

LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON  
H.R. 2433, H.R. 1941, AND H.R. 169

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HEARING  
BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS  
FIRST SESSION

—————  
JULY 15, 2011  
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**LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON  
H.R. 2433, H.R. 1941, AND H.R. 169**

**FRIDAY, JULY 15, 2011**

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

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:00 a.m., in Room 334, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Jeff Miller [Chairman of the Committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Miller, Stearns, Bilirakis, Roe, Stutzman, Denham, Runyan, Filner, Brown, Michaud, McNerney, Donnelly, Walz, and Carnahan.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN MILLER**

The CHAIRMAN. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. This hearing will come to order.

And I want to get right to the meat of things. Sixty thousand veterans were added to the unemployment rolls in the month of June bringing the total number to over one million veterans out there that are unemployed today. And that is unacceptable.

I have a full opening statement that I want to enter into the record. And without objection, I will do so.

[The prepared statement of Chairman Miller appears on p. 18.]

The CHAIRMAN. And we have a long series of votes, so I'm going to waive the rest of my opening statement and turn to the Ranking Member, Mr. Filner.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BOB FILNER**

Mr. FILNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The statistic you quoted shows how important this hearing is and how important it is that we address the issue of jobs very seriously.

We read about the results of veterans who come home often with invisible wounds who cannot find the dignity and security that work provides. We see that evidenced in the skyrocketing suicide statistics, domestic violence, substance abuse, and even, of course, in rising homelessness amongst our veterans.

Each of these bills before us today seeks to address the needs and I want to comment on H.R. 169, which requires the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to highlight the VetSuccess site on its main Internet page. I hope that the VA will do that.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your efforts in trying to make meaningful change in our veterans' lives and you have introduced some legislation, including H.R. 2433, which is before us today.

I have some problems with H.R. 2433, Mr. Chairman. I do not think we can call it a jobs bill, because it is a retraining bill. That is good, but it does very little to create jobs for veterans regardless of how this is going to be portrayed.

It focuses on contracting out the Transition Assistance Program, (TAP), which is a big discussion that I think we need to have about whether contracting out is the right way to go.

While I fully support widening the opportunities for our veterans by providing them with additional skills, I think we have to be realistic about how we frame the bill.

You pointed out the statistics and clearly we have to do something.

I also want to point out that in order to pay for the legislation, your bill would extend higher loan fees for our veterans that utilize the VA Home Loan Guarantee Program and then use these monies to pay for the monthly stipend and retraining costs that are created by the bill.

Mr. Chairman, your party has been threatening the whole stability of our economy by arguing that if you extend a fee or you do not extend a tax cut, you are raising taxes.

By extending the higher rates for 10 more years, what we are doing is not only raising taxes but taxing a specific group of veterans for using their benefit. Your leader, Mr. Cantor, said we do not believe you ought to be raising taxes right now in this recession.

So let's be consistent about how we apply the beliefs that we are throwing around on the Hill. If allowing the Bush tax cuts to expire was characterized as a tax increase, then not allowing these higher rates to expire can also be characterized as a tax increase.

Let's be clear about what we are doing and say in plain language that we are raising taxes on veterans. So let's be transparent about the shell game and how we are paying for it so we are not back here later trying to figure how we deal with unintended consequences.

Even worse, I think in my opinion, is that in order to pay for the bill, you will charge our veterans more fees so they benefit in one program, so we can pay for other veterans and their benefits in another program.

In this economy when our national housing market is in the tank where we on this Committee have worked so hard to protect our veterans from home foreclosures, we must carefully weigh our actions and be sure that the actions we take are not going to make it more difficult for a veteran to purchase or keep a home.

We also have Mr. Bishop with us today who has a viable alternative and he is going to explain that. It is going to require broad job skill training. It is a companion bill to Senator Murray's bill, S. 951.

What Mr. Bishop's bill does is require servicemembers to learn how to translate the skills they learned in the military into the working world. It will ensure that more veterans have jobs waiting for them when they leave the military by streamlining the path to private and Federal employment.

It requires the U.S. Department of Labor (DoL) to take a hard look at what military skills and training are translatable into the

civilian sector and work to make it simpler for our veterans to get the licenses and certification that they need.

I support H.R. 1941, the companion to Senator Murray's bill. It passed the Senate Committee unanimously and I hope we can do it here. I think it is a whole step forward.

The questions that we have to ask ourselves today, Mr. Chairman, are these the policies we want to pursue, what impact will extending these fees that you have in your bill have on the housing market, and the ability of our veterans to utilize the VA Home Loan Program.

Again, I think we could have looked at these questions and worked them out by going through the Subcommittee process. I also have not seen the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) cost estimate on this.

I hope that we can look at these bills in a bipartisan way, find the right combination that will, in fact, increase the employment opportunities for our Nation's veterans.

I thank the Chair.

[The prepared statement of Congressman Filner appears on p. 19.]

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the Ranking Member. And now I know why you would not agree with me to forego our opening statements.

I would remind you or inform you, if you are not aware, that the Senate Committee unanimously approved Senator Murray's bill. It uses the same fees in order to fund her bill.

The House approved the GI Bill grandfathering measure that use the same fees. And you used funding fees to increase 5 years ago to pay a host of improvements to veteran benefits.

So I appreciate you coming to the side of fiscal conservatism. I look forward to working with you on those issues in the future.

Now I would recognize our good friend, Mr. Bishop, who has joined us to make remarks that he may like to make on behalf of his bill today.

And welcome back, sir. As a former Member of this Committee, we are glad to have you back in the Committee room. You are recognized for 5 minutes to discuss your bill.

**STATEMENT OF HON. SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR., A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF GEORGIA**

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you very much.

And I would like to thank Chairman Miller and Ranking Member Filner and the rest of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, for inviting me to testify today on behalf of the Hiring Heroes Act of 2011.

As you are aware, the current economic environment has left millions of Americans out of work and has made it exceptionally difficult to find jobs. This problem is particularly acute when it comes to our Nation's veterans.

Recent data has shown that veterans, especially those who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, are facing an unemployment rate of over 27 percent after leaving the service. This situation is really unacceptable and it represents a failure of us here in Congress to really help our Nation's veterans.

As the War in Iraq comes to an end and we begin to draw down our forces in Afghanistan, even more veterans are going to be looking for work further compounding the problem.

With this in mind, I thank Senator Murray for taking the lead on this issue and introducing the Hiring Heroes Act of 2011 in the Senate.

It is also for this reason that I am proud to have introduced with the help of Ranking Member Filner, Chairman Bill Young of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, Ranking Member Norm Dicks of the full Appropriations Committee, and Representative McNerney, the House companion bill to Senator Murray's legislation.

Here in the House, the measure has already gained 55 cosponsors representing both Republicans and Democrats from both ends of the political spectrum.

I would like to add that this legislation has gained the support of various veterans and servicemember groups including the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Military Officers Association of America, and Military Families United.

The Hiring Heroes Act has already passed favorably, as the Chairman noted, out of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee and it is my hope that this Committee will follow the Senate's lead and quickly send the measure to the full House for consideration.

Now, let me discuss briefly the details of the legislation. Along with modernizing Federal hiring practices, the bill makes participation in the Transition Assistance Program mandatory for separating servicemembers. It requires that each servicemember receive an individualized assessment of jobs for which they may qualify.

It creates new programs aimed at improving the transition from servicemember to civilian life including a Competitive Grant Program for nonprofit organizations that provide mentoring services and job training that lead directly to job placements.

It also aims to break down the barriers between the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of Labor, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and it makes it easier for servicemembers to smoothly transition to veteran status.

Finally, I would like to stress that we have an obligation to help our veterans land on their feet when they come home and we have an obligation to help them find good-paying jobs to support their families.

These are the members of our society that have risked the most for our country. Our current system, although well-intended, simply does not focus enough on our servicemembers' transition into civilian life.

Providing more support to our Nation's veterans is simply the right thing to do. And I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle toward passing the Hiring Heroes Act of 2011.

I would like to thank the Committee for inviting me to testify and I will be happy to respond to any questions that the Committee might have.

[The prepared statement of Congressman Bishop appears on p. 22.]



The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Bishop. We appreciate you being here to present this important piece of legislation.

Also, I would like to ask unanimous consent that all Members can submit their opening statements for the record.

I also ask unanimous consent that the following organizations' statements or letters of support be inserted into the record, U.S. Department of Defense, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Veterans of Modern Warfare, Military Officers Association, and the Disabled American Veterans.

Hearing no objection, so ordered. For the record, all of the veterans service organizations supported.

If you could, tell us what you think the most important component is, not the outcome, but the most important component is of the legislation that you are proposing.

Mr. BISHOP. I think the most important component is being able to coordinate the efforts of all of the Federal agencies to make sure that the veterans have a seamless transition. Obviously gainful employment is extremely, extremely important to veterans. The lack of gainful employment often contributes to homelessness as well as joblessness.

And, of course, to the extent that we on behalf of the American people can give the right kind of transition, the tools to facilitate that transition, I think the better we will serve the people who serve America because, after all, they paid the price for the freedoms that we enjoy in this country. And we owe them that debt.

The CHAIRMAN. Does your bill fund any retraining for unemployed vets other than the few that would be granted additional vocational rehabilitation and education (VR&E) benefits?

Mr. BISHOP. Say that again?

The CHAIRMAN. I said does your bill fund any retraining for unemployed vets other than the few that would be granted additional VR&E benefits?

Mr. BISHOP. Well, it creates a Competitive Grant Program for nonprofit organizations that provide mentorship and job training programs that are designed to lead to job placements.

It requires the DoD, DoL, and the VA to jointly contract for a study to identify the equivalencies between certain military occupational specialties and related skills and potential civilian employment.

And it allows DoD to create a program to provide work experience with civilian employees and contractors to facilitate that transition for servicemembers that are on terminal leave.

It requires DoD, DoL, and the VA to collaborate in eliminating the barriers.

So there are some additional requirements, but, the Congressional Budget Office has scored the legislation and the report from the Congressional Budget Office indicates that if enacted on net, the bill would decrease direct spending by \$227 million over the period from 2012 to 2016 and by \$179 million over the period from 2012 to 2021.

In addition, the CBO estimates that implementing the bill would have a discretionary cost of \$160 million over the 2012 to 2016 period assuming that the appropriation of the necessary amounts are made.

But as you can see, the savings clearly outweigh the expenditures and I think that it is a very sound investment long term and short term and it is the right thing to do.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Mr. Filner.

Mr. FILNER. Just briefly.

Thank you, Mr. Bishop, for being here and for introducing your bill.

I would like to point out that the Chairman mentioned that Senator Murray's bill has a similar funding mechanism that I criticized in his bill. That does not mean I am for that part of Ms. Murray's bill.

I would just clarify that your bill does not include that funding mechanism at this moment, right?

Mr. BISHOP. No, it does not.

Mr. FILNER. All right. So we can fully support your bill.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Any questions from any Members?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Bishop, thank you very much for being here today.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you very much and I appreciate the consideration of the Committee.

I think it is a good bill and I hope that we will do the right thing for our veterans as this Committee has always done over the years. And I thank you for your service.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Our second witness, we will ask him to come forward. Many of you may remember that he is a former Member of this Committee and Chairman of the Benefits Subcommittee, the Honorable Jack Quinn who formerly represented that tropical haven known as Buffalo, New York. Congressman Quinn is now President of Erie Community College demonstrating once again there is life after Congress.

Welcome back to the Hill. Welcome to this Committee. And you are recognized for the customary 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JACK QUINN, PRESIDENT, ERIE COMMUNITY COLLEGE, WILLIAMSVILLE, NY (FORMER MEMBER OF CONGRESS)**

Mr. QUINN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, boy, is there ever life after Congress, Mr. Chairman.

Let me begin by stating that I have a prepared statement that will be part of the record today and I will limit my remarks to just 5 minutes verbally with you.

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Filner, I never thought I would talk about the good old days, but I am able to now and I see this room and my office just down a door or two in Cannon. Bob was my Ranking Member when I chaired.

And, Bob, I officially want to thank you for those years and your work on behalf of veterans.

Mr. Stearns, a lot of hours here and Mr. Michaud, the new folks I do not know, but I want to officially from the world of education

talk with you for a few minutes today about the bill that is for discussion.

And rather than the other folks who will testify here this morning, it looks like I am the only one that can talk about the education side of this.

Mr. Miller and Mr. Filner, that is what I would like to do. You all will figure out how it is paid for and what ends up getting passed. I am out of that business for now. I wish you luck and tell you we need the help. But I would like to spend a few minutes just talking about the education side of this, if I may.

And as President of Erie Community College in Buffalo, New York, we are about, just to give you a snapshot for the Members, we are about 20,000 students at our college on three separate campuses, downtown Buffalo, the suburbs north of Williamsville and south in Orchard Park in Hamburg, represented, by the way, by three able Members of Congress for our college-wide system.

And hearing the number this morning of a million veterans who are unemployed is enough to have all of us sit up and pay attention.

What I wanted to briefly say is that all schools face, as we look at our veteran students, the transition from wearing a uniform under the most difficult circumstances to the relatively unstructured civilian student life.

I understand that Assistant Secretary Jefferson has a project underway to revise the Transition Assistance Program. Hope he considers the concept that will help a veteran determine whether he or she is ready for college and choose the right school.

I also welcome the bill's Reauthorizations of Licensing and Credentialing Program.

And one of the things I worry about as the President of our college in Buffalo at Erie Community and the State University of New York (SUNY) system in New York is to provide the right education and training opportunities to meet these needs of local employers by making it clearer what a veteran needs to meet in these local licensing requirements. We can structure the program the way they are the most needed.

And, Mr. Chairman, I do want to point out the questions already talked about, the skills that are transferable with our veterans and would point out something you already know, that the United States Military is the largest training operation in the world.

And I would submit to you now in the education field, particularly at a community college, almost all of what we train our veterans for are transferrable. Unlike a 4-year institution, at a community college, you already know, whether it is Erie Community College in Buffalo or anywhere across the country, our work many times deals with training and on-the-job readiness. And I would submit to the Committee, the full Committee that our veterans are ready to do just that.

Recent numbers show that community colleges remain a top choice for veterans using their GI Bill education benefits. When we go back and look at numbers in 2008 and 2009, 40 percent of veteran students used their education benefits at a community college. Almost half of our veterans are at community colleges.

That is important for us as the educators and it is important for all of you as you put the local laws in place.

Two of the things that always crop up when you talk about community colleges as I have learned across the country is the low cost of the program and the convenience that they offer as driving forces in the decisions that veterans make, low cost at the community level and the convenience.

Veterans will also cite the fact that community colleges offer hands-on relevant education and training programs that build on their skills. We are constantly working at our level, Mr. Chairman, with employers to ensure that the programs, they offer students the skills they need for high-demand occupations in their areas.

Community colleges are also extremely nimble in their ability to quickly create and modify education and training opportunities to stay abreast of those skills.

And if I may just divert from my written testimony for a minute, Mr. Chairman, to share a quick story to give you a glimpse, the full Committee of the kinds of training and the flexibility community colleges are able to afford.

There is a utility company up in Buffalo called National Grid. They surveyed their workers and found out that the, for want of a better word, Mr. Chairman, the pole climbers, the folks who get up in bad weather and have to do the things that need to be done were going to be retiring very, very soon.

They came to us to do a skills program in the classroom for these folks and they came out and put up a dozen poles on our property, put these men and women that were trained for it, 20 to a class, up on a pole, facilitated the kind of weather that you might see in the northeast and Upstate New York on rainy, windy days when the power goes out.

Mr. Chairman, we now run 23 students a year through that program. They are certified through the utility company and they get out and they are making \$22.50 an hour for starters. Those become vibrant citizens in our economy in Upstate New York and western New York State. And they are helping the company and they are helping themselves.

As I checked our last group of 22, seven were veterans, Mr. Chairman. We got them in the school cheap. They are trained and they are on the job.

And I would submit to you this morning that as you look at the educational opportunities for a lot of the bills that come through the Committee, to keep our community college sector in mind. We can expand on the training our vets have received. We can match it in most cases and we are able to put men and women from the veteran services and from the veterans' ranks on the job and working.

Mr. Chairman, as I mentioned, my remarks are in the record fully. And I stand ready to assist the Committee in any way I can and answer any questions you may have this morning. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Quinn appears on p. 22.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you so much for your testimony.

It is great that you used that one scenario with the linemen because one of the things that we would like to focus on and you talked about community colleges having the ability to be nimble

and transform their training programs quickly. We have so many of the returning veterans today that are trained for certain jobs that could quickly transfer into the private sector but because of certification requirements but for the different States, and we hope to be dealing with the Governors Association and others to help.

Do you see a way that the community college system could help in shortening the training? Obviously the training for a medic, a combat medic—

Mr. QUINN. Uh-huh.

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. I would say they work under pressure. They know their job, but do not necessarily need to go through a year's worth of education to become an EMT (emergency medical technician).

So can the community colleges adapt and is that a good theory to be working upon?

Mr. QUINN. Mr. Chairman, the answer is unequivocally yes, that they can. And I will give you another quick example to the medic.

When I used to fly back and forth to Buffalo for the 12 years I was here, I met some mechanics at U.S. Airways and they were vets. And this mechanic came to me and said, you know, Mr. Quinn, I could take that plane apart and put it back together on the tarmac out there and it took me 2 years to get certified and licensed through U.S. Air to work on the thing. And that is crazy.

So the short answer is yes, absolutely. I do not speak for our national association, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), but I am involved and close to them. They are located right here in Washington, D.C.

One of the things that we could do is to expand what we do at Erie, our affiliations. Right now at our school, 20,000 students, we have over 400 affiliations and that means we are with on the front end some high schools, on the other end some 4-year institutions. We just signed up with Syracuse University and Cazenovia College in Upstate New York.

We arrange these affiliations, which is nothing more than an MOU, a memorandum of understanding, so that our teachers, our educators take a look at what was trained, the courses that were taken, the training that was taken, and they are able to certify or verify that it is almost the exact same thing we are teaching in classes and in training at the college.

Once that is done, I think the paperwork that needs to follow would be quick. It would not take long at all. The rub is going to be, Mr. Chairman, and we do it often with DoD and others, the rub is going to be that we can certify, we can somehow check off the box that says it is the same kind of training and education.

I can tell you from hands-on experience it is, it is the same old story. We need to get ourselves worked through the paperwork.

The CHAIRMAN. You mentioned 4-year institutions, high schools. What about vocational technical centers?

Mr. QUINN. Absolutely.

The CHAIRMAN. Privates?

Mr. QUINN. Private colleges, sure.

The CHAIRMAN. It is just a matter of assessing and certifying?

Mr. QUINN. It is, Mr. Chairman, and let me point out one other thing to you is we looked nationally and locally for our community

colleges. It is becoming more and more competitive for students and we are recruiting students. The beauty for us at the 2-year schools is if they choose, they can go on to a 4-year school. All those courses, all those credits are completely transferable.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Filner.

Mr. FILNER. I just want to thank Mr. Quinn for being here. When you are kids together, it is hard to call someone Mr. President.

Mr. QUINN. I have been called worse.

Mr. FILNER. I am glad to see that you finally got an honest job. I think what you do in the community college is exactly the answer to many of the problems facing our veterans.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you.

Mr. FILNER. I was critical of Mr. Miller's bill on one level, but certainly the retraining part is critical and we have to figure out ways to do this more efficiently, as you point out.

Mr. QUINN. Sure.

Mr. FILNER. I hope you will help us with the AACCC. Is that—

Mr. QUINN. Exactly.

Mr. FILNER. It has usually been the State. We worked on this when you were in Congress. The State certification agencies and the bureaucracies there protect the licenses so it is hard to break through the bureaucracy. We have to figure out a way to do that.

I appreciate that you are still working on veterans issues and you have not aged a bit. You always looked older than all of us anyway.

Mr. QUINN. I think I mean to say thank you. I am not certain, Mr. Filner.

Mr. FILNER. But thanks for what you are doing—

Mr. QUINN. Thank you.

Mr. FILNER [continuing]. And helping us.

Mr. QUINN. And if I may, Bob, just to say officially on the record I stand ready to assist with our association and any others that could be of help to the full Committee as you work on these issues.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Any other Members have questions for Mr. Quinn?

Mr. Michaud.

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

It is good to see you again—

Mr. QUINN. Thank you.

Mr. MICHAUD [continuing]. Mr. Quinn. Just a couple of quick questions. You talked about the student population. How many veterans are currently attending?

Mr. QUINN. Our school, I will give you a raw number, we can figure the percentages later, right now we have about 20,000 students. That is an unduplicated head count. That is everybody who is doing training and degree and certificate programs.

We hope to be in September at our school at almost 1,000 vets. So of the percentage that is out there, it is not high enough. But as we look at other schools in our area, in the western New York State area, we sort of lead the league with that because I have

hired a director of veterans' affairs. I have a club at each of my three campuses, a place for the vets to meet, those kinds of things.

But it is growing and as the colleges, I believe, become more competitive for students, I think you are going to see a lot of other places engage themselves in the marketing to veterans and it is about time. So I would say that number, 1,000 out of 20,000, not enough. But when the word gets out, I think those numbers will go up.

Mr. MICHAUD. And how flexible is the college? For instance, if you have soldiers coming back from Iraq or Afghanistan, it might not be at the same time—

Mr. QUINN. Right.

Mr. MICHAUD [continuing]. That the school enrollment begins. How flexible is the college as far as trying to meet the needs of the veterans to meet their schedule as well?

Mr. QUINN. Certainly. And I am prejudiced because I work at one. But I would say that is probably a hallmark of all community colleges is that flexibility.

For example, like we have what we call our Pathways Program. We do not have any dropouts at our college. We have stop-outs. If a veteran or any student comes back and cannot get the work the first month or 2—and, frankly, Members, that happens with some vets. They are not ready to go to school when they come back. They will start it up. They will get going at it, but then they find out that for a lot of reasons, they are not able to continue.

We do not call any of those folks dropouts. They are stop-outs. We bring them back. Our Pathways Program is an ungraded system that keeps the students, all students, but veterans in particular in the classroom so we do not lose them, so they come back. No penalty and no cost.

And when they are ready to get going to the second phase at our college, and most all the community colleges do it, and we know that in the best interest of the students and us, it is better to have them involved in the college in one way or another.

So I am sold on this whole community college sector like it is just the way to go. It is flexible enough. Four years. God bless them. They have a mission as well and it is important. But for now I just thought when I saw the topic today it is a perfect match.

Mr. MICHAUD. And what are some of the problems that you are hearing from the veterans when they come back as far as, you know, do they have childcare at the college for those that might have children? What are some of the problems that they are talking about?

Mr. QUINN. Of course veterans present extra special problems, but daycare is one because we deal with nontraditional students. I had three students last May graduate in their eighties from our college. We run a nighttime daycare at our school, for example, for our moms.

Mr. FILNER. Do they need daycare?

Mr. QUINN. Pardon me?

Mr. FILNER. Do they need daycare?

Mr. QUINN. No, they did not, but their children did.

So they present lots of problems. Some of them are financial.

What I found out was after dealing with the bureaucracy in the Army, the Navy, or the Air Force and Coast Guard, Marines, they came back to another educational bureaucracy. When it came time to sign up, they talk to the admissions people, to the bursar, the financial aid. We have somebody that handles Montgomery GI at our school.

And it is confusing. I mean, sometimes on purpose it is confusing if you are part of the government. And so what we have tried to do is streamline all of that. I have a one-stop phone call at our place where you get the bursar, admissions, financial aid, and a counselor all at the same time.

So I guess the specific answer, besides all of some emotional problems, Bob mentioned homelessness. Back at our school, we are hooked in with the VA Hospital. We are hooked in with the transitional housing assistance that we worked on some years ago so that the whole package is deliverable because veterans come back and present extra special problems.

And normally we would not offer housing assistance necessarily to a student who is applying at our school. We have cobbled it all together in one spot at the Veterans Club.

Mr. MICHAUD. So about 20 seconds left. What major industry are they being retrained for? Is there any specific sector?

Mr. QUINN. We are not seeing one that jumps out at us, but I am surprised to see a number getting into nursing that were not necessarily medical in the service. But as they come back, because that is a sector, at least in our economy in Upstate New York, where there is a lot of hiring going on, so we are finding a transfer to the medical field.

And then a lot of our trades, our building trades that we do and our construction and green construction fields are attractive to a lot of folks because the jobs seem to be available.

Mr. MICHAUD. Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you.

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

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Brown.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you.

Mr. QUINN. Hello.

Ms. BROWN. Hi.

Mr. QUINN. How are you, Corrine?

Ms. BROWN. Thank you for your presentation.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you.

Ms. BROWN. My real job in life was I worked 16 years at Florida Community College in Jacksonville.

Mr. QUINN. Yes.

Ms. BROWN. So I am a community college lover.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you.

Ms. BROWN. I do have a couple of questions. I am a community college lover. I wanted that to be on the record. But I guess my question is, the graduation rate is about 12 percent—

Mr. QUINN. Uh-huh.

Ms. BROWN [continuing]. Which is not that high. But I understand that education is life-long learning and like you said, they move in and out. But what kind of employment placement, what



kind of success do you have in that area because this is a major problem?

Mr. QUINN. Sure.

Ms. BROWN. I mean, when we have so many veterans returning, they cannot get jobs. I mean, it is just amazing. People who are out defending our country and when they come back, their job is no longer there. And I am so very happy that we have the educational opportunities for them to train and retrain, but what kind of success do we have?

Mr. QUINN. Not good enough, frankly. I was lucky enough to be invited to President Obama's summit on community colleges about 4 or 5 months ago and participated. The President talks about those graduation rates not being high enough and what we are going to do to address those.

All the community colleges across the country are involved in that. But what I would like to point out in answer specifically to your question is I take a little bit of umbrage with those graduation numbers all the time. Before you came in, I talked a little bit about a pole climbing program we have at our college. It sounds silly, but what it does is it puts people to work at good-paying jobs with health benefits and a small retirement, by the way.

So I guess, Corrine, I would not get ourselves as focused on the graduation rates as much as job placement. And in some of these jobs that I am talking about, there is no need for a 4-year education. There is in some cases not even a 2-year associate's degree. Oftentimes it is training. It is the proper training and the licensing and the certificate that is necessary.

And so we have at our place and in the SUNY system in New York across our 30 community colleges, we have put new emphasis on just that, job training and job placement.

Ms. BROWN. Right. I think that is what I was saying because when you say graduation—

Mr. QUINN. Right.

Ms. BROWN [continuing]. That is saying that we are looking for a 2-year degree—

Mr. QUINN. Uh-huh.

Ms. BROWN [continuing]. Or a 4-year degree.

Mr. QUINN. Uh-huh.

Ms. BROWN. But job placement, you could train, let's say you are a nurse—

Mr. QUINN. Yes.

Ms. BROWN [continuing]. Or you are a technician and you have been placed in a job, so the most important thing is, and also the support that we give those students while they are in school—

Mr. QUINN. Of course.

Ms. BROWN [continuing]. You know, what kind of support, the counseling, the, you know, the assistance—

Mr. QUINN. Uh-huh.

Ms. BROWN [continuing]. The childcare, the transportation, all of those things are important.

Mr. QUINN. Correct. And the only other thing I would add, if I may, is one other thing you will find at the community college ranks across the country and New York State is a huge emphasis on internship opportunities. We are finding out that when we—

Ms. BROWN. Internships, co-ops, all of that.

Mr. QUINN. Exactly. When we can intern our vets with very possibly another veteran who owns some businesses or a workforce site in our locality geographically that it is a more instant match for us. So we work pretty closely with the businesses.

Ms. BROWN. Well, I think one of the weaknesses that I think we have over all this is that we probably need to help more veterans go into businesses so that they can hire veterans. And so I hope that is one of the components of your—

Mr. QUINN. Yes.

Ms. BROWN [continuing]. Institution. And I guess the last thing, what we are doing is that we are taking funds from one area for veterans' programs to put it in another. I guess we are making decisions about age groups or who will get the services.

How do you feel about that?

Mr. QUINN. Now that I view this Committee from this angle—

Ms. BROWN. Yes, that is what we are talking about.

Mr. QUINN [continuing]. I like it better, by the way, and I would suggest that we find ways to include more money, that just to take from Peter to give to Paul and move around, while that is useful in an exercise, that is important because you get a chance to check on the programs, update them, make sure they are working.

One of the things we are hearing with these numbers that the Chairman mentioned when I first walked in this morning, a million veterans unemployed is something that Member Bishop talked about. Let's get Labor, Defense, VA all together so that all, whatever amount of money we are going to have is used the right way.

Ms. BROWN. Well, in closing, you know, I look at it like my grandmother's sweet potato pie. We have made sure that we have funded veterans' programs.

Mr. QUINN. Uh-huh.

Ms. BROWN. And we are doing big business, but we are not doing business with veterans. And that is still in my opinion one of the weaknesses as we move forward—

Mr. QUINN. Sure.

Ms. BROWN [continuing]. Because if I am a veteran, I am a disabled veteran and I have a business, then I am going to hire other veterans.

Mr. QUINN. Right.

Ms. BROWN. So we need to put more emphasis and focus on that area.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you.

Ms. BROWN. But thank you very much.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you.

Ms. BROWN. And it has been a pleasure—

Mr. QUINN. Thanks.

Ms. BROWN [continuing]. Working with you in the past and look forward to—

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Stearns.

Mr. STEARNS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will just be brief.

Jack, welcome back. It is good to see you. Are you playing any basketball or—

Mr. QUINN. Not as much.

Mr. STEARNS. What is the unemployment rate in Buffalo?

Mr. QUINN. Buffalo right now we are hovering a trifle above 9 percent. It is about 8.7, 8.76, I think?

Mr. STEARNS. Okay. The fact that the economy is weak across the Nation, and perhaps Upstate New York is no exception, has that impacted the funding for the community college from the State, which creates sort of extra problems for you?

Mr. QUINN. Sure. The way that we are funded in New York State is that it is the 3 percent that funds the college. A third comes from the local companies sponsoring us, in my case Erie, a third comes from the State through SUNY, and a third is tuition.

We all know the situation in the States with the economy. We have had a cut the last 2 years and had to raise tuition \$300 a year last year.

Mr. STEARNS. Now, does that kind of economic stress on your college, does that affect the services that you can provide? For example, are you able to provide, I think you mentioned in your opening statement, counseling service for these veterans when they come in?

Mr. QUINN. Yes.

Mr. STEARNS. Because I think one of the key areas is that program you talked about, your Stop-outs instead of dropouts is very good and tries to improve in some way to say to the veterans there is a pathway for you here, do not be discouraged.

But is the fact that some of the veterans need counseling, is that a part of the community college and how is that being affected with this economy?

Mr. QUINN. Well, I want to be clear, Cliff, too, that when we are stressed and stretched with funding problems, it affects all of our students, not just veterans.

Mr. STEARNS. Okay.

Mr. QUINN. The rub here, of course, as we have said this morning and for many years here, our veterans need some special attention.

Mr. STEARNS. Right.

Mr. QUINN. And sometimes when the funding is cut, it is disproportionately affected for these veterans. And I have to say yes. But I do want to be clear when we talk about funding from our situation, States and the local county, that hurts all of our students.

The big thing we are seeing, just again on an education note, Mr. Chairman, having to rely on adjunct professors more and more instead of full-time professors. And at the end of the day, that affects your counseling, that affects the advice that students get for courses, for financial aid, all of it.

So we are stressed and we do not make a distinction except I know what you are talking about when you say it is veterans.

Mr. STEARNS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you, Cliff.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Walz.

Mr. WALZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, for holding this hearing.

And, Mr. Quinn, thank you for your service on both sides. You are in a very unique position.

And I, like my colleague, Ms. Brown, am an unabashed supporter of community colleges. I think it is a fabulous transition. And, of

course, this group of folks is the best trained and just some of our best folks and we should be getting them in. And so I am concerned about this too.

We work hard on both sides making sure that DoD, that we are preparing folks to come out. And I noticed in your written testimony you talk about the TAP Program, something we struggled with here.

And I am kind of interested in this because you are making the observation that maybe we should make this mandatory like the Marine Corps. And I was looking at that.

Is that because these guys that are Marines, and being an Army veteran, I find it hard to believe that there is a higher quality of person coming out of there, but is the Marine Corps doing a better job of preparing their folks because of that program in your opinion?

Mr. QUINN. I do not know a better job, but I would have to say to you when they make it mandatory, it is more complete. I am not mincing words because we have some great Army vets. In fact, my testimony includes two verbatims, two sort of life stories, one Army, one Navy.

Mr. WALZ. Right.

Mr. QUINN. So I would not say necessarily better. But it is like high school. When you force everybody to take driver's ed, they are hopefully going to be better drivers. In this case—

Mr. WALZ. The one we struggle with, though, is because you understand you are getting into that issue of the commander's prerogative to be able—

Mr. QUINN. Yes.

Mr. WALZ [continuing]. To lead and to be able to demand this. But our take is, and I have seen this as being on that side of things and having out-processing lectures that were voluntary or mandatory—

Mr. QUINN. Uh-huh.

Mr. WALZ [continuing]. If it is time to go home, I know where they are going. So I very much appreciate that. I just wanted to kind of get and see. That is something we are struggling and looking with.

But, again, thanks for the work you are doing.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you.

Mr. WALZ. Fabulous.

Mr. QUINN. Appreciate the comment too.

Mr. WALZ. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Donnelly, do you have a question?

Mr. DONNELLY. No, I do not.

The CHAIRMAN. Any other questions?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Quinn, thank you so much. It has been a pleasure to visit with you.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you.

One disclaimer. I want to be careful that I do not speak for AACC. I hope I did not get them in any trouble here this morning.

The CHAIRMAN. You said that. We understand.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. We will be making contact with them.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

And Mr. Filner said he will handle the trouble part for you.

Members, we have 18 votes, 16 amendments, a motion to recommit, a final passage. Here is what I suggest we do.

We have testimony from everybody for my bill that is before us today and the other bills, excuse me, all three bills. So I suggest in view of the fact that it may be an hour and a half or 2 hours before we are able to return that we take all the testimony into the record, hopefully not offend anybody who is here today to testify, and call our business done for the day.

Does anybody have an objection?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. And if there are any questions for the record that need to be added, we will be happy to enter those, statements, letters of support, questions for the record.

No objections. Done. This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:46 a.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

## A P P E N D I X

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### **Prepared Statement of Hon. Jeff Miller, Chairman, Full Committee on Veterans' Affairs**

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. This hearing will come to order.

Let me get right to the heart of what this hearing is about. Six hundred thousand veterans were added to the unemployment rolls in June. That brought the total number of America's out-of-work veterans to over 1 million—a staggering figure. It is that fact alone that brings us here today to accomplish one goal. Namely, to put America's veterans back to work.

Having a job provides a sense of self-worth and accomplishment. It is our workforce that makes America strong. It makes us exceptional, and it also averts many of the perils that befall our societies, such as homelessness. It is therefore incumbent upon us all to find solutions and act.

Otherwise reaching goals such as eliminating homelessness among veterans will be next to impossible if we don't reduce unemployment at the same time. There is no better preventive measure than a good-paying job.

We have already set in place the building blocks for many of today's veterans. Through the Post-9/11 GI Bill, eligible veterans are getting college degrees, enrolling in on-the-job training programs, and training in specialized fields such as aviation in higher numbers than ever before. Nevertheless, the breadth of the joblessness problem in today's economy leads me to the conclusion that additional steps are needed.

To that end, I believe we must advance proposals which embrace certain fundamental objectives.

First, we must re-evaluate programs that are meant to acquaint our veterans with the civilian workforce. We owe it to these men and women, and every taxpayer, to ensure that these programs are effective and that measures are in place to gauge their viability. If they do not work, we must find programs that will.

Second, we must give unemployed veterans of past wars temporary access to education programs to acquire skills, especially in fields with a shortage of workers, such as technology and health care. Two-thirds of our unemployed veterans are between the ages of 35 and 64, and many face skills and training deficits.

Veterans of past conflicts are more likely to face significant financial obligations such as mortgages and college tuition for their children. Imagine looking forward to retirement, only to have to begin again.

Third, we must enforce the job protections in place for veterans, especially those who serve in the National Guard and Reserve—14 percent of whom are currently unemployed.

Fourth, we must work with the States to eliminate the regulations that hinder job growth. Our veterans have skills that are of value in the private sector and are being wasted due to unduly burdensome laws and regulations across the States.

It is time for the States to recognize the quality of military training and the power of reciprocity.

We cannot do this in a vacuum, however. We have an obligation to these men and women, and to all Americans, to decrease our debt, lower taxes that impede growth, and assure employers, especially the small businesses that are the engine of our economy and that produce 40 percent of new jobs, that help and leadership is on the way.

The Veterans Opportunity to Work Act (the VOW Act), which I have introduced, is my attempt at a comprehensive solution. It embraces all of the objectives I have just outlined. The VOW Act critically evaluates existing programs to ensure they are effective.

It focuses retraining assistance for veterans of past conflicts, who have fewer options available to them.

It strengthens re-employment rights to Guard and Reserve members. And it seeks to eliminate licensing and credentialing barriers preventing veterans from immediately applying skills learned in the military to a civilian job here at home.

Furthermore, recognizing that America's small businesses, many of which are veteran-owned, are suffering more today than other companies, I have also introduced legislation that would provide small businesses with a tax credit toward the purchase of capital equipment for every unemployed veteran they hire.

Again, we must think outside the box to solve this problem, and H.R. 2433, the VOW Act, is my starting point.

We have two other bills on the agenda that will round out our discussion this morning. First is H.R. 1941, introduced by our colleague from Georgia and former Member of this Committee, Sanford Bishop, and then we have H.R. 169 introduced by Congressman Stearns.

So, without further delay, let's get to work.

I now recognize the distinguished Ranking Member, Mr. Filner for any opening remarks he may have.

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#### Prepared Statement of Hon. Bob Filner, Ranking Democratic Member, Full Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Thank you, Chairman Miller.

All too often we read about the results of veterans who come home—often with the invisible wounds of war—who can't find the dignity and security that work provides. We read about it in skyrocketing suicide statistics, problems at home, substance abuse, and even in rising homelessness among our veterans.

Today we are here to review H.R. 169, H.R. 1941, and H.R. 2433. Each bill seeks to address the needs of our veterans. H.R. 169 will require VA to highlight the VETSUCCESS site on its main internet page. I support making the VA Web site as user friendly as possible.

I appreciate the Chairman's efforts to make meaningful change in the lives of our veterans and their families with this legislation and his own bill—H.R. 2433—The Veterans Opportunity to Work Act of 2011.

But, I also think we need to be clear about what H.R. 2433 **IS** and what it **IS NOT**. This bill **IS NOT** a jobs bill where veterans can go get a job—instead it is a retraining bill. This bill does very little to create jobs for veterans, regardless of how my Republican colleagues may portray it. This bill **IS** about completely contracting out the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). While I fully support widening the opportunities for our veterans by providing them additional skills, I also believe that we need to be realistic about our discussion and how we frame this bill.

Unemployment among veterans, and all of our citizens, is a national tragedy. A recent article in the *Los Angeles Times* dated July 11, 2011, stated that "Unemployment among recently returned veterans, already in double digits, is poised to get worse as more soldiers return from Iraq and Afghanistan." According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, unemployment among Gulf War-era II veterans aged 18–24 was nearly 21 percent in 2010.

In order to pay for this legislation, this bill would extend higher loan fees on our veterans that utilize the VA Home Loan Guarantee Program and then use those monies to pay for the monthly stipend and retraining costs created by this bill.

By not allowing the higher loan fee rates to expire to much lower rates and by extending the higher rates for 10 years we are effectively taxing a specific group of veterans for using a benefit. The House Majority Leader, Mr. Cantor of Virginia, said on July 11, 2011, that "We don't believe you ought to be raising taxes right now in this recession, in this economy [.]"

If this is the belief of our colleagues, then we must be consistent in how we apply these beliefs. If allowing the Bush tax cuts to expire was characterized as a tax increase, then not allowing these higher rates to expire can also be characterized as a tax increase. We need to be crystal clear as to what we are doing, and say in plain language that we are raising taxes on veterans.

I want to be transparent about this "shell game" and how we are paying for it, so we are not back here later in this session or in following sessions talking about how we had some "unintended consequences" and we then have to find some way to pay for the pay-for.

Simply put, in order to pay for this bill, we will charge our veterans more for the use of their benefit in one program so we can pay for other veterans and their benefits in another program.

In this economy where our national housing market is in the tank, where we, on this Committee, have worked so very hard to protect our veterans from home foreclosures, we must carefully weigh our actions and be sure that the actions we take are not going to make it more difficult for a veteran to purchase or keep a home.

But, we also consider today a viable alternative. A bill that will require broad job skill training for all servicemembers returning home.

H.R. 1941, a bill introduced by Mr. Bishop of Georgia which I have cosponsored, is the companion bill to Senator Murray's S. 951. This comprehensive bill requires servicemembers to learn how to translate the skills they learned in the military into the working world. It will also ensure that more veterans have jobs waiting for them when they leave the military by streamlining the path to private and Federal employment.

This bill requires the Department of Labor to take a hard look at what military skills and training are translatable into the civilian sector, and work to make it simpler for our veterans to get the licenses and certification they need.

I fully support and endorse H.R. 1941. The companion to this bill passed the Senate Committee unanimously and my hope is that we will have the same result here in the House. I believe, as does Chairwoman Murray, that this bill is a *huge step forward in re-thinking the way we treat our men and women in uniform after they leave the military.*

Finally, I have questions regarding all of the bills, as I am sure many of my colleagues do. First, are these the policies we want to pursue? What impact will extending these fees have on the housing market and the ability of our veterans to utilize the VA home loan program? Why didn't these bills follow the normal course of going to the Subcommittee of jurisdiction and how much do they cost—where are the CBO cost estimates?

I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle as we address these bills and other legislation that may assist our veterans in finding employment when their service is over.

Thank you, and I yield back.

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### Prepared Statement of Hon. Cliff Stearns

Thank you Chairman Miller for having this hearing today.

Unemployment is at a record high today and unemployment in our veteran community is higher than at any time that I can remember.

My bill, H.R. 169, would require that the Department of Veterans Affairs have a drop-down menu titled "Veterans Employment" on its homepage. This drop menu would have links to VetSuccess, USA Jobs, Job Central and other appropriate employment Web sites. It would also require the Secretary of VA to advertise and promote the VetSuccess Web site and require direct outreach to Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) veterans.

This bill comes out of discussions I had with the VA over the past couple of years and from constituents in my district returning from their service to our country. While the VA has addressed some of my concerns, they continue to miss the underlying reason for my bill: customer service and usability. The VA should have a clear link that will take veterans to a listing of jobs based on zip code.

Today, if you are a veteran and are looking for a job whether in the private sector or within the government, it can be a daunting task. For example, when you go to the VA homepage under quick links is "Federal Jobs for Veterans." After clicking on the link, you are taken to more barricades. This link will take you to "FedsHireVets" (feds hire vets), which offers useful tips, but you still have to go through one more step to access government jobs within your area.

To find private sector jobs, you have to click on the Veteran Service dropdown menu and navigate multiple links on the VA homepage. There is no simple link for Veteran Employment or Veteran Jobs. Instead you need to know that the VetSuccess program is what you're looking for. If you're unfamiliar with veteran programs, you may not know that VetSuccess is the web portal for jobs. The title isn't clear. VetSuccess might be the link for successful navigation of the VA bureaucracy. The title should clearly and simply mention jobs or employment.

Then, once you get to the VetSuccess webpage you must register to look up jobs. You can't just type in your zip code and get a list of jobs in your local area. My office had to fill out an excessively long form, and then monitor our spam filter to catch the verification e-mail, click the e-mail to prove we're human and then we waited for a follow up e-mail to get our password to finally access the VetSuccess job portal.



This is too high a hurdle for something so simple as a job listing for veterans. You should be able to go to this site, type your zip code and get the job listings. When I go to Monster.com, I don't need to register to do a quick lookup for the jobs listed within a specified proximity of my home in Ocala. VetSuccess needs to have similar accessibility like Monster: immediate access to job listings by zip code without hiding behind vague titles in a crowded drop menu with excessive registration requirements.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, unemployment for all veterans was 8.2 percent. The purpose of my bill is to get the VA thinking about how they should properly address the needs of Veterans, provide good customer service and lower the barriers to information. This type of employment information should be easily accessible in plain language on the VA's homepage and the VetSuccess program should provide these job listings without making veterans jump through more hoops. Our veterans have sacrificed so much for our safety and liberties. I want to ensure our veterans a smooth transition into our workforce after their service. Again, I appreciate Chairman Miller having this hearing today and I look forward to what we can accomplish and learn from the testimonies of our witnesses.

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#### **Prepared Statement of Hon. Corrine Brown**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Filner, for calling this legislative hearing today. It is important to discuss the legislation that is before this Committee.

The bills before us today are H.R.169, by my neighbor from Florida, Mr. Stearns. This would emphasize veterans' employment on the VA Web site. Considering the amount of information available on so many issues, it is important to include this information where our veterans can access it best.

H.R. 1941, the Hiring Heroes Act of 2011 is introduced by my good friend Sanford Bishop. Thank you, Mr. Bishop, for explaining your legislation to the Committee. This legislation would provide rehabilitation and vocational benefits to severely wounded members of the armed forces. I am pleased to be cosponsor of the legislation and look forward to voting for this bill in the full house.

The third bill is where I have some concerns. I commend the Chairman for bringing a bill to allow veterans to receive retraining assistance. However, with unemployment of veterans at an all time high, and those coming back from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan not having jobs, I don't understand the reasoning of limiting the age of eligibility to those between 35 and 60.

I also don't understand the funding mechanism for the program. In this time of budget tightening, and a refusal to discuss tax increases for any issue, this bill taxes veterans with higher interest rates to pay for more government programs. This legislation doubles the interest rates veterans pay for housing loans. Yes the rates have not gone into effect yet, but they are law right now, and I am sure in these tough economic times our veterans can use the estimated \$1.6 billion dollars this change in law will cost them.

The Veterans Home Loan Program is one of the homeowner programs that works in this country. The foreclosure rate is much lower than anything in the private sector and I don't think changing this program will do anyone any good.

I don't need an explanation of this provision, Mr. Chairman. I can recognize hypocrisy when I see it. You are trying to balance the budget on the backs of our veterans.

I cannot support this legislation as it is currently written. I hope that by the time we mark up this bill in Subcommittee and then full Committee, the provision is fixed.

Thank you and I yield back the balance of my time.

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#### **Prepared Statement of Russ Carnahan**

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Filner, thank you for hosting this legislative hearing to discuss the important issue of putting America's veterans back to work.

In this tough economy, jobs are hard to come by, particularly for many of our veterans. Our young returning combat soldiers, and those severely injured during military service, have the hardest time securing employment. We are also seeing difficulty in older vets obtaining employment as well.

It is vitally important to ensure that our veterans are able to secure and maintain employment after returning to civilian life. Not only does employment offer salary

and benefits, employment also provides an important sense of purpose and aides in the transition from military to civilian life. We in Congress must work with relevant stakeholders to guarantee that opportunities exist for our veterans to obtain gainful and meaningful employment.

I want to thank our witnesses for being here today, and have a few questions for them.

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**Prepared Statement of Hon. Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.,  
a Representative in Congress from the State of Georgia**

I would like to thank Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Filner, and the rest of the House Veterans Affairs Committee for inviting me to testify today on behalf of the Hiring Heroes Act of 2011.

As you are aware, the current economic environment has left millions of Americans out of work and has made it exceptionally difficult for them to find jobs. This problem is particularly acute in our Nation's veterans community.

Recent data has shown that veterans, especially those who have served in Iraq or Afghanistan, face an unemployment rate of over 27 percent after leaving the service. This situation is simply unacceptable and represents a failure of us here in Congress to help our Nation's veterans. As the war in Iraq comes to an end and we begin to draw down our forces in Afghanistan, even more veterans will be looking for work, further compounding this problem.

With this in mind, I thank Senator Murray for taking the lead on this issue and originally introducing the Hiring Heroes Act of 2011 in the U.S. Senate.

It is also for this reason that I am proud to have introduced, with the help of Ranking Member Filner, Chairman Bill Young of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, Ranking Member Norm Dicks of the full Appropriations Committee, and Representative Jerry McNerney, the House companion bill to Senator Murray's legislation. Here in the House, the measure has already garnered 55 cosponsors, representing Republicans and Democrats from both ends of the political spectrum.

I would like to add that this legislation has gained the support of various veterans and servicemember groups including the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Military Officers Association of America, and Military Families United.

The Hiring Heroes Act has already passed favorably out of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. It is my hope that this Committee will follow the Senate's lead and quickly send this measure to the full House for its consideration.

Now let me discuss the details of the legislation:

- Along with modernizing Federal hiring practices, this bill makes participation in the Transition Assistance Program mandatory for separating servicemembers.
- It requires that each servicemember receive an individualized assessment of jobs for which they may qualify.
- It creates new programs aimed at improving the transition from servicemember to civilian life, including a competitive grant program for nonprofit organizations that provide mentoring services and job training that lead directly to job placements.
- It also aims to break down barriers between the Department of Defense, the Department of Labor, and the Department of Veterans Affairs and makes it easier for servicemembers to smoothly transition to veteran status.

Finally, I want to stress that we have an obligation to help our veterans land on their feet when they come home and help them find good paying jobs to support their families. These are the members of our society that have risked the most for our country. Our current system, although well-intended, simply does not focus enough on our servicemembers transition into civilian life.

Providing more support to our Nation's veterans is simply the right thing to do, and I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and passing the Hiring Heroes Act of 2011.

I thank the Committee for inviting me to testify, and I am happy to respond to any questions.

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**Prepared Statement of Hon. Jack Quinn, President,  
Erie Community College, Williamsville, NY**

Good morning Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Filner, and to each of the Members of the Veterans Affairs Committee.

As you probably know, as a former Member of this Committee I spent 12 years here representing the people around Buffalo, NY and I come before you today as one who shares your passion for America's veterans and to speak on behalf of H.R. 2433, the Veterans Opportunity to Work Act.

I am now the President of Erie Community College in Buffalo, NY and I see, on a daily basis, the value of education and training. Therefore, I believe that preparing veterans to work in tomorrow's job market may be the most important thing this Committee could do for those who defend us.

To that end, I am delighted that Chairman Miller has chosen to introduce a bill whose centerpiece is to re-skill the largest cohort—632,000—of our 1 million unemployed veterans—those who are between the ages of 35 and 60.

The Veterans Opportunity to Work Act would provide up to 12 months of Montgomery GI Bill benefits, currently about \$1,426 per month, to enroll in full time training or education leading to employment in a high-demand field as determined by the Secretary of Labor.

To ensure these funds are being well-spent, the bill also requires participants to certify their attendance on a monthly basis, just as it has been done for as long as I have been around the Montgomery GI Bill.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to briefly mention a challenge that all schools face with some of our veteran students and that is the transition from wearing a uniform, often under the most difficult circumstances, to the relatively unstructured civilian student life. I understand that Assistant Secretary Jefferson has a project underway to revise the Transition Assistance Program and I hope he considers content that will help a veteran determine whether he or she is ready for college, and choose the right school. I also note that the bill would make TAP mandatory. I remember from my time on the Committee, that too many servicemembers were not attending TAP. I would hope the other services would join the Marine Corps in making TAP mandatory.

I also welcome the bill's reauthorization of a licensing and credentialing program. One of the things I worry about is the ability of Erie Community College to provide the right education and training opportunities to meet the needs of local employers. By making it clearer what a veteran needs to meet local licensing requirements, schools can structure their programs more efficiently.

One more thing about the State employment services—during my time on the Committee, I remember hearing from the Veterans Service Organizations that too often, DVOPS and LVERs were being diverted away from serving veterans to non-veteran work. Therefore, I strongly support the bill's provision that would prohibit full time DVOPS and LVERs from serving non-veterans.

I also see that the bill meets PAYGO requirements and in today's fiscal climate, that too is a good thing. But as an educator, I would like to focus on why Chairman Miller's approach, using community colleges and tech schools, is on target.

As I speak in such strong support for this bill, I cannot reiterate enough how community colleges are a perfect fit for veteran students. Recent numbers show that community colleges remain a top choice for veteran students using their GI Bill educational benefits. In a 2008 article analyzing Department of Veterans Affairs data, the Chronicle of Higher Education found that nearly 40 percent of veteran students used their educational benefits at a community college in FY 2007. A more recent Chronicle article reported that five of the top fifteen institutions serving veteran students using Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits were community colleges. Veterans often mention the low cost of community college programs and the convenience they offer as driving factors in their decision about what institution to attend.

Veterans also often cite the fact that community colleges offer hands-on, relevant education and training programs that build on the skills they learned in the military to help them find good jobs. In many respects, veterans are much like any other worker seeking the skills they need to transition from one job to another. Community colleges constantly work with employers to ensure that the programs they offer give students the skills they need to qualify for high-demand occupations in their area. Community colleges are also extremely nimble in their ability to quickly create or modify educational and training programs to stay abreast of the skills needs of emerging industries.

Community colleges are striving to increase the numbers of students who leave their institutions with postsecondary educational credentials, and to be successful in that effort we must effectively serve veteran students. Numerous studies have stressed the importance of attaining a credential to the student's short and long-term career prospects. H.R. 2433 is right to focus on degree or certificate attainment in a high-demand occupation.

In other respects, however, returning veterans are not like other transitional workers. Many veterans of active duty bring with them special needs that tax the

resources of our institutions as we try to address them. Community colleges have expressed the need for greater support in serving veteran students. The increased complexity of the veterans benefits programs and the unique physical, mental and other challenges faced by veterans of the recent wars are often cited as the reasons for this increased need. The Federal response has featured very modest efforts to meet this need, including the creation and funding of a new Centers of Excellence for Veterans success program in the Higher Education Act and an ongoing TRIO program in this area. Private efforts in this area, including the American Council on Education's "Serving Those Who Serve" initiative, have had some impact as well. Increasing resources for institutions that serve significant numbers of veteran students should continue to be a top priority of the Federal Government.

As you know, today's military requires a high school diploma or a general equivalency diploma to enlist. Veterans, as the community in general, come from a variety of educational backgrounds and therefore require and desire a diverse support system which is unique to the community college environment. At ECC our students have a variety of educational academic programs and support options to choose from. If a student graduated from high school long ago and need to brush up their skills before taking a placement test, the RISE Program (Reading Incoming Students for Excellence) is a workshop which prepares students in math skills, English skills and college success skills. In addition, the Pre-Collegiate Studies Program, a more in depth program 10 week program exists to build a student's skills before they enter a classroom. These programs are typical of the Community College environment. Community Colleges offer developmental courses (foundation courses) to those students whose academic skills are below the proficiency necessary to begin a particular program. Tutoring centers exist to support these efforts, as well as, to provide support during the completion of their academic program.

While community colleges have Veteran Affairs Departments, advisement and counseling centers they also develop relationships with community partners, such as the VA Hospital and Vet Centers to refer veterans for services when appropriate.

One of the most important attributes of a low cost community college education is that a student can re-enter the workforce within 2 years or less by completing a 2 year degree or an even sooner if they complete one of the many certificate programs offered. Many students transfer to 4 year institutions after benefiting from their community college experience.

I would also like to submit for the record two student veteran stories, in their own words. And before I close, I would like to say again that it is my hopes that H.R. 2433 gets the support it needs to become a reality, especially for Veterans Day this year which falls on 11/11/11.

*Tina Terhune*

"My name is Tina Terhune, I am 34 and am originally from Buffalo, NY . Visiting my father in Oregon, he sent me to a semester at college after graduating early from high school at age 17. Upon completion, I was hooked to continue my education. I joined the Navy at 19, completing 4 years active duty and 3 years of Reserves in Buffalo on Porter Ave. I knew I was headed for ECC City Campus. I had a 10 year laid-out plan to start ECC towards my intended degree into forensics. Taking classes at an affordable institution like ECC, my out-of-state and military classes processed into electives easier than I thought. I hit a snag with my Military money, but was encouraged to continue. Faculty guided me towards scholarships and awards available to me for female veterans to scholarships and awards to where I exactly served. I continue to get pointers on monetary help available to me. Another reason I knew I was going to continue with ECC was my mother who studied here in the late 1980's. She brought her two daughters to class, and I paid attention. Now, I'm packing a full time schedule with my club interests. I'm secretary for the vets club at ECC. I play with the physical HyPer Club when schedule permits. I'm also trying to revitalize the Theatre Club that used to exist as that was my major in high school. I'm glad that I didn't think my education stopped after my military money ran out. There were other avenues I was not aware of. I'm glad for the ECC veteran advisors that kept me to steer the Course! I hope to pay it forward with other veteran students who think they cannot continue. I'm living proof and I feel I'm working on a second chance!

*Glenn A. Scott*

I'm a 51-year old Army Veteran who served two terms in the United States Army. During and after the Army I had a long bout with addictions. With alcohol being my drug of choice, I hit several bottoms and attended many rehabs. Upon coming to Buffalo from Martinsburg, West Virginia on January 4, 2008, I drank and roamed

the streets of Buffalo homeless. I sought minimal treatment because I wasn't ready to give up drinking. Then a moment of clarity hit me. I entered my latest rehab on June 18, 2009 and have been sober ever since, with hope and ambitions today. I'm currently enrolled in Erie Community College, and I have completed two semesters earning a 3.33 GPA. My major is Business/Office Management. I'm the Vice President of the Veterans Club in the Student Government Association. I have a list of names of people who have helped me get to where I'm at today—starting with the college's president, countless faculty members, and all the teachers that I've had the privilege to study under. ECC's slogan, "Start Here, go anywhere" really caught my attention. While roaming the streets of Buffalo, I'd see that slogan on the side of metro buses. I'd say to myself that someday I'd like to go there. Because anywhere is better than where I've been, well, that day is here. Today I'm a full time student with many goals and ambitions. It took a 12-step program, a higher power, and ECC to change my life, and for that, I'm forever grateful."

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**Statement of Curtis L. Coy, Deputy Under Secretary for  
Economic Opportunity, Veterans Benefits Administration,  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Good morning, Chairman Miller, Ranking Democratic Member Filner, and Members of the Committee. I am pleased to present the views of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) on three bills that would affect rehabilitation, training, education, and employment programs for Veterans and Servicemembers. I am accompanied today by Mr. John Brizzi, Deputy Assistant General Counsel, Office of the General Counsel.

*H.R. 2433*

H.R. 2433, the "Veterans Opportunity to Work Act of 2011," would make changes in the laws relating to the employment and training of Veterans. We are pleased to provide our views regarding sections 101 and 501 of the bill, but respectfully defer to other departments or entities, including the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of Labor (DoL), and the Government Accountability Office, regarding the bill's remaining provisions.

Section 101(a) would require, during the period beginning on January 1, 2012, and ending on March 31, 2014, the Secretary of Labor, through the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, to provide for monthly payments of retraining assistance to certain eligible Veterans. The number of eligible Veterans who could participate in this program would be limited to 45,000 during fiscal year 2012 and 55,000 during the period beginning on October 1, 2012, and ending on March 31, 2014.

Section 101(b) would provide, generally, that each Veteran participating in the retraining program would be entitled to up to 12 months of retraining assistance, as determined by the Secretary of Labor. Such assistance could only be used by a Veteran to pursue a VA-approved program of education or training on a full-time basis offered by a community college or technical school that would lead to an associate degree or a certificate and is designed to provide training for a high-demand position, as determined by the Secretary of Labor.

Under Section 101(c), each Veteran participating in the retraining program would be responsible to self-certify to VA his or her enrollment in an approved program of education for each month in which he or she participates in the program.

Section 101(d) would provide that the amount of the retraining assistance under the program would be the amount payable under the Montgomery GI Bill-Active Duty.

Section 101(e) would define an eligible Veteran as a Veteran who is at least 35 years of age but not more than 60 years of age; was last discharged from active-duty service in the Armed Forces with an honorable discharge; as of the date of application for assistance, has been unemployed for a period of time determined by the "Secretary" (unspecified, but most likely the Secretary of Labor), with special consideration given to a Veteran who has been unemployed for at least 26 continuous weeks; is not eligible for assistance under chapters 30, 31, 33, or 35 of title 38, United States Code; and applies for the retraining assistance by not later than October 1, 2013.

Subsections (f), (g), (h), and (i) of section 101 would provide, respectively, for:

- (1) a report by the Secretaries of Labor and Veterans Affairs (to be submitted not later than June 1, 2014) that would reflect specified data or information regarding the retraining program's usage by Veterans; (2) entry into an agreement between DoL and VA for the purpose of carrying out the retraining pro-

gram; (3) funding for payments under the retraining program from VA's readjustment benefits account; and (4) the termination of the authority to make payments under section 101 to be effective on March 31, 2014.

While VA supports the intent of providing Veterans with educational retraining assistance, VA has several significant concerns regarding the implementation and administration of this proposed benefit.

It is unclear whether DoL or VA would make the final eligibility determination under the program. As written, we interpret the language to indicate that DoL would accept applications and determine eligibility. However, VA would be required to determine if an individual is eligible for certain VA educational assistance programs prior to issuing payments. This decision could potentially change DoL's initial eligibility determination.

Additionally, it would be very cumbersome for VA to determine that an individual remains ineligible for VA educational assistance while in receipt of the training assistance. This would require VA to review eligibility under multiple educational assistance programs prior to issuing each payment. This is even more complicated since individuals may become eligible or lose eligibility for certain assistance without notice. For example, under the Post-9/11 GI Bill (chapter 33) program, there is a transfer of entitlement provision that allows a Servicemember to transfer entitlement to a dependent. Although VA could determine that a Veteran is not receiving chapter 33 benefits from their Servicemember-spouse at the time of application, the Veteran could subsequently become eligible under chapter 33 based on a transfer of entitlement. A Veteran could also potentially gain eligibility under the Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance (chapter 35) program as a surviving spouse or a spouse of a Veteran.

Under the proposed legislation, Veterans eligible for education benefits under chapters 30, 31, 33 or 35 will not be eligible for the retraining assistance. However, Veterans eligible for benefits under chapter 32 of title 38, United States Code, or chapters 1606 and 1607 of title 10, United States Code would be eligible for this new benefit because the proposed legislation is silent on whether or not these Veterans would be eligible.

The proposed legislation would provide retraining assistance for 12 months towards a pursuit of program of education that leads to an associate's degree or certificate. However, we note that most associate's degrees require 2 years of study.

It is unclear whether a person who has previously used VA education benefits and either exhausted their benefits or reached the end of their period of eligibility would be considered eligible for the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program. VA recommends adding language to the proposed legislation to clearly state the eligibility criteria for the program and the agency responsible for making the determination.

The proposed legislation requires that VA enter into an agreement with DoL to carry out the program. VA would need to modify existing processing systems to accommodate the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program as well as hire and train 120 additional FTE in year one and another 12 employees in year two (132 total FTE) to accommodate the anticipated increase in claims received. This estimate is based on the assumption that applications are received evenly throughout the year. However, given the annual limit on the number of beneficiaries, VA expects that the bulk of the workload would be received at the start of each fiscal year. To process this surge (estimated 65 percent of annual limits) in applications, we would need 62 permanent employees, as well as additional temporary employees at the beginning of each year. Without this level of FTE and temporary employees to administer the proposed benefit, the timeliness for processing of Veterans' claims for other VA education programs would be severely and negatively impacted.

To accommodate the time needed to develop an agreement, hire and train new employees, and amend or develop systems for processing the benefit, VA recommends an effective date of June 1, 2012.

We will provide an estimate of the cost of enactment of section 101 for the record.

Section 501(a) of the bill would amend 38 U.S.C. § 3710(a)(12) to extend the Secretary's authority to guarantee loans secured by stocks or certificates in cooperative housing. Currently, the law is scheduled to expire on December 21, 2011. Subsection (a) would extend the provision through December 21, 2016.

VA supports subsection (a), provided Congress identifies the necessary cost offsets. Allowing the authority to expire would limit housing options available to certain Veterans, especially those living in larger, urban housing markets.

VA estimates that enactment would result in insignificant costs the first year, \$0.8 million over the period of FY 2012 through FY 2016, and \$2.2 million over 10 years.

Section 501(b) would amend 38 U.S.C. § 3729(b)(2) to maintain statutory loan fees at their current rates through October 1, 2021, and to delay the time frame in which the loan fees are scheduled to be further reduced. Currently, loan fees applicable to various types of loans, including initial loans with little or no down payment, loans for which Veterans contribute more substantial down payments, and subsequent loans, are all scheduled to decrease as of October 1, 2011. Another reduction of such fees is set to occur on October 1, 2013. If enacted, subsection (b) would extend through calendar year 2021 the current fee structure for the first two types: initial loans with little or no down payments and loans for which Veterans will contribute more substantial down payments. Subsequent-use loans would not be affected, and would decrease as currently scheduled.

VA does not oppose enactment of subsection (b). If Congress were to allow the funding fees to reduce as scheduled under current law, the program would require a larger appropriation to cover expected loan-subsidy costs associated with newly guaranteed loans.

VA estimates enactment of subsection (b) would provide loan-subsidy savings in the amount of \$206.9 million in the first year, \$1.0 billion over 5 years, and \$2.1 billion over 10 years.

Section 501(c) of the bill would amend section 501 of the Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-389) by delaying the sunset date affecting temporary increases in the maximum guaranty amounts. In 2004, as part of Public Law 108-454, Congress amended 38 U.S.C. § 3703(a)(1) by adding a new subparagraph (C) to redefine the maximum guaranty amount as "the dollar amount that is equal to 25 percent of the Freddie Mac conforming loan limit determined under section 305(a)(2) of the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation Act (12 U.S.C. § 1454(a)(2)) for a single-family residence, as adjusted for the year involved." Public Law 110-389 temporarily increased such amounts, through December 31, 2011, to the greater of either 25 percent of the Freddie Mac conforming loan limit or 25 percent of 125 percent of the area median price for a single-family residence. In no case, however, could a guaranty amount exceed 25 percent of 175 percent of the Freddie Mac conforming loan limit. If section 501(c) were enacted, the temporary increase would be extended through December 31, 2014. If it were not, the definition of the maximum guaranty amount would again be limited, as of January 1, 2012, solely to 25 percent of the Freddie Mac conforming loan limitation.

Provided Congress identifies necessary cost offsets, VA supports extending the temporary increase in the maximum guaranty amount enacted in the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2008.

VA estimates enactment of subsection (c) would result in an increase to loan subsidy costs by \$642,000 in the first year, \$6.0 million over 5 years, and \$24.6 million over 10 years.

#### *H.R. 1941*

We are pleased to provide our views on sections 2, 3, 4, 5, and 9 of H.R. 1941, the "Hiring Heroes Act of 2011," but respectfully defer to the views of the DoD regarding sections 6, 7, and 12; the DoL regarding sections 8, 11, and 13; and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) regarding section 10.

Section 2 of the bill would extend through 2014 a provision enacted in Title XVI of Public Law 110-181, known as the Wounded Warrior Act, which authorizes VA to provide rehabilitative services and assistance to certain severely disabled active-duty Servicemembers in the same manner as to Veterans. VA proposed a similar provision in its draft Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2011, transmitted to Congress on May 19, 2011. While the provisions differ in the length of the extension, VA supports section 2.

Section 3 of the bill would amend section 3116(b)(1) of title 38, United States Code, to expand VA's authority to pay employers for providing on-job training to Veterans. Under current law, VA is authorized to make payments to employers for providing on-job training to Veterans who have been rehabilitated to the point of employability in certain cases. By removing the requirement that Veterans be rehabilitated to the point of employability before VA can make payments to employers for providing on-job training, this section would allow VA to make these payments to employers for providing on-job training to many more Veterans. VA supports this provision. VA estimates benefit costs to be \$792,000 for the first year, \$4.2 million for 5 years, and \$9.1 million over 10 years.

Section 4 of the bill would provide for additional rehabilitation programs for persons who have exhausted rights to unemployment benefits under State law. Under section 3102 of title 38, United States Code, as amended by this section, a person who has completed a chapter 31 rehabilitation program would be entitled to an additional rehabilitation program if the person meets the current requirements for en-

titlement to a chapter 31 rehabilitation program; has, under State or Federal law, exhausted all rights to regular compensation with respect to a benefit year; and satisfies certain other requirements.

Section 4 of the bill would also amend sections 3105 and 3695 of title 38, United States Code, to limit the period of an additional rehabilitation program to 24 months, but also to exempt Veterans pursuing an additional rehabilitation program from certain other limits. Under current section 3105, a rehabilitation program may not be pursued after 12 years following a Veteran's discharge or release from active service. Under current section 3695(b), assistance under chapter 31 in combination with certain other provisions of law is limited to 48 months. Section 4 of the bill would amend sections 3105 and 3695(b) to make these limitations inapplicable to an additional rehabilitation program.

VA supports this provision because it would help VA serve more Veterans in need of assistance. VA estimates benefit costs to be \$51,000 in the first year, \$294,000 for 5 years, and \$724,000 over 10 years.

Section 5 of the bill would amend section 3106 of title 38, United States Code, to require an assessment and followup on Veterans with service-connected disabilities who participate in VA training and rehabilitation. In addition, section 5 would require VA to ascertain the employment status of a participating Veteran and assess his or her rehabilitation program not later than 180 days after completion of, or termination of, his or her participation in that program, and at least once every 180 days thereafter for a period of 1 year. VA supports this provision. We believe that providing follow-up is an important endeavor. No benefit costs would be associated with this provision. VA estimates administrative costs to be \$4.7 million in the first year, \$24.2 million over 5 years, and \$55 million over 10 years. In addition, VA estimates that \$250,000 will be needed in FY 2012 to develop an IT solution to automate follow-up activity.

Finally, section 9 of the bill would require VA, DoD, and DoL to select a contractor to conduct a study to identify equivalencies between skills developed by members of the military through various military occupational specialties (MOS) and the qualifications required for private-sector civilian employment positions and report on the results of the study. This section would also require Federal Government departments and agencies to cooperate with the contractor. VA, DoD, and DoL would be required to transmit the report with appropriate comments to Congress.

Section 9 would also require DoD to use the results of the study and other information to ensure that each member of the military participating in the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) receives an assessment of the various private-sector civilian employment positions for which the member may be qualified as a result the member's MOS. DoD would have to transmit the individualized assessment to VA and DoL to use in providing employment-related assistance in the transition from military service to civilian life and to facilitate and enhance the transition.

VA does not support this provision to enter into a joint contract to identify civilian equivalencies of military jobs. Software applications that analyze military occupational data and provide equivalent civilian jobs currently exist. Therefore, VA believes a contract to conduct a study to identify this information is not necessary. VA is currently utilizing web software available in the public domain that translates military skills to equivalent civilian jobs. VA will continue to closely monitor the marketplace to identify software that may improve our ability to identify civilian equivalents of military jobs.

VA estimates that if section 9 of H.R. 1941 were enacted there would be no benefit cost to VA; however, general operating expense costs would be approximately \$175,000.

#### *H.R. 169*

H.R. 169 would require that, not later than 60 days after the date of enactment of the Act, the Secretary include on the main page of VA's Internet Web site a new hyperlink with a drop-down menu entitled "Veterans Employment" that will include direct access to the VetSuccess Internet Web site, the USA Jobs Internet Web site, the Job Central Web site, and other employment Web sites that focus on jobs for Veterans. It would also require the Secretary to promote awareness of the VetSuccess Internet Web site by advertising in national media and to inform Veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom of the VetSuccess Internet Web site through outreach efforts.

VA supports efforts to increase Veterans' awareness of the VetSuccess.gov Web site and to promote opportunities for employment of Veterans through links to appropriate resources. Although we believe we are currently accomplishing the purpose of this legislation, we do not object to the enactment of this bill. VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program currently conducts outreach



to OEF/OIF Veterans through the Coming Home To Work (CHTW) initiative and through other avenues such as Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) presentations. VR&E informs Veterans of the VetSuccess.gov Web site through CHTW and by other means, including DTAP presentations and the distribution of QuickBooks.

One-time costs associated with advertising in national media outlets are estimated to be \$900,000 during the first year. To conduct a recent media campaign, VA's Education Service spent approximately \$380,000 on developing concepts and materials, identifying and targeting appropriate markets, and developing a marketing plan. An additional \$520,000 was spent on implementation of the marketing plan. Implementation included advertising on radio, social media sites including *Facebook* and *MySpace*, Internet sites including Google and Yahoo, print outlets and text messaging services. VA would expect to incur similar costs to conduct a media campaign to advertise the VetSuccess.gov Web site.

No additional costs are related to conducting outreach to OEF/OIF Veterans to inform them of the VetSuccess.gov Web site because this is currently done by VR&E. No additional costs are associated with including hyperlinks on the VA main Internet page because VA has already budgeted for these types of minor changes.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared remarks. Thank you for the opportunity to share the Department's views. I would be pleased to respond to any questions you or other Members of the Committee may have.

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

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Filner, and distinguished Members of the Committee, I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss legislation pending in this Committee aimed at helping our returning servicemember transition back to civilian life.

The Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) proudly serves Veterans and transitioning servicemember by providing resources and expertise to assist and prepare them to obtain meaningful careers, maximize their employment opportunities and protect their employment rights.

Secretary Solis has been an incredible source of guidance and support, and has made Veterans and VETS one of her top priorities. Our programs are an integral part of Secretary Solis's vision of "*Good Jobs for Everyone*" and her unwavering commitment to help Veterans and their families get into the middle class and maintain financial stability. We strive to achieve this vision through four main programs:

- Jobs for Veterans State Grants;
- Transition Assistance Program Employment Workshops;
- Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Programs; and
- Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act.

Your letter of invitation seeks input on three bills: (1) H.R. 169, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to include on the main page of the Internet Web site of the Department of Veterans Affairs a hyperlink to the VetSuccess Internet Web site and to publicize such Internet Web site; (2) H.R. 1941, the "Hiring Heroes Act of 2011"; and (3) H.R. 2433, the "Veterans Opportunity to Work Act of 2011". I will limit my remarks to those provisions of H.R. 1941 that would have a direct impact on VETS and the Department of Labor.

As for the remaining legislation, H.R. 169 would be administered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) and we defer to VA on that bill. H.R. 2433 was recently introduced on July 7, 2011, and we have not had an opportunity to thoroughly review and formulate the Department's views on the legislation in time for this hearing. We will, however, provide the Committee with our views in a follow-up Statement for the Record.

**H.R. 1941: "Hiring Heroes Act of 2011"**

**Section 6:** This section would require the mandatory participation of members of the Armed Forces in the Department of Labor's Employment Workshop component of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP).

We believe that all transitioning servicemember who plan to enter civilian employment would benefit from attending the Employment Workshop, but defer to the Department of Defense (DoD) as to whether it should be a mandatory component for *all* transitioning servicemember.

**Section 7:** This section would require DoL to follow-up on the employment status of members of the Armed Forces who recently participated in TAP. In particular, it would require that DoL contact each participating Veteran no later than 6 months after his or her completion of the program, and at least once every 90 days thereafter over the next 6 months in order to ascertain the Veteran's employment status.

DoL supports the concept of the TAP follow-up, but believes that the metrics of our redesigned Employment Workshop would properly satisfy this requirement. As you may recall, we recently testified on our current initiative to redesign and transform the Employment Workshop. As part of the redesign, which is already underway, a comprehensive follow-up program will be implemented to track participants' success entering the civilian workforce. In particular, 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 participants with implementing, "pressure-testing" (i.e., comparing the written plan with the participants' actual desires), and revising their Individual Transition Plans. The follow-up component will also incorporate peer support techniques. DoL believes that this program may provide the information that the Committee desires, and we would like to work with the Committee to provide additional information on this initiative.

**Section 8:** Among other things, this section would: (1) establish a competitive grant program for nonprofit organizations that provide mentoring and training to Veterans; (2) require DoL and nonprofit organizations to collaborate in order to facilitate the placement of Veterans in jobs that lead to economic self-sufficiency; (3) require DoL to conduct an assessment of grant performance no later than 18 months after enactment; and (4) authorize appropriations of \$4.5 million for Fiscal Years 2012 and 2013.

DoL believes that it currently satisfies the intent of this section. We note that this section seems to closely follow the parameters of the existing Veterans' Workforce Investment Program (VWIP) established under section 168 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. The VWIP provides employment and training support, through grants and contracts to service providers, to provide eligible veterans with additional assistance to transition to meaningful employment within the civilian labor force. It is unclear whether the intent of this section differs from the intent of the VWIP. Therefore, we would like to work with the Committee to discuss the potential overlap between this section and the VWIP.

**Section 9:** Among other things, this section would require DoL, DoD, and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to conduct a joint study to identify any equivalences between the skills developed by members of the Armed Forces through various military occupational specialties (MOS) and the qualifications required for various positions of civilian employment in the private sector.

Section 9 seems to duplicate existing processes that provide the capability to crosswalk Servicemember skills to equivalent civilian occupations. We note that there are several tools that meet the need for skill equivalencies for separating servicemember, such as the Department's Occupational Information Network (O\*NET) and DoD's Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL). In addition, the TAP redesign will include practical exercises to help participants in translate their skills, abilities, experience, and training on to a résumé, as well as create an Individual Transition Plan. We would like to work with the Committee to explore ways to strengthen these resources and improve the transition of Veterans into civilian employment.

**Section 11:** This section would require the Department to conduct outreach and employment assistance to recently-separated Veterans who receive unemployment compensation for more than 105 days.

The Department supports this section, but requests that the time period be changed from 105 days to 15 weeks to coincide with the end of a benefit week for purposes of Unemployment Compensation.

**Section 13:** This section would reauthorize and modify the demonstration program for credentialing and licensing of Veterans contained in 38 U.S.C. 4114.

DoL supports the concept of this section and believes that credentialing and licensing Veterans will help in transitioning successfully into the civilian sector. This provision does, however, raise serious implementation issues.

Licensing and credentialing are functions performed most often by individual States, which means that the demonstration project would require DoD to align its military training and assessments to more closely match States' civilian licensing requirements. We would like to work with the Committee to help resolve these issues so that the credentialing and licensing of Veterans can be more successfully implemented.

**Conclusion**

We are reminded every day of the tremendous sacrifices made by our Veterans, Servicemembers and their families. Secretary Solis and the Veterans' Employment and Training Service believe that America must honor those sacrifices by providing the Nation's bravest with the best possible programs and services that we have to offer. We look forward to continuing our work with this Committee to do just that.

I again thank this Committee for its commitment to our Nation's Veterans and for providing the opportunity to testify before you. We would be happy to work with your staffs to provide technical assistance on any of these or future bills, and I would be happy to respond to any questions.

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**Supplemental Statement of Ismael Ortiz, Jr., Deputy Assistant Secretary,  
Veterans' Employment and Training Service, U.S. Department of Labor**

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Filner, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of Labor's (DoL or Department) views on an important piece of legislation that would significantly impact our Servicemembers: H.R. 2433, the "Veterans Opportunity to Work Act of 2011" (the Act). We appreciate your continued support of the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) and look forward to working with Congress to help our returning Servicemembers transition back to civilian life.

To that end, the Department offers the following views on provisions of H.R. 2433 that would have a direct impact on DoL and VETS. As explained in our analysis, the Department has significant concerns with some portions of this bill.

**H.R. 2433 "Veterans Opportunity to Work Act of 2011"**

***Section 101—Veterans Retraining Assistance Program:***

Section 101 of the Act would require the Secretary of Labor (the Secretary) to provide eligible Veterans with monthly payments of "retraining assistance" to pursue a post-service education at a community college or technical school. Although DoL supports the intent of this section, we believe the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) should be the lead agency for three reasons. First, the payments are funded out of a VA account. Specifically, section 101(h) requires that the payments be made from amounts appropriated to the VA's readjustment benefits account. Second, the bill would require VA to receive the necessary enrollment certifications from participating Veterans. Finally, VA is in a better position to determine whether applicants are eligible for the program because of VA's access to Veteran's service records.

***Section 201—Transition Assistance Program (TAP):***

Section 201 would require the Secretary of Labor to contract with private entities to provide certain services to members of the Armed Forces who are separating from active duty (and their spouses). The bill also specifies that the Secretary must enter into these contracts within twenty-four months of the date on which H.R. 2433 is enacted.

DoL has two concerns with this section. First, the twenty-four month deadline is far too short. Although VETS intends to transition to having all facilitation of the TAP Employment Workshop done by contract facilitators, the move will take time. The transition to all contractors will take over 2 years to implement fully because of the following:

- First, VETS is currently working with a contractor to redesign the TAP curriculum that the contract facilitators will utilize. In order to maintain stability during the various stages of the curriculum redesign of TAP, we believe it most appropriate to extend an existing contract that provides VETS with facilitation services. It would be unnecessarily complicated to redesign TAP while simultaneously transitioning to a new contractor to provide all-contract facilitators.
- Second, a new award for facilitation services will take time to plan, compete, award and execute.
- Third, once a new facilitation contract has been awarded, that contractor will need to hire, train, and deploy facilitators
- Finally, Status of Forces Agreements for the new facilitation contractor to work in the host countries overseas will take months to complete

In order to continue to provide the Nation's warriors and their families with the seamless support they deserve, the timing should be revised to provide the Secretary with greater flexibility.

Second, VETS is concerned that the proposed legislation would require the Secretary to contract for services that are already assigned by statute to employees in the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program<sup>1</sup> (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives<sup>2</sup> (LVER) program. Specifically, the bill would reassign the responsibility for counseling and placement to contractors.

The DVOP and LVER programs have been very successful, and have helped Veterans throughout the United States. In fact, either a DVOP specialist or a LVER is out stationed half-time or more in 48 of the VA Regional Offices and in 19 satellite offices. The work of these individuals helped the Department's Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) Program in providing services to nearly 589,000 Veterans, and helped ensure that over 201,000 Veterans found jobs.

Therefore, due to our concerns regarding the timing of the TAP redesign and the conflict this section presents with the statutory responsibilities of DVOP and LVER, DoL does not support this section as written. However, DoL could support this section if it were amended to include more flexibility of time in the implementation of the contract facilitators and to preserve the roles and responsibilities of the DVOP/LVER positions

**Section 202—Mandatory Participation in Transition Assistance Program:**

Section 202 would require the mandatory participation of members of the Armed Forces in the Department of Labor's Employment Workshop component of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) unless there is a documented urgent operational requirement that prevents attendance. We believe that all transitioning Servicemembers who plan to enter civilian employment would benefit from attending the Employment Workshop, but defer to the Department of Defense (DoD) as to whether it should be a mandatory component for *all* transitioning Servicemembers.

**Section 203—Report on Transition Assistance Program:**

Section 203 would require the Secretary of Labor to: (1) report to Congress, annually, the number of members of the armed forces eligible for assistance under the Employment Workshop portion of TAP who participated in the program within 30, 90, and 180 days of being separated from active duty, and the percentages of which participated in each time frame; and (2) contract out an audit of the program at least every 3 years, and submit the results of the audit to Congress, VA, DoD, and DoL. This audit would be funded through the JVSG program.

We believe that the report required in (e)(1) more properly belongs to DoD and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). DoL does not have access to the information required in the report. Only DoD and DHS know when a Servicemember will be separated from active duty. DoL would report Employment Workshop participation information to DoD in order for them to note attendance in the Servicemembers' records.

Since the bill assigns the audit contracting requirement to the Secretary of Labor, it appears to require an audit of the Department's Employment Workshop, which is the only component under the Secretary's direct supervision. As this Committee is aware, TAP is an interagency program designed to assist returning Servicemembers as they transition back into civilian life. TAP consists of five components and is delivered in partnership with DoL, VA, DoD, and DHS. The five components include:

1. Pre-separation Counseling (3 hours)—This is a mandatory component for all transitioning Servicemembers and is provided by the military services;
2. TAP Employment Workshops (2.5 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;
4. Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) (2 hours)—Also voluntary and administered by the VA; and
5. One-on-One Coaching—This is a follow-up, provided by the military services, to the four components outlined above.

The TAP Employment Workshop provided by DoL is but one component of an interagency program for returning Servicemembers, which addresses their unique needs as they prepare to reenter civilian life.

<sup>1</sup>Section 4103A(a) of Title 38 of the U.S. Code requires DVOPs to "carry out intensive services." This broad mandate has been interpreted to include counseling.

<sup>2</sup>Under section 4104(b)(2) of Title 38, LVERs are required to "facilitate employment, training and placement services."

The Department's redesign of the TAP Employment Workshop, already underway, calls for the use of new performance metrics. These metrics must be fully integrated and implemented before they can be sufficiently evaluated. In particular, the redesign will include metrics and gather input from participants at 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 have learned)—they will evaluate the relevancy and effectiveness of the workshop's content and approach; and
3. After securing employment—attendees will be asked how useful the workshop was in helping them obtain a job or career opportunity, how rapidly the program helped them assimilate into the work culture of their new organization, and whether the program helped them become positive contributors to their organization.

The performance metrics for the new TAP Employment Workshop will allow for the continual analysis of the workshop and, if necessary, for adjustments to be made. We believe the new performance measurement system for the DoL Employment Workshop will accomplish the intent of the audit provision. Consequently, requiring a separate, outside audit every 3 years would not provide a meaningful benefit for the re-configured TAP Employment Workshop, and could, in fact, detract from the implementation of the performance metrics.

Moreover, we note that the Department's Office of the Inspector General currently conducts audits of the Employment Workshop program. We believe that this audit could fulfill the Congress's intent, as would the Comptroller General review in Section 205, which we discuss later. If an additional audit is needed, we believe it would properly fall under the jurisdiction of the Government Accountability Office, rather than being contracted for by the Secretary of Labor, as required by the bill. Therefore, we do not support this section.

***Section 204—Transition Assistance Program Outcomes:***

Section 204 would require the Secretaries of Labor and DoD to jointly develop a method to assess the outcomes for individuals who participate in the Transition Assistance Program. DoL supports the intent of this section but notes that the Secretary of VA should also be included because subparagraph (f)(3) asks for outcomes associated with education benefits that the VA has responsibility for tracking.

***Section 205—Comptroller General Review:***

Section 205 would require the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a review of the TAP Employment Workshop and submit the results and recommendations for improving the program in a report to Congress. DoL supports this section and believes this section eliminates the need for the audit required by Section 203 of the Act.

***Section 301—Reauthorization and Improvement of Demonstration Project on Credentialing and Licensure of Veterans:***

Section 301 would reauthorize and expand the demonstration project that links military skills to civilian jobs through licensing and credentialing. DoL supports the intent of this section, but requests that the dollar limit be removed. The Department believes it is unlikely that a sufficiently rigorous project could be completed for less than \$180,000. The Department also requests that the potential entities for this project be expanded to include all public and private entities to allow for the selection of the best proposal. Finally, the Department requests that the submission date for the report to Congress be extended to 120 days after the close of the fiscal year to allow time for the project to be evaluated.

***Section 302—Inclusion of Performance Measures in Annual Report on Veteran Job Counseling, Training, and Placement Programs of the Department of Labor:***

Section 302 would create new performance metrics to track the employment rate of Veterans who received services from all DoL-administered job training programs. The provision would also require that States track veterans' average salaries and credential attainment. The section would also require States to significantly modify and expand their processes to collect information.

The Employment and Training Administration tracks program outcomes based on a set of common performance measures for entered employment, retention and average earnings for all workforce system customers, including Veterans. The Depart-

ment does not support this provision as written because it would in effect create a separate performance system for serving Veterans.

***Section 303—Clarification of Priority of Service for Veterans in Department of Labor Job Training Programs:***

Section 303 would further clarify Priority of Service under section 4215 of title 38 U.S.C. and expand what is required in the DoL VETS' Annual Report. The update to the definition of Priority of Service is in line with the definition that appears in our regulations at 20 CFR 1010.200(b). DoL would support this change.

DoL also supports the intent of Section 303's expansion of VETS' Annual Report. The bill would require VETS to include: (1) an analysis of implementation of providing priority of service; (2) whether the representation of Veterans in such programs is in proportion to the incidence of representation of Veterans in labor market, including within groups that the Secretary may designate for priority under such programs, if any; and (3) performance measures to determine if Veterans are receiving priority of service and being fully served by DoL job training programs. Under the current Priority of Service regulations, DoL tentatively plans to collect additional information to provide data on Priority of Service in DoL programs.

***Section 304—Evaluation of Individuals Receiving Training at the National Veterans' Employment and Training Services Institute:***

Section 304 would require that all Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Specialists (DVOP) and Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVER) pass a certification test at the end of their National Veterans Training Institute training (currently operated by the University of Colorado at Denver). The Department supports this section because it will enhance our ability to track performance but requests an effective date of 180 days to allow time to make required changes to courses.

***Section 305—Pilot Program on the Use of Veterans Employment and Training Grant Funds to Provide Direct Training Services to Unemployed Veterans:***

Section 305 would require the Secretary of Labor to carry out a 3-year program to make grants to and enter into contracts with any of the ten States with the highest unemployment in the Nation. DoL does not support this section as written. The Department believes that Veterans have access to training under the Workforce Investment Act and therefore the diversion of funds from the JVSG for a secondary training program is unnecessary.

WIA offers comprehensive employment services, including job counseling, job search and referrals, résumé preparation, and other assistance. WIA also provides training through community colleges and other training providers for those in need of a credential or need to change or upgrade their skills. These services are easily accessed through WIA's network of nearly 3,000 One-Stop Career Centers nationwide, and Veterans receive priority of service for WIA programs and all other DoL-funded employment and training services.

***Section 306—Requirements for Full-time Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives:***

Sec. 306 of the proposed bill would add additional language barring full-time DVOPs and LVERs from performing non-Veteran-related duties. It also adds a requirement that DoL conduct regular audits to ensure compliance with this prohibition, and says that if there are violations, then a State's grants can be reduced. We believe the additional language is unnecessary. The current law, as well as VETS policy guidance, already makes clear that the role of DVOPs and LVERs is to help veterans find employment, and the audit requirement would needlessly divert scarce administrative resources. We recommend that the Committee strike Section 306 and maintain the current language in Chapter 41 of Title 38 of the U.S. Code.

***Section 307—Report on Findings of the Department of Defense and Department of Labor Credentialing Work Group:***

Section 307 would require a joint report by DoL and DoD on reducing licensing and credentialing barriers for ten military occupational specialties. DoL supports this section but recommends subsection (c) be changed to allow the study to be completed within 12 months from the date of the award of the contract. The report should be submitted to Congress no later than 90 days after the completion of the study. This would allow sufficient time for a thorough study to be conducted.

**Section 401—Clarification of Benefits of Employment Covered Under USERRA:**

Section 401 would clarify the definition of the terms “benefit”, “benefit of employment”, or “rights and benefits” under chapter 43 of title 38—Employment and Re-employment Rights of Members of the Uniformed Services. The Department supports this section.

**Section 502—Extension of Homeless Veterans Reintegration Programs:**

Section 502 would extend the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program until 2016. The Department supports extending this program. HVRP is the only Federal employment program designed specifically to address the employment problems faced by our Nation’s homeless veterans. HVRP provides services to assist in reintegrating homeless veterans into meaningful employment and to stimulate the development of effective service delivery systems that will address the complex problems facing homeless veterans. Employment is the linchpin by which a homeless veteran may start a successful journey back to society, regardless of whether the homelessness is long term or short term, first time or cyclical.

**Conclusion**

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to submit our views on this bill. We look forward to working with this Committee to provide the Nation’s bravest and their families with the best possible programs and services that we have to offer.

**Statement of the U.S. Department of Defense**

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Filner, and Members of this distinguished Committee, thank you for extending an invitation to the Department of Defense to address pending legislation that would significantly affect our Servicemembers: H.R. 169; H.R. 1941, the proposed “Hiring Heroes Act of 2011”; and H.R. 2433, the proposed “Veterans Opportunity to Work Act of 2011”.

The Department defers to the VA on H.R. 169 as DoD does not have any specific concerns.

The Department recommends modifying H.R. 1941 and H.R. 2433, and the Department’s comments are limited to sections directly affecting it.

*Summary of the Department’s views on pending legislation*

*H.R. 1941*

The Department’s comments on H.R. 1941 are limited to sections directly affecting it.

*Section 2:* The Department is not opposed to the provisions of section 2 that would extend Section 1631(b)(1) of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for 2008 (Public Law 110–181) through December 31 2014. Section 1631(b)(1) allows Servicemembers, with a severe injury or illness to receive vocational, rehabilitation and employment benefits (but not compensation) from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to facilitate their recovery and rehabilitation while still a member of the Armed Forces. Extending this benefit provides Servicemembers with disabilities assistance in identifying the training requirements and resources needed to achieve their rehabilitation and employment goals.

*Section 6:* The Department continues to work closely with Departments of Veterans Affairs and Labor, and the interagency, to enable seamless transition from Servicemembers to Veteran. Our efforts are consistent and integrated with the President’s Veteran Employment Initiative to help Federal agencies identify qualified Veterans, clarify the hiring process for Veterans seeking employment with the Federal Government, and help them to adjust to the civilian work environment once they are hired. The President’s statement highlights the fundamental purpose for that effort—“Honoring our sacred trust with America’s Veterans means doing all we can to help them find work when they come home so they never feel as if the American Dream they fought to defend is out of reach for them and their families.” DoD believes that we too must honor our sacred trust with America’s Servicemembers and do all we can to make their transition to Veteran seamless.

The Department has had recent discussions with the Administration to further highlight and advance these principles. The DoD Transition Assistance Program (TAP) must be an integral part in our ability to achieve the seamless transition. TAP is an important tool to prepare Servicemembers for life after they separate or retire from the military. Whatever policy decision is made about its mandatory use

will need to factor provide maximum flexibility for the Service Secretaries to ensure that there are waiver authorities available to exempt military personnel from mandatory training when appropriate given the unique circumstances of individual cases. This should also provide Service Secretaries with the tools for managing their personnel during transition.

*Section 9:* The Department believes that section 9 is unnecessary as it duplicates existing processes that provide the capability to crosswalk Servicemember skills to equivalent civilian occupations, and therefore does not support section 9 of H.R. 1941.

During mandatory (required by statute) preseparation counseling, Servicemembers are informed about the Occupational Information Network. The revised DD Form 2648, Preseparation Counseling Checklist for Active Component (AC), Active Guard Reserve (AGR), and Reserve Program Administrator (RPA) Servicemembers, states, "counselors will provide information on civilian occupations corresponding to Military occupations (see Occupational Information Network (O\*Net Web site) at [www.online.onetcenter.org/crosswalk](http://www.online.onetcenter.org/crosswalk) and related programs . . ."

The Occupational Information Network (O\*NET) is under the sponsorship of the U.S. Department of Labor/Employment and Training Administration. The O\*NET program is the Nation's primary source of occupational information. Central to the project is the O\*NET database, containing information on hundreds of standardized and occupation-specific descriptors. The database is continually updated by surveying a broad range of workers from each occupation. O\*NET OnLine contains crosswalks between the O\*NET-Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) and the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP), Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT), Military Occupational Classification (MOC), Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Data System (RAPIDS), and Standard Occupational Classification (SOC).

Additionally, the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration has a long-standing record of assisting transitioning Servicemembers with O\*NET.

Another program is the United States Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP), a partnership between Secretary of Labor, Secretary of Navy and Secretary of Transportation. Out of 300 enlisted Military Occupational Specialties (MOS's), 257 are covered under USMAP trades/occupations employing apprenticeship. Occupations offered through USMAP cross over into several civilian industries, including servicing, manufacturing and construction, and transportation/utilities.

*Section 10:* The Department opposes section 10. The authority under this section is too broad in its application and scope. It would appear the language would simply allow veterans to be non-competitively appointed to the GS system within 180 days of discharge. There appears to be no provision on how we would establish qualifications. Given we have a myriad of hiring authorities for veterans, we do not see what problem this language is trying to solve. Further, it runs the risk of making it extremely difficult for someone who is not a veteran to gain entry level employment in light on this authority. We run the risk of inadvertently giving veterans preference that is far overreaching and will likely be challenged by the Merit Systems Protection Board.

*Section 12:* The Department is not opposed to the provisions of section 12 which would allow the Department to establish a pilot program to provide separating Servicemembers, who are on terminal leave, work experience with civilian employees and contractors of the Department of Defense to facilitate the transition of those members from service in the Armed Forces to employment in the civilian labor market. The Department realizes the value of programs that improve the employment outcomes for our transitioning servicemembers, such as those that provide exposure to the civilian work environment while working for the Department. The Department of Labor, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security all jointly develop and contribute to the Transition Assistance Program, and we look forward to working with them to improve transition outcomes by using new and creative ideas, such as the one provided in this section.

#### *H.R. 2433*

Comments on H.R. 2433 are limited to sections directly affecting the Department.

*Section 202:* As with section 6 of H.R. 1941, we believe TAP is an important tool to prepare Servicemembers for life after they separate or retire from the military. However, Section 202 would require mandatory participation in the DoL Employment Workshop for all transitioning Servicemembers and only allows exceptions when "a documented operational requirement prevents attendance." As written, this section would require personnel to be retained on active duty until they have completed this TAP component. Therefore, this provision should include a waiver au-



thority to exempt mandatory attendance in order to give the Service Secretaries greater flexibility for managing their personnel during transition.

*Section 204:* The Department believes that section 204 is unnecessary and does not support this provision as written. On June 2, 2011, Secretary Jefferson, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Employment and Training Service, Department of Labor, discussed the redesigned DoL Employment Workshop in testimony before this Committee's Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity. The redesigned workshop will gather input from TAP attendees: (1) after the Employment Workshop; (2) during the job search; and (3) after they secure employment to assess how useful the workshop was in helping them obtain a job. We believe the redesigned DoL Employment Workshop, which is scheduled to be implemented November 2011, accomplishes the intent of the proposed legislation to assess the effectiveness of transition assistance employment efforts.

*Section 307:* The Department supports section 307 mandating the completion of the joint Department of Defense and Department of Labor Credentialing Work Group study of 10 military occupation specialties. We request the Departments be granted sixteen months from the date the contract is awarded to complete the study, analysis and submit the report to Congress as required by paragraphs b and c of this section.

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**Statement of Robert Madden, Assistant Director,  
National Economic Commission, American**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The American Legion applauds this Committee for the attention given to the troubling rise in veterans' unemployment. This slate of legislation addresses many of the key concerns of our 2.4 million members. The American Legion supports the passage of H.R. 169, H.R. 1941, and H.R. 2433.

H.R. 2433 addresses one of the little known facts of veterans' unemployment, which is though the percentages of younger, unemployed veterans is slightly higher, the vast majority of the ranks of unemployed veterans are of an older age group and require different needs such as retraining of job skills and other skills not necessarily covered by education benefits directed at younger veterans. Reaching these veterans would provide real and tangible job skills needed in the changing employment market.

Both H.R. 1941 and H.R. 2433 recognize the essential nature of a mandatory Transition Assistance Program (TAP) which is fully supported by The American Legion. There is no reason this necessary hand off between the military and civilian worlds should not be made mandatory.

Furthermore, better understanding of credentialing and certification is necessary to help civilian employers recognize the job skills learned in service closely mirror those required in the non-military world. There is no good reason a military driver should not be equally qualified to drive trucks in the civilian world, or that a corpsman is not qualified to serve as an EMT. Better attention to the certification and licensure process is needed.

The American Legion supports the passage of all three bills on this slate of legislation.

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Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Filner and distinguished Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the 2.4 million members of The American Legion I thank you for this opportunity to submit The American Legion's views on the legislation being considered by the Committee today. We appreciate the efforts of this Committee to address the different needs of the men and women who are currently serving and those who served during past conflicts.

***H.R. 2433: Veterans' Opportunity to Work Act of 2011***

*To amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements in the laws relating to the employment and training of veterans, and for other purposes.*

With the growing unemployment numbers facing both our younger and older generations, it is imperative that our great Nation gives back to the men and women who have given much to this country. Younger veterans currently face an unemployment rate of approximately 13.3 percent, the number of unemployed veterans aged

35–60 is far greater in terms of raw numbers. While unemployment seems to remain relatively steady for the general population, America’s veterans face unemployment that has continued to grow for the past several years. As the largest veterans’ service organization serving veterans from all eras, The American Legion applauds the Committee for seeking to restore employment and training opportunities to veterans of all eras. We understand the struggles that veterans from all ages face when either returning to work after military service or just getting back to work after being eliminated from their past employment. It is well documented that veterans who have any sort of education generally have lower unemployment rates as opposed to those who do not possess any higher education.

Recent transitioning servicemembers are provided with a robust education benefit, which earns them up to 36 months of tuition and fees, a housing allowance and a books stipend, based on their eligibility. Yet older veterans who have fallen on tough times are forced to fend for themselves seeking alternative employment. These veterans often have families and greater financial responsibilities. Additionally, these older veterans are not eligible for most education benefits like the new generation of veterans possess. These groups of veterans are reviewing ways to re-define themselves and their employment. Factory jobs that were eliminated during the economic recession might not return and these veterans are faced with an obsolete vocation and need to transition into thriving career fields.

H.R. 2433 also seeks to provide all servicemembers with the specific transitional training when leaving military service. The American Legion has supported, now and in the past, a policy of the service branches making Transition Assistance Program (TAP) mandatory for all servicemembers exiting the military. With the Departments of Labor, Defense and Veterans Affairs making the much needed changes to the TAP program, we believe this provision is essential to give all transitioning servicemembers the tools and resources they need to successfully integrate into the civilian workforce.

America’s servicemembers are the most skilled and highly trained individuals of any other Nation, yet when they are transitioning most of their military training is not properly equated to its civilian counterpart. In general, they must either return to school to get their civilian credentials or choose a different career path. These employment barriers exist for transitioning servicemembers who seek employment in line with their military occupational specialty (MOS). Surely a truck driver who drove convoys through the deserts of Iraq is qualified to drive the roads of the American Midwest; or the corpsman who patched up wounded in remote provinces of Afghanistan should be recognized as capable of performing as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) in any American city.

The American Legion commends the Committee for seeking to perform a formal study not only to identify the top 10 MOS’s, but to analyze initiatives that are currently available to servicemembers while in service and how to use those initiatives for all service branches; consequently, impacting a wider range of men and women. In addition, The American Legion recommends that all MOS’s that have a civilian counterpart be included in this formal study. Expanding credentials to servicemembers creates a more professional workforce and is aligned more fully with recruiting and retention of servicemembers. By improving the knowledge and skill of servicemembers, we will give them improved chances for employment after exiting the military and incentives/reasons should they chose to stay in the service.

The American Legion also supports the re-enactment of the credentialing work study group. Previously, the credentialing work group provided Federal agencies with support and guidance on how to move in promoting employment for transitioning servicemembers. The credentialing work group would help in fostering new ideas in the area of credentialing and provide options for overcoming barriers to employment.

**The American Legion supports this bill.**

#### ***H.R. 1941***

*Hiring Heroes Act of 2011—Amends the Wounded Warriors Act to extend until January 1, 2015, the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide the same rehabilitation and vocational benefits to members of the Armed Forces with severe injuries or illnesses as are provided to veterans.*

H.R. 1941 accomplishes many of the same tasks as H.R. 2433. The goal of this legislation is to: reduce unemployment for recently transitioned servicemembers and place them in training; expand Vocational Rehabilitation programs for those who have exhausted their unemployment benefits; follow up on employment status after rehabilitation training, making Transition Assistance Program mandatory; provide grants to non-profits for veterans training, mentoring and placement; create a study

to examine the employment barriers that transitioning servicemembers face when acquiring civilian credentials; and utilize a direct hire for veterans who have recently transitioned from service with an honorable discharge.

Veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan are facing double digit unemployment figures; this bill's goal is to eliminate some of the employment barriers that exist for recently returning servicemembers. With less than 1 percent of the population currently serving, H.R. 1941 provides a valuable tool and resource for those who are exiting the military and are trying to return to a "normal" state of life, including the number one issue they face: employment. As stated previously, the unemployment figures for recently returning servicemembers has been steadily increasing. This trend says that as a country, we should be providing every tool available to knock down those barriers that exist. Education Rehabilitation is one of the sharpest tools available to help veterans, active duty, Guard and Reserve components search for and locate employment. In almost every situation, education gives a leg up against the competition to veterans and civilians alike. With the employment climate being competitive, providing additional training resources is critical in drastically reducing the unemployment rates for returning veterans.

The American Legion supports the idea of utilizing Vocational Rehabilitation for those who have exhausted their unemployment benefits, but sees a potential problem of the number of counselors available to meet this new demand. Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment counselors already carry a heavy workload with the current case load. The addition of new veterans would need to be counteracted with the hiring of new, qualified counselors to meet the fresh demand. In addition, The American Legion supports the bolstering of follow-up on participants in the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program. In too many cases, veterans exit the program before finishing, thereby mandating a re-visit on a veteran's case, the metric of success would guide the overall program into a new direction.

The American Legion's policy regarding Transition Assistance Program has been to recommend the program be made mandatory. The American Legion commends the Committee for proposing this legislation.

Servicemembers exit the military fulfilling a certain Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) then return to their home of residence to find out, despite their duties and qualifications in their respective MOS, they are not qualified to provide the same support in a civilian counterpart. This problem is systemic from what is provided at the military training centers to what additional training a veteran might need in order to receive the civilian credential. Providing individual assessments at the TAP program might provide the veterans with additional resources, but we need to examine how we can bridge the credentialing gap between the military and civilian divide to better improve the employability of transitioning servicemembers.

The American Legion commends the Committee for proposing a study of 10 MOS's to identify employment barriers, but would suggest a comprehensive study of all MOS's that have a civilian counterpart. This expansion will make a great impact in identifying the employment and credentialing barriers that exist for transitioning servicemembers.

The American Legion further commends the Committee on bringing a non-competitive way to bring recently transitioned veterans into the Federal workforce. However, we are concerned that if this provision makes it through the legislative process, it would have to be properly communicated to those who are transitioning through TAP.

**The American Legion supports this bill.**

#### ***H.R. 169***

*To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to include on the main page of the Internet Web site of the Department of Veterans Affairs a hyperlink to the VetSuccess Internet Web site and to publicize such Internet Web site.*

Helping our wounded warriors and service-connected disabled veterans is and should maintain a high priority for the Department of Veterans Affairs. Giving them the proper tools and resources gives this group of veterans a way to gain an education and then enter a job market that fits their ability to perform. On too many occasions, The American Legion is informing service-connected or wounded warriors about the benefits available through the VetSuccess program. This legislation would enable one more way for veterans who visit [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) to find the information about the VetSuccess program and then make an informed decision about their education and employment path.

The American Legion once again commends the Committee for aggressively taking on the issue of veterans' unemployment. Veterans facing unemployment rates at two-thirds higher than the national average is a national tragedy; it is clear from

the work of this Committee that this issue needs to be resolved. The American Legion urges Congress to act swiftly to pass this legislation to help put our American heroes back to work. Furthermore, The American Legion reminds Congress of the essential role veterans' groups and Congressional oversight will play in ensuring that once this legislation is signed into law, it is implemented as intended and actually works to benefits those deserving veterans.

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**Statement of John L. Wilson, Assistant National Legislative Director,  
Disabled American Veterans**

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Filner and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and our 1.2 million members, all of whom are wartime disabled veterans, I am pleased to offer our statement for the record on three bills under consideration today.

**H.R. 2433—Veterans Opportunity to Work Act of 2011**

This bill addresses several areas important to veterans. Section 101 establishes a 3-year retraining program, providing up to 12 months of monthly compensation for eligible veterans. To be eligible, veterans must be between 35 and 60 years of age and pursue education or training through an accredited community college or technical school that leads to either an associate's degree or certification in a high-demand civilian occupation. Special consideration will be given to those veterans who have been unemployed for at least 26 continuous weeks.

This program sounds similar to the Servicemembers Occupational Conversion and Training Act (SMOCTA), which was established in 1993 in response to the downsizing of the military and its impact on veterans, particularly those who had no readily transferable skills. SMOCTA provided assistance in the form of reimbursements to employers to offset the cost of training recently separated servicemembers. It also provided funds for assessments, development of training plans, and supportive services for trainees.

This provision is in concert with the intent of DAV Resolution No. 100, which supports efforts to eliminate employment barriers that impede the transfer of military job skills to the civilian labor market.

Section 201 would require the Secretaries of Labor, Defense, Homeland Security, and Veterans Affairs to contract with businesses that provide Transition Assistance Program (TAP) participants with counseling, employment and training opportunities and other services as they plan to leave their respective branches of the military. While TAP participants should be provided the best in both information and delivery of services during this important time, we are also aware that contracts have been let by the Departments of Defense, Labor and Veteran Affairs to modernize their segments of this program.

While we appreciate the interest in further improvements to this program, requiring that TAP be contracted out may be too prescriptive at this time. Therefore we recommend mandates to contract out these services be held in abeyance until such a time that the changes currently underway can be fully assessed.

Section 202 would make participation in TAP mandatory for all military servicemembers except for urgent operational requirements. This is in line with DAV Resolution No. 230, which acknowledges the criticality of TAP attendance for military personnel being discharged from the service. The Department of Defense (DoD) has generally been opposed to mandatory attendance. This opposition should be overcome by this section's additional language, which provides waivers in the face of operational requirements. While the Services naturally have their focus on their mission, an equally strong case can be made that making TAP attendance mandatory may make the transition to civilian employment smoother and reduce the unemployment benefits that DoD would otherwise have to pay.

In accordance with DAV Resolution 304, we would also recommend that this section be amended to include mandatory attendance for members of the National Guard and Reserve, who are not typically afforded the opportunity to attend.

Section 203 would require contractor-provided reports on course participation. As with section 201, while we appreciate the interest in further improvements to this program, this requirement may be too prescriptive at this time. Therefore, we recommend mandates to have contractor-provided reports be held in abeyance until such a time that the changes currently underway can be fully assessed.

Section 204 directs the Secretaries of Labor and Defense to track how long TAP participants are unemployed after leaving the military, their initial salaries, or how long they attend college or a technical school during the first 12 months after dis-

charge. Although DAV does not have a resolution on this matter, we are not opposed to its favorable consideration. Tracking data such as this may provide valuable insights into current and future course structure and methods of instructions.

Section 301 would reauthorize and mandate the licensure and certification demonstration project that was recommended in title 38, Section 4114. The Veterans Benefits, Health Care and Information Technology Act of 2006 asked, but did not require, that the Department of Labor (DoL) Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training carry out a demonstration project that would identify the equivalencies between at least 10 military occupational specialty-related skills and civilian occupations, as well as ways to eliminate barriers between military training and civilian licensure or credentialing for those military occupational specialties. This section of H.R. 2433 would adjust the parameters of the demonstration project to evaluate at least five but not more than 10 military specialties.

The important distinction of making such a demonstration project mandatory is critical as our Nation searches for ways to reduce the unemployment rates that afflict our veterans. This provision is in line with DAV Resolution No. 100, which supports efforts to eliminate employment barriers that impede the transfer of military job skills to the civilian labor market.

Section 302 would modify the reporting requirements of the DoL with the addition of data on veteran job counseling, training, placement programs and earnings as well as those who participated in an education, certificate or licensure course of study. While DAV does not have a resolution on this matter, we are not opposed to adoption of this provision.

Section 303 would require DoL, in concert with State workforce agencies, to implement new performance measures to evaluate the priority of services provided to eligible veterans as compared to the overall customer base. The further clarification and reporting to ensure priority of service is in line with DAV Resolution 234, which addresses the role of Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialists (DVOPS) and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs).

Section 304 establishes a requirement that all those who completed a course of study provided by the National Veterans' Employment And Training Services Institute be given a pass/fail final exam and the results of the exam provided to the organization that employs the participants. DAV has no resolution on this matter.

Section 305 directs the establishment of a 3-year pilot program to assist unemployed veterans with skills training leading to qualification for employment. Up to 10 States that have the highest national unemployment rates could participate in the program. While this pilot program may provide important assistance to unemployed veterans, it would do so at the expense of DoL's State grants program, which funds DVOPS and LVERs. Specifically, it would allow participating States to use up to 25 percent of State grant funding to cover the cost of the pilot program. This means that the 10 States with the highest unemployment levels could reduce DVOP and LVER staff funding by 25 percent in order to provide the training.

In accordance with DAV Resolution 101, which calls for adequate funding for all veterans' employment and training programs, we would recommend that this section be amended to exclude funding from State grant programs and provide additional funding to support this pilot program.

Section 306 mandates that the sole duty of DVOPS and LVERs will be to assist eligible veterans in finding suitable employment. In addition, audits will be performed on a regular basis to ensure this is the case. DAV has long held that DVOPS and LVERs have been placed in the difficult position of wanting to assist veterans but being directed to perform other tasks such as working on public assistance related programs, including food stamps. DAV supports this provision, which is in line with DAV Resolution 234.

Section 307 directs the DoD and DoL to enter into a contract to complete the DoD/DoL Credentialing Work Group study with a focus on reducing barriers to certification and licensure for transitioning members of the military as well as veterans.

DAV has long been concerned with the issue of the transferability of military training into the civilian job market. It is our view that DoD provides critical training to active duty personnel to ensure their proficiency in the military specialty. Unfortunately, while this training meets the needs of the military, it does not meet the licensure or certification needs of the States in which servicemembers wish to live and work once they leave the military. Additional information on how to improve upon the employment prospects of veterans is welcome. This provision is in line with DAV Resolution No. 100, which supports efforts to eliminate employment barriers that impede the transfer of military job skills to the civilian labor market.

Section 401 clarifies the employment benefits covered under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). USERRA protects servicemembers' reemployment rights when returning from a period of service in the

uniformed services, including those called up from the reserves or National Guard, and prohibits employer discrimination based on military service or obligation. This section would stipulate that such protections extend to any advantage that is earned as a result of that employment to include rights and benefits offered by employers.

We recommend this section be amended to include medical treatment for service-connected conditions in accordance with DAV Resolution 141. While USERRA requires employers to release employees to perform military duty, and employers are required to make reasonable accommodations regarding these disabilities, currently employers are not specifically required by law to allow veterans with service-connected disabilities to be absent from the workplace to receive treatment for these disabilities. Amending this section to expand employment protections would resolve this discrepancy.

Section 501 extends the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) loan guaranty program for an additional 10 years for the purchase or construction of cooperative housing units. Programs to provide cooperative housing are an important resource in the multifaceted effort to end veterans' homelessness. Therefore, in accordance with DAV Resolution 223, we support the extension of the guaranty of loans for the purchase or construction of cooperative housing.

Section 502 reauthorizes the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP). The HVRP is an important program focusing on employment of homeless veterans, which provides assistance for those with significant problems including substance-use disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), serious social problems and legal issues. In accordance with DAV Resolution 223, we support this provision to provide sustained funding to improve services for homeless veterans.

#### **H.R. 1941—Hiring Heroes Act of 2011**

This bill provides enhancements to several programs impacting veterans.

Section 2 provides a 2-year extension, from December 31, 2012 to December 31, 2014, of a program that provides rehabilitation and vocational benefits to severely wounded members of the Armed Forces under the Wounded Warrior Act.

Extending this benefit provides servicemembers with disabilities important assistance in identifying the training requirements and resources they may need in order to achieve their rehabilitation and employment goals.

This is in line with DAV Resolution No. 307, which supports strengthening of the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program to meet the demands of disabled veterans.

Section 3 would expand the authority of the VA to pay employers to provide on-the-job training to veterans who have not been rehabilitated to the point of employability. Presently, the VA can make payments to employers for providing on-the-job training to veterans who have been rehabilitated to the point of employability in individual cases when it is determined that these payments are necessary help a veteran obtain needed on-the-job training or to begin employment. This provision extends this flexibility to veterans who have not been rehabilitated to the point of employability. Although DAV has no applicable resolution, we are not opposed to its passage.

Section 4 would provide up to an additional 24 months of vocational rehabilitation and employment services to veterans who have exhausted *both* these benefits *and* State-provided unemployment benefits and begin the new additional vocational rehabilitation program within 6 months of the date that the unemployment benefits begin. DAV has no applicable resolution but is not opposed to its passage.

Section 5 of the measure requires VA to engage, on a periodic basis for up to 1 year, with each veteran who has participated in its VR&E program, to determine whether the veteran is employed. This provision is in line with DAV Resolution No. 307, which calls for VR&E to provide for placement follow-up with employers for at least 6 months.

Section 6 of this measure would make participation in TAP mandatory for all military servicemembers, as does Section 202 of H.R. 2433. DoD has generally been opposed to mandatory attendance in the past. Opposition to this section of the bill could be overcome by amending it to include additional language which provides waivers of servicemembers' attendance in the face of operational requirements. Mandatory attendance is in line with the intent of DAV Resolution No. 230, which recognizes the importance of TAP and the Disabled Transition Assistance Program for those servicemembers transitioning to civilian status.

Section 7 would require the DoL to contact all TAP participants twice over a 180-day period to determine their employment status. Although DAV does not have a resolution on this matter, we are not opposed to its favorable consideration.

Section 8 creates a competitive grant program for nonprofit organizations that provide mentorship and job training programs that are designed to lead to job place-

ments. Although DAV does not have a resolution on this matter, we are not opposed to its passage.

Section 9 requires that each servicemember receive an individualized assessment of jobs they may qualify for when they participate in TAP. Although DAV does not have a resolution on this matter, the provision could benefit transitioning servicemembers. Therefore, we are not opposed to its favorable consideration.

Section 9 also requires the DoD, the DoL and VA to jointly contract for a study to identify any equivalencies between military occupational specialty-related skills and the qualifications required for various positions of civilian employment in the private sector. Then all those participating in TAP will be provided an individualized assessment of their military occupation as it relates to civilian employment opportunities.

This provision is in concert with the intent of DAV Resolution No. 100, which supports efforts to eliminate employment barriers that impede the transfer of military job skills to the civilian labor market.

Section 10 modifies Federal hiring practices to encourage the hiring of separating servicemembers and would allow them to begin the Federal employment application process prior to separation. This is in line with the intent of DAV Resolution 305, which supports veterans' preference in public employment.

Section 11 would authorize DoL Veterans Employment and Training Service to conduct outreach efforts through DVOPS and LVERs to unemployed veterans and assist them in finding employment. While DAV does not have a resolution on this matter, we are not opposed to its favorable consideration.

Section 12 would direct DoD to establish a pilot program to provide separating servicemembers, who are on terminal leave, work experience with civilian employees and contractors of the DoD to facilitate the transition of those members from service in the Armed Forces to employment in the civilian labor market. DAV has no resolution on this matter but is not opposed to its adoption.

Section 13 directs, as does H.R. 2433, Section 301, that DoL conduct a licensure and certification demonstration project. The important distinction of making such a demonstration project mandatory is critical as our Nation searches for ways to reduce the unemployment rates that afflict our veterans. This provision is in line with DAV Resolution No. 100, which supports efforts to eliminate employment barriers that impede the transfer of military job skills to the civilian labor market.

#### **H.R. 169**

This bill would require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to include on the main page of the VA's Web site a hyperlink to the VetSuccess Web site and to publicize the Web site. DAV has no resolution on this matter but is not opposed to its passage.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony.

#### **Statement of Tom Tarantino, Senior Legislative Associate, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America**

Madam Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee, on behalf of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America's 200,000 Member Veterans and supporters, thank you for allowing me to submit testimony sharing our members' views on these important issues.

My name is Tom Tarantino and I am the Senior Legislative Associate with IAVA. I proudly served 10 years in the Army beginning my career as an enlisted Reservist, and leaving service as an Active-Duty Cavalry Officer. Throughout these 10 years, my single most important duty was to take care of other soldiers. In the military they teach us to have each other's backs. And although my uniform is now a suit and tie, I am proud to work with this Congress to continue to have the backs of America's servicemembers and veterans.

IAVA would like to thank this Committee for its work on veteran unemployment, and would like to offer our comments on several of the bills that the Committee is currently considering.

<b>Bill #</b>	<b>Title/Desc.</b>	<b>Sponsor</b>	<b>Position</b>
H.R. 2433	Veterans Opportunity to Work Act	Miller	Support
H.R. 1941	Hiring Heroes Act of 2011	Bishop	Support
H.R. 169	Publicizing VetSuccess Program	Stearns	Support

***H.R. 2433***

IAVA is proud to endorse H.R. 2433. The most pressing concern for new veterans in 2011 is unemployment. With 13.3 percent unemployment for veterans in June 2011 and a rate of 12.3 percent for the year overall, unemployment is one of the single greatest challenges faced by veterans. Even though employment is a concern for every American in the current economic environment, the average unemployment rate for veterans is 25 percent higher than the rate for civilians. IAVA supports H.R. 2433, the Veteran Opportunity to Work Act of 2011, because of the significant steps it takes to help increase veteran employment.

The first step towards a successful transition to the civilian workforce is a successful Transition Assistance Program (TAP). Building on the reforms underway at the Department of Labor (DoL), H.R. 2433 makes TAP mandatory for all separating servicemembers. Additionally, this bill wisely requires that DoL collect metrics on the effectiveness of the program.

Additionally, in order to help a veteran transition from the military to the civilian workforce, we must know how their skills translate in to the civilian market. H.R. 2433 addresses this head on by studying how 10 high density Military Occupational Specialties (MOSSs) can translate into licenses and certifications in the civilian market. Requiring the DoL to contract with an organization of State Governors as well as private industry leaders to conduct this study will put decision makers and experts in front of this problem and promises to yield results where we have failed in the past. Hopefully, this effort will be the beginning of programs that allow military veterans to use the skills, training, and experience acquired through military service in civilian certification processes.

Throughout H.R. 2433, there are provisions that also collect metrics and enhance performance standards. This is a necessary component to establish not just historical perspective or current performance of any program, but to determine the most effective course of action in the future.

IAVA is pleased to support this bill. We thank Chairman Miller for his leadership and applaud the work of the Committee and their staff as a whole to address the problem of veteran unemployment in strong and creative ways.

***H.R. 1941 Hiring Heroes Act of 2011***

IAVA is pleased to support H.R. 1941, the Hiring Heroes Act of 2011. H.R. 1941 is a robust bill that contains provisions that utilize the combined resources of the Department of Defense (DoD), Department of Labor (DoL) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to combat this problem.

An essential first step is ensuring that all transitioning servicemembers attend a Transition Assistance Program (TAP). Nearly 20 percent of all separating servicemembers fail to attend a TAP class. TAP classes provide important information of job search skills and strategies as well as veteran benefits. Requiring TAP for all separating servicemembers will mean that veterans are made aware of VA programs for educational assistance or vocational training as well as transitional medical benefits that will help ease their transition to the civilian world. While requiring TAP attendance will not be the panacea to veteran unemployment, it will provide a baseline of knowledge for separating servicemembers and guarantee that they have at least a general exposure to the full range of benefits to which they are entitled. It is a low cost and effective first step toward a solution.

Understanding how military jobs, billets, and certifications translate into the civilian market and then directly translating military credentials and licenses into those used by civilian employers are necessary steps in reducing veteran unemployment. Military skills and experience in skilled occupations from air traffic controller to operating room specialist to jet pilot are often lost when servicemembers become civilians. Because military training and experience is not necessarily recognized for civilian licensure, barriers to entry into analogous civilian jobs in the form of costs for required (often duplicative) education and time to achieve requirements are high and those skills are lost. H.R. 1941 recognizes this loss to society and our economy and seeks to prevent it by establishing civilian equivalency for military jobs. This is a wise and frugal investment; the expense to train has already been borne by the military. It is a far costlier choice to allow servicemembers' skills to disappear.

Other aspects of H.R. 1941 are important in easing the transition from military to civilian employment and will, we believe, lessen the staggering 13.3 percent veteran unemployment rate posted for June of 2011. The ability to allow direct appointments into civil service jobs and establishing a pilot program to allow the DoD to place servicemembers 180 days from discharge into DoD civilian jobs or jobs with DoD contractors while on terminal leave are two forward thinking ideas that represent "out of the box" solutions that will help ease veteran unemployment at low-to-no extra cost to the taxpayer.



**H.R. 169 Publicizing VetSuccess**

IAVA supports H.R. 169. The VetSuccess Program is an excellent resource that offers a centralized location to find answers to common questions about VA resources for employment, education, health care and more. However, no matter how well resourced or executed a program is, if the population it serves is unaware that it exists, the program will not be successful. One of the most common criticisms of benefits programs is that veterans do not know the benefits exist. If we are to ensure that the VetSuccess program is successful, the least we can do is to prominently display it on the VA Web site (where many veterans initially begin searching).

For example, 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. VetSuccess on Campus, the VA program that places VA personnel dedicated to educational benefit counseling on college campuses and helps mitigate the challenges faced by transitioning veterans, 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 complications. 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 paperwork. However, we have found that many veterans do not know that the resources exist to help them navigate the labyrinthine processes they encounter.

This is a perfect example of the benefit of H.R. 169. Publicizing the resources available before a veteran begins the journey through the bureaucratic maze will help ensure faster access to benefits for the veteran and less extra, and often unnecessary, work for program administrators. H.R. 169 will help ensure the success of VetSuccess by the simplest of means.

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Military Officers Association of America  
Washington, DC.  
July 14, 2011

The Honorable Jeff Miller  
Chairman, Committee on Veterans Affairs  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Miller:

On behalf of the 370,000 members of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), I am writing to thank you for your leadership in introducing H.R. 2433, *The Veterans Opportunity to Work Act*.

H.R. 2433 would re-open Vietnam Era GI Bill educational benefits to certain veterans who have been chronically unemployed, mandate attendance in the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), require the Defense and Departments of Labor to track outcome measures for TAP participants, re-authorize a pilot program to link military acquired skills to civilian jobs through licensing and certification, and for other purposes.

MOAA recommends including a provision in the bill to require outreach by the VA to unemployed veterans who may be eligible for the GI Bill benefits authorized in Title I of the legislation. We would also recommend adoption of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program adjustments and other employment-related features in the *Hiring Heroes Act of 2011*, H.R. 1941.

MOAA pledges its full support for early enactment of H.R. 1941 and respectfully requests including this letter in the record of any hearing to consider or mark-up this important legislation.

Sincerely,

VADM Norbert R. Ryan, Jr., USN (Ret.)  
President

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**Statement of Robert L. Simoneau, Deputy Executive Director,  
National Association of State Workforce Agencies**

NASWA has long advocated for additional training resources dedicated to veterans as contained in H.R. 2433, the “Veterans Opportunity Act of 2011.” The following summarized our comments:

- NASWA supports the veterans retraining assistance program as described in Title I of H.R. 2433.
- NASWA supports extending the requirement for TAP participation all armed forces.
- NASWA asks the Committee to consider extending the provision of TAP to National Guard and Reserve members.
- NASWA supports Section 4114 of Chapter 41, Title 38, Credentialing and Licensure of Veterans demonstration project, and supports the changes outlined in H.R. 2433.
- NASWA supports a joint recommendation with NGA on Common Measures, but plans to study and provide recommendations for revised performance measures.
- NASWA supports additional training resources, especially those dedicated to serving veterans.
- NASWA supports the provisions in H.R. 169 and suggest changing the term, “JobCentral” to “the National Labor Exchange (NLX), powered by JobCentral.”
- In regard to H.R. 1941, NASWA is supportive of efforts to provide additional services to veterans who have exhausted their unemployment benefits under State law in H.R. 1941.

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Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Filner and Members of the Committee, on behalf of the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA), I thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony and to appear before you to discuss the legislation being addressed today.

The members of our Association are State leaders of the publicly-funded workforce development system vital to meeting the employment needs of veterans. This is accomplished through the Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program (DVOP) and the Local Veterans’ Employment Representatives (LVER) programs, as well as other programs and initiatives offered through the publicly-funded workforce system.

NASWA serves as an advocate for State workforce programs and policies, a liaison to Federal workforce system partners, and a forum for the exchange of information and practices. Our organization was founded in 1937. Since 1973, it has been a private, non-profit corporation, financed by annual dues from member State agencies, grants, and private sector alliance funds.

NASWA thanks the Committee for development of legislation to enhance services available for military members and veterans, their families, and to improve the transition of military members to civilian lives and careers. Helping veterans make a successful transition from their service in the military to successful civilian careers remains a significant challenge. I would now like to turn to the specific provisions of your proposed legislation.

***H.R. 2433***  
**“Veterans Opportunity Act of 2011”**

***Title I—Retraining Veterans***

NASWA has long advocated for additional training resources dedicated to veterans. Although the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and other employment and training programs funded through the U.S. Department of Labor provide priority of services for veterans, the purchasing power of those funds is limited and decreasing. Section 168 of WIA, Veterans Workforce Investment Program (VWIP), dedicates training resources to veterans, but only a few States receive VWIP grants, and only a few local areas receive funding.

We acknowledge the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944, the “GI Bill of Rights,” revamped by the 1984 bill, the “Montgomery GI Bill,” and especially the Post-9/11 GI Bill of 2008, are excellent sources of education and training resources for veterans. The Post-9/11 GI Bill significantly enhances educational benefits to cover various school expenses, including books and supplies. It also provides for the ability to transfer educational benefits to spouses or children.

Not every veteran can benefit from or take advantage of the GI Bill. It is difficult to tell how the proposed training in Title I of H.R. 2433 would be funded and implemented, but the clause, “Payments of retraining assistance under this section shall

be made by the Secretary of Labor through the Secretary of Veterans Affairs" sounds similar to the Servicemembers Occupational Conversion and Training Act or "SMOCTA" program. NASWA has several times recommended Congress consider re-funding the SMOCTA program, authorized in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1993 (P.L. 102-484), or a similar job training program. We believe one of the reasons SMOCTA worked so well is the program was administered jointly by the U.S. Departments of Labor, Veterans Affairs, and Defense. Funds were provided by the Department of Defense.

State workforce agencies considered SMOCTA to be one of the best programs to serve returning military personnel. SMOCTA was established in response to the impact on veterans who had been affected by the downsizing of the military, especially personnel who had no readily transferable skills. SMOCTA provided assistance in the form of reimbursements to employers to offset the cost of training recently separated servicemembers for stable and permanent positions that involve significant training. Besides the reimbursements to employers, SMOCTA provided funds for assessments, development of training plans, and supportive services for the trainee.

H.R. 2433 focuses retraining assistance on the pursuit of a program of education as defined in Section 3452(b) of Title 38, United States Code; however, it also allows training on-the-job as covered under Chapter 36 of Title 38.

NASWA supports the veterans retraining assistance program as described in Title I of H.R. 2433. It promotes the inclusion of on-the-job training and alternate education programs as outlined in section 101 (b) Retraining Assistance of the legislation. We also appreciate that special consideration is provided for veterans who have been unemployed for at least 26 continuous weeks. Our members often cite the need for additional resources for older veterans. The requirement for these training funds to be used for a veteran who is at least 35 years old but not more than 60 years old should help address this issue.

Although we realize this is authorization legislation, we are concerned whether additional appropriation of funds would be available for such training services. If additional funds are made available, it will be important those funds also cover administrative costs.

#### ***Title II—Improving the Transition Assistance Program***

The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) consists of comprehensive workshops at selected military installations nationwide. Many of these workshops have been conducted by State staff under the DVOP or LVER programs. While States have varying opinions regarding the move to contract administration of TAP workshops to private vendors, we understand the intent of ensuring TAP instruction is provided uniformly across the Nation. NASWA encourages the continued involvement of DVOPs or LVERs in TAP workshops, to assist in connecting the transitioning member to the local workforce center during and after the workshop.

NASWA supports the change to require the participation of all members of the armed forces eligible for assistance provided by TAP. The benefits of participation in TAP have been proven and have been acknowledged by most transitioning members who attend the workshops. The U.S. Marine Corps' policy to require participation in TAP has resulted in an average 85 to 90 percent participation rate, allowing for waivers or exemptions. We support extending the requirement for TAP participation to the all armed forces.

Many of our States have developed and expanded TAP workshops to include National Guard and Reserve units. We ask the Committee to consider extending the provision of TAP to individuals in these units transitioning from active duty to civilian life. Although many of these individuals, but not all, are job-attached, there still are many other provisions of TAP workshops that would benefit them.

The requirement for the Secretary of Labor to contract an appropriate entity to conduct an audit of the TAP program seems prudent. Section 203 of H.R. 2433 amends Section 144 of Title 10, United States Code, to indicate the Secretary of Labor shall use funds made available for the State grant program authorized under Section 4102 of Title 38. We recommend the audit contract not be funded from allocations made to States for the DVOP and LVER programs, which would reduce the ability of States to provide direct services to veterans.

Our only concern with Section 204, TAP Outcomes, is this section greatly expands the number of individuals potentially attending TAP. If State workforce agencies have the responsibility to track TAP participants, the reporting and tracking burdens placed on States will be significant. Current tracking and reporting systems used by the States often use antiquated computer systems and are difficult to change. In addition, establishing a method to build and implement an assessment system could require substantial resources. NASWA urges Congress to provide funding to make these changes.

One problem we often hear from our members is that the Department of Defense (DoD) cannot or will not share any personal information regarding transitioning members. The method to assess outcomes must include sharing of personal information of transitioning members between the Department of Labor and DoD; if DoD is not forthcoming with this information, expansion of the TAP is not likely to achieve the Committee's goals.

***Title III—Improving the Transition of Veterans to Civilian Employment***

Often military experience and training do not transfer to civilian occupations, or more likely, are not understood or accepted by civilian employers or State or local licensing or credentialing entities. Unfortunately, this often results in military members unable to obtain employment in occupations they are proficient in, but lack the civilian credentials to obtain. Also, when pursuing education or training requirements for a credential or license, they typically discover they need to repeat the same type of training or classes they had in the military.

This is a serious barrier to many transitioning members, which keeps them from finding employment in the industry or occupation where they want to work. Through our National Labor Exchange (NLX) employer partners, we learned one of the most critical obstacles to the employment of veterans is their inability to secure formal credentials and certifications, even though they have received nearly equivalent training while in the military. Veterans must spend resources, including valuable time, to acquire formal civilian credentials when many already possess the skills.

NASWA supports Section 4114 of Chapter 41, Title 38, Credentialing and Licensure of Veterans demonstration project, and supports the changes outlined in H.R. 2433. Our only concern is with the change in Section 4114(h) Funding. The change instructs the Assistant Secretary to carry out the demonstration project by "using not more than \$180,000 of the funds in each fiscal year that are appropriated . . . to be derived from amounts available to carry out Sections 4103A and 4014 of this title." Although NASWA supports the credentialing and licensure demonstration project, we are concerned that the funds for the DVOP and LVER programs are again being diverted from direct services to veterans.

Section 302, Inclusion of Performance Measures in Annual Report on Veteran Job Counseling, Training, and Placement Programs of the Department of Labor, adds a number of performance measures for the provisions under Chapter 41, Title 38.

NASWA's current policy is to support the NASWA and National Governors Association's (NGA) proposed common measures for the reauthorization of WIA. The NASWA/NGA proposal recommends measuring the percentage of program participants who are employed during the second quarter after exit, the percentage of program participants employed during the fourth quarter, the median earnings of program participants during the second quarter after exit, and the percentage of program participants who obtain an education or training credential during participation or within 1 year after exit.

NASWA supports common measures for all programs, including veterans' programs in the workforce system. Although NASWA currently supports the NASWA/NGA proposal, we recognize the workforce system in general, and performance measures in particular, can be improved. One example suggested by a NASWA member is to establish measures at the point of entry or during participation, rather than after exit. NASWA will work with its members to study this and other ideas, and make recommendations in the future.

We are concerned with staff time required to implement and then track these measures, and with the cost and programming time to change computer-based reporting systems. Computer modifications to implement these additional performance measures could be quite complicated and expensive. If State workforce agencies are required to perform these computer modifications within existing budgets, it would diminish direct services to veterans. If the additional performance measures are added, we recommend the U.S. Department of Labor include the changes in its redesign of consolidated reporting and provide the States with programming options and funding to retrofit State reporting systems.

The additional language to clarify Priority of Service for Veterans in Department of Labor Job Training Programs is a subtle difference, but because there still seems to be confusion in implementing Priority of Service; we appreciate the clarification. The only concern we have with the additional reporting criteria for the Secretary's Annual Report on Priority of Service is the potential increase in workload and costs for local and State workforce staff to track the information required for the assessment and the Report.

It is not clear what the overall purpose is for conducting a final pass-fail examination to evaluate the individual's performance in receiving training as described in

Section 304, Evaluation of Individuals Receiving Training at the National Veterans' Employment and Training Services Institute.

The intent of the training is to increase the knowledge skills and abilities (KSA) of staff who undertake the training. The curriculum is designed to cover specific segments of KSAs staff need to accomplish their work. As with any training program, trainees come from different backgrounds and experiences, therefore having an assessment system that measures the gain in KSAs achieved by each student makes sense, but these need to be targeted to specific areas. A single final pass-fail grade may not be attainable, nor achieve the intent of the Committee.

The participants of the various classes start at different knowledge and experience levels. There are a number of different classes taught at the Institute and we are not sure if all classes would have the same requirement, including those for managers and supervisors. Much of each class is skill-based and requires practice in the classroom.

Although NASWA does not have an official position on the requirement for testing, we do question the value of a pass-fail examination. Each State has the responsibility for evaluating employees' performance. If a sponsoring State or other entity receives a report that an employee failed the final examination, it is unclear whether the expectation is termination of the employee, reassignment to the same training, or other action. This could be in conflict with a State policy.

NASWA supports additional training resources, especially those dedicated to serving veterans. The pilot program to use State grant funds to enter into grants with the ten States with the highest rates of unemployment in the Nation to provide training to unemployed veterans sounds great. However, the legislation says the State may use up to 25 percent of the State grant for the training program. This means that the ten States with the highest unemployment levels would need to reduce its DVOP and LVER staff funding by 25 percent in order to provide the training. If the funding for sections 4103A and 4004 would be increased significantly, this would be a great option. We often hear from our members that they wished the State grant would provide and allow for training veterans; however, this recommendation is based on additional funding. A 25 percent reduction in the funding of DVOP and LVER staff in a State would have a significant adverse impact on services to veterans.

We understand and support the intent of Section 306, Requirements for Full-Time DVOPs and LVERs; however, States and local workforce centers should still have some flexibility in order to maintain efficient delivery of services. In small offices, a DVOP or LVER may need to cover the telephones or greet customers when no other staff members are available. At limited times, DVOPs or LVERs serve military members (not a veteran), non-eligible spouses, or possibly a veteran who does not want to be identified as such on the records.

NASWA supports Section 307, Report on Findings of the DoD and USDOL Credentialing Work Group. This study of ten military occupational specialists has been in the process for some time. An examination of current initiatives and programs to promote credentialing of members of the Armed Forces and identify best practices that can be leveraged by all services to increase the transferability of military education, training, experience, and skills would help to reduce barriers to certification and licensure for transitioning members. This study would enhance the efforts to reauthorize and improve the demonstration project on credentialing and licensure of veterans described under Title III, Section 301 or H.R. 2433.

Funding cuts and efforts to improve the workforce system through automation have allowed States to serve more workers and employers, but has disrupted the ability to provide in-person, targeted reemployment services. While nearly all Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants, including veterans, file for unemployment insurance via telephone or Internet, there is often limited in-person contact with one-stop career centers. NASWA is working with the U.S. Department of Labor to improve this connection.

During a recent hearing before this Committee, NASWA Executive Director Rich Hobbie mentioned a concept for the employment of veterans. The concept would require veterans collecting Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Servicemembers (UCX) to register with their local one-stop career center as a condition of receiving UCX and receive reemployment services. This process could be voluntarily piloted in a few States.

This approach would be targeted and timely, providing early intervention and information on the full array of job openings and employment and training services for recently discharged veterans. It also enhances the Jobs for Veterans Act, taking advantage of the Priority of Service provision to focus on veterans most likely to have difficulty finding employment.

If the Committee is interested, NASWA is willing to provide background information and suggestions for legislative language.

***Title IV—Improvements to Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights***

NASWA supports the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) and has no concerns on Section 401.

***Title V—Extension of Certain Expiring Provisions of Law***

NASWA supports Section 502, the extension of the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Programs (NVRP). The NVRP programs provide important resources to homeless veterans and to avert veterans from becoming homeless. Our members work closely with HVRP grant recipients.

***H.R. 169***

**To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to include on the main page of the Internet Web site of the Department of Veterans Affairs a hyperlink to the VetSuccess Internet Web site and to publicize such Internet Web site.**

**Section 1. Promotion of the VetSuccess Internet Web site.**

NASWA supports the provisions in H.R. 169 for hyperlinks on the Department of Veterans Affairs' Web site for VetSuccess, USA Jobs Internet Web sites, JobCentral Web site and any other appropriate employment Internet Web sites.

We suggest changing the term, "JobCentral" to "the National Labor Exchange (NLX), powered by JobCentral." NASWA in partnership with the DirectEmployers (DE) Association created the NLX, which allows NASWA and its State and business partners to have a direct involvement in making job connections for our Nation's veterans by creating a free electronic labor exchange service.

Promoting awareness of the VetSuccess Web site in national media outlets and conducting outreach to veterans of recent wars to inform such veterans of the Web site are sound business initiatives.

Although the list of Web sites in the legislation is not inclusive, we recommend the Web sites listed in H.R. 169 include the "Key to Career Success" Web site, which lists all one-stop career centers in the country and includes many other resources. The site is available at <http://www.careeronestop.org/MilitaryTransition/findLocalServices.aspx>.

***H.R. 1941***

**"Hiring Heroes Act of 2011"**

**Section 4. Training and Rehabilitation for Veterans with Service-Connected Disabilities who have Exhausted Rights to Unemployment Benefits Under State Law.**

NASWA is supportive of efforts to provide additional services to veterans who have exhausted their unemployment benefits under State law. We also suggest earlier emphasis on reemployment of veterans who are likely to exhaust their unemployment benefits. We suggest legislation be clear whether the State workforce agency or the Department of Veterans Affairs would be responsible to determine eligibility for this program. State workforce agencies have responsibility for the UI programs in their State; the role of the UI program should be delineated.

**Section 5. Assessment and Follow-up on Veterans who Participate in Department of Veterans Affairs Training and Rehabilitation for Veterans with Service-Connected Disabilities.**

This section directs the Secretary to contact such veteran for follow-up at 180-day intervals. NASWA suggests legislation be clear whether the State workforce agency or the Department of Veterans Affairs' would be responsible for conducting the follow-up. Currently, DVOP staff conducts the follow-up for Chapter 31 participants referred to the State workforce agency for placement services.

**Section 6. Mandatory Participation of Members of the Armed Forces in the Transitional Assistance Program of the Department of Defense.**

As stated in our comments for Title II of H.R. 2433, NASWA supports the change to require the participation of all members of the armed forces eligible for assistance provided by TAP.

**Section 7. Follow-up on Employment Status of Members of Armed Forces who Recently Participated in Transitional Assistance Program of Department of Defense.**

NASWA interprets this section to mean the State workforce staff, primarily the DVOP, would be required to conduct the follow-up activity for all Transitional As-

sistance Program (TAP) participants. This could result in a substantial increase in workload. Tracking former participants could be very difficult, and the more time that elapses after participation, the harder it is to find individuals.

**Section 8. Collaborative Veterans' Training, Mentoring, and Placement Program.**

This section includes authorizing appropriations of additional funds to carry out the program as described in Section 8. NASWA would be concerned if the program used existing State grants funds. We appreciate the requirement for grant recipients to collaborate with DVOPs, LVERs, and the appropriate State and local board as defined in the Workforce Investment Act. However, collaboration takes time and if not well-defined, can mean a significant increase in workload for the DVOPs, LVERs and other staff.

**Section 9. Individualized Assessment for Members of the Armed Forces Under Transition Assistance on Equivalence Between Skills Developed in Military Occupational Specialties and Qualifications Required for Civilian Employment with the Private Sector.**

As stated in our comments for Title III of H.R. 2433, NASWA supports efforts to improve the ability of veterans to use their military experience and training to obtain required civilian credentials and licenses. A study to identify any equivalence between the skills developed by members of the Armed Forces through various specialties and the qualifications required for various civilian positions should be beneficial to understanding the differences in requirements and to assist in veterans obtaining civilian credentials and licenses.

Also, it makes sense to use the results of the study to implement individualized assessment of all TAP participants of the various positions of civilian employment in the private sector for which such member may be qualified as a result of the skills developed by such member through the member's military occupational specialty.

**Section 11. Outreach Program for Certain Veterans Receiving Unemployment Compensation.**

NASWA supports the focus to provide outreach to covered veterans and provide them with assistance in finding employment. Past reemployment programs that provided resources to outreach and assist UI claimants to obtain employment have been very successful.

We reiterate the concept we proposed in response to Title III of H.R. 2433. The concept would require veterans collecting Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Servicemembers (UCX) to register with their local one-stop career center as a condition of receiving UCX and receive reemployment services. This process could be voluntarily piloted in a few States.

This approach would be targeted and timely—providing early intervention and information—on the full array of job opportunities and employment and training services for recently discharged veterans. It also enhances the Jobs for Veterans Act, taking advantage of the Priority of Service provision to focus on veterans most likely to have difficulty finding employment.

If the Committee is interested, NASWA is willing to provide background information and suggestions for legislative language.

**Section 13. Enhancement of Demonstration Program on Credentialing and Licensing of Veterans.**

NASWA supports a demonstration program on credentialing and licensing of veterans. Credentialing and licensing after military service is a significant barrier for many veterans in finding employment in their field of experience and training.

NASWA and its members remain dedicated to improving the efficiency of the labor market and its labor exchange function, and improving the employment opportunities of our Nation's veterans. We are willing to assist the Committee and the U.S. Department of Labor in any way possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to address these important issues.

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**Statement of Paralyzed Veterans of America**

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Filner, and Members of the Committee, Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) would like to thank you for the opportunity to offer our views on H.R. 2433, the "Veterans Opportunity to Work Act of 2011;" H.R. 1941, the "Hiring Heroes Act of 2011;" and H.R. 169. The employment challenges facing average Americans is certainly no secret, but the challenges facing veterans, particularly disabled veterans, are even greater. PVA is pleased to see that the Committee has made employment of veterans one of its highest priorities. In fact, PVA

has taken on veterans employment for severely disabled veterans as one of our primary missions by creating our own vocational rehabilitation program focused on actually getting veterans into a career, not just a job, and keeping them employed.

Recent statistics about veterans' unemployment are humbling to say the least.

Unemployment is particularly a problem for veterans who have served since September 11, 2011. In fact, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans rose to 12.1 percent at the end of May from 10.9 percent at the end of April. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate for non-veterans remained unchanged at 9.1 percent during that same period. Moreover, the unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans spikes to nearly 20 percent for male veterans ages 18 to 24.

And yet, the statistics for severely disabled veterans are even worse. Currently, approximately 85 percent of veterans with a severe disability are unemployed. The reasons for this are many, ranging from the veterans fear of reentering the workplace to employers simply being unwilling to take on the responsibility of accommodating veterans with special needs in the workplace. With these thoughts in mind, an agenda that focuses on employment for veterans of all ages, whether disabled or not, is critical, and we applaud the Committee for meeting this challenge head on.

#### **H.R. 2433, the "Veterans Opportunity to Work Act of 2011"**

PVA fully supports H.R. 2433, the "Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) Act of 2011." PVA is intrigued by the provision to create a veterans retraining assistance program. We are unclear as to why the program created by this provision would be limited to veterans over the age of 35. While we understand that a significant number of veterans in the age bracket proposed by this legislation (35 to 60) are chronically unemployed, we believe that this program could be beneficial to all veterans. That being said, given the vast array of programs available to post-9/11 veterans (many of whom are younger than 35), we appreciate the fact that the Committee proposes to offer this innovative assistance to older veterans.

PVA appreciates the emphasis placed on improving the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) in this legislation. However, we recommend that the proposed legislation be clarified to include veterans participating in the Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP). We have argued over the years that while TAP is questionably effective, the DTAP has been completely forgotten. In fact, too often disabled servicemembers are not even aware that there is a TAP available specifically for them. Additionally, we believe that the Department of Labor (DoL) has done a poor job of promoting and conducting DTAP.

We also fully support the requirement that participation in the TAP be made mandatory for all servicemembers prior to discharge. While we understand that the legislation includes the caveat that TAP will not be mandatory if a "documented urgent operational requirement prevents attendance," we believe that such occurrences rarely, if ever, occur. In fact, in the past, servicemembers primarily did not attend TAP because their unit commanders placed no importance on the program and did not readily provide them the opportunity to attend. Fortunately, we believe this culture is changing, but it has not been completely overcome. Given the difficulty that recently discharged servicemembers have achieving meaningful employment, it only makes sense that they be required to participate in TAP or DTAP.

Although PVA appreciates the focus on assessing outcomes of TAP, we believe that this assessment can be taken a step further. Often, the problem with employment tracking is that it does not follow the individual far enough into the future to ensure that they are retaining employment for an extended period of time. As such, we believe that DoL, the VA, and the Department of Defense should develop an in depth assessment that tracks veterans well beyond discharge.

PVA also supports the provision to reauthorize the demonstration project on credentialing and licensure of veterans. Credentialing standards, such as education, training, and experience requirements, are developed based on traditional methods for obtaining competency in the civilian workforce. As a result, many transitioning military personnel who have received their career preparation through military service find it difficult to meet certification and licensing requirements due to the lack of civilian recognition of military training and experience. However, we are unclear as to why the consultation requirement with "Federal, State, and industry officials" is being changed.

PVA also fully supports the provisions to require State employment offices receiving Federal grants to maintain a full-time Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist and a full-time Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) whose responsibilities are to only serve the employment needs of eligible



veterans. Too often, State employment offices take advantage of DVOP and LVER staff to fulfill other requirements not related to serving veterans. This has long been a complaint of veterans' service organizations. We appreciate the fact that the Committee has recognized this problem and is now considering legislation to prevent this from happening.

Lastly, we would like to offer our strong support for the reauthorization of the DoL Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP). The HVRP is a valuable program focusing on employment of homeless veterans. This program has achieved wonderful success since its inception approximately 25 years ago. The HVRP provides help for those veterans with significant problems including substance-use disorder, severe PTSD, serious social problems, legal issues and HIV. The specialized services needed for these veterans and provided by HVRP are often their only hope. The HVRP is perhaps the most cost-effective and cost-efficient program in the Federal Government. And yet in spite of the success of HVRP, it remains severely under-funded. Reauthorization of this program would ensure that homeless veterans who need a high level of support get it.

#### **H.R. 1941, the "Hiring Heroes Act of 2011"**

PVA strongly supports H.R. 1941, the "Hiring Heroes Act of 2011." With veterans' national unemployment rate higher than civilian unemployment rates for all age categories, the Federal Government must assist these men and women as they try to assimilate back into the civilian world. It is estimated that over 27 percent of young veterans coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan are unemployed. The "Hiring Heroes Act of 2011" is a proactive effort by the various agencies, VA, DoL, and DoD, to actively assist these newly discharged servicemembers with identifying a career path and obtaining employment they desire. The "Hiring Heroes Act of 2011" is the first legislation of its kind to require broad job skills training for all servicemembers returning home.

Military service to our Nation is preparation for civilian work opportunities. Today, most military occupations do not offer that benefit since many military occupational specialties are nontransferable skills. If all provisions included in the "Hiring Heroes Act of 2011" are fully developed, properly executed, and available to all servicemembers, this effort will provide a strong recruitment tool for all branches of service.

#### **H.R. 169**

PVA supports H.R. 169. Having readily available information pertaining to employment opportunities on the Internet is essential for veterans seeking employment in the 21st Century. This is particularly true of the newest generation of veterans who rely heavily on internet and online social media for information. The internet may be the most valuable tool for veterans who are continuing their education or looking for employment.

While creating a hyperlink directed towards veterans employment is seemingly a trivial step, it highlights the importance of this issue. Additionally, having readily available and easy access to other important Web sites such as VetSuccess, USA Jobs, Job Central, and other relevant Web sites would certainly improve information sharing for veterans seeking employment opportunities. PVA believes that determining the information to be made available through this hyperlink should be coordinated between the VA and the Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Service. We often hear of the difficulty veterans face when trying to navigate the vast array of information available when seeking employment. We believe the provisions of this legislation can help ease their search by placing these important links on the main page of the Web site of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, once again PVA would like to thank you for placing emphasis on one of the greatest challenges facing our Nation's veterans.

Meaningful employment is a vital part of improving transition for servicemembers as well as fulfilling our obligation to the men and women who served in the past. Moreover, employment holds the key to finally overcoming homelessness among veterans. We look forward to partnering with you to put veterans back to work. We would be happy to respond to any questions that you might have.



**Statement of Ryan M. Gallucci, Deputy Director, National Legislative Service, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States**

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THIS COMMITTEE:

On behalf of the 2.1 million members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and our Auxiliaries, the VFW would like to thank this Committee for the opportunity to present its views on these bills.

**H.R. 169, To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to include on the main page of the Internet Web site of the Department of Veterans Affairs a hyperlink to the VetSuccess Internet Web site and to publicize such Internet Web site.**

The VFW generally supports the intent of H.R. 169. However, we believe that the problem this bill seeks to rectify goes beyond VA. Recently, the Office of Personnel Management published its report on the 2009 Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government initiative, or Feds Hire Vets. Though the report demonstrated some success in the initiative, the gains in veteran hires were underwhelming. Numbers across agencies were inconsistent, while traditionally military-friendly departments, such as the departments of Defense, Homeland Security, and Veterans Affairs still comprise nearly 80 percent of total veterans employed.

After reviewing the numbers, the VFW decided to look at how each Federal executive agency chose to implement the tasks of the Feds Hire Vets program through their Web sites, which the VFW believes is the most easily accessible point of entry for job-seekers. The VFW found that information for veteran job-seekers was not readily available on many agency Web sites, and those that included the information often directed job-seekers into a loop that was difficult to navigate, and eventually guided job-seekers to USAJOBS.

Though the VFW does not necessarily support a legislative solution to issues of Web site layout and design, we support the notion that Federal agencies should practice consistency in their messaging to veteran job-seekers. The VFW believes that veterans should be able to easily find resources like VetSuccess and USAJOBS on the landing pages of Federal agencies, and we hope that Veteran Employment Program officers will choose to implement this recommendation as a best practice.

**H.R. 1941, Hiring Heroes Act of 2011**

The VFW supports H.R. 1941, the Hiring Heroes Act of 2011, and considers this bill a critical and overdue piece of legislation that will help our Nation's heroes re-enter and remain competitive in the workforce. During recent difficult economic times, young veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have been disproportionately affected by a stagnant job market, which is why VFW believes Congress should take every step necessary to ensure that our Nation's heroes have viable careers available to them when they leave the military. The VFW generally supports the provisions of H.R. 1941, but we would like to focus on several of the bill's sections in our testimony.

First, the VFW agrees that TAP must be mandatory for all servicemembers leaving the military. This is a missed opportunity to ensure that all servicemembers have a viable baseline from which to work once they reenter the civilian workforce. The VFW also believes that consultation with VA should be included in all TAP programs, ensuring that veterans transitioning out of the military are at least aware of the benefits and services to which they are entitled.

The VFW also agrees that direct hiring authority for Federal agencies and offering civilian work experience for potential civil service employees while on terminal leave will cut down on red tape for veterans seeking careers in the Federal workforce. Allowing qualified veterans a direct path to a civil service career also helps Federal agencies fulfill their obligations to employ veterans.

Finally, the VFW supports offering two additional years of VocRehab benefits for unemployed veterans who have exhausted all of their State and Federal benefits. The intent of VocRehab is to ensure that veterans who were disabled in the line of duty would be trained and employable in a new career field. If a veteran has used their VocRehab benefits, yet remains unemployed, then their initial VocRehab program clearly failed. To the VFW, VA is obligated to ensure that veterans who participate in the program truly receive the job skills they need to remain competitive in the civilian workforce.

The VFW also has a suggestion for improving H.R. 1491. Section 9 of the bill has the right objective; making the transition from military to civilian life easier by allowing servicemembers to apply the skills learned from their MOS to the civilian workforce. The problem with Section 9 is the approach; calling for a study and report requiring coordination between the Secretaries of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Labor. This approach wastes time on bureaucracy, rather than helping to place

the servicemember in a civilian occupation. Replacing Section 9 with ongoing private sector initiatives—two of which the VFW follows at Fort Bragg and in Illinois—would streamline this transition by cutting out bureaucracy. Some of these initiatives utilize mathematical algorithms through which servicemembers can simply enter their MOS to populate a list of viable civilian careers; others identify and fill State credentialing gaps; and industry experts continue to develop ways to translate such data sets into usable information to guide veterans on their educational and professional training needs. The VFW is eager to discuss these initiatives further with Members of the Committee following this hearing. The VFW believes that the private sector already has the capacity to bring the departments of Defense, Labor and Veterans Affairs into the 21st century through these ongoing initiatives without wasting additional resources on a duplicative study. Starting over with another study could cause a setback on gains already made by companies that have identified such gaps and are already working to close them.

#### **H.R. 2433, Veterans Opportunity to Work Act of 2011**

The VFW supports H.R. 2433, the Veterans Opportunity to Work Act of 2011, which is yet another long overdue piece of legislation to help veterans find meaningful employment during difficult economic times. The VFW generally supports the provisions of this bill, which will create substantive new programs for veterans, while also codifying reporting requirements for the departments of Defense, Labor and Veterans Affairs to ensure that new and ongoing initiatives are producing the desired result of placing veterans in viable careers once they separate from the military.

The VFW supports the proposal to create a new Veterans Retraining Assistance Program, allowing veterans who have exhausted both their education benefits and unemployment benefits to take advantage of an additional 12 months of training, honing the skills necessary to reenter the competitive job market. This new program would serve an often overlooked demographic within the veterans' community—workers ages 35 to 60—who are struggling to make ends meet during difficult economic times, but either do not qualify for or have exhausted comprehensive benefits packages like the Post-9/11 GI Bill or Chapter 31 Vocational Rehabilitation benefits.

As the VFW testified in relation to the extension of additional Chapter 31 benefits to unemployed veterans who have participated in the VocRehab program, VA education benefits were designed to allow veterans to cultivate the skills necessary to compete in the civilian workforce. If veterans have taken advantage of these programs, but remain unemployable, then the programs clearly failed and further assistance should be made available. Veterans have been hit disproportionately hard by the economic downturn. However, the VFW knows that our Nation's war-fighters still bring tremendous intangibles to the workplace. The VFW views this short-term benefit as a stop-gap measure to ensure that those who served our Nation have the resources they need to help stimulate our economy.

One of the VFW's top priorities for the last few years has been mandating TAP programs for separating servicemembers across the armed forces. This bill not only mandates TAP, but calls on concerned agencies to also compile data on program outcomes such the length of a veteran's unemployment following separation, starting salaries upon finding employment, and status of educational and vocational training programs.

Another overlooked statistic when discussing veterans' transition into the civilian workforce is underemployment. The VFW believes that many times veterans with years of relevant work experience as military professionals are treated as either entry level or even unskilled workers once they enter the civilian workforce. This is unacceptable, and the VFW believes that tracking starting salaries for TAP participants is a critical first step in rectifying this injustice.

The VFW believes that by mandating TAP, creating reporting criteria, including VA in TAP programs, and possibly integrating several of the follow-up provisions from H.R. 1941, Congress can ensure that veterans not only receive a baseline of resources to assist in their transition off of active duty, but that concerned agencies will have a vested interest in demonstrating program success.

Ensuring successful implementation of ongoing educational and employment programs seems to be a consistent goal of H.R. 2433, such as calling for DVOPs and LVERs to be evaluated upon completion of their training. The VFW supports this evaluation and the requirements that all full time DVOPs and LVERs must only perform tasks related to their specific function. The VFW has consistently heard of DVOPs and LVERs crisscrossing their responsibilities, ultimately diluting the caliber of services delivered to veterans eligible for each of the unique programs. Implementing auditing requirements whereby States could lose funding for DVOPs and LVERs for failure to comply will help ensure mission success.

The VFW also supports the pilot program allowing States to allocate up to 25 percent of DVOP and LVER funding for individual job training. The VFW believes that this keeps with the intent of DVOPs and LVERs of assisting eligible individuals in finding gainful employment, and VFW supports the caveat that all requests must be made to VA on an individual basis. If existing programs cannot help a veteran become employable, the VFW believes this last ditch effort is a proper use of available resources to ensure that the unique needs of the veteran will be met.

Finally, the VFW supports the approach H.R. 2433 takes to successfully correlating military service to civilian job skills. Though this bill also calls for the completion of the DoD, DoL, VA study, it includes the caveat that existing programs addressing this issue should be leveraged. As we have testified in the past, private industry groups are already working to address this issue with quantifiable success. We believe it is the responsible course of action to ensure that we are not duplicating effort.

The VFW views both H.R. 1941 and H.R. 2433 as critical pieces of stand-alone legislation that can each help veteran job-seekers successfully find viable careers after military service. The VFW believes that the new benefits programs established by both bills will help different sectors of unemployed veterans find viable work, and we believe the provisions included to offset costs are fair. The bills only minimally overlap when discussing issues such as mandatory TAP and credentialing of military job skills in the civilian sector. The VFW welcomes the opportunity to work with the Committee on how to improve either bill or create a single, comprehensive bill that includes provisions of both. However, the VFW must reiterate that unemployed veterans need a comprehensive veterans' employment package yesterday, which is why we urge Congress to move quickly in passing these necessary programs and reforms, and the VFW stands ready to assist in accomplishing that goal.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I would be happy to answer any questions that you or the Members of the Committee may have.

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Veterans of Modern Warfare  
Washington, DC.

Good Morning Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Member of this Committee.

Thank you for inviting Veterans of Modern Warfare to address you today.

As you know the national unemployment level is over 9 percent. Among Veterans, especially this generation of Veterans it's even higher.

House Resolutions 169,1941 and 2433 are examples of our governments understanding and appreciation of our service to this country. Through these bills either the continuation of good programs or the mandating of specific provisions of established programs will help Veterans entering the private sector. Through the TAP program and or other programs in these bills, the Department of Labor will provide to the returning Veteran the support and training programs necessary to reinstitute their place in society. Through tax incentives, employers will be incentivized to hire and train this generation of returning Warriors.

Veterans of Modern Warfare applauds the sponsors of these bills. A great deal of publicity has been shed on the 21st Century 9/11 GI Bill. Which is a wonderful piece of legalization. Unfortunately, as you know, not every Veteran is a candidate or has the desire to attend a 4-year college. The passage of House Resolutions 169, 1941 and 2433 will reassure and support this generation of Veterans returning to our society.

Veterans of Modern Warfare thank and encourage our Legislators to continue sponsoring bills that remind Veterans and America, that their sacrifices and service is appreciated now and forever in the hearts and minds of our country.

"A country that doesn't stand by it's Veterans, will one day fall, for lack of the Veteran"

Respectfully,

Joseph F. Morgan  
President/Chief Executive Officer

**MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD**

Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
 Washington, DC.  
*July 26, 2011*

Hon. Jack Quinn  
 President  
 Erie Community College  
 121 Ellicott Street  
 Buffalo, NY 14203

Dear Jack:

In reference to our Full Committee legislative hearing on H.R. 2433, H.R. 1941, and H.R. 169 that took place on July 15, 2011, I would appreciate it if you could answer the enclosed hearing questions by the close of business on September 7, 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 materials for all full Committee and Subcommittee hearings. Therefore, it would be appreciated if you could provide your answers consecutively and 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 Debbie Smith by fax your responses to Debbie at 202-225-2034. If you have any questions, please call 202-225-9756.

Sincerely,

BOB FILNER  
*Ranking Democratic Member*

JL:ds

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**Responses from Erie Community College**

**Question 1:** Is there a difference in needs between a veteran that recently separated from service and one who separated over 15 years ago?

**Response:** The comparison of the veteran of today and the veteran of 15 or more years ago can be made by looking at two main points that impact veterans and 2-year community colleges; economy, operational tempo, readjustment, and TBI.

The economic indicators from 1996 and prior show a more robust economy than experienced today. An 8 month recession had ended by March 1991, unemployment in 1996 peaked at 5.4 percent, with veterans experiencing a 3.9 percent unemployment rate.<sup>1</sup> In 2011, we are 2 years removed from a defined recession, however recent stock market swings indicate otherwise. Current unemployment is at 9.1 percent with veterans experiencing a 15 percent unemployment rate.<sup>2</sup> Veterans of today will need educational assistance to become more employable in today's job market along with tax incentives for employers to hire and retain work ready veterans.

The effects of Operational Tempo from multiple deployments over a 10 year sustained war, coupled with readjustment issues stemming from the deployments and undiagnosed Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) are placing a greater stress on today's veterans verses those of 15 years ago.

The Gulf War had ended by February 1991 and conflicts in Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo were limited in time, scope, and total troop deployments. Contrasting that the current veteran has faced a sustained multi theater 10-year conflict, with many facing multiple deployments and for the first time since WWII an extensive use of the Reserve and National Guard. In relation to education this increased OP Tempo has resulted in many veterans either breaking the educational path or indefinitely delaying it due to time away from school.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics <http://www.bls.gov/>.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics <http://www.bls.gov/>.

The Department of Veterans Affairs indicated that 313,670 veterans of the current conflict have been treated for mental health issues as of December 2010.<sup>3</sup> A Rand Corp study in 2008 showed 13.8 percent of 1,938 veterans surveyed using the pre-established PTSD checklist (PCL; 9) showed signs of PTSD. Based on the more than two million troops deployed in both OIF and OEF by the end of 2009, the survey supported the numbers seeking counseling at VA Hospitals. By comparison the same survey applied to veterans of the 1991 Operation Desert Storm indicated a 10.1 percent rate of PTSD equating to approximately 30,000 veterans with PTSD based on troop deployments.<sup>4</sup> The number of veterans who suffer from readjustment disorders, depression and PTSD will place a greater strain on community based counseling services as these veterans return to the workforce or to school. Community Colleges with smaller class sizes and a less intimidating campus sprawl have proven to be the choice of veterans according to VA data. Today's veteran continues to look for the atmosphere and support that he or she was accustomed to in the military, an atmosphere and system of support more readily accessible on a Community College campus.

According to the 2008 Rand report, probable Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) has been reported in 19 percent of the troops surveyed. About 68 percent of the more than 33,000 wounded in action in Iraq experienced blast-related injuries.<sup>5</sup> The rate of psychological and neurological injuries suffered by current conflict veterans is on par with veterans of the Vietnam War.<sup>6</sup> How does this impact the veteran returning to school? A veteran suffering from neurological injuries as a result of a TBI will present mood changes, difficulty concentrating, memory, attention, or thinking as well as restlessness, or agitation.<sup>7</sup> These symptoms will transfer directly to the classroom setting where veterans will struggle in larger settings. The small class size of the Community College creates a more welcoming feel for veterans who can receive greater one on one attention, tutoring, and ease of transition to an academic setting.

**Question 2:** Is legislation necessary to make TAP mandatory.

**Response:** As discussed during the question and answer period and in my written testimony, the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) developed by the DoD is critical in helping military members and their families make a smooth transition from a military career to the civilian sector. While all branches of the Armed Services state that the Pre-separation counseling is required, only the Marine Corps, Navy and Air Force describe the program as congressionally mandatory for all personnel. So to answer the question, no new legislation is needed as TAP is already considered mandatory by 60 percent of the branches. Under the guise of "Commanders Intent," the process used by the Marine Corps has been further refined to provide personnel with a better skill set on separation. A uniformed approach across all branches modeled after the Marine Corps Transition Assistance Management Program (TAMP) and further follow up through the TurboTap Web site [www.turbotap.org](http://www.turbotap.org) would better serve personnel and Commanders during this period.

**Question 3:** Tina Terhune was eligible for Chapter 30 of the Montgomery GI Bill?

**Response:** The term of eligibility is 10 years. Unfortunately, her eligibility ran out on 6/26/10 and she was only able to use it for one summer semester

**Question 4:** How many high demand associate degrees and/or certificates are offered at Erie Community College?

**Response:** The Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Investment Board distributes a list of "Demand Occupations" each year. Currently, ECC offers 32 degree, certificate and/or non-credit training opportunities that would be considered "high demand" based on this list.

<sup>3</sup>Bob Brewin, "Half the Afghanistan and Iraq veterans treated by VA receive mental health care," Broken Warriors, Examining the invisible wounds of war series, March 2011. [http://www.nextgov.com/nextgov/ng\\_20110322\\_2917.php](http://www.nextgov.com/nextgov/ng_20110322_2917.php).

<sup>4</sup>Jaimie L. Gradus, DSc, MPH, "Epidemiology of PTSD." U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Center for PTSD. <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/pages/epidemiological-facts-ptsd.asp>.

<sup>5</sup>Lucille Beck and Barbara Sigford, "Update on Health Care: VA TBI Screening Program," Department of Veterans Affairs, September 2008.

<sup>6</sup>National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, "Traumatic brain injury: hope through research," Bethesda (MD): National Institutes of Health; 2002 Feb. NIH Publication No.: 02-158. See: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/tbi.htm>.

<sup>7</sup>Matthew J. Friedman, MD, PhD, and Paula P. Schnurr, PhD, "PTSD Treatment: Research and Dissemination," National Center for PTSD.

They are:

Autobody Repair  
 Automotive Technology  
 Building Analyst  
 Building Envelope Professional  
 Business Administration  
 Business Administration (Transfer)  
 CNC Precision Machining  
 Clinical Laboratory Technician  
 Computer Applications for the Office  
 Computer Science  
 Construction Management Engineering Technology  
 Dental Assisting  
 Dental Hygiene  
 Financial Services  
 Green Building Technology  
 Health Information Technology  
 Heating, Ventilating, AC and Refrigeration  
 Human Services  
 Information Technology  
 Liberal Arts and Science—Social Science  
 Medical Office Assistant  
 Medical Office Practice  
 Mental Health Asst—Alcohol Counseling  
 Mental Health Asst—Substance Abuse  
 Nursing  
 Occupational Therapy Asst.  
 Office Assistant  
 Office Management  
 Paralegal  
 Radiation Therapy Technology  
 Respiratory Care

<b>T Chart Comparison</b>	
<b>Veteran separated over 15 years ago</b>	<b>Recently separated Veteran</b>
<p><b>Economic</b></p> <p>More robust economy            Five years since previous Recession            GDP decline 1.4 percent through Recession            National unemployment 5.4 percent            Veteran unemployment rate 3.9%</p>	<p>Economic downturn            Two years since last official Recession            GDP decline 5.1 percent through Recession            National unemployment 9.1 percent            Veteran unemployment 15%</p>
<p><b>Operational Tempo/Deployments</b></p> <p>Operation Desert Storm ended 5 years prior            Conflicts from 1993–1999 were limited in duration, scope of mission and overall troop deployment</p> <p>Approximately 300,000 troops deployed</p>	<p>Current conflicts are approaching 10 years of sustained multi front, multi deployment operations</p> <p>More than 2 million deployed by the end of 09</p>
<p><b>Female Veterans</b></p> <p>Number had steadily declined since WWII</p>	<p>Comprise 20 percent of current force            Fastest growing population of homelessness            Female veterans divorce rate at 9.2%</p>
<p><b>National Guard and Reserve Deployments</b></p> <p>In 1996 large scale deployments had ceased            Most unit or individual deployment were short duration peace keeping or humanitarian missions</p>	<p>Largest call up of National Guard and Reserve since WWII            Duration of deployment exceeds 1 year            Causes issues with education and career</p>

<b>T Chart Comparison—Continued</b>	
<b>Veteran separated over 15 years ago</b>	<b>Recently separated Veteran</b>
<b>Mental Health needs</b> 10 percent of Operation Desert Storm veterans diagnosed with PTSD or depression; 30,000 veterans	313,760 have sought treatment at the VA for mental health issues as a result of current conflicts Traumatic Brain Injuries on par with Vietnam War. 68 percent of wounded in Iraq are from blast injuries.  Causes lingering issues with concentration, memory loss, attention, and thinking
<b>GI Bill</b>	Increase in veterans and dependant accessing GI Bill has dramatically delayed access to tuition and housing allowance

Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
 Washington, DC.  
*July 26, 2011*

The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki  
 Secretary  
 U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs  
 810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
 Washington, DC 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary:

In reference to our Full Committee legislative hearing on H.R. 2433, H.R. 1941, and H.R. 169 that took place on July 15, 2011, I would appreciate it if you could answer the enclosed hearing questions by the close of business on September 7, 2011.

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Due to the delay in receiving mail, please provide your response to Debbie Smith by fax your responses to Debbie at 202-225-2034. If you have any questions, please call 202-225-9756.

Sincerely,

BOB FILNER  
*Ranking Democratic Member*

JL:ds

**Committee on Veterans' Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, Post-Hearing Questions for Curtis L. Coy, From the Honorable Bob Filner, Legislative Hearing on H.R. 2433, H.R. 1941, and H.R. 169, July 15, 2011**

**Question 1:** What is VA's anticipated cost for adding 132 additional FTE to administer the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program?

**Response:** In our testimony, VA indicated the need for 132 FTE to administer the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program if the claims were received evenly throughout the year. However, we would expect to receive the bulk of the workload at the beginning of each fiscal year, and therefore VA would need 62 permanent FTE and additional temporary employees to administer this program.

Assuming VA receives 65 percent of the total claims payable in the first 90 days of each fiscal year (FY), the need in FY 2012 would be 62 permanent FTE and 77 temporary FTE. In FY 2013, the need would grow to 62 permanent FTE and 104 temporary FTE. In FY 2014, the need would be 62 permanent FTE. The administrative costs are estimated to be \$9.4 million the first year and \$20 million over 3



years. These costs include payroll and benefits for the new employees, office supplies, equipment, and additional rent costs.

In addition to VBA administrative costs, IT costs are estimated to be \$851,000 the first year and \$1.1 million over 3 years.

**Question 2:** How much time would VA need to hire and train the 132 FTE?

**Response:** VA anticipates that it will take 6 months to hire and train the permanent and temporary employees once an agreement with the Department of Labor and processing system are in place.

**Question 3:** Does VA have a National advertising plan to publicize benefits nationwide?

**Response:** VA is developing a national advertising plan. This will be a comprehensive campaign based on market research and strategic analysis that uses clear, accurate, consistent, and targeted messaging to educate Veterans, their families and interested groups on VA's benefits and services.

The National Veterans Outreach office has been charged with two roles in advertising benefits: (1) Review Departmental advertising efforts over \$10,000 in scope and recommend approval or disapproval; and, (2) Develop a national advertising strategy (explained below).

The plan will emphasize the use of partnerships including the Ad Council ([www.adcouncil.org](http://www.adcouncil.org)), a private, non-profit organization that marshals volunteer talent from the advertising and communications industries, the facilities of the media, and the resources of the business and non-profit communities, to deliver critical public service announcements to the American public. The campaign will leverage advertising technology and the voice of partners to deliver VA's message.

VBA's Benefits Assistance Service (BAS) works closely with VA's National Veterans Outreach office to develop outreach products and campaigns to enhance access to VA benefits. BAS promotes national awareness of self-service activities available through eBenefits. In collaboration with the rest of VA, BAS is committed to providing streamlined benefits to Servicemembers, Veterans, and their dependents.

**Question 4:** How much money has VA spent in the past 3 years on advertising?

**Response:** VA issued its first national "Interim Advertising Policy," August 5, 2010, to provide direction, set standards and delegate responsibility for advertising.

Prior to the issuance, VA administrations and offices were largely prohibited from conducting "marketing and advertising." As a result, there wasn't a specific entity with responsibility of tracking advertising within VA. Advertising was largely permitted for the recruitment of health care professionals. Thus, information on expenditures have not been collected.

However, VA is establishing methods to standardize and track advertising. The National Veterans Outreach Office was established within the Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs (OPIA) in FY 2010 to assess and standardize how outreach is being conducted throughout VA, and to further develop the process for oversight and tracking of advertising campaigns over \$10,000.

The Office is also providing project management of significant marketing and advertising contracts, and is working to develop a system to track department-wide performance measures for VA's outreach programs.

In FY 2010, the Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs (OPIA) developed the "What Lies Ahead," and "Care Package," public service announcements as a part of national Veterans awareness campaign targeting OIF/OEF Veterans at a cost of \$5 million.

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Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
Washington, DC.  
*July 26, 2011*

Robert Madden  
Assistant Director, National Economic Commission  
The American Legion  
1608 K Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Robert:

In reference to our Full Committee legislative hearing on H.R. 2433, H.R. 1941, and H.R. 169 that took place on July 15, 2011, I would appreciate it if you could answer the enclosed hearing questions by the close of business on September 7, 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 materials for all full Committee and Subcommittee hearings. Therefore, it would be appreciated if you could provide your answers consecutively and 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 Debbie Smith by fax your responses to Debbie at 202-225-2034. If you have any questions, please call 202-225-9756.

Sincerely

BOB FILNER  
*Ranking Democratic Member*

JL:ds

American Legion  
Washington, DC.  
*July 19, 2011*

Honorable Bob Filner, Ranking Member  
Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
U.S. House of Representatives  
335 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Filner:

I respectfully submit the following responses to your additional questions from the Full Committee hearing on *H.R. 2433, H.R. 1941, and H.R. 169* conducted on July 15, 2011:

**Question 1:** According to resolution #342, the Legion seeks elimination of the VA Home Loan Funding fee. How do you reconcile your support for a bill that extends the fees at a higher rate when they were going to decrease?

**Response:** While The American Legion would like to see the elimination of the VA funding fee, there are programs that are needed and required now. Ultimately, The American Legion would like to see the elimination of the VA Home Loan Funding Fee for veterans.

**Question 2:** Since States have the biggest role to play in licensure and credentialing, what are the top 3 things that can be done to assist veterans with licensure and credentialing?

**Response:** The lack of attainment of both State licenses and national certifications can be a significant barrier for transitioning servicemembers and veterans. It is important to note that State licensing and national certification are two separate things and reducing barriers in these areas requires different strategies. Promoting State licensing of servicemembers and veterans is an important policy goal, but attention should also be provided to issues related to national certification. With regard to State licensure, the top three things that can be done to alleviate barriers include:

1. Ensuring that States pass legislation and change regulations to allow licensing bodies to recognize equivalent military training and experience. (The States of WA, CO, UT, VA, and MD currently have legislation that does this that can serve as models for other States.)
2. Demonstrate to State licensing agencies (and national certification bodies) the equivalency of military training and experience by conducting gap analyses between military training and experience and State licensing requirements and reporting this information systematically to the State licensing agencies.
3. Encourage States to grant reciprocity for servicemembers, veterans, and spouses who have attained licenses in the same occupation that are attained in other States. This would allow servicemembers and spouses to get licensed in one State during their military service and then, when they transition out of the service to a different State that license will be recognized and they will not have to attain a new license in order to practice.

It is important to note that The American Legion believes that national certification (e.g., certifications for automotive mechanics, dental assistants, IT personnel)

is equally important as State licensing. Employers often require these certifications even when there is no comparable licensure requirement in the State. Moreover, civilian certifications provide concrete evidence that transitioning servicemembers' and veterans' skills are on par with their civilian counterparts. However, many servicemembers leave the military without these certifications. The American Legion recognizes that reducing barriers to certification requires a multi-faceted approach. The top three things that can be done to promote certifications are:

1. *Ensure that all servicemembers have equal access to information on certifications (and licenses) related to their military occupations.* To date, only the Army and Navy consistently disseminate complete information on credentialing to their servicemembers (through the Army and Navy Credentialing Opportunities On-Line or COOL initiatives). While the Air Force has a web-based tool (called CERT), it is not nearly as comprehensive as the COOL initiatives. Moreover, the Marine Corps does not have anything to disseminate information on certifications and licenses to its servicemembers.
2. *Promote funding of certifications and licenses.* This can be accomplished in three ways:
  - *Require the military services to fund credentials for certifications and licenses directly related to the servicemember's military occupational specialty.* Currently the Navy is the only service that has exercised its authority under the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for 2006, which authorized the expenditure of appropriated funds for servicemembers to pay for commercial credentials.
  - *Ensure that the VA promotes the GI Bill licensure and certification benefit to servicemembers and veterans.* Many servicemembers and veterans are unaware that the GI Bill will reimburse up to \$2,000 per test for licensure and certification exams. The VA needs to increase awareness of this benefit.
  - *Ensure that the VA publicizes to licensure and certification agencies the need to get their certifications and licenses approved by the VA for GI Bill payment.* Currently, data from the Army and Navy shows that less than 50 percent of the certifications and licenses that are related to Soldiers' and Sailors' military occupations have been approved for GI Bill payment.
3. *Promote Accreditation of Certification Programs.* The lack of accreditation of certification programs means that servicemembers and veterans may spend money on certifications that do not have relevant value. Unlike in higher education where accreditation of institutions and programs is prevalent, there is currently no systematic monitoring of the quality of certification programs. Two agencies currently accredit certification programs—the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and the National Commission on Certifying Agencies (NCCA); however, the vast majority of certification programs have not been accredited. Army and Navy data show that less than 10 percent of certifications related to their military occupations have been accredited by either organization. Accreditation of certification programs is of benefit to military servicemembers, veterans, and civilians, but it can be costly for certification agencies and there is no major incentive for them to get accredited. Therefore, The American Legion recommends that the Department of Labor seriously consider providing grants to certification agencies that elect to get accredited.

**Question 3:** Is the Legion supportive of taking money from one group of veterans to pay for benefits for another group of veterans?

**Response:** The American Legion supports increasing veteran's benefits that provide valuable solutions to problems that face veterans from all eras of service. When financing a veteran's benefit, the financing should not be taken from a current benefit in order to pay for the newly created one, instead funding should come from a direct source that does not interfere with another veteran's benefit.

**Question 4:** What are the top 5 employment barriers facing veterans today?

**Response:** The American Legion has identified the following employment barriers facing veterans:

1. *Difficulty in translating military training and experience to civilian jobs.* A recent Society of Human Resource Management survey determined that 70 percent of civilian hiring managers cited their inability to translate military training and experience to their civilian jobs as a major challenge in hiring veterans.
2. *Lack of attainment of civilian occupational credentials while in the military.* Civilian credentials are instrumental in ensuring civilian employers that

transitioning servicemembers' and veterans' skills are on par with their civilian counterparts. They are also often required by civilian employers or by government agencies in order to perform certain occupations.

3. *Lack of a centralized database of veterans' résumés.* It is often difficult for employers to locate/identify qualified transitioning servicemembers and veterans to fill their job vacancies. Employers—particularly small business—often see the cost of using a private sector recruiter that specializes in hiring of ex-military as too prohibitive. A publicly funded talent bank that is heavily promoted to veterans and employers would help match qualified veterans with civilian jobs.
4. *Deployments.* The multiple deployments of veterans have taken them out of the job market and networking opportunities, which amounts to tremendous difficulties with obtaining and/or sustaining meaningful employment. Due to the recession, there are limited amount of jobs with heavy competition to fill them. Employers are skeptical to say the least in hiring veterans (National Guard and Reservists), because of the inevitable deployments, which has a major impact on business productivity, particularly small businesses. Furthermore, the longer a veteran is out of work, it becomes more of a challenge to find gainful employment, due to the private sector tending to assume that the veteran's skills have considerably diminished.
5. *Stigma of PTSD & TBI (invisible wounds).* There is a significant portion of combat veterans who have been diagnosed with PTSD and/or TBI. These invisible wounds have been well-documented since the two wars have progressed, which has caused an immediate concern to the private sector regarding the capability of combat veterans with these diagnoses in a civilian work environment. Currently, these invisible wounds are being researched/studied to provide employers and the public more details regarding how these mental disabilities effect veterans' work habits and ability to be productive in a work and/or family dynamic. Additionally, due to the fact that employers have a modest understanding about veterans' benefits, they have serious concerns regarding health care costs of hiring veterans with PTSD and TBI, along with other physical disabilities. These invisible wounds have set tremendous obstacles for veterans who are seeking employment.

**Question 5:** Should the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) be completely contracted out?

**Response:** The American Legion is supportive of making the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) mandatory; similar to the way the United States Marine Corps requires their troops to attend the TAP program. The TAP program is undergoing significant changes that have not been implemented. The American Legion has been advocating for an innovative and comprehensive TAP program, conducted by trained and effective leaders. At this time, The American Legion does not have a position on whether or not TAP should be contracted out; however, we're strongly recommending sweeping changes to be made to the TAP program that benefits servicemembers who are reintegrating into civilian life.

**Question 6:** The government provides programs to help separating veteran's transition back into their communities. How long should the government continue to provide such services after servicemembers separate from the military?

**Response:** The American Legion strongly believes that the government should provide assistance and/or services for these transitioning servicemembers as long as they require help. The government along with the private sector should be focused on providing the most proficient programs that provide education, training, employment and business opportunities, so veterans can productively move onto their next phase in life without incurring severe difficulties. It is the obligation of the government and the servicemember, in partnership with entities such as The American Legion, to create objectives and strategies which will significantly assist veterans with their journey to a seamless and successful transition. This is not a one-topic issue but, as we have learned, this is a multi-faceted issue which if not properly addressed can bring about: high unemployment rates, homelessness and other transitional issues. The American Legion will continue to support and advocate for effective government programs that enhance the employment and business opportunities for servicemembers as they transition from the Armed Forces.

**Question 7:** Section 203 and Section 4114 of H.R. 2433 direct the Department of Labor to use funds made available for the State grant program. Are you concerned that this directive may reduce funds to the States to provide direct services for veterans?

**Response:** The American Legion supports conducting the research, analysis, and reporting required in H.R. 2433 related to the Transition Assistance Program (Section 203) and credentialing (Section 4114) and is not concerned that it will take away funds for providing direct services to veterans. The American Legion recognizes the importance of funds for direct services to veterans; however, we also recognize the importance of conducting periodic evaluation and review of existing programs and identifying new methods of reducing employment barriers for transitioning servicemembers and veterans. If this type of research is not conducted, it is difficult to ensure that the existing services provided meet the needs of today's veterans.

**Question 8:** If DoD needs to share information With NASWA does your Organization have any privacy or security concerns?

**Response:** The American Legion does not have a position or resolution on this topic, therefore will decline comment.

**Question 9:** The pilot program, established by H.R. 2433, authorizes 25 percent of State funds to be used by States to enter into grants with the ten States with the highest unemployment which would essentially mean a 25 percent reduction in funding for Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialists (DVOPS) and Local Veterans' Employment Specialists (LVERS). Do you support this reduction to the States with the worst unemployment and how helpful do you think this will be?

**Response:** The American Legion does not support this reduction. DVOPs and LVERs play an important role in providing direct assistance to veterans who are disabled and/or other eligible veterans seeking employment. The American Legion seeks legislation that will transfer all DVOPs and LVERs from the State Agencies to DoL-VETS for supervision and oversight in order to ensure that the individuals employed to serve veterans are not used for other programs.

**Question 10:** In your testimony you mention that older veterans have great financial responsibilities and often have families. Do you think that younger veterans may be in the same position?

**Response:** Yes. The context was not only to look at the younger generation who are searching for jobs and who might have education eligibility or other forms of Federal financing, but to also look at the population of older veterans who are in a forced transitional phase. These older veterans might have been working at a job for 10–20 years and have had to reinvent themselves to gain a new job skill or vocation. Typically an older veteran tends to have a wife, children, a home and possibly greater debt. Veterans of all ages are serving in the war, but those who have come before the younger generation are not to be forgotten when discussing the employment of veterans.

Thank you for your continued commitment to America's veterans and their families.

Sincerely,

Robert Madden, Assistant Director  
*National Economic Commission*

cc: Chairman Stutzman

Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
Washington, DC.  
*July 26, 2011*

Tom Tarantino  
Senior Legislative Associate  
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America  
777 North Capitol Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Tom:

In reference to our Full Committee legislative hearing on H.R. 2433, H.R. 1941, and H.R. 169 that took place on July 15, 2011, I would appreciate it if you could answer the enclosed hearing questions by the close of business on September 7, 2011.

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Due to the delay in receiving mail, please provide your response to Debbie Smith by fax your responses to Debbie at 202-225-2034. If you have any questions, please call 202-225-9756.

Sincerely,

BOB FILNER  
*Ranking Democratic Member*

JL:ds

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**House Committee on Veterans Affairs, Legislative Hearing on  
July 15, 2011, Questions for Tom Tarantino, Senior Legislative Associate,  
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, August 15, 2011**

**Question 1:** Section 203 and Section 4114 of H.R. 2433 directs Labor to use funds made available for the State grant program. Are you concerned that this directive may reduce funds to the States to provide direct services for veterans?

**Response:** IAVA staff could not find section 4114 of H.R. 2433. However, under section 301 of H.R. 2433, Title 38 section 4114 is discussed. IAVA does not believe that this provision would have a substantial negative impact upon services for veterans. IAVA has championed the cause of translating military training into civilian credentials and we believe that this provision will prove tremendously valuable to veterans. If IAVA has any criticism of this provision it is that it does not cover more military occupational specialties.

Section 203 of H.R. 2433 establishes the conduct of an audit of the program once every 3 years by a veteran-owned small business. While IAVA clearly would like all funds dedicated for veterans programs to go directly to those programs, we also understand the need to collect metrics on the success and effectiveness of those programs. IAVA has long championed increased collection of information on veterans and veterans programs; one of the issues we face in our efforts to help our Nations heroes is a dearth of useful information. The nature of the requirements of section 203 appear to be of minimal impact, and IAVA does not believe that this requirement will have a significant negative impact upon the execution of the VA's mission or individual programs.

**Question 2:** The pilot program, established by H.R. 2433, authorizes 25 percent of State funds to enter into grants with the ten States with the highest unemployment would essentially mean a 25 percent reduction in funding for Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialists (DVOPS) and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs). Do you support this reduction to the States with the worst unemployment and how helpful do you think this will be?

**Response:** The likely effectiveness of this program is beyond the resources of this office to quantify. While a reduction in funding for DVOPS and LVERs seems, on the surface, drastic and counterproductive to the goal of helping veterans gain employment, increasing grants to the States with the highest rates of unemployment appears, on the surface, to be a good approach to a worthy goal. The real question is: How effective is the current system and will the new system be more effective? IAVA supports any measure that results in a more efficient and effective system that quickly delivers fair and accurate benefits to veterans. However, IAVA does not support attempts to reduce the VA's ability to effectively deliver fair and accurate benefits to veterans.

**Question 3:** Should a State ever lose its funding for its State grant program that provides direct services for veterans?

**Response:** If the program is ineffective and wasteful, then "Yes." IAVA's primary concern is the quick and effective delivery of fair and accurate benefits that help veterans. If programs are effective and helping veterans, then they should be continued. IAVA believes that any program that does not meet that standard should be restructured, rethought, and potentially cut in favor of better ideas.

**Question 4:** What more should VA be doing to publicize their benefits to veterans and families?

**Response:** Mandatory attendance of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) by all separating servicemembers will go a long way towards informing veterans and their families of what the VA has to offer. IAVA has long advocated for this measure and we continue to push for mandatory TAP. President Obama's recently proposed veterans employment initiative, S. 951 sponsored by Sen. Patty Murray, H.R. 1941 sponsored by Rep. Bishop and H.R. 2433 sponsored by Rep. Miller show that there is bipartisan support for this common sense measure. IAVA supports the adoption of mandatory TAP attendance for all servicemembers.

**Question 5:** Currently, what grade would you give VA on their efforts to inform veterans about their benefits?

**Response:** While IAVA has long championed improvement within the administration and delivery of VA programs and services, IAVA believes that "grading" the VA is counterproductive. Higher grades could lead to complacency, a false sense that all is well and there is no improvement to be found. Lower grades needlessly fuel outside criticism and call for shifting spending away from the VA instead of improving their delivery. In addition, painting the depth and breadth of the VA programs with a single stroke does not recognize that there are both exceptional programs and those in need of improvement. IAVA recognizes that the VA and its employees strive to provide help to our Nation's heroes but we reserve the right to provide *constructive* criticism at the appropriate time in the appropriate forum.

**Question 6:** Are you concerned that H.R. 2433 excludes veterans that qualify Chapter 30, 31, 33, and 35 but not veterans eligible for Title 32, Chapters 1606 and 1607?

**Response:** There are no chapters 1606 or 1607 in Title 32 of the U.S. Code. There are however, chapters 1606 and 1607 of Title 10 U.S.C. that deal with educational assistance for members of the Select Reserve. IAVA does note that not excluding these chapters is inconsistent, but does not object to their exclusion. Since the House Veterans Affairs Committee does not have jurisdiction over issues pertaining to Title 10 U.S.C., I can only speculate that they were left out to avoid any jurisdictional issues with the legislation.

**Question 7:** Community college associate degree programs are for an average of 2 years. Do you have any concerns that the retraining program is only for 12 months?

**Response:** The purpose of the bill is to address retraining, not initial study for an associate, technical, or baccalaureate degree. Therefore, the period of time to complete retraining should not be as long because prerequisites will have already been dispensed with.

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Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
Washington, DC.  
July 26, 2011

Bob Simoneau  
Deputy Executive Director  
National Association of State Workforce Agencies  
444 North Capitol Street, NE, Suite 142  
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Bob:

In reference to our Full Committee legislative hearing on H.R. 2433, H.R. 1941, and H.R. 169 that took place on July 15, 2011, I would appreciate it if you could answer the enclosed hearing questions by the close of business on September 7, 2011.

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Due to the delay in receiving mail, please provide your response to Debbie Smith by fax your responses to Debbie at 202-225-2034. If you have any questions, please call 202-225-9756.

Sincerely,

BOB FILNER  
*Ranking Democratic Member*

JL:ds

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**Committee on Veterans' Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives,  
Post-Hearing Questions for Bob Simoneau, From the Honorable Bob Filner,  
Legislative Hearing on H.R. 2433, H.R. 1941, and H.R. 169, July 15, 2011**

**Question 1:** How can we help employers understand the qualifications veterans and servicemembers have to offer?

**Answer:** With limited resources, State Workforce Agencies (SWA) attempt to make labor exchange services as efficient as possible. SWAs and local one-stop career centers work closely with unemployed veterans to gain a sense of their skills, and they assist them either to apply directly for available jobs, or if needed, they offer intensive services up to and including training.

The SWAs have used web services, such as the National Labor Exchange (NLX) and the MOS crosswalk page at O\*Net, where employers and veterans can relate the Military Occupational Classification with the private sector Occupations. Today much of the interaction between job seekers and employers occur thru Web sites.

The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) can help veterans learn how to communicate with employers in ways employers understand, and make connections for potential employment. Requiring all of the armed services to mandate transitioning members to attend TAP would help prepare them for connecting with employers.

Promotional efforts to demonstrate the value of hiring a veteran and to better define the qualifications of a veteran or servicemember need to be increased. Congressional support for such efforts would help to maintain this as a priority.

The employer tool kit developed by the U.S. Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) is an excellent start, but may need to be marketed better to employers. The link is in a prominent spot on the VETS Web site, but could be identified better with an icon or something to attract attention. VETS could promote the tool kit more directly with employer groups and associations. The tool kit is available at: (<http://www.americasheroesatwork.gov/forEmployers/HiringToolkit>). Many other groups and agencies also have developed employer tool kits.

**Question 2:** Do you think that employers are looking for a labor pool of applicants with marketable and transferable job skill that veteran's lack?

**Question 2(a):** What types of jobs are most veterans likely to qualify for and do those jobs exist or are there enough of those jobs?

**Answer:** To answer this question with any specificity we would need to discuss the skills of specific categories of veterans. For example, if we look at the education levels of veterans, we find veterans have a wide range of educational backgrounds. In the four categories shown in Appendix A, veterans have an education distribution equal to or better than the general population.

We do not have data on unsuccessful matches between the veteran job seeker and available jobs; real-time labor market information and analysis may help, but the ability to do this is just now emerging among States.

We have information on veterans who get training under the Workforce Investment Act. The data show more than 28,000 veterans received services in program year 2010, including training, to help them gain skills needed to obtain new jobs.

**Question 3:** What grade would you give employers for understanding the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)?

**Question 3(a):** What grade would you give to employers for USERRA compliance?

**Answer:** NASWA and the SWAs are not involved directly with USERRA. VETS, especially the State Directors for Veterans Employment and Training (DVETs), have the primary responsibility for the USERRA program. Also, representatives for the Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) assist in processing initial USERRA questions and complaints. Workforce system staff members, especially



DVOPs and LVERs, are knowledgeable about the basic criteria under USERRA, and refer veterans to the DVET in their State, or to ESGR representatives.

NASWA does not have specific data on program understanding by employers; anecdotal evidence would indicate a good deal of understanding. The Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM) conducted a survey in 2010; the results are shown in Appendix B.

Although the SHRM survey is based on a relatively small sample of employers, it demonstrates a need to improve education of employers about their responsibilities under USERRA. There is heavy employer involvement in membership in DirectEmployers, which partners with NASWA to run the National Labor Exchange and VetCentral.

There is evidence from VETS that the number of official complaints filed against employers has remained relatively constant for the last 5 years, which may indicate at least there is not a growing problem. In 2010, there were 1,438 new USERRA cases, plus 244 carry over cases. This compares with the following caseloads:

2005—1,252 cases  
 2006—1,434 cases  
 2007—1,365 cases  
 2008—1,426 cases  
 2009—1,431 cases

According to VETS, approximately one third of the meritorious cases each year are resolved, one third of the cases are not supported by evidence, and one third of the cases are withdrawn or were not eligible under USERRA.

### Appendix A

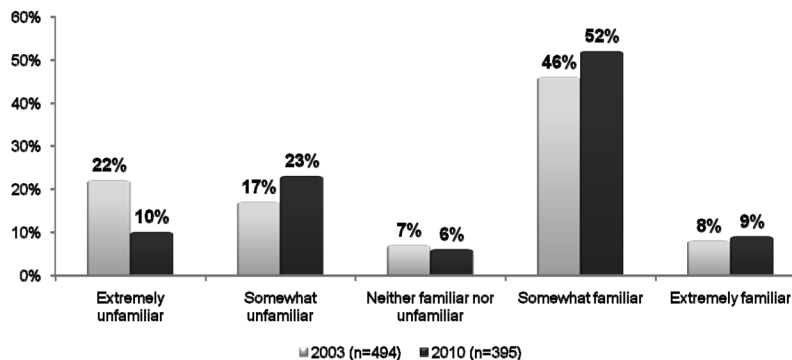
#### Educational Attainment by Veteran Status Percent distribution

Veteran status	Less than a high school diploma	High school graduate, no college	Some college or associate degree	College graduate
Nonveterans	14.3	30.8	27.6	27.2
Veterans	7.4	32.7	32.8	27.1
Gulf War-era II veterans	1.5	29.2	45.9	23.4
Gulf War-era I veterans	1.5	28.0	41.4	29.1
WWII, Korean War and Vietnam-era veterans	10.2	32.3	28.9	28.6

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, annual averages 2009, at: [www.bls.gov/spotlight/2010/veterans](http://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2010/veterans).

## Appendix B

How familiar are you with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)?



Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
Washington, DC.  
July 26, 2011

Ryan M. Gallucci  
Deputy Director, National Legislative Service  
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States  
200 Maryland Avenue, NE  
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Ryan:

In reference to our Full Committee legislative hearing on H.R. 2433, H.R. 1941, and H.R. 169 that took place on July 15, 2011, I would appreciate it if you could answer the enclosed hearing questions by the close of business on September 7, 2011.

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Due to the delay in receiving mail, please provide your response to Debbie Smith by fax your responses to Debbie at 202-225-2034. If you have any questions, please call 202-225-9756.

Sincerely,

BOB FILNER  
*Ranking Democratic Member*

JL:ds

**STATEMENT OF RYAN M. GALLUCCI, DEPUTY DIRECTOR,  
NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE, VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS  
OF THE UNITED STATES, RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED  
BY RANKING MEMBER FILNER, COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES WITH RESPECT TO  
SUBMITTED SEPTEMBER 7, 2011, H.R. 169, H.R. 1941, H.R. 2433**

**Question 1:** You recommend replacing Section 9 of H.R. 2433 with private sector initiatives. Can you give us a brief summary of these private sector initiatives?

**Response:** Several initiatives that the VFW has been following closely include the Military Pipeline, Helmets to Hardhats and the Teamsters' initiatives on credentialing health care professionals and commercial drivers. Military Pipeline is an independent program, currently being tested at Ft. Bragg, which allows servicemembers and veterans to correlate their military job skills to potential civilian career fields. Using mathematical algorithms, the proprietary software also allows veterans to learn of credentialing gaps for career fields they may wish to pursue. The program's developers are also looking for ways to responsibly steer servicemembers and veterans down viable career paths, once credentialing gaps have been established. Helmets to Hardhats is another program which seeks to streamline the process through which servicemembers can quickly transition from military service into construction-related jobs. Though Helmets to Hardhats is operated as an online opt-in program for veterans interested in construction-specific careers, the portal has an established network of regional outreach coordinators to assist veterans in pursuing union and non-union construction careers, as well as apprenticeships. Finally, the Teamsters currently operate two separate pilot programs designed to close credentialing gaps for two of the military's most highly trained, yet underemployed MOSs, health care professionals and truck drivers. The Teamsters are currently working in the State of Illinois to close credentialing gaps for servicemembers trained in these fields and looking to pursue these kinds of careers in the civilian job market. These four initiatives only scratch the surface, as countless others are underway across the country. The VFW believes that credentialing gaps have already been thoroughly identified through private sector initiatives, and rather than funneling more taxpayer money into additional studies of the phenomenon, the interests of veterans would be better served by reviewing private sector programs and investing in infrastructure that is already working to fix the credentialing gap.

**Question 2:** Is VFW supportive of taking money from one group of veterans to pay benefits for another group of veterans?

**Response:** The VFW does not support taking money from one group of veterans to pay for benefits for another group of veterans. However, the VFW respectfully disagrees with the premise that failing to lower interest rates on VA home loans is tantamount to increasing fees or lowering benefits for a certain group of veterans. The VA home loan benefit remains one of the best veterans' benefits available, and continues to offer the best rates in the housing market exclusively for veterans. Since the law was passed, authorizing a rate reduction, the needs of American veterans have shifted drastically, no longer making such a rate reduction a viable course of action.

**Question 3:** You state that another study could cause setbacks on claims already made. Is there such a thing as too many audits and studies?

**Response:** The VFW believes that too much time is wasted on government studies when need has already been identified. H.R. 1941 proposes another study on closing civilian credentialing gaps, requiring coordination between DoD, VA, and DoL. The VFW believes that such studies are duplicative and would waste time, while veterans continue to remain unemployed. The VFW would support the aforementioned private sector initiatives in lieu of more studies. However, the VFW does support proper auditing measures with regard to veterans employment programs. For example, we fully support proper auditing of TAP program outcomes, as included in both H.R. 1941 and H.R. 2433, and auditing of the pilot program to use DVOP and LVER funds for individual training.

**Question 4:** You state that if veterans take advantage of a Federal program and remain unemployed, then the program failed. If a veteran gets a college degree and remains unemployed like many of his or her civilian counterparts is that a failure of the program?

**Response:** The VFW believes that chronic unemployment clearly demonstrates a failure in academic planning, or a failure to cultivate the necessary skills to compete in the job market. However, I must clarify my statement on the extension of certain

benefits offered by H.R. 1941 and H.R. 2433. The VFW believes that the VA is obligated to extend VocRehab benefits, which are included in H.R. 1941, because the premise behind VocRehab is that veterans are unemployable and must be retrained due to service-connected disabilities. The VFW believes that the extension of Chapter 30-style benefits, which are included in H.R. 2433, would be a critical tool to help veterans reenter the job market, should they become and/or remain unemployed at the ages of 35–60. For this particular demographic, careers may have disappeared as the job market has evolved. Extension of this benefit is not an obligation of VA, but, rather, a temporary, responsible, stop-gap measure to help this particular group of veterans find viable careers and stimulate the economy during difficult economic times.

**Question 5:** What role should the veteran and the VA play in determining what type of training is most beneficial for the veteran?

**Response:** The veteran deserves the opportunity to determine his or her career path and the opportunity to develop a responsible course-of-action to succeed in that industry. VA should have the ability to offer sound advice to veterans on how to make this happen. The VA also has an obligation to ensure that requisite education and training is conducted through credible institutions in a timely manner. Over the last few months, the VFW has learned that vetting processes for institutions accepting VA education benefits are irresponsibly lax, allowing predatory institutions of higher learning to take advantage of veterans eligible for taxpayer-funded benefits. Such institutions should be ineligible to receive Federal education dollars, and the VA should be able to offer sound counsel to veterans seeking to utilize their benefits.

**Question 6:** You state that veterans with years of relevant work experience are treated as either entry level or even unskilled once they enter the civilian workforce. What can be done to remedy this issue?

**Response:** The VFW believes that many times this is the result of military skills not translating well to the civilian job market. The VFW supports Department of Defense efforts to close credentialing gaps, ensuring that separating servicemembers are employment-ready once they leave active duty. The VFW also supports outreach efforts to private industry to help demonstrate the value of prior service military employees.

**Question 7:** Section 203 and Section 4114 of Hr. 2433 directs the Department of Labor to use funds made available for the State grant program. Are you concerned that this directive may reduce funds to the States to provide direct services for veterans?

**Response:** The VFW believes that this provision in H.R. 2433 gives leverage to DVOPs and LVERs in the States hardest hit by the economic downturn to accomplish their mission of employing veterans. The VFW believes that the 3-year pilot program includes proper safeguards to ensure that funds are used responsibly when they are set aside for individual training. The pilot program specifically lays out eligibility criteria and auditing criteria to prevent fraud. Should this pilot program come to fruition, VFW would monitor progress closely and make further recommendations to this Committee on the viability of expanding the program beyond the original 10 States.

**Question 8:** If DoD needs to share veteran information with the National Association of State Workforce Agencies does your organization have any privacy or security concerns?

**Response:** The VFW is unclear as to what this question pertains to with regard to the included legislation, and cannot speak on behalf of NASWA. However, we believe that DoD could help to remedy the current veterans' employment crisis by offering home-of-record information to State employment offices. We believe that this could pose challenges to DoD with regard to personally identifiable information, but we also believe that DoD has the capability to ensure that PII beyond home-of-record could be redacted from any records turned over to State operators. The VFW believes that for State employment officers to be able to properly accomplish their mission, they must first know how many veterans they have been tasked to serve.

**Question 9:** In your written testimony you mentioned that after reviewing the OPM report on the 2009 Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government, the numbers were inconsistent. Do you think that a direct-hire authority for Federal agencies will help?

**Response:** The VFW supports direct hiring authority for veterans transitioning off of active duty. We believe that this would encourage agencies consistently proven

to hire a low percentage of veterans to tap this group of competent workers. Today, veterans who seek to take advantage of their 5 point preference must have a DD-214 in hand to start the often-lengthy Federal hiring process. The prospects are even worse for service-disabled veterans who must wait for their VA claims to be adjudicated before starting the hiring process. The resultant lag time in completing the hiring process can lead to significant financial hardships, and can result in the Federal agencies losing prime candidates to leaner private industry employers. If a veteran meets core competencies, they should be able to simply take off the uniform on Friday, and put on a suit on Monday, avoiding unnecessary hurdles and the potential financial hardships that come with the current Federal hiring system.

