CORRECTION

Congressional Record

United States of America

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 110th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 153 WASHINGTON, MONDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2007 No. 147

House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. HIRONO).

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
October 1, 2007.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MAZIE K. HIRONO to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 30 minutes and each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) for 5 minutes.

EFFECTIVE JOB TRAINING FOR OUR RETURNING WARRIORS

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, when our soldiers come home from combat, they often face an uphill battle. For many servicemembers, the transition from active duty to veteran status and returning to a full, meaningful civilian life is daunting, fraught with many challenging obstacles and bureaucratic barriers. Many times, these brave service men and women require job training but for entirely new careers.

Although statistics show that eventually veterans in general enjoy a favorable rate in the Nation's job market, many veterans obviously find it difficult to compete successfully in the labor market. That is why for over a decade the Federal Government has provided job training benefits to veterans through the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Labor. The mission statement for the Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service, VETS program, is to ''provide veterans and transitioning servicemembers with the resources and services to succeed in the 21st century workplace by maximizing their employment opportunities, protecting their employment rights, and meeting labor market demands with qualified veterans today.''

Additionally, the Department of Labor offers servicemembers leaving the military with a service-connected disability the Disability Transition Assistance Program, DTAP. DTAP includes a 3-day workshop plus additional hours of individual instruction to help determine job readiness and address the special needs of disabled veterans. However, this is the identical DTAP program offered to all transitioning disabled veterans across this country. This 3-day program is valuable support, but it only provides general employment information and at no time addresses the specific needs of the community in which the veteran lives. Unfortunately, this means that frequently there is a void of information on local labor market conditions that result in veterans using their benefits to train for jobs that do not exist in their community.

Mr. Jeffrey Askew is director of the Marion County Veterans' Service Center in my hometown of Ocala, Florida. He said many veterans have used their Federal job training benefit for information technology (IT) career training. However, Ocala has little demand for IT professionals, and veterans are often advised to move to Orlando where there are many more opportunities for them. Upon finally getting settled back into civilian life, it is frustrating and unfortunate to say the least to be forced to uproot one more time and move your family to an unknown city.

I am concerned about this problem, but I think and I believe that there is an easy solution. That is why I introduced legislation to provide better information to veterans on their local job market needs.

H.R. 3646, the Veterans Effective Training Job Opportunities and Benefits Act of 2007, or VET JOBS Act of 2007, directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Labor to conduct a joint study on the greatest employment needs in various job markets around the country and post these results on the VA Web site. These results would then be updated annually to reflect the current and possibly changing needs in the local job market. With this tool, a veteran could plug in his or her zip code and see a list of the occupations that are most in demand, and subsequently use their Federal job training most effectively.

The Department of Labor already has the infrastructure in place for this kind of research, so this is a practical, low-cost solution. In fact, the Congressional Budget Office has unofficially scored this proposal as having insignificant costs, insignificant costs for immeasurable benefits to our veterans.

I encourage my colleagues to join me in this effort. Help our veterans today. Help them with their quality employment. Help them to find out where the jobs that they wish to be trained for are located, and support the VET JOBS Act that I ask for all of my colleagues to cosponsor.

Printed on recycled paper.