AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

S. HRG. 110–150

OVERSIGHT HEARING ON DOL/DOD/VA COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION TO MEET THE EMPLOYMENT NEEDS OF RETURNING SERVICEMEMBERS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

JUNE 13, 2007

Printed for the use of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Available via the World Wide Web: http://www.access.gpo.gov/congress/senate

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

37-761 PDF WASHINGTON : 2007

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

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

DANIEL K. AKAKA, Hawaii, *Chairman*

JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER IV, West Virginia
PATTY MURRAY, Washington
BARACK OBAMA, Illinois
BERNARD SANDERS, (I) Vermont
SHERROD BROWN, Ohio
JIM WEBB, Virginia
JON TESTER, Montana

LARRY E. CRAIG, Idaho, *Ranking Member*
ARLEN SPECTER, Pennsylvania
RICHARD M. BURR, North Carolina
JOHNNY ISAKSON, Georgia
LINDSEY O. GRAHAM, South Carolina
KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON, Texas
JOHN ENSIGN, Nevada

WILLIAM E. BREW, *Staff Director*
LUPE WISSEL, *Republican Staff Director*

C O N T E N T S

JUNE 13, 2007

SENATORS

	Page
Akaka, Hon. Daniel K., Chairman, U.S. Senator from Hawaii	1
Craig, Hon. Larry E., Ranking Member, U.S. Senator from Idaho	2
Murray, Hon. Patty, U.S. Senator from Washington	3
Tester, Hon. John, U.S. Senator from Montana	5
Prepared statement	5
Brown, Hon. Sherrod, U.S. Senator from Ohio	26
Isakson, Hon. Johnny, U.S. Senator from Georgia	52
Webb, Hon. Jim, U.S. Senator from Virginia	54

WITNESSES

Ciccolella, Hon. Charles S., Assistant Secretary, Veterans' Employment and Training Service, Department of Labor	6
Prepared statement	8
Dominguez, Hon. Michael L., Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness, Department of Defense	12
Prepared statement	13
Caden, Judith A., Director, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service, Veterans Benefits Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs	18
Prepared statement	19
Warren, William O., Executive Director, DirectEmployers Association	29
Prepared statement	32
Bradley, Shaun, Co-CEO, Bradley-Morris, Inc.	39
Morris, Sandra, Co-CEO, Bradley-Morris, Inc.	40
Prepared statement of Shaun Bradley and Sandra Morris	41
Recommendations for the Improvement of TurboTAP/DOD Transportal/Defense Knowledge Online (DKO) Portal	42
Addenda	43
McGee, Corey, OEF/OIF Veteran	58
Prepared statement	60
Rizer, Monique, Spouse of an Army Reservist	61
Prepared statement	63
Recommendations for the Improvement of TurboTAP Web Site	66
Osterberg, Don, Vice President, Schneider National, Inc., Green Bay, Wisconsin	67

APPENDIX

National Military Family Association, prepared statement	73

OVERSIGHT HEARING ON DOL/DOD/VA COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION TO MEET THE EMPLOYMENT NEEDS OF RETURNING SERVICEMEMBERS

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 13, 2007

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:32 a.m., in room 562, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Daniel K. Akaka, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Akaka, Murray, Brown, Tester, Webb, Craig, and Isakson.

OPENING STATEMENT OF DANIEL K. AKAKA, CHAIRMAN, U.S. SENATOR FROM HAWAII

Chairman AKAKA. The hearing will come to order. I want to say aloha and welcome to another one of the Committee's seamless transition hearings. This morning, we will focus on the employment issues facing veterans, members of the Guard and Reserve, and their families as they seek to move from a military to a civilian workforce.

Making these transitions is never easy, but for younger veterans, it can be particularly difficult. For members of the National Guard and Reserves, the return to a prior job may be challenging for a variety of reasons. For family members, the uncertainty of multiple and extended deployments poses different kinds of problems. Finally, the obstacles facing those who are disabled while on duty can sometimes seem overwhelming and perhaps even insurmountable. The needs of these individuals deserve our utmost attention and resources.

We will address a variety of issues this morning from a wide range of witnesses, and I think you know now we have three panels. Our starting point will be the recommendations of the Task Force Report to the President on the Returning Global War on Terror Heroes. But I want to stress this, that it will not stop here. Indeed, this is something that deeply concerns me, that the Task Force only looked at what could be done within the constraints of current law and did not make any review of recommendations as to what might be needed in terms of improvements or additions to existing statutes. This is a major shortcoming, in my opinion, with regard to the entire report.

There is a lot on the agenda today that we will need to move through in a timely fashion, so I ask that our witnesses adhere to the 5-minute rule for your oral presentation. Your full statements, of course, will be made a part of the Committee's record. So again, welcome and I look forward to hearing from each of you this morning.

Chairman AKAKA. At this point in time, I would like to call on the Senator from Idaho, Senator Craig, our Ranking Member. Senator Craig?

STATEMENT OF HON. LARRY E. CRAIG, RANKING MEMBER, U.S. SENATOR FROM IDAHO

Senator CRAIG. Well, good morning, Mr. Chairman, and good morning to all assembled. Danny, again, thank you for calling this hearing to discuss employment needs of our returning servicemembers.

I think it goes without saying that during a time of war, it is essential that we as a Nation help our warriors smoothly return to civilian life. For many, finding a job is a critical aspect of their transition. Not only is it important for their long-term financial stability, but meaningful work can have a beneficial impact on both the physical and the mental health of that warrior. It is also important for our Nation's economy, the vitality of the civilian labor market, to benefit from the higher-trained, skilled, and motivated individuals that make up the character of that returning veteran. Perhaps more importantly, we as a grateful Nation owe it to those who have served and sacrificed to provide them with the resources and assistance they may need to enter again civilian life.

When the private and public sectors work together to fulfill this obligation, we can help ensure the continued viability of an all-volunteer force. It really works both ways.

But meeting the diverse employment needs of all who wear the uniform involves many complex issues. There are recovering servicemen and women who had their military careers cut short by devastating injuries and who are trying to find their niche in the civilian job market. We have members of the Guard and Reserve who are returning from war and want to be reinstated at their civilian jobs. And we have young veterans who have completed their terms of service and are looking to start a civilian career for the first time in their lives.

Today, we will hear about a wide range of programs and services involving both the private and public sector aimed at helping veterans succeed in the civilian job market. Given the sheer number of entities and programs involved, it is clear that the Nation as a whole has made it a priority to ensure that returning servicemen and women will have a successful transition into the civilian workforce.

In fact, veterans overall are continuing to experience lower unemployment rates than non-veterans, and even young veterans who have struggled in recent years have seen phenomenal improvements in their employment outcomes. The unemployment rate of the 20- to 24-year-old veteran dropped just less than 6 percent during the first quarter of this year.

I am sure everyone here is as pleased as I am about these signs of progress. However, I think it is incumbent upon this Committee to continue monitoring whether Federal programs are effectively serving veterans' employment needs.

To that end, I called a hearing last year to examine two employment programs administered by the Department of Labor: the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program and the Local Veterans' Employment Representative Program. Based on what I heard, Senator Akaka and I asked the Government Accountability Office to examine whether the current performance accountability system accurately reflects how well these programs are serving veterans. Last month, GAO issued a report finding that, after many years of trying to improve data and performance measures, there is simply no way to determine whether these programs are effective in helping veterans find jobs or whether other factors are responsible for veterans' job outcomes.

Although I hope these programs contribute to the success we have seen in recent months, I believe we must find a way to track how well these programs are serving veterans so we can quickly identify any gaps in existing services and continually seek ways to further improve veterans' employment outcomes.

As we move forward, I hope this Committee and Congress will do our part in helping returning servicemembers in their transition to civilian life by taking steps to ensure that these and other programs are capable of providing them with the most effective employment services, not just today, but for many years to come. And I hope that employers across the Nation will do their part by making it a priority to recruit our Nation's heroes and let them put their valuable skills and traits to work in contributing to the economy of this great Nation.

Mr. Chairman, the work this Committee has done and is continuing to do, the oversight, the kind of positive effort to make sure that we have the facts, and know if programs need to be adjusted and changed, is absolutely the right course and I thank you for doing it.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Senator Craig, for your statement.

Senator Murray from the State of Washington.

STATEMENT OF HON. PATTY MURRAY
U.S. SENATOR FROM WASHINGTON

Senator MURRAY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank you and Ranking Member Craig for holding this really important hearing on the employment benefits provided to our men and women in uniform as they transition from military to civilian life.

And I want to start by saying that as Chairwoman of the Employment and Workplace Safety Subcommittee, I am really glad that we are holding this hearing today. I have worked to explore this topic in my own subcommittee and I have spoken with a lot of the men and women who are facing employment challenges when they return home, and those hearings and those conversations have really helped me to get some ideas of some of our most critical needs.

First of all, civilian and veteran organizations need to work together to reach out to returning soldiers. We have a lot of trained professionals that are willing and able to help our returning servicemembers, but they face some real barriers in accessing information about those soldiers directly and we have got to think creatively how we can connect those providers with the soldiers that they are trying to help.

We also need to provide job information and resources at a better time. We all know that soldiers, when they return home immediately and are demobilizing, it is not a great time to be talking to them about anything except their families. We have got to find a better way to find a good time to talk to them about the critical employment issues that they are facing.

Third, we need to address the challenges that a lot of our small business owners face in trying to hire our veterans. Because we have unpredictable tours of duty, small business owners are telling me that they bear a very high cost of turnover and training when soldiers deploy. Tax credits or something similar to help them cover those costs would help them to do the right thing and employ soldiers and veterans.

Fourth, I think we need to ensure that the skills that servicemembers are learning in the field are transferrable to the jobs that they are trying to get when they return home. Too many soldiers I talk to tell me that the language of the skills they have while they are serving are different than the language of the skills when they come home and they have a hard time connecting those two and we need to focus on that.

And finally, I think we need to strengthen our training and education support, because often returning servicemembers need salary and benefits during a transitional time period every year or so as they pursue training and the credits that they receive for training need to be transferrable and recognizable.

In my home State of Washington, I am proud to say that we have been moving very proactively toward addressing and meeting some of these needs. Our Employer Security Commissioner has worked tirelessly to promote the Hire-A-Vet Challenge, and that is an initiative that encourages businesses to hire returning National Guard and Reserve members. And last year, our State legislature created a Veterans Innovation Program Board to work with Washington's Department of Veterans Affairs in meeting specific needs of returning Reservists and National Guard members.

I have said many times to employers, our returning veterans have the skills that they are looking for. They are loyal. They have character. They show up on time. And they are very good workers. I think what we need to do is make sure that all of our agencies are working to give them the support they need, whether it is assistance in basic job skills or access to information or support for businesses who want to hire them. I think it is imperative that this Committee look at these issues and ask, what are we doing to make sure that we have put in place the right policies and procedures and resources to make sure those returning veterans get the promises that we have all given them to care for them when they return home.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Senator Murray.

Now, Senator Tester from Montana.

STATEMENT OF HON. JON TESTER, U.S. SENATOR FROM MONTANA

Senator TESTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a very important hearing. I have got a markup in Homeland Security, so I am going to have to leave early and I apologize ahead of time for that. I would ask unanimous consent my entire statement be put into the record.

Chairman AKAKA. Without objection.

Senator TESTER. I do have a few comments I want to make. I would hope that each of the panelists would address what is being done and what can be done for the veterans as they come home for job opportunities. I think that when it comes to this particular war that we are in, the repeated deployments as it applies to Guardsmen and Reservists put some interesting issues on the table that are not typically there and I think that it is critically important that we serve all our veterans, but I think that is a segment that may have some special needs.

As far as the homeless veterans issue, what is being done to try to bring those folks back in, I know it is getting to be a more significant part of our population, unfortunately, and I think that if we can do whatever we can do starting when they are in the active military to when they go out of the active military and become a civilian, it is important that we deal with those folks in a way that meets their needs.

And then finally, I would hope that at least one of you would talk about, if not all, the follow-up and—let me start off with how you get the information out to the veterans on what is available out there for workforce training and then the follow-up of that to see if it is having the kinds of impacts that we need that are acceptable for our veterans' population.

So with that, Mr. Chairman, once again, I want to thank you very much for holding this hearing and I want to thank the panelists for being here. I will appreciate probably reading about your perspective, so thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Senator Tester follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. JON TESTER, U.S. SENATOR FROM MONTANA

Mr. Chairman, this is a very important hearing. Thank you for putting this together today.

The veterans' employment and training programs have so much promise, but we do not help ourselves if we allow the good intentions of these programs to be undone by not adequately preparing for the number of veterans who are using them.

As I understand it, the President's budget for FY 2008 would have:

- Put a freeze on funding for the National Veterans' Training Institute, which provides specialized training and professional skills development to federal and state veterans' service providers' staff;
- Increase by less than 1 percent the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, which provides grants to operate employment programs to reach out to homeless veterans and help them become employed;
- And cut funding for the Veterans Workforce Investment Program, which provides competitive grants for training programs and employment opportunities for veterans in high-skill occupations.

I know that funding is tight all over. Believe me, one of the reasons I came to Congress is to get after some of the wasteful spending that goes on around here.

But we're talking about our veterans. There's a moral responsibility there, I think, to make sure that after someone serves our nation that they have the chance to get the training they need to make a life for themselves in the civilian world.

And I have to tell you, this is especially critical in rural areas where we need every possible resource to create jobs and maintain a highly skilled workforce. And folks who have served in the United States military have good skills. We just need to make sure that civilian employers understand that, and our folks leaving the service know how to talk about those skills in a way that's attractive to prospective employers.

I also hope we'll hear a little about what kinds of follow-up the VA and the Labor Department do when it comes to getting the word out on these training programs. This is especially important for the National Guard folks.

We all know that when a soldier or a Marine comes back from deployment they won't be giving full attention to someone talking about their benefits. The soldier's mind is on his family—as it should be, quite frankly.

But as we've seen with mental health issues and with disability benefits, that can really complicate things down the road. So I'd like to know what you all are doing to follow up with folks after they hear about their job training opportunities when they first get home.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses, and I thank you all for being here today.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Senator Tester.

We will start with representatives of the three Departments most involved in the employment, and that is the Departments of Labor, Veterans Affairs, and Defense. While each agency has a different focus, they share a common responsibility to help veterans transition from military service to civilian employment.

Representing the Department of Labor is Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans' Employment and Training Service, the Honorable Charles S. Ciccolella. From the Department of Defense, we welcome the Honorable Michael L. Dominguez, the Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. Finally, joining us from the Department of Veterans Affairs is Judith Caden, the Director of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment.

Again, welcome to all of you. Your prepared remarks will, of course, appear in the record in full, so we look forward to your statement, Mr. Ciccolella.

STATEMENT OF HON. CHARLES S. CICCOLELLA, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Mr. CICCOLELLA. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Senator Craig, Senator Murray, Senator Tester. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the collaboration among the Departments, particularly the Department of Defense, the Department of Labor, the Department of Veterans Affairs, to provide services to our returning servicemembers from both active duty and the National Guard and the Reserve.

Our Department, the Department of Labor, is fully engaged in assisting our servicemembers as they return. We operate in very close partnership with the DOD and VA in particular. We do this by protecting their employment rights when they are deployed and ensuring they get their jobs back in conjunction with the Department of Defense, their ESGR organization, the Department of Justice, and the Special Counsel's Office. We do it by assisting their transition through the Transition Assistance Program, the employment workshop that we facilitate in conjunction with DOD and VA,

and we do it by working very closely with all of the agencies to improve employment services and outcomes in the workforce system.

Mr. Chairman, my testimony details the extent of cooperation and collaboration, particularly as regards the President's Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes. What I would like to do in just a couple moments is to highlight our recent and standing initiatives among the three agencies.

The Department of Defense is now leading a joint effort to promote and increase participation in TAP, and that is the TAP Employment Workshop that is facilitated by the Department of Labor. We now have a participation rate goal of 85 percent. We are only getting about 65 to 70 percent right now. We have already seen a large increase in the number of servicemembers who are attending the Transition Assistance Program Employment Workshop in the last several years.

DOL, DOD, and VA have stepped up their efforts to extend transition assistance to the National Guard and Reserve, both by attending active duty TAP sessions when we can get them in there if they need that, or in the case of the Labor Department, we do many regular TAP programs for active duty transitioning servicemembers in many States. I think Secretary Dominguez will talk about the TurboTAP initiative, and that is also an excellent way to reach out to the Guard and the Reserve.

The Department of Labor is also leading another joint effort through the TAP Steering Committee, which is a joint committee, to significantly improve the quality of instruction and the content of the TAP Workshops. Senator Murray, you talked about the translation of skills, and that is so important, that we teach servicemembers how to translate their skills, their education, and their training onto their resumes so employers can understand it. It is also important they do mock interviews and it is important they do job searches on their State Workforce Job Board.

We are working more closely with DOD and DOJ and America's employers to protect our servicemembers' employment and reemployment rights while they are on military duty and to educate employers on their obligations. We work very closely with the Department of Defense and the Office of Special Counsel, in particular, on ensuring Federal employers understand and abide by USERRA, the law that protects our servicemembers. We believe we do a very good job on USERRA, including these Federal sector cases, and we also think all these cases should remain under the jurisdiction, at least the investigative part, under the Department of Labor.

We have strengthened our already close relationship with the Department of Veterans Affairs and their vocational rehabilitation and employment program by stationing more veteran employment representatives from the workforce system in their vocational rehabilitation offices.

We are conducting more veteran job fairs through the HireVetsFirst campaign. Over 120 this year and 52 in one week in November are planned. Those job fairs are really important because they bring together the veteran, the employer, the workforce system, and the media and it really raises awareness of the value that veterans bring to the workforce. So that is also very, very important.

We are helping veterans better understand their financial and educational benefits and we are working with the Department of Defense to expand their "Operation Warfighter" program. That is the Federal intern program, wherein the servicemembers are recuperating, and as part of their therapy, they go to a Federal agency if they want to and it is like a "test drive." The Federal agency can sort of evaluate them. Over 50 of them have been hired so far and about 250 of them have participated in that program.

We provide face-to-face employment assistance to the most severely wounded and injured through our REALifelines program. We work very closely with the VA and the vocational rehabilitation folks and with the Department of Defense and the individual military services on that.

And finally, we continue to emphasize the needs of our youngest veterans because they do experience, as Senator Craig said, higher unemployment rates. We think we have a better fix on that, but we have got to watch it very, very carefully. The numbers are down, but they are not where they should be. But the key there is for more young servicemembers to attend the Transition Employment Workshops so they are better prepared and so they have a plan when they come out of the military.

That concludes the highlights that I wanted to cover in my testimony, in my opening statement, Senator.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ciccolella follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. CHARLES S. CICCOLELLA, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Craig and distinguished Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss transition and employment issues of returning veterans, servicemembers, reservists, and members of the National Guard.

The state of employment for our returning veterans is strong. Our economy continues to grow and it continues to produce new job opportunities. Employers are looking for quality workers, and the servicemembers who are leaving the military today bring the technical and leadership skills employers need.

The Department of Labor (DOL) is working in close partnership with the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to enhance employment opportunities for our separating military members by better preparing them for the civilian workforce as they transition, by protecting their employment rights while they serve, and by providing employment assistance to our veterans whenever it is requested or needed.

I am pleased to be a member of today's panel because the efforts of DOD, the VA, and DOL in the area of employment are complementary and supportive. We participate on many joint committees, including the recent Presidential Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes (Task Force), in an effort to constantly review and improve services for veterans and help make their transition to employment as seamless as possible.

My testimony today discusses three major areas.

First, you asked that I address the cooperation and collaboration on employment issues by DOL, DOD and VA, particularly in the context of the important employment-related recommendations of the Task Force. Since the Task Force focused to a large degree on improving transition services, I will elaborate on how DOL is implementing the recommendations by expanding or enhancing initiatives that directly assist the smooth transition of servicemembers, including members of the National Guard and Reserve and wounded and injured military members.

Second, I will discuss the ongoing collaborative efforts underway for the past several years to help servicemembers who need help the most—those who are wounded and injured, including those who are disabled as a result of military service—and our continuing efforts to reduce unemployment among young veterans.

Finally, I will discuss the Department's extensive efforts to reach out to employers to help them find and hire veterans.

COLLABORATION BETWEEN DOL, DOD AND THE VA; AND DOL'S ROLE IN TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

First, I would like to discuss the extensive cooperation and collaboration between our departments. As the Committee has recognized, the most recent example of our collaboration with VA and DOD is on the Task Force. Chaired by Secretary Nicholson, both Secretary Gates and Secretary Chao were members of the Task Force. The Task Force report contains important recommendations that are already in progress and it illustrates the high level of coordination and collaboration that goes on among DOL, VA, and DOD, as well as with other Federal departments and agencies.

DOL was tasked with the lead on four of the report's recommendations. Those are to integrate our HireVetsFirst Campaign into career fairs; train active duty, Guard and Reserve members regarding their rights under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA); develop a financial aid education module; and develop a wounded veterans intern program. I would like to describe our efforts in each of these areas.

• Integrate the HireVetsFirst campaign into career fairs: DOL's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) works through the nationwide system of One-Stop Career Centers to ensure that veterans receive priority employment services, including the specialized services of dedicated veteran employment specialists. We are working with One-Stop Career Centers in every state to integrate the HireVetsFirst campaign into over 120 private and public sector veteran job fairs, and to expand the number of employers actively involved in veteran recruitment. We will soon announce simultaneous job fairs that will be held this November in every state to highlight the value veterans bring to the workforce and to offer unprecedented opportunities for employers to find and hire veterans and servicemembers who are transitioning to the civilian workforce.

• Train Active Duty, Guard and Reserve on USERRA rights: To improve servicemembers' understanding of their reemployment rights at entry to, during, and exiting from military service, DOL has stepped up its efforts to ensure that National Guard and Reserve members are briefed on their Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) rights, both during mobilization and during their demobilization once they return. In 2006, we rolled out an aggressive training regimen on the new USERRA regulations and over 400,000 servicemembers and employers have been briefed to date.

We collaborate closely with the DOD National Committee on Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) to develop better understanding and application of the law in order to improve the USERRA training, technical assistance, and dispute resolution services that are provided to servicemembers. DOL has developed a comprehensive pocket guide and interactive programs on USERRA for use by servicemembers, veterans, employers, ESGR caseworkers and mediators as well as by our own USERRA investigators. We have improved training for our USERRA investigators and VETS has established a corps of senior USERRA investigators as part of its efforts to better advise servicemembers of their USERRA rights, and to insure prompt and accurate handling of USERRA cases.

• Develop a Financial Aid Education Module for the Transition Assistance Program (TAP): DOL, DOD and the Department of Education have formed a work group to develop a training module in the Transition Assistance Program and the Disabled Transition Assistance Programs (DTAP) that will better inform transitioning servicemembers of available financial aid benefits. Since only a limited number of servicemembers take advantage of the education benefits that are available to them, this module will educate them on the wide range of financial aid and other benefits to support enhancing their education and skills, and improving their marketability to employers.

• Develop an Intern Program for Wounded Veterans: Many severely wounded and injured servicemembers have little or no civilian employment experience. The internship program will build on DOD's Operation Warfighter (OWF), in which DOD and DOL have worked very closely since its launch two years ago at the Military Severely Injured Center (MSIC) in Arlington, Virginia. OWF places active duty wounded and injured servicemembers in unpaid Federal employment opportunities that meet both the agency's needs and the needs and interests of the OWF participant. Like OWF, the expanded internship program will provide valuable work experience to injured Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) servicemembers while they are in medical hold status and transitioning out of military service.

DOL has a full-time employee based at the MSIC who leads our role in OWF. We work directly with Federal agencies to develop intern opportunities for interested servicemembers, and hold regular meetings for potential OWF participants at Walter Reed Army Medical Center where Federal agencies discuss their internship opportunities. We then work closely to match wounded or injured servicemembers with appropriate internships. To date, over 200 servicemembers have participated in OWF, and over 50 have gone on to be hired into permanent Federal jobs.

In addition to leading these important initiatives recommended by the Task Force, DOL plays a pivotal role in several other Task Force recommendations.

• Increase participation in TAP. One of our goals has been to increase the participation rate of active duty, National Guard, and Reserve members in Transition Assistance and Disabled Transition Assistance Programs (TAP/DTAP) to 85 percent, and we have been working with DOD officials to accomplish this goal. Under DOD's lead, DOL and VA are working with the military at all installations to market TAP and encourage greater participation so that every servicemember that might need to find post-separation employment attends this important transition activity. Active duty servicemember participation in TAP employment workshops has risen by 50 percent since 2002 and will continue to increase under these joint efforts.

To smooth the return of activated National Guard and Reserve troops, in FY 2005 DOL began offering TAP Employment Workshops to members of the Reserve and National Guard returning from active duty. Recognizing the special needs of these returning units and their members, we developed a TAP instructional program specifically tailored for them. VETS State Directors coordinate closely with state workforce agencies to ensure veteran employment staff or contract facilitators are available to provide TAP employment workshops for the Guard and Reserve. The State Directors work directly with officials of the State Adjutant General offices and local Reserve Unit Commanders to stress the importance of TAP and to schedule the workshops. Spouses are also encouraged to attend.

Finally, DOL has assisted DOD with the development of "TurboTAP," which DOD will discuss during this hearing. This innovative, online resource will dramatically enhance transition.

In addition to increasing participation in the TAP employment workshop, DOL is working with DOD to improve the quality of the workshop. The improved TAP workshops will include resume development so that servicemembers leave TAP with a draft resume; "mock" interviews so they gain experience in job interviews; and job search sessions so participants have conducted a personal job search on their state workforce system job board.

Further, DOL has issued over 300,000 Keys to Career Success cards, which provide transitioning servicemembers with information on how to locate the One-Stop Career Center in their hometown, and we will continue to provide the cards in the TAP resource packets.

• Improve opportunities for Licenses and Certifications. DOL is also supporting the DOD in implementing the Task Force recommendation to improve civilian workforce credentialing and certification to better relate a servicemember's military experience to civilian employment opportunities.

ONGOING PROGRAMS FOR SERVICEMEMBERS AND VETERANS WHO NEED HELP THE MOST

Now I would like to take this opportunity to share the ongoing collaborative programs that target servicemembers who need help the most, and to smooth the transition of our youngest veterans.

• Providing Employment Assistance for Wounded and Injured Servicemembers and their Families: DOL initiated the Recovery and Employment Assistance Lifelines (REALifelines) program in November 2004 to provide face-to-face, personalized assistance to seriously wounded and injured servicemembers and their spouses so they are better prepared and trained for rewarding careers in the civilian sector. Dedicated REALifelines professionals work closely with DOD, the military services, and the VA at major military medical treatment facilities. They meet personally with wounded or injured servicemembers who will be transitioning into the civilian workforce.

Over 2,200 servicemembers, spouses or veterans have received employment assistance since the beginning of the program. We are now exploring ideas for onsite training at medical treatment facilities. For example, at Balboa Naval Medical Center, Cisco Systems has agreed to establish a Technical Training Academy that will certify participants for careers in information technology.

Last September, we hosted the first National Summit on Recovery, Rehabilitation and Employment for Wounded & Injured Servicemembers in Alabama under the

REALifelines banner. The summit fostered collaboration and highlighted successful efforts to assure the successful return and reintegration of returning wounded and injured servicemembers and their families.

• Assisting VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program: DOL and VA have long maintained a close working relationship in the VR&E Program. To ensure a seamless transition between the VA's VR&E program and civilian employment, DOL-funded veterans employment specialists are outstationed as needed at VR&E offices. These specialists provide labor market information to VR&E participants as they select training programs. The veteran employment specialists assist VA employment counselors and are present as participants complete the program in order to assist in job placement. Currently, 72 veteran employment specialists are outstationed at 36 VA Regional Offices and 36 outbased facilities.

DOL and VA strengthened our partnership through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) in 2005. Under the new MOA, joint working groups meet and report on ways to increase collaboration, to improve data collection and reporting, and, in general, to improve employment opportunities for disabled veterans. VA also uses the DOL-funded National Veterans Training Institute to develop training courses for VR&E staff.

• Ensuring the Smooth Transition of Young Veterans: This committee has expressed concern about the unemployment rates of 20–24-year-old veterans. There are a number of reasons the unemployment rate of young veterans is usually higher than that of their non-veteran counterparts. First, unlike their civilian counterparts in the Current Population Survey (CPS), which is conducted by the Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics, all young veterans have recently undergone a significant labor market transition. Moving from military to civilian employment is a big transition for these young people. They are generally first term enlistees who are getting out of the military and entering the civilian job market for the first time, or are going to school and waiting for a new semester to begin. Some take a well-deserved break after military service. Some use unemployment compensation while trying to land the right job.

Any young veteran who is unemployed is a serious concern to DOL, as we are researching this subject to better understand the path young veterans take as they transition from military to civilian occupations. We are also collaborating with VA and DOD on similar research efforts. We are working to increase servicemember participation in TAP, to make the TAP employment workshop more meaningful to them, and to encourage these young servicemembers to use the services of their local One-Stop Career Centers.

• Participation on Joint Committees and Task Forces: In addition to the programs mentioned above, DOL is an active participant on numerous DOD and VA committees, including the following:

DOD Special Working Group on Transition to Civilian Employment
DOD ESGR Freedom Awards National Selection Board
DOD/DOL Task Force on Licensing and Certification
VA Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans (ex-officio)
VA Advisory Committee on Rehabilitation (ex-officio)
VA Advisory Committee on Women Veterans (ex-officio)
VA Advisory Committee on Education (ex-officio)
VA Advisory Committee on OIF/OEF (observer)

SUPPORT FROM AMERICA'S EMPLOYERS

Finally, I want to take a moment to discuss two important outreach activities we believe are helping veterans find good jobs and employers find veterans.

HireVetsFirst Campaign: The HireVetsFirst Campaign was established under the President's National Hire Veterans Committee in 2004 to reach out to employers to help them find and hire veterans. The Campaign centers on helping employers develop veteran hiring strategies, use One-Stop Career Centers to find veterans, and participate in activities such as the many veteran job fairs. States and Governors also sponsor HireVetsFirst activities focused on hiring veterans in their states. We are particularly proud that 48 of 52 Governors have issued proclamations (highlighting or emphasizing) veterans' employment to their respective business communities.

• Advisory Committee on Veterans' Employment, Training, and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO): This newly formed Committee is responsible for assisting with outreach, assessing the employment and training needs of veterans and their integration into the workforce and determining the extent to which DOL programs and activities are meeting these needs. The Committee includes representatives of veterans service organizations, business, employment, labor, state workforce agencies,

the National Governors Association, rehabilitation agencies and ex-officio members from Federal agencies. VA and DOD serve as Ex Officio members. The Committee is looking at ways to improve transition, outreach to business, and services to special veteran populations. The first meeting of the ACVETEO, held on May 15th, 2007, was attended by Secretary Chao and Secretary Nicholson.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear today before the Committee. This concludes my remarks, and I would be happy to respond to any questions.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Ciccolella.

Mr. Dominguez, please proceed with your statement.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL L. DOMINGUEZ, PRINCIPAL DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Mr. DOMINGUEZ. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to be here today to discuss issues relating to the transition and employment of our separating servicemembers and demobilizing members of the National Guard and Reserve.

I would like to begin my testimony by recognizing the cooperation and collaboration of our partners at the Department of Labor and the Department of Veterans Affairs. The support we receive from them ensures our servicemen and women have every opportunity to find employment upon completion of their service to the Nation. The continued interest and support of this Committee is also vital to our efforts and I thank you for your involvement, sir.

Returning to private life after serving in the military is a very complex undertaking. Our DOD, DOL, DVA Transition Assistance Program provides servicemembers and their families with the skills, tools, and the knowledge necessary to design individual reentry plans.

Stimulated in large measure by the unique needs of our large numbers of demobilizing Guardsmen and Reserves, we collaborated with our many partners and designed a dynamic web-based system to augment the delivery of transition assistance and related information. We are calling this online system TurboTAP. TurboTAP will provide active duty, National Guard, and Reserve personnel access to employment information, allow them to build a resume online, do a job search, to contact their local DOL career One-Stop Career Center for employment assistance, and many other functions. Also, each servicemember will be able to create a lifelong account in TurboTAP. TurboTAP was launched on June 9 of this year and we demonstrated the program yesterday for the Committee staff.

We at the DOD, in collaboration with our Federal agency partners, veterans service organizations, State and local governments, and industry are working on several other initiatives to benefit transitioning servicemembers. We are studying the rate and causes of unemployment among younger veterans. As called for by the Defense Authorization Act of 2007, we established a Special Working Group on Transition to Civilian Employment of National Guard and Reserve members returning from mobilized status. My colleague, Secretary Hall, leads that effort.

We continue operating our Military Severely Injured Center and partner with DOL on REALifelines. We have begun a series of Hir-

ing Heroes career fairs focused on Federal civil service employment for severely wounded servicemembers.

We are increasing attendance at TAP, VA benefits, and employment workshops. We have developed and deployed tools to assist servicemembers in gaining civilian credentials from their military schooling. We have established joint DOD–DVA teams to completely revamp the way we support our wounded warriors and we continue to improve DOD–VA integration under the auspices of the Joint Executive Council.

Mr. Chairman, while we have accomplished much, much remains to be done. We are blessed, however, with energetic, enthusiastic partners. Working together and with your support, I am confident we can deliver world class transition assistance to the men and women who volunteered to serve this Nation in the Armed Forces. Thank you, sir.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Dominguez follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. MICHAEL L. DOMINGUEZ, PRINCIPAL DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss issues relating to employment of our returning veterans, Servicemembers, and members of the National Guard and Reserves. I'd like to recognize the cooperation and collaboration among the Department of Defense (DOD), the Department of Labor (DOL), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

We require a great deal from our Armed Forces and I want to affirm the Department's commitment to all our Servicemembers—Active, National Guard and Reserves and their families.

Returning to private life after serving in the military is a very complex undertaking. To assist them in doing so, we must empower Servicemembers with the tools and information they need to fashion individual solutions to the challenges they will face as they return to civilian life. DOD, along with DOL and the VA, has worked to provide them with a variety of tools, including the Transition Assistance Program (TAP).

Let me begin with some general comments regarding the cooperation and collaboration among DOD, DOL and VA.

I am impressed by the dedication and willingness of our Federal partners to provide an assortment of highly desirable transition services. The cooperation and support we receive from DOL and VA is outstanding. You can be truly proud of the manner in which DOD, DOL, and VA, have continued to enthusiastically support our men and women in uniform. Obviously, the sustained interest and support of this Committee is also vital to our efforts.

While the three departments have been working together in earnest for well over a decade, the many professionals within the departments are bringing DOD, DOL, and VA closer together at a pace greater than at anytime before. Examples of our collaborative efforts include the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Steering Committee and the Secretary of Labor's Advisory Committee on Employment, Training, and Employer Outreach. DOD and VA also partner extensively though the VA/DOD Joint Executive Council (JEC), the Benefits Executive Council (BEC), and the Health Executive Council (HEC), Veterans Employment, Training, and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO).

Whether separating, retiring or being released from active duty as a member of the National Guard or Reserves, the transitory Servicemember's most immediate goal is finding a job, changing careers, and improving his/her economic quality of life. DOD believes that none of our efforts are more important than creating an uninterrupted continuum of opportunities at every level, as our Service personnel and their families transition from military service to veteran status. This includes helping them reach and achieve their employment potential and aspirations to their full capability.

The rest of my statement today will touch on the many activities under way that reflect the shared commitment to delivering transition assistance, employment assistance, and benefits information.

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Since its inception in 1990, the goal of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) has been to provide Servicemembers and their families the skills, tools, knowledge, and self-confidence necessary for a successful reentry into the Nation's civilian work force. We deliver TAP through a collaborative effort involving DOL, the Military Services, VA, DHS, the Department of Education (ED), the Small Business Administration (SBA), the National Veterans Business Development Corporation, and other Federal, state, local and nonprofit organizations. The Veterans Service and Military Service Organizations provide outstanding support to TAP and to our Servicemembers and their families at both the national and local levels. The goal is to help prepare them to move into the job market.

There is much concern about how we can better serve the National Guard and Reserve Components coming from Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). So with that high priority, let me tell you first about the new technological breakthrough that will change how the National Guard and Reserve members transition out of the military, in addition to serving as a valuable tool for the Active Component Servicemembers as well.

TURBOTAP

When TAP was originally developed in 1990, we did not design it with the needs of the National Guard and Reserves in mind. Their mission has changed dramatically since 9/11 and the requirements, with respect to TAP, warrant a fresh look. To better meet the needs of the Guard and Reserves, DOD, with the cooperation and collaboration of the Military Services, National Guard Bureau (NGB), DOL, VA, ED, SBA, and the National Veterans Business Development Corporation, has designed a dynamic, automated web-based system for delivery of transition assistance and related information. This portal architecture will be the backbone of the updated DOD TAP process for National Guard and Reserve Servicemembers. Each Reservist and Guardsman will be able to create a lifelong account to which he/she or his/her spouse can refer, at any time during his/her life. Usability, flexibility, adaptability, and individual customization are the keys to successful implementation of this new technology-enabled process. The goal for this system is to increase Servicemember participation and satisfaction.

We are excited by the possibilities for TurboTAP. National Guard and Reserve personnel will be able to access employment information, build a resume online, do a job search, contact their local One-Stop Career Center for employment assistance, and the list goes on. TurboTAP allows an individual to develop and print out his or her own individual transition plan.

Some of the features of TurboTAP are:

- A comprehensive Transition Guide for the Guard and Reserves as well as a comprehensive Preseparation Guide for Active Component Servicemembers. These guides provide information on benefits and services available to transitioning Servicemembers as well as contact points for further assistance;
- Lifelong account for National Guard, Reserves and Active Component Servicemembers which allows them to use the system indefinitely;
- A personal profile that can be updated anytime;
- A customized Individual Transition Plan;
- Transition information that can be accessed anytime, anywhere;
- An Employment Hub containing job searches, resume builder and military occupational translator using the O*NET to convert to civilian occupational skills;
- Direct e-mail access to any DOL One-Stop Career Center;
- A VA Benefits Hub providing information on VA benefits, services and programs; and
- "Helpful checklists" to remind Servicemembers about key things they should do before separating or being released from active duty.

TurboTAP allows Servicemembers, veterans, retirees, and demobilizing members of the Reserve Components to locate and find the nearest DOL One-Stop Career Center, VA Regional Office, VA Vet Center, VA Medical Center, and military installation to where they live. These facilities with their highly trained and dedicated staffs, stand ready to help our deserving men and women who have served this Nation with honor.

TurboTAP will better meet the needs of the National Guard, Reserves and Active Component Servicemembers and their families because it gives them the tools to connect and access the information to meet their needs when they are ready—present or future. We have high expectations for this being a 21st century approach to delivering individualized information and benefits to Servicemembers and fami-

lies. With the expected success, we further plan to make transition an online transaction much like banking and bill paying have become. The success and accountability of transition will be managed online versus a form being hand carried to a personnel file. As we move down this road, we will solicit your approval and legislative support.

TurboTAP was launched on June 9th. The site can be accessed at *http://www.TurboTAP.org*.

Components of Transition Assistance Program

The four components of TAP emphasize preparation for employment rather than job placement itself.

Preseparation Counseling is the first component of TAP. This counseling is mandatory for separating and retiring Servicemembers and all eligible demobilizing members of the National Guard and Reserves. The Military Services are responsible for providing Preseparation Counseling. During the 2–2½-hour Preseparation Counseling session of TAP, Active Component Servicemembers are introduced to information about employment opportunities and how to go about finding a job. Also during this phase of TAP, Active Component Servicemembers, looking for a job post-military, are encouraged to attend a DOL TAP Employment Workshop.

During the Preseparation Counseling phase of TAP for the National Guard and Reserves, similar information is provided geared to their needs. However, instead of encouraging them to attend a DOL Employment Workshop, they receive a Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) Briefing. USERRA Briefings are scheduled at installation demobilization sites in coordination with the demobilization commander; therefore, based on availability of staff, the briefing may be conducted by a qualified and trained DOL representative, a representative from the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserves or another qualified and trained individual, such as a member of the Judge Advocate General Corps or Solicitor General's staff. National Guard and Reserve personnel are also informed, during the Preseparation Counseling session, about the services available to them at the DOL One-Stop Career Centers. Members looking for jobs or a career change are encouraged to visit and register with the One-Stop Career Center nearest their residence, once they return home.

Why does the Department emphasize a USERRA Briefing for our National Guard and Reserve personnel? The overwhelming majority of those activated have jobs when they are activated; therefore, they have jobs to which they will return. This is supported by the 2006 Status of Forces Survey conducted by the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) which shows that 78 percent of National Guard and Reserve members, who were activated in the 24 months preceding the survey, were employed prior to activation. We plan to address meeting their needs once home by leveraging technology.

While at the demobilization station, they get information about their eligibility to receive employment assistance and other transition services up to 180 days after demobilization from any of the Military Services Transition Office and DOL One-Stop Career Center.

In addition to the DOL Employment Workshops, the Military Services provide a vast array of additional employment seminars and one-on-one counseling to Servicemembers. This extensive assistance covers: resume and cover letter writing; information about electronic job banks and Internet access to automated employment tools (resume writer, cover letter and job assistance tutorials); tools on salary negotiation; location of job fairs; details about Federal employment workshops and seminars; opportunities for post military employment networking; relocation assistance; information about government partnerships for employment and training; benefits for members who are involuntarily separated; employer panels; and information about Veterans benefits (including disability benefits).

The second component of TAP is the DOL TAP Employment Workshop. Attendance is voluntary on the part of Active Component Servicemembers and their spouses, with the exception of the Marine Corps which has made attending the DOL Employment Workshop mandatory. The DOL Employment Workshops are 2½ days in length. The curriculum, facilitators, workshop materials, data collection and analysis related to the employment workshops are the responsibility of DOL. During the 2½-day workshop, Active Component Servicemembers receive information on labor market conditions, assessing individual skills and competencies, how to write effective resumes and cover letters, proper interviewing techniques, and the best methods of searching for jobs. They also learn how to use electronic employment data banks. Finally, they get information addressing the special employment needs of those separating with a disability.

The third component of TAP is the VA Benefits Briefing. This, too, is voluntary for Active Component Servicemembers and is 4 hours in length. The 4-hour briefing addresses education and training; health care; home loans; life insurance; vocational rehabilitation and employment (VR&E); disability benefits; burial benefits; and dependents' and survivors' benefits.

Demobilizing National Guard and Reserve Servicemembers receive a one-hour VA briefing which also includes information on Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP). Although not mandatory, if a VA Benefits Briefing is on the demobilization schedule, all members of that unit receive the briefing. The materials, information, counselors, and all data collection and analysis related to the VA Benefits Briefings are the responsibility of the VA.

The fourth and final component of TAP is DTAP. Attendance at the Disabled Transition Assistance Program is voluntary for Active Component Servicemembers and is a separate two-hour briefing. DTAP is for Servicemembers and veterans who have, or suspect they have a service-connected disability or an injury or illness that was aggravated by service. During the two hour DTAP briefing, VA addresses Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment, sometimes referred to as Chapter 31. DTAP addresses the five tracks to employment: re-employment; rapid access to employment; employment through long term services; independent living services; and self employment. DTAP also addresses other services such as medical, dental, optical, mental health treatment, special adapted housing, Vet Centers, vocational/educational counseling and special hiring authorities for Federal employment. VA provides all materials and information, counselors, data collection and any analysis related to DTAP.

Finally, we cannot overlook the many options for Federal employment such as: Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA), Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA), Appointment of 30 percent or More Disabled Veterans, Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP), Small Business Administration and the National Veterans Business Development Corporation Programs for those who want to start their own business or franchise.

I now want to share with you some ongoing initiatives in DOD as they relate to post-military employment for our Servicemembers.

OTHER INITIATIVES UNDERWAY

Special Working Group on Transition to Civilian Employment of National Guard and Reserves

A more recent initiative is the establishment of a 2-year Special Working Group on Transition to Civilian Employment of National Guard and Reserve Members Returning from Mobilized Status in direct or indirect Support of Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom, as specified in Section 676 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007.

The working group will identify and assess the needs of CONUS and OCONUS military members with regard to returning to civilian occupations or school, the pre- and post-deployment delivery of these services, and the effect of the severity of wounds or injuries upon their return to the civilian workforce. We look forward to accessing this valuable information and utilizing it to the benefit of transitioning Servicemembers.

Support for Severely Injured

As you are aware, DOD and VA established task forces to review how wounded Servicemembers are served and how to better collaborate to meet the needs of the members and their families. However, today, the Joint Seamless Transition Program, established by VA, in coordination with the Military Services, also facilitates a more timely receipt of benefits for severely injured Servicemembers. Veteran Benefits Administration (VBA) counselors visit all severely injured patients and inform them of the full range of VA services, including readjustment programs, employment programs, and information on educational and housing benefits.

Seamless Transition helps these personnel touch base with vocational rehabilitation and employment services, and assists in putting them in contact with other employment resources available through DOL, the Military Services, the Joint Seamless Transition Office, DOD and the Military Services severely injured and wounded programs. All of these are available to help Servicemembers and their families connect with the employment assistance they need.

To expand employment assistance to our severely injured and wounded, the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, Civilian Personnel Management Service, has undertaken a broad outreach program called "Hiring Heroes Career Fairs" to assist severely injured Servicemembers and their families in finding employment op-

portunities in the DOD, other Federal agencies, and the private sector. Outreach efforts to Servicemembers and veterans are conducted by working across government and the private sector to ensure information offered through their educational and training programs is available to the Servicemembers at the career fairs.

Career fairs that support the Department's "Hiring Heroes" program have been offered at the following locations: Walter Reed Army Medical Center, DC; Fort Sam Houston, TX; Womack Army Medical Center, Fort Bragg, NC; Eisenhower Army Medical Center, Fort Gordon, GA; and Walson Army Medical Center, Fort Dix, NJ. Three career fairs have been conducted in partnership with the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes, a non-profit organization. Over 2,000 Servicemembers and their family members have attended these career fairs and several more are planned well into the future.

Corporate America has responded to the call; many Fortune 500 companies and small businesses are recruiting injured and wounded veterans for their skills, experience, maturity, and work ethic. Many of these companies are creating special programs geared specifically toward finding employment in their respective companies for these veterans and their family members.

Task Force Recommendations on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes

Now, I'd like to turn your attention to the recommendations contained in the recent report of the President's Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes that relate to employment. Of the 25 overall recommendations, DOD is the lead agency on two that are related to employment:

• The first recommendation, O–1, calls for us to "Increase Attendance at TAP and DTAP Sessions." This recommendation calls for DOD to increase attendance at TAP and DTAP sessions to 85 percent of those separating Servicemembers and demobilizing National Guard and Reserves Forces. To meet this challenge, a Departmental Memorandum is being prepared that will go to the Secretariats of each Military Department informing them of the Department's 85 percent attendance goal. Due to the complexities and uniqueness of the National Guard and Reserves, how they mobilize and demobilize, this is the area where we plan to leverage TurboTAP technology to help us achieve this goal. We want at least 85 percent of all demobilizing National Guard and Reserves as well as Active Component Servicemembers, to establish a TurboTAP account and use the system as intended.

• The second recommendation is O–4, "Improve Civilian Workforce Credentialing and Certification." During the Preseparation Counseling phase of TAP, Servicemembers (National Guard, Reserves and Active Component) learn where and how to access information relating to licensure, certification and apprenticeship. The Army, after doing extensive research, conducting gap analysis, and following a comprehensive review of the credentialing process, created "Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL)" or Army COOL. This robust web site helps soldiers find civilian credentialing programs related to their military occupational specialty. It helps them understand what it takes to obtain a credential and it helps them identify resources available to pay credential fees. The Navy followed the Army with Navy COOL. DOD is working with the Air Force and Marine Corps and hopes that they will soon join their sister Services with a COOL web site.

• I have already addressed the fact that, during the Preseparation Counseling phase of TAP, information about the DOL One-Stop Career Center web site is provided to Active and Reserve Component personnel. One of the tools on this web site is the Credentials Center, which a Servicemember can use to locate State-specific occupational licensing requirements, find agency contact information, information on industry-recognized certifications as well as the associated workforce education and examinations that test or enhance knowledge, experience or skills in an occupation or profession. DOD and DOL established a "Credentialing Working Group," that is charged with developing appropriate goals, objectives, and outcomes that will help remove credentialing barriers that some veterans and transitioning Servicemembers face today.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman, as I stated earlier in my remarks, the collaboration and partnership between DOL, VA, SBA, the VSOs and MSOs and others is outstanding. The collaborative structures we have in place (JEC, BEC, HEC, TAP Steering Committee, Advisory Committee on Veterans Employment and Training and Employer Outreach, and the Joint VA Seamless Transition Office) provide multiple forums for our continued dialogue on these crucial issues. The Report to the President on "Returning Global War on Terror Heroes" provides us another opportunity to communicate, strategize and work together.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. On behalf of the men and women in the military today and their families, I thank you and the Members of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs for your steadfast support during these demanding times.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Dominguez.

Now we will hear from Ms. Caden.

STATEMENT OF JUDITH A. CADEN, DIRECTOR, VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICE, VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. CADEN. Good morning, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to be here today to discuss these very important issues.

I will first mention the recommendation that came out of the President's Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes. For the VR&E program, there was one recommendation, that we authorize an immediate extension of from 12 to 18 months of an individualized extended evaluation plan for those returning servicemembers whose disabilities or injuries are so great they need more time to really decide on next steps, and we can assess whether employment is a feasible goal for them, and that change has been implemented.

VR&E and the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service, or VETS, continue to work in partnership to provide comprehensive employment services to veterans with service-connected disabilities. In October of 2005, we signed a revised Memorandum of Agreement to expand and solidify our cooperation and our ability to work together, and the implementation has been made easier, as Mr. Ciccolella mentioned, with the co-location of 72 Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialists, or DVOPS, at 36 of our regional offices and 36 of our out-based sites. So at these offices, those DVOP Specialists work hand-in-hand with our VR&E staff together to efficiently and effectively deliver employment services, and both groups work with the same tools, including the VR&E Job Resource Labs and our new online employment tool, *VetSuccess.gov*.

VR&E Service and the Department of Defense collaborate in many ways, and we absolutely recognize the importance of partnering with DOD. They are the main component of our early intervention and outreach efforts to assist in the transition of seriously injured servicemembers.

An example of this effort is a Memorandum of Understanding we entered into with the U.S. Army Materiel Command in support of their Always a Soldier Initiative, and that is focused on providing newly discharged servicemembers with another employment tool to come into AMC. And, in fact, since the beginning of FY 2006, that has helped towards the Department of Army's hiring over 372 veterans that have participated in the VR&E program.

More recently, we signed an MOU with the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division, or NAWCAD, again to provide another employment tool, and this is a little bit more innovative because while they are in the VR&E program, NAWCAD will also work with veterans to provide paid work experience, provide on-the-job

training opportunities, and to provide the participants with a program mentor.

We work with DOD as far as working with their other organizations, like Department of the Navy Safe Harbor, Department of the Army Wounded Warriors program, and others.

DTAP is part of the TAP program, and DTAP, the Disabled Transition Assistance Program, is really my piece of TAP for VR&E. It explains the VR&E program. In FY 2006, we conducted 823 DTAP briefings attended by 15,500 participants. We are expanding that effort. So far this year, we have had almost 1,500 briefings for nearly 29,000 participants. We also have provided a DTAP CD, mainly for members of the Guard and Reserve who maybe can't attend one of these sessions. They can have a CD as soon as they get home, take it home, and watch it. They can also access it from our web site.

We have expanded our outreach efforts to OIF and OEF servicemembers and veterans, including the Coming Home to Work program, which is carried out at eight of the primary military treatment facilities. We partner with DOD and with DOL in this effort and, to date, there have been 442 participants in that program.

There are many other efforts that are outlined in my full statement, but I appreciate the opportunity to be here today. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Caden follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JUDITH A. CADEN, DIRECTOR OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICE, VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Committee, I am pleased to be here today to discuss the progress made by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in improving the delivery of employment services and benefits to our Nation's veterans.

We are working in close partnership with the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of Labor (DOL) to leverage every opportunity to improve the transition of our separating servicemembers from military to civilian life. We have expanded and cemented our relationships, allowing us to work smarter and better in our separate but related missions. Our reinforced partnerships now cut across a range of difficult issues and have reduced many of the problems encountered by previous generations of veterans.

I am pleased to provide an overview of the actions the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service has taken in response to the recommendations of the President's Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes, and the innovative partnerships, programs, and initiatives we have implemented together with DOD and DOL to improve coordination among our three systems as we deliver our programs, services, and benefits.

TASK FORCE ON RETURNING GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR HEROES RECOMMENDATIONS

On March 6, 2007, President Bush established the Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes. The purpose of the Task Force was to improve the delivery of Federal services and benefits to Global War on Terror (GWOT) servicemembers and veterans. The Task Force report includes 25 recommendations that focus on enhancing the delivery of services and information to GWOT servicemembers and veterans within existing authority and resource levels. The report outlined one recommendation specifically directed toward the Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (VR&E) Program.

The Task Force recommended that the VR&E Service authorize the immediate extension, to 18 months, for an Individualized Extended Evaluation Plan (IEEP) for those OIF/OEF participants whose severity of injuries warrant additional time to

determine feasibility of achieving an employment goal. During this extended evaluation, VA will continue to provide independent living services to these severely injured servicemembers and veterans.

Current law does not allow the provision of a program of solely independent living services to a servicemember through the VR&E Program. However, independent living services may be provided to either a veteran or a servicemember with a serious employment handicap under an extended evaluation plan or as part of a plan of services leading to an employment goal. When the feasibility of achieving a vocational goal cannot be readily determined for an individual with a serious employment handicap, an IEEP is developed. Various services to evaluate an individual's feasibility of achieving a vocational goal can be provided under an IEEP, including independent living services.

Many individuals returning from the GWOT with very serious injuries require extensive medical treatment and a prolonged transition to civilian life. Those individuals who are so severely disabled that a decision cannot yet be made about whether an employment goal is currently feasible may need an extended evaluation of more than 12 months. A requirement for a formal request for an extension at the end of the 12-month period could potentially cause an interruption in needed services if there is any delay in preparing, evaluating, or approving the request. An extension of the IEEP at the time the plan is developed will avoid interruption and allow sustained access to specialized assessments and any necessary independent living services.

In response to this recommendation, VR&E Service authorized VR&E Officers at our 57 regional offices (ROs) to approve the extension of an IEEP at the time a plan is developed for those GWOT participants whose severity of injuries warrant additional time to determine feasibility of achieving a vocational goal. In such cases, an initial IEEP may be developed for a period of up to 18 months. Extensions for additional periods of an IEEP, including independent living services, may also be authorized prior to completion of the initial 18 months.

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR'S VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE

VR&E and DOL's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) continue to work in partnership to provide comprehensive employment services to veterans with service-connected disabilities.

In October 2005, VR&E and VETS signed a revised memorandum of agreement (MOA) that expands and solidifies our cooperation in case management, employment services, communication, reporting, oversight and monitoring, and accountability. These activities are all necessary to assist veterans to successfully achieve their rehabilitation goals. Associated with the MOA, guidelines and parameters for three workgroups have been established to develop and implement the following critical activities:

- Establish effective performance measures for assessing the results of partnership activities;
- Design a joint training curriculum for use at the National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI); and
- Develop a methodology for joint data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Our goal of achieving excellence in the delivery of employment services requires that we establish and maintain close working relationships with our VETS partners. Implementation of the MOA with VETS has been made easier with the co-location of 72 Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists at 36 VA regional offices and 36 outbased facilities. At these offices, DVOP specialists and VR&E staff work together to efficiently and effectively deliver employment services. Both groups have access to the same resources and online technologies such as the VR&E job resource labs and *VetSuccess.gov*.

As a result of the national MOA, 38 regional offices have established formalized memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with VETS partners at the local level within their state. VR&E's Employment Coordinators partner with DVOP specialists and Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) staff. As partners, they assess the feasibility of employment services, recommend an appropriate vocational rehabilitation plan with the goal of suitable employment or independent living, and deliver job-readiness skills training and job-placement services.

I believe we have successfully established effective partnerships with VETS, and that disabled veterans are benefiting from our success through the availability and delivery of more comprehensive employment services. My staff and I meet with our VETS counterparts on an ongoing basis. We have developed the Five Track Employment Model so that, from a service-delivery point of view, consultation and assist-

ance from local DVOP specialists, LVER staff and VETS Federal staff are detailed and emphasized in each employment track.

From our standpoint, the VR&E/VETS partnership is strong and continues to gain momentum through our ongoing communications and joint participation in training activities and development of effective employment policies.

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD)

VR&E Service and the Department of Defense (DOD) collaborate in many ways. We recognize the importance of partnering with DOD, as they are a main component of our early intervention and outreach efforts to assist in the transition of seriously injured servicemembers.

U.S. Army Materiel Command

In June 2005, VR&E signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with U.S. Army Materiel Command (AMC) in support of its "Always a Soldier" initiative. This initiative is focused on providing continued support to veterans beyond their active duty service by ensuring that they have access to both challenging and rewarding career opportunities. Furthermore, it underscores AMC's commitment to working with VA to link disabled veterans seeking employment with AMC offices across the Nation. VR&E and AMC offer veterans with disabilities opportunities for employment, career advancement, job mobility, family economic well-being, and greater financial security. Through this MOU, VR&E and AMC have agreed to:

- Support AMC initiative by making "Always a Soldier" program information available to veterans with service-connected disabilities through the local VR&E staff at each RO across the Nation, as appropriate;
- Encourage AMC human resource managers and VR&E employment staff to organize local activities for the "Always a Soldier" program; and
- Construct new lines of communication to inform veterans with disabilities about employment opportunities with AMC.

As a result of this MOU, AMC has contributed to the Department of the Army's commitment to hiring veterans with disabilities. Since the beginning of FY 2006, the Department of the Army has hired 372 veterans from the VR&E program.

Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division

In March 2007, the VR&E Service signed an MOU with Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD) to advance, improve, and expand employment opportunities for veterans with disabilities. This MOU established a partnership between both agencies and provides the framework to bring veterans with disabilities into the civilian workforce through the NAWCAD Disabled Veterans Cooperative Education Program (DVCEP). Through DVCEP, NAWCAD and VR&E will assist qualified veterans in taking advantage of VA educational and vocational rehabilitation benefits while attending accredited college courses, leading to employment opportunities with NAWCAD. Beyond standard VR&E program services, NAWCAD has agreed to:

- Promote DVCEP to VA's 57 regional offices;
- Provide paid work experience to full and/or part-time college students;
- Provide on-the-job training opportunities;
- Provide participants with a program mentor;
- Work with program candidates to create an Individual Development Plan;
- Upon successful completion of the education program, consider program participants for permanent hire;
- Use Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) as a mechanism to provide tuition assistance to program participants, where appropriate; and
- Use SCEP appointing authority to non-competitively convert eligible program participants to permanent positions after satisfactory performance and completion of all academic requirements, subject to funding limitations and needs of the organization.

VR&E Service and Program staffs are officially kicking-off this partnership today. They are touring the NAWCAD facility in Patuxent River, MD with the goal of formalizing relationships, practices, and referral processes. Once the program is up and running, we plan to expand DVCEP to seven additional locations across the country.

VR&E and DOD Working Partnerships

Integral to the success of employment services within VR&E are the combined efforts of DOD entities by which we link together, through mutual service delivery offerings, to provide necessary vocational rehabilitation services to servicemembers

and veterans with disabilities, and their families. There are many working partnerships of an informal nature that support successful vocational rehabilitation and employment programs. VR&E, in conjunction with DOD, consults, advises, and coordinates employment services for servicemembers and veterans. We also provide VR&E training for DOD staff members. VR&E works closely with the following DOD organizations to coordinate the provision of priority services to the most severely injured servicemembers.

- Department of the Navy "SAFE HARBOR" program.
- Department of the Army "Wounded Warriors Program."
- USMC's "Wounded Warrior Regiment (formerly "Marines for Life").
- Department of the Air Force "Palace HART."
- DOD's Military Severely Injured Center.

COMBINED PARTNERSHIP WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE (DOL–VETS) AND DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD)

VR&E Service & VR&E field staff, DOL–VETS, and DOD cooperate to provide Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) services to separating servicemembers. Through this relationship, the agencies partner to ensure that the transition from active duty to veteran status is seamless for servicemembers.

The proportion of separating, deactivating, and retiring servicemembers who participate in VA benefits and TAP/DTAP briefings prior to separation, deactivation, or retirement was 53 percent in FY 2006.

Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP)

In FY 2006, VA conducted 823 DTAP briefings attended by 15,500 participants. We are significantly expanding our program, as evidenced by the nearly 1,500 DTAP briefings we have already provided this fiscal year for nearly 29,000 participants.

DTAP briefings are not mandatory in all military services. However, VR&E, in cooperation with DOD and DOL, strongly encourages servicemembers who are separating with a service-connected disability to attend the DTAP briefing. VR&E Service has also worked through the TAP Steering Committee to suggest that DTAP become mandatory for servicemembers being medically separated or servicemembers who believe they are separating with a service-connected disability.

Coming Home to Work (CHTW) Program

VR&E Service has partnered with DOD and DOL to expand its outreach to Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF) servicemembers and veterans through early intervention and seamless transition initiatives, to include the Coming Home to Work (CHTW) program. CHTW provides valuable civilian job skills, exposure to employment opportunities, and work experience to servicemembers facing medical separation from the military and uncertain futures. Participants work with VR&E, DOD, and DOL staff to obtain work experience in a Government facility that supports their career goals.

VR&E coordinates the Coming Home to Work (CHTW) initiative for servicemembers pending medical separation from active duty at eight primary military treatment facilities: Walter Reed Army Medical Center, National Naval Medical Center Bethesda, Naval Medical Center Balboa (San Diego), Brooke Army Medical Center (San Antonio), Eisenhower Army Medical Center (Fort Gordon), Evans Army Community Hospital (Fort Carson), Darnall Army Community Hospital (Fort Hood), and Madigan Army Medical Center (Fort Lewis).

To date, there have been 442 participants in the program with the following results:

- 23 in active work-experience programs.
- 201 receiving early intervention services.
- 182 transferred from MTF to local RO for continued VR&E services.
- 26 returned to active duty.
- 10 direct hires.

CLOSING

Mr. Chairman, I believe our efforts and progress underscore our dedication to removing barriers to the employment of veterans with disabilities through cooperative partnerships with the Department of Defense and the Department of Labor. We are better coordinating our overlapping infrastructure and services, and we continually seek additional opportunities for partnership. Our Departments are singularly committed to the men and women we all serve. They are our highest priority.

Our greatest challenge, and our greatest opportunity, is to build and deploy employment services that meet the needs of veterans, servicemembers, and their families for today and tomorrow. We will continue to persevere toward that goal.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I thank you and Members of this Committee for your outstanding and continued support of our servicemembers, veterans, and their families. I greatly appreciate being here today and look forward to answering any questions you or other Members of the Committee may have.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Ms. Caden.

I was glad to hear Mr. Dominguez mention about speaking to DOL and collaborating and cooperating. This is what we are trying to bring about. So I have a question for each of you.

The first question is for DOD, Mr. Dominguez. In the case of severely injured or wounded servicemembers, it seems to me that there are a myriad number of programs that could be used to address their needs. First, I would like to ask DOD how you decide whether to refer an individual to VA's Coming Home to Work or to DOL's REALifelines program. And once that linkage is made, is there any system in place to track the individual's progress?

Mr. DOMINGUEZ. Sir, I will take a stab at that. I think the referral actually happens by the fact that REALifelines also puts Department of Labor people in the hospital. So it is conversations between the Department of Labor people, veterans' benefits counselors there, and then the staff at the military treatment facilities that refer, if you will, people to REALifelines. Once they are into those programs, it is our two sister agencies that are actually delivering the services in terms of vocational rehabilitation and training and assistance in connecting with employers. I hope that answered your question, sir.

Chairman AKAKA. Yes. The other part to that was whether you have any system in place to track the individuals' progress.

Mr. DOMINGUEZ. I will have to get back to you on that, sir, because I don't know if we do——

Chairman AKAKA. That is fine.

Mr. DOMINGUEZ. Assistant Secretary Ciccolella may know that, sir.

Chairman AKAKA. Well——

Mr. DOMINGUEZ. Pass the buck.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you, Mr. Dominguez.

This question is for VA. In terms of the VA, could you describe briefly how your Coming Home to Work program differs from DOL's REALifelines.

Ms. CADEN. Sure. I think there are similarities, which I don't necessarily think is a bad thing. I think we are both providing as many services as we can. We are a bit more focused, I believe, and I will let Chick talk about REALifelines.

In the Coming Home to Work program, we have the counselors at these eight military treatment facilities. We work with the DOD staff to identify those soon-to-be veterans that are in a medical hold and are ready to maybe get some work experience, and so we will work to get them into a non-paid work experience. We work with them to do that. They will do that while they are at the treatment facility. And then we work to transition them when they go back to their home to become a full-blown member of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. It could be that that work experience turns into a permanent job or it helps them decide what kind

of training they might need for the future and get a job at their home base.

I do think we are similar, but we might work with different veterans at different points in their program.

Chairman AKAKA. From DOL's perspective, how does your REALifeline program interface with the VA's vocational rehabilitation program? When you are dealing with an individual who is in need of vocational rehabilitation for a serious employment handicap, how does that individual get referred for appropriate assistance without falling through the cracks?

Mr. CICCOLELLA. I think Judy and Mike both touched on this. First of all, I would tell you, Senator, that it can't be just the VA's program or the DOD program, the doctors at the medical treatment facilities or the services or just Department of Labor. It has got to be all three of those agencies working closely together.

The REALifelines program we started out at Walter Reed to work with individuals once they are stabilized, focuses on identifying, you know, what they may want to do once they leave the military. Now, we don't do that alone at Walter Reed. We work right next door to the Department of Veterans Affairs. So if the individual would like to pursue education or an apprenticeship or training that VR&E, the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program, offers, whether we see them or whether they see them, they will get to the vocational rehabilitation representative, and the vocational rehabilitation representatives, again, are right there at Walter Reed. They are also right down there together at San Antonio at Brooke Army Medical Center. They are at Tripler Army Medical Center and they are at Madigan Army Medical Center. So they work together. At Madigan, for example, the agencies are all represented and work on one committee called a REACH Committee.

So, for this population of severely wounded and injured, some of them will be ready to go to work right away. Some of them want to go back to the service. Some of them are pending their evaluation boards. But they all want to do something good in life. That is why they came in the military.

So whatever their requirements or their needs are, the REALifelines program is there to assist them. We can hook them up with the DVOP or the LVER in the workforce system. The military is there. The military services are there if they want to go back in the service, and we are seeing more and more, particularly amputees, go back in the service. The Army, in particular, is taking more of them back. If they desire to pursue education, then the vocational rehabilitation folks are right there.

The key to this whole thing is that these agencies work together, and that is exactly what is happening at the medical treatment facilities.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much. I guess, again, you have reemphasized the need for cooperation and collaboration in these programs, that all of you do work together on this and the importance of that.

Moving to the next question, and I am directing this to Mr. Dominguez and the rest of you can speak about it. My understanding is that the TurboTAP online resource has been launched

and that staff had an opportunity to see a demonstration of it yesterday. I am glad to see this site up and running. The information provided us is undeniably helpful for transitioning servicemembers and their families. The question is, how are you getting the information out that the site even exists?

Mr. DOMINGUEZ. Sir, thanks for that question. The pre-separation counseling for every member leaving the Armed Forces is mandatory. Pre-separation counseling for people demobilizing out of the Guard and Reserve is mandatory. And it is in that pre-separation counseling session, which is the first part of the Transition Assistance Program, that the—what that really does is give them a little bit of everything, to tell them what is out there for them and where to go to get help and encourage them to use the tools and access the opportunities available to them. So the first answer is in the pre-separation counseling.

The second answer is we met yesterday—my staff and I met yesterday—or, no, it was Monday—with the Deputy Chiefs of Staff for Personnel in the military services to demonstrate for them the program, to let them know, OK, it is ready. They have known we have been building it. We have been collaborating with them on building it. But the purpose of the session was to ask them what are they going to do to market this capability. What is it that they will do within their services to ensure that commanders are talking about it, that personnel people are talking about it.

And so I have a memo now being drafted to ask them to designate people to a team my Deputy for Military Community and Family Policy will head to develop the marketing campaign for TurboTAP that will involve that chain of command.

Chairman AKAKA. What I am referring to is that we are looking at information dealing with benefits available, health care, family relocation, career building, job searches, and all of this designed to help transition these servicemembers. Also, even thinking about the younger set that is now returning who are possibly more advanced with technology and the information age, so you can treat them a little differently in sending out information to them.

And so I am glad to hear that you are moving on this, you have been meeting on this. I just want to ask Mr. Ciccolella whether he has any comments about this and what stage have you had in this development and how are you doing.

Mr. CICCOLELLA. Thanks, Senator. I think Secretary Dominguez covered it very well. I would only add to what he said that TurboTAP will also be marketed to servicemembers through the mobilization and the demobilization briefings. It will be marketed at the employment workshops. It will be marketed through our outreach efforts and the veteran employment representatives in the workforce system and, of course, through our national campaign that all the agencies participate in the job fairs and other activities of the Hire Veterans First campaign.

The collaboration that has been, I think unprecedented between, or I should say among the Department of Defense, the military services, the individual military services, and the VA has been phenomenal. And two of the folks, Gary Woods and Ron Horn, sitting right back here, and their developers, they are the folks that developed this TurboTAP system and they developed it step by step

right along with our input. So I think for that reason, it is probably one of the best things that has come along to help our transitioning servicemembers and it is going to help a lot of Guardsmen and Reservists, but it is also going to help active duty servicemembers, even those who have gone through the employment workshop, because they can go back to it and sign up and create a profile and get services that way. It is an awfully good system.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you. Thank you for your response.

Before I call for final comments by Ms. Caden, I would like to call on Senator Brown for any opening statement that you may have.

Senator BROWN. I only have a question. I can ask the question or defer to the Chair until he is ready.

Chairman AKAKA. Well, fine. Then let me just finish and then I will——

Senator BROWN. OK. Then I will ask quick.

Chairman AKAKA. Ms. Caden, will you, again coming back to that last question——

Ms. CADEN. Sure.

Chairman AKAKA [continuing].—will you respond with whatever you are doing with this.

Ms. CADEN. Right. Well, like the others, we have been very involved and there is a TAP steering committee working on this. What we would plan to do is add TurboTAP links to our *VetSuccess.gov*, which we market to veterans as a place to go learn not only about our program, but other programs that are out there for them. We do it as part of our DTAP briefings also, emphasizing that this is another place to go to for information to make sure they have everything.

One of the most important things is to let our field counselors know that this is now out there, and we have started to do that. We will reemphasize it. So as they are talking to veterans or soon-to-be veterans, whether they are first meeting them in a military hospital or a VA hospital or once they are home, to let them know this is another resource. But I think it is great.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much.

Senator Brown?

STATEMENT OF HON. SHERROD BROWN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM OHIO

Senator BROWN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

One question for Mr. Ciccolella, if I could. During the week after Memorial Day when we were back in our States, I did a series of roundtables with veterans around Ohio, veterans' service officers with veterans, specifically the Iraq War, then a broader group of veterans from all the way back to World War II and since, and did five or six of these around Ohio and listened to 20 or 25 veterans just talk about the VA and talk about the challenges that they face, especially in health care.

Two young men in Canton, Ohio, a city in Northeast Ohio in a county of about a third of a million people, were Iraqi War veterans and I was particularly about the conversation I had with them. They are part of an organization with which I am sure you are familiar, Helmets to Hardhats program. Talk through, if you would,

how—or let me back up for a moment. They both came from families, the father of one of them was a union organizer, the other one I believe is his mother or father was a union member. So they came out of a union tradition which might have led them more to this program or gotten them the information about it that other returning soldiers and Marines or sailors might not have gotten.

Talk through with me, if you would, how we make sure that those sort of third-party programs, if you will, that are not sponsored by the VA, how we make those available, make people knowledgeable about them and get young men and women into those very important programs, jobs, what have you.

Mr. CICCOLELLA. Sure. Thank you, Senator. Well, you mentioned the Helmets to Hardhats Program. It is really a good program. It is under new management now, and the management that is operating it now is very good.

I will tell you one way that we are able to make sure that servicemembers who are leaving the military who are inclined toward the building trades and construction trades, how they hook up with Helmets to Hardhats, and that is at the Transition Assistance Program conferences that train the TAP facilitators who facilitate the Department of Labor Employment Workshop, because Helmets to Hardhats is often there and they set up a booth. And also, they work very closely with the TAP facilitators when the workshops are actually going on.

In Ohio, you have a number of people who are inclined in that direction and you have very good programs. Your Governor has terrific programs for your veterans, some of the best in the Nation. Governor Strickland has a terrific program called "Promises Kept." In the conferences that go on with veteran employment representatives, the VA is always there. The Helmets to Hardhats frequently are there at those same conferences. You have a program up there in Ohio, a Transition Assistance Program for veterans and spouses, not just the folks that are coming out, and not just the folks that are in the Guard and Reserve who are redeploying. So the word gets out that way.

Ohio has some of the best programs for taking care of veterans, including the Guard and Reserve, because you have a program called Serving Warriors at Transition. It is called SWAT program. And the veteran employment representatives and frequently the VA representatives will go out to the mobilization and demobilization events. When they talk about employment, they talk about things like Helmets to Hardhats and other programs that are available so they can hook them up there.

So it is a very proactive effort on the part of Helmets to Hardhats and the other folks, and it is also the employment system and the Department of Veterans Affairs and the State workforce system and the State Directors of Veterans Affairs working together to make sure that the word gets out about this, and it is working.

Senator BROWN. Thank you for that, and thank you for your acknowledgment about my State. I appreciate that.

I hear over and over that when Guard and Reserve return from Iraq, that one of the reasons we don't know initially about some of their illnesses, particularly PTSD and all that come, particularly any kind of psychological damage or illness from which they suffer,

that these young men, particularly Guard and Reserve, just want to get home. They don't want to do screenings. They just want to get home.

Are we in these employment opportunities that are out there, like Helmets to Hardhats, if we are not reaching them on that first screening, on that first go-around when they want to get on with their lives thinking that their job will be just like it was and their spouse will be just like he or she was and their kids will be good and everything will be the same when so often they aren't, are people falling through the cracks with employment opportunities?

Are you finding a way if you don't get them—maybe this is for you, Ms. Caden, or maybe for you, Mr. Dominguez—if we are not getting them right from the start, are we getting them a month later or three months later through these conferences or other ways? What guarantees are there that we are not missing out on these opportunities that are there for them in many cases?

Ms. CADEN. Let me start real quickly. One thing that we have tried to do anytime we make a contact with a soon-to-be veteran or a new veteran, either from the National Guard or Reserve or from the regular service (often that first contact is when they first come home or when they are first in a hospital) is offer the vocational rehabilitation program to them, tell them about it, and tell them about the different employers like the Helmets to Hardhats. We have built links for all of these employers on the *VetSuccess.gov* web site, which we hope all veterans use, so that it is right there also. They can link to, say, Helmets to Hardhats, learn about them. They can even send an application to them at that point. So we build those links.

But what we are trying to do now is, if we meet them and their first wish is to get home and see what is going on in their lives, we will do follow-ups. We are doing quarterly, six-month, yearly follow-ups to again remind the severely disabled of the vocational rehabilitation program, that it is there for them, and maybe this is now the better point to come in and access that.

Senator BROWN. Mr. Dominguez?

Mr. DOMINGUEZ. I wanted to make a couple points on that. The first is that as part of our routine data exchanges now with Veterans Affairs, we provide information on all demobilizing Guard and Reserves, so automated data feeds to the VA so they know who is coming.

The second thing is that when Guard and Reserve units come home, we deploy counselors, so there is a big family assistance effort, a transition effort pushed out in cooperation with the Adjutants General for the Guard and the commanders of the Reserve forces for the Reserves. But we put people out there to do the counseling and the assistance to them in terms of reintegration back into the civil society. So even if they don't get it at the demobilization station, it is available to them while they are in the early stages of their transition home.

And then with regard to people who may be suffering from PTSD, everyone does pre-deployment health assessments, so they complete a form that tells about the kinds of things they are experiencing, post-deployment health assessments, and then six months after they get back we connect with them again to do a post-deploy-

ment health reassessment. So if anybody is manifesting symptoms of PTSD or any kinds of problems, there is an opportunity for them to tell us so we can get to them.

There is also available to them Military OneSource. At any time, they can go to that and access a counselor and that counselor will appear in their neighborhood, you know, 30 minutes from their home, for them to talk to in a private and confidential way outside the chain of command. So that is available to all those people coming back.

Senator BROWN [presiding]. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Now that I am the Chairman—sorry about that——

[Laughter.]

Senator BROWN. I am just finding out how it works around here.

[Laughter.]

Senator BROWN. Thank you very much to all three of you for joining us. I really appreciate your candor and your help and your public service. Thanks for joining us.

I call the second panel. We will hear from two groups from the private sector working in different ways to match veterans with appropriate jobs and to maximize their opportunities of getting the right job—if the second panel would come forward.

Two of you, I understand, are husband and wife. I am guessing it is you two, right?

Mr. BRADLEY. We work with each other——

Senator BROWN. Oh, I thought you were. I am sorry.

Thank you. From the DirectEmployers Association, we welcome their Executive Director, Bill Warren. Representing Bradley-Morris, Inc., are the company's co-founders, not related except at work, Shaun Bradley and Sandy Morris, and my understanding is Mr. Warren will begin with five minutes. Mr. Bradley and Ms. Morris will split their five minutes however you want.

I have to leave right around the time your testimony concludes. Either Senator Akaka or Senator Murray will be here to preside or we will recess until one of them comes back, so I apologize for that.

Mr. Warren, I would love to hear your testimony.

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM WARREN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DIRECTEMPLOYERS ASSOCIATION, INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

Mr. WARREN. Thank you. Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Craig, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss transition employment issues affecting our Nation's veterans.

DirectEmployers Association is a nonprofit association of over 270 leading U.S. employers. Through the Association, we have developed and managed an employer-funded national employment system on the Internet. Our member companies include an impressive group of industry leaders, such as Anheuser-Busch, Boeing, Cisco, Coca-Cola, General Electric, General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, Harris Corporation, Northrop Grumman, Proctor and Gamble, Union Pacific, Xerox, and, of course, many others. As you see, these are primarily Fortune 500 companies and most are Federal contractors.

Twenty-seven DirectEmployers Association member companies were ranked in the 2006 Top 50 Military-Friendly Employers by

G.I. Jobs magazine. This ranking is based on assets dedicated to military hiring, policies for Reserve and Guard called to active duty, the percentage of new hires who are veterans, and internal military and veterans recruiting programs.

Today, I would like to outline what the private sector is willing to do to reach our Nation's transitioning veterans. Bottom line, America's leading employers are willing to fund and manage a national labor exchange, including an online job distribution and employment program for veterans to enable all employers in our country to reach the veterans.

Our association has been working on the development of an employer-funded online national labor exchange to replace America's Job Bank since its phase-out was announced by the U.S. Department of Labor early last year. Our members need to reach and connect with our Nation's veterans. The need to reach them ranks equally with their need for an efficient labor market and their decision-making to actually fund a national labor exchange. This need was driven by Federal contractors' statutory obligation to give veterans preference in hiring, the labor shortage facing our Nation, and, of course, their sense of social responsibility. Employers realized that today's veterans have a lot of technical training and possess outstanding leadership skills.

DirectEmployers Association, to do this, to develop this national employment system, has entered into an agreement with the National Association of State Workforce Agencies, NASWA, to provide the Job Central National Labor Exchange services to replace the functionality previously provided the State workforce agencies by America's Job Bank. This program includes a wide range of services, from job listing uploads and downloads to full-scale site management and a free national labor exchange for all employers and all job seekers and all industries. Again, this is a free service to all employers and all job seekers. Our alliance with NASWA gives us direct access to the States' One-Stop Career Centers, local veterans' employment representatives, and disabled veterans' outreach program representatives in each State.

We are extremely fortunate to be working with workforce experts like Dr. Richard Hobbie and Mr. Bob Simonall at NASWA, who provide us wise counsel on State-level workforce and veterans issues. We are particularly pleased to have their assistance in helping us contact, or helping us connect with the veterans' community at all levels, the State, national, and again, all levels.

Through our association with NASWA, we have a unique opportunity to work side-by-side with these individuals as well as others at the local level who work every day to help veterans gain employment and maximize their employment opportunities. Our goal is clearly stated. Our member employers want to work with NASWA, the States, veterans, veterans' organizations, and local employment representatives in a true partnership.

A critical component of Job Central National Labor Exchange is VetCentral. VetCentral is a program to deliver Federal contractors' jobs to all veterans, including those currently in transition back to civilian life. Some of our recent discussions with government officials have centered around providing additional support for severely injured, wounded and injured servicemembers returning to

civilian life after rehabilitation. We also plan additional support and services for military spouses.

The goal of VetCentral is not compliance but the active facilitation of veterans' hiring. We believe the spirit of the Jobs for Veterans Act is best met when the right employer and the right veteran find each other right away. We have offered the DOD, VA, DOL, and others to help create and manage a veterans only resume bank that would help with the process of making these job matches quickly. There needs to be one place where any employer can find qualified veterans.

To design and help develop the VetCentral program, DirectEmployers has partnered with XPAND Corporation and contracted for the consulting services of two key former U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration Managers, Mr. David Morman and Mr. James Vollman. XPAND Corporation, Mr. Morman, and Mr. Vollman all have extensive experience in working with various government agencies and veterans' organizations in the design, development, and implementation of online workforce systems and E-Tools.

XPAND Corporation is a pioneer in advanced technologies and has tremendous experience working with the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration Veterans' Employment and Training Service. It has extensive knowledge of job banks, labor market information, and labor exchange systems, having successfully built and operated and maintained most of DOL's award-winning workforce portals and E-Tools applications over the last 10 years.

Mr. Morman——

Senator BROWN. Mr. Warren, try to wrap up here, if you can.

Mr. WARREN. Both Mr. Morman and Mr. Vollman are highly respected workforce experts.

I have gone into this level of detail to assure you that no stone was left unturned in our quest for an effective first-line online employment system to match America's employers with our Nation's veterans.

As a citizen and as a veteran, I can honestly say we have been tremendously encouraged by the hard work and dedication of all government officials with whom we have worked with on this project. My only recommendation would be to continue the dialogue we have established. I truly believe we have a unique opportunity to forge a public-private partnership that can become a model for helping our Nation's veterans.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this presentation today and this concludes my remarks. I would be happy to answer any questions. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Warren follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WILLIAM O. WARREN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DIRECTEMPLOYERS ASSOCIATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"VetCentral," a job distribution program for veterans, has been created by DirectEmployers Association to help Federal Contractors meet their statutory job posting responsibilities after America's Job Bank is closed on July 1, 2007 and in accordance with the proposed regulations implementing the Jobs for Veterans Act of 2002 (JVA). The law requires that any employer receiving Federal contracts in the amount $100,000 or more shall immediately list all of its employment openings with the "appropriate employment service delivery system." The law also states that each such employment service delivery system shall give such qualified covered veterans priority in referral to such employment openings.

VetCentral will be fully integrated into DirectEmployers' JobCentral National Labor Exchange site, making it easy for Federal Contractors to comply with the amendments to the Federal Contractor Job Listing Program! It will eliminate the need for Federal Contractors to identify the appropriate local service delivery system and contacts for their job listings.

Jobs can be indexed (scraped) from Federal Contractors' corporate web sites and automatically entered into VetCentral. The program will then forward the job listings to the appropriate Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs), and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Representatives (DVOPs) through local One-Stop Career Centers integrated in the employment service delivery system.

DirectEmployers Association has partnered with industry experts to design, develop and implement VetCentral so Federal Contractors can remain compliant with The Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act (VEVRAA), as amended by the Jobs for Veterans Act of 2002, and easily transition from America's Job Bank when AJB is discontinued.

2007 is the publication target date for the revised VEVRAA/JVA regulations according to the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs' (OFCCP) last semi-annual regulatory agenda. The OFCCP, as a matter of enforcement discretion, is presently allowing Federal Contractors to meet their job listing requirements by posting employment openings with either America's Job Bank or directly with the appropriate local employment service delivery system until the amended regulation becomes final.

JobCentral National Labor Exchange (*www.jobcentral.com*) has been selected by The National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) (*www.naswa.org*) to provide job seekers, employers and states a cost-effective transition from America's Job Bank (AJB) when it is discontinued July 1, 2007, as previously announced by the U.S. Department of Labor.

JobCentral will provide a wide range of employment services to participating state workforce agencies, from job listing distribution to and from state employment web sites to participation in the national labor exchange with other states. The service will also be available to Federal agencies for fast response to recruiting needs, after disasters, such as hurricanes or earthquakes.

FEDERAL CONTRACTORS' STATUTORY JOB POSTING REQUIREMENTS

The Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act (VEVRAA), enacted in 1974, requires covered Federal Government contractors and subcontractors to take affirmative action to employ and advance in employment specified categories of veterans protected by the Act and prohibits discrimination against such veterans. In addition, VEVRAA requires contractors and subcontractors to list their employment openings with the appropriate employment service delivery system, and that covered veterans receive priority in referral to such openings from those employment service delivery systems. Further, VEVRAA requires Federal Contractors and subcontractors to compile and submit annually a report on the number of current employees who are covered veterans (the VETS–100 Report). The affirmative action and mandatory job-listing provisions of VEVRAA are enforced by the Employment Standards Administration's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) within the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). DOL's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) administers the veterans' employment reporting requirement.

In 1998, the "Veterans' Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA)" was approved by Congress. The VEOA amended VEVRAA to: (1) expand the class of protected veterans to include "any other veterans who served on active duty during a war or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized"; (2) require contractors to include their maximum number and minimum number of em-

ployees during a specific period of time on the VETS–100 Report; (3) increase VEVRAA's contract coverage threshold from $10,000 to $25,000; and (4) prohibit the Federal Government from contracting with or paying contractors who fail to file the VETS–100 Report.

Enactment of the Veterans' Benefit and Health Care Improvement Act of 2000 (VBHCIA) added "recently separated veterans" as an additional VETS–100 reporting category. The new category was defined in the VBHCIA amendments as "any veteran during the 1 year period beginning on the date of such veteran's discharge or release from active duty." On December 1, 2005, the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) announced new regulations that made its Veterans Affirmative Action Plan (AAP) requirements consistent with the VEOA and VBHCIA.

Congress revised the veterans' compliance and reporting requirements for Federal Contractors and subcontractors again in 2002 when the "Jobs for Veterans Act" (JVA) was enacted. The JVA amendments apply only to contracts and subcontracts entered into on or after December 1, 2003.

The JVA amended VEVRAA's definition of "covered veteran" by deleting "veterans of the Vietnam era," and adding a new category of veterans who receive an "Armed Forces Service Medal." It also expanded the definition of "recently separated veterans" to include any veteran discharged within the last three (3) years. The JVA requires covered Contractors to report the number of all current employees by job category and hiring location on the VETS–100 form. It also raised VEVRAA Federal contract coverage from $25,000 to $100,000.

JVA also amended VEVRAA by requiring covered Contractors and subcontractors to take affirmative steps to employ qualified disabled veterans, recently separated veterans, Armed Forces Service Medal veterans, and other protected veterans. Under the JVA, Contractors with a Federal contract or subcontract of $100,000 or more that was entered into on or after December 1, 2003, are required to list their job openings with an "appropriate employment service delivery system."

In addition to listing their employment openings with an "appropriate employment service delivery system", the JVA proposed regulations provide that Contractors and Subcontractors may list their employment openings with a One-Stop Career Center, other appropriate service delivery points, or America's Job Bank. The definition of an "appropriate employment service delivery system" is not clear in the proposed regulations. It is anticipated this will be clarified when OFCCP issues a final regulation, scheduled for publication in 2007.

On January 20, 2006, the OFCCP published "Part 60–300 Proposed Rule, Affirmative Action and Nondiscrimination Obligations of Contractors and Subcontractors Regarding Disabled Veterans, Recently Separated Veterans, Other Protected Veterans, and Armed Forces Service Medal Veterans."

In these proposed regulations, OFCCP has interpreted JVA's mandatory listing requirement to mean that Contractors and Subcontractors can no longer meet their job listing obligations by posting their jobs on AJB. JVA now requires that job listings be actually listed with or "pushed" to the appropriate local employment service delivery system. While a prototype application was developed to accomplish this "local job push" within the AJB structure in 2003, it has never been implemented by USDOL and instead USDOL's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) announced in March 2006 that AJB would be phased out completely by July 1, 2007.

OFCCP has not yet finalized its Proposed Rule, although the agency has actively reviewed the public comments received in response to its proposal. The agency's last semiannual regulatory agenda indicated a 2007 publication target date.

ASSESSING FEDERAL CONTRACTOR OPTIONS

The failure of OFCCP to issue final rules implementing the Jobs for Veterans Act of 2002 has created some confusion about how employers with Federal contracts are to comply with the "mandatory listing" requirements of 38 U.S.C. 4212 and its predecessors. The issue arises particularly for those who are now using America's Job Bank (AJB) as a compliance vehicle, something explicitly permitted by current regulations (41 CFR 60–250.5 Paragraph 2) that will become unavailable beginning July 1 when the Labor Department terminates that service.

The lack of final rules has resulted in significant speculation about how compliance can be achieved in the post-AJB world. The answer to that question is not simple and depends on two primary facts: (1) whether the contractor has any pre-December 1, 2003 contracts still in effect that remain subject to existing OFCCP rules (41 CFR 60–250) and (2) whether OFCCP has issued final rules implementing the new mandatory job listing provisions of the Jobs for Veterans Act (P.L. 107–288).

There is a significant "hope" in the market that simply listing jobs with State Job Banks will be sufficient to achieve compliance under the new law. In large part, this hope is tied to how the term "appropriate employment service delivery system" might be interpreted. Let's examine whether or not such hope is realistic.

It is difficult to read the entirety of the current and proposed OFCCP Regulations and come away with a reading that says listing jobs with a State Job Bank would be sufficient to guarantee Federal Contractor compliance. Perhaps OFCCP will issue such regulations, but they have not yet and a look at the statute itself would make that option unlikely.

There will be two sets of rules at play. The first set, which applies to any company with an existing Federal contract for more than $25,000 that was signed before December 1, 2003, will be in effect as long as those contracts are active (which could be several years). Those rules apply not just to jobs covered by the contract, but to all jobs in the company (which a few exceptions for top executives and very short term jobs). See 41 CFR 60–250.5, Paragraph 2. Those rules require that the listing be done "at an appropriate local employment service office of the state employment security agency wherein the opening occurs." They also allow for listing with AJB as an alternative method of compliance. However, when DOL ends AJB service on July 1 the only compliance method under the current rules will be listing with a local office.

A company which has no pre-December 1, 2003 contracts will not be covered by this rule, provided that OFCCP actually issues final rules for the Jobs for Veterans Act. If OFCCP does not issue such regulations by June 30, AJB's last day, all contractors will need to comply with the current rules, and the only compliance method will be listing at "at an appropriate local employment service office of the state employment security agency wherein the opening occurs." Companies with pre-December 1, 2003 contracts will be covered by the old rules as long as those contracts are in place. The plain language of 41 CFR 60–250.5 Paragraph 2 covers all that company's jobs. OFCCP in its notice of proposed rulemaking stated: "Contractors with contracts entered into both before, and on or after December 1, 2003, will be subject to both the requirements found in part 60–250 and the requirements proposed for part 60–300." (Page 3353 of the Federal Register for January 20, 2006.)

The proposed rules contain the potentially unclear phase "appropriate employment service delivery system," but do not either explicitly or implicitly equate this phrase with State Job Banks or posting of jobs at the state level. The words themselves may be unclear; but in the context of Title 38 they have a fairly established meaning. Section 4104 of Title 38 which establishes the LVER (Local Veteran Employment Representative) program states in paragraph (d) "Each local veterans' employment representative shall be administratively responsible to the manager of the employment service delivery system and shall provide reports, not less frequently than quarterly, to the manager of such office and to the Director for Veterans' Employment and Training for the State regarding compliance with Federal law and regulations with respect to special services and priorities for eligible veterans and eligible persons."

Further, the Questions and Answers prepared by the Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) to explain the requirements of JVA as they relate to Federal Contractors and posted on the DOL web site explicitly call for jobs to be posted at the local level. (*http://www.dol.gov/vets/contracts/main.htm#A-1*)

> A–1. What are the requirements of the Federal Contractor Job Listing Program and what is the legal basis for reporting requirements?
>
> Title 38, United States Code, Section 4212(d) requires that Federal contractors list all employment openings with the nearest State Job Service office (also known as State Employment Service or One Stop Service Location) and Workforce Development Offices (in some States). This job-listing requirement applies to all job openings with the exception of executive or top management jobs, positions filled from within the organization, and jobs lasting 3 days or less. This includes agreements to lease workers from "Temp Agencies." . . .
>
> A–3. "How do I list job openings with a Job Service local office, local One Stop Service Center, or Workforce Development Office?"
>
> To list job openings with a local office, contractors and subcontractors must contact the local office of the State employment service location in their area. The Veterans' representatives in the state employment Service local office can help explain the requirements of the Federal Contractor Program. To locate the state employment service center, local one stop service center or Workforce Development local office nearest you, please contact your state's Director for Veterans' Employment and Training (DVET). A di-

> rectory of State DVET offices can be located at the following web site: (*http://www.dol.gov/vets/aboutvets/contacts/main.htm*).

The movement of Wagner Peyser services into One-Stop Career Centers in many States created the shift in language (from employment service office to employment service delivery system), but the listing is now and always has been to facilitate the employment of veterans by having the local office and the DVOP/LVER "work" the job order on behalf of their veteran customers. That rationale is also contained in the current and the proposed regulations in 60– 250.84 and 60–300.84.

The Jobs for Veterans Act itself speaks to that rationale in its own statutory language. 38 U.S.C. 4212 section (a)(2)(A) requires the mandatory listing by Federal contractors. Section (a)(2)(B) requires the employment service delivery system to provide priority referral of qualified veterans to those jobs. The mandatory listing is not so that the general public can see the job, but rather so that qualified veterans can get priority referrals to those jobs. That priority referral process has been and continues to be a "local" process which involves staff, either general purpose or DVOP/LVER, that "work" the job orders on behalf of the qualified veterans.

Even more troubling for those who "hope" that listing with State Job Banks alone will satisfy this requirement is Section (a)(2)(C) of 38 U.S.C. 4212 which requires the "employment service delivery system" that has received that listing to "provide a list of such employment openings to States, political subdivisions of States, or any private entities or organizations under contract to carry out employment, training, and placement services under chapter 41 of this title." If Congress had intended that a compliant listing could be made at the State Job Bank level, there would be little reason for the addition of States to the list of entities with whom the job listing need be shared.

It is also useful to note that requirements of the Jobs for Veterans Act are not self-implementing. The introductory paragraph in 38 U.S.C. 4212(a)(2) states "the Secretary of Labor shall prescribe regulations requiring" which is followed by the particular statements in paragraphs A, B and C. OFCCP itself recognizes need for the new rules before the JVA requirements become effective. It states in answer to the question "Does listing a job with America's Job Bank (AJB) satisfy mandatory listing for veterans?"

> Currently all covered contractors may list their job openings with either America's Job Bank or with an appropriate local employment service office. After OFCCP promulgates a new VEVRAA regulation implementing the Jobs for Veterans Act (JVA), covered contractors with contracts entered on or after December 1, 2003, will be required to post their jobs at an appropriate employment service delivery system. The Department of Labor is working on a new option to allow contractors to meet both the current and the revised mandatory job-listing requirement. A new web portal, the Veterans' Job Clearinghouse, will automatically post listed employment openings with the appropriate employment service delivery system while also giving contractors the option of continuing to list job openings on America's Job Bank. But until the final regulations implementing JVA amendments go into effect, contractors may continue to fulfill their job listing requirements by using either America's Job Bank or their local SES. (See *http://www.dol.gov/vets/contractor/main.htm#A-4*)

The Veterans' Job Clearinghouse (VJC), mentioned in the above answer as a potential solution, was developed to provide a mechanism to re-distribute Federal contractor job openings that were posted on America's Job Bank to the local level, including to DVOP/LVER staff at the local offices, not to State Job Banks. This would have allowed Federal Contractors to continue to post on AJB and maintain their compliance. The Labor Department has abandoned the VJC effort, in part because it was dependent on AJB. However, DirectEmployers Association is using the VJC approach of local office delivery in its VetCentral compliance tool, and has engaged the same vendor that built VJC to build VetCentral.

DirectEmployers Association, through JobCentral National Labor Exchange and VetCentral, will approach compliance as requiring delivery of the job listing to the local office which delivers Wagner-Peyser labor exchange services that is nearest the hiring location. That approach is based on DirectEmployers' reading of the current and proposed rules and the belief that compliance efforts should be conservative in their reading of regulatory requirements.

Some companies may hope that listing with a State job bank, which does not generate compliance with the current rules, would now generate compliance with the proposed rules. But that hope does not seem to have much basis in the statute, the regulations themselves, or the practice of the employment service.

Things to consider——

• The proposed rules for post December 1, 2003 contracts are not final and OFCCP has not stated when they will issue the final rules.

• The current rules are in effect for all Federal contractors until the new rules are issued and will cover any Federal contactor with a pre-December 1, 2003 contract. Those rules are not at all unclear—on July 1 the only acceptable compliance method will be listing with a "local employment service office."

• AJB does not now deliver job listings to all States. Less than half of the States take the current AJB download of jobs. That number is not likely to improve when AJB ends. For example, Alabama where major defense contractors have large facilities does not take the AJB feed now. It will be difficult for anyone other than DirectEmployers Association, with its National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) Alliance, to guarantee compliance under even the "hopeful" reading of the proposed rules given that reality. We are aware of no other approach that provides compliance for companies that must also comply with the current rules in 41 CFR 60–250.

DirectEmployers Association is taking the conservative approach to compliance (usually the way most company lawyers approach the issue) and making sure that member companies are covered whatever the eventual ruling and interpretation of the rules might be. While on July 1, DirectEmployers/JobCentral will be downloading jobs to more States than currently take the AJB feed, it will not have 100 percent coverage of all States. It will generate compliance by delivering its member company jobs to the local offices in all the States.

DirectEmployers Association member companies will not be surprised. Companies depending on "hopeful" interpretations of the law and regulations may be.

VEVRAA/JVA COMPLIANCE RESEARCH

DirectEmployers Association has been working on a solution for employers' mandatory job listing requirements since the AJB phase-out was announced almost a year ago. After careful research and months of discussions with various stakeholders, some employers might be surprised by our conclusion that the VEVRAA/JVA compliance solution for employers after AJB is phased out will not be a national public or privately financed (commercial) AJB-type job board that distributes their jobs to state employment sites. Many employers might be further surprised to learn that AJB, had it continued to exist, would not have served as a vehicle for them to meet their VEVRAA/JVA job posting requirements.

There are two reasons for this: (1) in recent years, various states for various reasons have dropped out of participation in the AJB system. It is estimated that as many as twenty-five or more states are currently not taking job listing downloads from AJB. Therefore, all employers' jobs are currently not being distributed to the local employment systems as required by VEVRAA/JVA; and, (2) the JVA changes the mandatory job listing requirement to require that, before posting with AJB, One-Stop Career Centers, or state job banks, jobs must be listed with an appropriate employment service delivery system. AJB currently does not do this.

It is also unclear whether simple posting on a state's job bank (either directly or as a result of download from AJB or other job site) would generate compliance with VEVRAA or JVA. The intent of VEVRAA was to place the Federal Contractor job in the hands of the local employment service office where by tradition or policy the veteran employment representatives had a day to "work" the job on behalf of veterans prior to it being released to the general population of job seekers. In 1995, OFCCP modified its regulations to allow posting on America's Job Bank to satisfy the VEVRAA requirement. OFCCP and the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) were convinced that such a posting would actually make more of the jobs from large companies available to veterans by allowing them and their advocates to view them directly from the Internet. In 1995, America's Job Bank did not distribute jobs back to the states.

The passage of the JVA was intended to return the compliance approach back to the pre-1995 way of posting with the local employment service office, primarily so that veterans would get a priority chance to apply for jobs. The January, 2006 proposed JVA regulations define employment service delivery system as "a service delivery system at which or through which labor exchange services, including employment, training, and placement services, are offered in accordance with the Wagner-Peyser Act." From this, one could infer that an "employment service delivery system" can only be a locally staffed office, where actual services are delivered. Therefore, it has not been determined whether or not posting to a state electronic database will meet the job posting requirements. Simple posting to state job banks does not guarantee JVA compliance.

However, Federal Contractors should have no immediate fear. Until OFCCP issues a final regulation, scheduled for publication in 2007, the agency, as a matter of enforcement discretion, is presently allowing Contractors to fulfill their VEVRAA/JVA job listing requirements by either using AJB or posting with their local employment service delivery system.

DIRECTEMPLOYERS' VEVRAA/JVA COMPLIANCE SOLUTION

The Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974 (VEVRAA), as amended by the Jobs for Veterans Act of 2002 (JVA), requires covered Federal Contractors and subcontractors to list their employment openings with "an appropriate employment service delivery system." Since America's Job Bank (AJB) will not be a job-posting option for compliance after July 1, 2007, DirectEmployers Association has partnered with industry experts to design, develop and implement "VetCentral", a web-based application for the distribution of jobs to veterans. This application, when fully integrated into DirectEmployers' JobCentral National Labor Exchange, will act as a distribution point for Federal Contractors—"pushing" their jobs to the appropriate employment service delivery system and maintaining the necessary records of each transaction. It will offer a compliance solution for Federal Contractors and Subcontractors that is believed to be consistent with the new JVA regulations that are scheduled to be published in 2007.

VetCentral will comply with both the spirit and intent of the mandatory job listing requirement by delivering, or "pushing" job listings directly to the nearest of the estimated 2,200 Disabled Veterans Outreach Programs (DVOPs) and Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs), through a local employment service office (if it exists) and/or a One-Stop Career Center if it is an office delivering Wagner-Peyser services. It provides required compliance reporting capabilities for participating employers in addition to offering extensive tools for use by veterans' employment representatives. VetCentral will also enable Federal Contractors and subcontractors to "push" their job listings to applicable DVOPs and LVERs through state One-Stop Career Centers from a single point of access through JobCentral. Jobs from DirectEmployers' member companies will continue to be indexed (scraped) directly from their corporate web sites and made available to veterans through VetCentral so participating employers will have uninterrupted compliance with the JVA regulations when AJB is closed.

ADDITIONAL VETCENTRAL BENEFITS

In addition to providing JVA compliance, the many benefits of VetCentral include:

- Elimination of the significant administrative burden facing Federal Contractors in distributing their job listings to the appropriate employment delivery system.
- A single point of job entry through JobCentral's indexing process.
- Required compliance reports for Federal Contractors through the JobCentral interface.
- Assistance in giving covered veterans priority in referral to employment openings.

VETCENTRAL COMPLETION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Software development for the VetCentral job distribution application is presently complete and ready for implementation. Companies that make an early election to utilize the VetCentral service through JobCentral should encounter no loss of VEVRAA/JVA reporting capability as they transition from America's Job Bank when it is discontinued on July 1.

PROGRAM PARTNERSHIPS AND CONSULTING AGREEMENTS

To design and develop this critical application, DirectEmployers Association has partnered with XPAND Corporation and contracted for the consulting services of two former key U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (DOL–ETA) managers, Dave Morman and Jim Vollman. XPAND, Morman, and Vollman all have extensive experience in working with various government agencies and veterans organizations in the design, development, and implementation of online workforce systems and E-Tools.

XPAND is a pioneer in advanced technologies, implementing leading-edge and awardwinning enterprise web solutions including many years of experience working with the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration and Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS). It has extensive knowledge of job banks, labor market information, and the labor exchange system, having successfully built, operated and maintained most of DOL's award-winning workforce

Portals and E-Tools applications over the last 10 years. XPAND also has extensive experience working with representatives from the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) and the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) to strategize technical solutions for the proper distribution of jobs to local DVOPs and LVERs.

Both Dave Morman and Jim Vollman are highly respected for their many years of government service at DOL and for the pioneering work they did in making AJB one of the most heavily used government web sites and an industry leader in workforce management. Vollman was the chief architect of America's Job Bank and was responsible for its growth and development in its early stages gaining its acceptance by nearly all 50 states. Morman managed ETA's National Electronic Tools Program which included AJB; he has previously served as the Executive Director of the Veterans' Employment and Training Service. In their positions at DOL, both were deeply involved in the early development, management and direction of AJB and our Nation's national labor exchange programs and in serving veterans.

DirectEmployers Association has also entered into an agreement with The National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) to provide JobCentral National Labor Exchange services to replace the functionality previously provided to State employment sites by America's Job Bank. This program includes a wide range of services from job listing uploads and downloads to full-scale site management and a free national labor exchange. The JobCentral/NASWA program allows the distribution of jobs to participating states for affirmative action purposes and to reach each state's workforce. It is also a convenience for companies that are required to post job listings to their state sites. While this is an extremely important partnership for our member companies and participating states, it alone may not provide VEVRAA/JVA compliance because posting jobs to state employment web sites may no longer satisfy the new JVA job posting requirements, hence the creation of VetCentral.

DirectEmployers Association believes strongly in the concept and value of a low-cost national labor exchange and will continue to provide JobCentral for all job seekers, employers, and states that choose to participate. A national employment system like JobCentral National Labor Exchange can play a vital role in the management of our Nation's workforce, especially at a time when employers are facing a nationwide labor shortage. It should be an important part of every employer's Affirmative Action Program (AAP). By working together, an immediate, cohesive group of leading U.S. employers can be available to Federal agencies for fast response as witnessed by JobCentral's response to the Katrina disaster. Bottom line: a cooperative of employers can provide a national low-cost employment system where all employers, regardless of size can participate—all difficult, if not impossible, to do in a commercial for-profit environment.

THE NEED FOR A LOW-COST NATIONAL LABOR EXCHANGE

Funded by Employers America's Job Bank, the only federally funded job board on the Internet and the first Internet presence for labor exchange for each of the states, has served a very important role for both job seekers and employers since its inception in 1995. It most recently listed over two million jobs from employers in all industries and nearly 700,000 job seeker resumes which are available free of charge to employers.

The discontinuance of America's Job Bank along with the impending labor shortage caused by baby-boomer retirements and a dwindling workforce provides a formidable challenge for all employers. Because job postings and resume searching have always been provided free of charge by AJB, many small to medium-sized employers have relied on AJB as their only Internet recruiting source.

AJB has also played a prominent role in helping employers build their workforce and comply with state and Federal regulations by serving as the Nation's only online cross-state labor exchange and distributing corporate job listings to state employment services. It has been invaluable in helping employers meet Federal job posting requirements for Affirmative Action Plans, Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) and Jobs for Veterans Act compliance.

The loss of America's Job Bank is even greater for employers when you consider the labor shortage facing our Nation. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) predicts a labor shortage of more than 10 million skilled workers by 2010 which heightens employers' need to attract difficult to reach groups such as minorities, veterans, seniors and women to the workforce.

JobCentral's National Labor Exchange will be free of charge to job seekers and easily affordable for all employers. No job seeker or employer will be excluded because of financial constraints. It will help employers satisfy their compliance re-

quirements and, through new search technology, provide a single place on the Internet where job seekers can find employment opportunities in all industries.

It will allow job seekers to search over five million (5,000,000) jobs from corporate web sites, newspapers, trade associations, and other Internet sources in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia, major metropolitan areas, and all U.S. cities and postal zip code areas. The National Labor Exchange will be available free-of-charge to job seekers. Job postings, resume searching capabilities and other services will be available at no cost to all employers in all industries.

The JobCentral National Labor Exchange will help companies: (1) meet their respective Affirmative Action Program (AAP) objectives, Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) obligations and veterans hiring goals when America's Job Bank (AJB) is discontinued in July, 2007 and; (2) meet their general recruiting needs at the time of an impending national labor shortage.

In addition to general recruiting for all occupations in all industries, the site will also serve as the primary focal point for recruiting diverse candidates, returning members of the U.S. Armed Forces and specialty groups such as the physically challenged and senior members of the workforce. It will also allow companies to work directly with government officials at all levels in responding to national emergency recruiting needs such as we experienced with the Katrina disaster.

The JobCentral National Labor Exchange site will play a leading role in helping employers meet their individual affirmative action goals and, as a group, better manage our Nation's workforce. It will provide an opportunity for companies to meet their compliance and staffing requirements in an environment which is owned, managed and controlled by employers.

Senator BROWN. Thank you, Mr. Warren.

Ms. Morris, Mr. Bradley, your five minutes. Thank you.

STATEMENTS OF SHAUN G. BRADLEY AND SANDY MORRIS, CO-CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS, BRADLEY-MORRIS, INC., KENNESAW, GEORGIA

Mr. BRADLEY. Thank you, Senator. Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Committee, on behalf of Co-CEO Sandy Morris and myself, I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to speak with you today. We are honored to be included in the discussion of seamless transition for our military.

Our company, Bradley-Morris, Inc., often referred to as BMI, was created in 1991. For the majority of our history, we have operated as a typical contingency placement firm, and according to Staffing Industry Analysts, we rank in the top 1 percent of contingency placement firms nationwide.

The reason we are here today is because of our candidate focus, that is, the job seekers we screen and present to Fortune 500 and emerging companies that help fill their job openings. We focus on the ex-military talent pool, one of the most highly trained and most diverse groups of job seekers in existence. Over our company's history, we have placed more than 15,000 veterans into jobs in corporate America. These positions have included management, engineers, technicians, and sales people, to name a few. Twenty-nine percent of these placements have been diversity, that is, minority and women.

As a matter of fact, we think so highly of this talent pool that more than 60 percent of our own employees are ex-military. Thus, they are personally familiar with the transition challenges and are keenly aware of the great training members of the military community receive while they are serving.

And because we subscribe to the contingency model, our services are free to military-experienced job seekers. That is, our client companies pay the fee for our services.

Ms. MORRIS. Good morning. To expand on Shaun's points, a new opportunity presented itself to us approximately three years ago and it was based on specific feedback we received from our employers that we work with. They told us that they would like to expand the ways that they source military job seekers, and as a result we created *CivilianJobs.com*, which offers employers and job seekers three ways to connect: Via the web, via job fairs on or near military bases, and then via print newspaper that is on military bases.

Whereas the Bradley-Morris model delivers specific jobs for specific candidates, *CivilianJobs.com* offers something for everyone. Any former member of the military may use these services, and not just those transitioning. *CivilianJobs.com* provides employers with the most efficient and cost-effective ways to access the veteran talent pool. Again, these services are all free to military-experienced job seekers.

As you might expect, it has been incredibly rewarding for us to place these men and women that have honorably served in our Armed Forces with great careers in corporate America. We find that the demand is high and our business is strong. And we believe there are even more opportunities to assist ex-military by strengthening our public and private partnership.

Mr. BRADLEY. As part of our service to military men and women, we visit many bases around the world to bring our job assistance services to them, whether we are conducting group career counseling putting on job fairs, or distributing job seeker advice via our base newspaper. We work in close partnership with both the ACAP and TAP Transition Offices of each service branch to get notice of these events out to veterans, as well as notice of our client companies' job opportunities.

Ms. MORRIS. As with any endeavor, some audiences are more receptive and enthusiastic to our message than others, and over our history, there have been some instances where a lack of enthusiasm as to notifying veterans and transitioning military personnel of our opportunities has been attributed to BMI being a for-profit company. This is despite the fact that, again, our job seeker services are free to military personnel.

Over time, we have found the "less-than-enthusiastic" to be a small percentage of the whole. However, as we were asked to discuss the seamless transition topic, having a clear mandate that it is OK for military bases, branches of the service, or military affinity groups to support companies like ours, companies that provide free job services to veterans, whether they are for-profit or not, would certainly provide a more seamless transition to more veterans, that is, help veterans get more jobs.

We also support two pieces of legislation recently introduced, S. 1272, the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program Act of 2007, focusing on seamless transition for our National Guard troops, introduced by Senators Isakson and Chambliss, as well as H.R. 2330, the Veterans' Employment Transition Support Act of 2007, introduced by Representative McCotter. Both of these proposed initiatives help strengthen the cause of veteran job seekers and will help us assist more ex-military personnel in their job search.

Mr. BRADLEY. In summation, we look forward to supporting the Committee's work on seamless transition and we will be glad to be

of assistance and provide additional information as needed to further illuminate this important issue.

Thank you for your time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bradley and Ms. Morris follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SHAUN BRADLEY AND SANDRA MORRIS, CO-CEOS, BRADLEY-MORRIS, INC.

Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Committee, we would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to speak with you today. We are honored to be included in the discussion of seamless transition for our military.

Our company, Bradley-Morris, Inc., often referred to as "BMI," was created in 1991. For the majority of our history, we've operated as a typical contingency placement firm, and according to Staffing Industry Analysts, we rank in the top 1 percent of contingency placement firms nationwide.

The reason we are here today is because of our candidate focus, that is, the job seekers we screen and present to Fortune 500 and emerging companies that help fill their job openings.

We focus on the ex-military talent pool, one of the most highly trained and most diverse groups of job seekers in existence. Over our company's history, we've placed more than 15,000 vets into jobs in corporate America. These positions have included management, engineers, technicians and sales people to name a few. Twenty-nine percent of these placements have been diversity, that is, minority and women.

As a matter of fact, we think so highly of this talent pool that more than 60 percent of our own employees are ex-military. Thus, they are personally familiar with transition challenges, and are keenly aware of the great training members of the military community receive while they are serving.

And because we subscribe to the contingency model, our services are free to military-experienced job seekers—that is, our client companies pay the fees for our services.

A new opportunity presented itself to us approximately 3 years ago, based on specific feedback we received from employers. They told us they would like to expand the ways they source military job seekers.

As a result, we created *CivilianJobs.com*, which offers employers and jobs seekers three ways to connect: Via the web, via job fairs on or near military bases, and via a print newspaper on military bases.

Whereas the Bradley-Morris model delivers specific jobs for specific candidates, *CivilianJobs.com* offers something for everyone—any former member of the military may use these services (not just those transitioning). *CivilianJobs.com* provides employers with the most efficient and cost-effective ways to access the veteran talent pool. Again, these services are all free to military-experienced job seekers.

As you might expect, it's been incredibly rewarding to be able to place the men and women who have honorably served in our Armed Forces into great careers in corporate America.

We find the demand high, and our business is strong.

And, we believe there are even more opportunities to assist ex-military by strengthening our public/private partnership.

As part of our service to military men and women, we visit many bases around the world. We bring our job assistance services to them, whether we are conducting group career counseling, putting on job fairs, or distributing job seeker advice via our base newspaper.

We work in close partnership with both the ACAP and TAP transition offices of each service branch to get notice of these events out to veterans, as well as notice of our client companies' job opportunities.

As with any endeavor, some audiences are more receptive and enthusiastic to our message than others. Over our history, there have been some instances where a lack of enthusiasm as to notifying vets and transitioning military personnel of our opportunities has been attributed to BMI being a "for profit" company. This is despite the fact that, again, our job seeker services are free to military personnel.

Over time, we have found the "less-than-enthusiastic" to be a small percentage of the whole. However, as we were asked to discuss the "seamless transition" topic, having a clear mandate that it is OK for military bases, branches of service, military affinity groups, etc., to support companies like ours—companies that provide free job services to veterans, whether they are a "for profit" company or not—would help us provide a more "seamless transition" to more veterans, that is, help more veterans get jobs.

We also support two pieces of legislation recently introduced: S. 1272, the "Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program Act of 2007," focusing on seamless transition for our National Guard troops, introduced by Senators Isakson and Chambliss; as well as H.R. 2330, the "Veterans' Employment Transition Support Act of 2007," introduced by Representative McCotter. Both of these proposed initiatives help strengthen the cause of veteran job seekers and will help us assist more ex-military personnel in their job search.

In summation, we look forward to supporting the Committee's work on Seamless Transition and will be glad to be of assistance and provide additional information as needed to further illuminate this important issue.

Thank you for your time.

BRADLEY-MORRIS' RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF TURBOTAP/DOD TRANSPORTAL/DEFENSE KNOWLEDGE ONLINE (DKO) PORTAL

RESUME DISTRIBUTION

Resumes submitted to TurboTAP must be distributed beyond *Monster.com* to other free job seeker services for transitioning military. *Monster.com* only represents a portion of available jobs (e.g., we understand that *Monster.com* which powers *TurboTAP.org* only presents jobs that employers pay to advertise), and in our experience, *Monster.com/Military.com* does not have visibility of many of the highest-value and most applicable jobs for transitioning servicemembers (such as those found at Bradley-Morris, Inc./*CivilianJobs.com*).

FREE JOB PLACEMENT SERVICES

Free job placement services must be highlighted.—In the Senate hearing, a repeated prominent theme emerged: There is a pronounced communication gap that exists between private sector companies' job opportunities (such as those offered through companies like ours) and getting that information into the hands of transitioning servicemembers and veterans. Adding to this gap, TurboTAP is designed as a "do-it-yourself" site.

To help address these gaps, free services that do part of the job search "leg work" for transitioning servicemembers must be "up front."

Intuitively, it would seem a transitioning servicemember would want to learn about the free added-value services first, on the home page, services that actually schedule interviews and/or match them with applicable military-friendly companies (such as the services offered by companies like ours).

On the current web site, there is space available under the More Resources area to add a Free Job Placement Services section (see addenda for more detailed information on this suggestion).

We have provided additional detail for each of these points in the Addenda attached.

In conclusion, Secretary Dominguez brought out many good points in his written testimony regarding TurboTAP. However, one statement gave us pause:

> ". . . we further plan to make transition an on-line transaction much like banking and bill paying have become."

If this is indeed the future of TAP that TurboTAP portends, we do not feel this is a productive direction if the ultimate goal of TAP is for transitioning servicemembers to secure civilian employment. In fact, we feel this direction would be at odds with the best interests of the transitioning servicemember if, again, the end result of TAP is meant to be civilian employment.

Our company, Bradley-Morris, Inc. (BMI) and our subsidiary, *CivilianJobs.com*, deliver jobs to transitioning servicemembers every day. Over our company's 15-year history, this experience has shown us that hiring is an "in-person" business. Interviews are conducted in-person, job fairs are conducted in-person, base visits and career counseling are conducted in-person, etc. "In-person" is the ultimate essential ingredient to employment.

If TAP/TurboTAP isn't helping to deliver this essential ingredient by communicating, promoting and linking to the free "in-person" job seeker services, services that companies like Bradley-Morris, Inc. and *CivilianJobs.com* offer, we do not believe that TAP and TurboTAP will be as successful as we all hope they would be.

BRADLEY-MORRIS, INC.
MILITARY PLACEMENT SPECIALISTS

ADDENDA:

Detail of Key TurboTAP / DOD Transportal / Defense Knowledge Online (DKO) portal(s) Areas to be Addressed offered by Bradley-Morris, Inc.

Submitted to Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs June 26, 2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Resume Distribution from TurboTAP

2. Free Job Placement Services
   a. Recommendation to More Resources Area on home page of TurboTAP
   b. Recommendation to Employment Hub on home page of TurboTAP
      i. Addition #1, Adding a Step to Getting a Great Civilian Job
      ii. Addition #2, Adding a Link to Other Career Fairs
      iii. Addition #3, Alphabetization and Expansion o f Where to Look for Great Jobs
      iv. Addition #4, Adding a Resource to Employment Checklist
      v. Addition #5, Creation of new Job Board Page
      vi. Addition #6, Feedback on Building Your Resume

3. Comments on Transition Guide_RC.pdf downloadable guide
   a. On page 1 of guide, Link to TurboTAP, identification of incorrect link
   b. On page 10 of guide, Step 2. Review the Transition Counseling Checklist, suggested bullet point to be added
   c. On page 13, Phase Five: The Job Search, suggested new section to be added
   d. On page 20, D. Where to Look for Great Jobs, suggested alphabetization and expansion
   e. On page 24, Skills Assessment, suggested new link
   f. On page 109, Employment Assistance Websites, suggested new section to be added

4. Comments on PreSepGuide_AD.pdf downloadable guide
   a. On page 11, Phase Five: The Job Search, suggested new section to be added
   b. On page 16, B. Where to Look for Great Jobs, suggested alphabetization and expansion
   c. On page 20, Skills Assessment, suggested new link
   d. On page 103, Appendix A-Preseparation Timeline, suggested new section to be added
   e. On page 112, Employment Assistance Websites, suggested new section to be added

5. DOD Transportal
   a. Suggested additional links to be included on DOD Transportal
   b. In "Specialized Job Search Links," suggested new paragraph to be added
   c. In "General Job Search and Resume Posting Links," suggested new paragraph to be added

6. Defense Knowledge Online (DKO) Portal

Corporate Headquarters - Atlanta Office • 1825 Barrett Lakes Blvd. • Suite 300 • Kennesaw, GA 30144
(678) 819-4185 • Fax (678) 819-5185 • www.bradley-morris.com
Norfolk • **Atlanta** • **Austin** • **Chicago** • **San Diego**

1. **SUBJECT:** **Resume Distribution from TurboTAP**

COMMENT: **Resumes submitted to TurboTAP must be distributed beyond Monster.com to other free job seeker services for transitioning military.**

To promote the best interests of the military job seeker and to maximize their job opportunities, distribution of their resumes should be expanded to include the many, existing free military-focused job services (both for-profit and non-profit).

We believe this could be accomplished very simply: After a job seeker completes their resume on TurboTAP.org, a choice would be presented of free job seeker services to which the user may elect to distribute their resume (instead of automatically limiting their distribution to Monster.com / Military.com as with the existing system).

An example of this alphabetical list could be similar to the following:

- ☐ Bradley-Morris.com (www.Bradley-Morris.com)
- ☐ CivilianJobs.com (www.CivilianJobs.com)
- ☐ Monster.com / Military.com (www.Monster.com)
- ☐ Etc.
- ☐ Select all

2. **SUBJECT:** **Free Job Placement Services**

COMMENT: **Free job placement services must be highlighted and promoted on TurboTAP (and other military transition sites operated by DOD / DOL / VA / branches of service).**

Below are specific instances where inclusion of information about these services would help close the communication gap between service members and civilian job opportunities that was so clearly articulated in the Senate committee hearing.

a. The following is a recommendation to the **HOME page of TurboTAP.org:**

- **ADDITION TO MORE RESOURCES AREA: Add Free Job Seeker Services section**
  As referenced above, we believe that a critical step to closing the communication gap between transitioning service members and civilian job opportunities is to promote the existence of "in-person" services up front on the homepage of TurboTAP.org.

  As such, we respectfully request the addition of a section on the **homepage of TurboTAP.org (www.TurboTAP.org)**, in the **MORE RESOURCES area**, a new third sub-section that says:

> **Free Job Seeker Services**
> These services help do some of the "leg work" of job hunting for you

(This would link to a new page that says)

> **Free Job Seeker Services**
>
> In recognition of the benefits associated with public-private partnerships, TAP and each Military Department endorses and promotes transition assistance and programs offered by private companies who provide job seeker services at no cost to transitioning service members and veterans. These corporations share our goal of helping veterans find jobs during transition as well as after their service.
>
> Many of these programs, provide services that will do some of the "leg work" for you in your job search:
>
> - ▶ Bradley-Morris.com (www.Bradley-Morris.com)
> - ▶ CivilianJobs.com (www.CivilianJobs.com)
> - ▶ Etc.

Page 2/ Section 2B/ Free Job Placement Services/On Home Page of TurboTAP.org/Employment Hub.

b. The following are recommendations to sections found within the **Employment Hub found on Home Page**

i. **ADDITION #1 TO EMPLOYMENT HUB: Add a New Step to Section under Employment Hub**
(http://www.transitionassistanceprogram.com/portal/transition/resources/Employment_Hub)

The 5 Steps to Getting a Great Civilian Job....

We believe it would be beneficial to the transitioning service member if these 5 Steps were **amended to 6 steps...**

Step 1 Translate Your Military Skills

Step 2 Build Your Resume

Step 3 Search Jobs

▶ Step 4 Register with Free Job Seeker Services

(This link would link to the "Free Job Seeker Services" page outlined in the preceding bullet point above.)

Step 5 Network

Step 6 Interview Tips

ii. **ADDITION #2 TO EMPLOYMENT HUB/Job Hunting Tools: Add link to other Career Fairs**
(http://www.transitionassistanceprogram.com/portal/transition/resources/Employment_Hub)

Under the **Attend a Career Fair section** of Job Hunting Tools, we respectfully request a link be added under **Featured Job Fairs** to include Bradley-Morris Hiring Conferences as well as CivilianJobs.com Job Fairs as both of these type of events represent multiple monthly opportunities for transitioning service members and veterans nation-wide to be connected with job opportunities specifically targeted to those with military experience. While they are currently listed further down on the page, under the "Upcoming Job Fairs" header, when that page is pulled up, unless one scrolls down, the only section visible is Featured Job Fairs which, at this time, only lists Military.com Job Fairs.

iii. **ADDITION #3 TO EMPLOYMENT HUB: Alphabetization and Expansion - Where to Look for Great Jobs**
(www.transitionassistanceprogram.com/portal/transition/lifestyles/Employment/Where_to_Look_for_Great_Jobs)

Under Employment Hub / Employment Assistance (in the left hand navigation) / Where to Look for Great Jobs, we suggest an alphabetization and expansion of the list to include the "in-person" free services which would be greatly beneficial to transitioning service members, e.g.,

www.bls.gov
www.Bradley-Morris.com ◀
www.CivilianJobs.com ◀
www.doleta.gov/programs
www.doleta.gov/jobseekers/building_your_career.cfm
www.hirevetsfirst.gov
TurboTAP Employment Hub
www.usajobs.gov/

Page 3/ Section 2B Employment Hub Additions continued…

iv. **ADDITION #4 to EMPLOYMENT HUB: Adding a Resource to Employment Checklist**
(http://www.transitionassistanceprogram.com/portal/transition/resources/checklists/Employment_Checklist)

Under TurboTAP home page section Quick Reference Checklists / Employment_Checklist, we suggest the following:

In the 3rd bullet where military.com/careers is referenced as a resource, we respectfully request www.Bradley-Morris.com be listed as another resource.

In the 6th bullet, we respectfully request www.CivilianJobs.com be added as another Job Fair resource.

v. **ADDITION #5 to EMPLOYMENT HUB: New Job Board Page**
Obviously, the **TurboTAP.org job board** should expose transitioning service members to as many civilian job opportunities as possible. We respectfully request instructions regarding how to post Bradley-Morris, Inc. / CivilianJobs.com job openings for service members on the TurboTAP job board:

TurboTAP.org Job Board
(http://www.transitionassistanceprogram.com/search_jobs.tpp)

In addition, when a service member clicks on the TurboTAP.org Job Board, they are directed to "their" home page offering sections of "My Resumes," "Saved Searches," "Cover Letters," and "Saved Jobs." It is under "Saved Jobs" where they are given the opportunity to "Begin Job Search." **However this link takes them to a site that we understand is powered by the Monster.com / Military.com Job Board.**

We respectfully suggest a new page be created at which service members are given a list of ALL Job Boards available at no cost to them ensuring the broadest opportunity for job searches at which they can "explore hundreds of thousands of job opportunities."

vi. **ADDITION #6 to EMPLOYMENT HUB: Under Employment Assistance/ Step 2 Build your Resume**
(http://www.transitionassistanceprogram.com/portal/transition/lifestyles/Employment/Resume_Writing_for_the_New_Millennium)

Based on our experience with military-to-civilian resumes, the feedback we receive from employers in some cases contradicts this information. We offer more contemporary resume training in our own job seeker online modules and would be glad to work with DOD and TurboTAP to collaborate on a revision of this page as needed.

3. **SUBJECT:** **Transition Guide_RC.pdf downloadable guide**

COMMENT: On the **"TransitionGuide_RC.pdf"**, downloadable on the homepage of TurboTAP.org (the below applies to the May 2007 version which is the live version as of the date of this letter):

a. The **link to TurboTAP on page 1** is incorrect and links to a non-functioning web page. It should be TurboTAP.org.

b. In **Step 2. Review the Transition Counseling Checklist**, page 10, we respectfully suggest to add a bullet that says:

- Register with one or more of the free private military job seeker services that are listed on the home page of TurboTAP.org. Many of these services will do some of the "leg work" for you in your job search. We recommend taking advantage of all free job seeker services available to you.

(This assumes that free military job seeker services such as those offered by Bradley-Morris, Inc. / CivilianJobs.com are in fact added to the home page of TurboTAP.org as suggested earlier in the addenda.)

Page 4/ Section 3/ Transition Guide Recommendations continued…

c. In **Phase Five: The Job Search**, page 13, we respectfully suggest to add a section that states:

> In recognition of the benefits associated with public-private partnerships, **TAP and each Military Department endorses and promotes transition assistance and programs offered by private companies who provide job seeker services at no cost to transitioning service members and veterans.** While some of these corporations may be classified as "for profit," their services are free to all service members and thus are a valuable resource to complement our existing programs, no matter how these services may be delivered (including but not limited to the web, on or near military installations, etc.). These corporations share our goal of helping veterans find jobs during transition as well as after their service.
>
> **Register with one or more of the free private military job seeker services that are listed on the home page of TurboTAP.org**. Many of these services will do some of the "leg work" for you in your job search and we recommend taking advantage of them.

Such an action will serve to promote the beneficial relationships being developed between the public and private communities. (This assumes that free military job seeker services such as those offered by Bradley-Morris, Inc. / CivilianJobs.com are in fact added to the home page of TurboTAP.org.)

d. In the **D. Where to Look for Great Jobs** section, page 20, we suggest an alphabetization and expansion of the list to include the "in-person" free services would be greatly beneficial to transitioning service members, e.g.,

> www.bls.gov
> www.Bradley-Morris.com ◄
> www.CivilianJobs.com ◄
> www.doleta.gov/programs
> www.doleta.gov/jobseekers/building_your_career.cfm
> www.hirevetsfirst.gov
> TurboTAP Employment Hub
> www.usajobs.gov/

e. On page 24, we respectfully suggest to change this link to include all the free job seeker services and group the military.com/careers link with the other free job seeker services.

Change….

For more assistance in skills assessment, go to http://www.hirevetsfirst.gov and http://www.Military.com/careers.

To…

For more assistance in skills assessment, go to http://www.hirevetsfirst.gov and also sites found on the Free Job Seeker Services page (the Free Job Seeker Services page would be new page of content that is outlined above).

f. In the **EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE WEBSITES** section, page 109, we respectfully request the addition of a section below the Department of Labor Resources:

Private companies offering free job services to transitioning military:

a. Bradley-Morris, Inc. (BMI): www.Bradley-Morris.com

b. CivilianJobs.com: www.CivilianJobs.com

Page5/ Section 4/ PreSep Guide Recommendations

4. **SUBJECT:** **"PreSepGuide_AD.pdf downloadable guide**

COMMENT: **On the "PreSepGuide_AD.pdf"** , downloadable on the homepage of TurboTAP.org (the below applies to the February 2007 version which is the live version as of the date of this letter):

a. In **Phase Five: The Job Search**, page 11, we respectfully suggest to add a section that states:

> In recognition of the benefits associated with public-private partnerships, **TAP and each Military Department endorses and promotes transition assistance and programs offered by private companies who provide job seeker services at no cost to transitioning service members and veterans.** While some of these corporations may be classified as "for profit," their services are free to all service members and thus are a valuable resource to complement our existing programs, no matter how these services may be delivered (including but not limited to the web, on or near military installations, etc.). These corporations share our goal of helping veterans find jobs during transition as well as after their service.
>
> **Register with one or more of the free private military job seeker services that are listed on the home page of TurboTAP.org.** Many of these services will do some of the "leg work" for you in your job search.

(Again, this assumes that free military job seeker services such as those offered by Bradley-Morris, Inc. / CivilianJobs.com are in fact added to the home page of TurboTAP.org.)

b. In the **B. Where to Look for Great Jobs** section, page 16, we suggest an alphabetization and expansion of the list to include the "in-person" free services which would be greatly beneficial to transitioning service members, e.g.,

> www.bls.gov
> www.Bradley-Morris.com ◄
> www.CivilianJobs.com ◄
> www.doleta.gov/programs
> www.doleta.gov/jobseekers/building_your_career.cfm
> www.hirevetsfirst.gov
> TurboTAP Employment Hub
> www.usajobs.gov/

c. On page 20, we respectfully suggest to change this link to include all the free job seeker services and group the military.com/careers link with the other free job seeker services.

Change....

For more assistance in skills assessment, go to http://www.hirevetsfirst.gov and http://www.Military.com/careers.

To...

For more assistance in skills assessment, go to http://www.hirevetsfirst.gov and also sites found on the Free Job Seeker Services page (the Free Job Seeker Services page would be new page of content that is outlined above).

(Also assumes creation of new Free Job Seeker Services section on Home page of TurboTAP.org.)

d. In **Appendix A – Preseparation Timeline** page 103, we respectfully suggest to add a section at the top: **Two Years Prior to Separation** (one that is separate from the one for Retirees).

Transitioning service members can greatly benefit from seeking out companies offering free job seeker and career counseling services such as Bradley-Morris, Inc. as much as two years in advance of their separation. As such, we believe a section should be added as follows:

Two Years Prior to Separation
Register with one or more of the Free Job Seeker Services on TurboTAP.org as listed on the Home Page of TurboTAP.org.

As implied, this would be linked to the new Free Job Seeker Services on TurboTAP.org's Home page as described on preceding pages.

e. In the **EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE WEBSITES** section, page 112, we respectfully request the addition of a section below the Department of Labor Resources:

Private companies offering free job services to transitioning military:

- Bradley-Morris, Inc. (BMI): www.Bradley-Morris.com
- CivilianJobs.com: www.CivilianJobs.com

5. **SUBJECT:** **DOD Transportal**

COMMENT: We recommend adding outside resources to DOD's Transportal website including the following:

a. **On the DOD Transportal:**

Job seekers could benefit from the inclusion of Bradley-Morris and CivilianJobs.com links. As such, we respectfully request the links to www.bradley-morris.com and www.CivilianJobs.com be added to:

http://www.dodtransportal.dod.mil/dav/lsnmedia/LSN/dodtransportal/

and/or here:

http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/portal/page/itc/MHF/MHF_IFRAME?current_id=20.20.80.132.0.0.0.0.0

b. In the **"Specialized Job Search Links"** section on this page: http://www.dodtransportal.dod.mil/dav/lsnmedia/LSN/dodtransportal/ynclinks.htm , add the following:

"Bradley-Morris, Inc. (BMI) (links to www.Bradley-Morris.com): Bradley-Morris provides no-cost transition services to both officer and enlisted military talent who are transitioning from bases in the U.S., Europe and Asia, and has placed more than 15,000 job seekers into jobs in corporate America. Specializes in leadership, technical, sales and operations positions and conducts monthly Hiring Conferences with Fortune 1000 and emerging sector companies."

c. In the **"General Job Search and Resume Posting Links"** section on this page: http://www.dodtransportal.dod.mil/dav/lsnmedia/LSN/dodtransportal/ynclinks.htm , add the following:

"CivilianJobs.com (links to www.CivilianJobs.com): CivilianJobs.com is the online job board where America's military connects with civilian careers. In addition to our job board, CivilianJobs.com hosts monthly job fairs at or near major military bases. These services are delivered at no cost to military-experienced job seekers."

Page 7/ Section 6/ Defense Knowledge Online (DKO) portal

6. **SUBJECT:** **Defense Knowledge Online (DKO) portal** (including the branches' existing sites, e.g. Army AKO, Navy AKO, etc.):

COMMENT: DKO has been announced as the single enterprise service portal, serving as the entry point for all U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) and authorized users to access DoD and government intranets supporting operations, missions and critical support processes for forces worldwide.

To further the best interests of the transitioning service member, we believe including links to free job seeker resources in this portal and the existing AKO, NKO, etc. sites would increase the chances of a successful result in transitioning service members securing a civilian job.

On the home page of the main transition / TAP informational section on this site(s), the following would be included:

In recognition of the benefits associated with public-private partnerships, **TAP and each Military Department endorses and promotes transition assistance and programs offered by private companies who provide job seeker services at no cost to transitioning service members and veterans.** While some of these corporations may be classified as "for profit," their services are free to all service members and thus are a valuable resource to complement our existing programs, no matter how these services may be delivered (including but not limited to the web, on or near military installations, etc.). **These corporations share our goal of helping veterans find jobs during transition as well as after their service.**

Register with one or more of the free private military job seeker services that are listed below. Many of these services will do some of the "leg work" for you in your job search.

- Bradley-Morris.com (www.Bradley-Morris.com)
- CivilianJobs.com (www.CivilianJobs.com)
- Etc.

#END#

Senator MURRAY [presiding]. I would like to thank all of you for your testimony, and I apologize for everybody. I had a VA markup downstairs. I know Senator Craig did, as well. Senator Akaka has gone to a markup. Everybody is returning, and I want to thank Senator Brown, who assisted in chairing for a minute. Senator Akaka has asked that I take over for a few minutes. And to all of you who it looks like we are just running in and out and not paying attention, we are trying our best to pay attention here, but it has been a difficult morning with so many markups in the Senate.

But I want to thank all three of our panelists today for being here to talk about a very important topic and making sure that our men and women who serve us don't come home and find themselves unemployed, which is far too often the case today. All of you have done a really good job in working throughout your professional lives to address that issue and we really appreciate it.

I wanted to ask you one question. I have found that a lot of veterans who return home from Iraq and Afghanistan are not aware of the opportunities that are available to them. I held a roundtable out in my State in Vancouver, Washington, and brought in some Guard and Reserve members who had returned from Iraq, had not been able to find a job, and I also had at the table, people from the Washington State WorkSource whose job is to find jobs for people who don't have jobs. They didn't know each other existed and they sat there at the roundtable and started talking about how they could get jobs for these young men.

Yet until I had that roundtable, they didn't even know they existed. The WorkSource employees told us that they could not get access to veterans' information. They couldn't call and get veterans' names so that they could reach out to them and the veterans themselves, for whatever reason, didn't know that this WorkSource even existed.

So I wanted to ask you, how can we make veterans more aware of the services, and do you find that it is hard to access the veterans' names and how can we work through that?

Mr. BRADLEY. Well, first, there are a lot of people that are in the service that don't think about what they are going to do after the service until the day they leave the service. The missions are intense. It is not everybody, but that is a decent percentage of it.

If the goal is to have people in the military see something or do something, then I think the way to accomplish that is to hold the commanders accountable for it being done. That is how things work. A lot of the information that we want veterans to know, we are depending on them to do it, for them to look at it. And the reality is the ones that need the help the most are the ones that are going to be least likely to do that. So sometimes there needs to be a little bit of a push. Have you looked at this? I want to make sure. So I would make the commanders responsible for making sure that gets done.

Ms. MORRIS. You know, Senator, it is funny, because you were talking about, when you were giving your speech earlier, that they are talented, they have skills, but people don't know it. Shaun and I often tell people, we feel that we are in the education business, not in the placement business, because that is really what it is about. It is educating not just the employers about the talent pool

and what they can bring, but also the individuals transitioning, letting them know what is available, and that is an educational process. We run into that all the time.

Kind of what I mentioned in my testimony is we are reaching out all the time to organizations, to facilities, anything we can do, ACAP, TAP, we have worked with all of them to try to get the information out. I don't know that there is a right answer, but certainly some of the things that were mentioned here today. You know, Secretary Ciccolella was talking about working together with organizations. We are partnering with them with job fairs. Again, that coordination will help.

So I think any public-private partnerships that can be established to help get the word out will help in that regard.

Mr. WARREN. I would agree with that. One of the most effective things that we have done is Secretary Ciccolella actually was on a phone call conference call with over 100 companies that are our member companies and he took the time to explain the transition programs that are available and the information that is available for veterans, and that was by far the most popular session that we have had like that. Again, I think I would go along with that public-private partnerships can really do a lot to help get that information out. In that case, he took over an hour on a conference call to actually go through all the programs and our employers were overwhelmed by that.

Senator MURRAY. I appreciate that, and I know the agency heads are no longer at the table. I hope that they get to Members of Congress information, because one of the things I do at every Chamber meeting or Rotary meeting I go to in talking to businesses is say, I am speaking on behalf of a lot of men and women who are coming home. They are skilled. They show up on time. They have good work skills. They are dedicated employees. They need a job. I am counting on you to help provide that. And I think if we can provide that information, to any of the agencies that are here, to Members of Congress, all of us go home and talk to those organizations and help get some of this information out, it would, I think, be of benefit.

Senator Isakson?

STATEMENT OF HON. JOHNNY ISAKSON, U.S. SENATOR FROM GEORGIA

Senator ISAKSON. Thank you, Senator Murray, and I want to welcome Shaun Bradley and Sandy Morris. Not only are they from my home State, but they are from my home county. They are in Kennesaw, Georgia, I think the largest organization of your type in the United States, is that not correct?

Ms. MORRIS. We like to think so.

[Laughter.]

Senator ISAKSON. Well, I just wanted to throw that advertising plug in for you.

Ms. MORRIS. Thank you. We appreciate that.

Senator ISAKSON. Speaking of advertising, Sandy, thank you for talking about S. 1272. We do think that is an important piece of legislation and somebody like yourself acknowledging that, I think is very helpful to us.

I think you answered the question that I had, Shaun, talking about putting the responsibility on the commanders, but I would like to just push that a little bit further. Talk about some things that DOD can—well, let me preface this. I was at Mologne House on Monday. Mologne House at Walter Reed is where the wounded veterans who are in transition—they are not totally ready to go back to their post or back to society, they have medical problems—Mologne House is where they and their families can stay. I know the Army is making a real effort to help have counselors and guides for them to work through the medical side. Do you know if there is much of that on the job placement side?

Mr. BRADLEY. As far as——

Senator ISAKSON. As far as the military or the Department of Defense.

Mr. BRADLEY. With disabled——

Senator ISAKSON. No, not just disabled, but in terms of really trying to get job counseling and get the veterans who are leaving or transitioning out connected with people like yourselves.

Mr. BRADLEY. Oh, there is a real strong program with the TAP and the ACAP offices and they do a really fine job. There is career counseling. There is resume help. It is good. Now, their challenge is to deal with the volume of people that are going through the program, and just as with any large program, are they able to provide as much one-on-one attention to each personally the services they would like? You would have to ask them that. But, oh yes, those are good people at those offices.

Senator ISAKSON. From the standpoint of job placement, you mentioned veterans with disabilities. From the standpoint of job placement, what percentage of those you are placing have a disability, a service-related disability?

Mr. BRADLEY. Well, we can tell you how many of our own Bradley-Morris staff is classified as disabled. Sixteen percent of Bradley-Morris's——

Senator ISAKSON. Sixteen percent?

Mr. BRADLEY. Sixteen percent of our own people are classified as military disabled. While we don't have that statistics for the people that we place into companies, we could look at it and see if we could come up with it. It is a sizable percentage, and we have offered to help in this area. I mean, when Sandy was talking about clarity on being able to work with a private or a for-profit company, we actually offered our services to a government agency that was providing services to disabled veterans. Because we were a for-profit company, you know, thanks but no thanks. So we would like to be able to do that.

Senator ISAKSON. OK. Maybe I shouldn't ask this, but I always like to shine a light on the good guys. Are there companies that you could point to that are really aggressive in seeking and employing veterans?

Ms. MORRIS. Oh, absolutely. I mean, we work with thousands of companies all over the country and one of the things we try to do—I mean, you have to remember, what our people are doing on the phone every day, as Senator Murray was talking about, is calling all these companies all over the country to educate them and tell them about this resource.

The biggest problem is really that a lot of the companies aren't aware of it. Once they are made aware, once we introduce them to these candidates, once they interview them, they are sold. They come back time and time again, and then, of course, success breeds success because they talk to their friends, their associates, or their subsidiaries or divisions and then it spreads. So once they are introduced to the candidate pool, absolutely, they are all very interested.

Senator ISAKSON. And I guess, following up, this will be my last question because my time is running out, what has been your most successful method? You talked about how you get the word to the employers on what is out there and the service. What is your most successful tool that you use to get to the soldiers?

Ms. MORRIS. Well, it is day-to-day letting them know we are here. It is that contact, constant contact. We have people that all they do all the time is travel to all the bases. We go overseas. We go to Hawaii. As Shaun mentioned, we work with the TAPs and ACAP offices to continually let them know that when they are ready, they have a place to go as a resource to use.

Senator ISAKSON. Thank you very much, and thanks for coming to Washington today and testifying.

Mr. BRADLEY. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman AKAKA. [presiding]. Thank you very much.

Senator Webb?

STATEMENT OF HON. JIM WEBB,
U.S. SENATOR FROM VIRGINIA

Senator WEBB. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I appreciate the testimony that you all gave this morning. I read it before I got here. I would like to, first of all, make a comment about a portion of your testimony where you indicate that there, at least in some areas, was some resistance to the fact that you are a for-profit enterprise. My experience in this area goes a long way back. In fact, I see Ron Drock [ph.] out here in the audience, who used to work for the Disabled American Veterans 29 years ago when we were working on these.

I would like to say, first of all, that the experience we have had with government actually trying to do this kind of job has been abysmal. We had a program that during the Carter Administration they tried to put into place. I think Ron will probably remember this. It was, like, a $40 million program to try to, with the Department of Labor, actually help do the same sort of thing you are doing and it was just horrible. I think we got something like 400 jobs for veterans in about a year.

So the fact that you are doing this and making money out of it is not a bad thing when you consider what the alternatives are for the kinds of expenditures when government tries to replicate the sorts of things that you are doing.

I would also like to say that my brother, the first job he got when he left the Marine Corps was through a job fair program like this. I think they are very useful and the right way to do it.

The questions that I have go to, first of all, awareness. We talk about awareness, awareness on both sides and particularly with respect to enlisted personnel. I am wondering, first of all, what per-

centage of people you are placing are junior enlisteds. Do you have any idea?

Mr. BRADLEY. Historically, Senator, we will place about 60 to 65 percent enlisted, 35 to 40 percent officer.

Senator WEBB. Do you know what percentage of those are junior enlisteds rather than people retiring?

Mr. BRADLEY. I would need to get the specific number, if you would like, but because there are more of them, more junior enlisteds than are senior, it is probably the majority, I mean, the E–4, E–5, there are more of them and consequently more are placed.

Senator WEBB. That is good to know. The question really goes to the awareness inside the active duty ranks that this sort of assistance is available when they are transitioning out. I find anecdotally that they are less likely to be employed at the point of their discharge rather than when they go back home. Is that something that you have seen?

Mr. BRADLEY. That is not our program. Our program is that before they leave the service, they have a job, they know where they are going. Typically, they will interview 60 to 90 days before they get out. They will have a job. It takes about three weeks before initial interview to job offer, so they are good to go. So as far as awareness, we believe, as Sandy said, we want them to be aware of us. We say it over and over and over again to make sure they are aware of us, and we get a lot of—because we have been so successful, we get huge numbers of—you know how it works, buddies referring buddies referring buddies and that takes on a life of its own and that is the majority of our candidates now come to us that way. But we don't rely on that.

Senator WEBB. That is really great to hear. We need a lot more of it. One of the things I have been working with, in fact, with our unions in Virginia, where they say they want to go after veterans, as has been said many times, somebody who has spent four, six years on active duty compared to people in their age group has a much more refined sense of responsibility, knows how to get things done. They are in an environment where you have got to get things done every day. They are a great commodity. In talking to the unions in Virginia about wanting to reach those people, I have been trying to encourage them to get closer and closer to the point of discharge rather than waiting until people come back to the community. So I really commend you on what you are doing here.

Mr. BRADLEY. Senator, if I could comment on that, I have been doing this 20 years and Sandy has more experience than me, even though you would not be able to tell that, and I don't think there has ever been a case—the military-experienced job seeker versus his civilian counterpart, the same age, there is no comparison because the military-experienced job seeker will tell what he did from a leadership standpoint, from a stress level, from just cultural sensitivity, every category that is important to somebody being a successful employee.

Now, translating that to a world that sometimes doesn't understand—I would not say that people don't value, because I think they do, but there is a world out there of people that haven't served or don't know anybody in the military, that they just don't know.

They just don't understand. As Sandy said earlier, when they interview them, it is like their eyes pop open. They just can't believe how good these military candidates are. That is the world that we live in.

Senator WEBB. I am glad you are doing it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Senator Webb.

Senator Tester?

Senator TESTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just a couple real quick questions just to clarify.

Are all three of your groups working before discharge for placement, all three folks here? I mean, I understand that Shaun and Sandy, you are focused on the folks before they get out or they are discharged.

Mr. WARREN. Both.

Senator TESTER. Both?

Mr. WARREN. Both.

Senator TESTER. OK. For the ones after they get out, how do they get access? How do you inform them you are available? Is it by mail, or is it by direct contact? Do you call them? The ones that are in the military are a little easier because they are in a spot where you can identify them.

Ms. MORRIS. Right. Well, after they have already been out, are you saying that they have already had a job and they are making a second job change, or they just exited——

Senator TESTER. Either one.

Ms. MORRIS. OK. Well, they can come to us a number of different ways. Obviously, again through the public and private partnerships, we try to get the word out. A lot of it is through referrals, because even though they may not have a job, maybe their buddy got a job through one of the sources.

But we also do a lot of advertising. We publish a newspaper called Civilian Job News and that goes to all the bases. And so obviously there are going to be people reading that, and we have got advertisements in there as well as information to provide to them as to what they need to do.

Senator TESTER. Do you have outreach, too, for those that are out of the military that are in civilian life? Does that publication go to the folks who are out of the military?

Ms. MORRIS. That publication doesn't, but we do a lot of advertising outside of that——

Senator TESTER. OK.

Ms. MORRIS. [continuing].—and we have a job board and online services, as well.

Senator TESTER. OK. Well, I don't ask these questions to be critical. As Senator Webb, I appreciate the work you do because I think it is valuable.

Do you reach into all States as far as placement?

Ms. MORRIS. We try to.

Mr. BRADLEY. Yes, Senator. I mean, there are States where we have not placed anybody. I actually——

Senator TESTER. How about pulling the veterans in? Is it all 50 States for that, too, because——

Mr. BRADLEY. Oh, absolutely.

Senator TESTER. OK.

Mr. BRADLEY. Absolutely, because somebody who is stationed in Wisconsin, which is where I am from, doesn't mean they want to spend the rest of their life there.

Senator TESTER. Then somebody in California might want to, say, work in Montana.

[Laughter.]

Senator TESTER. Thank you folks for all you do. I appreciate it.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Senator Tester.

Let me ask two or even three questions. Mr. Warren, as a successor to America's Job Bank, please describe the role your organization is undertaking to assist returning servicemembers make a smooth and effective transition from the military to a civilian workforce.

Mr. WARREN. Our primary role in that respect is to help the employers, all employers, but primarily the Federal contractors, get their jobs to the local level, to the State level, to the local DVOPs and LVERs and to the people, the counselors that can help them. In other words, looking at IBM as an example, IBM would have to post jobs in, I think, about 30 States, and what we do is electronically deliver those jobs to the appropriate DVOP, LVER, and One-Stop Career Center in each State to help those people know where the jobs are, where the Federal contractors are, and how to get the veterans into those jobs.

Chairman AKAKA. Let me ask just one more question. DOD has recently launched its TurboTAP web site. I recognize that DirectEmployers is a contributing resource to that site.

Mr. WARREN. That is correct.

Chairman AKAKA. I would greatly appreciate it if each of you would visit the finished product on the web and share with the Committee for the record your reaction to it and any suggestions you might have for improvements. So I am asking you to do that and we would really appreciate your responses.

Mr. WARREN. Could I respond now to that, or——

Chairman AKAKA. Yes.

Mr. WARREN. As part of our participation in that product, our firm is actually providing the job search capability that connects the veterans with the employer, and so I have looked at that extensively, the whole product, the whole service. And as a citizen and as a veteran, I can say that I am probably more impressed with that service and what they have done with that than anything that I have seen or any service, especially any online service, that I have seen. I think it is an outstanding product and I think they have done a tremendous job in developing it.

In terms of looking at it and making recommendations beyond that, I would have to spend more time.

Chairman AKAKA. Well, thank you. What about——

Mr. BRADLEY. We would be happy to look at it, Senator.

Chairman AKAKA. Fine. Then will you respond in writing?

Ms. MORRIS. Absolutely.

Mr. BRADLEY. Yes, sir.

Chairman AKAKA. I really appreciate that.

Let me ask the Members here, do you have any further questions?

Well, I want to thank you so much for your testimony of panel two. It will help us in our work here. It is looking exciting and we certainly want to help seamless transition of our military people. So again, thank you very much for being here.

Mr. BRADLEY. Thank you, Senator.

Mr. WARREN. Thank you.

Chairman AKAKA. For our final panel, we will hear some very personal stories. First, the Committee welcomes Corey McGee. Mr. McGee was severely injured in Iraq and he will share his inspiring success story with us.

We are also pleased to welcome Monique Rizer, a young wife and mother who was recently awarded the Army Commander's Award for Public Service for her work as a Family Readiness Group leader during her husband's deployment in Iraq.

Mr. Don Osterberg, Vice President of Schneider National, Inc., of Green Bay, Wisconsin, will share some of his insight on transition from an employee's perspective.

We are happy to have you all join us today and look forward to hearing from you. So may I ask Mr. McGee to begin with your statement.

STATEMENT OF COREY McGEE, OEF/OIF VETERAN

Mr. MCGEE. Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. It is an honor to be here on behalf of the newly injured soldiers coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan who will be transitioning into civilian life to find new careers, not just jobs. From experience, I can tell you that it is not an easy road to travel, but I hope that today will bring us one step closer to creating a better experience for combat-wounded veterans and their families around the United States.

After receiving the news that I had to retire from the military due to the wounds I received in combat, I decided that I needed to think about what was next. I was worried that no one would want to hire a paraplegic. I had joined the Army straight out of high school. The only thing I was trained to do was be a sniper for a scout platoon. Even if there were an opportunity for employment, how would I know about it and set up an interview? What would I wear and how would I get to the interview? Because I had planned to be in the military for the next 20 years, I did not have a resume and the only degree I had was a high school diploma. I had no back-up plan. It never occurred to me that I would be paralyzed and searching for gainful employment.

After a few months after returning from Fallujah, I met a woman by the name of Jennie Lohowictz who gave me the answers I needed to begin to travel on the road to success.

She introduced me to the Coming Home to Work Program. This program allowed me to serve as a Department of Veterans Affairs volunteer, which enabled me to get the experience I needed to work in the business world. Though it goes against that old Army cliche, I volunteered.

I joined the nationwide volunteer group of thousands who serve veterans at VA hospitals, helping in a variety of assignments from escorting the patients to medical appointments within the hospital to working in administrative work. Volunteering gives returning

soldiers an opportunity to transition back into civilian life as well as establish relationships with VA staff and members of the veterans service organization community. It also allows soldiers to use old and current skills as well as learn new skills without the pressure of a job. It helps soldiers transition into the community and establish relationships, just as a young business professional in the real work world.

I have been through a lot within the last three years, from a quadriplegic to a paraplegic, to the man sitting here before you today, as I transitioned from an under-educated soldier with few practical skills to a college-educated Public Affairs Specialist with the help of this program. Even though I could no longer serve my country within the Army, I am proud to continue to serve from within. I now have a full-time position at the VA as a Public Affairs Specialist while also attending college full-time at the Northern Virginia Community College.

Thanks to my experiences, I was able to find a job in the VA medical center in Atlanta, Georgia, where I am moving with my soon-to-be wife. I plan to transfer to Emory University to further my education in the fall. I would not change a thing within the last seven years of my life. I would do it all over again if I could because I would not be here today without everything that I have done.

Having said that, though, there is one change that I would like to recommend that might be able to help soldiers and their families. I have two children from a previous marriage and know what it is like to worry endlessly about how to take care of them financially after a military career is cut short. After receiving the training I needed from the VA as a volunteer for a year, I knew I wanted to work for the VA as an actual employee once completing my medical discharge. However, no governmental agency could hire me nor guarantee me a position since I was still technically employed by the military.

By the end of my year-and-a-half of volunteering with the VA, I was living off the hospital grounds, going to work almost every day, and only rarely returning to Walter Reed for physical therapy and exams, yet I still had no idea if there would be a job for me upon my release from the military. It took two months for me to secure a position once I was discharged, a long time when you support two children and live in such an expensive city.

My suggestion is for the entire process to be more streamlined to make it easier for these young heroes to directly transition from a volunteer position to a permanent position once released. A government employer should have the option to hire a soldier part-time that is currently on medical hold and meets the standards for the position. For those soldiers who may not need office training, it would be most beneficial to have a point of contact to guide them to employers who are interested in hiring soldiers, disabled or not. Even better would be the establishment of a web site designed solely for retired soldiers and their families that would highlight job opportunities or training seminars and classes. This web site could be similar to the numerous other job market search sites, like *Monster.com* or *USAjobs.com*, but would only be accessible to retiring

soldiers. This would help families to eliminate the worry of finding a career and help soldiers recover faster during their rehabilitation.

Mr. Chairman, that ends my statement and I thank you for the privilege of appearing before the Committee today.

[The prepared statement of Mr. McGee follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF COREY MCGEE, OEF/OIF VETERAN

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. It is an honor to be here on behalf of the newly injured soldiers coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan who will be transitioning into civilian life to find new careers, not just jobs. From experience, I can tell you that it is not an easy road to travel, but I hope that today will bring us one-step closer to creating a better experience for combat wounded veterans and their families around the United States.

After receiving the news that I had to retire from the military due to the wounds I received in combat, I decided that I needed to think about what was next. I was worried that no one would want to hire a paraplegic. I had joined the Army straight out of high school, and the only thing I was trained for was to be a sniper for a scout platoon. Even if there were an opportunity for employment, how would I know about it and set up an interview? What would I wear and how would I get to the interview? Because I had planned to be in the military for the next 20 years, I did not have a resume and the only degree I had was a high school diploma. I had no back-up plan. It never occurred to me that I would be paralyzed and searching for gainful employment.

After a few months after returning from Falluja, I met a woman by the name of Jennie Lohowictz who gave me the answers I needed to begin to travel on the road to success. She introduced me to the, "Coming Home to Work Program." This program allowed me to serve as a Department of Veterans Affairs volunteer, which enabled me to get the experience I needed to work in the business world. Though it goes against that old Army cliche, I volunteered. I joined a nationwide volunteer group of thousands who serve veterans at VA hospitals helping in a variety of assignments from escorting patients, to medical appointments within the hospital, to working in administrative work. Volunteering gives returning soldiers an opportunity to transition back into civilian life, as well as establish relationships with VA staff and members of the veterans service organizations community. It also allows soldiers to use old and current skills as well as learn new skills without the pressure of a "job". It helps soldiers transition into the community and establish relationships just as a young business professional in the real work world.

I have been through a lot within the last three years. From a quadriplegic to a paraplegic, to the man standing here today as I transitioned from an undereducated soldier with few practical skills, to a college educated Public Affairs Specialist with the help of this program. Even though I could no longer serve my country within the Army, I am proud to continue to serve from within. I now have a full time position at the VA as a Public Affairs Specialist while also attending college full-time at the Northern Virginia Community College. Thanks to my experiences, I was able to find a job in the VA medical center in Atlanta, Georgia, where I am moving with my soon-to-be wife. I plan to transfer to Emory University to further my education in the fall. I would not change a thing within the last seven years of my life. I would do it all over again if I could, because I would not be here today without everything I have done.

Having said that, though, there is one change that I would like to recommend that might be able to help soldiers and their families. I have two children from a previous marriage and know what it is like to worry endlessly about how to take care of them financially after a military career is cut short. After receiving the training I needed from VA as a volunteer for a year, I knew I wanted to work for the VA as an actual employee once completing my medical discharge. However, no government agency could hire me nor guarantee me a position since I was still technically employed by the military. By the end of my year and a half of volunteering with the VA, I was living off of the hospital grounds, going to work almost every day, and only rarely returned to Walter Reed for physical therapy and exams. Yet, I still had no idea if there would be a job for me upon my release from the military. It took two months for me to secure a position once discharged, a long time when you support two children and live in such an expensive city. My suggestion is for the entire process to be more streamlined, to make it easier for these young heroes to directly transition from a volunteer position to a permanent position once released. A government employer should have the option to hire a soldier part time

that is currently on medical hold and meets the standards for the position. For those soldiers who may not need office training, it would be most beneficial to have a point of contact to guide them to employers who are interested in hiring soldiers, disabled or not. Even better would be the establishment of a web site designed solely for retired soldiers and their families that would highlight job opportunities or training seminars and classes. This website could be similar to the numerous other job-market search sites, like *monster.com* or *usajobs.com*, but would only be accessible to retiring soldiers. This will help families to eliminate the worry of finding a career and help soldiers recover faster during their rehabilitation.

Mr. Chairman, that ends my statement, and I thank you for the privilege of appearing before the Committee today.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. McGee.

Mr. MCGEE. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman AKAKA. We will hear now from Ms. Rizer.

STATEMENT OF MONIQUE RIZER, ARMY RESERVE SPOUSE

Ms. RIZER. Thank you. Thank you for your service, Corey. My name is Monique Rizer and I am married to a 13-year Army Reserve soldier who deployed to Iraq from May of 2005 until August of 2006. Thank you for inviting me to speak with you about how Reserve spouses return to civilian employment after a deployment. My entire statement has been submitted for the record, but I would like to share some highlights with you today.

My husband deployed three months after he moved to Virginia for his civilian job. I was transitioning from employee to contractor for a contracting and consulting firm I had worked for two years. When my husband deployed, I looked for work, but with two young children at home and a soldier at war, full-time opportunities were daunting. After his R&R in January of 2006, I felt overwhelmed and I decided to stop seeking employment or contracting opportunities altogether. It was in the best interests of my children and my soldier and the 20 families I supported as a Family Readiness Leader.

I was eager to work again when he returned from his tour August 2006, but the search was more difficult than I had expected. I was not aware of resources for Reserve or Guard spouses seeking professional employment and I received no government assistance. I relied on popular web sites and my own small network of friends.

During the first half of his tour when I was looking for work, recruiters called me regularly based on my publicly posted resume. When he returned home, I updated my resume with my FRG experience and the military award I had received for that work. I received only one call during that job search. I couldn't help but wonder if the lack of interest in my resume was because I now had a nearly two-year gap in my paid employment history. I can't be sure, but according to January 2006 Bureau of Labor Statistics, a woman my age with employment tenure of two years or more, which I had, the median time without work was five-and-a-half weeks. I was without work for nearly six months.

It was frustrating to think that I, too, had served my country while my husband was deployed, and it was more difficult looking for work now than before. My credentials hadn't changed. In fact, they had improved. I added a software course to my master's degree and was highly recommended by the military leader I worked with during the deployment.

Active duty spouses who relocate with their sponsor to an active duty station receive DOD job preference. I believe Congress should consider a six-month preference for Reserve and Guard spouses, as well, similar to six months of TRICARE benefits we receive post-deployment. Of course, this would not help Reserve and Guard spouses who live in remote areas as compared to areas here in Washington, DC, which is why civilian employment support is imperative.

I believe spouses must also be proactive and take advantage of the opportunities that are presented during a deployment. I immersed myself in military life during my husband's deployment. I told everyone I knew I was looking for a job and I continued to volunteer, which finally led to my employment.

However, I do believe I am behind my civilian peers due to the deployment. My husband is legally protected from this effect under the law. I make half the hourly rate of my last contracting opportunity. He, on the other hand, received a raise that he missed while he was in Iraq. I am in a field that I was not trained for, so I am not building a career in my primary area of experience. However, I also am offered benefits that I did not have as a contractor, such as paid leave, holidays, a retirement plan, and health care benefits. I am also now in a place I feel secure if he was deployed again, which we know is likely as a long-term Reserve family.

Day care is another area affected by a servicemember's deployment. My husband is currently on active duty, right now, actually, attending a military course for two weeks out of State. I am living what my life would be if he deployed again while I am working and it is challenging. He usually cares for our children one day a week during his flex schedule so I can work longer hours, and now I have to seek out friends to cover before and after-school care for my third-grader and full-day care for my 3-year-old. If I were paying for this, it would eat up more than 60 percent of my net pay, making the financial benefit hardly worth it.

My other consideration with returning civilian employment was that my husband suffered a traumatic brain injury in his first few days in Fallujah. It was mild compared to others, but I am still concerned about his long-term ability to provide for us, since we have invested in him as our primary breadwinner. I am constantly torn, like many military spouses, between being home as a support for my family and working hard outside the home to eventually be in a position to be the primary breadwinner if the situation demands it. For now, we take life one day at a time. We are very thankful that he is home and I am employed. So far, his civilian career is going well.

I believe widespread communication about resources available to Reserve and Guard spouses seeking employment would help. Employers to offer part-time work with benefits is crucial, and even extra leave time for military spouses who must take off for issues related to the servicemember's deployment would be beneficial. Day care is also key. Whether the servicemember is deployed or serving an extended battle assembly, two-week AT, or military course, there should be some provision for spouses who need extra day care assistance that their spouse usually provides. As with the

servicemember, the spouse should not be penalized for taking time to support his or her family while the servicemember is deployed. They should be able to reclaim their place in the civilian workforce.

Each military spouse's experience is unique, but today's Reserve and Guard spouses are relied upon for family support like never before. We are committed to that support, but our jobs and pursuit of higher education is sometimes delayed because of it. We resign, reduce hours, or change jobs. I believe I have shared some challenges we all face: Finding employment that works with our unique life, having consistent day care, and supporting our servicemember.

Thank you for your time.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Rizer follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MONIQUE RIZER, SPOUSE OF AN ARMY RESERVIST

My employment history since graduating with my master's degree in 2003 has been heavily influenced by my husband's military and civilian career. Up until the deployment I was progressing at a pace I was satisfied with and felt was on par with my peers. His deployment to Iraq, however, resulted in a gap in my employment history, and changed my future career course. Following is some background about my employment history leading up to my husband's deployment.

We both grew up and attended college in Washington, Senator Murray's state. After graduating on the same day, he from law school and I from a master's program, we relocated to Pennsylvania, Senator Specter's state, in July of 2003 where my husband served as a Federal law clerk until February 2005. I was fortunate to keep my job with a Northwest based top 100 accounting and consulting firm, where I began as a communications intern during my master's program, by working from home in Pennsylvania despite the firm having no offices outside of Washington or Idaho. I had also given birth to our second son during that time, so the arrangement was ideal for our circumstances as young professionals with young children.

Our family moved to Alexandria in February of 2005 when my husband accepted a full time position in Virginia, Senator Webb's state. The move forced my company to reevaluate our telecommuting agreement, and, while I pushed to keep working from home, they were not able to continue with this work arrangement, but they did contract with me for several projects as the new employee was trained. By this time I had tripled my starting hourly wage.

Within weeks of moving to Virginia rumblings of a deployment put a question mark on my employment future, since we had no idea how it would affect our family. He received orders and deployed on Mother's Day 2005 for 3 months of training in Indiana, and then was sent to Iraq where he served in a small town outside of Fallujah from late July 2005 until July 2006. Our sons were 6 and 18 months at the time.

I had begun a frantic search for employment before we moved to Virginia, right after I was informed I could no longer telecommute for my firm once I moved. The pressure to replace my income, and put to use my education, which had been funded primarily by a full scholarship I was awarded as junior in college, weighed heavily on my mind, but when my husband finally deployed I wasn't sure what to do. Despite my husband's 11 years of service as a Reserve component soldier (he served as an enlisted Washington National Guard soldier for 5 years, then as an officer in the WNG prior to transferring to the Army Reserves when we moved to Pennsylvania) I couldn't have imagined what the next 15 months would bring; an injury caused by an IED in the first weeks of him being in Iraq, and the anxiety on all of us.

GOING BACK TO CIVILIAN EMPLOYMENT

When he returned home early August 2006 we both wanted as much time as a family as possible, so using his military leave and some of our own funds to float us without an income for a few days he was able to take several weeks off before returning to his civilian job.

I decided to seek part time employment when my husband returned home. I freelanced on a few projects while he was deployed, but only during the first half. After his two-week leave in January of 2006, I was overwhelmed and sought counseling, so did not pursue any additional freelance opportunities. When he returned, I was eager to find ways to get my career back on track, but still could not to take my main focus off my family, which, for me, precluded me from seeking full time work.

By this time it had been a year and a half since I had been employed. I volunteered as an FRG leader during the deployment and the responsibilities I had helped to explain my absence from the work force for prospective employers, but it would take another 6 months to find a position that could accommodate my family needs, which I believe is an important point.

When my husband returned, he was not the same, and our family was not the same. Like thousands of servicemembers, he was dealing with post traumatic stress and also a traumatic brain injury, which affected all of us. He lives with chronic headaches, decreased hearing and eyesight, and traumatic memories, to name some of his symptoms. My 2-year-old son was uncomfortable with his father for anything routine, such as bed times, having spent half his life separated from him, so it was a challenge for my husband to bond with our children again, and find his role in our lives since we had been independent of him for so long. Given these circumstances I felt a great responsibility to my family and wanted to balance our health with my career, so I think it took me much longer to find employment than had I been seeking traditional full time employment without the added concern for my family.

It was at times discouraging looking for work. I was not aware of resources for Reserve or Guard spouses seeking professional employment, besides a career fair on Ft. Belvoir, which I attended. I relied on Monster, Craigslist, and my own small network of friends. During the first half of his tour, when I was looking for work, I had several recruiters calling based on my Monster profile. When he returned home, I updated my profile with my FRG responsibilities and my award for public service. I received one call in 6 months. Was the dearth in interest because I now had a nearly 2-year gap in my paid employment history? I can't be sure, but it was frustrating to think that I, too, had served my country while my husband was deployed, and it was more difficult looking for work now, than before that service.

And yet, the pull to be home with my family, to take care of them, was strong enough to make me question if going back to work was even the right move. I had conflicting emotions—take care of them from home, or get back into the work force so that I can eventually get a high paying job in case my husband's employment was affected by what he suffered in Iraq. (He was still in the disability process at that time and we did not know what kind of compensation he would receive for his injury.) It may sound paranoid, but given the recent discoveries about even mild TBI and the delayed onset of symptoms particularly when coupled with PTSD, it was a real and frightening thought at the time, and it still crosses my mind that who knows what or how TBI symptoms could affect his longevity as an attorney. I want to be prepared to care for my family no matter what the future holds.

I believe Reserve spouses must also be proactive and take advantage of the opportunities that are presented during a deployment. I became involved in military life to an extent I never had before, which resulted in my finding employment with NMFA. I do believe I am behind my civilian peers due to the deployment—an effect that my husband has protection from under Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act—I make half the hourly rate from my last contracting opportunity with my previous firm, and I am in a field that I was not trained for, so I am in a sense losing career building time in my primary field of education and experience. However, I also am offered benefits that I did not have as a contractor, such as paid leave, holidays, a retirement plan and health care benefits. And I'm in a place I feel secure in if my husband was deployed again.

FUTURE EMPLOYMENT AS A RESERVE FAMILY

We have a much clearer understanding of what it means to be a Reserve family in today's military. Not only can we expect the 2 weeks of yearly training to take work off for, we know another deployment is a real possibility and we must consider how it affects our civilian jobs. For me it means needing a flexible and a supportive employer who will understand if I need time off for my husband or my children or even a leave of absence. It also means having back up daycare arrangements.

Child care

I am experiencing now what life would be like if he deployed. My husband is currently away for 17 days to attend a military course and I have relied on the generosity of my friends (also military spouses) to care for my children when my husband normally would.

A deployment today would increase my daycare costs by about $200/month since my husband currently has a flex schedule, which allows him to be home with our children one day a week. (During a deployment, that's about what I spent sending my husband food since he lived outside of a FOB and did not have regular access to meals other than MREs, morale items, and paying for shipping.) I rely on him

for this so that I can work more hours that day without having to pay for an additional day of daycare for our 3-year-old, or before and after school care for my third grader. If I did have to pay for an additional day, the total cost of daycare would eat up more than 60 percent of my paycheck.

While I do qualify for military child care when my husband is on active duty orders for more than 72 hours, this would not completely eliminate the challenges. First, I still would have to pay for it. Second, I know from experience using the part time care on post during the deployment that you must plan at least one month in advance to get an hourly care slot, not to mention having to go through the process of re-registering them, and hours are limited from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. This would conflict with my work schedule. Third, there is no transportation from a civilian school to before and after care on post for my third grader.

If he were deployed again, I would have to either alter my work schedule or lose pay, and paying for additional child care would make the net financial profit of working hardly worth it.

Future deployments

Since returning, my husband has been contacted twice for another deployment. We assume that he cannot be ordered to deploy again since he just finished a 15-month tour less than 1 year ago, but the lack of clarity on the deployment rules for Guard and Reserve servicemembers puts us in a precarious position wondering how long he can stay in the service, considering the interruptions it causes to our primary livelihood. I know nothing is sure, but some guidance or an attempt to follow a standard, such as limiting deployments to 18 consecutive months in 5 years, would at least help us to understand what we are facing if we remain a Reserve family. No one has been able to answer that question for me.

Job interruptions caused by lengthy deployments can have significant consequences for Reserve families. One Reserve spouse who ran her own business told me that after her Reserve spouse's second deployment in 4 years, with a total of 2 years away, she was compelled to close her business. The risk of future deployments was too great for her. She wrote to me saying:

> "First, it is a lot of work to run a business, but on your own it is even more. This is not double the work . . . it is exponential. The farm, the house, the business, it is exhausting both physically and emotionally.
>
> Secondly the financial risk involved. A small business is always tenuous. I have a few employees and although they are all contractors, I try to keep myself and them employed to their fullest potential. The lost of a large contract, the bankruptcy of a large client, or worse yet another geopolitical disaster such as 9/11 could wipe out my company in a day. This would have a large impact on my finances while my spouse is overseas.
>
> And finally, since my husband's return in August, my thoughts have been overwhelmed with worries that he will be called back again. And this time, it will be longer than the last. I need a more stable, less risky environment.
>
> It is hard to find an employer who believes that I want to give up successful entrepreneurship for a return to the corporate life. But I tell them this is now a way of life for the military spouse."

THE SERVICEMEMBER

While I have the opportunity, I would like to offer some insight into the servicemember's transition to civilian employment after a deployment. We are more profoundly affected by his or her return to civilian employment if they are the primary breadwinners.

Each servicemember's experience is different, but there are common challenges to returning to civilian employment—if they even have something to return to. I believe a large part of this issue revolves around ensuring servicemembers, and their families understand the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act and how it applies to public and private employers and ensuring employers adhere to these protections without causing undue burden or pressure on the servicemember. In addition, I believe certain changes should be made, or at least more clearly articulated within USERRA regarding the employment rights of our Nation's citizen warriors. I admit I do not understand the law myself. But, I can offer our family's experience to highlight some difficulties and successes.

I have found the general understanding of employment rights for Reserve servicemembers to be limited to: (1) a guarantee that you will have a position to return to, or one comparable to the position you left when you deployed, (2) any pay increases, or promotions you were entitled to before you deployed should remain on schedule. I believe the rule should be simple—you should not be penalized in any

way because you served your country when called to active duty. Our servicemembers put their lives on the line, spend years away from their spouses and children, sometimes only to return to a boss pressuring you to return to work, dragging feet to give deserved, earned benefits, or nothing to return to at all. We must also continue to recognize employers who exemplify support to Guard and Reserve servicemembers and their families.

The transition back and forth from civilian to military to civilian again can be consuming because of everything else that is going on. Our family's primary concern was securing a pay increase that we were sure he would have earned had he not been deployed. We had hoped the pay raise would be a natural part of his return to work but that did not occur and so my husband began the due diligence to receive the raise he deserved. After writing letters and progressing up the appropriate chain, 7 months later he received the raise, and pay dated back to the date of the raise. Though we disagreed with the date of the pay raise, we felt it was best to not push our luck and considered the matter resolved. Other issues we faced when he returned to work were: reconciling whether or not he acquired leave while he was deployed (he did not), how to make up for matching contributions to our retirement plan (this process is not clear), and achieving the next scheduled pay raise. While we are grateful to have received his raise, but that 7-month wait heaped stress upon my husband who was already dealing with other challenges from the deployment.

Overall, I believe our family was fortunate that my husband was a Federal employee during his deployment. His profession as an attorney and chosen field of practice offered certain protections that we felt confident would be fulfilled, or to see enforced in the case that they were not. Though only weeks into his new position before he received orders to deploy (incidentally, he was at Air Assault school for 2 weeks after beginning his new position when he heard of the deployment orders), where he came from an 18-month long Federal law clerkship, his supervisors were incredibly supportive. His benefits specialist was patient to explain any questions I had during his deployment regarding issues such as health care benefits, which were paid for by the Federal Government as primary health care coverage, military leave pay and life insurance.

Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Committee, I thank you for your interest in how Reserve component servicemembers and their military families transition back to civilian employment after returning from war. We are proud of our service, but I ask that we not bear additional costs as we balance our civilian life with our military commitments. More emphasis placed on resources for job placement after returning from deployment, better communication and enforcement of Reserve and Guard employment rights, and continued support from outstanding employers will help sustain citizen warriors and their families, and our Nation's security for the long term.

MONIQUE RIZER'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF TURBOTAP WEB SITE

I have gone through the Turbo TAP web site and I have a few observations:

First, I think it is very well done. The information is organized, well written, and visually pleasing. I was especially happy to see information for servicemembers who are also small business owners. From a web development perspective, I think a search tool and a clear "enter here" button would be useful, rather than having to find a way to get to the "meat" of the site by clicking on the General Information link down on the lower right side of the home page.

I think the site would be improved by adding more information about family members. Where do spouses go for counseling if they need it after a deployment ends? What kind of assistance is there for children? Parents of single servicemembers? A large part of the transition, particularly when coming off a combat tour, is mental and emotional. What can family members expect in their servicemember as he or she makes the transition to the civilian world and how can the family member help, or how can the servicemember help? This kind of information would make the site even more comprehensive.

The Guard and Reserve section seems more for active duty servicemembers going to a Reserve component, instead of for Reserve Component servicemembers separating from active duty. I think it would be well worth it to expand that section into resources for RC servicemembers and have more information about PTSD, going through the disability rating process, leave time after coming off active duty, USERRA rights, etc. I realize some of this information may be in other areas of the site, but with the web, redundancy is important to reaching the intended audience

as so many people search for information in so many different ways. As a Reserve or Guard spouse, I would head straight for that section and hope to find my answers there, tailored for a Reserve family.

I think asking a servicemember and family member who has used the site to guide their transition would really tell how useful this site is. I know it would have been a great resource for me and my family when my husband returned from Iraq last year. But, we found our way . . . and I guess we still are.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much.

And now Mr. Osterberg.

STATEMENT OF DON OSTERBERG, VICE PRESIDENT, SCHNEIDER NATIONAL, INC., GREEN BAY, WISCONSIN

Mr. OSTERBERG. Good morning, Chairman Akaka and distinguished Members of the Committee. I certainly am honored to serve on such a distinguished panel as my co-panelists today and I thank both of you for your service to our great Nation.

As was mentioned, my name is Don Osterberg. I am currently serving as Vice President for Schneider National. I am also a retired Army infantry officer. I am here today representing not only Schneider National, but the Truckload Carriers Association, as well. For those of you that may not be familiar with Schneider National, we are our Nation's largest truckload carrier. We generate nearly $4 billion in annual revenue. We have nearly 25,000 associates that serve worldwide. And we provide integrated transportation logistics services. Perhaps most importantly today, we have a very long history of supporting America's veterans.

Our history dates back to 1935, when our founder, Al Schneider, a longtime member of the Wisconsin National Guard, sold his family automobile to buy his first truck. As Al Schneider's business grew, so did his need for quality drivers and other associates and Al began recruiting, as you would expect, from his fellow Guardsmen in the Wisconsin National Guard. Over 70 years later, Schneider National continues to approach Guard members, Reservists, and separating servicemen and women with nationwide career opportunities.

Our preference to hire military veterans is as true today as it was for Al Schneider back in 1935. As an example, last year, we hired just under 1,700 veterans as driver associates for our company, and this year to date, we have hired 812 veterans as driver associates. We also hire many military veterans as mechanics, office associates, managers, and executive leaders.

We currently have 56 of our associates that are serving on active duty and are deployed with Guard and Reserve units worldwide. We have several programs in place for our members of the Guard and Reserve. For example, we offer extended benefits and differential pay when servicemembers are deployed and we have guaranteed home time for weekend drill and annual training where no vacation time is required on the part of our associates.

Our programs for supporting our military have garnered us many regional and national awards and recognition. For example, in November 2006, Schneider National was ranked 17th on GI Jobs' annual list of top 50 military-friendly employers. Going back to 1991, Schneider National was named America's most supportive employer of the Guard and Reserve by the Enlisted Association of National Guard of the United States. It was the first time that

they had presented that award, as many of you may know, and today, that award is known as the Al Schneider Award in honor of our founder.

In 1996, Schneider was awarded the first ever Employer Support Freedom Award by the Department of Defense and the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve. Schneider National was selected based on our continued support for Guard and Reserve associates and their families. Over the years, Schneider has also received numerous awards from veterans' support organizations at State and national levels, including most recently recognition from the Department of Defense through the "My Boss is a Patriot" program.

Schneider National is active in the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, encouraging other employers to hire members of the Guard and Reserve and supporting membership and participation in Reserve units. We are also a national HireVetsFirst employer, an Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve Five-Star Employer, and a proud supporter of the Army Wounded Warrior Program.

However, I don't mention those for any attempt at organizational self aggrandizing, but really to establish I believe we have earned a modicum of credibility and experience on the question of employing not only Guard and Reserve members, but military veterans separating from the military. We have some challenges that organizations like Schneider National and others will face, other truckload carriers. I want to summarize some of those challenges and really ask for your help in several of these areas.

First of all, our challenge today, and it certainly has been very enlightening for me to listen to the predecessor speakers today, but our challenge is to recruit even more separating servicemembers and members of the Guard and Reserve than we have in the past. We certainly have a need, and toward that end, we offer a quick-hire process for separating servicemembers. We actively participate in many of the organizations and programs that were mentioned today, including military job fairs. We have a section on our employment web site dedicated exclusively to veterans. And our company and our industry have many thousands of good jobs available today.

Recent projections, for those of you that are familiar with the truck driver shortage that we currently are experiencing, not only do we have an acute truck driver shortage today, but that shortage is projected to grow to perhaps as high as 111,000 by the year 2014. By virtue of the fact that we have good jobs available today, and yet there are certainly some unemployed military veterans, suggests that we certainly have a communications and marketing issue. But perhaps more importantly, I think we face transition issues with separating servicemembers.

It is my opinion that it seems imperative that the Department of Veterans Affairs become involved in developing career transition programs to facilitate matching separating servicemen and women with employers that provide opportunities that directly affect our economy, like the trucking industry.

In 2005, I was honored to be invited to participate in a national conference hosted by Secretary Nicholson to discuss a VA-led ca-

reer transition initiative, Coming Home to Work. I believe it is very unfortunate, both for veterans as well as for employers, that the Coming Home to Work initiative was not fully launched. I firmly believe that VA leadership in helping separating veterans as well as Guard and Reserve members transition from their military career to suitable civilian careers is even more essential today with the large number of combat veterans returning from both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Secondly, I would ask for your support in revising the accelerated benefits under the Montgomery GI Bill for separating servicemen and women. The current GI Bill system of educational assistance for veterans is inefficient. It is an inefficient funding system for professional truck driver training and other short-term, high-cost educational programs that are not currently listed on VA's accelerated benefits payment list. Accelerating GI Bill benefits for training in high-growth occupations like trucking, as opposed to simply high-tech occupations, would help provide more veterans with gainful employment opportunities and sound career paths even faster. We are currently working with DOL on an apprenticeship program that we think will help.

I finally would ask, I know there is a great deal of work going on with the Air Force as the Air Expeditionary Force Cycle and the Army's Force Generation Model to address the issue of predictability of Reserve and Guard members, and certainly we would ask for your support in ensuring that the services can provide us with that modicum of predictability.

In closing, Schneider National and other Truckload Carriers Association members have great employment opportunities for veterans today. We also have a strong motivation to provide veterans with honorable career opportunities that support the transportation industry as the lifeblood of our Nation's economy.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Osterberg.

I would like to change the order and ask Senator Webb for your questions and I will close out. Senator Webb?

Senator WEBB. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to first thank all of you for your testimony. I think in different ways, I have lived all different facets of what you have just testified about.

First, I would like to, if I may, Mr. McGee, I would like to ask you something about your treatment, your medical treatment. I had a rifle platoon and then a company in Vietnam, and in my small platoon, we had a triple amputee, more than one double amputee, high-arm amputee, spinal cord injury, and largely as a result of that, I have on a daily basis for many years—in many cases a daily basis—tracked how people have been able to readjust and the opportunities that they were given and that sort of thing. I think it is a great story that you are now in the flow here.

But for you to have proceeded from a quadriplegic to where you are today, could you give us a comment on the medical care that you received in the military and in the VA, if you were using DVA?

Mr. MCGEE. I had nothing but great treatment from Walter Reed and VA, although it did take me—I spent two-and-a-half years trying to go through my medical board, so it was a long time be-

cause I kept progressing and getting better as time went on. I was paralyzed from the waist down for a year, and after the year was done, I kept progressing. So overall, I have had nothing but great treatment because they have always taken care of me. I have never had a complaint, just as far as the length of time that I was going through my medical discharge, but that is the only thing.

Senator WEBB. Sure. That seems to be a constant theme over the past couple of years, medical treatment being very good, but the processing itself seems to be where things are breaking down.

May I ask, when you were progressing, were you put on like a temporary retirement while your condition continued to evolve, or did they just hold you on active duty until they decided that your condition had stabilized?

Mr. MCGEE. They held me until they could finally stabilize. I wasn't retired until a year after I finally—well, about half-a-year afterwards is when I finally was discharged, when I finally became stabilized.

Senator WEBB. Did they put you on permanent retirement at that point, or are you still temporary——

Mr. MCGEE. Still temporary. It is still temporary for the next five years.

Senator WEBB. Ms. Rizer, I would like to hear your comments about—you were talking about seeking employment and this sort of thing while your husband was deployed. There was something of a syndrome that went on during Vietnam with spouses, and I know of one case where someone I knew very well, who was a 3.9 graduate out of college, et cetera, got turned down for 51 jobs in 4 months because she was deemed a permanency risk because her husband was deployed. Do you feel like any of the struggles that you were going through were as a result of your husband being deployed?

Ms. RIZER. Well, when he was deployed, I was very unsure about what I wanted to do, so I was going on interviews and seeking employment and I tried not to bring up the fact that he was deployed. I didn't want that to be a consideration. So I couldn't say for sure whether that affected the interviews that I went into and whether or not I got a job.

But when he came back, it was definitely something that I had to bring up because I had to explain that I needed to be home with my family and so I wasn't working. It may have deterred. To be honest, I only got a couple of interviews, which was part of the frustration. I couldn't even get my foot in the door for the first five months or so.

But I have no doubt that an employer considers that, because my husband, even he interviewed for new jobs when he returned home, he was specifically asked if he thought he would be deployed again, and he is a Federal employee. So I think that it is surprising that employers still do consider that for Reserve and Guard, I guess spouses now too, because it is just a reality that we live today. We are going to be deployed again. So yes, in a way.

Senator WEBB. Mr. Osterberg, I hope your company will look at the GI Bill that I introduced at the beginning of this session. I spent a good bit of time working on it. As you may know, I was committee counsel on the House Veterans side years ago and I

have always believed that the people who have served since 9/11 deserve the same level of benefits as the people who served in World War II, and I think that would affect the OJT programs you are talking about, too, because they are tuition-based rather than monthly based. I hope your company will look at that and maybe give us some support if you believe it fits into what you are doing.

Mr. OSTERBERG. Yes, and thank you for your leadership on that. I think you are absolutely right.

Senator WEBB. I appreciate it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you very much, Senator Webb.

Ms. Rizer, I thank you very much for your compelling story. It is clear that it is not only the warrior, but also the warrior's family who bears the burden. I can also appreciate the very difficult decisions that you and your family faced at that time and, of course, what you will be facing in the future.

You indicated that when you were looking for work after your husband's demobilization, you were not aware of the resources for Reserve or Guard spouses seeking employment. Was this because there were none or because information about such resources was not readily available?

Ms. RIZER. I am sure there are resources available, because being a Family Readiness Group Leader and being very connected to the entire division, I had a lot of information disseminated through me. So I know there are resources. I am sure there are. There must be, because there are similar resources for active duty spouses. But I think Reserve and Guard spouses sometimes don't think that they are eligible for those resources because they are not active duty 365. So I think there could be some education there definitely that we are eligible for these services when our husbands return, our servicemembers return. So for myself, I don't know how I missed that information, just because, I guess, I was very well informed.

Chairman AKAKA. I am trying to reach for information about agencies or groups that would help you look for a job.

I guess it is something that we need to work on——

Ms. RIZER. Yes, definitely.

Chairman AKAKA [continuing].—to help the families.

Mr. McGee, the Committee is really honored to have had the opportunity to share your inspiring story. Just one very brief question. You indicated that your primary interface in terms of employment was through the VA's vocational rehabilitation program. Did you have any interaction throughout the process with the Department of Labor?

Mr. MCGEE. No, sir, I didn't. I didn't know who to go to. There was only one person that kind of came up to me and that was the VA representative.

Chairman AKAKA. I see. We have been talking to the different agencies about providing information for individuals like you and we want to be sure that there are a number of agencies that can help in this way.

Mr. Osterberg, I especially thank you for making yourself available to this Committee on short notice and for your very interesting testimony. I understand and commend your personal commitment to training and hiring those returning from service. In terms of hiring individuals who are serving in the Guard and Reserve, could

you comment on any special problems an employer might encounter?

Mr. OSTERBERG. Well, certainly we have the luxury of being a relatively large employer, so we have the ability to mitigate some of the costs and productivity negative impacts of employing Guard and Reservists who are deploying at a much more frequent rate and for longer duration than we have historically seen.

I recognize, however, that there are many smaller employers that don't have the luxury of size that we have and have to essentially work very hard at financial impact to their organization. They have no recourse, as you can imagine if we have 15-month deployments, but to replace their deployed servicemembers when they leave and it certainly creates some disruption in the workforce. I believe most of them are very committed to doing it because it is the right thing to do, but clearly there are some costs and productivity challenges associated with that.

So if there is anything that the Committee and Congress can do to help create the same kinds of mitigation strategies that we have the luxury of in a larger company for smaller companies, I think it would certainly be appropriate to focus on that.

Chairman AKAKA. Thank you for that.

DOD has recently launched its TurboTAP web site. Both Mr. McGee and Ms. Rizer talked about the need for online resources. I would greatly appreciate it if each of you would visit the finished product on the web and share with the Committee for our records your reaction to it and any suggestions you might have for improvements. That will certainly help us with what we are trying to do, to hear from you and from your level as to how it is working out and maybe what we can do to improve it. We want to try to create a system that will be helpful, that will be seamless, that our families as well as the warriors themselves might be able to seek help in these places. So I am very, very grateful that you all were here and look forward to your responses on this request. Is that all right with you?

Ms. RIZER. Yes.

Mr. OSTERBERG. Yes.

Mr. MCGEE. No problem, sir.

Chairman AKAKA. Well, again, in closing, I thank all of our witnesses for appearing today. We truly, truly appreciate you taking the time to share your views with us.

We are looking forward to this hearing so that we can try to put together a program that will help you and many others that are coming in the future. So again, we can't thank you enough for what you have done.

The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:40 a.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL MILITARY FAMILY ASSOCIATION

Today's military is comprised of predominantly young adults under the age of 35. Sixty-six percent of military spouses are in the labor force, including 87 percent of junior enlisted spouses (E–1 to E–5). For many, working to pay bills and cover basic expenses is the primary reason for working. Studies show the gap between the financial well-being of military families and their civilian peers is largely due to the frequent moves required of the military family and the resulting disruptions to the career progression of the military spouse. In a 2005 report by the RAND Corporation: Working Around the Military: Challenges to Military Spouse Employment and Education, researchers found that military spouses, when compared to their civilian counterparts, were more likely to live in metropolitan areas and are more likely to have graduated from high school and have some college.

Yet the RAND study found that all things being equal, military spouses' civilian counterparts tended to have better employment outcomes and higher wages. Surveys show that a military spouse's income is a major contributor to the family's financial well-being and that the military spouse unemployment rate is much higher (10 percent), than the national rate. The loss of the spouse's income at exactly the time when the family is facing the cost of a government ordered move is further exacerbated when the spouse is unable to collect unemployment compensation. Lacking the financial cushion provided by the receipt of unemployment compensation, the military spouse must often settle for "any job that pays the bills" rather than being able to search for a job that is commensurate with his or her skills or career aspirations. This in turn hurts morale and affects recruitment and retention of the servicemember.

With a concern that spouses desiring better careers will encourage servicemembers to leave the military, the Department of Defense (DOD) is acknowledging the importance of efforts to support spouse employment. In 2003 DOD signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Department of Labor (DOL) to expand connections to the job markets in America's communities, involvement with labor laws that affect reemployment (i.e., training, unemployment compensation) and interest in states' reciprocal licensing and certification requirements needed to qualify for employment.

The results of this collaboration thus far have been:

- Establishing *Milspouse.org*, a resource library for military spouse employment, education and relocation information.
- Establishing One-Stop Career Centers near major military installations (i.e. Norfolk, Va.; San Diego, Calif.; Fort Campbell, Ky.).
- Expanding opportunities for National Guard and Reserve members and military spouses to access training and education grants.
- Exploring options with states to offer unemployment compensation to military spouses when unemployment is the result of a permanent change of station (PCS) move.
- Improve reciprocity for state certifications and licensing requirements.

Unfortunately, funds for this promising collaboration have run out and are not due to be reinstated. NMFA believes this lack of funding is a significant blow to the promise of these early initiatives. While DOD will continue to work some of these issues, we believe the Department of Labor is best positioned to provide the coordination necessary with states and other agencies to promote opportunities for military spouse employment.

DOD has also sponsored a partnership with *Monster.com* to create the Military Spouse Career Center (*www.military.com/spouses*) and recently announced the availability of free career coaching through the Spouse Employment Assessment, Coaching and Assistance Program (SEACA). However, with more than 700,000 active duty spouses, the task of enhancing military spouse employment is too big for

DOD to handle alone. Improvements in employment for military spouses and assistance in supporting their career progression will require increased partnerships and initiatives by a variety of government agencies and private employers. NMFA applauds current partnerships through the Army Spouse Employment Partnership (ASEP) where currently 26 corporate and government partners have pledged to provide solid employment opportunities to military spouses. Although marketed as an Army initiative, all military spouses may take advantage of this program. Unfortunately, without the ability to track the actual hiring numbers, it is difficult to determine the success of these partnerships.

Despite greater awareness of the importance of supporting military spouse career aspirations, some roadblocks remain. In addition to their inability to qualify for unemployment compensation in many states, military spouses may not be eligible for the many labor and workforce development opportunities offered in the states in which their servicemember is assigned. As the military streamlines operations and contracts out many services, military spouses may find the contract positions have significant disadvantages over positions as non-appropriated fund (NAF) or civil service employees. While one could argue that the ability to be a contractor provides a spouse with some flexibility, this "opportunity" also brings significant monetary implications for the military spouse. What many spouses do not realize, until it is too late, is that, as a contractor, spouses enjoy none of the regular employee benefits available through NAF or civil service positions. In addition, they must file quarterly tax statements to pay self-employment tax. NMFA asserts it is time to take a closer look at the efficiencies of contracting and the resulting impact on military spouses who frequently fill these contractor positions.

One of the primary reasons that spouses interviewed in the RAND study gave for not working outside the home was a lack of affordable, accessible child care. As a spouse explained in a 2005 NMFA Survey of Military Spouses, "For the first time, I am staying home because we have 3 children, 2 are under 2 years of age, and the cost of daycare is so much that it is not worth it for me to return to work." This situation may be further exacerbated in National Guard and Reserve families where parents may work shifts to tradeoff child care responsibilities. When the servicemember is activated the spouse is forced to find child care and to make budget adjustments to cover this new and significant expense, along with adjusting to all of the other stresses a deployment brings.

> As a National Guard spouse, I had to quit my high paying position (primary source of income and benefits) during my husband's deployment because of a combination of a long commute and daycare hours. My husband had drop off responsibilities so that I could commute before peak traffic hours. There is no protection or advocacy for Guard and Reserve spouse jobs. My family went from software jobs to qualifying for food stamps in the year and a half after my husband's return because of the difficulty in finding a job that I could stick with through another potential deployment.

Many National Guard and Reserve families live a significant distance from a military installation making DOD child care centers an unrealistic solution to the problem. Programs such as Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood and Operation Military Child Care which are offered through a DOD partnership with the National Association for Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA), are helping. The fact remains, however, that currently DOD has a shortage of 35,000 child care slots just for regular full time care. This number does not even begin to reflect the staggering shortage of part-time, evening, and respite care slots available to military families.

Many military spouses realize that additional education is required to improve their employment prospects. These spouses encounter another set of barriers as they seek further education. As one spouse stated in a recent NMFA online spouse education and employment survey: "My resume looks like I cannot hold a job, never mind that I have worked since I was 15! Low salary, no time to accrue seniority, no time for education to improve skills all lead to low self esteem. Never mind that when my husband retired he had access to the MGIB and subsequently has finished two masters' degrees while my options are still limited."

In the 2006 Defense Manpower Data Center Survey for Military Families, 87 percent of spouses report education/training is a personal goal and 54 percent report training would have helped during their last relocation. The high cost of education, the lack of uniformly authorized in-state tuition, and the high cost of transferring certifications and licenses from state to state are challenges that must be addressed.

NMFA has also been aware of these challenges. In 2006, the Association's Joanne Holbrook Patton Military Spouse Scholarship Program garnered over 8,000 applicants! An analysis of responses reaffirmed that military spouses have a strong com-

mitment to educational advancement even as they struggle to juggle school, work, and family, especially with today's current deployments. They understand service life brings unique educational challenges, which often influences their career choices as well. NMFA is developing educational tools to enhance a spouse's ability to navigate through the frustrating years it can take to complete a degree. The NMFA Military Spouse Education Resource Guide is now in its second printing.

In January of this year, NMFA launched its new online Military Spouse Education web section, a comprehensive resource about higher education tailored for the military spouse (*http://www.nmfa.org/spouseeducation*).

But even with all these initiatives and scholarship opportunities, the need continues to be great. As one spouse put it, "I have searched for education or tuition reimbursement for military spouses and I have found no help. I don't qualify for grants or financial aid because my spouse makes too much money. I see many scholarships for military children or children of the fallen but very little for spouses. How can a spouse further her education when there is very little help for us?"

NMFA is pleased to report that some states, with encouragement from the DOD State Liaison Office, are examining their in-state tuition rules and licensing requirements to ease spouses' ability to obtain an education or to transfer their occupation as they move. NMFA is appreciative of the efforts by DOD to work with states to promote the award of unemployment compensation to military spouses, eligibility for in-state tuition, and reciprocity for professional licenses. DOD has also recognized it is imperative that programs be developed to move the 22,500 military spouses without a high school degree toward General Education Development (GED) certificates and address the 52,000 military spouses with a high school diploma who need to move toward an Associate or Technical degree.

NMFA asks that:

- The partnership between DOD and DOL be realigned to give DOL the authority to serve military spouses through legislative changes designating military spouses as an eligible group for funds for training and education.
- Congress promote Federal and state coordination to provide unemployment compensation for military spouses as a result of Permanent Change of Station (PCS) orders.
- Congress promote Federal and state coordination to make college credits and fees more easily transferable and adopt state education policies that permit a military spouse to qualify for in-state tuition regardless of servicemember's duty location.

NMFA also supports programs or legislative changes that would give local Workforce Investment Boards the opportunity to provide education and training assistance to military spouses. Private sector employers who protect employment and/or education flexibility of spouses and other family members impacted by deployment should be applauded as role models.

WOUNDED SERVICEMEMBERS HAVE WOUNDED FAMILIES

As revealed in the series of articles about Walter Reed Army Medical Center, post-deployment transitions can be especially problematic for injured servicemembers and their families. NMFA asserts that behind every wounded servicemember is a wounded family. Spouses, children, parents, and siblings of servicemembers injured defending our country experience many uncertainties. Fear of the unknown and what lies ahead in future weeks, months, and even years, weighs heavily on their minds. Other concerns include the injured servicemember's return and reunion with their family, financial stresses, and navigating the transition process to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The system should alleviate, not heighten these concerns, and provide for coordination of care that starts when the family is notified the servicemember has been injured and ends with the DOD and VA working together to create a seamless transition as the injured servicemember transfers from active duty status to veteran.

While all military spouses face unique challenges in obtaining employment, spouses of wounded servicemembers face additional issues. Initially many spouses of wounded servicemembers find themselves in the role of caretaker while the wounded servicemember receives treatment and rehabilitation. When a wounded servicemember is discharged, however, the spouse may also become the primary wage earner in the family. Many military spouses are unprepared for this new circumstance for all of the reasons discussed earlier in this statement. This new reality can be financially devastating. In these circumstances it is imperative that the Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) and DOL are prepared to assist spouses in transition.

The current program, which permits military spouses of severely injured servicemembers to utilize remaining GI Bill benefits, is an excellent concept. Unfortunately, many spouses in the role of caretaker are unable to return to school in the time frame permitted under the current program. NMFA recommends extending the eligibility period for this program to permit more spouses in this situation to utilize this important benefit.

The DOL has assisted veterans, who have special needs, transition to the civilian workforce. In 2002, Congress enacted the Jobs for Veterans Act (JVA) to improve employment and training services for veterans. A one-stop system was created under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to integrate employment and training into a comprehensive service delivery system. The JVA stipulates veterans, who meet eligibility requirements, are given reemployment service priority over non-veterans. NMFA recommends this benefit be expanded to include spouses of seriously wounded servicemembers, who would have qualified, but due to their injuries are unable to work.

In the past, the VA and DOD have generally focused their family support service on spouse and children. Now, however, it is not unusual to see the parents and siblings of a single servicemember included as part of the servicemember's family unit. Almost 50 percent of active duty and Reserve component servicemembers are single. Having a wounded servicemember is new territory for family units. Regardless of a servicemember's marital status, their families will be affected in some way by an injury. As more single servicemembers are wounded, parents and siblings must take on the role of helping servicemembers through the recovery process. Family members are an integral part of the health care team. Their presence has been shown to improve their quality of life and aid in a speedy recovery.

Congress needs to be cognizant of the caregiver. Family members have made the commitment to care for their loved one. We must acknowledge they are a part of the health care team. They advocate, transport, and move along with their wounded loved one from Walter Reed Army Medical Center or the National Naval Medical Center at Bethesda, to a polytrauma center and follow on to other medical treatment facilities throughout the United States, often leaving their own lives/jobs behind. Congress needs to take into consideration the economic impact on families who decide to care for their loved one. Families may voluntarily choose to leave their jobs for a variety of reasons. Family members may desire to spend as much time as possible with the wounded servicemember. The overwhelming challenges of trying to care for and navigate the complex health care system may cause them to give up their jobs. They may wish to relocate to be with the injured servicemember or veteran so they may receive optimum care.

The Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides leave for 12 unpaid work weeks for 1 year. We are finding family members switch on and off in order to maintain a family presence 24/7. The law may not provide enough time off given the seriousness of injuries of the servicemembers. Unpaid leave may further add to the overall loss of families' incomes. Some families do not qualify for the FMLA because their employer does not employ over 50 employees or because they have not been with the employer for over 12 months. NMFA recommends Congress reevaluate the FMLA given the unique aspects presented with wounded servicemembers and their families.

Families are taking on an ever increasing role in caring for their loved one's wounds. Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) has been found to be the signature wound for Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom injured servicemembers. Families' active role in caring for TBI injuries should be acknowledged. NMFA recommends the establishment of a TBI training and certification program for family caregivers, which would recognize the important commitment family members make in caring for their loved ones diagnosed with TBI.

There is no doubt that tremendous strides have been made to assist military spouses in obtaining and retaining employment. Work remains to be done, however. Valuable programs such as those fostered by the partnership between DOD and DOL must be funded. The issues surrounding military spouse employment are multifaceted; therefore, the solution must also be multifaceted. Agencies such as DOL and VA must be included in the solution, but the outreach must also extend to local communities, state agencies, educational institutions, and employers. Only by weaving a tapestry of services and programs can we truly begin to tackle this important issue.

Military families support the Nation's military missions. The least their country can do is make sure wounded servicemembers and veterans' families have consistent access to high quality education and employment. Wounded Servicemembers have wounded families. DOD and VA must support the caregiver by recognizing the important role they play in the recovery and rehabilitation of the wounded servicemember and veteran, and the sacrifices they make in delivering daily care to their loved one's wounds.

Thank you for your continued support of military families.

○