as a single point in time when they simply pick up their DD-214 papers and leave the military. Not surprisingly, in recent years, more than 50 percent of service members were unemployed within 15 months of leaving the military, with no clear pathway to economic success.

In 2014, a key effort of Hiring Our Heroes was our aggressive work to address this problem, by helping service members focus on moving left of transition, and starting the job search process earlier. When interfacing with service members, we compare this process to any evolution that they would encounter in the military. It is a process that requires a clearly-defined mission, preparation, execution, and ability to adapt and overcome as circumstances evolve.

Working with our public, private, and nonprofit partners, we launched a series of multi-day, on-base transition summits aimed at reaching and empowering service members long before their last day on active duty. These summits are essentially one-stop-shops for service members as they learn what economic opportunity looks like for them in today's workforce, with panel discussions from industry leaders, breakout workshop classes, networking receptions, and ultimately a hiring fair to conclude the event.

We are continuing this innovative approach to serving the military community throughout 2016, hosting 17 summits in the United States and internationally, providing job seekers with best-in-class resources for their transition process, and connecting them with employers (sometimes numbering in the hundreds) at each event that are searching for top military talent.

Another pioneering effort which complements our summits is our model of attaching hiring events to professional sporting events, creating an expo. This series of events was launched in 2014 in conjunction with major professional sporting events, such as NBA basketball or Major League Baseball games. All military job seekers receive free admission to the hiring events and tickets to attend the game and/or special event. We have seen great success with these as a means to attract attention to our program, capitalizing on the high-profile nature of the athletic teams or host organization to further our messaging reach with job seekers and employers.

Lastly, we have critically important training programs which truly set us apart in this hiring community. Our Corporate Fellowship Program is a 12-week evolution that prepares service members for separation from the military through corporate education, extensive on-the-job training, and networking opportunities. At the completion of the program, service members have increased their marketability tremendously, giving them an added edge in an increasingly competitive job market.

Just as these events are geared towards making sure job seekers understand the opportunities that are available to them, these are also services to our business population as well. We have learned over the years that companies want access to veterans and military families sooner in the transition process, and coming up with new and creative ways to make that possible is how we meet that demand signal.

Most importantly, while there are many groups and avenues that can be helpful in this effort, we recognize that it is incumbent upon job seekers to own their transition. There is a sea of goodwill that exists for transitioning service members and military spouses, but ultimately, it is their responsibility to start far enough in advance and dedicate the time and effort necessary to have a successful transition.

Prepared Statement of Terry D. Howell

Thank you, Chairman Wenstrup, Ranking Member Takano, and Members of the Subcommittee for inviting us here today to address important issues associated with veteran employment. Today, I will discuss what Military.com and Monster Worldwide are doing to assist service members in their transition to the civilian sector as they seek employment opportunities.

My name is Terry Howell; I am the Sr. Director for Strategic Alliances and Editorial Operations for Military.com. I joined the Military.com team in 2003 after 20 years of service in the U.S. Coast Guard. My last assignment prior to retiring from the Coast Guard was as a Career Development advisor, where I worked active duty, reservists and their families on issues related to their career, including education, advancement, and transition.

I am currently responsible for Military.com's editorial operations, reaching more than 7 million unique visitors a month and our efforts to build alliances to support veterans and veteran programs. In addition, I have worked on transition related products for both the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Military.com was founded in 1999 with a significant mission: connect service members, veterans, and their families with all the benefits of service and with each other.

Today, we're the largest military and veteran membership organization - 10 million members strong. Military.com's free membership connects servicemembers, military spouses, veterans and their families to all the benefits of service and related resources- government benefits, scholarships, discounts, lifelong relationships, mentors, legislation, news, and much more.

We are proud that our Military.com team is made up of more than 60 percent veterans, including active members of the National Guard, reserve, and military spouses.

In 2004, Military.com joined forces with Monster Worldwide to change the playing field for career and educational opportunities for servicemembers, veterans, and military spouses. Monster's vision of bringing people together to advance their lives, has proven to be a great fit with Military.com's "members first" ethos and our goal of connecting the military community to all the benefits of service. The acquisition did not change our original mission; it has served to increase the scope of what we have been able to accomplish, while maintaining our core values of providing a vital service to those who serve or have served.

In 2006, Military.com worked with Simon and Schuster to publish the Military Advantage, which continues to serve as the most comprehensive guide to military and veteran benefits, and military career information. Today, the book is published through the US Naval Institute Press in Annapolis.

In the mid-2000's, Military.com was contracted by the Department of Defense to develop an online transition assistance program known as TurboTap. The program enabled service members (active and reserve component) to use a simple guided process to create their own Individual Transition Plan (IDP) which they could print or revisit online at any point in the future.

In 2008, Military.com and Monster Worldwide were selected to contribute to the creation of a set of tools for the VAforVets and later the FedsforVets websites. The centerpiece of this project was our Military Skills Translator, which remains the only skills translator/job matching tool that incorporates the full breadth of a service member's career experience and training. Users can include their collateral duties, multiple occupation codes, special assigned duties, and previous civilian employment when using this tool. In its application for the VAforVets website, the Military.com skills translator also serves as the first step in a resume building process, which helps veterans explain their military skills in civilian friendly terms.

Through the years, Military.com and Monster Worldwide have remained focused on supporting service members, veterans, and families through the transition process, the subsequent job search, and finally their gainful employment. During this time, we have created an online transition center which helps veterans track their progress toward a successful transition; published an annual "Veteran Talent Index (VTI)," which serves as a report on the state of veteran employment; and provided direct and indirect support of job fairs, hiring events and other transition assistance workshops.

Through our VTI and continued communication with our members and employers, we have identified some key issues which impact veteran employment. The roots of the issues are communication and commitment. Most vets site an inability to adequately explain their experience in a way that employers can fully understand. Conversely, many employers site a lack of understanding of a veteran's military work experience and where they fit may in their organization.

In response to this need, we developed products such as our skills translator/job matching tool, which is currently being used by more than 60 companies and trade association. This is providing the tools to help veterans find jobs within individual companies and associations. To ensure we are part of the solution, we have gone so far as to provide these tools at no cost to non-profit organizations like the American Legion, the Enlisted Association of the National Guard, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars and at cost to trade associations like the Northern Virginia Technology Council. We are working to expand this list to include all the major veteran service organizations and non-profit colleges and universities over the next few months.

We have found that the level of commitment by employers to develop a veteran specific hiring processes, online veteran portals, and awareness campaigns has a direct impact on veteran employment. We have found that the companies that are most successful in hiring and retaining veterans are those that have instituted best practices for veteran hiring. For example, the companies which are recognized as the best employers for veterans, have developed specific veteran hiring processes and tools, trained their human resources staff and recruiters on how to review veteran resumes and the best techniques for interviewing veterans, and have created veteran friendly work environments.

Early last year, we decided to do a top-to-bottom review of our website and veteran employment products, and came to the conclusion that what we may have seen as "good enough" was no longer enough to meet the future needs of transitioning service members.

Based on our findings, we have overhauled our website in an effort to improve veteran awareness of our vet hiring programs and products. We also have taken steps to improve the job search and application process, with the goal of increasing the propensity of veteran job seekers to fully complete online job applications, before clicking away. We have added new areas of content to provide employer tools, moti-

vation, and resources to encourage them commit to hiring veterans. We will soon launch our new mobile Military Transition app, which we have developed with help of Citibank. The app will provide personalized checklists and alert notifications to remind service members of where they are on the transition timeline and exactly which tasks need to be completed at any given point in their transition. In addition, we will soon launch a campaign to recognize and celebrate employers who choose to make a pledge to hire veterans. This will include a public listing of employers and a badge which will acknowledge their pledge to hire vets.

Our current suite of veteran hiring products includes the following:

- The Military Skills Translator and Job Matching Tool
- The Transition Center and Mobile Transition Center App
- The Job Fair and Transition Workshop Finder, which provides a list of upcoming events based on distance and date range
- The Military.com/Monster Job Finder, which is a quick means for veterans to search jobs offered by military friendly employers.
- Veteran Talent Portals, which are featured webpages highlighting specific jobs with specific employers
- The Veteran Talent Index, an annual report on veteran employment that includes survey results reflecting employer and veteran points of view
- VSO Veteran Career Portals, which includes customized job finders and our Skills Translator)
- Employer Specific Veteran Employment Products, with companies such as Home Depot, Lowes, Brinks, Citibank, Coca-Cola, etc.

New Initiatives and Future Efforts:

Military.com and Monster are currently working to make further improvements and enhancements to our skills translator. We are developing an education factor to help graduating student veterans find gainful employment - with the very large number of veterans choosing to go school many will face a second transition, this time from full-time student to a professional in the civilian work force. With the addition of academic, training, and certification elements to the skills translator, student veterans will see an expanded list of career opportunities.

In addition, we plan to implement enhancements to the skills translator that will eventually enable veterans, service members, and career counselors to use our platform as a career-path tool, providing service members and veterans the tools and necessary information to help them select the right geographic location, academic degree, job training, and/or certification required to achieve their civilian career goals.

As you may know, Monster Worldwide recently announced the acquisition of Jobr, the leading mobile job discovery app. This acquisition is an important step in delivering on our ongoing mission to create and deliver the best recruiting media, technologies and platforms for connecting jobs and people. As we move forward we will be examining how the app can be used to best impact the military and veteran communities.

We are keenly aware that we cannot solve the veteran employment issue solely through the use of online tools and products—nor can it be solved in a vacuum. That is why we are taking steps to change the employment and recruitment industry paradigm from fiercely competitive to a collaborative “veteran-focused” approach.

For example, we are working with several companies, agencies, and organizations to use our online presence to promote their products and events. We are also working on ways to use our products and tools to make other organizations offline events more effective. We are committed to building partnerships and alliances with employers, service organizations, and others to help use our reach, expertise and products to make a positive and lasting impact on the lives and careers of veterans of all ages and all eras.

It is our belief that the employment issues facing veterans is not caused by a single factor, nor is there a single solution. The issues range from unfounded concerns about post-traumatic stress and a lack of understanding of what a veteran brings to workforce, to the disconnect between military training and civilian certification processes.

In conclusion, it is our genuine hope and firm belief that the private sector, federal, and state agencies can work together to increase awareness, provide tools and incentives, and align military training with civilian certification so the veteran unemployment rate can fall below that of their non-veteran peers. We firmly believe the key to solving veteran employment issues is through continued innovation and collaboration.

I would like to thank the Subcommittee for this opportunity to present this testimony and share what Military.com and Monster Worldwide are doing to make a positive impact on veteran employment. More importantly, I would like to thank the members of this committee and their staffs for their hard work and dedication to ensuring our veterans have every opportunity to make a successful transition to the civilian workforce. With overall employment numbers improving, it would be easy to move on, but thankfully you have remained steadfast in your resolve to make sure ALL veterans are given the best opportunity for success.

Mr. Chairman and Members of this Subcommittee, this concludes my statement.

Prepared Statement of LeRoy Acosta

Chairman Wenstrup, Ranking Member Takano, and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of DAV (Disabled American Veterans) and our 1.3 million members, all of whom were wounded, injured or made ill in wartime military service, I am pleased to testify at this hearing concerning "Examining 21st Century Programs and Strategies for Veteran Job Seekers." DAV is dedicated to a single purpose: empowering veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity.

DAV's Employment Program

DAV recognizes that veterans, especially ill and injured veterans, continue to face challenges in obtaining employment. In 2014, DAV empowered America's veterans by establishing a National Employment Program and committed more than \$800,000 to its startup so the program could begin work immediately.

The need for DAV's Employment Program is overwhelming. According to the Department of Labor (DoL), the unemployment rate for male veterans is 4.5 percent compared to female veterans at 5.4 percent.¹ Tens of thousands are now making the transition from military to civilian life. About 250,000 service members transitioned in 2015, and by 2017, we expect that number to be close to one million.

That is why we partnered with RecruitMilitaryr and Veteran Recruitingr. Through these partnerships, DAV has sponsored a total of 128 all veteran career fairs in cities nationwide as well as 3 virtual events, to connect veterans with employers who are committed to hiring them. Since the inception of DAV's Employment Program, 54,347 attendees have connected with 7,373 exhibitors that resulted in 15,734 job offers. I invite you to see the All Veterans Career Fair schedule at jobs.dav.org.

Addressing veterans' unemployment head-on, DAV's employment program connects transitioning active duty, guard and reserve members, and veterans and their spouses with employers. DAV recognizes the value, talent, education and work ethic that veterans add to the workforce. We connect veterans with employers nationwide who are actively seeking the unique talents veterans bring to the workplace.

In order to give veterans every advantage in the transition process, we incorporated our VA benefits and claims experts into these career fairs. DAV's service officers are a professional team of advocates, all veterans themselves, who help veterans and their families access the full range of benefits available to them. DAV helps veterans and their families successfully file claims for VA disability compensation, rehabilitation and education programs, pensions, death benefits, employment and training programs.

The DAV Employment Program provides many resources outside of our sponsored All Veteran Career Fairs. At jobs.dav.org, visitors will find a job-search board with more than 800,000 employment opportunities. We average about 5,000 visits to our webpage every month.

[Jobs.dav.org](http://jobs.dav.org) will soon expand and improve, to feature additional employment and educational resources, webinars, and will promote certain employers who have demonstrated that hiring veterans is part of their business strategy.

DAV encourages job seekers to visit jobs.dav.org to access the Employment Assistance Request Form, participants will receive updates on employment-related news, and their information is accessible to employers who are seeking their talents.

National Veterans Transition Services, Inc. REBOOT

Another program focused to reduce the unemployment rates for veterans is the National Veterans Transition Services, Inc. (NVTSI) REBOOT. NVTSI specializes in

¹ <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/vet.nr0.htm> Obtained June 7, 2016.

military to civilian reintegration through their signature REBOOT program. Since 2010, the mission of REBOOT has been “to assist veterans in making a successful transition from military service to civilian life through applied behavioral education.” A non-profit, San Diego-based, veterans service organization, NVTSI asserts that in order to achieve a higher return on investment for veterans, there is a need to re-socialize them via a reverse boot camp (REBOOT) to address the gap in services.

REBOOT is an innovative, evidence-based, intensive three-week workshop that addresses the root causes of reintegration failure from a holistic perspective using cognitive structuring to help participants redefine their personal identity, purpose in life, and desired occupation - from the inside out. The REBOOT Workshops¹ are conducted across the nation and the curriculum includes one week covering personal transition, one week on lifestyle transition, one week of career transition, and supportive follow-up services. NVTSI has become a national leader in veteran transition, achieving 95 to 97 percent employment/education success and a 93 percent retention rate one year after graduation. NVTSI has also proven it can decrease recidivism among incarcerated veterans by 28 percent.²

Over the past six years REBOOT has conducted 82 workshops and graduated over 1,450 service members and veterans and gained national recognition by the White House as a Champion of Change.³ Their model and system of delivery has been validated independently by the University of San Diego. REBOOT has also successfully piloted six all-female veteran workshops to focus their program on comprehensive reintegration services for women veterans.

Transition Assistance Program

For men and women alike, a key requirement for a successful transition away from military service is the ability to establish satisfying, stable employment as a civilian. Most military members make this transition successfully, but some struggle. With the United States facing a significant drawdown of about a million service members by 2020⁴, it is critically important that employment programs and services are effective at helping men and women in the military make this transition smoothly.

The challenge of making the transition from military service to civilian employment has been widely discussed.⁵ For many in the military, seeking civilian employment may be the first time they have developed a resume or interviewed for a job. For most, it can be a challenge to translate the skills, knowledge, and experience gained in military assignments into language accessible to a civilian hiring audience. In particular, specialized training and certificates gained during service do not generally translate into certification or licensure requirements for an equivalent position in the civilian sector. Finally, military members who move frequently or have been absent on deployments may not have a local network of civilian contacts who can help identify employment opportunities where they live.

In recognition of the need to help service members to transition effectively to civilian life, Congress established the original Transition Assistance Program (TAP) in 1991.⁶ In 2013, TAP was redesigned to standardize the opportunities, services, and training that service members receive to prepare them to pursue their post-military career goals. The redesigned TAP includes an outcome-based curriculum known as Transition GPS (Goals, Plans, Success). Transition GPS covers all departing service members. It is intended to help service members identify their post-separation education, financial and employment goals. After participating in the structured program, service members are expected to have clear goals for employment or education and will know where and how to access the services that can help them achieve those goals.

DAV’s unprecedented report, *Women Veterans: The Long Journey Home*, found there are no comprehensive studies that evaluate the effectiveness of the TAP pro-

²Presentation by Maurice Wilson, MCPO, USN (Ret) Co-Founder/President/Executive Director National Veterans Transition Service, Inc. aka REBOOT. <https://www.dropbox.com/s/c81hswb2kb0xecj/REBOOT—Evaluation—Report.pdf?dl=0>

³ White paper: Developing a System to Overcome Failure of Social Reintegration for Military Veterans - NVTSI 2016. Adapted from *Helping Veterans Successfully Transition from the Battlefield to the Homefront!* By Brianna Bendotti, Grey Hoff, Samantha Kahoe, and Victoria Schaefer-Ramirez Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education and Psychology Fall 2015.

⁴U.S. Government Accountability Office (2014). *Transitioning Veterans: Improved Oversight Needed to Enhance Implementation of Transition Assistance Program*. Washington, DC. GAO-14-144

⁵U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Business Board (2013). *Employing our Veterans Part II: Service Member Transition*. Washington, DC.

⁶Transition Assistance Program 1991 (P. L. 101-510) S 502 (a)(1)

gram. The hallmark of adult learning is that adults seek out and absorb information when they perceive that they need it, not necessarily when it is presented. Some transitioning service members may not be primed to absorb TAP training pre-separation but would be more receptive once they are actively seeking help and assistance 6–12 months later.⁷

The DoL has conducted research on how to best serve the employment needs of women veterans and provide them with many customized programs, communications and supports; however, despite these targeted efforts, the unemployment and under-employment rates for women veterans are slightly higher than their male counterparts.⁸ While DoL found no employment challenges that are exclusive to women veterans, it indicated that the demographics of this group make it more likely they are in subpopulations that have higher unemployment rates.⁹ Innovative outreach efforts to ensure women are aware of these services are necessary. Additionally, employment assistance will become even more pressing as the Department of Defense (DoD) executes its current downsizing plan. Some service members who may have expected to complete full military careers will be thrust, with little preparation, into civilian communities and job markets.

According to a recent review of the program by the Government Accountability Office (GAO),¹⁰ comprehensive data on participation rates and information on the effectiveness of the training is not readily available and post-transition outcome data is limited. The data that is gathered has not been publicly released with an analysis of outcomes and satisfaction by gender. It is estimated that 200,000 women are expected to leave the military over the next four to five years, therefore, it is imperative that we improve our efforts and support for women veterans' employment.

While there is no direct evidence that this transition is any different for women than it is for men, women veterans' unemployment rate remains stubbornly high and women have voiced frustration with the transition process. For instance, women veterans were less likely than men (32 percent compared to 47 percent) to believe the military was doing enough to ease transitions to civilian life, and more women (18 percent) than men (7 percent) doubt their military skills will be useful in the civilian job market.¹¹ Other studies found that women felt they had been led to believe that military training would be more valuable than it is in their search for employment.^{12, 13}

Delegates to our more recent National Convention adopted Resolution No. 136 urging Congress to monitor the review of the Transition GPS program, its workshops, training methodology and delivery of services, and the collection and analysis of course critiques; and to ensure the inclusion of DAV and other veterans service organizations in workshops, in order to confirm the program is meeting its objective, and follow up with participants to determine if they have found gainful employment.

Moreover, DAV Resolution No. 138 calls on Congress to support licensure and certification of active-duty service personnel, which would eliminate employment barriers that impede the transfer of military job skills to the civilian labor market. The DAV calls on Congress to engage in a national dialogue, working closely with the Administration generally, and DoD, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and DoL specifically, as well as state governments, employers, trade unions, and licensure and credentialing entities to establish a clear process so military training meets civilian certification and licensure requirements for the states in which veterans choose to live once they leave the military.

This resolution was reaffirmed in *Women Veterans: The Long Journey Home* report, which recommends that the DoL should work closely with state certification organizations to translate military training and certification to private sector

⁷ <https://www.dav.org/wp-content/uploads/women-veterans-study.pdf>. Obtained June 11, 2016.

⁸ U.S. Dept. of Labor, Economic News Release, "Employment Situation of Veterans - 2014." Mar. 18, 2015

⁹ U.S. Dept. of Labor, Fact Sheet, "Women Veterans: Equally Valued. Equally Qualified. Equally Served." Retrieved Apr. 2015.

¹⁰ U.S. Government Accountability Office (2014). *Transitioning Veterans: Improved Oversight Needed to Enhance Implementation of Transition Assistance Program*. Washington, DC. GAO-14-144

¹¹ DiJulio, B., Deane, C., Firth, J., Craighill, P., Clement, S., Brodie, M. (2014) *After the Wars: Survey of Iraq & Afghanistan active duty soldiers and veterans*. Kaiser Family Foundation. Personal communications DiJulio, B.

¹² Business and Professional Womens Foundation.(2007). *Women Veterans inTransition*. Washington, DC.

¹³ Thom, K. B., E (2011). *Chicagoland female veterans; a qualitative study of attachment to the labor force*. American Institute for Research National Center on Family Homelessness.

equivalents. Furthermore, DAV recommended that VA and DoD establish a grant program to accelerate these efforts.

Women Veterans Population and Women Veterans Unemployment

DAV's Women Veterans: The Long Journey Home provides a roadmap to support women veterans on their transition from military service to veteran status. Women veterans have remained invisible for far too long to the federal, state and local programs that have a mission to support them. The need will become even more pressing as the DoD executes its downsizing plan and those who expected full military careers are suddenly thrust, with little warning, into the ill-prepared civilian community. The time has come to push for change in reintegration and readjustment support for women as they transition to post-military life. This report and the ongoing advocacy of DAV aims to trigger urgent actions from VA, DoD and other stakeholders, for an integrated approach to address the transition needs of women veterans, and an overhaul of the culture, values, and services of the federal system.¹⁴

Until 1973, women remained a very small minority of the Armed Forces population due to legislation that imposed a two percent cap on women's participation in the military. When those gender caps were lifted, women entered military service at unprecedented rates. Today women constitute approximately 20 percent of new recruits, 14.5 percent of the 1.4 million active duty component and 18 percent of the 850,000 reserve component. Almost 280,000 women served Post-9/11 during the Global War on Terrorism in Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn in Afghanistan and Iraq.¹⁵

Current transition programs and treatments for relationship building, family reintegration, prevention of intimate partner violence and support for family functioning are based on civilian programs and lack evidence of effectiveness in military and veteran populations. Transition support programs that are designed for prevention, treatment and support for women and their families are needed.¹⁶

The report findings and recommendations cover the broad range of transition needs of women veterans in culture change, health care, military sexual trauma, disability compensation, justice, family and community, education, transition assistance, employment, and housing. The DAV report provides the 27 key recommendations in these areas to drive immediate action and change.

The reasons underlying this persistently higher rate of unemployment among women veterans are not definitively known. However, characteristics such as a younger age, being unmarried or divorced, lower educational attainment and having children at home are associated with a higher rate of unemployment and are also prevalent among women veterans.

Even when these factors are controlled, Post-9/11 women veterans and National Guard women veterans have higher rates of unemployment than other groups. Given this constellation of factors working against employment success for some women veterans and their demonstrated higher rates of unemployment, it is important for all of the partners working on veteran transition challenges to identify the specific and unique needs of women and institute specialized programs and outreach for them.

Operation Reinvent

Operation Reinvent founder Julie Lewit-Nirenberg commented that the DAV report, Women Veterans: The Long Journey Home, was a valuable resource in determining what she could do to help women veterans' transition from service.¹⁷

A program focused to reduce women veteran unemployment is the New York City based, Operation Reinvent; a non-profit organization, founded in 2013, dedicated to providing expert guidance and resources to help transitioning military women identify career paths that suit their skills, education, goals and interests; Thus, unleashing the power of women veterans.

The Operation Reinvent Career Transition and Empowerment Program incorporates hands-on professional image development, stress management, year-long mentoring and real-time job search opportunities.¹⁸ The program occurs in-service prior to discharge and focuses on transitioning women service members, because

¹⁴ Women Veterans: The Long Journey Home, page 3.

¹⁵ Women Veterans: The Long Journey Home, page 8.

¹⁶ Women Veterans: The Long Journey Home, page 6.

¹⁷ Julie Lewit-Nirenberg, founder of Operation Reinvent, phone interview June 10, 2016.

¹⁸ <http://operationreinvent.org/mission/our-plan/> obtained June 11, 2016.

women are known to not identify as veterans upon discharge from service.¹⁹ Workshops connect women directly with experts in human resources, workforce initiatives and job interviewing.²⁰

An Operation Reinvent workshop occurred June 8–9, 2016 at the Soldier Support Centers in Fort Bragg, North Carolina and Fort Campbell, Kentucky with 50 women soldier attendees at each location. The first day of the Workshop was webcast to both locations in real-time from CBS Studios in New York City. Nationwide webcasts in each time zone are being planned.

Mr. Chairman, DAV appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony for this hearing to outline just a few innovative and effective employment transition programs. We look forward to working with this Subcommittee to ensure that the men and women who stood up for America have the tools, resources and opportunities they need to competitively enter the job market and secure meaningful employment. I would be pleased to address any questions you, or members of the Subcommittee may have on the topics covered in my testimony.

Prepared Statement of Greg Call

Introduction

Chairman Wenstrup, Ranking Member Takano, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify today. My name is Greg Call and I am the Head of LinkedIn's Veterans Program. The Veterans Program connects 2.1 million veteran and military members of LinkedIn with the networks, insights, and skills they need to succeed in the workplace.

LinkedIn is a professional network with over 433 million individuals around the world, and over 128 million in the United States. Our network connects the world's professionals to help make them more productive and to transform the ways companies recruit, develop, and retain talent.

Our vision is to create economic opportunity for every member of the global workforce. To achieve that vision, we're building the world's first Economic Graph—a digital map of the global economy that includes every member of the global workforce and their skills, all open jobs, all employers, and all educational institutions (more information about the Economic Graph is available at www.linkedin.com/economic-graph). We share labor market insights from the Economic Graph with policymakers and other stakeholders across the globe to help create greater economic opportunity. And, as I'll discuss later in my testimony, LinkedIn is using information from the Economic Graph to help veterans find economic opportunity.

Connecting veterans to economic opportunity isn't just my job; it's also a personal commitment. I became a Marine Corps officer in 2008 at the age of 28. I transitioned out of the Marine Corps in 2012 after two deployments and over four years of honorable service. Like many transitioning servicemembers, I really had no civilian professional identity or professional network after leaving the military. LinkedIn enabled me to re-invent myself as a veteran entrepreneur and empowered me to connect with people and organizations to support my new mission in life. Through this platform, I built a strong professional identity and a powerful new support system including two mentors who were instrumental in my successful transition.

When the opportunity arose to lead LinkedIn's Veterans Program, I once again heard a call to duty. I wanted those Marines and every veteran to share the same successful transition story as me. This was my chance to become part of that solution.

The goal of my testimony this afternoon is to provide you with an overview of LinkedIn's work with veterans and to discuss three points in particular:

- **Connecting Veterans to Opportunity.** As I'll describe more fully below, LinkedIn is working to equip veterans with information and tools to find economic opportunity. We are doing this by, among other things, providing free one-year subscriptions to our job seekers and free one-year access to online courses through Lynda.com, a leading online learning platform that helps anyone learn business, technology, and creative skills.

¹⁹ Julie Lewit-Nirenberg, founder of Operation Reinvent, phone interview June 10, 2016.

²⁰ Amanda Dolasinski Staff writer. <http://www.fayobserver.com/military/workshop-helps-female-veterans-transition-into-civilian-careers/article—4e74aa7c-bc26-53be-a7ee-30fd265677c7.html> obtained June 11, 2016.

- **Release of LinkedIn Veterans Insights Report.** LinkedIn recently released its first annual report on veterans in the workplace. This report, based primarily on aggregated LinkedIn member data, highlights the top industries in which veterans are working, the skills which they are bringing to industries, and the top employers of veterans. We hope these insights can be a resource for the federal government, veteran non-profits, and veteran program managers as they further develop programs designed to continue the reduction in veteran unemployment.
- **Recommendations to the Subcommittee.** LinkedIn has been working with the Transition Assistance Program (“TAP”) to assist servicemembers with access to post-military opportunities. Among other things, we recommend adoption of professional opportunity tools like LinkedIn earlier into servicemembers’ life cycle to ensure they have strong networks by the time they depart from the military.

Connecting Veterans to Opportunity

LinkedIn’s Veterans Program is working to set veterans up for success in transition and helping to close the gap between military service and civilian employment by empowering veterans to build professional identities, professional networks, civilian careers, and workplace skills. Our website for the Veterans program is available at veterans.linkedin.com.

To do this, we are focusing on four key areas:

Professional Identities. LinkedIn allows its veteran members to build professional identities through a digital profile. A digital profile is a living expression of a veteran’s experience, education, skills, awards, volunteer causes, and recommendations (which includes digital media videos, articles and posts). We understand that veterans sometime face challenges in developing their digital profile and therefore we created a “LinkedIn for Veterans” tutorial video that includes recommendations for translating their professional military identity to a professional civilian identity. We also distribute these training materials through partnerships with veteran service organizations and also through TAP classes.

Professional Networks. As a part of our training, LinkedIn also focuses on helping veterans to use these networking tools. In our recent survey of veteran members, leveraging professional networks was the number one method that veterans utilize to find employment. Additionally, our groups program on LinkedIn has been extremely popular, especially the Veteran Mentor Network, which brings 100,000 transitioning veterans and civilian professionals together for online mentoring.

Civilian Careers. LinkedIn offers one year of free job-seeker subscription for veterans. Veterans can appear at the top of a recruiter’s list, search within companies for recruiters and hiring managers, and communicate directly with recruiters and managers through InMail. They can increase the visibility of their LinkedIn profile, and conduct advanced searches to identify fellow veterans in their desired field of choice.

Workplace Skills. LinkedIn’s latest addition to training includes our online learning platform Lynda.com. We now offer a one-year free Lynda.com account to all our veteran members. With over 6,000 available courses including our “LinkedIn for Veterans” course, Lynda.com has helped students, leaders, IT and design professionals, project managers, and others build software, creative, and business skills. Lynda.com can be deeply impactful because it allows veterans to build valuable skills and fill common skills gaps that they face in transition or during career progression.

Release of LinkedIn Veterans Insights Report

In May, the LinkedIn Veterans Program team leveraged our Economic Graph to generate and share insights into the professional identities of LinkedIn’s veteran community. This report is primarily based upon the veterans who are on LinkedIn and offers additional insights into the unique skill sets of veterans entering the workforce.

We have also provided copies of the report to members of the Committee and your staff. We hope that this report and others like it can be used to better inform veterans about the paths that are available to them, and inform employers about the high level of talent that characterize the veteran applicant and leadership pool on LinkedIn.

To create this report, our team analyzed the professional experience, skills, education, and behaviors of over 2.1 million military personnel and veterans that are members of LinkedIn, as well as veteran employer data. Below are some of the major highlights of the report.

Leadership and Entrepreneurship. Today's veterans are high-demand talent, thriving and leading organizations. In fact, more than 186,000 veteran professionals identify themselves as executives, vice presidents, partners, founders, or owners on LinkedIn. There are over 42,000 veteran Vice Presidents alone on LinkedIn, and over 64,000 owners of companies.

Leading Industries and Metro Regions. Information technology is the number one industry where veterans who are LinkedIn members are employed, followed by defense and space and government administration. The top metro area for veterans are: Washington, D.C.; New York, New York; Dallas-Ft. Worth, Texas; Los Angeles, California; Atlanta, Georgia; Seattle, Washington; San Diego, California; Houston, Texas; Norfolk, Virginia; and Chicago, Illinois.

Education and Training. Our data shows that veterans on LinkedIn are highly educated individuals across the workforce. Over 81 percent of veterans who have listed their education on LinkedIn have at least a bachelor's degree, while 31 percent have a master's degree and 5 percent have earned a doctorate degree. Overall, as noted above, servicemembers gravitate towards business and information technology degrees. In terms of training, on-the-job training is veterans' number one method for learning new skills; 61 percent received on-the-job training, 50 percent got an additional degree, and 31 percent were self-taught.

Professional Networking. Networking is the single most important way that veterans find career opportunities. Interestingly, on average, veterans and servicemembers have 26 percent more connections than non-veteran LinkedIn members. This networking is critical, especially because opportunities for veterans in the private sector are often different from what they did in the service. In fact, two-thirds of professional veterans state that they work in positions that are not similar to what they did in the military, and that it is imperative that they reach out to their networks to understand how to gain access to those jobs.

Recommendations to the Subcommittee

We appreciate the opportunity to share our recommendations to the Subcommittee on how to better connect veterans to opportunity, and we look forward to working with you on these matters.

Overall, we have two general recommendations. First, we believe that LinkedIn and other 21st Century career tools should be offered to servicemembers well before they transition to civilian life. Second, we believe that veterans should be encouraged to connect to programs at the time that they separate and also well beyond the time that they leave the service. Training and learning are lifelong endeavors and we recommend that the military support and promote skills-based learning and help transitioning servicemembers identify the training programs that teach those skills and lead to strong career outcomes at all stages of a veteran's professional life.

Career Tools Before Transition to Civilian Life

With respect to career tools before a servicemember transitions, LinkedIn recommends implementing a proactive strategy to veteran transition rather than waiting until servicemembers are being discharged or following their discharge. We can preempt transition challenges by integrating LinkedIn and other career tools during their time in the service. As servicemembers progress through their military career, they graduate from military education courses and serve in a variety of billets. Each one of those courses and billets has some kind of direct application to their professional identity. And as servicemembers progress through their military careers, they will meet and build relationships with civilian professionals. LinkedIn is an outstanding tool for servicemembers to create a robust and valuable professional story to tell civilian employers and to maintain those critical relationships that they will need to leverage during their transition.

Currently, transitioning servicemembers are provided basic information about LinkedIn during the employment segment of the TAP. While driving awareness of LinkedIn is essential, a more effective approach during the TAP would be providing practical application sessions to teach the best use of the platform. For instance, we provide tools such as the "LinkedIn for Veterans" Lynda.com course to facilitate practical application. This 60 minute tutorial provides skills for building an outstanding professional identity, improves job search techniques and enhances workplace skills, and could be easily integrated into the TAP curriculum. We also recommend that servicemembers utilize our job-seeker subscription for veterans, access to Lynda.com courses, both of which are free for one-year and available at any time after separation from the service.

Skills Training Beyond the Transition From the Military

In a similar vein, we believe that policymakers and other stakeholders should support skills training programs not just as transitional support but also as part of lifelong learning. This training should start before the transition out of the military.

Specifically, the military can help servicemembers by: (1) clearly mapping the skills gained in each role and helping servicemembers track that through their LinkedIn profiles; (2) promoting skills-based job descriptions by civilian employers; (3) helping transitioning servicemembers identify the gap between their existing skills and those needed for their desired civilian role; and (4) helping transitioning servicemembers identify the training programs that teach those skills and lead to strong career outcomes.

It is equally important to encourage veterans to continue upskilling and to connect to programs that help them do that. There are several programs throughout the U.S. that focus on teaching members of the workforce new skills. One recent example is Skillful (www.skillful.com), a Markle Foundation initiative to help workers in Colorado and Arizona with high school diplomas or limited college education acquire new skills to advance their careers. This is important because over 40 percent of workers in Colorado and nearly 50 percent of workers in Arizona have a high school diploma and some or no college education. Yet 44 percent of the more than 468 recruiters and hiring managers we surveyed in Colorado and Arizona in February said it's hard to find people with the right technical skills. As a result, companies have a hard time hiring and are less productive, thereby stunting economic growth. In both states, we're working with local bases and veterans programs to connect servicemembers and veterans to Skillful, its career coaches, and its digital resources.

As part of this effort, LinkedIn has developed Training Finder (www.linkedin.com/training), a new product that helps job seekers acquire new skills and advance their careers. This tool shows them relevant training programs in their area; which programs are affiliated with employers; whether or not they're accredited; the program's employment rate, cost, and duration; the skills that the program will teach them; the jobs they'll be qualified for when they complete the program; and the estimated salary. Our goal is for these insights to help individuals select the training program that will teach them the skills they need to get the job they want. Combining LinkedIn jobs tools and the Training Finder can help veterans identify the gap between their current skill set, the skills needed for their ideal role, and then identify the best-fit program to acquire those skills. We believe that this new product could be a great tool for education and employment counselors within transition offices, and we look forward to training counselors on how to use Training Finder.

Conclusion

As Florent Groberg, the Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, recently noted:

In 2012, my lifelong passion for serving in our armed forces was cut short. Four years later, through the power of networking, a steadfast mindset and the act of seeking mentors...I am living proof of the power of LinkedIn. It is through this platform that I have made hundreds of connections with men and women that otherwise, I would have never had the opportunity to meet. This should be the story of every U.S. Military veteran.

We at LinkedIn are deeply inspired by Florent and we stand ready to work with you and each of the Members of the Congress on leveraging our tools and capabilities to expand opportunity for every veteran. Doing so is our duty and our mandate, and it is fundamentally tied to our mission and our vision at LinkedIn. Thank you.

