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TROOPS–TO–TEACHERS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON BENEFITS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED EIGHT CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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TROOPS-TO-TEACHERS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 2003

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

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2 p.m., in room 334, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Henry Brown (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Brown and Michaud.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN BROWN

Mr. BROWN. Good afternoon. The hearing will come to order.

Welcome to our oversight hearing today on the Troops-to-Teachers program. Originally, this hearing was scheduled as a joint effort with the Education and Workforce Committee, Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness. Unfortunately, due to the extended nature of their markup today, the Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness is unable to join us.

Let the record show that all the written testimony from today's hearing has been shared with the Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness, and their members will receive a summary of the oral testimony, as well.

Our Nation faces a teacher shortage. Today we are looking at a program that is one of the solutions to this growing problem.

In 1994, Congress established the Troops-to-Teachers program to enable former servicemembers a successful transition into a teaching career. Since Congress enacted the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the Departments of Education and Defense have been working together to serve our schools and former servicemembers. Schools have hired over 4,500 former servicemembers through the Troops-to-Teachers program in the 50 States, a quarter of them reservists and National Guardsmen.

These men and women are excellent role models for our youth. They bring leadership, discipline, and a maturity gained from military service into our Nation's classrooms.

First Lady Laura Bush, one of Troops-to-Teachers' greatest advocates, said it best when she stated, "Members of the military have always been tremendous role models. They possess the greatest in character, commitment, and resolve, and today our children need those qualities more than ever."

I look forward to hearing from today's witnesses, which include two Troops-to-Teachers graduates. What a special honor it is to have them with us.

At this time, I would like to welcome the ranking member, Mr. Michaud, for any remarks that he might make.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MICHAEL H. MICHAUD

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

I want to thank you for having this hearing today on the Troops-to-Teachers program. Before we begin, I would like to welcome the witnesses and thank you in advance for your testimony, looking forward to hearing your testimony today.

I would be remiss if I also did not welcome Mr. Don Sweeney from my home state of Maine. I had the pleasure of meeting with Mr. Sweeney just a short while ago, and I'm pleased that he's had the opportunity and will be sharing his views before the committee today.

Your testimony will provide us with needed insight into this program and assist us in our legislative and oversight duties.

Quality education is essential to our competitiveness. Our Nation cannot have too many outstanding, dedicated teachers. Troops-to-Teachers helps us meet the need for quality educators by assisting our servicemembers and veterans successfully transition from military life into the civilian workforce.

Servicemembers who become teachers can provide more than excellent classroom instruction. They can be a role model who teaches our students important values, like honesty, teamwork, and self-discipline. And Troops-to-Teachers does not just benefit the students. It is also of particular value today to our servicemembers as they return to a civilian labor market in which good jobs are disappearing today.

I'm concerned that while the Nation is engaged in hostilities and thereby creating many new veterans halfway around the world, when they come back home, our economy has stalled and as a result, companies are laying off employees by the thousands.

Just last Friday, the U.S. Department of Labor reported that 108,000 employees lost their jobs in the month of March alone. We cannot continue down this road. Consequently, I am pleased to participate in this very timely hearing.

The thrust of the Troops-to-Teachers program appears to address two very important goals. It allows servicemembers to gain quality employment as teachers, and it helps relieve teacher shortages in high-need school districts in a variety of subject areas, including technical subjects like math and science.

I would support these objectives, even if they were independent of each other. However, with the Troops-to-Teachers, these objectives work together and ultimately result in a win-win situation. Indeed, I can think of no other group of people more qualified to impart knowledge and share their wisdom as teachers than this Nation's veterans.

While an important reason for holding this hearing on the Troops-to-Teachers program is to highlight the positive effects and raise interest in it amongst servicemembers as well as school districts, I also look forward to hearing from the witnesses about areas where we can make improvements to these programs.

I'm especially interested in hearing Don Sweeney about the Troops-to-Teachers implemented throughout the New England

area, especially in rural school districts, and if any changes should be made to better serve the schools in those districts, and particular in the State of Maine.

So thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I look forward to working with you throughout the upcoming session.

Mr. BROWN. Thank you, Mr. Michaud, and certainly glad to have you on the team, and certainly look forward to listening to these witnesses today.

Before we get started, we have a special guest with us today, Maj. Gen. James B. Allen. General, would you mind standing up? Thank you very much for coming, and thank you for all you do for the Troops-to-Teachers program. (Applause.)

Mr. BROWN. Our first witness this afternoon is Ms. Nina Rees, Deputy Under Secretary for Innovation and Improvement, at the Department of Education. Ms. Rees is accompanied by Dr. John Gantz, the Chief of the Troops-to-Teachers program in the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support at the Department of Defense.

Without objection, the complete written testimony for each witness will be submitted in the record. I would ask each witness to limit their oral testimony to 5 minutes. The red light will tell witnesses when the 5 minutes has expired. Your seat doesn't get ejected or anything, but——

(Laughter.)

Mr. BROWN. Ms. Rees, you may begin when you're ready.

STATEMENT OF NINA S. REES, DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR INNOVATION AND IMPROVEMENT, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, ACCOMPANIED BY JOHN GANTZ, CHIEF, TROOPS-TO-TEACHERS, DEFENSE ACTIVITY FOR NON-TRADITIONAL EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT (DANTES), DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Ms. REES. Mr. Chairman and subcommittee members, I am pleased to be here this afternoon to discuss the Troops-to-Teachers program. I'm also delighted to be sitting next to John Gantz, the head of Troops-to-Teachers at the Department of Defense's Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support, also known as DANTES. John has capably led the Troops-to-Teachers program since its inception in 1994.

My position is Deputy Under Secretary for the Office of Innovation and Improvement at the Department of Education. This is a new office that the Secretary created this last fall, and its mission is to identify, support and promote promising innovations with a proven track record of raising student achievement in our Nation's elementary and secondary schools.

We are particularly interested, in this office, in approaches that bring highly qualified teachers into the classrooms, and Troops-to-Teachers is certainly one of those programs.

Now, as you know, the No Child Left Behind Act, which passed with overwhelming bipartisan support from both houses of Congress, challenges states to put in place plans to ensure that every teacher is highly qualified by the 2005–2006 school year. This is an ambitious goal, but one that we can meet.

As Secretary Paige has explained, in order to meet this goal, we must do things differently.

First, states must raise academic achievement for all of their teachers to ensure that they are prepared to teach in high-need areas

Second, we must lower the barriers to entry so that we can attract the best and the brightest into the field of teaching.

The Troops-to-Teachers program reflects both of those objectives.

Many of our servicemen and women possess a command of mathematics and science, subjects that are critical to our Nation's economic success in the 21st century, and subjects for which there is a critical shortage of qualified teachers, especially in our high-need school districts.

The Troops-to-Teachers program promotes high standards by identifying and bringing these talented men and women, and their top-notch skills and abilities, into our Nation's public schools.

The Troops-to-Teachers program also addresses the barriers that keep many talented people out of our schools. Unfortunately, for too long, states have relied on certification systems that seem to repel talent, rather than recruit it.

Though many teachers come through traditional preparation programs and state certification systems that prepare them to become highly qualified in the classroom, the hoops and hurdles, the bureaucratic entanglements, the sometimes mindless requirements that find their way into state certification regimes keep countless individuals who could potentially become wonderful teachers from ever setting foot into a classroom. That is a shame.

Troops-to-Teachers helps us cut through this red tape by placing critical personnel inside state departments of education, people who help retiring military personnel negotiate the land mines of government bureaucracy and certification requirements.

The program also puts helpful pressure on states to open up new streamlined alternative routes to teacher certification that take less time, cost less, and are designed specifically for career-changing adults with lots of relevant skills and experience.

Now, let me just put this in context. These are some of the basic requirements of the Troops-to-Teachers program.

Beginning in the fiscal year 2002, the Congress appropriated funds for the Troops-to-Teachers program to the Department of Education.

Through a memorandum of understanding with the Defense Department, we transfer funds to DANTES, to Mr. Gantz, who then handles the day-to-day administration of this program; but as I mentioned earlier, the program has been around since 1994, so our involvement of this program is fairly new.

Troops-to-Teachers assists eligible military personnel in making the transition to teaching in public elementary and secondary schools. To be eligible, in general, a serviceman or woman must meet one of three criteria.

First of all, they can have retired from active or reserve service;

Secondly, they can have separated from the service after at least 6 years of continuous duty and be willing to enter the reserves for at least 3 years; and

Lastly, they can be currently serving in the reserves and have at least 10 years of active and reserve service and commit to continuing in the reserves for at least 3 or more years.

Does this mean I only have 2 minutes left?

Mr. BROWN. We will give you an additional 2 minutes.

Ms. REES. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (Laughter.)

Let me just go through some of the things we know about the program.

One of the key features of the Office of Innovation and Improvements, one of the things we're going to promote, is rigorous evaluation of the programs that are in our office. In the case of Troops-to-Teachers, we've had several studies done already, one by the General Accounting Office. Another one is a 1998 national survey of Troops-to-Teachers that was done by an independent organization called the National Center for Education Information.

A lot of the things that the Department is currently gathering are the basic facts. We know how many teachers are serving in the program. We know where they're serving. But we also have a lot of anecdotal evidence that the program is effective.

So one of the goals that we're going to pursue at the Department of Education is to try to rigorously evaluate the benefits of this program, making sure that we're not just relying on anecdotes in years to come.

The other thing that our Department is really going to focus on is the requirement in No Child Left Behind to make sure every teacher is highly qualified, to make the case to states for them to come up with a definition of highly qualified that takes into account some of the alternative routes to certification.

One of the things that the Secretary did recently was fund the launch of an on-line teachers college called Western Governors University. This is a program that three states are currently participating in, and it's a virtual college that a lot of military men can potentially get their certification through.

Another program that we fund through a $5 million grant is the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence, which again is a certification route that, in essence, gets qualified individuals who want to get into teaching, basically administers a test for them to take if they want to become teachers.

Again, some states have already approved this type of certification, but not all states have, and we think it's very important for members on this committee and any other members in Congress who are interested in boosting Troops-to-Teachers to really pay attention to these alternatives routes and make sure that their states are including these alternatives in their definition of "highly qualified," so that we can bring more troops into the classroom, because they're really serving a great need in our classrooms, especially in high-need areas that are suffering a shortage of teachers in math, science, and special education.

So I think I'm at my deadline. Thank you for having me, and I'd be happy to answer any questions you have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Rees appears on p. 25.]

Mr. BROWN. Thank you very, very much, and I'll recognize Mr. Michaud for questions.

Mr. MICHAUD. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I actually have three quick questions.

One is, I understand that education and teaching certification requirements are within the prerogative of the states. However, has the Department of Education considered to look into actions which can be taken to improve the portability of the credentials?

Ms. REES. We have had discussions with governors and we hope to continue these discussions, maybe through conferences in the future, but we haven't really come up with any policies, per se, to address the portability question. It's something that's been brought to our attention.

I'm very well aware of it, and we hope that we can address it in years to come, but there are also, from what I understand, states that are engaging in these discussions, so that they can make their certifications portable across state lines.

I'm happy to look into this a little bit further and get back to you, but it hasn't been something that we've discussed at great length at the Department.

And just so you know, my office oversees alternative teacher certification programs. The Office of Elementary and Secondary Education in our Department handles all the requirements dealing with teacher quality, and with Title II of ESEA, so I need to also consult with them in order to answer your question.

Mr. MICHAUD. Has the Department of Education or Department of Defense evaluated the states participating in this program, to determine and implement elsewhere any best practices?

Ms. REES. In the Troops-to-Teachers area?

Mr. MICHAUD. Yes.

Ms. REES. As I said earlier, one of the things our office will do is conduct a rigorous evaluation of the program to determine its effectiveness.

Because we've only had this program for a new years, and because my office is a new office, we haven't really had a chance to look at how this program is playing out.

There are certainly models and examples of teachers who have come to the classroom through this program. The retention rates seem to be high. They hover between 70 to 85 percent, and retention is one of the areas that a lot of high-need schools complain to us about, but we don't have any other qualitative data that can then help us shine a light on specific things that we can do to use this program as a model.

But if John wants to add to that?

Mr. GANTZ. We've seen several states that have adjusted their teacher certification requirements to help attract our military personnel.

Arizona, I know, is one state that looks at the background and experience that military personnel have, and where it's relevant for the teacher certification program, they will consider that in the award of their teacher certification for that state.

Hopefully, more and more states will begin to realize that these military veterans are bringing a great deal of background and experience that is very relevant to quality teachers in public schools.

Mr. MICHAUD. My last question, are you familiar with the Social Security offset? And there are, I believe, 14 states who are affected

by the Social Security offset, so how does this affect Troops-to-Teachers, and how do you plan on addressing that?

Ms. REES. We'll take a look at that, and I'm happy to provide you with a written comment from the Department addressing that specific issue, if you like.

Mr. GANTZ. If I may, we have had a number of our states offices, probably the 14 that you mentioned, that have contacted us and said that the Social Security offset is a complication that our people are facing.

The issue is that our retired military people have paid into Social Security over the 20 or so years of their career. Then when they join the teacher retirement system, they do not have to pay Social Security benefits, but then when they retire from that teacher position, they are faced with the Social Security offset.

One of the things we're doing is telling our state offices to make sure our veterans understand that, and I think that is having an impact, because some of the people are saying, "Well, if I have an interest in teaching in one, two, or three states, I'm going to go to that state where I'm not going to have the Social Security offset."

Mr. MICHAUD. Or they might not go into teaching at all.

Mr. GANTZ. Or they might not teach at all. You're right, sir.

Mr. MICHAUD. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BROWN. Thank you, Mr. Michaud. That was a great question.

Ms. Rees, as you stated in your testimony, there is a shortage of teachers in math and science. However, there seems to also be a shortage in foreign languages, as well.

With a vast number of servicemen proficient in languages, is the Troops-to-Teachers program recruiting language specialists from the military, as well?

Ms. REES. The requirement of the law is such that we address the fields where there is a shortage of teachers. Math, science, and special education are the three fields that we've identified at the national level as the fields that need the most attention.

There is nothing prohibiting states from recruiting Troops-to-Teachers to also fill in vacancies in the areas of foreign languages.

Mr. BROWN. This, I guess, will be my next to last question.

I've heard from some private parochial schools in my state regarding their inability to participate in the Troops-to-Teachers program.

Is there any reason why faith-based schools are not involved in Troops-to-Teachers, and wouldn't it be more helpful to servicemembers to have more job opportunities?

Ms. REES. The way the statute is currently written, there is nothing prohibiting troops who are interested in teaching in private schools to take advantage of the counseling and recruitment components of the program to.

However, the stipends and bonuses are specifically available for teachers who will teach in high-need public schools, and those bonuses cannot be expanded to private schools, because the statute is very clear that they have to be limited to teachers who are going to end up in public schools.

But the program, as it's written in law, can recruit teachers for private schools, without the bonuses.

Mr. BROWN. I think the bonuses is one of the attractions, though, isn't it?

Let me follow up on that question. One of the great things about the Troops-to-Teachers program is that it recruits teachers for inner city schools. However, many rural schools also have a large problem recruiting teachers.

Would including rural areas in the bonus program be a good idea?

Ms. REES. Well, you have to teach in a high-need district in order to qualify for the funds, and if the rural district is a high-need district, defined as a district that has a high percentage of low-income students, they also would qualify.

So it's defined based on how many needy students you have in your district.

Mr. BROWN. One last follow-up question not related to Troops-to-Teachers. I was just curious, in my area we have a goodly number of business folks coming down to retire. Is there any possibility or is there any thought about maybe creating a similar program for, say, retired business executives?

Ms. REES. At the Department of Education? We have not had policy discussions in this area, but there is an alternative teacher certification program called the New Teachers Project, which gets indirect funding through our Title II program in different states to recruit mid-level business professionals into the classroom, and they've had great success in a number of states so far.

We've been trying to use our bully pulpit, to bring attention to them. Certainly, Mrs. Bush has held a number of events at the White House and during her trips to bring attention to this particular program, but we don't currently have specific funding for it.

They did qualify for Transition to Teaching funding a couple of years ago, but for a variety of reasons they decided not to apply for the grant this time.

Mr. BROWN. Okay. I thank you very, very much, both of you, Ms. Rees and Mr. Gantz, for coming and participating in this discussion today. Thank you.

Ms. REES. Thank you.

Mr. GANTZ. Thank you, sir.

Mr. BROWN. Will the second panel come forward?

Our first witness on the second panel is Dr. Deno Curris, former long-time president of Clemson University. You notice I brought this cup today in your honor, Dr. Curris, and it's good southern iced tea with sugar in it.

Dr. Curris and I go back a long way. When I chaired the Ways and Means Committee in South Carolina, he was the president of Clemson, and we had a great relationship at that time.

Dr. Curris, certainly, we welcome you to our panel today. Dr. Curris is the president of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

Seated at the table with Dr. Curris is Ms. Nancy Dunlap, associate director of the School of Education at Clemson University, heads up the T3 Coalition in South Carolina.

Dr. Dunlap is accompanied today by Dr. Kathy Brown, a professor at The Citadel, who is currently teaching an on-line course for the Coalition.

Dr. Brown, I didn't bring my dog cup, but I'm still a great fan of The Citadel, you understand.

The program in South Carolina is currently ranked Number 7 in the country with regard to the number of teachers from the Troops-to-Teachers program who have been placed in jobs.

Dr. Dunlap, your program is also a model for other states on how becoming a teacher can be made easier and more effective for former servicemembers.

The T3 Coalition is designed so South Carolinians stationed all over the world, including some who are today in Bosnia, Kuwait, and Japan, can work toward their teaching certificates.

Using distance learning strategies, servicemembers can access and complete case work from any location, around the clock, 7 days a week.

I applaud you for your leadership.

That funny sound that you heard was we have a vote on the House floor in 15 minutes, is that correct?

So, Dr. Curris, if you would, continue.

STATEMENTS OF CONSTANTINE W. "DENO" CURRIS, PRESIDENT, THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES; AND NANCY CASSITY DUNLAP, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, EUGENE T. MOORE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, CLEMSON UNIVERSITY; ACCOMPANIED BY KATHY BROWN, PROFESSOR, THE CITADEL

STATEMENT OF CONSTANTINE W. "DENO" CURRIS

Mr. CURRIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Michaud. It's a genuine pleasure for me to be here, particularly to speak on behalf of the 425 public 4-year institutions in the country that are part of our association.

I come before you to discuss the Troops-to-Teachers program specifically, and more generally, the National Teacher Challenge.

AASCU, the organization I represent, is uniquely qualified to discuss both of these issues for two reasons:

First, our historic and ongoing involvement in teacher preparation, with over half of the Nation's teachers graduating from institutions that are part of our association.

And the second reason is our 30 years of experience in participating in the education of members of the armed services, specifically through our Servicemen Opportunity College that we have been pleased to be part of our association for three decades.

We believe that the Troops-to-Teachers program provides an invaluable service to the Nation's K–12 schools and is important in meeting the National Teacher Challenge.

Servicemembers entering the teaching profession benefit the Nation's schools not only because of their commitment, but also because of their diversity in placement. Specifically, over 40 percent of the Troops-to-Teachers participants are minority, 80 percent are male, and over two-thirds serve in high-poverty school districts.

These men and women become important role models for America's children while addressing key workforce shortages.

The profile of teachers prepared by this program is one of the reasons we support it so strongly. We are concerned about the sup-

ply of highly qualified teachers willing to serve in high-need school districts and the number of educators from under-represented and non-traditional teaching populations.

If I could digress for a moment, I would simply say that my daughter-in-law is a counselor in the Army Career and Alumni Program at Fort Bragg, where our son is stationed. She counsels servicemembers about Troops-to-Teachers. She is excited whenever one goes into it. The difficult is, we don't have enough of our servicemembers going into the teaching profession.

She indicated that among the reasons cited is that several are close to having received a college degree before entering the service and they need that extra help to graduate from college as well as to come into the Troops-to-Teachers program.

I say that because I think the field is ripe for some limited funding for experimental programs that will try and increase the number of our troops that go into teaching.

I would also add that alternative preparation programs can and do help, but the numbers they produce are just insufficient to meet the Nation's needs.

Since January of 1994, the Troops-to-Teachers program has placed 3,000 teachers, but that's less than 1 percent of the newly hired every year, and while the bulk of the Nation's demand will be met through traditional programs, every servicemember going into teaching is needed. The contribution of Troops-to-Teachers is greater than the numbers because of the diversity in placement they provide.

Whether traditional or non-traditional in nature, our association stands firm in its belief that all preparation programs must be held to rigorous standards. We think that can be done. We don't need to lower the bar.

I think we can help to eliminate barriers that preclude people from going into teaching without lowering the standards, and we should not lower the standards, because we cannot ensure that a highly qualified teacher is going into every classroom if we do that.

So to do this, AASCU is calling upon Congress, as part of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, to provide resources to institutions of higher education to build and strengthen the Nation's teaching force.

Specifically, we ask that the partnerships that are already established in Title II of the Higher Education Act—and I know it's not directly before this subcommittee, but it's important—be modified to require collaboration that includes not only local education agencies and institutions of higher education, but also state and other local authorities responsible for teacher education, and including those that establish the standards.

Such collaboration is consistent with professional development activity supported in the Leave No Child Behind law. It will promote policy and programmatic alignment throughout the education curriculum, and it will support changes to unwarranted requirements that serve as obstacles, and can facilitate progress.

Regardless of how an individual earns a teaching credential, the Troops-to-Teachers program is dedicated to ensuring that all participants are highly qualified. AASCU member institutions are like-

wise dedicated to ensuring that goal. We need just more, and our children deserve no less.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Curris appears on p. 32.]

Mr. BROWN. Thank you, Dr. Curris.

Dr. Dunlap, if you would be so kind, we must go vote.

Ms. DUNLAP. I am at your disposal, sir.

Mr. BROWN. We will come back. We will just take a short recess and come back as soon as we vote. Thank you very much.

[Recess.]

Mr. BROWN. The hearing will continue, and Dr. Dunlap, thanks for your patience. We will hear attentively from you.

STATEMENT OF NANCY CASSITY DUNLAP

Ms. DUNLAP. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, distinguished guests, and our colleagues from the Department of Labor and the Department of Education who are here today, and our Coalition partners who are here today.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm thrilled to be here today and want to thank you for this opportunity, because this gives further credence to the fact that what we're doing is the right thing. We have a lot of confidence in that. It gives testament to its value.

Teaching is an art. It's a calling. Teaching requires knowledge and skills, to be sure, but it also requires heart. It's the willingness and the need to serve, and who better fit to serve than those men and women in uniform? They have already proven themselves and they've given us so much.

Why are they appropriate? You've heard some of the reasons:

Their high level of training and education; there's a high ethnic minority ratio, missing in our schools; their military experience as trainers; their training in safety and security—let's not underestimate that importance in our schools today; their organizational, technical, and leadership skills; they're great role models for kids; they're mature; they're physically fit; they're drug free; and they have a world view that they bring to the schools that heretofore has been missing.

In the short time that I have—and you must remember, please, I'm a South Carolinian, and it's hard for me to say hello in 5 minutes——

(Laughter.)

Mr. BROWN. Dr. Dunlap, not to interrupt you, but I have that same problem up here. I tell those folks that they give us 5 minutes. I said, you know, from us being from the low country in South Carolina, we talk slow. So we understand.

Ms. DUNLAP. Yes, sir, and I'm trying to talk fast, so you all need to listen fast. (Laughter.)

But in this short period of time, it's going to be impossible for me to convey the passion that we have for this program, but I will try to provide you with some pertinent information and some detail about it.

First, I want to draw your attention to the folder that is sitting at your place, the blue folder, and I want to tell you just briefly what is in it, so you'll have a notion as to what all that means.

I'm not going to go through this stuff, I'm just leaving it for you, for your edification, and I think Ms. Seibert has additional copies, too.

Ms. DUNLAP. Over on the right-hand side, there is a brochure that advertises our program. This is the poster that accompanies the brochure.

1,500 of these posters went to all of the military bases around the world, to help promote the program, with the little tear-off thing, but there's a brochure there.

There's also a briefing paper, a little one-pager that kind of tells about what we are.

There is a Power Point presentation that I'm not going to go over today. I've used it in the past. But I'm going to hit a couple of the pieces from that in this session.

Over on the left-hand side there's an unabashed advertisement for the Eugene T. Moore School of Education at Clemson University. I'm shameless.

The other pieces on the left-hand side, there's a list of the project participants. This is a coalition of four universities, five agencies, and a corporate partner, and there have been a lot of people who have been involved in this initiative since its inception.

Then, the final piece in there is a copy of letters of support from the various partners.

The front piece on that left-hand side, I want to talk about just for a second, because this is based on software that we have that tracks the hits to our web site, and we have had almost 12,000 hits on our web site, and what we can do is trace how deeply get into our web site.

If they just hit the first page and go on, or if they get into the web site three levels down, then Carol Goodwin, who is the project director, knows she's going to expect an e-mail or a phone call within a week, and that's how really good this software is.

But you can get a sense of where they're coming from, but the point that I want to mention, down at the bottom left of this where it says, "Active links," these are folks who actually have a link to us on their web site.

So we've got ACAP, the Army Career Assistance Program; the Military Officers Association, used to be TROA; the DMOZ; Quantico, Marine Corps—never mind—the Commission on Higher Education; and the Citadel; and more are coming.

The other thing I want you to look at just briefly is the countries that are visiting the web site. Now, most of these are military people, and if you look at the graph right above that, where it says 49.5, actually contacting a web site through military bases around the world, or embassies.

So what you see down here at the bottom is a list of the countries that are represented on those hits on our web site, and that is really impressive, and we just got one from Afghanistan, and we're really curious about that.

That's all I'm going to say about the packet until I get to a couple of the things.

I want to also say that we started—in 1996, first of all, the National Commission on Teaching in America's Future issued its report, "What Matters Most." In this report, the commission stated,

"What teachers know and can do is the most important influence on what students learn."

Seemingly, this is a no-brainer, but this became a touchstone for the work that evolved out of the T3 Coalition.

The coalition was born in the summer of 1999 through the efforts of many dedicated people, including representatives from DANTES, our partner universities, school districts, agencies, and IBM LOTUS, our corporate partner, to develop a training program designed specifically for military personnel who want to become teachers, so those were our targets from the beginning.

This program's genesis and its heart evolved from Troops-to-Teachers, and we embrace its origins.

Now, one person I want you to meet, and in the testimony there are several examples in here, but one person I want you to meet is Mercer Jameson.

Mercer Jameson hails from Pocataligo, South Carolina. It is a small crossroads in the South Carolina low country, very few prospects, very few opportunities for Mercer, so when the Navy offered him an opportunity to see the world, he jumped at it.

Twenty-five years later, he has a bachelor's degree in engineering from Old Dominion University. He's ready to retire. He wants to come home. He wants to be a teacher and make a difference in the lives of rural youth.

These are the folks we're talking about. A lot of them will be coming home. Some of them will be coming to South Carolina for the first time. We welcome them, we embrace them.

To be successful teachers, they need more than a textbook and a handshake. They need training, and they need a tool kit to enable them to be successful.

We've found that if you send a person into a classroom without requisite training, they often stumble and they have difficulties, so what we've designed is a unique program that they can start taking 2 years prior to separation from active duty, so no matter where in the world they are, if they are in Pensacola, if they are in Alaska, if they are in Aiken, South Carolina, they can take their course work. When they finish their course work they will walk into a 1-year paid internship in one of the schools in high need in South Carolina.

The curriculum—and I'll draw your attention real quickly to Page 8—my light is red, Mr. Chairman—Page 8 of the handout, a couple other things I want to hit on the unique features of this program.

It is a collaboration among four universities and five agencies. The four universities are Clemson University; University of South Carolina; The Citadel, represented here by Dr. Brown; and South Carolina State University.

The curriculum was developed by university faculty based on what teachers need to know and need to be able to do, and defensively—can defend it through a scientifically documentable knowledge base, not just take this course that needs to be taught this way. No. We zero-based this curriculum. We built it from nothing.

What do they need to know and what do they need to be able to do? These are for second career folks, retiring military.

We looked at gap analysis of skills and experiences— what do they already know; what can they already do; what did they bring to the military—and we build on that.

The participant may begin within 2 years of retirement or separation, go into a paid internship, placement in the districts with greatest need.

We have a strong research component. We want to be able to measure how our folks are effective in the schools, short-term and long-term. We're looking at 5 years out, 10 years out, being able to assess their competency, and again, focusing on retiring military personnel with a Bachelor's degree or higher.

We also are looking at blended learning opportunities, so it's not just on-line interaction with a computer, with the faculty, but they have opportunities for field experiences in either a DODDS school or a local public school.

The other thing I wanted to mention is that our general assembly in South Carolina was so impressed with the program that they said that any person who is enrolled, regardless of where they're from or where they are, can pay in-state tuition at the participating institutions. That's our state commitment, which is substantial.

In terms of the processes that we went through, if you'll turn the page to Page 9, it lists—I'm a systems person, so I'm really, really concerned about the processes that we went through.

The processes we found are transferable, that these can transfer into other career fields, so we are investigating right now with the Department of Labor looking at some other career fields where we might also be able to apply this for veterans and for active duty military who are separating from the service, being mindful of the fact that these are not—we're not trying to pull people out of the service. These are folks who have made the choice and made the decision that they are going to be leaving either through retirement or there early separation.

Finally, the areas that we're looking at, education, of course, health, homeland security, communications, and there may be others out there, but what we are trying to do is to allow our servicemembers in all branches of the service to be what—be all that they can be, yet again.

I would welcome any questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Dunlap appears on p. 38.]

Mr. BROWN. Thank you, Dr. Dunlap.

I'll point out, for the benefit of the panel, that on Page 10 there was another screen that said, "Clemson University, Time Magazine's Public College of the Year 2001," and I can understand why. Thank you very much for your testimony.

Ms. DUNLAP. Thank you, sir. I am shameless in my advertising.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. Michaud, do you have any questions?

Mr. MICHAUD. Thank you very much, Dr. Dunlap. I really appreciate your enthusiasm about the program. I can see why it's doing so well.

Ms. DUNLAP. It's a passion.

Mr. MICHAUD. I see it comes from the heart. Just a couple quick questions.

Having been involved in the program, can you see where there might be some burdensome requirements in the program that you

hear from servicemembers, and how should we change the program if there is, to make it more user friendly?

Ms. DUNLAP. We are piloting it right now, and one of the reasons Dr. Brown is here, she actually was involved in the development of two of the courses and has actually taught one of them.

So we're going through our pilot phase now, and we're debugging where we find problems.

One of the beautiful things that we've experienced in this is an absolutely marvelous relationship with our corporate partner, with IBM Lotus. They have taken the learning space software and have tailored it specifically to our needs, which has been so enormously helpful, and so that we're able to—when we started going through the development of the courses, we had two groups look at the courses through their filters and give us feedback.

One was a group of excellent teachers and really skillful teachers. We used Milliken teachers, national teachers of the—I mean state teachers of the year, and the Teacher Forum, and some of our nationally board-certified teachers to look at it from a teacher's perspective—is this what teachers need to know and need to be able to do?

Then we got our ROTC faculty, who are active duty military, to look at it with their filters. Now, if you are a military person, look at this. Is it too jargony, is there something we need to amend? Do we need to perhaps emphasize this a little more, this a little less, whatever?

So it's in a constant state of development, and that's what's good about it. That's what's healthy about it, the fact that we can make these mid-line adjustments.

But Dr. Brown also might want to address that, from a faculty member who has actually been teaching one of these courses.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you very much, sir, and for the committee.

After we've gone through the course, it's very easy to make adjustments. Now, the difference is when you're face to face, you can always clarify what it is you need to do, but when it's a distance approach, then you're really going to have to be specific and very exact about what it is you want.

What we have done with the course is, we've provided our applicants an opportunity to submit prior to grading, so that the professor can review it, and then we send it back.

Now, what I've done is I've compiled a notebook of any issues that we've had, and then I've made adjustments for teaching the course the second time around.

However, our assessment of what has happened with the students that I've been working with says that it's a very positive experience.

I also want you to know that our corporate partner has allowed us to give the opportunity to students so that there can be a lot of interaction. They can post their assignments so that other classmates can take a look at it.

We have threaded conversations much like the instant messenger, so that they can all talk at the same time if we give them the opportunity to know when we're going to speak.

So the opportunity is there. It's different from face to face interaction, but we've made adjustments with our corporate partners.

Mr. MICHAUD. Great. Thank you very much.

My second question, Dr. Dunlap, and I appreciate your state's decision to treat servicemembers, regardless of where they're at, with in-state tuition. That's very generous of your state, and we appreciate that.

Do you have feel it's fair, though, where you mentioned—you heard my question earlier about the Social Security offset, that because of 14 states, that it's fair to discriminate against the servicemen and women in those states from participating in this program because of that offset?

Ms. DUNLAP. That was the first I had heard of that, and I hate to plead ignorance. I had not heard that before, so that was—that really blindsided me.

I don't really know enough to even answer your question, and I apologize, but I will find out, absolutely I shall.

Mr. MICHAUD. Thank you very much.

Mr. BROWN. And also, I thank the Congressman. We should also be finding out, too. I think that really is a concern that we all have about, you know, giving to them and taking away some of the benefits.

Dr. Brown, Dr. Dunlap, and Dr. Curris, thank you very, very much for coming, and I can understand how South Carolina is seventh in the country, with such enthusiasm for that program back home.

So thank you all very, very much, and I hope you all have a safe trip back.

Ms. DUNLAP. Thank you kindly, and we are also looking for the opportunity perhaps of taking this national and making it available to other institutions across the country.

Mr. BROWN. It certainly seems to be working in South Carolina. I think it's a good program. Thank you.

Ms. DUNLAP. Thank you.

Mr. BROWN. Will our third panel please come forward?

We'll begin our third panel with Mr. Don Sweeney of the National Association of State Approving Agencies, Troops-to-Teachers Program in New England.

You've appeared before this subcommittee many times, and we welcome you back, Mr. Sweeney.

The two remaining witness on the panel are Troops-to-Teachers graduates, Dr. William Harner, a West Point graduate with 20 years in the Army, who is superintendent of the Greenville County schools in South Carolina—the largest school district in the State with some 76,000 students—and Ms. Sandra Sessoms-Penny, a retired Air Force Senior Master Sergeant, 22 years of active duty, and now an assistant principal in Yorktown, Virginia.

Thank you all for being here, and Mr. Sweeney, we'll begin with you. Thank you.

STATEMENTS OF C. DONALD SWEENEY, LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE APPROVING AGENCIES, TROOPS-TO-TEACHERS, NEW ENGLAND; WILLIAM E. HARNER, DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT, GREENVILLE COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA; AND SANDRA G. SESSOMS-PENNY, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL, SMITHFIELD MIDDLE SCHOOL, SMITHFIELD, VIRGINIA

STATEMENT OF C. DONALD SWEENEY

Mr. SWEENEY. Mr. Chairman, Congressman Michaud, I'm very pleased to be here today to testify on the Troops-to-Teachers program.

Since time is limited, I will not summarize all my written testimony, but just make quick reference to the most important points in some sections as a basis for later discussion.

As requested, I'll speak to the relationship of the Troops-to-Teachers program to the priorities and work of state approving agencies, what the program means to northern New England, identify issues that inhibit program success, and offer a couple of recommendations for legislative change.

Regarding the relationship of the Troops-to-Teachers program to the priorities and work of state approving agencies, I'd like to highlight two current congressional initiatives.

The first is improving the opportunities for our servicemembers to transfer the knowledge and skills learned in the military to a civilian occupation or profession. In academic terms, this is referred to as credit for prior learning.

The bottom line, veterans cannot afford to waste valuable time and resources being required to participate in learning experiences that provide certain knowledge and skills that they already have. Working towards entrance into the teaching profession is no exception.

As you know, each state has specific requirements for teacher certification, and frankly, some states are more user friendly than others when it comes to recognizing the past experiences of military personnel for certification purposes.

We need more providers of teacher preparation programs and more state department of education officials to recognize and grant credit for relevant military training and experience.

The second congressional initiative is the further development of job training programs for veterans and other G.I. Bill eligible persons. Teacher shortages and other factors have led states to take great interest in the expertise, experience, and talents of individuals who were not specifically trained for the classroom.

Consequently, there has been increased emphasis on the development of alternative certification approaches to include apprenticeship-like programs under a mentor or master teacher for individuals hired on a conditional basis.

As these alternative programs continue to develop, we project that there will be increased opportunity to approve the learning experiences as on-the-job training under the G.I. Bill.

In northern New England, we anticipate up to 40 percent attrition of teachers during the next 5 years, largely through retirements. This phenomenon is made worse by slumping state econo-

mies that create even greater difficulties for school administrators and school districts to attract and retain highly qualified teachers as now required by the No Child Left Behind Act.

The Troops-to-Teachers program can be very valuable as the northern New England states continue to work hard to redesign our certification requirements and options.

In my written statement, I describe some of what is occurring in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont as well as the invaluable assets that servicemembers and veterans bring to our Nation's classrooms.

In addition to the credit for prior learning issue, and the further development of alternative approaches to teacher certification, there are two other challenges facing the Troops-to-Teachers program.

One is the acquisition of course work necessary to obtain certification, and you've already heard some about that here today. Enrolling in a residential program as required by many educational institutions is not an option for many TTT participants.

Fortunately, a few colleges and universities now offer teacher preparation programs and/or subject matter and professional education methodology courses through what is termed distance education.

A significant challenge to the success of the TTT program is the legislative language that authorizes the program. The No Child Left Behind Act states that the purpose of the program is twofold. In essence, the first is to assist eligible members of the armed services to obtain certification and become highly qualified teachers. The second is to facilitate the employment of such members in schools or school districts that serve a high percentage of children from low-income families.

However, the legislative language for determining which TTT participants qualify for financial assistance is not consistent with the second purpose. Section 2304, Public Law 107–110, severely limits the locations where TTT participants who have received up to a $5,000 stipend may seek employment. Based on the definition of qualifying local education agencies found in Section 2102, only 28 percent of all school districts in the Nation would satisfy the obligation of our Troops-to-Teachers participants to teach for 3 years.

In fact, in New England, the situation is even more restricted. For instance, in New Hampshire, we go from 73 school districts down to one that meets this criterion. Maine is almost as bad with the number of available school districts decreasing from 184 to 75.

There's one other change that should be made to make the program more consistent with the goals of the program, and helpful to attracting more TTT participants to teach in high-need, high-demand areas. The essence of this recommendation is to allow the awarding of the $10,000 bonus in addition to the $5,000 stipend for a minimum of 3 years of employment in a school with a higher percentage of children from low-income families.

Thank you, Chairman Brown and Congressman Michaud. It has been my pleasure to be here today. I would be happy to answer any questions that you might have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sweeney appears on p. 46.]

Mr. BROWN. Thank you, Mr. Sweeney. Dr. Harner.

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM E. HARNER

Mr. HARNER. Thank you, Chairman Brown, Mr. Michaud, ladies and gentlemen. I'm delighted to have the opportunity today to speak about my experience with the Troops-to-Teachers program.

As a point of reference, I serve today as the superintendent of the school district of Greenville County in the great State of South Carolina, our State's largest school district and the 63rd largest school district in the Nation, with 62,000 students.

I have served almost 3 years as superintendent after serving 20 years in the U.S. Army.

I am honored to be considered a torchbearer within the Army ranks by the Troops-to-Teachers program, and I was selected 2 years ago to appear with First Lady Laura Bush in the national kickoff supporting the Troops-to-Teachers program.

My interest in wanting to make a difference in public education began during a tour on the faculty at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and subsequently reading about a retired Army major general, John Stanford, who in 1994 became the superintendent of the Seattle school system.

Using the tuition assistance program provided by my veterans benefits, I enrolled in my first of three graduate-level educational leadership programs. At the time, I was serving on the Joint Staff in Yongsan, Korea.

Without those educational benefits, I would not be sitting here today, nor serving the students of Greenville County. I am deeply appreciative to my country, to the Members of Congress, and the Army for all of these opportunities.

Upon my return to the States from Korea, I was selected as a basic training battalion commander at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. While in command, I burnt the candle at both ends—infantry officer by day and student by night.

During the nighttime, I earned another master's degree in educational supervision, a requirement to become a principal in South Carolina, and later earned a Ph.D. in educational leadership.

However, even with a master's degree in education, I needed a teacher's certificate before I could become a leader in a public school. Like most states, the South Carolina Teacher Certification regulations provide no flexibility for folks like me, who want to bring a full career of experience, knowledge, and abilities to a public school classroom.

At that point, I sought the counsel of the South Carolina Troops-to-Teachers staff. I ended up going out of state to find a certification process that would accept my time on the U.S. Military Academy faculty, then transferred that teaching certificate to South Carolina.

It was the support of the Troops-to-Teachers staff that pointed me in the right direction. As a result, the day after I retired from the military, I was walking the halls of Hilton Head High School here in South Carolina as its principal.

My 2-year service as principal later led to my selection as a non-traditional superintendent to serve in the Greenville community.

I am a non-traditional superintendent in the sense that I did not follow the standard process for moving up the ranks in a public school system, beginning as a teacher, then moving up to an assist-

ant principal, principal, administrator, and finally to superintendent.

Matter of fact, most of my classmates in the education programs thought by the time I was 65, I would probably be qualified to be a superintendent. I was 44 when I was selected.

We need to break the paradigm, if we truly are genuine in our desire to leave no child behind.

My time is brief, and I want to leave you with a few points.

First, thank you for your support of the Troops-to-Teachers program. I would not be sitting here, as I said earlier, if I did not have that support.

Alternative certification routes are important to sustain a qualified teaching workforce. There are thousands who leave the military each and every year who want to continue to serve and who have much to offer the young people of our Nation. Thank you for supporting the initiative in South Carolina and providing additional opportunities for retired veterans to serve their community.

Second, I want to support Secretary Paige and the American Board for Teacher Certification of Teaching Excellence, whose mission is to certify subject matter experts, experienced professionals, and military veterans as public school teachers. Quality teachers can come from all walks of life, as you know from many successes made possible by the Troops-to-Teachers program.

Third, a key component of our national security no doubt is the quality of our public education system.

Decades ago, the father of the nuclear navy, Admiral Rickover, appeared before Congress asking our Nation's leaders at the time to raise the bar of the public education system. He saw our country's need for future engineers and understood the importance of the first Elementary and Secondary Schools Act of 1963 as the means to the end to meet those needs.

In our knowledge-based economy today, public education plays an even more vital part in national security. In support of our Nation's latest effort to improve public schools, we must continue to press forward in the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act and seek other avenues where military veterans can contribute to the Act's success.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. This has been a great honor, indeed an honor for me, my Board of Trustees, and everyone that I represent in the School District of Greenville County.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Harner appears on p. 52.]

Mr. BROWN. Thank you, Dr. Harner. Ms. Sessoms-Penny.

STATEMENT OF SANDRA G. SESSOMS-PENNY

Ms. SESSOMS-PENNY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good afternoon, members of the subcommittee.

My name is Sandra Sessoms-Penny, and I'm a retired senior master sergeant of the U.S. Air Force, having served nearly 22 years of active duty. I'm also an assistant principal at Smithfield Middle School in Isle of Wight County, located in Smithfield, Virginia.

I'm known as Ms. S-P to nearly 900 sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade students. I'm also a former Troops-to-Teachers participant and currently a Troops-to-Teachers mentor.

I'm honored to be invited here today to speak of my personal experiences as a graduate of the Troops-to-Teachers program.

I entered the Air Force determined to pursue my education. At nearly every permanent duty location where I was stationed, I earned a few college credits. I was never in one place long enough to finish a college program due to military commitments, family needs, or fulfilling each college's requirements.

After nearly 10 years and four colleges, I earned my first degree, an associate's degree in administrative management. While at Langley Air Force Base, I applied for and was granted leave under the Operation Bootstrap program to finish my bachelor's degree in human resources management from St. Leo College in 1986, just before receiving orders to go to a new duty assignment.

Being an individual who believes in seizing opportunities, I earned an additional degree while serving on active duty, a master's degree in human resources management from Troy State University, Montgomery and began a second master's degree in education from Old Dominion University, located in Norfolk, Virginia. I'm currently working on my doctorate degree in education from the George Washington University.

I was very fortunate that most of my education was funded through the old G.I. Bill and tuition assistance. My original intention was to attend law school and become an attorney after leaving the military in 1995. However, shortly before I retired, I noticed the information about the Troops-to-Teachers program.

I was intrigued by the program because it offered an opportunity to convey to kids and other adults the importance of education, by leading by example. One day I found myself in the base education office at Langley Air Force Base. On the same day, I visited the educational advisors in the Old Dominion University office and they talked to me about the Military Career Transition program, which is located in Norfolk, Virginia.

The advisors from Old Dominion University completed an informal review of my college transcripts and started me on a journey which has opened more doors for me than I could ever have imagined, to include today.

In order to help defray the cost of completing the program, I also completed an application for the Troops-to-Teachers program. It took an additional 18 months to earn a Master of Science degree in education. In order to obtain this master's degree, I traveled to three universities and six different campuses—a lot of miles on my car.

During the 18 months it took to finish the program, I took classes related to special education, classroom management, and the other required courses. Because of my participation in the Troops-to-Teachers program and the Military Career Transition program, I was able to student teach for 6 weeks instead of the 3 months normally required for student teaching.

I learned from the observations in student teaching experience that a career in education was my true calling. I also held a full-time job while completing the program and took a leave of absence

to complete the student teaching requirement. I successfully completed the PRAXIS examination for new teachers on my first attempt.

The Troops-to-Teachers program offered monetary incentives to school districts that hired its participants when I was in the program. I made a decision that I did not want to be a substitute teacher, because of the prior horror stories. It was all or nothing.

I applied for a job I saw advertised in the local newspaper. and from that point on, I was hired, and I'm here today.

I began my teaching career in language arts and civics by teaching eighth grade students at Smithfield Middle School in February of 1997 and continued in that position until December 2000.

In August of 2000, I was selected as lead teacher of the school. In January of 2000, when I returned from the holiday break, I pursued an education specialist degree offered by the George Washington University, and I completed that program in the spring of 2001.

In January of 2001, I accepted a position as assistant principal of Smithfield Middle School. Before the end of the school year, a new assistant principal who was also a Troops-to-Teachers participant and I were managing the Smithfield Middle School.

Mr. BROWN. Ms. Sessoms-Penny——

Ms. SESSOMS-PENNY. Okay. Thank you.

In the summer of 2001, I began a doctoral program for educational leadership and administration through the George Washington University.

Because of my positive and enriching experiences with the Troops-to-Teachers program, and as a mentor, I'm writing my dissertation on "Perceptions of Troops-to-Teachers Participants Filling Teacher and School Administrator Shortages in the Commonwealth of Virginia."

Also during this degree program, I wrote a policy analysis paper, "Using Former Military Personnel to Resolve the Teacher Shortage" on the Troops-to-Teachers program.

To summarize this, there are a few things I would like for the committee to consider, and that is additional funding to improve and enhance the Troops-to-Teachers program.

First, I would like for us to consider those troops who are currently at war and will be coming home, and who have been displaced by their positions. I'm asking that the committee look at those individuals.

I'm also asking that the agency resume providing grants or direct funding to school districts which hire Troops-to-Teachers candidates.

Finally, I'd like to advocate funding the agency— providing funding to support participants who pursue advanced degrees in the Troops-to-Teachers program.

In conclusion, it has been an honor to serve as a Troops-to-Teachers participant and now as a mentor, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Sessoms-Penny appears on p. 60.]

Mr. BROWN. Ms. Sessoms-Penny, let me just say thank you so very much for coming, and I'm glad you didn't take that first call and become an attorney.

Ms. SESSOMS-PENNY. Thank you.

Mr. BROWN. And Dr. Harner, thank you very much.

Mr. HARNER. Thank you.

Mr. BROWN. As a native South Carolinian, you certainly make me very, very proud, and I thank you for your service in the military and also now in this new endeavor. What a great testament from both of you on what a great program this and that it's working, and certainly we're proud of the program. We're proud of the service of our men and women, particularly those in harm's way as we speak. Thank you all.

Mr. Sweeney, thank you very much for coming and being a part of this process.

If you heard those funny bells again, that means that we must trek over to the Capitol and vote, so I guess we will go ahead and conclude the hearing now. Thank you all again for coming, we value the testimony that you gave and we'll certainly take your recommendations under consideration as we try to improve this program and carry it nationwide to make it what you all have made out of it.

Thank you very, very much, again.

[Whereupon, at 3:30 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

Statement of Nina S. Rees
Deputy Under Secretary for Innovation and Improvement
U.S. Department of Education

on the Troops-to-Teachers Program

before the

House Committee on Veterans' Affairs,
Subcommittee on Benefits

and the

House Committee on Education and the Workforce
Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness

Chairman Brown, Chairman McKeon, and Subcommittee Members, I am pleased to be here this afternoon to discuss the Troops-to-Teachers program. I am also delighted to be sitting here with John Gantz, the head of Troops-to-Teachers in the Defense Department's Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES). John has capably led Troops-to-Teachers since the program began operating in DOD in 1994.

My position is Deputy Under Secretary in the Office of Innovation and Improvement in the Department of Education. The mission of this new office is to identify, support, and promote promising innovations in elementary and secondary education. We are particularly interested in approaches that bring highly qualified individuals into teaching, including approaches that target non-traditional candidates and allow them to obtain teacher certification with a minimum of difficultly. Troops-to-Teachers is definitely one of those programs, and I am proud to say that the Bush Administration supports it enthusiastically.

As you know, the No Child Left Behind Act, passed by overwhelming bipartisan majorities in both houses of Congress, challenges States to put plans in place to ensure that every teacher is "highly qualified" by the end of the 2005-2006 school year. This is an ambitious goal, and one that we can meet. But, as Secretary Paige has explained, in order to meet this goal, we must do things differently. First, States must raise academic standards for their teachers to ensure that they are prepared to teach challenging content to our students. Second, we must lower the barriers that keep thousands of talented

individuals out of our classrooms. The Troops-to-Teachers program reflects both objectives.

The brave men and women fighting in Iraq, and their colleagues around the world, represent one of the most highly skilled, highly trained sectors of our society. Many of our servicemen and women possess a command of mathematics and science, subjects that are critical to our Nation's economic success in the 21st Century, and subjects for which there is a critical shortage of qualified teachers. The Troops-to-Teachers program promotes high standards by identifying and bringing these talented men and women, and their top-notch skills and abilities, into our Nation's public schools.

The Troops-to-Teachers program also addresses the barriers that keep many talented people out of our schools. Unfortunately, for too long, States have relied on certification systems that seem to repel talent, rather than recruit talent. Please don't misunderstand: many teachers coming through traditional preparation programs and State certification systems are highly qualified indeed, and we owe them our gratitude for the work they do with our children. But the hoops and hurdles, the bureaucratic entanglements, the sometimes mindless requirements that find their way into State certification regimes keep countless numbers of potentially wonderful teachers from ever setting foot inside a classroom. That is a shame. Troops-to-Teachers helps cut through this red tape by placing critical personnel inside State departments of education, people who help retiring military personnel negotiate the landmines of government bureaucracy and certification requirements. The program has also put helpful pressure on the States to open up new, streamlined "alternative" routes to certification that take less time, cost less, and are designed specifically for career-changing adults with lots of relevant skills and experience. (As I will explain later, however, many barriers remain that keep talented individuals, including those from Troops-to-Teachers, out of the classroom.)

With that context in mind, let me lay out some basic facts on how Troops-to-Teachers operates and what it has accomplished. Beginning in fiscal year 2002, the Congress has appropriated Troops-to-Teachers funds to the Department of Education; through a memorandum of understanding with the Defense Department, we transfer that

money to DANTES, which handles day-to-day administration, as it has done since the program's inception.

Troops-to-Teachers assists eligible military personnel in making the transition to teaching in public elementary and secondary schools. To be eligible, in general, a serviceman or woman must: (1) have retired from active or reserve service; (2) have separated from the service after six or more years of continuous duty and be willing to enter the reserves for at least three years; or (3) be currently serving in the reserves and have at least 10 years of active and reserve service and commit to continuing in the reserves for at least three more years. Program entrants must also hold a baccalaureate or advanced degree, except that those seeking to become vocational and technical education teachers qualify if they have at least one year of college, at least six years of military service in a vocational or technical field, or meet a State's certification requirements for vocational and technical education teachers.

The program offers participants counseling, referral, and placement assistance in moving into their new teaching careers. In other words, it links military personnel with teacher preparation programs operating in the States in which they want to teach, and then with school systems seeking to hire Troops-to-Teachers participants. It provides these services through 33 State support offices that assist participants with State certification requirements and employment leads in a total of 44 States. DANTES also provides program information through a network of military education centers and transition offices, and maintains a Web page that provides information on job vacancies and includes model resumes and other information.

Participants can also receive stipends of up to $5,000 to help them with the cost of certification expenses, or recruitment bonuses of up to $10,000. Recipients of stipends must agree to teach full time in a school in a "high-need" school district for at least three years. Recipients of recruitment bonuses must commit to teaching full time for at least three years in a school that has at least 50 percent of its students living in poverty or that has a large percentage of children with disabilities.

What has the Troops-to-Teachers program accomplished in its almost ten years of existence? The Department of Education has not yet conducted a rigorous, scientific

evaluation of the program – we have been involved with it only for the last two years – but the data on program participation and information from available studies are very impressive. Although, for five years, the program did not receive an appropriation sufficient to provide financial assistance to participants, Troops-to-Teachers has placed over 5,000 new teachers in classrooms, and many of them have filled needs that are of the highest priority in school districts and schools. For instance, some 44 percent of placements have been in the hard-to-fill areas of mathematics, science, and special education. Participants are also heavily male and heavily minority; their presence thus addresses the need for more male and minority role models in the classroom. Retention rates have been good; as of 1999, 82 percent of participants who had entered teaching were still in the classroom. And, under the statute, Troops-to-Teachers participants who receive financial assistance must be placed in high-poverty schools and districts, which typically have the hardest time recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers.

These basic statistics are backed up by positive findings from independent studies of the program. A 2001 General Accounting Office report found that the official records on participation in the program may actually understate the total number of military personnel who have benefited; they count only people who applied for to the program, not other personnel who may have taken advantage of the counseling and placement services available but never submitted a formal application.

A 1998 national survey of Troops-to-Teachers participants by the independent National Center for Education Information found that participants had the types of attitudes and expectations that result in effective education. Participants believed that all children should be held, and can achieve, to high educational standards and that students' socioeconomic backgrounds should not prevent them from performing at the highest levels of achievement. It also found that teachers who had entered the profession through the program believed that they had achieved satisfactory relationships with students, parents, and other teachers, and that two-thirds intended to remain in teaching as long as they were able to do so or until retirement.

A survey in Texas found that school principals who had hired teachers through the program rated almost 60 percent of those teachers "Above Average" or

"Outstanding." They considered program participants superior to other teachers (with comparable levels of experience) in such areas as "contribution to improvement of performance," "contributions to the school and community," and "classroom management." In a companion survey, 89 percent of Texas teachers who had entered teaching through the program reported that their last official performance rating was either outstanding or above average.

The Department's optimism that Troops-to-Teachers can become an important vehicle for helping to solve the teacher shortage problem, bringing non-traditional candidates into the teaching profession, and opening up new methods of training and licensing teachers is bolstered not only by these reports but also by some of the experiences of individuals who have gone through the program. To take one example, Michael Glaze left the Air Force after 19 years to become a third-grade teacher in Beaufort, South Carolina. Last school year, he was the "teacher of the year" at Beaufort Elementary School.

Other examples include seventeen-year Army veteran Eusabio Bretado who has taught math and social studies at Desert Hills Elementary School in the El Paso area. An immigrant from Mexico and a one-time high school dropout, he has received excellent performance ratings and his students have performed extremely well on Texas academic assessments. Douglas Kononos, after 20 years in the Air Force, has embarked on a second career teaching special education in New Braunfels, Texas. And Arthur Moore, who teaches special education in Baltimore, entered the profession, after a 24-year Army career, through an innovative alternative-preparation program operating in that city.

I hope these anecdotes convey to you why we are so excited about this program. But I must also stress that we do not want to rest on anecdotes. One of the key objectives of our new office is to determine, using scientifically-based research and evaluation methodologies, what strategies and interventions in elementary and secondary education really work, and then try to capitalize on those success stories by encouraging their proliferation. So we have begun discussions with the Department's evaluation offices on the initiation of studies that hold Troops-to-Teachers to rigorous analytical standards.

Before I finish, I should point out the remaining challenges confronting the Troops-to-Teachers program, and similar efforts to place nontraditional candidates in our nation's schools. In too many States, certification barriers remain high. Alternative certification programs—which allow teachers to earn their certification while they are teaching, and often include intensive mentoring by expert teachers—are an important step forward. Without them, troops would have to go back to education school for several years, a luxury that many men and women with families to support cannot afford. But oftentimes, these alternative programs are expensive and lengthy, and merely repackage traditional education school programs into a different (but still burdensome) arrangement. The Troops-to-Teachers stipends help with the cost, but many participants in these programs complain about attending evening classes that they see as adding very little value to their teaching.

What we desperately need are bold new approaches to certification, approaches that recognize the knowledge and skills that nontraditional candidates bring to the table, and approaches that focus more on results and competencies rather than on process and seat time. The Administration has tried to do its part in recent years by supporting some important initiatives in this area. For example, we made a five-year, $10 million grant to the Western Governors University to support the launch of its online Teachers College. This virtual college allows individuals to earn their credentials by demonstrating their competency to teach through completion of courses or other creditable experiences. The competency assessments can be completed on line, any time, anywhere, and, combined with a teaching experience, can qualify an individual for a teaching position. This program is just getting off the ground, but imagine the possibilities it holds for the Troops-to-Teachers program. Military personnel stationed around the world, as they approach retirement, could take courses on line when off-duty and make great progress toward full State certification even before they return to civilian life. Only a handful of States have approved this program so far, but we hope the rest follow suit soon.

Similarly, the Department has made a two-year, $5 million grant to the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence. The American Board is developing extremely rigorous assessments for new teachers, both in key academic areas and in

professional teaching knowledge. If these assessments are adopted by States, individuals who pass them would be considered fully certified, and therefore highly qualified. Troops-to-Teachers participants could take and pass this online exam and head straight into the classroom. This kind of streamlined approach is the best and fastest way to turn our troops into teachers, but it depends on the willingness of the States to do things differently.

This concludes my prepared remarks. I would be happy to answer any questions the Subcommittees may have.

Joint Oversight Hearing of the Troops to Teachers Program
held by
U.S. House of Representatives Veterans' Affairs Committee,
Subcommittee on Benefits
and
U.S. House of Representatives Education and the Workforce Committee,
Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness

Testimony by
Constantine W. Curris, President
The American Association of State Colleges and Universities

April 9, 2003

Chairmen and members of both Committees, good morning. I am Deno Curris, President of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU). The Association, which is based here in Washington D.C., is comprised of more than 425 public four-year colleges and universities and university systems located throughout the United States and its territories. On behalf of our member institutions, I am grateful for your invitation and pleased to be with you today.

I come before you to discuss the Troops to Teachers program specifically, and more generally, the national teacher challenge. By the national teacher challenge, I mean the laudable goal that Congress and the Administration has placed before the entire education community, not just the K-12 schools, to ensure that no child is left behind and that every child has a highly qualified teacher, a goal that will not be achieved without extraordinary commitment and support.

AASCU is uniquely qualified to discuss these issues for two reasons. The first is our historic and ongoing involvement in teacher preparation. The second is our 30 years of experience educating members of the armed services.

Many of AASCU's member institutions began as "normal schools" or "teachers colleges." In fact, AASCU institutions currently prepare over 50 percent of the nation's newly credentialed teachers each year. AASCU, and its member institutions, take our responsibility to help the nation's school districts meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind law very seriously.

Additionally, AASCU has been the home for the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC), since its inception in 1972. SOC is a consortium of more than 1,600 colleges and universities that provide an invaluable service for our nation's men and women in uniform. By working with colleges and universities to seamlessly transfer college credit for active duty service members, SOC helps

students who are serving their country to complete a cohesive educational program in a timely fashion. Since 1972, SOC has aided thousands of service members in their higher education pursuits, demonstrating the importance of strong ties between higher education and the nation's armed forces.

These strong ties are also evident in the Troops to Teachers program. The Troops to Teachers program provides an invaluable service to the nation's K-12 schools, retiring military personnel, and those of us engaged in meeting the national teacher challenge.

Last October, First Lady Laura Bush rightly described the Troops to Teachers participants as bringing "... dedication, commitment and leadership ... to classrooms all across America." Service members entering teaching benefit the nation's schools not only because of their commitment, but also because of their diversity and placement. Specifically, over 40 percent of the Troops to Teachers participants are minority; 80 percent are male; and over two-thirds serve in high poverty school districts. These men and women become important role models for America's children while addressing key workforce shortages.

The profile of the teachers prepared by this program is one reason AASCU supports the Troops to Teachers program. AASCU is concerned about the supply of highly qualified teachers willing to serve in high-need school districts, and the number of educators from underrepresented and nontraditional teaching populations.

The Troops to Teachers program serves retiring military personnel in several ways. The program, which is administered by the Defense Activities for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) office, helps prospective teachers assess their educational background, the specific requirements of the state in which they may wish to teach, and the employment prospects for the teaching position sought. All of this information is used to aid the former service member in selecting the best teacher preparation program for their individual situation.

Many service members select alternative preparation programs, which enable them to earn their teaching credentials while serving in the classroom. These alternative preparation programs are highly valuable to our nation's schools in meeting the highly qualified teacher standard found in the No Child Left Behind law. AASCU supports alternative preparation programs, which are structured according to rigorous state determined standards that are consistent with those applied to traditional teacher preparation programs. From AASCU's perspective these alternative preparation programs provide an opportunity for our institutions to once again serve the men and women of the United States military, and a corresponding opportunity for our military personnel again to serve our society.

However, when discussing alternative preparation programs it is important to recognize both their vital role and their limitations. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report, *Predicting the Need for Newly Hired Teachers in the United States to 2008-2009*, the nation will need between 1.7 and 2.7 million newly hired teachers by the 2008-2009 school year. The economic down turn that most states are currently experiencing may reduce these numbers, because states like California are abandoning class size reduction efforts due to adverse financial situations. The exact number of newly hired teachers can be disputed but the fact that a large number of newly hired teachers will be needed in the near future is clear.

Alternative preparation programs, like Teach for America and those used by the Troops to Teacher program can and do help, but the numbers they produce are not significant enough to meet the nation's needs. Since January of 1994 the Troops to Teachers program have placed roughly 3,000 teachers and the Teach for America program since its inception in 1989 has placed about 8,000 teachers. Combined these two valuable programs, in the last nine and fourteen years, respectively, have prepared less than 1 percent of the newly hired teachers NCES estimates the nation will need in the next five to six years. While the bulk of the nation's demand will be met through traditional programs, every service member going into teaching is needed, and the contribution of Troops to Teacher is greater than numbers per se because of the diversity and placement the program contributes to our schools.

To meet near-term teacher shortages, especially in certain geographic and subject matter areas, it has become clear that states must rely on a combination of traditional and non-traditional teacher preparation programs. Whether traditional or non-traditional in nature, however, AASCU stands firm in its belief that all preparation programs should be held to rigorous standards. Policies that compromise standards in the name of expediency will only weaken the profession, and more importantly, leave millions of children behind.

For the long term, our nation's colleges and universities, working with policymakers, must seriously address the larger issue of how to build a solid pipeline into and through the teaching profession, one that will attract some of our most talented graduates, and one that will not leak a significant portion of new recruits within the first five years of entering the classroom.

To aid in this effort, AASCU is calling on Congress, as part of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, to provide resources to institutions of higher education to build and strengthen the nation's teaching force. Specifically, AASCU requests that the partnerships established in Title II of the Higher Education Act be modified to require collaboration that includes not only local

education agencies and institutions of higher education, but also state and/or local authorities responsible for teacher education program approval and those responsible for establishing K-12 standards. Such collaboration, which is consistent with the professional development activities supported in the No Child Left Behind law, will promote policy and programmatic alignment throughout the educational curriculum.

Aside from alternative preparation, the Troops to Teachers program has also benefited from distance education. A good example of distance education used for teacher credentialing can be found in South Carolina. Clemson University, The Citadel, the University of South Carolina and South Carolina State University have joined together and created a distance education teacher-credentialing program that has successfully served many Troops to Teacher participants.

Regardless of how an individual earns a teaching credential, the Troops to Teachers program is dedicated to ensuring that all their participants become highly qualified teachers. AASCU's member institutions are likewise dedicated to ensuring that all the teachers we prepare are highly qualified. We just need more. Our nation's children do not deserve less.

Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you, I and 400 AASCU presidents and chancellors look forward to working with you on these important issues.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF
CONSTANTINE W. CURRIS

Dr. Constantine W. Curris assumed the presidency of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities in October 1999. He is the fourth chief executive for AASCU -- a national association of over 400 public colleges and universities.

Curris, a Kentucky native, has served as President at three universities: Murray State University (KY) for 10 years, the University of Northern Iowa for 12 years, and Clemson University (SC) for over 4 years until his selection as AASCU's president. The Murray State Student Center and the Northern Iowa Business Building bear Curris' name.

Curris is a strong advocate for public higher education and its students and a proponent of the qualitative strengthening of higher education institutions in order to meet public needs and expectations in the 21st century. Curris has been associated with AASCU since 1973 as a member of several Association committees, its Board of Directors and in 1995 as Chairman of the Board.

Other professional experiences for Curris include appointments to the 1998 Commission on the Future of the South, the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities, the Education Commission of the States, the Iowa Board of Economic Development, the South Carolina Research Authority, The Sigma Chi Foundation, and the chairmanships of American Humanics and the Iowa Task Force on Teacher Education and Certification.

Curris, who goes by the nickname "Deno," received his baccalaureate and doctorate degrees from the University of Kentucky, and his master's from the University of Illinois. He is married to Jo Hern Curris, a tax attorney. They are parents of two adult children: Robert Alexander and Elena Diane.

AASCU Federal Grant or contract Disclosure
Statement
April 9, 2003

Federal Contract or Grant	Number	Amount
Federal Fiscal Year 2002		
Servicemembers Opportunity College Department of the Navy		
	N00140-97-C-0181	$3,281,991
National Science Foundation		
	DUE-0089912	79,833
	Total for FY 2002	$3,361,824
Federal Fiscal Year 2003		
Servicemembers Opportunity College Department of the Navy		
	N00140-03-C-J096	$3,546,789
	Total for FY 2003	$3,546,789

TESTIMONY OF

NANCY CASSITY DUNLAP

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, EUGENE T. MOORE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
CLEMSON UNIVERSITY

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
SOUTH CAROLINA T3 COALITION
ALTERNATIVE ROUTE TO CERTIFICATION

BEFORE THE JOINT MEETING OF

THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON BENEFITS,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

AND

THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON 21ST-CENTURY COMPETITIVENESS,
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

APRIL 9, 2003

Chairman Brown, Chairman McKeon, members of the Committees, distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen,

On behalf of the South Carolina T3 Coalition, I am proud to have this opportunity to address this august group, and I wish to thank Chairman Brown and Chairman McKeon for their kind invitation for me to provide this testimony on what we believe to be an exciting project that we have initiated in South Carolina and hope to be able to provide across the nation.

In 1996, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future issued its report, *What Matters Most*. In it the Commission stated, "What teachers know and can do is the most important influence on what students learn." This phrase was to become the touchstone for the work of the SC T3 Coalition.

The Coalition was born in the summer of 1999 through the efforts of many dedicated people, including representatives from the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES), our partner universities, school districts, agencies, and IBM/Lotus, to develop a training program designed specifically for military personnel who desire to become teachers. This program's genesis and its heart evolve from the Troops-to-Teachers program, and we embrace its origins.

I would like to begin by introducing you to some outstanding people:

Master Sergeant Virginia Dukes grew up in Newark, the only child of a single parent living in the inner city. The Army offered her an escape from her bleak surroundings and promises of opportunity, which she took. She completed her education, had an illustrious career in training and data management, and is retiring, but at 39, she is a vital, energetic, bright, and motivated woman who feels that teaching might be a viable option for her. She also wants to locate in the Sunbelt, and has chosen to live in South Carolina.

Lt. Col. Raoul Hernandez and Maj. Donna Hansen met while both were stationed at the Beaufort Air Station. They married, raised a family, and after successful careers in the Marine Corps (she in public information, he a Provost Marshal), have decided to return to the Beaufort area. She has her degree in Journalism from the University of Montana; he received his JD degree from George Washington University. They have a desire to give back to the community, and are considering teaching as a second career.

Commander Mercer Jamison was born and raised in Pocataligo, SC, a small crossroads in the South Carolina Lowcountry. A young African-American with few local prospects, he couldn't wait to get away, and when a Navy recruiter offered him a chance to see the world and complete his education, he jumped at the chance. Now, 25 years later, with a bachelor's degree in engineering from Old Dominion University and 15 years as a nuclear engineer, he is preparing to retire and is anxious to return home, where he hopes to make a difference for rural youth. He wants to become a teacher.

The players in these three fictitious scenarios have several things in common: all have had successful careers as military commissioned or non-commissioned officers; all want to locate in the Sunbelt; all want to teach; all are attempting to begin a new chapter of their lives; and all bring a abundance of talents and skills and a world view to an area and a career field that desperately needs them.

However, traditional programs would require up to two years to complete after the service member leaves active duty, and he or she would forego a paycheck during training. Also, if they were in traditional teacher-preparation programs, their maturity, experience, expertise, and training would not necessarily be valued. Or, as in some alternative-certification programs, they would be placed in the classroom with little or no preparation or supervision and left to their own devices to survive (or not) in the school setting.

To be successful, aspiring teachers need more than a textbook and a handshake. They need training--not a traditional undergraduate teacher-training program (although

those options continue to be available), but one tailored specifically for them, to provide necessary knowledge and skills, to provide options for demonstration of proficiency, to avail them of what they need to be successful in this social structure called "school," while acknowledging the talents, experience, and expertise that they bring with them. The training also needs to be readily accessible, and it should enable military personnel to assume a teaching position immediately upon exiting their military careers, but with continued follow up, training, mentors, and supervision—all focused upon the new teachers' success. Whether they are stationed at a base in Japan, retired in Hawaii, or in the Reserves in South Carolina, the SC T3 alternative route to certification program allows them to "jumpstart" their teaching career. By the time they leave military service or locate to South Carolina, they could be ready to step into the classroom and "be all that they can be" --again.

The South Carolina T3 Coalition has developed a program using "blended learning" (e-learning and practical, hands-on field experiences) to enable these folks to realize their dreams while concurrently ameliorating teacher-shortage needs--the needs for specific content areas, in grade levels, in small, rural, or inner-city schools, for minority representation, and for male teachers.

The South Carolina T3 Coalition consists of four institutions, five agencies, and a corporate partner: Clemson University, the University of South Carolina, the Citadel, and South Carolina State University have come together with the five agencies (the Governor's Office, the South Carolina Center for Teacher Recruitment, the Commission on Higher Education, the Employment Security Commission, and the State Department of Education) and IBM/Lotus to craft an initiative to enable commissioned and non-commissioned officers with college degrees to secure the requisite training and credentialing to become teachers.

The target group consists of members of the armed forces, commissioned or non-commissioned officers, who possess a bachelor's degree or higher.

The reasons to tap this talented pool are numerous:

1. The military began downsizing in 1994, sending well-qualified personnel into the civilian work force.
2. Military personnel often have strong content skills.
3. Commissioned and non-commissioned officers possess high levels of training and education; indeed, many have master's degrees.
4. The potential pool is great; while the military is not presently downsizing, many active-duty personnel are making plans for retirement--often wanting to return "home."
5. Within the ranks exists a high ethnic minority ratio; this will enable us to recruit, train, and place heretofore under-represented minorities.
6. Likewise, there is a high ratio of males; this cadre can provide more men for the classrooms.
7. Their military experience as trainers provides them with a solid foundation for a teaching career; all commissioned and non-commissioned officers have served in various training capacities during their careers.
8. They have the advantage of being trained in providing safe and secure environments; this is an added benefit for school safety and violence prevention.
9. In their military careers, they have gained organizational, interpersonal, technical, technology, and leadership skills.
10. They are great role models for kids--mature, drug-free, and physically fit.
11. Finally, they bring a wealth of personal and professional experiences and a world view heretofore missing in our schools.

Because of their high degree of training and education acquired during their military service, because the number of teachers who can be trained from this pool is potentially much greater than many sources, and because of the high ethnic minority and gender ratios which could significantly ameliorate under-representation of ethnic

minorities and men in these critical-needs areas of education, this group would be a benefit to and a resource for our schools and our young people.

Evolution of South Carolina* T3 *Coalition Alternative Route to Certification (ARC)

The SC T3 Coalition ARC began in August 1999; the first year was dedicated to planning. With a grant from DANTES, the Coalition undertook a rigorous process to design an alternative certification program to allow participants to complete their requisite course work while still on active duty using e-learning and blended-learning strategies.

The Coalition reviewed the existing literature on alternative certification, best practice, and research, to examine the programs of other states, teacher education programs, and other entities. While most states have developed or are developing routes for alternative licensure, none possesses the uniqueness of the proposed South Carolina model.

Based on the premise posited in *What Matters Most*, a report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, *"What teachers know and can do is the most important influence on what students learn,"* the Coalition began by processing ten essential questions:

1. What do mature, new, second-career teachers need to know? Can we defend this through a scientifically documentable knowledge base?
2. What do mature, new, second-career teachers need to be able to do? Can we defend this through a scientifically documentable knowledge base?
3. What specific competencies do they need?
4. What specific competencies do they possess and can they demonstrate?
5. How do we identify these competencies?
6. How do we identify gaps?
7. Can we develop a training model based on this gap analysis?
8. What will it include?
9. How can we deliver it? Can we deliver via the Internet?
10. What resources (human, material, technological) do we need to do this?

Upon completion of this analysis, the Coalition then reviewed standards, best practice, knowledge bases, and research from the following agencies and organizations:

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)
National Association for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)
Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)
Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC)
Key Competencies (Australia)
Teachers College, Columbia University
National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (*What Matters Most*)
Renaissance Group
University of Arkansas Profile of a Beginning Teacher
American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU)
Educational Testing Service (PRAXIS)
American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE)
Holmes Partnership
National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER)
Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
South Carolina's Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Professional Teaching (ADEPT)
Good Teaching Matters; a Report of The Education Trust
Conceptual Frameworks of the partner universities
American Council on Education

The Coalition also adopted the following guiding principles to manage the process and to keep the group on-track and on-target:

> "Develop high-quality pathways to teaching for recent graduates, mid-career changers, paraprofessionals already in the classroom, and military and government retirees." --National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, *What Matters Most*, Recommendation 3

> "The fundamental differences between an alternative and traditional program are the target audience, the training design, and the length of training, not the program content, rigor, [standards] or expected outcomes." --AACTE, *Alternative Preparation for Licensure: Policy Statement*

> "To do and perform all things necessary to encourage, uphold, and dignify the profession of teaching." --*Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning*

The Coalition would return to these principles often.

The Curriculum

Upon examination of the standards and evidence, the Coalition developed two documents: (1) What teachers need to know and (2) what teachers need to be able to do. To achieve the necessary validation, these lists were widely circulated within and without South Carolina; teachers, teacher educators, parents, business people, community leaders, and the Military Assistance Council, then an advisory group for the Coalition, had the opportunity for input. It was important that this be as comprehensive, as valid, and as reliable as possible.

The result is a rich, valid, robust curriculum, grounded in best practice and research, based upon what career-changing professionals need to know and be able to do to become successful teachers, (acknowledging that pedagogy for a 40-year-old professional should differ from that for a 20-year-old college sophomore AND recognizing the vast expertise and experience that military professionals bring to the profession) in nine discrete modules divided into three blocks, from the more general and theoretical to the more specific and concrete:

Block One
- ? Psychological Foundations of Adolescent Learning and Development
- ? Technology in the Classroom
- ? Cultural Distinctions and Diversity

Block Two
- ? Community Resources
- ? Methods and Strategies (content-specific in mathematics, sciences, and English/language arts)
- ? Student Assessment and Evaluation

Block Three
- ? Application of Research
- ? Classroom Organization and Management
- ? The Culture that is School

The Technology

The group then, upon returning to the "Ten Questions," determined that we could, indeed, take this list of what teachers need to know and, using a "gap analysis," could tailor an individualized, performance-based, open-entry program based upon the client's documented experiences and expertise, over the World-wide Web, using state-of-the-art technology and synchronous and asynchronous delivery of modules rather than traditional graduate-level courses.

From this point, we turned to the technology experts; upon reflection, we determined that we needed a vehicle not only of getting the courses on-line, but also a means of managing variable credit, generating student transcripts, providing means of interactivity between faculty and participants, among other significant issues, and an in-

depth review of technological potential yielded only one likely candidate: IBM/Lotus and its LearningSpace software. IBM/Lotus remains as a partner in crafting the technological methodology for on-line delivery and management of this complex project. The support and engagement of IBM/Lotus has been exemplary; not only is their LearningSpace a robust system, but their technical support has been exceptional.

The Academic Program

Military personnel may access the program during their last two years of active duty through the SC T3 Coalition ARC Website (http://www.hehd.clemson.edu/TTT/). Since all of these folks will have bachelor's degrees (and many will come with master's degrees), content expertise is presumed; however, the candidate must provide passing scores from the Praxis II subject-area examination to validate currency of content knowledge. The candidate's program will be determined based upon what experiences he/she can validate from the military. University faculty will provide the personalization.

The participants have the modules available around the clock; the professors maintain maximum availability. Options are available, also, for real-time discussions, chat rooms, white boards, and the like.

Additionally, since teacher education cannot occur in a vacuum, field experiences and practical applications of skills are built into each module. The experiences are as varied as the curriculum but are a requisite part of the training, hence the "blended-learning" methodology that complements e-learning.

Also, the Coalition has designed a schedule to allow the participant to work on as many as three modules in an eleven-week period. If deployed to a combat zone, however, the "clock stops," and he or she may resume the module at the point at which he/she left it. The academic schedule of courses is presently designed through 2008, and it takes into account holidays and other pertinent issues; the university Registrar has incorporated the [essentially quarter] schedule into Clemson's semester-based calendar, thus allowing for acceleration of participants through the program. All of the support mechanisms are in place.

Upon completion of at least six modules (Block 2), the participant will be placed in a one-year internship in a high-need school, during which he/she will not only undergo induction, as does any first-year teacher, but he/she will have to demonstrate the knowledge gained through the modules--the "What teachers need to be able to do" list. Resources will be made available to provide for mentor teachers and other resources necessary to assure candidate success. Accompanying this internship is a year-long seminar (also carrying academic credit), bringing together participants from the four regions with university faculty, school district and school personnel, and other pertinent, appropriate resources.

The Placements

The Coalition determined four criteria for placements as critical:

1. Districts "in greatest need of technical assistance;"
2. Geographic critical teaching needs, based on criteria and annual determination of the State Board of Education;
3. Top 12% in the State for high school dropouts;
4. Proximity to military installation; must be either inner-city or rural and must meet federal poverty guidelines for "high need LEAs"

Based upon recent information from the State Board of Education regarding geographic critical needs, the Coalition has identified 78 schools throughout the state that meet one or more of the above criteria; this will likely change as new data and funding sources become available.

The Coalition has designated four geographic divisions within the state; each of the partner universities will have responsibility for monitoring the internship and two subsequent years of follow up in partnership with the LEA and the school in which the

participant is interning. Subsequent monitoring and support for this three-year program will be provided in partnership among the Coalition, the LEA, and the partner university. Additionally, we will gather data on successful program completion, internship, and ultimate placement within the schools and districts most in need.

Project Uniqueness

The program is unique in many ways; following is a compendium of reasons:

? Participants may begin within two years of separation from military service;
? Participants may participate at their duty station, anywhere in the world;
? Program uses state-of-the-art technology;
? Participants are provided a waiver of out-of-state tuition (Section 5A.32 of the 2002 Budget Bill, SC General Assembly);
? Participants partake of a robust curriculum designed to prepare them for the realities of the classroom;
? Coordination among 4 universities and 5 agencies, school districts, and a corporate partner; over 90 people have been involved in the genesis of this project, including university faculty, corporate officers, technicians, university administrators, school district personnel, military representatives, and agency staff;
? Field experiences and practical application of skills are incorporated into every course;
? Curriculum developed by university faculty based on what teachers need to know and be able to do;
? Graduate-credit modules via Internet delivery with synchronous and asynchronous options;
? One-year paid internship with skilled mentor teacher; participants will not miss a paycheck;
? Placement in districts with greatest need;
? Strong research/evaluation component;
? Focus on retiring military with bachelor's degree or higher;
? Program availability year-round, with course rotation;
? Flexibility:
--Participant may "stop the clock" and resume at a later date;
--Program will be available around the clock, seven days per week

The result is a program that is research-based, facile to use and to navigate, easy to access, is valid, is reliable, and is grounded in reality and a scientifically documentable knowledge base.

Lessons Learned

Throughout the development and implementation activities, the Coalition learned many lessons as we blazed new trails through the *Terra Incognito* of e-learning and blended learning. One of the most compelling was to identify, analyze, and document our processes as we proceeded. Following is a listing of some of the processes and some samples within each; of course, different projects will render differing processes.

Table 1: PROCESS ANALYSIS

Conceptual processes
Idea, needs assessments, literature searches

Analytical processes
Data, resources, best practice, research

Academic processes
Curriculum development, committees, materials selection

Political processes

Funding, support, consensus, residency

Marketing processes
Advertising, web site, monitoring, print media

Documentation processes
Data collection/analysis, participation, support

Fiscal processes
Grants, finances, resources

Implementation processes
Hardware, software, enrollments, fees

Continuous Improvement processes
Growth plans, adjustments, evaluation, realignment

Technology transfer processes
National rollout, Software and hardware upgrades

Finis

Military personnel represent a wealth of talent, experience, diversity, knowledge, expertise, skills, and world views; they are grounded in the content areas, and many have extensive training experience. What opportunities exist to install this leadership and talent in the inner-city and rural schools most in need! And our new cadre of teachers can "be all that they can be," yet again.

STATEMENT FOR
THE RECORD BY
C. DONALD SWEENEY
LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE APPROVING AGENCIES
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON BENEFITS
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
AND THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON 21ST CENTURY COMPETITIVENESS
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Introduction

Chairmen Brown and McKeon, Congressmen Michaud and Kildee and members of the Subcommittee on Benefits and the Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness, I am pleased to appear before you today on behalf of the National Association of State Approving Agencies to provide comments on the Troops to Teachers program. I should mention at the outset that I also am the Director of the Maine State Approving Agency for Veterans Education Programs and the Northern New England Troops to Teachers program and am very proud to be associated with the program that you will be receiving testimony on today.

It is my understanding that today's hearing is to determine the short-term and long-term successes of the Troops to Teachers program and the challenges facing it as we proceed into the future. My testimony will be from the perspective of someone who has worked in the field of education and for veterans for nearly thirty years and who has been officially associated with the Troops to Teachers program since the year 2000. As requested, I will focus my comments on the relationship of the Troops to Teachers program to the priorities and work of State Approving Agencies, what the program means to Northern New England, and the issues that inhibit maximum program success. Additionally, I will offer a couple of recommendations for legislative change that we believe can be very beneficial to helping the program be more successful.

Relationship to State Approving Agencies

There are a number of current Congressional initiatives that are related to the enhancement of the education, training and employment opportunities available to veterans and others eligible for GI Bill assistance. Some of these are directly related to the work of State Approving Agencies and to the Troops to Teachers program. I will speak to two of these initiatives today.

The first is improving the opportunities for our servicemembers to transfer the knowledge and skills learned in the military to a civilian occupation or profession. In academic terms this is referred to as credit for prior learning. It is one of the major concerns of State Approving Agencies (SAAs) when evaluating the quality and integrity of education and training programs and the policies of educational institutions for enrolling veterans who are entitled to GI Bill benefits. It is has been a central theme of the work of SAAs for over fifty years and has taken on new meaning as we proceed into the 21st century.

As a society, we find ourselves inundated with new information at an unprecedented pace. This requires the continued expansion of our knowledge and skills if we, as individuals and a nation, are to remain viable and competitive. It truly is a time of life long learning and State Approving Agency personnel believe that along with the increased importance of this concept comes greater responsibility. One responsibility is the continuation of our work with licensing and certification entities. Veterans cannot afford to waste valuable time and resources by being required to participate in learning experiences that provide certain knowledge and skills that they already have. Working toward entrance into the teaching profession is no exception.

The broad concept of credit for prior learning is easy to comprehend; putting it into practice is not as easy. As you know, each state has specific requirements for teacher certification and, frankly, some states are more "user friendly" than others when it comes to recognizing the past experiences of military personnel that are related to teaching in a certain field and at a certain level. As State Approving Agency (and Troops to Teachers) personnel we find that one of the major obstacles to our veterans entering the teaching profession is the various state processes for becoming certified, specifically the rigidity of policies or lack of procedures for evaluating existing knowledge and skills. Most states require military training and experiences to be evaluated and transcripted by an educational institution that has been authorized to offer teacher preparation programs. Direct utilization of resources, such as the American Council on Education ***Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services***, by state Department of Education officials who have responsibility for teacher certification is limited to a very few states. We need more providers of teacher preparation programs and more state Department of Education officials to recognize and grant credit for relevant military training and experience.

In 1997, a report was issued from a study that was funded by the Department of Labor and coordinated by the American Legion. This report, entitled ***Study of Civilian Licensure and Certification for Veterans***, brought national attention to the difficulties that servicemembers have in transitioning the knowledge and skills learned in the military to a civilian occupation or profession. Since then, several meetings and conferences have been held where members of the Departments of Defense, Labor and Veterans Affairs; State Approving Agencies; and others continue to work toward providing servicemembers with greater opportunities to enter, upon discharge, their chosen occupation or profession with advanced standing. While advances have been made, there

is still more to do. A continued emphasis from the Subcommittees on improving the transferability of prior learning will not only be beneficial to Troops to Teachers (TTT) participants, but also will be a win-win situation for our schools, our youth and the Nation.

The second Congressional initiative that is related to SAAs and the TTT program is the further development of job training programs for veterans and other GI Bill eligible persons. As the federal government and states have begun to recognize the severity of the teacher shortage, they also have recognized the value of utilizing the expertise, experience and talents of individuals who were not specifically trained for the classroom. These individuals transition from a wide variety of careers into teaching and arrive with a different set of needs from those who graduate from an approved teacher preparation program. Because of this movement there has been increased emphasis on the development of alternative certification approaches to include mentoring programs within the "school house". For example, once a veteran is deemed to have the minimum number of credit hours necessary to teach a subject at a certain level, they may be hired on a conditional basis to perform certain teaching responsibilities while participating in an apprenticeship like program under a mentor or master teacher. As these programs continued to develop, we project that there will be opportunity to approve the learning experience as on-the-job training under the GI Bill. In states where there are severe shortages and low salaries, this option may prove to be very valuable to the recruitment and retention of excellent teachers who qualify for participation in the Troops to Teachers program.

Importance of the Troops to Teachers program to Northern New England

As you are aware the Troops to Teachers program was conceived during the drawdown of our active duty military during the early nineties. It also was a time when the shortage of teachers was beginning to escalate throughout the Nation. As implied above, that shortage continues today and in many parts of the country at a higher rate than before. In Northern New England we anticipate up to 40% attrition of teachers during the next five years, largely through retirements. This phenomenon is made worse by slumping state economies that create even greater difficulties for school administrators and school districts to attract and retain highly qualified teachers as now required by the ***No Child Left Behind Act.***

Below are excerpts from a recent proposal entitled ***Creating Regional Teacher Development Centers: A Plan to Promote Teacher Quality and Address Maine's Teacher Shortages.*** They describe the current situation pertaining to Maine's teaching force. Similar concerns can be found in all of New England.

- Teacher shortages exist statewide, especially in the areas of math, science, modern languages, and special education, and are particularly acute in rural areas of Maine.

- Schools are being forced to hire teachers who lack the required professional credentials and preparation needed for early success in the classroom; there are over 1600 conditionally-certified teachers working in Maine this year.

- Many new teachers, lacking mentors or other critical supports during their first few years, experience failure and leave the profession in high numbers, worsening teacher shortages and affecting the quality of the educational experience of their students.

In an effort to respond to escalating teacher shortages, the changing culture of schools and new research on learning, the Northern New England states continue to work hard to redesign and/or refine their teacher certification requirements. New Hampshire has developed several alternative approaches to teacher certification including one that is primarily competency based and another that is on the job training for individuals with at least 30 credits in the area that they wish to pursue certification. Vermont has a competency based Peer Review process that begins with the submission of a portfolio. Basic eligibility requirements include a Baccalaureate degree with a major in the liberal arts and sciences. The Maine State Board of Education has provisionally adopted revisions to its teacher certification requirements "that will transform alternative teacher certification from a course-based system to a performance-based system, thereby streamlining the process for career-changers to enter teaching". Each state is also working with the providers of current state approved teacher preparation programs to help in the redesign and deliverance of alternative programs. These developments are very helpful to attracting TTT participants seeking employment in Northern New England and will be increasingly beneficial as further refinements are made.

I will not repeat the data that I believe will be provided to you by others today on the numbers, diversity and strengths of the servicemenbers and veterans who enter teaching through the TTT progam. However, I would like to amplify the invaluable assets that these men and women bring to our Nation' schools. Evidence shows that TTT participants who enter the teaching profession bring a level of maturity and experience that is invaluable to assisting their students to learn and become productive and contributing members of society. Additionally, TTT participants arrive in the classroom with high expectations of themselves which translates to their students. Simply put, TTT participants have become role models for their students throughout the Nation. The feedback that we receive in the states of Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont from school administrators is overwhelmingly positive. We look forward to being able to attract more of these highly qualified veterans to the teaching ranks.

Other Challenges Facing the Troops to Teachers Program

In addition to the credit for prior learning issue and the further development of alternative approaches to teacher certification, there are two other challenges that I would like to highlight for you today. I am pleased to report that some progress has been made in one of the areas, I believe the other requires immediate attention.

Acquiring the course work necessary to meet the minimum requirements for teacher certification can be a challenge for many TTT participants who are still on active duty as well as veterans upon discharge. Over 60% of the veterans who leave military service are married and many have children. Enrolling in a residential program as required by many educational institutions is not an option for many TTT participants. Fortunately, a few colleges and universities now offer teacher preparation programs and/or subject matter and professional education methodology courses through what is termed distance education. One is in Northern New England and currently offers a viable option to TTT participants. Just recently, I was invited to a meeting with a university in the Boston area to explore the further development of their distance education teacher preparation programs with an emphasis on special education. The continual development and expansion of these types of programs and courses will provide greater opportunity for TTT program success, especially if the providers maximize the awarding of credit for relevant military training and experience.

A significant challenge to the success of the TTT program is the legislative language that authorizes the TTT program. The ***No Child Left Behind Act*** states that the purpose of the program is two-fold. In essence, the first is to assist eligible members of the Armed Services to obtain certification "as elementary school teachers, secondary school teachers, or vocational or technical teachers, and to become highly qualified teachers". The second is to facilitate the employment of such members in schools or school districts that serve a high percentage of children from low-income families. However, the legislative language for determining which TTT participants qualify for financial assistance is not consistent with the second purpose. Section 2304(a)(1)(B) of PL 107-110 severely limits the locations where TTT participants who have received a $5,000 stipend may seek employment. Based on the definition of qualifying Local Education Agencies found in Section 2102, only 28% of all school districts in the nation would satisfy the obligation of our Troops to Teachers participants to teach for three years. In fact in New England, the situation is even more restricted. For instance in New Hampshire, there is only one school district that meets this criteria. This disincentive does not serve the veteran, the school district, the state, the Nation and, more importantly, the children of these communities well – especially during a time of national teacher shortages. Serious consideration needs to be given to revising Section 2304 as indicated in the Recommendations Section of this testimony.

There is one other change in legislation that also would be consistent with the goals of the program and helpful to attracting more TTT participants to teach in high need, high demand areas. Some of our communities with the lowest income require the use of extra incentives to recruit and retain high quality teachers, especially rural areas. A revision to Section 2304 of PL 107-110 could greatly enhance the success of the program by providing this additional financial incentive.

Recommendations

Two changes to the Troops to Teachers program legislation would help to make the program more successful. The first is to Section 2304(a)(1)(B) of Public Law 107 – 110 and is as follows:

> "… for not less than 3 school years with a ~~high need~~ local educational agency or public school charter, as ~~such terms are~~ defined in section 2302(b)(2) ~~2101~~, to begin the school year …"

As mentioned, this change would provide an increase in the number of school districts that qualify for recognition as low-income and, thus, authorize the awarding of stipends to a larger number of Troops to Teachers participants as well as assist school districts with hard to fill positions.

The second recommendation for change is to Section 2304(d)(1) and is as follows:

> "BONUS AUTHORIZED – Subject to paragraph (2), the Secretary may~~,~~ ~~in lieu of paying a stipend under subsection (c),~~ pay a bonus of $10,000 to a participant in the Program …"

This change would provide a greater incentive to TTT participants to teach in high need and/or high demand areas.

Closing

In closing, I would like to emphasize the importance of the Troops to Teachers program to the country and to our youth. This is a win-win program that has taken on new life at a very important time in the history of public education in America. As the program motto reads: "Proud To Serve Again", it could not be more fitting for us to be proud and thankful for the interest and dedication that members of our Armed Services bring to the classroom upon separation from the military. I encourage members of the Committees and the Congress to continue their support of the Troop to Teachers program and to enact the recommendations for legislative change that will help the program to be even more successful.

Thank you Chairmen Brown and McKeon and members of the Subcommittees on Benefits and 21st Century Competitiveness for the opportunity to testify on the Troops to Teachers program. I would be happy to respond to any questions that you might have.

Dr. William E. Harner
District Superintendent
The School District of Greenville County (S.C.)

Dr. William E. Harner is serving his third year as superintendent of The School District of Greenville County. With more than 62,000 students, the school district is the 63rd largest in the nation and the largest in South Carolina.

Dr. Harner's vision is to create the "Best School District in the Southeast by 2005." To attain this objective, his priorities are to create a values-based culture, improve the leadership capacity within schools, vigorously implement the *Education Plan*, and improve the financial and communications functions of the District.

Dr. Harner retired from the U.S. Army in 1998, as a lieutenant colonel. During his 20-year military career, he served in various leadership positions from infantry platoon leader to battalion commander. He completed tours of duty in the 1st Armored Division in Germany, 4th Infantry Division at Fort Carson, Colorado, 7th Infantry Division at Fort Ord, California, and the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) at Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

For three years, Dr. Harner served on the faculty of the United States Military Academy, West Point, New York as a cadet performance counselor, leadership and character education instructor, and aide-de-camp to the Superintendent.

Additionally, Dr. Harner served as the Chief, Policy & Strategy Branch, US Forces Korea. In this role, he led a 150-member joint military task force that supported the 1996 Presidential Summit on Cheju Island, Korea. He developed and coordinated the meetings between the Secretaries of State and Defense, and National Security Advisor, with their Korean counterparts. Dr. Harner is a graduate of the US Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Dr. Harner served as principal of Hilton Head High School, in Beaufort County, South Carolina, before accepting the superintendency in Greenville County.

Dr. Harner received a bachelor's degree from the United States Military Academy at West Point. He holds a master's degree in educational leadership from Troy State University, and master's degrees from the University of South Carolina in human resources and educational supervision. In 2000, Dr. Harner completed requirements for his doctorate (Ph.D.) in educational leadership and supervision from the University of South Carolina.

Joint Oversight Hearing on the Troops to Teachers Program

Subcommittee on Benefits, Committee on Veterans' Affairs and Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness, Committee on Education and the Workforce

Wednesday, April 9, 2003

Dr. William E. Harner, District Superintendent
The School District of Greenville County (S.C.)

Distinguished members of the committee, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak today about my experience with the Troops to Teachers Program.

As a point of reference, I serve as the superintendent of The School District of Greenville County in South Carolina, our state's largest and the 63rd largest school district in the Nation with 62,000 students. I have served almost three years as superintendent after serving 20 years in the United States Army.

I am honored to be considered a "torchbearer" within the Army ranks by the Troops to Teachers community as I was selected two years ago to appear with First Lady Laura Bush in the national kickoff supporting Troops to Teachers.

My interest in wanting to make a difference in public education began during a tour on the faculty at West Point, and subsequently reading about retired Army Major General John Stanford, who in 1994 became the superintendent of the Seattle School system.

Using the Tuition Assistance program provided by my Veterans Benefits, I enrolled in my first of three graduate-level education leadership programs. At the time I was serving on the Joint Staff in Yongsan, Korea. Without those education benefits, I would not be sitting here today, nor serving the students of Greenville County. I am deeply appreciative to my country and the Army for those opportunities.

Upon my return to the States from Korea, I was appointed as a basic training infantry battalion commander at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. While in command, I "burnt" the candle at both ends ··· infantry officer by day and student by night. During that time, I earned another master's degree in educational supervision, a requirement to become a principal in South Carolina. Later, I earned a Ph.D. in educational leadership and supervision.

However, even with a master's degree in education, I needed a teaching certificate before I could become the leader of a public school. Like most states, the South Carolina Teacher Certification regulations provide no flexibility for folks like me, who want to bring a full career of experience, knowledge, and abilities to the public school classroom.

At that point, I sought the counsel of the South Carolina Troops to Teachers staff. I ended up going out of state to find a certification process that would accept my time on the US Military Academy faculty, then transferred that teaching certificate to South Carolina. It was the support of the Troops to Teacher staff that pointed me in the right direction. As a result, the day after I retired from the military, I was walking the halls of Hilton Head High School as principal.

My two-year service as principal later led to my selection as a non-traditional superintendent to serve the Greenville community. I am a non-traditional superintendent in the sense that I did not follow the standard process for moving up the ranks in a public school system --- beginning as a teacher and then moving up to assistant principal, principal, district administrator, and finally to superintendent. We need to break that paradigm if we truly are genuine in our desire to Leave No Child Left Behind.

My time is brief and I want to leave you with several important points.

First, thank you for your support of the Troops to Teachers program. Alternative certification routes are important to sustain a qualified teaching workforce. There are thousands who leave the military each year who want to continue to serve and who have much to offer the young people of our Nation. Thank you for supporting the initiative in South Carolina and providing additional opportunities for retired veterans to serve their community.

Second, I want to support Secretary Paige and the American Board for Teacher Certification of Teaching Excellence, whose mission is to certify subject matter experts, experienced professionals and military veterans as public school teachers. Quality teachers can come from all walks of life, as you know from the many successes made possible by the Troops to Teachers program.

Third, a key component of our National Security is the quality of our public education system. Decades ago, the Father of the Nuclear Navy, Admiral Rickover appeared before Congress asking our Nation's leaders at that time to raise the bar of the public education system. He saw our country's need for future engineers and understood the importance of the first Elementary and Secondary Schools Act of 1963 as the means to meet that need.

In our knowledge-based economy, public education plays an even more important role. In support of our Nation's latest effort to improve our public schools, we must continue to press forward in the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act and seek other avenues where military veterans can contribute to the Act's success.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. This has been a great honor for me, my Board of Trustees, and everyone that I represent in The School District of Greenville County.

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF GREENVILLE COUNTY

SCHEDULE OF FEDERAL AWARDS

FEDERAL GRANTOR/ PASS-THROUGH GRANTOR/ PROGRAM TITLE	FEDERAL CFDA NUMBER	THROUGH GRANTOR'S NUMBER	2001-2002 TOTAL EXPENDITURES	2002-2003 TENTATIVE BUDGET
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION				
Direct Programs:				
Presidential Award for Excellence (carryover)	-	ESI-9811808	$ 1,769	$ 2,932
After School Day Care	84.287B	N/A	7,688	-
21st Century LEA (new allocation + carryover)	84.287B	N/A	686,156	1,778,564
21st Century LEA (carryover)	84.287A	N/A	1,068,890	262,470
Village Green (carryover)	84.303A	N/A	828,707	1,349,660
Total direct programs			2,593,211	3,393,626
Passed Through S.C. Department of Education				
Title 1:				
Title I - Low Income (new allocation + carryover)	84.010	02-BA040	6,435,277	9,597,185
Total 84.010			6,435,277	9,597,185
IDEA:				
Public Law 101-476 The Individuals with Disabilities Act (new allocation + carryover)	84.027	02-CA040	7,445,158	11,813,584
Capacity Building Allocation	84.027	02-CR040	184,004	188,395
Total 84.027A			7,629,162	12,001,980
Preschool Handicapped:				
Handicapped Preschool Grant	84.173	02-CG040	367,945	103,696
Occupational Education:				
Local Administration	84.048	02-VA040	31,766	34,995
Special Populations	84.048	02-VA040	12,500	12,500
S-T-W Activities	84.048	02-VA040	17,015	157,164
Career Guidance	84.048	02-VA040	193,332	193,669
Student Org.	84.048	02-VA040	15,831	15,000
Equipment	84.048	02-VA040	457,872	365,799
Professional Development	84.048	02-VA040	8,000	10,000
Administration II	24.243	02-VA040	1,826	8,324
Curriculum	24.243	02-VA040	-	8,000
Technical Assistant	24.243	02-VA040	12,548	9,387
Accountability II	24.243	02-VA040	57,087	45,188
Staff Development	24.243	02-VA040	23,496	30,188
Total 84.048			831,275	890,214
Drug and Violence Prevention Program (new allocation + carryover)	84.186	02-FQ040	320,852	395,879

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF GREENVILLE COUNTY

SCHEDULE OF FEDERAL AWARDS

FEDERAL GRANTOR/ PASS-THROUGH GRANTOR/ PROGRAM TITLE	FEDERAL CFDA NUMBER	THROUGH GRANTOR'S NUMBER	2001-2002 TOTAL EXPENDITURES	2002-2003 TENTATIVE BUDGET
Adult Education:				
Adult Regular	84.002	02-EA040	383,331	438,214
Adult Education-Regional Tech.(new allocation + carryover)	84.002	02-EA040	91,724	106,594
EFF Mentoring Project (carryover)	84.002	02-EB040	24,020	15,980
English Literacy Civics	84.002	03-ED040	-	3,600
GED Espanol	84.002	03-EA040	-	8,333
DSS Family Literacy Collaborative	N/A	02-EK040	25,000	-
Total Adult Education			524,075	572,721
Other Special Programs:				
Title II - Enhancing Education thru Tech.	84.318	03-ET040	-	240,835
Title III - English Language Acquisition	84.365A	03-BP040	-	27,010
Title II - Improving Teacher Quality	84.367A	03-TQ040	-	2,246,721
Title I Accountability Grants	84.348A	02-BN040	-	686,988
Technology Literacy Challenge (new allocation + carryover)	84.318	01-FJ040	-	50,226
SC READS Tutorial Assistance (new allocation + carryover)	84.338A	03-RF040	-	112,428
Even Start - Family Literacy	84.213	02-EK040	150,000	139,500
Even Start Initiative	84.213	02-EK040	52,357	-
Foreign Language Incentive Program	84.294A	T294A020196	-	4,114
Title VI/Title V (new allocation + carryover)	84.298	02-BB040	380,921	501,500
Eisenhower Professional Development (carryover)	84.281	02-FN040	442,218	26,450
Greenville Hub	47.076	02-GA040	18,092	72,271
Goals 2000 Parental Assistance	84.310	N/A	133,494	135,361
RCS-Federal (carryover)		02-BK040	1,066,773	250,452
Homeless Children	84.196	02-FH040	36,706	-
Emergency Immigrant (carryover)	84.162	02-BL040	33,841	19,363
Tech Prep	N/A	01-VA040	50,749	54,267
Learn and Serve America	94.004	02-FA040	20,997	20,000
Schools of Excellence (new allocation + carryover)	17.249	02-VA040	11,848	95,352
School to Work (carryover)	17.249	02-VA040	86,829	284,272
School to Work - Imp. (carryover)	17.249	02-VA040	291,551	293,072
Extended Daycare Program (new allocation + carryover)	N/A	02-FB040	26,742	5,458
Project Sight	N/A	02-FQ040	8,723	-
Community Arts Partnership	84.351B	S351B020102	-	245,700
Challenge America	N/A	178161307	-	10,000
Integrating Health Education	93.938	03-FR040	-	5,450
Youth Court Expansion	16.523	03-FC040	-	18,502
Total Other Special Programs			2,811,842	5,545,293
Total Passed through SC Department of Education			18,920,428	29,106,968
Total US Department of Education			21,513,640	32,500,595
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES				
Passed Through S.C. Department of Education				
Head start	93.600	N/A	29,360	30,415
Total Passed Through S.C. Department of Education			29,360	30,415

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF GREENVILLE COUNTY

SCHEDULE OF FEDERAL AWARDS

FEDERAL GRANTOR/ PASS-THROUGH GRANTOR/ PROGRAM TITLE	FEDERAL CFDA NUMBER	THROUGH GRANTOR'S NUMBER	2001-2002 TOTAL EXPENDITURES	2002-2003 TENTATIVE BUDGET
Passed Through Clemson University				
Project Jericho (carryover)	84.342A	N/A	$ 38,202	$ 5,609
Passed Through the State Health & Human Services Finance Commission				
Child Development (Overbrook CDC)	13.667	N/A	881,992	225,934
Child Development (Overbrook Summer)	13.667	N/A	48,176	-
Child Development (Overbrook Summer) (new allocation + carryover)	13.667	N/A	5,576	1,356
Child Development (Overbrook Summer) (new allocation + carryover)	13.667	N/A	8,312	32,405
Total 13.667			944,055	259,695
Total Passed Through the State Health & Human Services Finance Commission			944,055	259,695
TOTAL U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES			1,011,617	295,720
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE				
Passed Through S.C. Department of Education				
Commodities/Food Distribution	10.550	N/A	1,233,558	1,045,000
School Breakfast Program	10.553	N/A	1,603,234	1,647,970
School Lunch Program	10.555	N/A	6,938,889	7,235,487
Total 10.55			9,775,681	9,928,457
TOTAL U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE			9,775,681	9,928,457
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE				
Direct Programs:				
Army ROTC	12.000	N/A	61,053	68,000
Navy ROTC	12.000	N/A	39,153	40,000
Air Force JROTC	12.000	N/A	94,114	113,000
TOTAL U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE			194,319	221,000

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF GREENVILLE COUNTY

SCHEDULE OF FEDERAL AWARDS

FEDERAL GRANTOR/ PASS-THROUGH GRANTOR/ PROGRAM TITLE	FEDERAL CFDA NUMBER	THROUGH GRANTOR'S NUMBER	2001-2002 TOTAL EXPENDITURES	2002-2003 TENTATIVE BUDGET
COMPONENT UNITS/CHARTER SCHOOLS				
Greenville Technical Charter High School				
U. S. Department of Education				
Pass through SC Department of Educ.				
SREB-High Schools that Work	84.048	01-VA040	$ 3,632	$ -
Meyer Center For Special Children				
Pass through SC Department of Educ.				
Preschool Grant	84.173	02-CG040	16,610	19,668
TOTAL COMPONENT UNITS/ CHARTER SCHOOLS			20,242	19,668
TOTAL FEDERAL ASSISTANCE			$ 32,515,498	$ 42,965,439

Testimony of
Sandra G. Sessoms-Penny
Senior Master Sergeant
United States Air Force (Retired)

Before the
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Subcommittee on Benefits

Committee on Education and the Workforce
Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness

April 9, 2003

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, my name is Sandra Sessoms-Penny. I am a retired Senior Master Sergeant of the United States Air Force, having served nearly 22 years of active duty. I am also an Assistant Principal at Smithfield Middle School in the Isle of Wight County School Division, located in Smithfield, Virginia. I am known as Ms. "S-P" to the students, staff, and community of Smithfield Middle School, which serves nearly 900 sixth, seventh and eighth grade students. I am also a former Troops-to-Teachers participant and currently a Troops-to-Teachers mentor. I am honored to be invited here today to share my personal experiences as a graduate of the Troops-to-Teachers program.

Florida is my home state, but after having traveled throughout the United States and overseas for most of my adult life, my family and I decided to settle in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1995. I entered the Air Force at 18 years of age with a high school diploma and lots of prayers and encouragement to do well from my family and friends. I retired from Langley Air Force Base as the Senior Paralegal and Law Office Manager having worked in the Office of the Staff Judge Advocate.

I entered the Air Force determined to pursue my education. At nearly every permanent duty location where I was stationed, I earned a few college credits. I was never in one place long enough to finish a college program due to military commitments, family needs, or fulfilling each college's requirements. After ten years and four colleges, I earned my first degree, an Associate Degree in Administrative Management from the Community College of the Air Force. While at Langley Air Force Base, I applied for and was granted leave under the "Operation Bootstrap Program" to finish my Bachelors Degree in Human Resources Management from St. Leo College in 1986, just before receiving orders to transfer to a new duty assignment. Being an individual who believes in seizing opportunities, I earned several other degrees while serving on active duty --,a masters degree in Human Resources Management from Troy State University, Montgomery and a second master's degree in Education from Old Dominion University. I am currently working on my doctorate in education from The George Washington University.

I was very fortunate that most of my education was funded through the old "GI" Bill and tuition assistance. My original intention was to attend law school and become an attorney after leaving the military in 1995. However, shortly before I retired, I began to notice information about the Troops-to-Teachers program. I was intrigued by this program because it offered the opportunity to convey to kids and other adults the importance of education, by leading by example. One day I found myself in the Base Education Office at Langley and on the same day I visited educational advisors who shared information with me about the Military Career Transition Program being offered by Old Dominion University, located in Norfolk, Virginia. The advisors from Old Dominion University completed an informal review of my college transcripts and started me on a journey that has opened more doors for me than I could have ever imagined. In order to help defray the cost of completing the program, I also completed an application for the Troops-to-Teachers Program. It took an additional 18 months to earn a Masters of Science degree in Education. In order to obtain my first Master's Degree, I traveled to three universities on six different campuses.

During the 18 months it took to finish the program, I took classes related to special education, classroom management, instructional delivery, subject matter content, educational principals and foundation, and other education based courses. I also completed a classroom observation and did student teaching. Because of my participation in the Troops-to-Teachers program and the Military Career Transition Program, I was able to student teach for six weeks rather than the three months required of other education majors. I student taught a sixth grade class in a public school setting. I learned from the observation and student teaching experience, that a career in education was my true calling. I also held a full time job while completing the program and took a leave of absence to complete the student teaching requirement. I successfully completed the PRAXIS examination for new teachers on my first attempt.

The Troops-to-Teachers program offered monetary incentives to school divisions that hired its participants. I made a decision that I did not want to be a substitute teacher. I had heard many horror stories about the treatment that substitute teachers received, so I decide to commit all or nothing. I applied for a job that I saw advertised in the local newspaper. I was interviewed, and hired in the middle of the school year, directly after graduating from the Troops-to-Teachers program. I know of individuals who were hired even before completing the program because the need for teachers was so great. Transitioning from the military into the classroom was an adjustment, but I learned quickly and established a rapport with my administrators, peers, students, and their parents. I enjoyed the interactions in the school setting. It has proven to be the most challenging experience I have ever encountered. Some interactions were a little more than challenging, but fortunately my administrator, lead teacher, and team teachers were supportive and helped to train me on the nuisances of the teaching profession.

I began my teaching career teaching language arts and civics to eighth grade students at Smithfield Middle School in February 1997 and continued in the position until December 2000. In January of 2000, I pursued the Education Specialist Degree offered by The George Washington University and completed the program in the spring of 2001.

In January of 2001, I accepted a position as Assistant Principal of Smithfield Middle School. Before the end of the school year, a new assistant principal (who was also a Troops-to-Teachers participant) and I were managing Smithfield Middle School. We both applied for the vacant principal's position and my Troops-to-Teachers colleague, Mr. Barry Davis,was awarded the position.

In the summer of 2001, I began the doctoral program for Educational Leadership and Administration Program through The George Washington University with an anticipated graduation date in 2004. I funded my matriculation for the Education Specialist degree with the last of my GI Bill benefits. I am proud to say that I took full advantage of those benefits and used every penny of them, along with personal funds and small amounts of tuition reimbursement from my school district and the university. Currently, I am funding my doctorate degree from student loans and my own personal funds.

Because of my positive and enriching experiences with the Troops-to-Teachers Program as a participant and as a mentor, I am writing my dissertation on *Perceptions of Troops-to-Teachers Participants Filling Teacher and School Administrator Shortages in the Commonwealth of Virginia.* Also during this degree program, I wrote a policy analysis paper, *Using Former Military Personnel to Resolve the Teacher Shortage* on the Troops-to-Teachers program. This paper was selected for publication by George Washington University.

I eagerly accepted the role of a Troops-to-Teachers mentor when asked and have been speaking to and communicating with service members from all branches of the military interested in the program since 1997. Individuals call or e-mail me with questions about the program and opportunities provided by the program. I have spoken with over 150 people over the last six years who were looking for new careers and wanted to know if teaching would be a viable option for them. Additionally, I aid my school district in helping to recruit teachers at job fairs at least twice a year.

Of those I have spoken with or e-mailed, all ask if the program provides financial assistance. And if not, what are the benefits of the program. Prior to the program being refunded, my general response was that the program was being reviewed and that prospective participants should wait for new information. In all honesty, I am sure that having funding to support my course work in obtaining my education degree affected my decision to enter the teaching profession. The added blessing for me was that I really enjoy the field of education. If the Troops-to-Teachers Program, had not provided financial assistance, I probably would have chosen a different career path in either human resources management or law.

Some additional advantages I share with mentees about the Troops-to-Teachers Program have been networking with other professional educators and being able to use many of the skills developed in the military in the classroom such as leadership, management, communications, counseling, planning, technological, and instructional skills. I emphasize the overwhelming need for adult role models and mentors in the

public schools. We as former military members have high expectations for our students and our staff. Yet we are willing to work with the students and staff to achieve those expectations.

I would like to offer several suggestions to improve the Troops-to-Teachers Program. First, I would suggest additional funding to develop intensive teacher preparation programs. These programs would help to ensure that teacher candidates in the program are well prepared for the classroom. This would help support the "No Child Left Behind" initiative in providing the nation's schools with "highly qualified" teachers.

Second, the agency should resume providing grants or direct funding to school districts that hire Troops-to-Teachers candidates. This provides an incentive for these school districts to take a chance on former military personnel, who may not have had as much formal training as education majors.

Finally, I would advocate providing funds to support participants pursuing advanced degrees. Graduate school is a very competitive process, so I would not anticipate that large number of soldiers would pursue this path. For those who do however, the support would allow them to take the lessons learned in the military into the classroom and then into the policy and program development arena. Moreover, participants with advanced degrees could assist in filling the shortage in administrator level positions in school districts.

In light of the current war, many service people (active, reserve, and guard) will be displaced when they return home. This committee should adopt measures now, to help recruit those individuals who may want to change or have to change careers when they return. Since many reports have stated that there are current and growing teacher and administrator shortages nationwide, it would be prudent to attempt to provide some of those service members an opportunity to not only fill the shortages but to also provide our troops with other jobs that will help to support the nation.

In conclusion, my personal experience as a Troops-to-Teachers participant and mentor has been very positive and inspiring. In fact, that experience was transformational. My participation has also raised important questions for this committee to: How do we find the best teacher candidates? How do we ensure that those teachers set the high standards needed to prepare our students for the future and global competitiveness? How do we capitalize on the strength of a nation from our military service and restore patriotism in our schools? How can we better serve military members who choose a career in education? And finally, why is it important to move forward now to help those who serve the nation during our time of conflict to also help serve our nation through a time of peace? I am sure that your answers to these questions will lead you to providing enhanced support for the Troops-to-Teachers program.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my views with you today.

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

SANDRA G. SESSOMS-PENNY

EDUCATION:

- Doctoral Cohort, The George Washington University
- EdS, The George Washington University, 2001
- M.S., Education, Old Dominion University, 1996
- M.S., Human Resources Management, Troy State University, Montgomery, 1991
- B.S., Human Resources Management, Saint Leo College, 1986
- A.A., Administrative Management, Community College of the Air Force, 1986

CERTIFICATIONS:

- Education Specialist Degree, Educational Administration Endorsement (2001)
- Virginia Postgraduate Professional License, Middle Education Grades 4-8 (1996)
- Paralegal Certification, Judge Advocate General's Department, United States Air Force (year)

EDUCATION WORK EXPERIENCE:

- Assistant Principal, Smithfield Middle School, Smithfield, Virginia
  January 2001-present
- Lead Teacher and Teacher, Smithfield Middle School, Smithfield, Virginia
  February 1997 – December 2000
- Student Teacher, Yorktown Middle School, Yorktown, Virginia
  September – November 1996

MILITARY CAREER WORK EXPERENCE:

- Troops-to-Teachers Participant and Mentor (1995 - present)
- Family Advocacy Program Assistance, Langley Air Force Base, Virginia
  June 1995-February 1997
- Law Office Manager and Paralegal Superintendent (1973 - 1995 active duty)
  Administrative Assistant
  Aircraft Electrician, C-130 aircraft

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS:

- Teacher of the Year – Isle of Wight County and Smithfield Middle 1999/2000
- DOD – Meritorious Service Awards; USAF Commendation Medals; Good Conduct Awards, and National Defense Service Medal
- Policy Analysis – selected for publication by The George Washington University

FAMILY AND RESIDENCE:

- Husband - Alonzo Penny (USAF Retired); Son – Andre' J. Sessoms (1st Lt, USA)
- Reside in Yorktown, Virginia

PERSONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Associate Minister, Langley Air Force Base Chapel, Gospel Services

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD OF ANTHONY J. PRINCIPI

SECRETARY

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON BENEFITS

APRIL 9, 2003

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Troops to Teachers (TTT) is a U.S. Department of Education and Department of Defense program that helps eligible military personnel begin new careers as teachers in public schools where their skills, knowledge and experience are most needed.

TTT assists eligible members of the Armed Forces to obtain certification or licensing as elementary school teachers, secondary school teachers, or vocational or technical teachers, increasing the opportunities for highly-qualified former service-members to join the ranks of America's teachers, particularly in math, science, special education, and other high-needs subject areas. TTT also assists in recruiting quality teachers for schools that serve low-income families throughout America. TTT provides a means for former servicemembers to continue serving America by putting the skills and character traits they perfected while on active duty to work in our nation's classrooms.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) heartily endorses this program. We encourage veterans to also contact VA since they may be eligible for Montgomery GI Bill benefits for training necessary to qualify for teacher certification. In addition to the monetary incentives from the TTT program, VA may reimburse qualified veterans for the cost of their approved licensure or certification up to $2,000.

STATEMENT OF
STEVE ROBERTSON, DIRECTOR
NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION
THE AMERICAN LEGION
SUBMITTED TO THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON BENEFITS
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
AND
SUBCOMMITTEE ON 21ST CENTURY COMPETITIVENESS
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE
ON
THE JOINT DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE – DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
"TROOPS TO TEACHERS" PROGRAM

APRIL 9, 2003

The American Legion welcomes the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of this truly outstanding program. This is a win-win situation for recently separated veterans and America's public school system.

The public education system continues to face a crisis. Classroom enrollments continue to climb, many experts predict that the student age population will reach 48.5 million by 2006. The National Education Association predicts that one million teachers are nearing retirement and the nation will need two million teachers in the next decade.

Across America, critical areas for teacher recruitment include urban and rural schools, especially for high-need subject areas such as special education, math and science. There is also a great need of diversity of educators from minority groups.

Teacher retention is another area of concern. It is reported that 20 percent of all new hires leave the classroom within three years. Nearly 50 percent of those teaching in urban schools leave within five years.

The Troops to Teachers Program addresses these critical needs. The program provides school administrators with a quality rich pool of potential teachers. These men and women can fill many of these critical subject needs in public education. From those veterans participating in the Troops to Teachers program, nearly 26 percent become math and science teachers; 85 percent are males; 33 percent are minorities; 24 percent elect to teach in inner city schools; 24 percent select rural schools; and the retention rate after five-years is 80 percent. These former service members traditionally receive outstanding performance evaluation and serve as excellent role models for students.

"I love learning, and I love watching kids learn," said Colin Mayo, a 17-year Marine Corps veteran. His response is typical, the number one reason veterans enter the teaching field is "their desire to work with young people."

The Troops to Teachers Program has become one of the most successful military transition initiatives, with some 4,000 former service members in the program. In a 1998 National Center for Education Information survey showed that 26 percent of administrations that had Troops to Teachers on their staff rated them "among the best," 28 percent rated them "well above average," and 17 percent rated them "above average."

This does not come as a surprise to The American Legion. Military training is mission focused and task oriented. The military lifestyle is based on attendance, appearance, attitude, attention to detail, strong work ethic, teamwork, and many other positive attributes shared by professional educators. In today's armed forces, professional and military education is stressed at every level. Much of this continuing education brings with it transferable skills suited for educating young minds.

President Bush's talks about *leaving no child behind* – another common trait between educators and military service members. The military tradition is rich because of the deep bond among service members – I will not fail those with whom I serve – which translate in leaving nobody behind – a student or a teacher.

Military service members make excellent employees:

- They are certifiably drug-free.
- They have a strong work ethic.
- They understand personal accountability.
- They are loyal.
- They are use to operating under strict guidelines governing dress, appearance, performance, and personal conduct.

Experts predict that during the next decade, public and private schools will need to hire two million additional teachers. The American Legion believes, that hiring preference should be given to veterans. The American Legion believes many veterans, transitioning from active-duty to the civilian workforce, possess the teaching background and experiences that would be a valuable resource to any public or private school system. The American Legion believes that many of these veterans desire to continue serving this nation as teachers.

The American Legion wholeheartedly supports the Troops to Teachers Program.

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