

**TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND  
VETSUCCESS ON CAMPUS PROGRAM**

---

---

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

FIRST SESSION

—————  
JUNE 2, 2011  
—————

**Serial No. 112-15**

—————

Printed for the use of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs



U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

67-190

WASHINGTON : 2011

---

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office  
Internet: [bookstore.gpo.gov](http://bookstore.gpo.gov) Phone: toll free (866) 512-1800; DC area (202) 512-1800  
Fax: (202) 512-2104 Mail: Stop IDCC, Washington, DC 20402-0001

**COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

JEFF MILLER, Florida, *Chairman*

CLIFF STEARNS, Florida	BOB FILNER, California, <i>Ranking</i>
DOUG LAMBORN, Colorado	CORRINE BROWN, Florida
GUS M. BILIRAKIS, Florida	SILVESTRE REYES, Texas
DAVID P. ROE, Tennessee	MICHAEL H. MICHAUD, Maine
MARLIN A. STUTZMAN, Indiana	LINDA T. SANCHEZ, California
BILL FLORES, Texas	BRUCE L. BRALEY, Iowa
BILL JOHNSON, Ohio	JERRY McNERNEY, California
JEFF DENHAM, California	JOE DONNELLY, Indiana
JON RUNYAN, New Jersey	TIMOTHY J. WALZ, Minnesota
DAN BENISHEK, Michigan	JOHN BARROW, Georgia
ANN MARIE BUERKLE, New York	RUSS CARNAHAN, Missouri
TIM HUELSKAMP, Kansas	
Vacancy	
Vacancy	

HELEN W. TOLAR, *Staff Director and Chief Counsel*

---

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**

MARLIN A. STUTZMAN, Indiana, *Chairman*

GUS M. BILIRAKIS, Florida	BRUCE L. BRALEY, Iowa, <i>Ranking</i>
BILL JOHNSON, Ohio	LINDA T. SANCHEZ, California
TIM HUELSKAMP, Kansas	TIMOTHY J. WALZ, Minnesota
JEFF DENHAM, California	

Pursuant to clause 2(e)(4) of Rule XI of the Rules of the House, public hearing records of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs are also published in electronic form. **The printed hearing record remains the official version.** Because electronic submissions are used to prepare both printed and electronic versions of the hearing record, the process of converting between various electronic formats may introduce unintentional errors or omissions. Such occurrences are inherent in the current publication process and should diminish as the process is further refined.

# CONTENTS

June 2, 2011

	Page
Transition Assistance Program and VetSuccess on Campus Program .....	1
OPENING STATEMENTS	
Chairman Marlin A. Stutzman .....	1
Prepared statement of Chairman Stutzman .....	31
Hon. Bruce L. Braley, Ranking Republican Member .....	2
Prepared statement of Congressman Braley .....	31
WITNESSES	
U.S. Department of Defense:	
Brigadier General Robert F. Hedelund, Director, Marine and Family Programs, United States Marine Corps .....	16
Prepared statement of General Hedelund .....	39
Philip A. Burdette, Principal Director, Office of Wounded Warrior Care and Transition Policy .....	19
Prepared statement of Mr. Burdette .....	44
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Thomas J. Pamperin, Deputy Under Secretary for Disability Assistance, Veterans Benefits Administration .....	17
Prepared statement of Mr. Pamperin .....	42
U.S. Department of Labor, Hon. Raymond M. Jefferson, Assistant Secretary, Veterans' Employment and Training Service .....	21
Prepared statement of Mr. Jefferson .....	48
-----	
American Veterans (AMVETS), Christina M. Roof, National Acting Legisla- tive Director .....	3
Prepared statement of Ms. Roof .....	32
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Marco Reininger, Legislative Fellow .....	5
Prepared statement of Mr. Reininger .....	37
SUBMISSION FOR THE RECORD	
Student Veterans of America, Michael Dakduk, Executive Director .....	52
MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD	
Post-Hearing Questions and Responses for the Record:	
Hon. Bruce L. Braley, Ranking Democratic Member, Subcommittee on Eco- nomic Opportunity, Committee on Veterans' Affairs, to Christina M. Roof, National Acting Legislative Director, AMVETS, letter dated June 2, 2011, and AMVETS responses .....	54
Hon. Bruce L. Braley, Ranking Democratic Member, Subcommittee on Eco- nomic Opportunity, Committee on Veterans' Affairs, to Brigadier General Robert F. Hedelund, Director, Marine and Family Programs, United States Marine Corps, U.S. Department of Defense, letter dated June 2, 2011, and USMC responses .....	55
Hon. Bruce L. Braley, Ranking Democratic Member, Subcommittee on Eco- nomic Opportunity, Committee on Veterans' Affairs, to Thomas Pamperin, Deputy Under Secretary for Disability Assistance, Veterans Benefits Administration, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, letter dated June 2, 2011, and VA responses .....	56

	Page
Post-Hearing Questions and Responses for the Record—Continued	
Hon. Bruce L. Braley, Ranking Democratic Member, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, Committee on Veterans' Affairs, to Philip A. Burdette, Principal Director, Office of Secretary of Defense, Office of Wounded Warrior Care and Transition Policy, U.S. Department of Defense, letter dated June 2, 2011, and DoD responses .....	58
Hon. Bruce L. Braley, Ranking Democratic Member, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, Committee on Veterans' Affairs, to Hon. Raymond M. Jefferson, Assistant Secretary, Veterans' Employment and Training Service, U.S. Department of Labor, and DOL's responses .....	60

## **TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND VETSUCCESS ON CAMPUS PROGRAM**

**THURSDAY, JUNE 2, 2011**

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

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 11:07 a.m., in Room 334, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Marlin A. Stutzman [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Stutzman, Bilirakis, Johnson, and Braley.

### **OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN STUTZMAN**

Mr. STUTZMAN. Good morning. It is good to see everybody here this morning. Beautiful, warm, DC day.

The topic of this morning's hearing is the Transition Assistance Program, TAP, and VetSuccess on Campus Programs. TAP is a program that is supposed to help discharging veterans transition from the military into civilian careers. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) also has a portion of TAP where they educate the servicemembers on the multitude of services that are available to them once they become veterans.

My staff recently completed visits to four TAP sites in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. And I believe Mr. Braley's staff has just visited several VetSuccess sites on campuses out west as well.

I am going to yield to the distinguished Ranking Member in a moment to review his staff's visit, but I believe it is fair to say that the TAP site visits resulted in a mixed bag of observations.

On the plus side, staff observed that, with one minor exception, nearly all the instructors' presentations were very highly professional. The instructors had a level of energy and instructional techniques that were a pleasure to watch and the staff was encouraged by their enthusiasm and professionalism.

Unfortunately, the staff could not say the same about facilities, class sizes, and materials. For example, at Camp Lejeune, there were 165 Marines in the class being held in a gym.

While I know Assistant Secretary Jefferson is working hard to renovate TAP, and I congratulate him for his efforts, it appears that an insufficient number of instructors appears to be driving the class size at Lejeune. And that, I am sure Secretary Jefferson would agree, is not acceptable.

Additionally, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) is not alone. Their TAP partners, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), VA, and the State workforce agencies, need to take a hard look at the total quality of TAP. Across the TAP sites, hand-out materials were not standardized, sometimes out of date, or just not available.

In one instance, the materials failed to contain any information on the current Post-9/11 GI Bill, which became law in 2009. In at least one class, the VA instructor admitted he did not know much about some of the programs.

For a program that has been in operation for nearly 20 years, those discrepancies are unacceptable and we cannot ignore today's shortcomings. So I look forward to hearing from today's witnesses.

And I will yield to the gentleman from Iowa's first district, Mr. Braley.

[The prepared statement of Chairman Stutzman appears on p. 31.]

#### **OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BRUCE L. BRALEY**

Mr. BRALEY. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for holding this important hearing.

I was delayed getting here because I was meeting with representatives from DoD about important educational assistance programs to children of military families.

And I think it is part of that broader continuum of our obligation to provide education and training to people who serve this country with honor and distinction and making sure that we are living up to our commitment to them that they gave to us when they signed up for this job.

Many of our brave servicemen and women in this country are returning in need of health care, employment, housing, education, and other services. Like veterans all over the country, they deserve our best efforts in providing the resources to ensure a seamless transition from military service to civilian life.

This Subcommittee has explored various options to accommodate servicemembers and encourage them, as well as their spouses, to attend the Transition Assistance Program. I think that is a very important point often lost on American citizens.

This is a team effort and spouses are fully committed to being a support system along with their families to the actively deployed member of the military. And we have an obligation to give them opportunities for the sacrifice they have made.

One of the things that we are looking at in terms of proposed changes is expanding evening classes and adding online resources to accommodate servicemembers' and their spouses' working schedules, which is a very real reality.

Others have suggested making the program mandatory for separating servicemembers and expanding the existing Montgomery GI Bill benefits.

I was happy to learn that the three responsible departments that make TAP possible, DoD, VA, and Department of Labor, were also aware of the criticism surrounding TAP and they have been working to modernize this important workshop.

Today we will reexamine TAP and the progress that has been made by the departments. I hope we also have the opportunity to

learn how the program is assisting our veterans in a seamless transition into employment and their communities.

As many of you know, TAP was established to meet the needs of separating servicemembers during the period of readjustment into civilian life. The program offers job search assistance and related services such as workshops and resume writing, the interview process, labor market overviews, personal appraisal, and VA benefits. The program seeks to provide veterans with the skills and services needed to make that transition into the workforce.

We also know that the VetSuccess on Campus Program plays a similar role to TAP. It helps individuals as they transition from being servicemembers to students and that transition is critical to help student veterans succeed in school and feel welcome and accepted in campuses across the country.

The age difference between a non-veteran and a veteran in a classroom can vary and might make the veteran feel as if they cannot relate or be intimidating at times.

VetSuccess on Campus helps veterans network with other veterans, but most importantly it can ease the veteran's transition by helping them apply for education benefits.

This hearing today will inform us of all the initiatives being implemented to help servicemembers and veterans succeed, so I want to thank you again for holding the hearing and look forward to the testimony of our witnesses. And I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Congressman Braley appears on p. 31.]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Thank you.

At this time, we are going to welcome our first panel to the table. And our first panel consists of Mr. Marco Reininger, Legislative Fellow for the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), and Ms. Christina Roof, National Acting Legislative Director for AMVETS.

You are welcome to the table at this time.

And, Ms. Roof, I think we will start with you and we will recognize you for 5 minutes. Thanks for coming today and I am looking forward to your testimony as well as your input.

**STATEMENTS OF CHRISTINA M. ROOF, NATIONAL ACTING LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR, AMERICAN VETERANS (AMVETS); AND MARCO REININGER, LEGISLATIVE FELLOW, IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN VETERANS OF AMERICA**

**STATEMENT OF CHRISTINA M. ROOF**

Ms. ROOF. Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, on behalf of AMVETS, I would like to extend our gratitude for being given the opportunity to share with you our views and recommendations regarding the Transition Assistance Program and VetSuccess on Campus.

You have my complete statement for the record, so today I would like to focus on TAP.

While AMVETS is aware of the recent efforts to improve TAP, we still strongly believe the overall program to be falling short of its intended purposes.

TAP classes are often the only opportunity a servicemember or qualifying spouse will have to receive the critical information vital to sustaining their quality of life after the military.

After spending years becoming a part of a respected military culture, servicemembers who leave the military face a new unknown culture when they step into a civilian role or corporate career. This transition is often complicated by visible and invisible injuries a servicemember sustained while serving their country.

AMVETS ardently believes that as the faces and needs of today's transitioning servicemembers and veterans change, it is critical for DoD, VA, and DOL to be ready and willing to adapt their programs to better meet these needs.

AMVETS has also noticed what appears to be a lack of confidence in the thoroughness and success of TAP among the individual branches.

For example, the U.S. Marine Corps has successfully adapted and utilized their updated version of TAP for some time now. The Marine Corps mandates that every transitioning Marine participate in TAP and the Marine Corps also has a higher rate of eligible spouse participation in TAP.

Often the U.S. Army utilizes Army Community Service centers to provide additional, and sometimes duplicate, TAP services to their transitioning wounded warriors.

While AMVETS applauds the individual branches for stepping up to fill the gaps of services and information that are supposed to be covered in TAP, we have to ask if taking the successful practices and programs from each branch and combining them into one, uniform updated TAP would not be a better way of ensuring successful transition across every branch of the United States military.

We are all aware of the fact that duplication of efforts and funding of multiple programs with large overlap is not the best way to meet the needs of today's transitioning war fighters or their families.

AMVETS would like to offer the following recommendations on how we believe TAP can be strengthened.

One, AMVETS strongly recommends TAP be a mandatory program in which all transitioning servicemembers are required to attend before they are released from DoD.

Two, DoD, VA, and DOL must design and implement a stronger Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) for wounded servicemembers who are hospitalized or who are receiving any type of medical rehabilitation during their military service discharge. We too often see the entire focus put on the servicemember's physical recovery while overlooking preparation for life outside of the service.

Third, DoD, VA, and DOL must also redesign and build upon the programs available to active-duty National Guard and Reserve members. As the current conflicts have shown us, members of the Guard and Reserve are just as likely to be deployed into combat zones. This means these men and women are serving side-by-side their active-duty colleagues and are serving just as long. TAP offered to these men and women must be equal to that of their active-duty counterparts.



Fourth, AMVETS strongly recommends the inclusion or involvement of a certified veteran service organization's service officer in a TAP class or at a minimum as an outside DoD, VA, and DOL referral servicemembers can receive by name.

Finally, AMVETS believes there needs to be immediate and intense focus and education on the translation of military experience to a civilian skill set and resume. This should also include guidance on what fields of employment to look for in the private sector.

A 2011 national survey of private sector businesses clearly illustrated the disconnect and lack of understanding between what someone did in the military compared to that of what the private sector job requisites are.

Chairman Stutzman and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, AMVETS again would like to thank you for inviting us to share with you our opinions and recommendations on these very important issues.

This concludes my testimony and I stand ready to answer any questions you may have for me. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Roof appears on p. 32.]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Reininger, is that how you pronounce it? I want to make sure I pronounce it.

Mr. REININGER. Reininger.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Reininger. Okay. All right. Sorry about that. Go ahead. You have 5 minutes.

#### **STATEMENT OF MARCO REININGER**

Mr. REININGER. Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on behalf of the more than 200,000 veterans and supporters of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America and the many veterans who are currently unemployed and looking for work.

My name is Marco Reininger. I am an Army non-commissioned officer (NCO) and veteran of the war in Afghanistan. I currently study political science at Columbia University on the GI Bill and serve as a Legislative Fellow for IAVA.

Today I am not expressing the views of the U.S. Army, but my own and those of IAVA.

Mr. Chairman, unemployment is a major issue facing our newest generation of veterans. Over 200,000 veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan are seeking employment. Not only is this number unacceptably high, but it also represents a tremendous waste of resources.

The members of our armed services are some of the best trained, most disciplined, and most ambitious men and women this country has to offer. Not equipping them with the tools they need to transition into the civilian workforce is simply bad economics.

Hundreds of thousands and often millions of taxpayer dollars are spent on training each servicemember and every one that cannot find employment is a missed opportunity.

After two decades without significant changes to the Transition Assistance Program, it is time to take a serious look at overhauling it.

IAVA member Nick Colgin is one vet who would have benefitted from improved TAP classes. Nick was a combat medic in the Army, but could not find a job in the civilian world. Nick went through the TAP Program, but was being treated for traumatic brain injury (TBI) at the same time, so the classes did not suit his needs and were not helpful.

On March 3rd, 2011, during his testimony before the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Assistant Secretary Ray Jefferson put forward excellent recommendations to overhaul TAP and turn it into a more effective and relevant program.

IAVA supports his recommended improvements in addition to several other crucial items. TAP needs to be a program that addresses each servicemember's unique level of experience, education, career of choice, and readiness to enter the civilian job market.

Having a lance corporal medic and an armor lieutenant colonel attend the same course as is currently the case is inefficient and a tremendous waste of opportunity.

The goal of TAP should be to ask the servicemember what are your employment or entrepreneurial goals and then provide a detailed plan on how to achieve them.

We support DOL Veterans' Employment and Training Service's (VETS') recommendations to update traditional TAP elements, implement e-learning modules, create an online TAP platform, transition entirely to contracted instructors, and provide e-mail and phone support for transitioning servicemembers.

In addition to the Assistant Secretary's recommendations to measure the program's success, IAVA recommends that an outside organization with expertise in analyzing performance metrics be contracted to do so and be contracted to conduct a full audit of the program every 3 years to ensure that the program remains efficient and relevant.

We need to build for the future and ensure that TAP is set up to serve many generations of servicemembers to come.

Lastly, the program will not succeed if servicemembers do not attend. According to a Bureau of Labor Statistics survey of over 600,000 veterans, 45 percent said that they never attended TAP when separating from the military.

Therefore, we recommend for the program to become mandatory for all transitioning servicemembers, be expanded in length, and the course be given sufficiently early before the servicemember's separation date.

Mr. Chairman, one of the most valuable steps a veteran can take to be successful in the job market is to earn a college degree. The Post-9/11 GI Bill has already opened the doors to success for hundreds of thousands of veterans across the country.

Along with this important new veteran's benefit come challenges to the VA and the educational institutions. To mitigate those challenges, VetSuccess on Campus, the VA program that places VA personnel on college campuses, should play a crucial role in ensuring that student veterans receive their benefits on time.

IAVA recommends that the number of vocational and peer-to-peer counselors be increased and expanded to every campus that hosts a significant amount of student veterans.

Currently certifying officials are not trained to a specific standard, they are not held accountable, and are often overworked with other duties. And in those cases, the student veteran always loses.

This is a problem because correct GI Bill certification is crucial to ensuring the veteran receives his or her living stipend. Especially for student veterans with families, this stipend is financial life support that cannot be tampered with.

Dedicated on campus VA counselors are important for student veterans and should be present at every campus in America.

Mr. Chairman, the men and women that served our country in uniform are a tremendous resource of expertise, technical skill, and they have the right attitude for the workplace.

In a time where our Nation faces economic turbulence and high unemployment, we simply cannot afford to leave this resource untapped. We must ensure our veterans are hired and we hope to be a resource to you in this endeavor.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony and I am looking forward to answer any questions you or the Members of the Subcommittee may have. Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Reininger appears on p. 37.]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you, Mr. Reininger. And first of all, I would like to just thank you for your service to our country and for what you have done and what you will do.

I will start the questions. I do have a couple of questions for both of you. And you mentioned the statistic of 45 percent of servicemembers attend TAP. That is for all branches.

And am I correct that the Marines do require—it is mandatory for their servicemembers to attend TAP before they are discharged and do we know if their percentage is any higher than the other branches?

Ms. ROOF. When I spoke with Marine Corps officials last week, I was told that it is mandatory that their Marines complete the TAP Program. I was also told there were some exceptions, of course, when there was, you know, life critical injuries involved and so on. But I was told last week that it is mandatory that all their Marines complete TAP before their service discharge.

Mr. STUTZMAN. So that is with no exceptions? I mean, every Marine coming out has completed TAP or—

Ms. ROOF. Again, I can only go on what they told me which was, you know, it was mandatory, which I think is a great idea and should be across the board. I cannot speak again to each individual case, but it seems like they are enforcing it.

Mr. STUTZMAN. So would the 45 percent number have Marines included in that percentage or do we not know more of the demographics of that poll or that study?

Ms. ROOF. I will let my colleague. I think that was his number.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Yes.

Mr. REININGER. Sir, if I may, I am not 100 percent sure whether or not this number includes the Marine Corps, but I believe that making it mandatory DoD-wide would be the right solution here.

That same survey indicated that many veterans did not attend the TAP Program or TAP courses that were offered because it had a reputation of being redundant, not really useful for making a suc-

cessful transition. And in some cases, even commanding officers would not let them go. Again, this is what the survey indicated.

So mandating it DoD-wide for all service branches would be the right answer here, sir. And, of course, along with that comes having to overhaul the program so that it actually works and makes sense for people to attend.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Mr. Reininger, I would like to ask you, what was your experience like? Plenty of information given to you? You were fully aware of TAP and the scheduling? Can you share a little bit about your experience with it?

Mr. REININGER. Certainly, Mr. Chairman.

As a Guard member, I came off active duty twice. I did not attend the TAP Program. It was not offered for us at the time.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay.

Mr. REININGER. So what we went through was I guess a similar concept, but it was only a few hours and it was essentially a briefing on what benefits are available, what suicide hotline to call, and basically handing out paperwork to register with the VA.

So it was certainly insufficient for preparing someone to go out, hit the job market, apply, and go to interviews. I already knew that I was going to go to school, so I did not pay too much attention. But I can tell you, sir, that in that respect, it was insufficient.

Mr. STUTZMAN. If we did adopt a policy that mandated all of those to attend TAP, all servicemembers, any ideas how we—how do we enforce it? How do we make sure—is there a penalty? How do we get folks to attend a TAP meeting? And I am not sure what the Marines do I guess entirely, so maybe they already have a model that is working.

Ms. ROOF. Well, I think the first step is you make people want to go. You make the program worth their time and you reschedule when they have the classes.

If I can share just a little bit of a personal, my younger brother returned from Afghanistan about a year and a half ago and he was on base for about 2 weeks. And they said, you know, okay, your 10 years is up. We are going to go ahead and transition you out. Here is a class. You are going to do it, the same day that the movers are coming to your house, so make sure your wife is there.

And he told me, he said he did not remember two words those people said to him. He was thinking about what the movers are doing with their stuff, if his wife was okay, and that he only had 3 days until he got to go home.

So I think, again, readjusting the program so people want to go, so you do not have to make them go, as well as looking at when the classes are held is number one.

Two, within DoD, I do not think you will have a lot of problem if someone's commanding officer (CO) tells them to go to the class. I am pretty sure they will go if the COs are held accountable to making sure everyone goes. But, again, that might be a good question for the Marine Corps.

Mr. STUTZMAN. I mean, with only 3 days left and, like you said, they have a lot of other things on their mind, what would make them want to go?

Ms. ROOF. Well, again, my brother had told me, he said, again, the timing was horrible. He had only been back from deployment

for a couple weeks. So he said, you know, maybe if we would have done this a couple months ago when I was not thinking about movers.

And he said they kind of talked—and, again, I am not saying this is for every class, just the class he was in—they kind of talked at him, at them instead of to them if that makes sense. And there was also some misinformation given regarding VA benefits. So I am hoping that was just a one-time incident for the class he was in.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Sure. Well, any information like that is helpful. We are never going to have a perfect system, but we obviously want to make it as beneficial and get the value for our servicemembers coming out of the programs.

Ms. ROOF. And if I may, you said something about how you were given a couple hours. That has to be fixed. That has to be changed. The members of the Guard and Reserve are doing the exact same thing as their active-duty colleagues. They deserve the exact same benefits and opportunities for transition.

Mr. REININGER. Mr. Chairman, if I may also, to answer your first question, and I agree with my colleague here, as a soldier myself, we are used to executing orders. So if somebody tells, you know, the servicemember, hey, soldier Marine, you are attending the TAP course, move out, roger, that is it.

So if it were mandated and, you know, COs would enforce it, then I do not think there would be an issue with attendance.

Now, in terms of getting servicemembers to want to go, I agree also, the same survey that I cited earlier indicated that many servicemembers would prefer for the TAP Program to be offered about 6 months before their separation date so that they can go ahead and look at the transition plan and really start to learn the skills they need and adapt and implement those actions that they need to be successful out there.

And I think I am looking at a statistic here right now and this is Bureau of Labor Statistics' first quarter 2011. It indicates here that in the age group 18 to 24, both female and male were looking at 29.8 percent unemployment among Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) vets.

So if you tell folks, listen up, if you go out there, there is a 30 percent chance you are going to be unemployed, then I think people would start listening because a lot of folks have families to support. And we are used to working and we are used to working hard. So, you know, having a program that I am told will work and I am told to attend, I think, would do the job.

And, again, it is all about making it relevant, bringing it to the 21st Century and not teaching things that were current 20 years ago. I mean, the world has changed. We are talking about cutting-edge technology in place. We are talking about new ways of human resources department hiring people, what skills are needed.

So if servicemembers are really prepared to go out there and educate employers to the value they bring to the workforce, then I think that would do the trick because, as we know, many employers out there do not know how to translate military skills into civilian skills. They do not know how to read a military resume. And, of course, working on establishing these best practices, but the separating servicemember cannot rely on that.

So if the TAP Program goes ahead and teaches me how to walk into an interview, sell myself, and really educate that employer, then I think we have figured out how to make it work.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Braley.

Mr. BRALEY. Let me ask you this basic question. Isn't it true that the Department of Defense could make these programs mandatory across the board right now without any further action by Congress if they wanted to?

That was a yes from both of you?

Mr. REININGER. Yes, sir. Absolutely. The Executive Branch could order this to be mandatory and that would most likely be the end of it as far as I understand the process.

Mr. BRALEY. And I really appreciated both of your comments because I think it is true, you need to have a clear direction from a commanding officer to make mandatory actually mean mandatory, but you also have to provide a program people think has value to promote the idea that it is a worthwhile thing for people to pay attention to while they are attending it.

And one of the things that I think would be important is making it part of an officer's evaluation form if this indeed is a mandatory program, looking at the attendance and making sure that it is, in fact, mandatory because one of the things we know is that when people have an opportunity to attend meaningful programs and feel they are getting something of value for it, they will share that with their peers.

So rather than being one of those you just have to check off as you are being demobilized to get home, it is something you look forward to as helping you achieve a goal that is going to benefit you over the long term.

And, Ms. Roof, I was really impressed with your comment about the importance of identifying the need to treat people with invisible injuries as a subgroup of people who are going through the TAP Program.

I just attended a welcome home in Dubuque, Iowa for a young Marine who lost both of his legs above the knee, very serious wounds, in Afghanistan. When he is traveling in his home community, people have a very clear understanding of the nature and extent of his injuries.

But we know many returning veterans who have the other signature wounds of these wars including traumatic brain injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder. Because they are invisible, they may be in a job interview or on a college campus and the people they are interacting with have no idea of the trauma that they have gone through and the needs they have that are different than the other population.

And my father came home from Iwo Jima with post-traumatic stress disorder, went through two severe bouts of depression, so this is something that is very personal to me.

And one of the things that we know is that it is also important for veterans to be able to open up and share what they are going through so that their employers and their college peers are able to relate to them better.

So what can we do to address this subgroup of returning warriors and prepare them for these TAP programs?

Mr. REININGER. Sir, and thank you very much for making this very important point. As you indicated, these injuries are invisible. However, they are not untreatable. And with medicine advancing, we have seen pretty good success in treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), treating mild traumatic brain injury (MTBI), TBI.

So I think one key component, and, of course, this plays into educating employers, but also into educating folks that are applying for jobs, is that just because you have PTSD, just because you were diagnosed with this illness does not mean that you do not bring a lot to the workforce. All it means is that you have a disease or an injury rather like many other people and that it needs to be treated.

So, again, I think it goes into educating employers. It goes into educating the individual servicemembers to make hiring professionals aware of this. And so I think that is very important.

Ms. ROOF. And I agree. And thank you, by the way. When it comes down to it, TBI, for example, invisible wound, but definitely treatable.

So when looking at the DTAP Program and its redesign, people that have suffered—there are different degrees of TBI obviously, so I am not going to speak across the board, but let's talk, you know, mild TBI, they might cognitively function, you know, a little bit differently, but they are still absolutely the same.

So in that transition course, adjust and adapt that course to meet the needs of those individuals. If it is maybe adding 1 day to the program or having shorter days and intervals, however it is going to meet their needs, the best because, again, these individuals have a tremendous amount to add to the private sector. It is just we have to work with them to figure out how to bring their best qualities to bring back to the private sector.

Mr. BRALEY. Well, I think one of the concerns a lot of employers have is they do not understand the underlying nature of the disease and how it impacts the employability of that particular employee.

And that is why I think a lot of people have a tendency to not to want to bring that up when in reality making employers aware of that on the front end and talking about the coping mechanisms that can be put in place to help that employee function and be effective in the workplace.

You know, when you were talking, one of the things you mentioned was the emphasis on physical rehabilitation and not vocational rehabilitation. And when you look at physical rehabilitation, they focus on things like activities of daily living which are everyday benchmarks that you can identify and measure on how people are able to respond to a physical injury.

We almost need activities of employment or vocational living that can serve as a benchmark on rehabilitation for people looking for work in the workplace. And I think that both of you have offered some great ideas on what we should be looking at in terms of providing greater opportunities to make this TAP Program work effectively. So thank you very much.

I yield back.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Braley.

Mr. Johnson.

Mr. JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank the panel for being here with us this morning to talk about these very, very important issues.

Ms. Roof, thank you for providing several suggestions for ways to improve TAP.

What, if any, are some of the components of TAP that you believe are working well and benefitting veterans better than others or are there any?

Ms. ROOF. Well, yes. I mean, there are parts that are working. But, again, I think that is going to vary from each individual location and/or class because as the Chairman was saying, you know, his staff saw some wonderful enthusiastic presenters, which is very important. You know, you have to keep people awake, have to keep people wanting to pay attention.

But, then again, you hear stuff, you know, such as what happened to my brother in that kind of class or what the Chairman's staff reported back to him that there was misinformation given.

So I really think that is going to vary and that is something that should be looked at when looking at maybe redesigning or updating the program.

Mr. JOHNSON. Okay. Well, thank you.

You also mentioned the early success of the VetSuccess on Campus Program. What can we in Congress do to enable this program to continue being a successful tool for those veterans that are seeking higher education?

Ms. ROOF. Well, first and foremost, grant the Secretary and grant VA the authority to expand the program and then make sure that they have the proper number of personnel and funds to grow the program and keep the oversight that it has now because it is working now because people are watching every step.

If you just start expanding this rapidly and you lose oversight, I think there could be problems. But if you keep it how it is working now and keep the oversight level you have now, I think it stands to be an amazing tool.

Mr. JOHNSON. You know, I do not know if these questions already have been asked. One of the earliest experiences we had here after coming to Congress in January was to visit some of our wounded troops over at Walter Reed.

I met one who is a quad amputee, and very enthusiastic young man given his situation, sitting there with an iPad and a medical tape around his arm holding a stylus that he was using this iPad with. And when I asked him what he was doing, he said, well, he said I cannot walk and I cannot make a living with my arms, so I am applying to law school. And, of course, everybody's chin dropped. What an attitude.

What are we doing or do you have an opinion on whether we are addressing enough the need for opportunities, economic opportunities for those that come back? Five, 10 years ago, they did not survive, but now they are. We have a different group of veterans that now want to provide for themselves, but they are going to need some serious help in terms of educational opportunities.



In his case, for example, going to law school is very difficult because, and we are still trying to figure all that out, under the rules that existed at that time, a quad amputee could not be released from a facility because it takes two people to take care of them.

So how do you bring quality education to those men and women who come back from the battle zones much different than when they went and are unable to get out like that? Have you got an opinion, any thoughts?

Mr. REININGER. Sir, first of all, that is a very inspiring story and very touching at the same time.

I think what we should look at is, and like you said, quality education is going to be key especially for servicemembers that come back with severe physical injuries like the ones you described, creating programs within the VA that would allow for and facilitate for somebody to go ahead and despite these injuries attend college, attend law school would be ideal.

Of course, you know, I am just sitting here and brainstorming, but as I mentioned earlier, one of the things we advocate, and this pertains to TAP, but this could be applied to other programs, too, is to engage an outside agency, a third-party agency to go ahead and really assess these programs and make them relevant, bring them to the 21st Century, and make sure that they work.

The Department of Labor, the Department of Veterans Affairs, they are great at executing most of the time, but not always necessarily great at thinking outside the box. That is not necessarily part of their mission.

So going ahead and engaging an agency or an organization, maybe a think tank, something like the Rand Corporation, whose job it is to look at and improve, that would be ideal, I think, and that is the motivation.

Mr. JOHNSON. I am glad you said that. You know, America has been great since our founding at thinking outside the box. I think we can solve this problem if we put our minds to it.

Thank you for your testimony.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. JOHNSON. I yield back.

Mr. STUTZMAN. All right. Thank you.

Mr. Bilirakis.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

A question for Marco Reininger. You comment in your testimony that the members of armed services are some of the best trained, most disciplined, and most ambitious men and women this country has to offer and not equipping them with the tools they need to make a successful transition into the civilian workforce is bad economics. I completely agree with you, by the way.

Do you think that proposed Department of Labor modifications are sufficient to educate departing servicemembers on how their military skill sets translate to civilian skill sets and will you speak to how Congress can be more helpful in conveying the message of the attributes former servicemembers bring to civilian workforces?

Mr. REININGER. Sir, the recommendations that Assistant Secretary Jefferson made are outstanding. And I was thrilled to hear him talk about how they even applied lean six sigma to some of the processes to really again think outside the box and improve.

I think it needs to go a little bit further in terms of, and I mentioned this during my oral testimony, making it mandatory, of course, which should be a relatively easy fix and then again making sure that this program remains relevant, remains up to date, and really serves servicemembers in the future regardless of who is in charge of the White House, regardless of who is in charge of Congress or the Department of Labor.

And I think a key to making that happen is to having that audit occur at regular intervals to make sure that it stays relevant.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you.

Mr. REININGER. And, sir, again, a key component here, I believe, is educating employers. When I was about to deploy to Afghanistan, my manager went to our H.R. department and asked to fire me because I was gone too much for military training. Thank God the H.R. department knew about the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Act (USERRA) laws, but this manager had no clue.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. It is unfortunate.

Mr. REININGER. So this is what we are looking at out there and these are issues that need to be tackled. And I think implementing best practices, educating H.R. departments is a key component of fixing this problem, sir.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you very much.

And I would like to discuss this issue with you maybe in my office or what have you at your convenience. Okay. Thank you.

Now, this is for the entire panel. The VetSuccess Program, which was piloted in Tampa, Florida, at the University of South Florida is certainly making it easier for veterans to utilize the education benefits they have earned.

What are the major obstacles to expanding this program and then, secondly, what are the success rates of veterans at an institution where the VetSuccess Program is in place as opposed to those attending institutions without the program for the entire panel?

Ms. ROOF. To give you fully accurate information, I would like to ask to submit my answer for the record because I do have that data compared across different campuses.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Please do. And, you know, I would like a copy of it as well.

Ms. ROOF. Absolutely.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. And probably the other Members of the panel.

Ms. ROOF. Uh-huh. Absolutely.

[Ms. Roof subsequently provided the following information:]

After contacting the VA VetSuccess Program office, there is no data available on success rates as compared to campuses without the program. In regards to expanding the program, the law needs to be changed to give the Secretary the authority to expand it beyond the current eight campuses. The program gets rave reviews and offers a nice "buffer" (for lack of a better term) for the transition from a very structured military life to that of a very unstructured college campus environment.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Anyone else? Would you like to?

Mr. REININGER. Sir, again, I think VetSuccess on Campus is a great tool because, as I mentioned earlier, a lot of these certifying officials wear that title as a fourth or fifth hat. They are already overworked.

I have anecdotal evidence of folks that I am friends with who almost had to drop out of the semester because the certifying official just would not certify them and they were barred from taking the exam because of nonpayment.

So we cannot rely on these schools to really fulfill their duty of serving their student veteran population. A VA employee on campus can ease that problem, can help with making sure the process goes smoothly, and make sure that the veteran gets their benefits on time.

As I mentioned earlier, if you do not get your living stipend and you have a spouse and perhaps two children to care for, maybe in a high-class area like New York City where I go to school on the GI Bill, then that could create tremendous financial distress on top of the stress of going to school and having to prepare for exams and things of that nature.

So by expanding the program across America, to place these VA counselors and peer-to-peer counselors on more campuses would be, I think, crucial to ensuring that the process goes smoothly. And, again, any support the VA can get to make sure that they are authorized to implement more of these VetSuccess on Campus centers, I think, would be very beneficial, sir.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Very good. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Thank you for calling the hearing as well, Mr. Chairman. Appreciate it.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you.

I just want to say thank you for your testimony. And what I walked away with today is really mandatory classes for servicemembers and timing are the two big things to make sure our servicemembers have the information they need before moving on.

So thank you for your testimony. Looking forward to working with you in the future. And, again, thank you for your service to our country and what you all are doing for our veterans.

All right. At this time, I will call on our second panel to take their seats at the witness table. With us today is Mr. Tom Pamperin, Deputy Under Secretary for Disability Assistance, and impending retiree from the Department of Veterans Affairs. I believe today or tomorrow is his last day.

So congratulations—

Mr. PAMPERIN. Thank you.

Mr. STUTZMAN [continuing]. On your retirement. Yeah. Would you want to share how many years or is that personal information?

Mr. PAMPERIN. Thirty-seven years.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thirty-seven years. Fantastic.

Also with us today is Mr. Philip Burdette, Principal Director of DoD's Office of Wounded Warrior Care and Transition Policy; Brigadier General Robert Hedelund, Director of Marine and Family Programs. And General Hedelund is accompanied by Dr. Beth Barton, the Manager of Personal and Professional Development Program, Marine Corps Community Services. And finally, and certainly not least, we are pleased to have Mr. Ray Jefferson, the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS).

We always enjoy having you and working with you.

But I think we will start with General Hedelund. As the Marines like to say, they are the first to fight, so you are the first to testify today. So you are recognized for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENTS OF BRIGADIER GENERAL ROBERT F. HEDELUND, DIRECTOR, MARINE AND FAMILY PROGRAMS, UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE; ACCOMPANIED BY BETH A. BARTON, PH.D., MANAGER, PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM, MARINE CORPS COMMUNITY SERVICES; THOMAS J. PAMPERIN, DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR DISABILITY ASSISTANCE, VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS; ACCOMPANIED BY RUTH A. FANNING, DIRECTOR, VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICE, VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS; PHILIP A. BURDETTE, PRINCIPAL DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF WOUNDED WARRIOR CARE AND TRANSITION POLICY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE; AND HON. RAYMOND M. JEFFERSON, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**

**STATEMENT OF BRIGADIER GENERAL ROBERT F. HEDELUND**

General HEDELUND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about the Marine Corps' Transition Assistance Management Program.

In our Commandant's 2010 Planning Guidance, he directed the Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs to review and retool Transition Assistance to better meet the needs of our separating and retiring Marines.

Through careful review of our program, surveys of the parting Marines, and engagement with our partner organizations, we have identified that our Transition Assistance Program needs fundamental redesign to more effectively engage and support our Marines and their families.

This requires transformation from the current one-size-fits-all, single-event approach to a more individualized career-long process. Our personal and professional development methodology begins as recruits hit the yellow footprints or at accession and must continue through the Marine's career whether it be for 4 or 40 years.

Transition assistance, therefore, must be mapped to this process to ensure that the tangible and intangible benefits Marines gain will contribute to their personal and professional goals in the Corps, as they reintegrate into the civilian community, or if they become members of our Reserve component.

Our immediate priority and first phase of this work will be focused on the Marine's End of Active Service or EAS plus or minus 180 days. To that end, we are collaborating with the DOL, VA, and DoD to transform the traditional transition assistance workshops into 21st Century venues that will deliver actionable knowledge to our Marines.

Our future program is still in the planning stages, but we have briefed our Commandant on our way ahead and actions are under-

way to establish a core curriculum, elected elements based on a Marine's future desires, a standardized high-quality product, and pre-work requirements to help streamline valuable classroom time.

We are particularly excited about our envisioned elective courses that will support four pathways that our departing Marines can choose from. They include employment, career technical education, college and university work, and entrepreneurship.

After a Marine leaves active service, we will offer reach-back capability via a revitalized Marine For Life Program that some of you may be familiar with. That is key because it continues to support retention and recruiting goals throughout our country.

Our ultimate aim is to improve transition assistance to the point that mandatory attendance is no longer an issue because Marines want to be there due to the program's high quality and desirability.

During all this work, we look to partner and collaborate with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Department of Labor, the VA, and our sister Services for best practices.

I look forward to answering your questions and I thank you very much for your time.

[The prepared statement of General Hedelund appears on p. 39.]  
Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Thank you.

And, Ms. Fanning, I apologize for failing to recognize you as well. It is good to have you here with us today.

And next we will go to Mr. Pamperin. We will start with you.

#### STATEMENT OF THOMAS J. PAMPERIN

Mr. PAMPERIN. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Braley, and Members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the VA's Transition Assistance Program and VetSuccess on Campus.

My testimony will cover what we are currently doing in the TAP Program, our current TAP reengineering efforts, and other support to separating servicemembers and veterans to include the VetSuccess Program and our efforts in the VetSuccess on Campus Program.

Ms. Ruth Fanning, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service, accompanies me.

I would also like to introduce Mr. Curtis Coy seated behind me, the newly-named Deputy Under Secretary for Economic Opportunity.

Public Law 101-510 created the TAP Program, which is executed under a memorandum of understanding among the Departments of Labor, Defense, Homeland Security, and VA. The departments work collaboratively to schedule briefings and to best serve servicemembers as they transition to civilian life. Quarterly meetings among the departments are held to oversee the operations of the program and to plan enhancements.

VA's TAP briefings are provided by trained military services coordinators, Military Services Coordinators (MSCs), from the regional offices with jurisdiction over the military installations in the United States and Puerto Rico.

TAP services are provided to servicemembers stationed outside the United States through overseas military services coordinators in the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Spain, Okinawa, Japan,

and Korea. We also provide transition briefings to demobilizing Reserve and National Guard members.

At TAP briefings, the servicemembers learn about the array of benefits and services available from VA. In 2010, approximately 207,000 active Reserve and Guard servicemembers and family members participated in over 5,000 transition briefings.

From October 1, 2001, through March 2011, over 83,000 servicemembers and family members participated in over 2,000 transition briefings.

In June 2010, VA established a TAP reengineering project to update and modernize the briefing and to ensure that it meets the current needs of servicemembers. We have revised the briefing, conducted training for over 200 military services coordinators, and will standardize the makeup of all take-away materials.

In the fourth quarter, VA will launch an online TAP. We currently conduct regular reviews of the briefing materials and conference calls with MSCs. A plan to conduct site visits to monitor the delivery of the program beginning in 2012 has been established. Additionally, a survey tool is under development to provide customer feedback.

I would also like to discuss VA's VetSuccess Program. The goal of the VetSuccess Program is to assist veterans with service-connected disabilities to prepare for and obtain suitable and sustainable employment through the provision of services individually tailored to each person.

VetSuccess begins with a comprehensive evaluation of the veteran's needs, identification and understanding of their interests, aptitudes and transferrable skills.

Next, vocational rehabilitation professionals explore a veteran's potential career goals in line with the labor market demands.

Veterans' employment, a fundamental mission of the VR&E Program, relies on early intervention, smart processes, a productive partnerships, good rehabilitation planning, and retention to the point that an individual is job ready.

In 2010, over 10,000 veterans were successfully rehabilitated. Fifty-one percent were hired by the private sector, 33 by the Federal Government, 12 percent by State and local governments, and 4 percent by faith-based organizations.

I would also like to discuss our Web site, the Vetsuccess.gov, which has been enhanced to provide one-stop resources for both disabled and able-bodied veterans and family members to assess services during transition, campus life, job search, and career attainment. The program also assists veterans with disabilities to maximize independent living in their homes and communities.

The Web site includes a job board for employers desiring to hire veterans, resume builders, and tools that allow veterans to utilize resumes already developed, a military-to-civilian jobs skills translator, aggregator tools for employers seeking certain sets of skills, and other items.

The job board feature and VetSuccess currently connects over 68,000 veterans to over 1,500 employers. Veterans have access to the direct employer's job central career board that lists 4,000,000 with additional links to other popular and highly-populated job sites.

The VetSuccess on Campus Program provides support to veterans in completing a college degree at eight campuses. Over 4,500 veteran students have been served at these eight campuses. VA plans to expand VetSuccess on Campus in 2012 to nine additional campuses with veteran populations of 800 to 1,200 students.

Our objective is to significantly increase the potential for graduation and successful transition to a career that supports veterans and their families and contributes to the Nation's well-being.

Mr. Chairman, we at VA are proud of our continuing role in the transition of servicemembers to civilian life. Thank you for allowing me to testify today and I would be pleased to respond to any questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Pamperin appears on p. 42.]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Pamperin.

Mr. Burdette is recognized for 5 minutes.

#### **STATEMENT OF PHILIP A. BURDETTE**

Mr. BURDETTE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley, Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the views of the Department of Defense on the performance of the Transition Assistance Program this morning with my colleagues from the Marine Corps, Department of Labor, and Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Transition Assistance Program is a collaborative partnership between the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Department of Labor, its primary function, its primary platform used to deliver an extensive array of services and benefits information to separating servicemembers.

The Department also focuses on providing separating and retiring servicemembers useful information and assistance in all aspects of their transition process including preparation for post military employment. Together with our partners, we have done a good job of connecting servicemembers with resources, but we are by no means finished.

The Transition Assistance Program was designed for in-person delivery to servicemembers coming off active duty 20 years ago, a one-size-fits-all approach that is simply not what is needed or desired by today's force.

To strengthen and improve the Transition Assistance Program for the 21st Century, the Department and our partners recognize that it is in need of major enhancements and each agency is working to improve their component of the program through a number of initiatives.

We are leveraging technology, modernizing curriculum, improving field staff training, and developing ways to improve access to information relating to a successful transition.

By using the Internet, we are no longer bound by the constraints of more traditional learning environments, allowing us to reach more servicemembers at the same time.

The traditional brick and mortar classrooms will remain available, but I am excited about moving the Transition Assistance Program into an online setting. We started doing this on March 1st of this year by offering Web-based seminars on important topics like

building better resumes and landing a Federal job with networking and interviewing.

This is just a few examples of how we are better reaching servicemembers worldwide and at different points in their transition as well as reaching those with hearing and visual impairments. Waiting until the end of military service to educate the war fighter is simply too late.

Another major part of our use of our technology and the movement to an online environment is our career decision tool kit. The tool kit in both compact disk and online format is the cornerstone of transforming the Transition Assistance Program into a blended career transition training model. It takes advantage of online and digital resources, virtual classrooms, and social media that complement the traditional classes.

Just this spring, we shipped over 500 kits to the southwest border and with the Department of Labor facilitated six workshops in May for members of our National Guard and Reserve who are transitioning from that mission back to civilian life.

The Department of Defense, particularly our military services, have also significantly increased their focus on licensing and certification by providing such information in a wide range of ways and in different formats to appeal to individual learning styles.

The Department also recognizes that exposure to career opportunities is crucial to future employment. Networking must take place throughout a servicemember's career and DoD is involved with several initiatives to encourage this, especially for our wounded, ill, and injured.

Launching this spring the department's education and employment initiative pilot, we will match recovering servicemembers with career and vocational counselors who will help them become engaged in their future very early in their recovery by helping to identify skills that they have, skills that they need, and opportunities to utilize these skills.

Another pilot program that the Department of Defense sponsors is our Operation War Fighter, which is discussed in detail in my written statement. The program strives to demonstrate to participants that the skills they have obtained in the military are transferrable into civilian employment.

To date, Operation War Fighter has placed approximately 1,800 servicemembers in internships across more than 100 different Federal employers.

When I left the Marines in 2001, I thought I was pretty plugged in. I knew what I wanted to do and I chose not to take advantage of the transition resources available at the time from the Marines because I thought I had it all figured out.

Unfortunately, I was not as savvy as I thought. Instead of walking right into one of those jobs I knew was just waiting for a Marine like me, I remained unemployed for 13 months. I still keep all the rejection letters that I received in a pile on my desk to remind me every day of my solemn obligation to today's transitioning servicemembers who face even greater challenges than I faced.

In closing, I want to acknowledge that we are anticipating increasing numbers of transitioning servicemembers from both the active-duty and the Reserve component and that this is not a uni-



lateral effort. Only by working together with the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Labor, and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the Congress can we ensure that our servicemembers receive the transition support they need.

Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the men and women in the military today and their families, I thank you and the Members of this Subcommittee for your steadfast support and leadership in this important area.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Burdette appears on p. 44.]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you. There is nothing like rejection to give you incentive, is there?

Mr. BURDETTE. You bet.

Mr. STUTZMAN. All right. Mr. Jefferson.

#### **STATEMENT OF HON. RAYMOND M. JEFFERSON**

Mr. JEFFERSON. All right. Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley, Representative Bilirakis, thank you very much for calling this important hearing.

I want to first honor the contributions and cooperation of our partners. TAP will only become as great as it has the potential to be through all of us working together and that is what is happening.

I also want to acknowledge the insights we heard earlier from Ms. Roof and Mr. Reininger.

So here is where we started off to transform the program. I first asked the question who are the leading experts on TAP in the country and in the world and what is the best content. And I spent hours upon hours downloading all of these best practices and putting them right into the newly redesigned TAP Program.

I am focusing on the implement workshop. There are four purposes of an implement workshop.

One, to teach servicemembers to find job after job after job after job.

Two, certainty, clarity, and what they want to do with their life.

Three, readiness, readiness to succeed in a job.

And, fourth, the ability to decrease the time it takes for them to get rapidly on board in the new job and to begin contributing.

There are four adult learning principles which are relevant to the TAP implement workshop.

The first is relevancy. It needs to be effective and just in time.

The second is action learning, learning by doing.

The third is a stretch that gets people outside their comfort zone.

And the fourth is a supportive learning environment.

So here are the six major challenges and problems that we have had over the years and the six solutions and improvement areas.

Number one, it has been one size fits all, no customization, no segmentation. How are we going to solve that for the first time? We are solving it through pre-work. Before people come to TAP, we are going to assess them on their readiness for employment and also their interests. We will probably use the strong interest inventory which is the most widely regarded interest inventory around.

Then we are going to segment people as to be highly ready for employment, moderately ready, or entry level. Then we are going to bring them into what I call component number two, best practice

content with a cohort who has the same transition employment needs. So you start creating peer support groups right at the cohort level when they are in the classroom.

What is the best practice contact in TAP? It is life and career planning, I left my book on my desk, mental resiliency training, stress reduction techniques, how to transition from military to a civilian work environment, networking so that if you have been deployed or mobilized, you do not have much of a network other than your family and friends, story telling, how to articulate your value proposition to an employer. They make their initial decision in the first 1 to 2 minutes and spend the rest of the interview trying to provide proof that they made the right decision. And they want you to answer two questions. A, you can make my problems go away, B, you really want to be here.

Entrepreneurship and also peer support techniques and finally Federal Government employment. All this is best practice content. We are going to have three versions, one for people highly ready, moderately ready, and entry level.

There are two things you want to look at in a career transition program, the message and the messenger, the content and the delivery system. Right now we have 186 PowerPoint slides, no good. We are going to experiential learning, learning by doing. We are going to an all contract facilitator force because we get the best results when we use contract facilitators.

The final three components, something that has never been done before, I got this from international best practices, after TAP support. When a servicemember finishes TAP, he or she is going to create an individual transition plan that reflects their vision for their life, what they want to be, where they want to go, their strategy, the road map they are going to take to get there, and the tactics, the actions and steps they are going to use along the way.

Then and after TAP support for 60 days after they finish TAP, they are going to be able to make a phone call or go online and get customized coaching to implement and pressure test their individual transition plan. Never been done before. This ensures that after we have them drinking through a fire hose, similar to the way I talk in these hearings, afterwards we are going to embed and instill what they have learned so they have uptake for the long term.

Fifth major component e-learning platform. All the content is going to be available in an interactive dramatized format online. And I want to acknowledge our friends at DoD for letting us use the DTAP and partnership to do that.

So this will also be available 24 hours, 7 days a week. All veterans, wounded warriors, spouses, Guard, Reservists will all have access to that. And it will also be an entry point into all of the entrepreneurship programs, services, and support that is coming out of the interagency task force on entrepreneurship chaired by the Small Business Administration's Associate Director Marie Johns.

Finally, performance metrics. Over 2½ million people have gone through TAP. I do not have one performance metric to show for it. People say the program is going well, it is not well. It is all anecdotal. So I am going to get performance metrics and three moments in truth.

One, when you finish the course, thumbs up or thumbs down.

Number two, when you are applying the content because it may be a period of time between when you take the course and when you apply the content.

And then number three, when you get a job, how effective are we at helping you to assimilate into a new culture.

In our fiscal year 2012 budget request, we are asking for \$2 million more so that we can account for expanding and ensuring that we can provide TAP to all Guard and Reservists.

This is a personal priority of me as the Assistant Secretary. It is one of our top five priorities as an agency.

I look forward to your questions. And, again, I want to acknowledge the tremendous work that we are doing with our partners.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Jefferson appears on p. 48.]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you. And I like what I hear. I appreciate all of the information that you have given today and I am hopeful you are successful because I think you have a plan and it is well laid out. And I think you will do a lot of good things.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes, sir. Our goal is to get it done by Veterans Day.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Great. That is fantastic. Well, first question that leads into that, with the enhancements to TAP, do you expect to continue to request additional funding for future fiscal years beyond the \$9 million requested in the 2012 budget or is that going to be all wrapped inside of that?

Mr. JEFFERSON. Sir, you mean for consecutive years after 2012? Let me take that for the record and confer with my team. I think once we get the contract facilitators on board, I would envision that the additional cost required will be minimal.

But the one thing I want to say is I want to have a continual improvement component to the new TAP. I want to have a way that every year we are evaluating what we are doing and we are bringing in the latest best practices so 3 years from now, the program is not again becoming obsolete.

So, sir, I will take that for the record. But once we get it stood up with those full contract facilitators on board, I do not envision major funding increases but want to verify that with my budget team back at the office.

[The DOL subsequently provided the following information:]

Our budget request for FY 2013 of \$12 million reflects the move to all contract facilitators. The statement above that once the program is funded, the out years would not require major increases is correct.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Sure. And then you also mentioned a contract.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. STUTZMAN. And contracting some of the work out. How is some of the experiences you had and then also in the TAP redesign, you will be utilizing more contract instructors? Can you touch on that just a little bit?

Mr. JEFFERSON. Absolutely. So, sir, right now we have three communities that do TAP facilitation. I have my Federal team members. We have State team members, our employment representatives, and we also have contract facilitators.

And you have some outstanding people in each group, but the questions I ask my team is who consistently gets the best feedback. And this is the challenge that we have. For my staff or for the State employment representatives, they may not do a TAP workshop for 3 to 6 months. Then all of a sudden, they are given the binder, say you are going to be doing the TAP workshop next month, so they are prepping it, the slides, et cetera. I do not want that.

And the results demonstrate that we get the best outcomes with contract facilitators, people who are trained facilitators whose sole job is to stay tuned up on the best practices and all they do is TAP. So we are going to an all contract facilitator force and we are hoping to have that completed—I do not know if that will be completed this year. I am pushing it as fast as we can move, but that is where we are going to.

Mr. STUTZMAN. I really like the assessment idea and also the e-learning platform.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. STUTZMAN. I think they are both fantastic objectives.

General Hedelund, my question is, with the Marine Corps' policy that requires TAP, have you seen any negative effects and how does the Corps enforce mandatory attendance?

General HEDELUND. Yes, sir. Thank you for that question.

First, no, no operational impacts by requiring Marines to go to mandatory TAP. As I mentioned in my oral statement, our goal is to make this mandatory requirement almost Overtaken By Events (OBE) because people will figure out that this is something they need and want.

That said, some of the discussion earlier from the first panel is relevant in that it is a bit of a leadership issue. Let's not forget that this event does not happen in a vacuum. And that is part of the issue right now with TAP is that it is a one-shot deal and where it falls on a Marine's timeline to get out, the Marine Corps sometimes is convenient, sometimes not so much.

If you are a Marine on a Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) and you have a Pre-deployment Training Plan (PTP), that gets you to your deployment and you are gone for 7 months, then you may have a limited window on the backside of your deployment to get TAP before your End of Active Service (EAS).

That is a challenge for the individual Marine, but it is the responsibility of that commander to make sure that that Marine has the opportunity to attend that training. So it is a leadership issue in that the Marine's supervisor, via the commanding officer, needs to ensure that that occurs.

Now, briefly, the mandatory piece of this is important from our perspective for accountability and a number of other issues, but that is the Marine Corps way of doing it and we are pretty happy with the way it works. It does not guarantee that the Marine that is sitting there in the class is 100 percent attentive 100 percent of the time, but it is a step in the right direction.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Sure. Sure. Well, and then finally, touching on the appropriate size of the class size, I mentioned the Camp Lejeune situation with about 160 folks according to staff and then

also if you could touch on timing. Is there a better time frame that we could fit these classes in for servicemembers before they leave?

General HEDELUND. Yes, sir. I will take the timing issue first because I think we all have a mind set that TAP is a place on a calendar.

The Marine Corps' perspective on TAP is that it is only part of the larger personal and professional development program. And the Marine Corps' view to that is that we need to give our Marines tools along their career, not just toward the end, where they are already on board with much of what TAP is going to have to offer.

The timing, then, is less crucial because they do not have to wait until that one event to gather all this information. They will have already done pre-work. They will have already done their online work. Even when they are deployed in most locations, most locations, they will have access to the Internet to be able to do some of this pre-work and some of the online resources that are available.

So they will be familiar with some of these issues and some of the things that they want to accomplish in future life before they get to the actual TAP event. We would hope that by the time a Marine gets to that event, he is already saying I got that, good to go, I am on board, show me the money and let's move on. And that would help alleviate that issue.

As far as class sizes go, again I think this is certainly an important issue right now with current TAP because given what we have today, which I think we all acknowledge is of limited success. The future holds that the critical event, the symptom, if you will, of large class size will be ameliorated partially because, A, it is not going to be at that critical time or at only one critical time during a Marine's career, but, B, the information will be spread out over time and the class size piece of it is not quite as critical at that point.

An element of that is our view of that there may be a venue where you start this Transition Assistance Program, if you will, with a large plenary class, but that, much like many conferences are done these days, you have the plenary session that is more introductory and administrative and you break down into these break-out sessions where your interest is as the Marine; if you want to go down the educational track, then you go to the educational break-out session. If you want to go the vocational tech piece, then you go to that break-out session.

And, quite frankly, if you are the Marine that wants to go to Mexico and surf for 3 months, you may not go to any of them. You may check off at that point and the mandatory piece was that core plenary session. You have the other tools you need and you have the reach-back capability after your 3 months in Mexico surfing to come back and say, well, what was the part about, and then we would help that Marine get to that linkage, if you will, toward that pathway.

Mr. STUTZMAN. And I would think that type of model would fit right into what you are—

Mr. JEFFERSON. I was hoping, Mr. Chairman, you would give me a chance to comment because this is exactly where we are going. We need to think of transition as a journey. We are going to have

an amazing 2½ day TAP implement workshop. But what we are also working to do is to connect into each of the services career transition plans.

So you do a TAP workshop as early as you can in your transition. Then you move into General Hedelund's Marine Corps' program. Then you move into the Army's ATAP Program. So we are working right now to put a connection between VETS' TAP implement workshop and Army ATAP.

And then General Hedelund and I, we are meeting next week to begin doing that on the Marine side as well. So what you have is a journey where you get the certainty of what you want to do and then you figure out what your strengths are, what your improvement areas are, and then you continue to build and build on that so when you finally transition out, you are ready to go. And if you want to take some time off, you can loop back in through the Internet or through the reach-back services.

So it is a journey which is what we are going to and this is a whole new paradigm.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Braley.

Mr. BRALEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Hedelund and Mr. Burdette, my father graduated from high school in Montezuma, Iowa, in 1943 and literally went from the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Iwo Jima. And one of my proudest moments was a year ago when *Leatherneck Magazine* published this article called, "My Father's Legacy" on the 65th anniversary of the Battle of Iwo Jima.

My family, we learned the Marine Corps hymn before the Star Spangled Banner. That is just the way it was with my dad. But my father is also an example, I think, of what you are trying to talk about when you put together a program Marine for Life because his severe depression did not manifest itself until almost 30 years after he served on Iwo Jima.

And it was not until 11 years after he died that my brother who was working at a VA hospital met a patient who was able to share that my father had seen one of his best friends vaporized by a shell burst on Iwo Jima. And, of course, that was something that our family knew nothing about.

So when we have these wounded warriors coming home, many of them with signature wounds that are hidden from the public's view most of the time, it is important to keep in mind that our commitment to them, it is not something that we just provide them when they are demobilized on the back end of their active service to prepare them for a job. It is a lifetime commitment, and that is why I am so excited to hear about how we are rethinking the purpose of this TAP Program.

One of the things that I did in high school was take an armed services vocational battery test as part of my mandatory high school testing that I went through. And when you were talking about the strong interest inventory, it struck me this must be a more updated and modernized version of that.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. BRALEY. And I think that it is something that not just people who are returning from military service but many young people

right now who are struggling to find their role in the world and what they want to do could benefit from.

So I think what I would like to do is start with you, General Hedelund, and have you talk about what changes are being contemplated for this individualized career-long process. I am interested in how that is going to help moving forward to accomplish some of the goals we have been talking about.

General HEDELUND. Well, first, sir, your father's service is honored in our Corps. And I would also say that your family's sacrifice in supporting him throughout the years is obviously incredible in and of itself. So many thanks to you and your family.

The piece that I think is important here is that our one-size-fits-all approach to TAP in the past is just that, in the past. We have recognized through a number of different venues, and transition assistance is only one, where an individualized approach is much more successful.

We have to give the Marines the tools before the traumatic event or before they are even thinking of transitioning from the Marine Corps.

For instance, where is the best time to give a Marine financial management education, in that TAP class at the end of his Marine Corps career or maybe at the beginning of his Marine Corps career where he is just learning what a checkbook is all about and he is just learning about what it really means to be in charge of your own finances?

So what we look at is we should engage with that Marine. We should have a process in place that engages with that Marine right from the get-go and says, okay, I got it. Thank you for joining the United States Marine Corps. You are going to get your personal financial management class training if you go through boot camp. In the meantime, what are your plans for the future?

Now, I do not know if it will be that direct and that early in the process, but it will be very early in the process where we start to figure out what this person wants to do for the rest of his or her life.

So that case management, if you will, will be important to take a litmus test right there. The assessment is one of those tools that we will use to take that litmus test.

As that case builds over time, let's say that a Marine goes and he successfully finishes boot camp and he goes to his primary military specialty school and he is going to be an avionics man in the aviation community. Well, that is all important information for his future. That should be automatically catalogued and annotated in his case management record so that down the road when it is time to build a resume, he presses go on the computer and a draft resume comes out with all that experience.

All that certification work, if you will, is already done for him so that when it comes time to transition, some of these things, they are automated, they are already a piece of both Mr. Jefferson's process and our process so that instead of taking the big leap out the door, you open a door and walk through and you are there.

So those are some of the ideas we have. I will be honest with you. We do not have an example of that case management system right in front of us right now, but we have a pretty good idea of

where we need to go and we have some capability that if we expand, we will be able, I think, to capture what we need to see what Marines need throughout their career.

Mr. BRALEY. Thank you.

Mr. Pamperin, first of all, congratulations. On behalf of all veterans of this country, thank you so much for your many years of service and every veteran in this country owes you a debt of gratitude because that is a long time to be working on behalf of veterans. So on behalf of everyone on the Subcommittee, congratulations on a job well done.

Mr. PAMPERIN. Thank you, sir.

And I would just like to point out that really one of the most enjoyable times I have had in my time was the 3½ years when I was Assistant Adjudication Officer in Des Moines.

Mr. BRALEY. Oh, thank you. I will make sure that people in Des Moines hear that.

I am not the brightest bulb in the sky, but I was interested in one of the statistics you shared with us. And if my math is correct, 45 percent of the veterans that came through this program found employment with a government job.

Mr. PAMPERIN. Yes. The actual 51 percent were hired in the private sector and one-third in the Federal Government.

Mr. BRALEY. You said 33 percent in the Federal Government, 12 percent State and local?

Mr. PAMPERIN. Yes.

Mr. BRALEY. And I think that is important. At a time when government employees come under frequent attack, we need to realize that many of those government employees are veterans and that the Federal and State governments have done a significant job in employing our veterans and putting them to work. So I just wanted to acknowledge that and make that point.

Mr. Burdette, you talked about those rejection letters and I think that was a powerful symbol for many of us because those of us who have gone through the experience of being rejected for employment, a lot of times, especially coming out of a military background, that just serves as greater motivation to try harder, to keep struggling until you get that job that you really are hoping for.

But one of the other things that was really notable to me was, Mr. Jefferson, your comment about story telling—

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. BRALEY. Because I think this is one of the most underestimated assets of an employee is the ability to communicate and tell a powerful and compelling story.

We know many of these veterans who are struggling to find employment have amazing stories of their life's journey that should be a great selling point to any employer no matter what additional issues they bring to the workplace because of the sacrifice they have made for this country and, yet, I am fairly confident that most employment training programs do not spend much time focusing on strengthening your story telling abilities.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes.

Mr. BRALEY. So can you tell me a little bit more about what you have in mind for helping people who many times are struggling to open up and share some of their personal intimate experiences that



have changed their lives and are coming back trying to forget about some of those issues?

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes.

Mr. BRALEY. How do you open up the door of opportunity to make them better story tellers?

Mr. JEFFERSON. Great. And, sir, thank you for the question.

And let me say I hope one of the things that we are taking away today is that career transition involves a high-tech and high-touch approach.

And so in the high tech, we spoke yesterday about the H.R. tool kit we are creating with the Society for Human Resource Management. That will be a great online skills translator. We are looking to identify those.

But we want our servicemembers to be their own skills translator. And so first thing we are going to educate them is to what happens during an interview. The fact that the person you are talking to is going to make the first decision in the first 1 to 2 minutes, they are going to spend the rest of the interview trying to make sure that they made the right decision to substantiate it.

So we will be talking to the servicemembers and teaching them things such as what are those moments that you have had, how to articulate the subjective and objective assets that you have, so how you take a peak moment or contribution and then you break down what was the challenge, how did you approach dealing with that challenge, what were the results, and then what does that show about your objective assets, your hard tangible skills that you possess, and what does it show about your subjective assets, your personal qualities, commitment, creativity, courage.

And then we pressure test this meaning we have them do it over and over and over again. What is your 1-minute elevator pitch? How did you respond to these most likely asked questions in interviews such as what is your greatest achievement, what is your greatest failure, your greatest challenge?

And so we teach them the process experientially, we pressure test it, and we do that over again not just in TAP but in those 60 days after with the after TAP support.

But story telling and making people their own skills translator is a critical component of our best practice content.

Mr. BRALEY. Great. Thank you.

And I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Well, thank you.

I think I have just got a question yet for Mr. Pamperin. I was thinking of just giving you a pass since it was almost your retirement, but you are about to enter retirement. But while we have you, this question was here and I thought it would be a good question to ask.

But the Veterans' Employment and Training Service currently uses contract instructors for all overseas and some CONUS-based (Continental United States-based) TAP classes and intends to contract out all TAP instruction.

Is there any reason that the VA could not use or partner with VETS to contract out the VA portion of TAP?

Mr. PAMPERIN. It is certainly a topic that we are more than willing to look at. I would like to emphasize that our perspective is

that we want to do what is right and most effective for the servicemember.

We have committed employees who do a good job at this, but it clearly is something that we are looking at, particularly since we are going to do a pilot of putting a person at one of the military sites overseas for 2 to 3 years depending upon status of forces or whatever, how long that would be, to see whether or not that is more effective than doing rotations.

But, again, what I would like to emphasize is that our interest is in the servicemember and what is best for them.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Well, thank you.

Thank you, General, as well for being here and appreciate your service and what you are doing and, Mr. Burdette, as well for being here and what you are doing over at DoD.

I am really excited, thanks, Mr. Jefferson, about what you have explained to us today. And if we can be helpful in any way, whether any legislation needs to be addressed, I am sure that we would be glad to work with you as far as this Subcommittee would.

And I think at this time, we will go ahead and adjourn. But I just want to say thanks again to the panel and would ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on today's hearing. Hearing no objection, so ordered.

And thanks again, and this concludes the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity hearing. Thanks for being here. This meeting is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:36 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

## A P P E N D I X

---

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

Good morning.

The topic of this morning's hearing is the transition assistance program (TAP) and VetSuccess on Campus program. TAP is a program that is supposed to help discharging veterans transition from the military into civilian careers. VA also has a portion of TAP where they educate the servicemembers on the multitude of services that are available to them once they become veterans.

My staff recently completed visits to four TAP sites in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina and I believe Mr. Braley's staff has just visited several VetSuccess on Campus sites out west.

I am going to yield to the distinguished Ranking Member in a moment to review his staff's visits, but I believe it is fair to say that the TAP site visits resulted in a mixed bag of observations.

On the plus side, staff observed that, with one minor exception, nearly all the instructors' presentations were highly professional. The instructors had a level of energy and instructional techniques that were a pleasure to watch and the staff was encouraged by their enthusiasm and professionalism.

Unfortunately, the staff could not say the same about facilities, class size and materials. For example, at Camp Lejeune, there were 165 Marines in the class being held in a gym. While I know Assistant Secretary Jefferson is working hard to renovate TAP and congratulate him for his efforts, it appears that an insufficient number of instructors appears to be driving the class size at Lejeune and that, I am sure, Secretary Jefferson would agree is not acceptable.

Additionally, DOL is not alone. Their TAP partners, DoD, VA, and the State workforce agencies need to take a hard look at the total quality of TAP. Across the TAP sites, handout materials were not standardized, sometimes out-of-date, or not available. In one instance, the materials failed to contain any information on the current Post-9/11 GI Bill . . . which became law in 2009.

And in at least one class, the VA instructor admitted he did not know much about some programs. For a program that has been in operation for nearly 20 years, those discrepancies are unacceptable; we cannot ignore today's shortcomings.

I look forward to hearing from today's witnesses, and I will now yield to the gentleman from Iowa's First Congressional District, Mr. Braley.

---

### **Prepared Statement of the Hon. Bruce L. Braley, Ranking Democratic Member, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity**

Many of our brave servicemen and women in this country are returning in need of health care, employment, housing, educational, and other services. They, like all our veterans across the country, deserve our best efforts in providing the resources to ensure a seamless transition from military service to civilian life.

The Subcommittee has explored various options to accommodate servicemembers and encourage them to attend the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) workshop as well as their spouses, and how to modernize TAP. Some proposed changes have included: expanding evening classes and adding online resources to accommodate servicemembers and their spouses' working schedules. Others had brought up the prospect of making the program mandatory for separating servicemembers and expanding existing Montgomery GI Bill benefits. I was happy to learn that the three responsible Departments that make TAP possible, DoD, VA, and DOL were also aware of the criticism surrounding TAP and they have been working to modernize this important workshop.

Today, we will reexamine TAP and the progress that has been made by the Departments. I hope we also have the opportunity to learn how the program is assisting our veterans in a seamless transition into employment and their communities.

As many of you know, the Transition Assistance Program was established to meet the needs of separating servicemembers during their period of readjustment into civilian life. The program offers job-search assistance and related services such as workshops on resume writing, interview process, labor market overviews, personal appraisal, and VA benefits. The program seeks to provide veterans with the skills and services needed to transition into the workforce.

Additionally, the VetSuccess on Campus program plays a similar role TAP. It helps individuals as they transition from being servicemembers to students. This seamless transition is critical to help student veteran's succeed in school. Most importantly, I believe, it is helping veterans feel welcome and accepted in campuses across the country. The age difference between a non veteran and a veteran in the classroom can vary, for veterans this age difference can feel as if they can't relate or can be intimidating at times. VetSuccess on Campus helps veterans network with other veterans. Furthermore, the VetSuccess on Campus can ease a veteran's transition by helping them apply for their education benefits.

This hearing today will inform us of all the initiatives being implemented to help servicemember and veterans succeed.

---

**Prepared Statement of Christina M. Roof,  
National Acting Legislative Director, American Veterans (AMVETS)**

Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, on behalf of AMVETS, I would like to extend our gratitude for being given the opportunity to share with you our views and recommendations regarding the Transition Assistance Program and VetSuccess on Campus.

AMVETS feels privileged in having been a leader, since 1944, in helping to preserve the freedoms secured by America's Armed Forces. Today our organization prides itself on the continuation of this tradition, as well as our undaunted dedication to ensuring that every past and present member of the Armed Forces receives all of their due entitlements. These individuals, who have devoted their entire lives to upholding our values and freedoms, deserve nothing less.

By way of background, the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) was designed by the Department of Defense (DoD) to provide transition and job search assistance to separating servicemembers. TAP is a partnership among the Departments of Labor (DOL), Defense, Homeland Security (DHS) and Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide employment assistance and counseling services to members of the armed forces, and their eligible spouses, within 1 year of their separation or 2 years of their retirement from the military. TAP classes are usually held on a military installation or base and are composed of said location's servicemembers, who are close to the end of their service in the United States military.

According to DoD, the following areas should be addressed in TAP classes for full-time active-duty servicemembers. The program consists of the following four components:

1. **DoD Pre-separation Counseling:** A thorough review of transition services, VA and DoD benefits and resources begins the transition process. DoD has published, but rarely educates servicemembers and their families, guidelines stating they should make an appointment with the bases transition office no later than 12 months before a members known separation date (for retiring servicemembers, you can make an appointment 24 months prior to your retirement date).
2. **Department of Labor (DOL) Employment Workshops:** During this 2½ day workshop, servicemembers are to learn how to write a resume and cover letter, obtain information on skills assessment and job search techniques and learn about other important areas of interest regarding career and job services available to veterans through DOL.
3. **A Benefits Briefing:** A 2½ to 4-hour session, administered by a VA representative explaining VA benefits a servicemember may be entitled to, including the GI Bills, health care services and qualifications, VA education and employment counseling, home loan programs and all of the other important programs and information critical to ensuring a smooth transition from DoD to VA.
4. **Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP):** Any servicemember with a service-connected disability is required to attend this 2-hour briefing if

not hospitalized. DoD, VA and DOL representatives are supposed to jointly present vital information about eligibility for Chapter 31, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service benefits provided by VA and DOL, health care services and other information key to the smooth transition of the disabled servicemember and their family.

Optional and shorter, less in-depth TAP classes for qualifying and demobilizing National Guard and Reserve are to be composed of:

1. **DoD Pre-separation Counseling:** During demobilization, and prior to release from active duty, any servicemember returning from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) can receive 2 hours of pre-separation counseling by a DoD official.
2. **Department of Labor Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) Briefing:** An USERRA Briefing is available prior to release from active-duty Guard or Reserve service. If the servicemember does not receive this briefing prior to release from active duty, they are given the choice to seek out the information on their own from a DOL Career One-Stop Center in their community if they wish to receive further employment assistance.
3. **VA Benefits Briefing:** Prior to release from active duty, you are eligible to receive a VA Benefits Briefing, if they request the briefing.
4. **VA DTAP Briefing:** This normally occurs as part of the VA Benefits Briefing and usually includes information about application procedures for vocational rehabilitation and employment assistance. This information is for servicemembers who have or think they have a service-connected disability. Once released from active duty, servicemembers are told they should always follow up with VA once they return home by contacting the VA office closest to where they live.

While AMVETS is aware of the recent efforts to improve TAP, we still strongly believe the overall program to be falling short of its originally intended purposes. TAP classes are often the only opportunity a servicemember, or qualifying family member, will have to receive the critical information vital to sustaining their quality of life after the military. The transition from a military career to a civilian and corporate sector career is a culture shift, and sometimes very difficult. Veterans need employment and often need assistance in making the transition from a military culture to a civilian or corporate culture. This time of transition is one of the most stressful and challenging times for many veterans. After spending years becoming part of a respective military culture, servicemembers who leave the military face a new unknown culture when they step into a civilian role or corporate career. This transition is often complicated by injuries received, both visible and invisible, while serving their country. As battlefield medicine continues to save more lives, VA, DoD, DOL and DHS must be ready to adapt and change their current transition and education programs to meet the needs of today's transitioning veterans.

The information previously listed, which outlines all aspects of the Transition Assistance Program must be presented thoroughly, as it is crucial to ensuring a seamless transition from DoD to civilian life. However, anyone who has ever served or has lived on base as either military personnel or as a qualifying family member knows that what is supposed to occur and what actually occurs, is more often than not, not one and the same. AMVETS believes this is due to the timing and length of TAP classes, lack of education and outreach to servicemembers and their families on the importance and eligibility of TAP, miscommunication and conflicting "desired end results" of the agencies tasked with providing TAP and outdated education models.

There also appears to be a lack of faith in the thoroughness and success of TAP among the individual branches as well. This is demonstrated through the new programs and services within each branch of the military. For example, the U.S. Army Community Service Center, located at Walter Reed Medical Center, helps the total Army family by providing services to maintain stability and meet the challenges of military life and transition. Readiness services are available to active-duty and retired servicemembers, their family members, Army civilian employees and Reservists on active duty and during transitioning out. While TAP is a part of the services offered, there are five other services providing more focused and long term assistance with employment and transition issues. Another example lies within the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC), who for some time has taken their own, more successful approach to TAP. The USMC mandates every transitioning Marine participate in TAP and they also have a higher rate of eligible family member TAP attendance. While AMVETS applauds the individual branches for stepping up to fill in the gaps of

services and information that are supposed to be well covered during TAP, we have to ask if taking the successful practices and programs from each branch and combining them into a uniform updated TAP would not be a better way of ensuring successful transition across every branch of the armed services. We are all aware of the fact that duplication of efforts and funding of multiple programs with large overlap is not the best way to meet the needs of today's transitioning war fighters and their families.

Due to the disproportionately high unemployment rates among OEF/OIF and Operation New Dawn veterans, in June of 2010, The Society For Human Resource Management (SHRM) released their national survey findings entitled "*Employing Military Personnel and Recruiting Veterans—Attitudes and Practices SHRM Poll.*" The large national survey examined pay and benefits that organizations provide to employees who have been mobilized to serve on active-duty service either as a Reservist or as a member of the National Guard, as well as the challenges organizations face when an employee has been mobilized to serve on active duty. The benefits and challenges of hiring military veterans were examined, as were the areas that would assist organizations in recruiting and hiring veterans. Unfortunately, the survey results confirmed what many of us have feared was occurring. Employers reported that while they wanted to actively seek out and hire veterans they did not know what the appropriate channels to achieve this were and did not receive much assistance when contacting local DOL and VA locations. The survey also showed that only 13 percent of private sector companies offered any type of transition assistance to newly separated servicemembers or active-duty returning Guard and Reserve members. Moreover, most companies reported the below reason they often hire and employ veterans and members of the Guard and Reserve:

	<b>Organizations that have hired veterans (n=93-151)</b>	<b>Organizations that have made an effort to hire veterans (n=11-18)</b>	<b>Organizations that have not made an effort to hire veterans (n=107-167)</b>
Strong sense of responsibility	97%	94%	98%
Ability to work under pressure	96%	94%	96%
Ability to see a task through to completion	92%	92%	92%
Strong leadership skills	91%	93%	92%
High degree of professionalism	91%	82%	87%
Strong problem-solving skills	90%	83%	89%
Ability to multitask	89%	91%	84%
Ability to adapt to changing situations quickly	88%	85%	89%
Ability to give back to U.S. veterans by showing gratitude for their service	88%	87%	93%
Positive impact on the image and/or credibility of organization	86%	82%	82%
Sense of patriotism at organization	77%	82%	84%
Technology/information technology skills and training	77%	80%	83%
Strategic planning/foresight	74%	73%	80%
Fulfillment of Federal and/or State affirmative action requirements	73%	82%	76%
Global perspective	61%	63%	71%
Knowledge/expertise of defense issues	60%	73%	79%

However, employers and individual company's HR Departments listed the following as the top issues the private sector experiences when hiring a veteran:

- 60 percent of employers found they were unable to translate a veteran's military experience into a job's requisites.
- 48 percent said veterans had a difficult time transitioning out of the structure and hierarchy of military culture to that of a civilian workplace culture.
- 46 percent reported veterans had difficulties directly relating to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or other mental health issues.
- 36 percent reported problems with the amount of time it took veterans to adapt to their new workplace.
- 22 percent said they had issues related to a veteran's combat related physical disabilities.
- 18 percent of employers stated that they find veterans are not qualified for the positions in which they apply.

As you can see from the above survey results, there remains to be some stigma attached to being a veteran when it comes to finding work in the private sector. While a couple of the aforesaid issues cannot be corrected through TAP, most of them could be with a proper TAP class and guidance. Better preparing our servicemembers for their transition to civilian life, as well as ensuring they are receiving all of the care and services necessary is the only way we have a chance at lowering the unemployment rate and properly addressing adjustment issues today's veterans are facing. AMVETS also believes that by properly preparing a servicemember for their life outside of the military we could possibly see a decrease in the usage and/or necessity for several other programs veterans and families seek during tough transition times. While AMVETS is in no way suggesting cutting funding or resources related to these other services that have severe overlap with TAP, we do believe that the number of veterans needing these other resources stands to decrease with a smoother transition, proper enrollment within the VA system and immediate employment after military discharge.

AMVETS would like to make the following recommendations on ways to improve the Transition Assistance Program:

1. AMVETS strongly recommends TAP be a mandatory program in which all transitioning servicemembers and their eligible family members attend before release from DoD. The USMC has utilized this rule for many years and tends to have lower unemployment rates when compared to the other branches.
2. DoD, VA, DOL and DHS must design and implement a stronger DTAP program for wounded servicemembers, and their families, who are hospitalized or are receiving any type of medical rehabilitation during their military service discharge. While incredibly cutting edge with their medical care and military hospitals, such as Walter Reed, DoD often forgets that when a servicemember and their family go home there will be employment and transition issues that they need to be well prepared for. All military and VA medical centers must have a stronger, more in depth, need specific transition and employment programs for servicemembers and veterans having sustained a service-connected injury. We cannot reasonably expect a veteran or their family to sustain any sort of quality of life if we do not ready them for what lies ahead. We ready our troops for war, so we must also ready our veterans for their transitions.
3. AMVETS recommends the lengthening of the current two and a half, full day TAP class. The current method is almost information overload, resulting in transitioning servicemembers losing focus on the presented materials. Since the content is very broad in context and is all critical to a successful transition, AMVETS believes a longer length (i.e.- number of days) and shorter class days will result in better information exchanges and full comprehension of all of the information presented.
4. AMVETS strongly believes there needs to be more focus and education on the translation of military experience to a civilian skill set and résumé, as well as what fields of employment to look for in the private sector. The training and real world application our servicemembers experience during their time in the military can be compared to that of higher education, technical schools and real life work experience. These men and women learn their area of expertise not simply to "perform a job", but rather to "perform a job that may possibly mean ensuring the safety and lives of their comrades." We must ensure transitioning servicemembers possess a strong civilian résumé upon DoD discharge from duty.
5. All TAP classes must include clearer and lengthier VA benefits and health care education sessions, as well as time for questions or concerns the participant

may have. On average VA personnel are allotted 2½ hours during a TAP class to educate the participants on the entire VA health and benefits system. As we know, the VA system can be very overwhelming to newly transitioning servicemembers. In fact many eligible veterans go without health care and employment resources due to their lack of understanding of the VA system and their eligibility to receive services. If you ask most veterans what they learned about VA's services and benefits during their TAP class you will usually get a very short response conveying an overall lack of understanding of information they received. AMVETS also usually finds those statements followed by a comment that since they were not catastrophically injured during their service they would not qualify anyway. Sadly, many of these same veterans have DoD disability ratings. AMVETS finds this unacceptable and urges a very strong review of VA's involvement in the TAP class. VA must have a reasonable amount of time to convey all of the critical information they have to share. Every transitioning servicemember and family must be armed with a clear understanding of the resources available to them.

6. AMVETS strongly recommends the inclusion or involvement of a certified Veterans Service Organization's Service Officer in the TAP class or at minimum, as an outside resource DoD, VA and DOL can refer servicemembers to by name. The claims process is daunting and the lack of education or information servicemembers and their families will ever receive on VA care and benefits is during their TAP class. TAP's section on VA care and benefits must be longer than a 2½-hour lecture. It is very hard to imagine how anyone could convey all of the important information needed to understand the VA system properly in 2½ hours. One can only assume not every important part of VA's services and resources are being discussed. AMVETS understands that the desired end result of TAP slightly varies between the agencies involved and we understand why. However, this is no excuse to rush any program that stands to ensure a higher quality of life for the men and women who need TAP.
7. DoD, VA, DOL and DHS must redesign and build upon the programs available to active-duty National Guard and Reserve members. As the current conflicts have shown us, Guard and Reserve members are just as likely, if not more likely, to be deployed to a combat zone. This means these men and women are serving side by side their active-duty colleagues and are serving just as long. AMVETS finds it to be reprehensible that any Federal agency or any individual person would hold their service as less or not as life changing simply because they chose to serve their country as a member of the National Guard or Reserve. AMVETS believes TAP and DTAP must be thoroughly reviewed and redesigned to meet the growing needs of members of the Guard and Reserve. The face of today's modern military force continues to change. VA, DoD, DOL and DHS must continue to grow and adapt their services to accurately reflect these changes.
8. TAP is not designed for nor set up to meet the needs of qualified spouses. Even though TAP and DTAP are incredibly important to a spouse, especially when a servicemember has sustained a service-connected life changing injury, little has changed in the way of outreach or class design to meet their specific needs. DoD, VA, DOL and DHS must do a better job educating the families of servicemembers on the availability of TAP classes to them, as well as other VA and DOL programs regarding employment, financial stability and health care resources that are available to the servicemember and to the family.

Finally, AMVETS believes VetSuccess on Campus, even though still in its very early stages, has so far shown to be a successful tool veteran students can utilize while seeking a higher education. The colleges participating, as well as their veteran students, who have thus far utilized this program have reported very successful outcomes. The program has shown that through the collaborating of a Veterans Health Administration outreach coordinator, a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor and an on-campus cohort counselor, veterans utilizing VR&E and/or the Post-9/11 GI Bill have had better outcomes with their transitions and academic performance. As a partner author of *The Independent Budget*, AMVETS recommends VA be given the authority and resources necessary to expand the program to campuses around the country. AMVETS further concurs with the 2012 Independent Budget's support of approving VR&E's request for an additional ten fulltime employees to assist with the expansion of the VetSuccess program. AMVETS looks forward to seeing the results and outcomes resulting from expansion of the VetSuccess on Campus program.

Chairman Stutzman and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, AMVETS would again like to thank you for inviting us to share with you our opinions and



recommendations on these very important pieces of legislation. This concludes my testimony and I stand ready to answer any questions you may have for me.

---

**Prepared Statement of Marco Reininger, Legislative Fellow,  
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America**

Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley, and Members of the Subcommittee. I want to thank you very much for the opportunity to testify before you today on behalf of the more than 200,000 veterans and supporters of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) and the many veterans who are currently unemployed and looking for work.

My name is Marco Reininger and I am an Army veteran of the war in Afghanistan where I conducted investigations into Improvised Explosive Device attacks and insurgent networks. I currently attend Columbia University on the new GI Bill, studying political science, and I work as a legislative fellow for IAVA.

Mr. Chairman, unemployment is a major issue facing our newest generation of veterans. Approximately 214,000 or 10.9 percent of veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan are seeking employment. Not only is this number unacceptably high but it also represents a tremendous waste of resources. The members of our armed services are some of the best trained, most disciplined, and most ambitious men and women this country has to offer and not equipping them with the tools they need to make a successful transition into the civilian workforce is bad economics. Hundreds of thousands and often millions of taxpayer dollars are spent on training each Soldier, Sailor, Airman, and Marine and they often receive the most cutting edge instruction available in technology, the medical field, and other fields. Thus, every servicemember that cannot find employment after transitioning out of the military due to a lack of effective transition assistance or insufficiently knowledgeable civilian employers is a missed opportunity to add a highly-skilled worker to America's workforce.

After two decades of no significant changes to the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) it is time to take a serious look at how we help our transitioning servicemembers to be successful in the civilian workforce and enable them to find the jobs they deserve. IAVA, therefore, fully supports an overhaul of TAP as proposed by the Department of Labor (DOL). Additionally, IAVA advocates for an expansion of the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) VetSuccess on Campus program to help veterans receive their GI Bill benefits on time, become successful college graduates, and be more attractive in the job market.

**Transition Assistance Program**

On March 3rd, 2011, the Assistant Secretary of Labor for the Veterans' Employment and Training Service put forward excellent recommendations to overhaul TAP and turn it into a more effective and relevant program during his testimony before the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. IAVA supports the recommended improvements in addition to several other crucial items.

Nick Colgin is one vet who would have benefitted from improved TAP classes. Nick was a combat medic in the Army, but when it came to getting a job in the medical field in the civilian world, it proved almost impossible. Nick went through the TAP program, but was being treated for a TBI, and fulfilling other requirements to leave the Army at the same time, so the classes proved less than helpful. He was never taught how to write a résumé or that he had to wear a suit to job interviews.

When it came to finding a job, Nick enrolled in a Wilderness First Responder class to get the proper certifications to work as a civilian medic. To get this certification, Nick had to use his GI Bill benefits. When he was found to be overqualified for the jobs he applied for, he decided to cut his losses and finish his college degree instead.

TAP needs to be a program that addresses each servicemember's unique level of experience, education, career of choice, and readiness to enter the civilian job market. Having a Lance Corporal Medic and Armor Lieutenant Colonel attend the same course, as is currently the case, is inefficient and a tremendous waste of opportunity. TAP should offer different categories of training and instruction based on a pre-course assessment of each transitioning servicemember's unique skill set. The goal of TAP should be to provide each transitioning servicemember with a clear roadmap on what steps to take to achieve his or her employment goals. A successful TAP would ask the servicemember "What are their employment or entrepreneurial goals?" and provide detailed answers on **how** to achieve them.

The traditional TAP elements of résumé writing, building job interviewing skills, and choosing the correct attire for employment interviews are important and IAVA supports maintaining them. However, the content and delivery of these modules should be assessed and made relevant to the current job market and business environment.

Compared to past decades, very few employers and business leaders today have a direct relationship or even basic understanding of the military, making it difficult for veterans to translate their skills to the civilian world. Thus, in addition to the improvements introduced by the Assistant Secretary, the transitioning servicemember should be provided with the tools necessary to educate potential employers of the value he or she brings to the workforce. TAP should give servicemembers the ability to help employers understand a military résumé and translate military skills into civilian skills. While a national effort is needed to educate employers to the value of hiring veterans, transitioning servicemembers cannot rely on best practices to be in place and need to be equipped to lead the effort themselves.

A crucial component of making TAP more relevant is the addition of online tools and e-learning modules. Making the program effective will require increased instruction time and more attention on the individual. An online platform would help facilitate such improvements without exploding the program's cost and manpower requirements. Additionally, it would allow servicemembers to prepare questions for the instructors before and after the TAP course by completing e-learning modules and reviewing TAP materials online. TAP facilitators should in return be available to provide individual support by answering such questions via the online platform or a dedicated telephone hotline.

To create a standard quality of instruction TAP should be administered by Department of Labor (DOL) contracted instructors. Using contracted instructors would simplify having certified instructors, a standardized curriculum, and more accountability of the instructors without having to coordinate across Federal, State, and local government agencies. These instructors should be assessed on their instructional abilities and training success.

Additionally, as part of making and keeping TAP relevant, DOL should begin measuring the program's success. The key elements of the program should be measured, as should the program's overall success in getting transitioning servicemembers hired. Beyond the recommendations made by the Assistant Secretary, IAVA recommends that an outside organization with sufficient research capabilities and expertise in analyzing performance metrics be contracted to conduct such measurements. The most important point, however, is that these measurements function as a basis for a full third-party audit of the program every 3 years to ensure that the program remains efficient and current, and does not again become de facto obsolete regardless of who is in charge of the White House and the DOL. We need to build for the future and ensure that TAP is set up to serve many generations of servicemembers to come.

Lastly, the program will not succeed if servicemembers do not attend it or do not have enough time to learn the skills offered in it. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), in a recent survey of over 600,000 veterans, 45 percent submitted that they never attended TAP when separating from the military. Therefore, we recommend for the program to become mandatory for all transitioning servicemembers. Additionally, we recommend for the program to be sufficiently extended in duration to allow for all the suggested improvements to be implemented. In addition, an optimal TAP attendance window before separation should be determined to allow the servicemember sufficient time to prepare and adapt all the actions laid out in his or her transitioning plan. In the same BLS survey, a significant number of veterans indicated a preference for TAP to be offered 6 months prior to their discharge for such purposes.

### **Vet Success on Campus**

One of the most valuable steps a veteran can take to be successful in the job market is to earn a college degree. The post-9/11 GI Bill has already opened the doors to success for thousands of veterans across the country that would have otherwise been out of reach. And, as the number of student veterans increases and hundreds of thousands of veterans enroll in colleges across the country we will see our Nation transform for the better not unlike it did after World War II.

Along with this important new veterans benefit come challenges for the VA and the educational institutions benefiting from the student veterans. To mitigate those challenges, VetSuccess on Campus, the VA program that places VA personnel dedicated to educational benefit counseling on college campuses, could play a crucial role in ensuring that student veterans receive their benefits in a timely and uncomplicated fashion without their academic success being jeopardized by benefit complica-

tions. It could also ensure that educational institutions are informed and educated on the procedures and terms of the GI Bill, and that the VA is not burdened with erroneous or unnecessary certifications and paper work.

IAVA recommends that the number of vocational and peer-to-peer counselors as part of the VetSuccess on Campus program is increased and expanded to every campus that hosts a significant amount of student veterans. Currently, certifying officials are not trained to a specific standard or held accountable on whether they properly certify and facilitate the student veterans' educational benefits. And, while many educational institutions are doing an acceptable job in making sure their veterans are taken care of, other institutions are simply assigning already over-worked officials with the additional task of being a certifying official and navigating the complicated VA benefits process.

Without an enforced standard, standardized training, and officials solely dedicated to certifying and serving colleges' veteran populations, it is always the student veteran that loses out by having the stress of a complicated and problematic GI Bill process added to an already stressful course load. Additionally, correct GI Bill certification is crucial for the veteran to receive the proper living stipend in a timely fashion. Especially, for student veterans who provide for their dependents while attending college the stipend is an instrumental financial life support that cannot be tampered with. Dedicated on-campus VA counselors that assist student veterans are a critical tool that should be present at every campus in America.

The men and women that served our country in uniform are a tremendous resource of expertise, technical skill, and the right attitude for the workplace. In a time where our Nation faces economic turbulence, high unemployment, and the perils of an ever-growing deficit we simply cannot afford to leave this resource untapped. We must ensure our separating servicemembers get jobs and our veterans are hired. The suggestions IAVA made today are sensible and feasible steps to accelerate the process and we hope to be a resource to you in this endeavor.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony and I would be delighted to answer any questions you or the Members of the Subcommittee may have. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak before you today.

---

**Prepared Joint Statement of Brigadier General Robert F. Hedelund,  
Director, Marine and Family Programs, U.S. Marine Corps,  
U.S. Department of Defense, and Beth A. Barton, Ph.D., Manager,  
Personal and Professional Development Program, Marine Corps  
Community Service, Marine Corps Community Services**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Transition Assistance Program (TAP), which was created to help separating and retiring servicemembers and their families make a smooth transition from a military career to the civilian sector, is a collaborative partnership between DoD, the Military Services, the Department of Labor (DOL), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

***Marine Corps Transition Assistance Management Program (TAMP)***

Currently, the Marine Corps' Transition Assistance Management Program (TAMP) consists of 2½- to 3½-Day Workshops which include the following components with our other agency partners: USMC *Preseparation Interview*; USMC *Preseparation Counseling Briefing*; Department of Labor (DOL) *Transition Assistance Program Employment Workshop*; Department of Veterans Affairs *Benefits Briefing*; and Department of Veterans Affairs *Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP)*.

***Camp Lejeune***

Camp Lejeune and Camp Pendleton are two of the largest installations in the Marine Corps. Based upon an internal review of operations for separating/retiring Marines, we found that Camp Lejeune and Camp Pendleton experience the highest number of Marines transitioning out of the Corps annually. On average, the typical TAP workshop (class) size at Camp Lejeune is 100. For FY 2010, Camp Lejeune held 82 TAP workshops, with a total of 8,201 participants. Since the most recent Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among DOL, DoD, VA, and the Department of Homeland Security does not limit the size of the TAP workshop (class), Marine Corps installations have the latitude to expand the size of scheduled classes to meet

their installations' servicemember demands. Generally, DOL and VA use their respective State agency representatives to conduct TAP workshops at Marine Corps installations. Per the Commandant's direction, we are in the process of vetting and approving all partners, affiliates, and contractors providing support services at TAP workshops.

### ***Way Ahead***

In his Planning Guidance, our Commandant said, to "Review and improve transition assistance—conduct an assessment of our Transition Assistance Program and recommend a plan to revolutionize our approach to better meet the needs of departing and retiring Marines." In response, we have established a goal to make the Marine Corps Transition Assistance Management Program (TAMP) more value-added for separating and retiring Marines.

We will transform TAMP's 2½- to 3½-Day Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Workshops from event-driven to process-driven programs and support services along four "military to civilian" pathways: Employment; Career/Technical Education; College/University; and Entrepreneurship. We are developing a 3-year strategic and operational plan to improve and streamline Transition Assistance programs and services for our Marines and their families. We will inventory TAMP's capabilities; assess current operations for redundancies and gaps; standardize TAP workshop core curriculum and electives; adopt best practices, and establish Measures of Effectiveness which enable the Marine Corps to continuously improve our Transition Assistance programs and services.

We believe our efforts will result in an innovative program that addresses the Commandant's concerns, meets the needs of our Marines and their families as they progress through their military life cycle, and help them transition successfully to a post-military career.

---

### ***Introduction***

Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for your interest in the Marine Corps Transition Assistance Management Program (TAMP) and the opportunity to discuss the important steps we are taking to transform our program from an event-driven process to one of engaging our Marines at their initial entry into the Corps, helping them establish their long-term education and career goals along the way, and equipping them with the skills they need to successfully reintegrate back into civilian life and workforce once they leave the Service.

### ***Transition Assistance Management Program (TAMP)—Collaborative Process***

The TAMP, which was developed by the Department of Defense (DoD) to help separating and retiring servicemembers and their families make a smooth transition from a military career to the civilian sector, is a collaborative partnership between DoD, the Military Services, the Department of Labor (DOL), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

Partnering with our sister Services and agencies, the Marine Corps currently provides 2½- to 3½-day Transition Assistance Program (TAP) workshops which are designed to assist all active-duty personnel and family members with their transition to the civilian sector. Currently, the key components include the following, all of which are mandatory for the Marine Corps:

- **USMC Preseparation Interview** includes an explanation of the transition requirements for separating and retiring servicemembers and how to obtain Verification of Military Experience and Training (VMET).
- **USMC Preseparation Counseling Briefing** must be completed before a servicemember can separate or retire and involves subject matter experts outlining the available benefits and entitlements to transitioning servicemembers. As part of this process, servicemembers complete the DD Form 2648-1 Preseparation Checklist.
- **DOL Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Employment Workshop** includes comprehensive information on such topics as how to write a résumé and cover letter; getting information on skills assessment; job search techniques; and accessing DOL's Career One-Stop Center in their local community to continue their job search, if necessary.
- **The Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits Briefing** outlines the VA benefits, health care, and entitlements separating and retiring servicemembers

may be entitled to; the procedures for applying for such benefits; as well as information on the Montgomery and Post-9/11 GI Bills.

- **The Department of Veterans Affairs *Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP)*** is specifically geared to servicemembers who have a disability verified by a VA physician. The program focuses on eligibility requirements for Chapter 31 Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment benefits.

### *Camp Lejeune*

Camp Lejeune and Camp Pendleton are two of the largest installations in the Marine Corps. Based upon an internal review of operations for separating/retiring Marines, we found that Camp Lejeune and Camp Pendleton experience the highest number of Marines transitioning out of the Corps annually. On average, the typical TAP workshop (class) size at Camp Lejeune is 100. For FY 2010, Camp Lejeune held 82 TAP workshops, with a total of 8,201 participants. Since the most recent Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among DOL, DoD, VA, and the Department of Homeland Security does not limit the size of the TAP workshop (class), Marine Corps installations have the latitude to expand the size of scheduled classes to meet their installations' servicemember demands.

Generally, DOL and VA use their respective State agency representatives to conduct TAP workshops at Marine Corps installations. Per the Commandant's direction, we are in the process of vetting and approving all partners, affiliates, and contractors providing support services at TAP workshops.

### *Way Ahead*

In his Planning Guidance, our Commandant said, to "Review and improve transition assistance—conduct an assessment of our Transition Assistance Program and recommend a plan to revolutionize our approach to better meet the needs of departing and retiring Marines." In response, we have established a goal to make the Marine Corps' TAMP more value-added for separating and retiring Marines.

From 2009 to 2010, the Marine Corps conducted various assessments of the TAMP and the Personal and Professional Development and noted many deficiencies. In response, we established two Transition Assistance Operational Planning Teams in 2010 to assess existing programs. These teams identified issues, stakeholders and a conceptual framework for improved services and ways to integrate Marine Corps Community Services transition assets. Key stakeholders involved in this process include Marine recruiters, commanders, Unit Transition Coordinators, and most importantly—our Marines and their family members.

With our predominately first-term force, we are committed to reaching our Marines at designated touch points, helping them develop roadmaps to support their Marine careers, and better equipping them to reintegrate back into civilian life upon leaving active-duty service. We have developed an end-to-end process improvement plan, are initiating actions, and are integrating existing capabilities that directly improve the quality of support provided to our Marines. In the near future, our transition assistance will become a personal and professional development process that will transition Marines into civilian life with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to better leverage their Marine Corps time and experience into meaningful careers.

We will transform TAMP's 2½- to 3½-Day Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Workshop from event-driven to process-driven programs and support services along four "military to civilian" pathways: Employment; Career/Technical Education; College/University; and Entrepreneurship.

We are developing a 3-year strategic and operational plan to improve and streamline Transition Assistance programs and services for our Marines and their families. To date, we have developed a plan which inventories and assesses critical components of our TAMP, based on the following three phases:

- Phase I focuses on 180 days pre- and post-end of active-duty service, which includes an inventory of our TAMP capabilities, an assessment of current operations for redundancies and gaps, a requirement that our TAP workshop core curriculum and electives be standardized (with well-defined learning objectives and exit outcomes), and an adoption of best practices.
- Phase II and Phase III are still in development, based upon Measures of Effectiveness indicators that will be adopted, used, and assessed by Marine Corps Headquarters and all installations to continuously improve our Transition Assistance programs and services.

**Conclusion**

We believe our efforts will result in an innovative program that addresses the Commandant's concerns, meets the needs of our Marines and their families as they progress through their military life cycle, and help them transition successfully to a post-military career.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

---

**Prepared Statement of Thomas J. Pamperin, Deputy Under Secretary  
for Disability Assistance, Veterans Benefits Administration,  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Braley, and Members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and the VetSuccess program. My testimony will cover what we are currently doing in the TAP program, the current TAP reengineering efforts, and other support to separating Servicemembers and Veterans, to include the VetSuccess program and our efforts in the VetSuccess on Campus program. I am accompanied today by Ms. Ruth Fanning, Director, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Service, VBA.

**VA Transition Assistance Program**

TAP is conducted under the auspices of a memorandum of understanding between the Departments of Labor, Defense, Homeland Security, and VA. The Departments work together to schedule briefings and classes on installations to best serve Servicemembers and their expectations as they prepare for their transition from active military service. Quarterly meetings among the Departments are held to oversee the operations of the program and to plan enhancements to TAP.

VA's TAP briefings are provided by trained Military Services Coordinators (MSCs) from the regional offices with jurisdiction over military installations in the United States and Puerto Rico. TAP services are provided to Servicemembers stationed outside the United States through seven overseas MSCs providing services in the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Spain, Okinawa, Japan and Korea. VA also provides transition briefings to demobilizing Reserve and National Guard Servicemembers. These briefings are typically held at the Reserve component Servicemembers' home station after completion of the deployment.

At TAP briefings, Servicemembers learn about the array of benefits and services available from VA. Servicemembers learn how to complete applications and are advised about what evidence is needed to support their claims. Following the general instruction segment, personal interviews are conducted with those Servicemembers who want assistance in preparing and submitting their applications for disability compensation and other benefits. In FY 2010, approximately 207,000 active duty, Reserve, and National Guard Servicemembers participated in over 5,000 transition briefings. From October 1, 2010, through March 2011, over 83,000 active duty, Reserve, and National Guard Servicemembers participated in over 2,000 transition briefings.

In June 2010, VA established the TAP Re-Engineering Project Team in response to a request from the VA/DoD Joint Executive Council to update the existing briefing to ensure that it met the needs of current Servicemembers. The project team revised the briefing and is currently developing a web-based version of VA's portion of TAP to be available in the fourth quarter of 2011, for use in lieu of the existing "brick and mortar" classroom environment where appropriate. Our goal is to achieve 100-percent Servicemember participation in 2012 by enabling Servicemembers to complete the VA benefits briefing at their convenience prior to discharge.

Our efforts to improve the VA portion of TAP include three main elements: expanded training of briefers, continuous updates, and greater oversight of the program. The classroom TAP presentation has been revised and updated, reducing the number of slides by over 50 percent while focusing the remaining slides in a standardized template. Training has been completed on the new slide deck to over 200 VA employees, including those at overseas locations. A web page has been created to keep VA benefits briefers updated on benefits and resources. Monthly conference calls have been initiated to provide briefers with direct access to various subject matter experts, updated information on VA benefits, upcoming program changes/enhancements; and to communicate best practices. A survey tool is also under development for both the in-person briefing and online information to track attendance and customer feedback. This survey tool will provide VA with valuable information, in-

cluding participation rates, customer satisfaction data, and qualitative feedback, which will help VA to better meet the needs of our separating Servicemembers.

As part of the continual development of the VA portion of TAP, VA is conducting monthly reviews of the information on the slide deck and online. In 2012, VA will begin scheduled site visits to review the delivery of the classroom briefings.

#### **VetSuccess Program**

The goal of the VetSuccess program is to assist Veterans with service-connected disabilities to prepare for and obtain suitable and sustainable employment through the provision of services individually tailored to each Veteran's needs.

VetSuccess services begin with a comprehensive evaluation to help Veterans identify and understand their interests, aptitudes, and transferable skills. Next, vocational exploration focuses Veterans' potential career goals in line with labor-market demands. This allows Veterans to participate as partners with their counselors in the development of a rehabilitation plan that builds on their transferable skills and ultimately assists them in achieving their career goals. To help Veterans accomplish their rehabilitation goals, VR&E provides a broad range of employment services including:

- Translation of military experience to civilian skill sets;
- Direct job-placement services;
- Short-term training to augment existing skills to increase employability (e.g., certification preparation tests and sponsorship of certification);
- Long-term training including on-the-job training, apprenticeships, college training, or services that support self-employment;
- Independent-living services for those Veterans so severely disabled they may not currently be able to work, with the goal of exploring vocational options when each individual is ready; and
- On-going case-management assistance throughout their rehabilitation programs to assist with any needs that would interfere with retention and completion to the point of employment.

Veteran employment is the fundamental mission of the VR&E VetSuccess program. Success relies on early intervention, smart processes, productive partnerships, good rehabilitation planning, and retention to the point that each Veteran is job-ready. Although all of these areas are vitally important, the most important are those services at the end of the program that assist job-ready Veterans to cross the finish line and land the career that they prepared for throughout their civilian and military experiences.

In FY 2010, out of the 10,038 Veterans that were successfully rehabilitated from the program, 51 percent were hired in the private sector, 33 percent were hired with the Federal Government, 12 percent were hired with State and local government, and 4 percent were hired with faith-based and community organizations. Of note, 79 percent of Veterans were employed in professional, technical, or managerial careers, earning an average annual starting salary of \$38,734.

The VetSuccess.gov Web site has been enhanced to provide a one-stop resource for both disabled and able-bodied Veterans and family members to access services during transition, campus life, job search, and career attainment. The program also assists Veterans with disabilities to maximize independence in their homes and communities. The Web site includes a job board for employers desiring to hire Veterans; résumé builders and upload tools that allow Veterans to utilize résumés already developed; a military-to-civilian jobs translator; aggregator tools for employers seeking certain skill sets and for Veterans seeking specific jobs; and a feedback mechanism to self-report employment gained through the site. The job-board feature of VetSuccess.gov currently connects over 68,000 Veterans with over 1,500 employers. Veterans also have access through the Direct Employers Job Central career board to over 4 million jobs, with additional links to other popular and highly populated job boards. Other enhancements to the site include self-assessment tools and interactive maps that drill down to resources in the Veteran's community. Future enhancements will include self-assessment tools, an enhanced military-to-civilian-jobs translator, and linkage to E-Benefits effective next month, allowing the self-service features such as checking the status of a specific employment application.

The VA VetSuccess on Campus program was established in June 2009 to provide support to Veteran-students in completing college or university degrees, including Veterans using the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The VetSuccess on Campus program is currently in place at eight campuses: the University of South Florida, Cleveland State University, San Diego State University, Rhode Island College, Rhode Island Community College, Texas A&M Central Texas, Arizona State University and Salt Lake

Community College. Over 4,500 Veteran-students have been served at these eight campuses.

VA plans to expand VetSuccess on Campus to 9 additional campuses with Veteran populations of 800–1,200 students in 2012. The VetSuccess on Campus program is designed to give needed support to all Veterans pursuing training through one of the educational programs administered by VA, as well as to Veterans who are not entitled to one of VA's education benefit programs. Our objective is to significantly increase the potential for graduation and successful transition to a career that supports Veterans' and their families and contributes to well-being of the Nation.

Mr. Chairman, we at VA are proud of our continuing role in the transition of Servicemembers from military to civilian life, and seek to continually improve the quality and breadth of our outreach efforts to active duty, Reserve, and National Guard members.

Thank you for allowing me to appear before you today. I would be pleased to respond to any questions from Members of the Subcommittee.

---

**Prepared Statement of Philip A. Burdette, Principal Director, Office of Wounded Warrior Care and Transition Policy, U.S. Department of Defense**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the views of the Department of Defense (DoD) on the performance of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). TAP is a collaborative partnership between DoD, the Department of Labor (DOL), and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and is the primary platform used to deliver an extensive array of services and benefits information to separating servicemembers. The Department also focuses on providing separating and retiring servicemembers useful information and assistance in all aspects of the transition process, including preparation for post-military employment.

**TAP OVERVIEW**

Servicemembers are required by law to commence pre-separation counseling no later than 90 days prior to active-duty separation but are strongly advised and encouraged to start the process 12 months before separation, or 24 months before retirement. In addition to the mandatory pre-separation counseling, DoD counselors make every effort to encourage transitioning servicemembers to participate in the voluntary TAP components, which are the VA's Benefits Briefing, Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) and DOL's TAP Employment Workshop. Each Department is independently responsible for how to provide its portion of TAP to servicemembers. The decision of how to accomplish that, including the utilization of contract support, resides solely with the individual Departments. DoD wants every effort made to ensure quality instructional delivery of the material.

Taking full advantage of what TAP has to offer enables servicemembers to be strong competitors for career opportunities in the civilian workforce. During mandatory pre-separation counseling, servicemembers review and complete an extensive checklist with a counselor. After servicemembers complete the pre-separation counseling portion of TAP, they receive a copy of the checklist (DD Form 2648 for Active Duty and DD Form 2648-1 for the National Guard and Reserves) so they can refer back to it and look up Web sites and other information to reinforce what they received during the pre-separation counseling session. The checklists have all the topics required by statute that a counselor must address during the pre-separation counseling session. The forms are used by separating servicemembers and their spouses to record that pre-separation counseling was conducted.

If the servicemember desires more information on any topic on the pre-separation counseling checklist that exceeds the general knowledge of the counselor, then the member checks a "YES" block next to the item on the form, and the counselor refers the servicemember to a subject matter expert who is able to assist the member with the desired information, or get the answers to questions which the transition counselor may not have been able to answer. The subject matter expert may be a family support transition or education counselor located at the installation, or it may be a DOL or VA representative who provides TAP support at the installation.

**ENHANCED TAP FOR THE 21ST CENTURY**

To strengthen our TAP and reinforce its value to servicemembers and their families, the Department, in collaboration with our partners at VA and DOL, is committed to moving TAP from a traditional event-driven approach to a modern, inno-



vative lifecycle approach. We are shifting from an end of military service event to an outcome-based model, that will measure success not only on the number of servicemembers who use the TAP process, but also on the number of transitioning servicemembers and their families who find the TAP process beneficial in assisting them with their life goals, military career progression, and/or new careers/meaningful employment outside of uniformed service. We will be implementing this strategic plan with focuses on information technology, strategic communications, resources and performance management. The end-state for the TAP overhaul will be a population of servicemembers who have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to empower themselves to make informed career decisions, be competitive in the global workforce and become positive contributors to their community as they transition from military to civilian life.

As part of this effort, we launched the DoD Career Decision Toolkit in August 2010. Available both online and in CD format, the Toolkit was developed in collaboration with the Military Services and our TAP partners at VA and DOL to help simplify the learning curve for transitioning servicemembers with the information, tools, and resources they need to succeed in the next phase of their lives. The toolkit uses the latest technology to consolidate the very best teaching materials from all the Service branches and provides thousands of on-demand resources to servicemembers. It is interactive, simple to use and portable. The toolkit includes:

- More than 3,000 on-demand information and planning resources
- Transition subjects such as career exploration, financial planning, résumé creation, interviewing skills and compensation negotiation
- Tools that enable servicemembers to catalogue their military skills, training, and experience in ways that transfer to civilian sector
- Post-Service benefits and resources
- Resources that allow users to self-assess individual transition needs and plan personalized options

One of the great benefits of this toolkit is the ability for the servicemember to access the information anytime, anywhere as they have concerns/questions/issues with their transition.

In addition to the Toolkit, we began offering a series of virtual learning opportunities to transitioning servicemembers and military spouses on March 1st of this year. The free online classes are available to any servicemember and military spouse worldwide and provide them with an interactive educational forum to delve into employment and career related topics, such as “Building Better Résumés” and “Financial Planning for a Career Change.” The classes are highly encouraged for servicemembers looking to bolster their transition-related knowledge, especially geographically separated members of the National Guard and Reserves and recovering Wounded Warriors. To date, there have been more than 1,330 registrations for these weekly classes by Guard and Reserve members, Wounded Warriors, family members, and servicemembers stationed around the world, including registrations by military personnel stationed overseas in Diego Garcia, BIOT, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; Honduras; Italy; Japan; Korea; Germany; and members deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq. Military spouses are also among the many participants who have enjoyed this new delivery methodology.

The TAP Virtual Learning Seminars have also been enthusiastically embraced by senior military leadership and prominent figures in business and academia, some of whom now participate in online seminars as “surprise celebrity guests.” Leaders such as Army Reserve Command Sergeant Major Michael D. Schultz; Navy Reserve Force Master Chief Ronney A. Wright; Philip Dana, Amazon’s Military Recruiting H.R. Manager; and Dr. Timothy Butler, Harvard Business School’s Director of Career Development Programs, have made guest appearances to motivate the attendees, stress the importance of proper transition planning, and also to participate in the online classes along with the servicemembers and families.

The Toolkit and the virtual classes are just the beginning of our effort to move TAP into the digital spectrum.

We are developing an “end-to-end” virtual TAP delivery platform that will provide the backbone of the transformed program, integrating the Guard and Reserve components, as well as expanding services available to family members.

DoD has also played a supporting role with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) on the initiative to increase hiring veterans in all Federal agencies. This is now recognized as President Obama’s Veterans Employment Initiative that directs all Executive Agencies to increase veteran employment. TAP is one of the programs we will use to educate and inform servicemembers about Federal service career opportunities.

Additionally, we established our presence on the social networks. Our *Facebook* page continues to help promote information that impacts transition and has helped several servicemembers who may have otherwise missed critical transition planning information. During this fiscal year, fans and non-fans have viewed our *Facebook* postings over 892,500 times. Our social network continues to expand as employers begin posting employment opportunities and provide mentoring advice for transitioning personnel.

#### **Focus on Credentialing**

The Department continues to provide licensure and certification information in a range of ways and in different formats in order to appeal to individual learning styles and ensure the widest possible dissemination. It is important to note, DoD does not serve as a credentialing body. These bodies are typically well-defined for licensure requirements by governmental agencies—Federal, State, or local—who grant licenses to individuals to practice a specific occupation, such as a medical license for physicians. State or Federal laws or regulations define the standards that individuals must meet to become licensed.

Non-governmental agencies, associations, and even private sector companies grant certifications to individuals who meet predetermined qualifications. These qualifications are generally set by professional associations (for example, National Commission for the Certification of Crane Operators) or by industry and product-related organizations (for example, Novell Certified Engineer). Certification is typically an optional credential; although some State licensure boards and some employers may require it. For many occupations, more than one organization may offer certifications.

#### **Verification of Military Experience and Training**

The Verification of Military Experience and Training (VMET) document was established by Public Law in November 1990 to assist departing servicemembers transitioning to civilian life by providing a verification of their military skills and training, and translating them into civilian terms. The Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC), a DoD activity that supports the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness (OUSD/P&R), has the responsibility for producing the VMET documents and maintaining the VMET Web site.

The enhanced DD Form 2586, Verification of Military Experience and Training, is now available on demand directly from the DMDC Web site at [www.dmdc.osd.mil/vmet](http://www.dmdc.osd.mil/vmet). Access to the document is protected by secure login protocols.

The VMET is not an official transcript for purposes of granting college credit, but it can be used for verification of having met training and/or course requirements to qualify for civilian occupations, certificates, licenses, or programs of study. Credit recommendations from the American Council of Education (ACE) for occupations and/or courses are listed when they are available, though academic institutions determine which credits are applicable to a program of study.

#### **A Lifecycle of Credentialing Education**

The Department realized that for licensure and certification programs to be effective, they must be introduced to servicemembers early in their careers, not at the time of separation. We are taking full advantage of the DOL's Career One Stop ([www.careeronestop.org](http://www.careeronestop.org)) online resource and promoting utilization throughout the entire military lifecycle to reinforce the value of military training and experience. In this application, servicemembers link to the *Credentials Center*, which they can use to locate State-specific occupational licensing requirements, agency contact information and information about industry-recognized certifications. There are also associated workforce education and examinations that test or enhance knowledge, experience and skills in related civilian occupations and professions.

Other resources such as the Army and Navy Credentialing Opportunities Online (COOL) Web sites are readily available. Army and Navy COOL sites explain how Soldiers and Sailors can meet civilian certification and licensure requirements related to their military occupational specialties or ratings. They also serve as a resource to identify what civilian credentials relate to a servicemember's Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) or Rating and how to obtain them. The Air Force emphasis on licensure and certification is two-fold—career-related degrees and certification from civilian schools. The COOL search-tool equivalent for Airmen, known as the Credentialing and Research Tool (CERT), links the CCAF degree programs with nationally-recognized professional certifications relevant to specific career fields.

Additional resources include the DoD/DOL United Services Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP), the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES), and TurboTAP, DoD's official TAP Web site. All of the aforementioned resources were developed and designed to help servicemembers translate their skills and experience into opportunities for civilian employment.

## **DoD AND MILITARY SERVICES PROGRAMS AND TOOLS**

In recognition of the importance of the need for highly-qualified, experienced information assurance personnel, DoD has established a policy requiring certain individuals with privileged access to DoD information systems to obtain civilian credentials. DoD Manual 8570.1-M requires any full- or part-time military servicemember, contractor, or foreign employee with privileged access to a DoD information system, regardless of job or occupational series, to obtain a commercial information security credential accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) or equivalent authorized body under the ANSI/ISO/IEC 17024 Standard. The Manual also requires that those same employees maintain their certified status with a certain number of hours of continuing professional education each year. The number of people affected by this mandate is estimated to top 100,000, including any full- or part-time military servicemember, contractor, or foreign employee with privileged access to a DoD information system, regardless of job or occupational series.

## **OTHER TRANSITION-RELATED EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES**

### **Operation Warfighter (OWF)**

OWF is a DoD-sponsored internship program that offers recuperating wounded, ill and injured servicemembers meaningful activity that positively impacts wellness and offers a process of transitioning back to duty or entering into the civilian workforce. The main objective of OWF is to place recuperating servicemembers in supportive work settings that positively benefit the recuperation process.

OWF represents a great opportunity for transitioning servicemembers to augment their employment readiness by building their résumés, exploring employment interests, developing job skills, benefiting from both formal and on-the-job training opportunities, and gaining valuable Federal Government work experience that will help prepare them for the future. The program strives to demonstrate to participants that the skills they have obtained in the military are transferable into civilian employment. For servicemembers who will return to duty, the program enables these participants to maintain their skill sets and provides the opportunity for additional training and experience that can subsequently benefit the military. OWF simultaneously enables Federal employers to better familiarize themselves with the skill sets of wounded, ill and injured servicemembers as well as benefit from the considerable talent and dedication of these transitioning servicemembers.

To date, the program has placed approximately 1,800 servicemembers across more than 100 different Federal employers and sub-components. The program currently has 390 active internship placements.

### **The Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI)**

The VEI, created by Executive Order 13518, aims to aggressively enhance recruitment strategies and promote employment opportunities, which will lead to an increase in the number of Veterans in the Federal Government. DoD is a strategic partner on the Steering Committee for this initiative, along with the OPM, VA, DOL, and Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The Order also established an interagency Council on Veterans Employment that advises the President and the Director of OPM on the initiative. The Council serves as a national forum to promote Veterans' employment opportunities in the Executive Branch and develops performance measures to assess the effectiveness of the VEI. This led DoD to implement an agency-specific DoD Veterans Strategic Plan, which includes performance measures and expected outcomes. Agencies covered by the VEI have established Veterans Employment Program Offices or designated a full-time staff person dedicated to providing employment services to Veterans. The DoD Veterans Employment Program Office assists Veterans with navigating the application process in their search for employment. Veterans and the public may also access the VEI's helpful Web site at [www.fedshirevets.gov](http://www.fedshirevets.gov).

### **Education and Employment Initiative (E2I)**

Contributing factors to unemployment among wounded warriors include the lack of a focused employment, educational, and rehabilitation process that engages servicemembers as soon as they begin treatment at a medical treatment facility (MTF), as well as a lack of qualified career counselors who can administer career assessments and match servicemembers to careers. DoD, in collaboration with VA, DOL, and OPM, is developing E2I to address these shortfalls. E2I will leverage best practices and the good work already being done from existing employment and training initiatives in both the Federal and private sectors. The first phase is a tiered pilot program that launched in May at two locations.

The goal of the E2I pilot is to engage servicemembers early in their recovery to identify the skills they have, the skills they need, and the employment opportunities

where those skills can be matched and put to good use. The E2I process will begin within 30–90 days of a recovering servicemember (RSM) arriving at a MTF, taking advantage of a recovery time that averages 311 days but can be as long as 5 years. Once they are ready to begin the E2I process, all applicants will be administered a comprehensive skills assessment to include understanding their current disability, current MOS experience, career desires, education and training background, and special accommodations that may be required for a particular type of position. A highly trained career and vocation counselor who has extensive knowledge of the issues facing wounded warriors will provide this assessment.

The E2I counselor will work with the RSM from the initial stages of creating an individual development plan goal setting, course selection or education requirements, through the completion of training/certification to return to duty or alternate job placement. A Mentor and Coach will be assigned to all E2I applicants at the beginning of the process to provide personalized assistance and guidance throughout the E2I process from recruitment at the MTF into the program, through placement in their new MOS or chosen career.

Our plan is to evaluate the E2I program over the next 12 to 18 months and refine the E2I process with new ideas and best practices. Once this evaluation is complete, our plan is to continue our E2I roll-out, which will include partnering with OPM, VA and DOL to ensure we have standardized practices and comprehensive handoffs as the RSM leaves the responsibility of the DoD.

#### **CLOSING**

The measure of a successful transition does not focus solely on TAP, but rather is shared with military leadership at every level within the command structure and the degree of personal involvement by the servicemember and his or her family. We must continue to find new ways to not only reach our servicemembers and provide useful information to them, but also strive to ensure they are armed and prepared to address all the various challenges and opportunities in their transition to civilian life. It is through their success that we measure ours and continually look for better ways to provide the help they need.

In summary, the end-state for the enhanced TAP for the 21st Century by DoD, DOL, and the VA will consist of a population of servicemembers who have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to empower themselves to make informed career decisions, be competitive in the global workforce and become positive contributors to their community as they transition from the military to civilian life.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. On behalf of the men and women in the military today and their families, I thank you and the members of this Committee for your steadfast support.

---

#### **Prepared Statement of Hon. Raymond M. Jefferson, Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training Service, U.S. Department of Labor**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to appear as a witness before the Subcommittee and speak to you on the Transition Assistance Program employment workshop, more commonly referred to as TAP.

VETS proudly serves Veterans and transitioning servicemembers by providing resources and expertise to assist and prepare them to obtain meaningful careers, maximize their employment opportunities and protect their employment rights. We do that through four major programs that are an integral part of Secretary Solis's vision of

*"Good Jobs for Everyone."*

- The Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG);
- The Transition Assistance Program Employment Workshops (TAP);
- The Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP); and
- The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA).

#### **Overview of the TAP Program**

TAP is an interagency program to help returning servicemembers transition back into civilian life. TAP consists of five components and is delivered in partnership by DOL, the Department of Defense (DoD), Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA), and Department of Homeland Security. The five components include:

1. Pre-separation counseling (3 hours)—this is mandatory for all transitioning servicemembers and is provided by the military services;
2. TAP employment workshops (2½ days)—these are voluntary on the part of the transitioning servicemember and are administered through DOL and its State partners;
3. VA benefits briefing (4 hours)—these briefings are also voluntary and administered by the VA; and
4. Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) (2 hours)—also voluntary and administered by the VA.
5. One-on-One Coaching—this is a follow-up to the four components outlined above.

DOL began providing TAP employment workshops in 1991, pursuant to section 502 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1991 (P.L. 101–510), and, to date, we have provided employment and job training assistance and other transitional services to over 2½ million separating and retiring servicemembers and their spouses.

We also started providing employment workshops at overseas military institutions pursuant to section 309 of the Veterans Benefits Act of 2003 (P.L. 108–183). Today, so that we can better serve Guard and Reserve units, we've made the commitment to provide employment workshops whenever requested, to include those returning from mobilization. We are currently conducting TAP employment workshops at 50 sites overseas including Germany, Belgium, the Azores, Japan, Italy, Korea, Guam, the United Kingdom, Turkey, and Bahrain.

Our mission is to provide TAP at every location requested by the Armed Services, including National Guard and Reserve Components. Last year, nearly 130,000 transitioning servicemembers and spouses attended a TAP employment workshop given at one of 272 locations worldwide.

#### **Employment Workshop Overview**

DOL is authorized by Chapter 58 of title 10, U.S. Code, to assist DoD and VA in providing transition assistance services to separating servicemembers and their spouses. The role of VETS in this effort is to conduct employment workshops based on projections made by each of the armed services and the Department of Homeland Security for the U.S. Coast Guard. DOL-funded Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) lead many employment workshops that take place in the United States. In some cases, due to the distances from State employment offices to the military installations, and to assist with the rapid growth of the program, contract facilitators were added in early Fiscal Year (FY) 1992 and Federal staff in FY 1996. In overseas locations, contract facilitators lead all workshops.

DOL's TAP employment workshop is a comprehensive 2½ day session where participants learn about job search techniques, career decision-making processes and obtain information on current occupational and labor market conditions. Practical exercises are conducted in résumé writing and interviewing techniques. Participants are also provided an evaluation of their employability relative to the job market and receive information on the most current Veterans' benefits. Current components of the employment workshop include the following: career self-assessment, résumé development, job search and interview techniques, U.S. labor market information, civilian workplace requirements and documentation of military skills.

The current workshop also explains the additional services available at the over 3,000 DOL One-Stop Career Centers and the value of the workforce investment system. One-Stop Career Centers help provide the support Veterans need to be successful and competitive in today's workforce and, this past program year, served over 1.8 million Veterans. VETS partners with the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) to increase Veterans' awareness of, access to, and use of the One-Stop service delivery system including ETA's suite of online electronic tools.

To maintain quality of service delivery and ensure uniformity between locations, all workshops use a common workbook and standard program of instruction. In addition, all facilitators—whether DVOP/LVER, Federal staff, or contractors—are trained and certified by the National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI). In the future, VETS will transition to having all facilitation done by contract facilitators, allowing DVOPs to focus on their core roles and responsibilities.

#### **The Transformation and Redesign of the TAP Employment Workshop**

Since its inception, the TAP employment workshop has been a valuable tool for servicemembers transitioning into the civilian workforce. As times change, we believe it is important to ensure that the approach and content stays current with emerging best practices. It is also critical that the program meets any changing

needs of our transitioning servicemembers, like those returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan during these challenging economic times. Therefore, in order to bring the best possible program and services to our servicemembers and their spouses, VETS is undertaking a redesign of the workshop that will incorporate the latest techniques and best practices that have been identified over the past two decades.

We have identified six major opportunities for improving the current employment workshop and are in the process of completely redesigning and transforming it. We are creating experientially-taught, effective, enduring solutions for a successful transition from military to civilian life and employment.

The first improvement opportunity we have identified is that the current employment workshop is neither customized to participants' needs nor segmented according to their readiness for employment. There is no assessment of individuals *prior* to them attending the course. Simply put, it's "one size fits all." For example, in today's workshop, servicemembers of all skill sets and experiences attend the same workshop—in this situation, we are not effectively engaging varying readiness levels. The solution to this dilemma is "pre-work." The redesign will assess each individual's readiness for employment, and their interests, before they attend the workshop. The pre-work results will then be used to assign individuals to one of three employment readiness levels: (1) high; (2) moderate; or (3) entry-level. When a servicemember attends TAP, he or she will do so with a cohort having the same readiness level, and the material will be tailored to that level. This is a completely new addition to the employment workshop.

The second improvement opportunity we have identified is that the content for the employment workshop is outdated—we have not done a significant content update in 19 years. Therefore, the transformation and redesign will bring in best practice content in the area of career transition. The new content will focus on helping participants develop the vision, strategy, and tactics for their careers. Vision involves determining the life they want, strategy involves creating their roadmap for getting there, and tactics are the actions and steps they'll be using along the journey. There will be three versions of the content—one for each level of employment readiness. The new, best-practice content will cover topics such as the following:

- Life and career planning;
- Stress reduction techniques;
- Mental resiliency training;
- Transitioning from a military to a civilian work environment and culture
- Peer support techniques;
- Networking;
- Storytelling (how to determine and communicate one's value proposition)
- Entrepreneurship; and
- Federal Government employment.

TAP will continue to cover the traditional topics like résumé writing, interviewing, and dressing for success. A distinctive element of the new employment workshop is that each participant will create an Individual Transition Plan (ITP)—encompassing his/her vision, strategy and tactics—which will serve as the individual's roadmap to meaningful and successful career opportunities. This is a completely new addition to the employment workshop.

The third improvement opportunity we have identified is that, presently, TAP is facilitated by a mixed cadre with different skill levels and training (e.g. contractors, VETS Federal staff, State Disabled Veteran Outreach Program specialists, and Local Veterans Employment Representatives). Our solution is to employ experienced, skilled contract facilitators trained to standards developed as part of the redesign. They will provide interactive facilitation that is based on adult learning principles. A major difference in the new employment workshop will be the emphasis on experiential learning—"learning by doing"—as opposed to the current reliance on PowerPoint slides. Also, by using contract facilitators, we can implement changes more quickly and will have better accountability of their performance. This is a new approach to content delivery.

The fourth improvement opportunity we have identified is that, with the current model, there are constraints on access to the program, who can attend, and refresher training. The solution to this is an online, e-learning platform—a "virtual" TAP. The redesign will include an online, e-learning platform that will contain the entire TAP workshop in an engaging, dramatized format that serves as a comprehensive resource for all servicemembers, Veterans, Wounded Warriors, spouses, Guard and Reservists. Having an online platform will allow these communities continual and unlimited access to all of the content provided, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The online platform will be a primary portal to access entrepreneurship training, resources and support from the Small Business Administration (SBA), and

other sources. Furthermore, this solution will allow us to receive feedback from on-line users and track how many there are. The online, e-learning content for the employment workshop will also be available in Spanish. This is a completely new addition to the employment workshop.

The fifth improvement opportunity we have identified is that there are no follow-up services for participants to reinforce and embed what they've learned. When a transitioning servicemember or spouse attends the employment workshop today, they leave with whatever they've absorbed in those 2½ days. Reinforcement of learning is a well-understood principle of adult learning. Our solution to this is what we call "After-TAP Support." In the redesigned workshop, participants will receive customized coaching by phone or online for 60 days after they attend the workshop. This will be "live" person-to-person contact and will focus primarily on assisting the participants with implementing, "pressure-testing" (i.e., comparing the written plan with the participants' actual desires) and revising their Individual Transition Plans. It will also incorporate peer support techniques. This is a completely new addition to the employment workshop.

Finally, the sixth improvement opportunity we have identified is that the employment workshop has no performance metrics to evaluate its effectiveness. Over the past 19 years, about 2½ million people have gone through the workshop. However, there is no repository of data measuring the program's effectiveness. Therefore, the redesign will include performance metrics and gather evaluation input from TAP participants at the following three "moments of truth":

1. At the conclusion of the TAP Employment Workshop—attendees will evaluate the delivery, content, approach, resources, and setting;
2. During the job search (when attendees are actually applying what they've learned)—they'll evaluate the relevancy and effectiveness of the workshop's content and approach; and
3. After becoming employed—attendees will be asked how useful the workshop was in helping them to obtain a job or career opportunity, how rapidly did it help them assimilate into the work culture of their new organization, and did the program help them to quickly become positive contributors to their organization.

VETS is excited about the future of this program. The request for proposals for this redesign has been released and proposals were due on May 27th. Our goal is to have the new workshop in place by Veterans' Day 2011.

#### **FY 2012 Budget Request**

In FY 2012, VETS requests that TAP be funded at \$9,000,000, renewing our FY 2011 request to fund this as a separate activity. This is \$2,000,000 above the level for FY 2010. VETS anticipates increased demand for TAP employment workshops because of our participation in DoD's Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program and our commitment to provide workshops for retiring Reserve and National Guard members, which represent two populations not fully supported in previous years.

This funding level helps servicemembers and their spouses make the initial transition from military service to the civilian workplace more seamlessly, effectively, efficiently and with less difficulty.

Mr. Chairman, you asked in your invitation letter for the status of the contract for the National Veterans' Training Institute. The request for proposals closed on April 21, 2011, and we are currently evaluating the submitted proposals. We plan to make an award by mid-June 2011.

You also asked about class sizes of the employment workshop at Camp LeJeune, NC. We have established a goal of 24 participants per employment workshop. Upon occasion, due to mission requirements and facility availability, this goal is exceeded. We will continue working with DoD to prevent the issue of excessive class size from arising and address it when it does.

#### **Conclusion**

Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley, and Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, I reaffirm my commitment to work closely with you, the outstanding team at VETS, and our partners and stakeholders to provide Veterans and transitioning servicemembers the best possible services and programs. Our success will be measured by the impact our programs have on helping our Veterans find and keep good jobs in today's modern economy.

Thank you again for your unwavering commitment to Veterans and for the support that you've been providing to us. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today and look forward to answering your questions.

---

**Statement of Michael Dakduk, Executive Director,  
Student Veterans of America**

Chairman Stutzman, and Ranking Member Braley,

Thank you for giving Student Veterans of America the opportunity to comment on the Transition Assistance Program and the VetSuccess on Campus Program. These two programs are both essential parts of the transition from the military to civilian life, and it is essential that they be continually assessed by the Congress to ensure that they are meeting the needs of our Nation's veterans.

**Transition Assistance Program**

We have enjoyed working with the Departments of Labor, VA, and Defense in overhauling TAP, and are looking forward to seeing the final product of the new version as it is rolled out in the coming months. As we have emphasized to all of the stakeholders, we feel strongly that education assessment and benefits awareness be critical components of the new TAP Program. It is not enough to simply tell a veteran what benefits are available. If they express interest in higher education, why not sign them up on the spot? The timeline for the expiration of their benefits begins as soon as they are discharged regardless of whether or not they sign up, so for the vast majority of veterans there is no hesitancy to enroll in the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

It is essential that TAP be geographically linked to where a veteran is going, not where they are being discharged from. Most TAP programs only talk about local VA and DOL resources, but there is no one-on-one counseling as to what will be available when they return home, or what they are interested in when they get there. It is essential that the resources in the area provide personal contact information to the veteran who is going there, and they should also have the veteran's information so they can contact him or her when they get there. We are under the impression that this will be a part of the new TAP Program, and we hope that the Congress will continue to require it.

We strongly believe that education should become part of a servicemember's career long before TAP, and we hope that DoD will continue to explore opportunities for servicemembers, especially junior enlisted and NCOs, to have the opportunity to earn higher education credits prior to making the decision to transition. However, we do recognize that with the high operational tempo our military is currently facing, it will be some time before the same kind of education opportunities that our officers can take advantage of are made available to the enlisted force. That does not mean, however, that our enlisted force is not college material, and we hope that this Committee as well as the HASC will encourage DoD to explore these options for all servicemembers so as to dramatically reduce the amount of time a servicemember must spend in college following discharge before taking on more responsibility in the civilian workforce.

In the meantime, we believe that TAP should begin as soon as possible for all servicemembers, and that over the course of the year before someone transitions, they should be able to take advantage of these resources more than once. This is especially true for those who will be entering higher education following discharge. The college application process must begin at least 6 months before discharge, with the servicemember preparing for and taking the SATs or other required exams, etc. Therefore, it is essential that TAP offer some kind of tangible education component that allows servicemembers to take the time to prepare for these exams if they need, as well as having the resources to teach them on base.

We hope that this will dramatically increase the number of veterans going directly from their discharge facility to a college campus, where they can be part of a larger academic conversation in a supportive environment, thus more effectively acclimating them to the civilian world.

**VetSuccess on Campus Program**

The VetSuccess on Campus Program is one that SVA is very supportive of, and hopes that the Congress will continue to fund and expand it. One of the most important parts of this is a full or part-time VA benefits counselor at the participating university that can speak comprehensively about what is available to student vet-



erans. This is important because many universities are not able to afford full-time veteran coordinators, and some do not even have full time certifying officials.

It is for this reason that we feel that the VetSuccess on Campus Program is so important. We know that in these tough economic times, many schools are struggling to maintain highly qualified support staff. Without further requirements from the VA, some schools are reducing their veteran support staff down to the one required person to handle growing student veteran populations, and this is leaving many questions unanswered and likely contributes to veterans dropping out of school and feeling unwelcome. The more that VA-trained and accountable personnel can be interacting daily with student veterans, the more likely these men and women are to finish school and continue succeeding.

We hope that the Congress will continue to work with the VA to place these centers where they are most needed around the country. We would very much like to read of the successes and challenges of this program at each of the 9 pilot locations funded thus far, and we hope that this honorable Subcommittee will request and then publish statistics and anecdotal best-practices so that other schools may learn. Ultimately, we feel that this program is the best way for the VA to see firsthand what we have known for years: **not all schools are ready for such a large increase in their veteran populations.** In order to enhance this readiness, the VA and the Congress must step in to provide resources to schools while at the same time holding schools accountable for their student veteran's performance. VetSuccess on Campus is one such way that the VA can do that, especially at a time when many schools are cutting their budgets.

SVA is very interested in continuing to work with the VA to offer input as to where these sites should be located in the future. It is important that proper metrics are used to determine what size of a population is required to justify this kind of presence. Additionally, we hope that in placing these centers on campus, the VA will be able to offer some kind of guidance, if not outright requirements, for how much staff is needed to service each size of student veteran population. It is unthinkable that 10 years into these wars, some schools are still only funding a part-time employee to serve hundreds if not thousands of student veterans with no repercussions. The VetSuccess on Campus program offers a perfect medium to assess these needs and offer more concrete guidance to schools. We look forward to working with this Committee and the VA on this issue.

Finally, we would be remiss if we did once again mention the fact that there is no Congressional or regulatory requirement for the VA to track the graduation rates of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. At this time, the VA measures only consumption: how many veterans are using the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and how much it is costing. **There is no requirement or mechanism for the VA to tell the Congress, schools, or the American people how well their tax dollars are being spent, and this is unacceptable.** There must be a way for the VA and the Department of Education to reconcile their records to show what degrees have been paid for, in-full or in-part, by the Post-9/11 GI Bill. This is essential to determine how well our veterans are being supported, performing academically, and ultimately if this is money that has been well-spent. We hope that this honorable Committee will agree with us and take steps to find out this important information.

### Conclusion

These two programs are essential for the proper and healthy transition of our Nation's heroes from the uniform to the classroom and beyond. TAP is currently receiving an overhaul, and we hope that it will reflect the reality that higher education is almost universally required for well-paying jobs in this economy, and thus encourages veterans to use their hard-earned benefits. VetSuccess on Campus represents a fantastic opportunity for the VA to show other schools what veteran's support should look like, and we hope that these lessons will be documented and publically available to learn from. We also hope that the Congress will continue to fund this program so that highly-trained and accountable persons are helping our next generation of leaders succeed at as many colleges and universities as possible.

Very Respectfully Submitted.

**MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD**

Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
 Washington, DC.  
*June 2, 2011*

Ms. Christina M. Roof  
 National Acting Legislative Director  
 AMVETS  
 4647 Forbes Boulevard  
 Lanham, MD 20706-4380

Dear Ms. Roof:

I would like to request your response to the enclosed questions for the record I am submitting in reference to our House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity *Hearing on Transition Assistance Program and VetSuccess on Campus* on June 2, 2011. Please answer the enclosed hearing questions by no later than Thursday, July 14, 2011.

In an effort to reduce printing costs, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, in cooperation with the Joint Committee on Printing, is implementing some formatting changes for material for all full Committee and Subcommittee hearings. Therefore, it would be appreciated if you could provide your answers consecutively on letter size paper, single-spaced. In addition, please restate the question in its entirety before the answer.

Due to the delay in receiving mail, please provide your response to Ms. Orfa Torres by fax at (202) 225-2034. If you have any questions, please call (202) 225-9756.

Sincerely,

Bruce L. Braley  
*Ranking Member*

JL/ot

---

**HVAC Questions and AMVETS Responses for the Record**  
**Subject: TAP and VetSuccess on Campus**  
**Hearing: June 2, 2011**

**Question 1:** What is the average rate of attendance of each branch?

**Answer:** Due to the fact that this is not currently tracked by all of the branches it is not possible for me to supply you with an accurate number. I am aware of several private sector studies that have sought to address this issue, however given the fact that DoD is only partly involved with the capability to accurately track this data; I believe much of that data to be speculative as well. DoD must partner with VA and DOL to start tracking attendance and developing metrics to accurately reflect the success and shortfalls of the classes.

**Question 2:** Who bears the responsibility of informing employers of where to find and hire vets?

**Answer:** There is no single person or agency exclusively tasked with informing employers where veterans can be located for employment. However, there are several programs within the department of Veterans Affairs who are responsible for employment and training services of veterans. The DVOPs and LVERS, as well as DOL's VETS program are all responsible for assisting veterans with gaining substantial employment. However, AMVETS believes much of the current unemployment problems stem from the lack of training or assistance with sustaining quality employment. We believe this matter should be addressed immediately in an effort to reduce the astounding unemployment rates within our veterans' communities.

**Question 3:** How can we increase spouse participation in TAP?

**Answer:** Currently, the TAP program is not setup to conduct outreach or provide appropriate TAP classes to eligible spouses. I believe it would be a safe assumption to say that most eligible spouses are probably not aware they are even eligible or have ever been shown the value of a well instructed TAP class. Improvements in outreach and education need to be done to increase eligible spouse participation.

**Question 4:** Do you have any views on overseas TAP?

**Answer:** Regardless of location, AMVETS believes that every TAP class should be equal in quality and content.

**Question 5:** In your written testimony you stated that employers are unable to translate a veterans' military experience into civilian equivalent. With the current initiatives being implemented why are employers still unable to understand and translate veterans' military experience into civilian equivalent?

**Answer:** Unfortunately, we believe it is not only the employers, but veterans as well, who are having trouble qualifying a former MOS and military experience to that of a private sector position. AMVETS believes this is an issue that needs to be addressed properly and thoroughly in the servicemember's TAP class before their release from DoD.

Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
Washington, DC.  
June 2, 2011

BGEN Robert F. Hedelund  
Director, Marine and Family Programs  
United States Marine Corps  
U.S. Department of Defense  
3280 Russell Road  
Quantico VA 22134

Dear BGEN Hedelund:

I would like to request your response to the enclosed questions for the record I am submitting in reference to our House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity *Hearing on Transition Assistance Program and VetSuccess on Campus* on June 2, 2011. Please answer the enclosed hearing questions by no later than Thursday, July 14, 2011.

In an effort to reduce printing costs, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, in cooperation with the Joint Committee on Printing, is implementing some formatting changes for material for all full Committee and Subcommittee hearings. Therefore, it would be appreciated if you could provide your answers consecutively on letter size paper, single-spaced. In addition, please restate the question in its entirety before the answer.

Due to the delay in receiving mail, please provide your response to Ms. Orfa Torres by fax at (202) 225-2034. If you have any questions, please call (202) 225-9756.

Sincerely,

Bruce L. Braley  
Ranking Member

JL/ot

**Questions for the Record from the House Committee on  
Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity,  
*Hearing on Transition Assistance Program and VetSuccess on Campus***

**Question 1:** What is the current rate of participation in TAMP, TAP and DTAP for Marines?

**Answer:** Based on the FY 2010 Marine Corps Transition Assistance Program Annual Report,

- The total number of active-duty Marines receiving pre-separation counseling = 28,690;
- The total number of Reserve Marines receiving pre-separation counseling = 2,432;
- The total number of Marine Spouses receiving pre-separation counseling = 446 (representation from all Services);
- The total number of servicemembers receiving Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) = 12,044 (representation from all Services); and

- The Total number of Marines receiving DOL TAP Employment Workshop = 28,335.

**Question 2:** What type of partners, affiliates and contractors are the Marines looking to add to TAP?

**Answer:** Currently, the Marine Corps is working with several external transitional career coaching/counseling contractors to assist with Senior and Executive Level Transition assistance programs. We are also looking for additional partners with educational institutions, colleges, universities, institutions; and technical and vocational schools.

**Question 3:** At how many locations is TAP available for the Marines?

**Answer:** 17 Marine Corps Installations.

**Question 4:** How often do spouses or other family members attend the mandatory TAP workshops?

**Answer:** For FY 2010, 430 spouses attended DOL TAP Workshop (spouse representation from all Services). Spouses are strongly encouraged to attend all transition assistance programs and services, including the:

1. Department of Defense's (DoD's) Pre-Separation Counseling Checklist;
2. Department of Labor (DOL's) Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Employment Workshop;
3. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) Benefits briefing;
4. Marine Forces Reserve's (MARFORRES) service obligations and benefits briefing; and the
5. Wounded Warrior Regiment's (WWR) Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) briefing.

**Question 4(a):** What are you doing to encourage spouses to attend TAP workshops?

**Answer:** Local Family Member Employment Assistance Program (FMEAP) offices and Marine Corps TAMP offices recommend that spouses attend all TAP-related programs and services.

**Question 5:** Can you clarify what the difference is between the Transition Assistance Program and the Transition Assistance Management Program?

**Answer:** The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) is an employment workshop conducted by the Department of Labor (DOL). The Transition Assistance Management Program (TAMP) encompasses all aspects of transition assistance to include DoD's pre-separation counseling; DOL's TAP Employment Workshop; the VA's Veterans Benefits Brief; the Wounded Warrior Regiment's (WWRs) Disabled Transition Assistance (DTAP) briefing; and one-on-one counseling sessions culminating in completed and customized Individual Transition Plans (ITPs) for separating and retiring Marines.

---

Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
Washington, DC.  
June 2, 2011

Mr. Thomas Pamperin  
Deputy Under Secretary for Disability Assistance  
Veterans Benefits Administration  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Mr. Pamperin:

I would like to request your response to the enclosed questions for the record I am submitting in reference to our House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity *Hearing on Transition Assistance Program and VetSuccess on Campus* on June 2, 2011. Please answer the enclosed hearing questions by no later than Thursday, July 14, 2011.

In an effort to reduce printing costs, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, in cooperation with the Joint Committee on Printing, is implementing some formatting changes for material for all full Committee and Subcommittee hearings. Therefore, it would be appreciated if you could provide your answers consecutively on letter

size paper, single-spaced. In addition, please restate the question in its entirety before the answer.

Due to the delay in receiving mail, please provide your response to Ms. Orfa Torres by fax at (202) 225-2034. If you have any questions, please call (202) 225-9756.

Sincerely,

Bruce L. Braley  
Ranking Member

JL/ot

---

**The Honorable Bruce L. Braley, Ranking Member,  
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs,  
Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity,  
Hearing on Transition Assistance Program and VetSuccess on Campus,  
June 2, 2011**

**Question 1:** Since VA is looking at TAP, are there any coming changes to the overseas TAP program?

**Response:** VA's Transition Assistance Program (TAP) is currently undergoing a reengineering process. By the end of fiscal year 2011, TAP will provide a progressive benefits presentation, standardized benefits information package, a new survey instrument, and a state-of-the-art Web-based benefits course. VA is also issuing an improved Overseas Military Services Coordinator (OMSC) training syllabus and extending the OMSC tour lengths from 4 to 6 months. OMSC provide TAP services, benefits counseling, and disabled transition assistance briefings to separating Servicemembers in the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Bahrain, Okinawa, Japan and Korea. VA is confident that these changes will drive better results. VA is also working with the Department of State on requirements and options to pursue a pilot for extending tour lengths up to 3 years. Collectively, these important changes will improve VA's delivery of benefits information to transitioning Servicemembers stationed abroad.

**Question 2:** Staff traveled to various VetSuccess on Campus sites in April. One of the concerns we heard was that the VA had not provided any guidance regarding legislative changes to the Post 9/11, in particular Public Law 111-377. The VA later informed our staff that guidance and additional information on Public Law 111-377 had been sent out. Can you tell us why some schools had received the information while others had not?

**Response:** VA used every available resource to raise awareness about the changes made to the Post-9/11 GI Bill by P.L. 111-377. The following outreach efforts were taken to proactively inform schools:

- On January 5, a VA press release announcing passage of P.L. 111-377 was published;
- The first Post-9/11 GI Bill *Facebook* update was published on January 5, 2011, and the first VBA *Facebook* update was published on January 9, 2011 explaining upcoming changes;
- On January 6, the GI Bill Web site was first updated with a news feed that listed pending changes to the Post-9/11 GI Bill by effective date;
- On January 7, letters were sent to all institutions of higher learning executives, State Approving Agencies, and the American Council on Education explaining upcoming changes;
- On February 14, Mr. Keith Wilson, Director, VA Education Service, briefed the National Association of State Approving Agencies at its Mid-Winter Conference;
- On February 23, Mr. Keith Wilson hosted a webinar for the Winter 2011 American Council on Education;
- On March 18, a letter was sent to School Certifying Officials (SCOs) explaining new tuition and fee changes and reporting requirements. The letter was posted on the GI Bill Web site the same day; and
- On June 3, the SCO Handbook detailing enrollment certification instructions and reporting requirements under Post-9/11 GI Bill was released.

VA continues to proactively reach out to educational institutions regarding the impact P.L. 111-377 is having on the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Additionally, a VA Education Liaison Representative (ELR) is assigned to each State. Schools may contact their

assigned ELR to determine where to get additional information or to obtain clarification on information previously provided.

VBA is drafting a new policy based on the legislation, and that policy is under departmental review. Once final concurrence is received, a policy letter and training will be provided to all field personnel. Release of the new policy is expected in July 2011.

**Question 3:** According to the VA, on May 20 of this year, the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service were supposed to contact the VetSuccess counselors to discuss changes and formal guidance on Public Law 111-377. Can you tell us if this call was made?

**Response:** Yes, a special training session was conducted for all VetSuccess on Campus Counselors on May 20, 2011, regarding the impact of Public Law 111-377 on Chapter 31 participants. The training consisted of a review of the language in the law, and included scenario-based examples. This call was in addition to prior field training provided to the counselors.

---

Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
Washington, DC.  
June 2, 2011

Mr. Philip A. Burdette  
Principal Director  
Office of Secretary of Defense  
Office of Wounded Warrior Care and Transition Policy  
4000 Pentagon, Room 5A688A  
Washington, DC 20301-4000

Dear Mr. Burdette:

I would like to request your response to the enclosed questions for the record I am submitting in reference to our House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity *Hearing on Transition Assistance Program and VetSuccess on Campus* on June 2, 2011. Please answer the enclosed hearing questions by no later than Thursday, July 14, 2011.

In an effort to reduce printing costs, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, in cooperation with the Joint Committee on Printing, is implementing some formatting changes for material for all full Committee and Subcommittee hearings. Therefore, it would be appreciated if you could provide your answers consecutively on letter size paper, single-spaced. In addition, please restate the question in its entirety before the answer.

Due to the delay in receiving mail, please provide your response to Ms. Orfa Torres by fax at (202) 225-2034. If you have any questions, please call (202) 225-9756.

Sincerely,

Bruce L. Braley  
*Ranking Member*

JL/ot

---

**Questions for the Record from the House Committee on  
Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity,  
*Hearing on Transition Assistance Program and VetSuccess on Campus***

**Question 1:** How many people have used the DoD Career Decision Toolkit and what has been the feedback?

**Answer:** The Department initially rolled out 180,000 kits in September 2010. Since then, we have processed an additional 700-reorder requests totaling over 120,000 toolkits. We had additional demand from the Reserve Component (RC) for Servicemembers who had already transitioned, resulting in an order for 100,000 toolkits in CD-ROM format. Over 50,000 of these CDs have been shipped to meet demands by 25 States serving demobilized RC personnel during Yellow Ribbon Events. We also provided 500 CD toolkits to the USO in Bagram, Afghanistan, to satisfy their request. Arizona State Labor Officials also requested 500 toolkits for use in the deactivation of National Guard troops serving on Border Patrol duties.

DoD considers the Career Decision Toolkit to have been well-received by its intended customers based upon the initial rollout and subsequent reorder requests, including servicemembers and those who support them in their career decisions. A further illustration of success is that it has been publically endorsed by Department of Labor (DOL)/Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS), National Guard Bureau (NGB) and Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) senior leaders.

**Question 2:** Does DoD believe that TAP should be mandatory?

**Answer:** Yes, courses and materials to help servicemembers and families transition should be mandatory. Much like the Department prepares recruits and new officers for life within the military, the Department must prepare them for life after they separate or retire from the military.

Currently, the pre-separation counseling portion of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) is already mandatory for all separating servicemembers. Department of Defense (DoD) counselors make every effort to encourage transitioning servicemembers to participate in the voluntary components of TAP; which are the VA's Benefits Briefing and Disabled TAP, and DOL's Employment Workshop. Ultimately, the Department wants TAP to be a resource that servicemembers want to use, not a requirement they feel compelled to attend.

**Question 3:** Is overseas TAP meeting the needs of our separating servicemembers?

**Answer:** The Department does not currently have Department-wide metrics measuring overall satisfaction with TAP classes overseas; however, we are looking at specific options to best measure how overseas TAP classes are meeting the needs of separating servicemembers.

Servicemembers overseas receive the same Transition Assistance Program services as those in the United States, but we realize that those stationed overseas may face additional challenges. To address these challenges, we have added items such as the Career Decision Toolkit on the TurboTap.org Web site for information and resources to better meet their transition needs. Servicemembers and their families can access transition information and resources anytime, anywhere from this site. Additionally, they can also participate in weekly scheduled web seminars, or "webinars," on such topics as Building Better Résumés, Financial Planning for Career Change, Decoding Military Skills for Civilian Employers and Acing the Interview, to further enhance their transition experience. Since its launch in March, 2011, hundreds of servicemembers in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as members at overseas installations in Europe and the Pacific have participated in the webinars.

**Question 4:** Is DoD working to increase spouse participation in TAP?

**Answer:** Yes, the Department is making a concerted effort to increase spouse participation. Spouses are encouraged to attend pre-separation counseling as well as the other Transition Assistance Program (TAP) components offered by the Departments of Labor (DOL) and Veterans Affairs (VA). This encouragement has been successful and in Fiscal Year (FY) 2010, over 30,000 spouses attended one or more TAP sessions, to include pre-separation counseling, the DOL Employment Workshop, VA Benefits Briefing, relocation assistance, personal financial management, or transition and employment assistance. Through the first two quarters of FY 2011, more than 20,000 spouses have attended similar TAP sessions. It is understood that it may not always be possible for spouses to attend TAP sessions and they are encouraged to use the Career Decision Toolkit on the TurboTAP.org Web site for information and resources to support their transition needs. Spouses can also participate in weekly web seminars, or "webinars," that address various transition topics such as Building Better Résumés, Financial Planning for Career Change and Acing the Interview, to further enhance their transition experience.

**Question 5:** Are servicemembers encouraged to get copies of their medical records for future claims?

**Answer:** Yes, we encourage servicemembers to get copies of their medical records. We also suggest and encourage servicemembers to start the process of filing the appropriate paperwork, prior to retirement or separation, with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to obtain all VA benefits to which they may be entitled. The gathering of records and paperwork is a practical approach to help our servicemembers to have the necessary documents prepared for any transition event whether it is transfer, retirement or separation.

Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
 Washington, DC.  
 June 2, 2011

The Honorable Raymond M. Jefferson  
 Assistant Secretary, Veterans' Employment and Training Service  
 U.S. Department of Labor  
 200 Constitution Avenue, NW  
 Washington, DC 20210

Dear Secretary Jefferson:

I would like to request your response to the enclosed questions for the record I am submitting in reference to our House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity *Hearing on Transition Assistance Program and VetSuccess on Campus* on June 2, 2011. Please answer the enclosed hearing questions by no later than Thursday, July 14, 2011.

In an effort to reduce printing costs, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, in cooperation with the Joint Committee on Printing, is implementing some formatting changes for material for all full Committee and Subcommittee hearings. Therefore, it would be appreciated if you could provide your answers consecutively on letter size paper, single-spaced. In addition, please restate the question in its entirety before the answer.

Due to the delay in receiving mail, please provide your response to Ms. Orfa Torres by fax at (202) 225-2034. If you have any questions, please call (202) 225-9756.

Sincerely,

Bruce L. Braley  
*Ranking Member*

JL/ot

---

**Veterans' Employment and Training Service, U.S. Department of Labor,  
 Questions for the Record, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs,  
 Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity Hearing, *Transition Assistance  
 Program and VetSuccess on Campus Program, June 2, 2011***

**Question 1:** In how many locations did DOL provide TAP last year for Reserve Component forces?

**Response:** Transition Assistance Program (TAP) eligible Reserve Component (RC) forces are able to attend TAP Employment Workshops at any of the 272 active-duty sites worldwide. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2010, RC forces attended regularly scheduled 2.5-day TAP workshops at 108 of these sites. In addition, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) delivered TAP Employment Workshops of varying lengths to RC force units at 33 National Guard armories or Reserve Unit locations in FY 2010.

**Question 2:** Do Reserve Component forces need a different kind of TAP from active-duty forces?

**Response:** RC forces do not need a separate TAP Employment Workshop. Instead, the primary challenge of providing TAP workshops to RC forces is finding ways to increase the availability and accessibility of the course content. This challenge is being addressed through the redesign of the TAP Employment Workshop. Upon completion, expected later this year, the TAP will offer an eLearning platform version of the workshop to allow RC participants to review the full course content online at their convenience, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from anywhere in the world.

**Question 3:** Currently what percentage of DVOP/LVERS have not attended NVTI?

**Response:** P.L. 109-461 amended 38 U.S.C. 4102A(c) to required all Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialists (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) staff to complete the training provided by the National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI) within 3 years of appointment. At the end of FY 2010, approximately 1 percent (24) of DVOP/LVER staff members had not completed the mandatory NVTI training as required by law.



38 U.S.C. 4102A(c) was further amended by P.L. 111-275, which now requires DVOP/LVER staff to complete their NVTI training within 18 months of appointment. For staff assigned between January 1, 2006 and October 12, 2010, NVTI training must be completed by April 13, 2012. VETS is working with the States to ensure that all staff complete the training and is closely monitoring the number of staff that have not yet done so. Below is a breakdown of the percentage of staff required by law to complete training in specific NVTI courses that have not done so as of July 20, 2011.

*Labor Employment Specialist (LES)*—10 percent (152)

*Case Management (CM)*—26 percent (232)

*Promoting Partnerships in Employment (PPE)*—30 percent (189)

**Question 4:** In the fifth improvement opportunity you note that each person will have a “live” person to person contact. Who will be doing the contacting, how many people will be doing it, and what is the expected cost?

**Response:** The Statement of Work in the Request for Proposal for the redesign of the TAP Employment Workshop requires development of an After-Training Support module that will provide follow up support for participants for 60 days following the workshop. This support will be based upon the individual needs of the person seeking assistance, including personalized phone and email support, résumé and cover letter assessment, and interview preparation. In coordination with VETS, the selected vendor will also conduct a gap analysis of transition assistance support services to ensure a strengthening of support, rather than a duplication of effort, to make maximum use of existing employment opportunities for Veterans. In addition, the selected vendor will develop and recommend annual resource requirements for the implementation of the After-Training Support module beyond the life of the contract awarded under this solicitation. Because this contract was recently awarded, we cannot provide more specific details about the new support module at this time. Similarly, expected costs have yet to be determined.

**Question 5: What is the best way to help employers find veterans for hire?**

**Response:** As the national focal point for Veterans’ employment and training services, DOL-VETS is especially situated to help employers find Veterans for hire. Our DVOP and LVER staff strive everyday to fulfill Secretary’s Solis’ vision of “Good Jobs for Everyone” by linking Veterans looking to obtain meaningful careers with employers who seek to capitalize on the specialized skills Veterans have to offer. To help us facilitate these connections, we recommend employers contact VETS staff in the geographic area where they are looking to hire, or participate in any of our 100 mega-hiring fairs held nationwide. Further information is available at <http://www.dol.gov/vets/aboutvets/contacts/map.htm>.

DVOPs and LVERs also work closely with VA’s Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service to provide comprehensive employment services on a national and local level through State Workforce Agencies. The VR&E Web site, VetSuccess.gov, receives direct job feeds through a Vet Central database that includes vacancies announced by the National Association of State Workforce Agencies. VetSuccess.gov helps Veterans and employers connect by allowing them to post relevant information and search job openings and résumés.

**Question 6:** During our Full Committee hearing on June 1, 2011, we heard from some of our panelists that there is information overload and there should be one database portal for employers. Do you think that there should be one database portal for servicemembers and veterans that contains employment information? Should this database portal be maintained under DOL’s or VA’s Web site?

**Response:** Yes, we believe there should be one database portal for employers, servicemembers, and Veterans. DOL, DoD, and VA currently are working jointly in the development of an integrated Veterans Employment Technology Platform that will provide a primary entry point for returning Veterans to find support resources in transitioning to the civilian workforce. The Platform will act as a central point of entry aimed to reduce the complexity of accessing employment resources and with the purpose of improving service to this valuable customer segment.

**Question 7:** What are some of the efforts that DOL is working on to encourage spouses to attend TAP workshops?

**Response:** DOL has launched the following efforts to increase spouse participation in the TAP Employment Workshop:

A. *Collaboration with Department of Defense (DoD) Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP)*

DOL is collaborating with the Department of Defense's Office of Military Community and Family Policy, which has oversight of the Spouse Education and Career Opportunities Program and the Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP). MSEP is a comprehensive employment and career partnership that connects corporations with military spouses who possess essential 21st Century workforce skills and attributes. Spouse Education and Career Opportunities Program counselors identify those spouses who are preparing to transition from the military with their servicemembers and refer them to the installation transition program where they are currently stationed, or to the Transition Assistance Program resources online. Once connected to the installation transition program, spouses are encouraged to attend the 2½ day TAP Employment Workshop where they will be provided training and education on:

- Résumé writing
- Interviewing skills
- Networking
- Job market research and analysis
- Salary negotiation
- Dressing for success

Spouses are also referred and encouraged to connect with the nearest One-Stop Career Center in their new location where they can continue to receive employment assistance and connect to available job opportunities in their local community.

B. *Pre-Separation Counseling*

The transition process for servicemembers begins when the servicemember attends the mandatory DoD component of TAP called "Pre-Separation Counseling." During this session, servicemembers are also informed about the DOL's TAP component, the Employment Workshop. If the spouse is not present during the pre-separation counseling session, the servicemember is encouraged to bring his/her spouse with them to the employment workshop. In addition, we continue to work with DoD and other Federal agencies with TAP components to increase awareness about the Employment Workshop among transitioning spouses and encourage them to attend.

C. *Increase Use of Social Media*

DOL is continuing its collaboration with DoD and the Military Services to increase marketing, outreach and awareness via traditional means, such as public speaking events, email, word of mouth, and news media, as well as increased usage of social media, such as *Facebook* and *Twitter*, to attract more spouses to participate in the DOL TAP Employment Workshop.

