

[H.A.S.C. No. 113-37]

**STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE VOW ACT
AND THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE
PRESIDENTIAL VETERANS EMPLOYMENT
INITIATIVE TASK FORCE FOR THE DOD
TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM—
GOALS, PLANS, AND SUCCESS (GPS)**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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CONTENTS

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF HEARINGS

2013

	Page
HEARING:	
Wednesday, April 24, 2013, Status of Implementation of the Requirements of the VOW Act and the Recommendations of the Presidential Veterans Employment Initiative Task Force for the DOD Transition Assistance Program—Goals, Plans, and Success (GPS)	1
APPENDIX:	
Wednesday, April 24, 2013	21

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2013

STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE VOW ACT AND THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PRESIDENTIAL VETERANS EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE TASK FORCE FOR THE DOD TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM—GOALS, PLANS, AND SUCCESS (GPS)

STATEMENTS PRESENTED BY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

Davis, Hon. Susan A., a Representative from California, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Military Personnel	2
Wilson, Hon. Joe, a Representative from South Carolina, Chairman, Subcommittee on Military Personnel	1

WITNESSES

Kelly, Dr. Susan S., Deputy Director, Transition to Veterans Program Office, U.S. Department of Defense	3
Moran, John K., Deputy Assistant Secretary, Veterans' Employment and Training Service, U.S. Department of Labor	4
Pummill, Danny, Director, Veterans Benefits Administration—Department of Defense Program Office, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs	6

APPENDIX

PREPARED STATEMENTS:

Davis, Hon. Susan A.	27
Kelly, Dr. Susan S.	29
Moran, John K.	52
Pummill, Danny	61
Wilson, Hon. Joe	25

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD:

[There were no Documents submitted.]

WITNESS RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ASKED DURING THE HEARING:

Mrs. Davis	75
------------------	----

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING:

Mr. Gibson	79
------------------	----

**STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REQUIREMENTS
OF THE VOW ACT AND THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF
THE PRESIDENTIAL VETERANS EMPLOYMENT INITIA-
TIVE TASK FORCE FOR THE DOD TRANSITION ASSIST-
ANCE PROGRAM—GOALS, PLANS, AND SUCCESS (GPS)**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL,
Washington, DC, Wednesday, April 24, 2013.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 2:06 p.m., in room 2212, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Joe Wilson (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOE WILSON, A REPRESENTA-
TIVE FROM SOUTH CAROLINA, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE
ON MILITARY PERSONNEL**

Mr. WILSON. The hearing will come to order. Today, the Subcommittee on Military Personnel will hear testimony on the Transition Assistance Program run by the Department of Defense, Department of Labor, and Department of Veterans Affairs, which assists transitioning military members as they prepare to separate from their military service to civilian life.

Normally, the military transitions just as many service members back to society as they enlist every year, but during the next several years as the military reduces end strength that number will grow.

So it is critical that transitioning service members are provided with the right information they need to make important decisions to support their future endeavors. When Congress established the Transition Assistance Program in 1991, the military was also undergoing a drawdown, but it this was not conducted after more than 10 years of combat with men and women participating in multiple combat deployments. The high number of deployments and the high unemployment rate for the post-9/11 veterans has generated several changes that affect the program.

First of all, the VOW [Veterans Opportunity to Work] to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 requires all service members who have been on Active Duty for more than 180 days to participate in the program. Second, the Veterans Employment Initiative Task Force made recommendations to revamp and improve the existing program to ensure members were provided the information and services they needed tailored to their postmilitary initiatives. Today, we will hear from witnesses about the status of the implementation, the changes and improvements to the Transition Assistance Program and what mechanisms are available to identify and share best

practices, receive feedback from service members, and how does each agency define success.

I would like to welcome our distinguished witnesses. Dr. Susan S. Kelly, Deputy Director, Transition to Veterans Program Office, Department of Defense; Mr. John K. Moran, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Veterans' Employment and Training Service, Department of Labor; Mr. Danny Pummill, Director, Veterans Benefits Administration, Department of Defense Program Office, Department of Veterans Affairs.

Ms. Davis, would you have any opening comments?

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wilson can be found in the Appendix on page 25.]

STATEMENT OF HON. SUSAN A. DAVIS, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM CALIFORNIA, RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL

Mrs. DAVIS. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I am certainly pleased that we are holding this important hearing today on the current status of the Transition Assistance Program. I also want to welcome our witnesses; Dr. Kelly, Mr. Moran, and Mr. Pummill, thank you so much for your presence.

Today's hearing will focus on how the Departments of Defense, Labor and Veterans Affairs are working together—I would add Education in there, perhaps you can provide some help with that, as well—to enhance the transition of service members back to their communities. Over the past several years, the unemployment levels of those who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan has received much attention. Many of these individuals, following their service, return home to a job market that has been challenging, to say the very least, and to the communities that have been hard hit economically.

While the economy and the job market continue to slowly improve, the transition of service members remains a focus of attention. Efforts to improve the transition services provided to service members to ensure that they are provided the tools they need to ensure a smooth reentry into society, that is absolutely vital to ensure the long-term stability of these individuals. In our efforts to help service members transition, there has been considerable attention paid to how we can improve the transfer of military skills and certifications.

But what is less clear is whether we have an understanding of where the jobs in the private sector really are, and whether these new programs provide the capacity for a service member to transition their skills to meet the demands of the job market. For example, in 2012 we authorized the Services to allow transitioning service members to participate in apprenticeship programs while still in service. The program in San Diego, which I have had a chance to visit a number of times, is quite impressive and has trained a number of marines who have gone into civilian jobs following their successful completion of the program.

Transitioning out of the service and back into civilian life can be one of the most stressful events in a person's life, and it is important that we provide the tools these individuals need to succeed. So I look forward to hearing from our witnesses, especially on how we

are doing to implement the new requirements under the VOW Act and the recommendations from the President's Task Force on Veterans Employment. I am also interested in learning how the Departments will measure the effectiveness of these changes and whether there continues to be gaps in the program that need further focus.

Thank you all again for being here. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We look forward to the hearing.

[The prepared statement of Mrs. Davis can be found in the Appendix on page 27.]

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mrs. Davis. And we will be having votes at any time. We would proceed right away to hear your testimony, and then we will very likely recess and then come back. And so, Dr. Kelly, we will begin with your testimony. As a reminder, please keep your statements to 3 minutes. We have your written statements for the record.

Thank you again for being here today.

**STATEMENT OF DR. SUSAN S. KELLY, DEPUTY DIRECTOR,
TRANSITION TO VETERANS PROGRAM OFFICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE**

Dr. KELLY. Thank you, Chairman Wilson, and thank you, Ranking Member Davis and the distinguished members of the subcommittee. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today, joined by my colleagues from the Departments of Veterans Affairs, and Labor, to discuss the status of the Department's implementation of the requirements of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011. Our progress on the redesign of the Transition Assistance Program, known as TAP, and the DOD's [Department of Defense] views on H.R. 631, the "Servicemembers' Choice in Transition Act of 2013."

TAP, the cornerstone of the Department's transition efforts, is now a collaborative partnership among the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Labor, Education, the Small Business Administration, and the Office of Personnel Management. It is the primary platform used to deliver an array of services and benefits information to separated service members. Our overall goal at DOD is to ensure those who are leaving the service are prepared for their next step, whether that step is pursuing additional education, finding a job in the public or private sector, or starting their own business.

To that end, the Department and its partners have fundamentally redesigned TAP, making the needs of today's service members and their families a top priority. The redesigned TAP was built around four core objectives discussed in detail in my written statement. The culmination of the TAP redesign efforts, the Transition GPS—which stands for "Goals, Plans, Success"—encompasses the requirements of the VOW Act. Moreover, the redesigned TAP establishes the new career readiness standards, extends the transition preparation through the entire span of a service member's career, and provides counseling to facilitate the development of an individual transition plan.

The Department and our interagency partners are implementing the redesigned TAP according to the mandates and the intent of the VOW Act and the recommendations from the Veterans Employ-

ment Initiative Task Force. We have been implementing part of the redesign since November of 2012, and we are currently in the second phase of implementation of Transition GPS, which is targeted for completion by the end of fiscal year 2013. Furthermore, we are on course toward implementing the military life cycle transition model by the end of fiscal year 2014.

The objective of the model is for transition to become a well-planned, organized progression that empowers service members to make informed career decisions and take responsibility for advancing their personal goals.

At this time, I would like to briefly address H.R. 631. The Department's view is that this legislation would negatively impact transitioning service members and would significantly impede the full implementation of the redesigned TAP. DOD and the military departments, and our interagency partners, are successfully implementing the redesigned TAP.

The Department believes that the best course of action at this time is not to provide another prescriptive legislative remedy, but to let us and our partners continue the implementation of a new redesigned TAP. Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. On behalf of the men and women in the military today, and their families, I thank you and the members of this subcommittee for your steadfast support and leadership in this important area.

I am happy to answer any questions you or the other members of the subcommittee may have.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Kelly can be found in the Appendix on page 29.]

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much, Dr. Kelly.

We now proceed to Mr. Moran.

STATEMENT OF JOHN K. MORAN, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Mr. MORAN. Good afternoon, Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Davis, and members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's hearing. My name is John Moran, and I am honored to serve as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Veterans' Employment and Training Service at the Department of Labor. DOL [Department of Labor] is committed to preparing service members and their families to transition from the military to the civilian workforce.

The Transition Assistance Program, or TAP, is an integral part of these efforts. TAP is an interagency effort among DOL, VA [Department of Veterans Affairs], DOD, DHS [Department of Homeland Security], and various other agencies. Together, we work to provide separating service members and their spouses with the training and support they need to successfully transition to the civilian workforce. Through TAP, DOL brings to bear its extensive expertise in employment services to provide a comprehensive 3-day workshop at U.S. military installations around the world.

To date, the Department have provided the employment workshop to over 2.6 million separating or retiring service members and their spouses. Last year alone, DOL conducted more than 4,500 employment workshops for over 160,000 participants. In August

2011 the Department initiated a major effort aimed at revamping and updating the employment workshop curriculum. The result is a highly effective workshop that reflects the best practices in career development and adult learning. Around the same time the Department initiated the redesign, the President established the joint VEI [Veterans Employment Initiative] Task Force to develop proposals to maximize the career readiness of all service members.

The task force recommended the fundamental redesign of TAP. This launched a coordinated effort to adopt and implement the training and service of the remodel, called Transition GPS. The VOW Act mandated several reforms to further enhance TAP, including mandatory participation in the employment workshop. In addition, the VOW Act requires DOL to use contract facilitators to ensure a standardized, high-quality professional cadre of instructors. The Department has completed the transfer to contract facilitation and has successfully rolled out the new workshop at all military installations.

DOL has worked closely with its partner agencies to ensure that the redesigned employment workshop is seamlessly integrated into the overall Transition GPS model. Between February and April 2012, DOL conducted a 3-month pilot of the redesigned TAP employment workshop at 11 military installations. Based on the pilot findings and comments from hundreds of different organizations and individuals, DOL fine-tuned the curriculum which is in use today. The redesigned workshop has incorporated training best practices in adult learning, and increased emphasis on networking and communicating the veterans' job skills to employers.

The new curriculum was specifically geared toward the mechanics of getting a good job. Participants learn how to explore career interests, understand the labor market, build résumés, prepare for interviews and negotiate job offers. I am happy to report that the new curriculum has been well received. Student feedback from over 2,000 attendees during January and February of this year gave the employment workshop an overall rating of 4.4 on a 1-to-5 scale. The data strongly suggests the Department's revised employment workshop is meeting the high expectations of its customers.

Finally, I would like to mention the Department has serious concerns about H.R. 631, the "Servicemembers' Choice in Transition Act of 2013," which would negatively impact our transitioning service members. The Department looks forward to working with the subcommittee to ensure that our transitioning service members have the resources and training they need to successfully transition to the civilian workforce.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the subcommittee, this concludes my statement. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Moran can be found in the Appendix on page 52.]

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Moran.

And we now proceed with Director Pummill.

STATEMENT OF DANNY PUMMILL, DIRECTOR, VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION—DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE PROGRAM OFFICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. PUMMILL. Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Davis, and members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today. In August 2011 the President announced his comprehensive plan to address the issues of unemployment and the educational and entrepreneurial opportunities for returning service members and veterans struggling to find jobs suitable with their experience and talent.

In December 2011, the task force provided recommendations to the President for a redesigned Transition Assistance Program called GPS. These overarching recommendations intend to transfer service members' transition to veteran status into a well-planned, organized process which equips them to make informed career decisions and advance them toward achievement of their goals. The end state will be a transform process that places throughout a service member's military career in addition to the new Transition GPS program.

VA is also working with the Army in delivering virtual briefings to service members across the globe. Additionally, we are working with DOD to develop online courses of the VA briefing to be housed in DOD's joint knowledge online Web site. This will allow participants to access courses according to their own schedules and train at their own pace. Our new format is dynamic, instructor-led and classroom-based. Quantity delivery of VA products and services is essential to the success of the Transition GPS and implementation of the task force VEI recommendations.

VA continues to make recommendations and improvements to the curriculum on a quarterly basis through feedback provided by service members, briefers and VA subject matter experts to ensure consistency and accuracy of the program and individual presentation skills. We have set high standards for our contract briefers delivering the enhanced briefings. During the 2-week training process, where they learn presentation skills in the VA curriculum, they are required to take a written examination that measures their ability to research and understand VA benefits.

The evaluation is also put in place to measure instructor proficiency in presenting a 4-hour and a 2-hour VA briefing. Trainees must show proficiency in their platform skills in order to pass the training. Criteria for evaluating briefers includes accuracy in relaying content, professionalism, student engagement, use of technology, and control of the classroom. Briefers who do not meet the minimum proficiency will be provided additional guidance, education and assistance to help them achieve the minimum standards. If they are unable to achieve the minimum standards, then we let them go.

In conclusion, the VA is honored to continue our role in assisting with the transition of service members from military to civilian life. I would also like to take this opportunity to express VA's respect and appreciation to our partner agencies in this unprecedented endeavor to assist service members and their families. This program is designed to give men and women in the service and their fami-

lies an opportunity to hear and learn more about their benefits, research benefits, and fit their individual needs.

VA continually seeks to improve the quality and breadth of our outreach service to all Components, Active Duty, Guard and Reserve. And we continue to work with our partner agencies. VA fully supports the Administration and congressional efforts to ensure that transitioned service members are ready for employment and education upon separation.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions that you or members of the subcommittee may have at this time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Pummill can be found in the Appendix on page 61.]

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Director. And we will now proceed to questions. And each subcommittee member will be able to ask questions for 5 minutes. We have an expert professional timekeeper. Craig Greene will maintain the time, and very proficient at this, including me. And even as we begin, I want to thank you. I want to thank you as a member of Congress, but I want to thank you as a veteran myself and also the proud Dad, all credit to my wife, of four sons serving in the military today.

So we are a military family. And it is just reassuring to see the services and the thoughtfulness that is being provided to our service members. So thank you very much. As we proceed, Mr. Moran, you have already actually touched on this, but beginning with Dr. Kelly I would like you all to touch further. And that is, the feedback that you receive on the Transition Assistance Program. How is the effectiveness? How do you determine if the program is being successful?

Dr. KELLY. Well, we started first by making sure that we had the curriculum right and that it was hitting the mark. So this summer we piloted curriculums. And with that pilot came an online assessment for participants to provide us feedback, module-by-module. And that assessment evaluated if they were mastering their learning objectives. It asked them about the professionalism of the instructors, the facilities, what still needed to be done. So that was the online assessment for the members to give us direct feedback, and they did.

We also had, at each pilot site observer teams from across the interagency, 10 subject matter experts, go to each one of the pilot sites and again conduct a very structured assessment. As well as conducting sensing sessions with service members who had gone through the previous TAP program and then who went through the current pilots, and asked them for their evaluations of the before and the after. Nine hundred fifty-four military members went through those pilots this summer of just the core curriculum, and we had very, very high marks.

They were mastering the learning objectives, they gave us good, strong feedback, and their confidence was increased. And they thought they were getting the skills that they needed. So that was good feedback to us. We also received feedback to help us modify the curriculum and some of with weaknesses that that they identified for us. We modified the curriculum with subject matter experts and are relaunched that again. We also have an enduring online

assessment that we set up so that we continue to get feedback anonymously from the participants of the curriculum so that they can give us unfettered and direct feedback on—again, as to the curriculum, the facilities, the logistics of getting into the courses, et cetera.

And again, we are measuring the learning outcomes, their confidence, and if they think that these skills are what they need and how prepared they are. We also have short-term, medium-term, and long-term performance measures across the interagency that we will be monitoring. It starts with DOD, with career readiness standards, how many of our military are meeting career readiness standards. A medium-term one is how many military members are receiving credentials or earning their credentials while they are still on Active Duty.

A long-term example would be the number of veterans who complete their course of study at the universities, colleges, and the technical institutes. And that will be a measurement that comes from both VA and the Department of Education. So there is a whole suite of performance measures—immediate, medium-, and long-term—that we will be using to assess our return on investment.

Mr. WILSON. Good. Thank you.

Mr. Moran.

Mr. MORAN. Yes, thank you for the question. We obviously have been collaborating with DOD and our other partner agencies and working together with obtaining the evaluation information at the end of each class. So what we are seeing right now, as I mentioned in my statement, is that the—

Mr. WILSON. Four-point-four?

Mr. MORAN. I am sorry. Four-point-four out of a five-scale. We are getting very high marks. If—I would like to even read to you a couple comments that were made. Because in addition to sort of the numeric scores, they were allowed to put in some free text. So a couple of the comments that were made. “I didn’t think I had the skills for a high-paying job. The DOL employment workshop has changed my life.” “I was fearful of my future—however, after the DOL workshop I no longer feel fearful, and excited and eager to start my new career.” “Thank you for creating this course. It has changed my life.”

So we collaborate with DOD and VA to collect all of this evaluative information. We look at it from the DOL employment perspective. Right now, our marks are pretty good. That doesn’t mean we are resting on our laurels. In fact, we want to look at an annual cycle of curriculum review and revision, as necessary. And we are looking at actually taking our evaluation process further than what we call the level-one evaluation into something more sophisticated, where we are reaching out to these folks after, say, 8 months out on the street to see how they can reflect back on the course that they did take and how it was valuable to them in their current life circumstances or what could have helped it a little bit more.

So we are very engaged in the evaluation process. And it is a great one right now, but we even want to extend it a little bit further very shortly.

Mr. WILSON. Well, thank you. And I apologize, Director, but Craig has already tapped me on the wrist. My time is up.

We proceed to Mrs. Davis.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Pummill, I wanted to ask you first about how the Department of Labor tracks industries and the types of jobs that are currently available, and where future job opportunities are growing. How do you see that? And I am directing that to Mr. Pummill, actually.

Mr. PUMMILL. I am sorry?

Mrs. DAVIS. . Well, part of it is that you are being cross-trained, right, now? And so I think it is important if we try and understand. Do you see that that information is being tracked so that you have that information, as well?

Mr. PUMMILL. Could you repeat the question?

Mrs. DAVIS. The information about where the jobs are available. What jobs are available, where they are available, and where future job opportunities might be. Are you able to access that information? Do you—

Mr. PUMMILL. Yes, I am not sure. I will have to find out. I believe it is all at the Department of Labor, and it is in their area of expertise. But—I will check with the people at VA that run the jobs programs and find out what information they have in addition to this.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 75.]

Mr. MORAN. So within the Department of Labor, we do labor market surveying and research. And we have online tools through our Bureau of Labor Statistics to do forecasting of job opportunities and future growth. So we have a very powerful tool online called My Next Move for Veterans. And within that tool, a veteran can put in a military occupational series and look at what the forecast is for similar work in the civilian sector over the next 10 years down to a city, State or region of the country.

So online they can go in and they can basically say I want to be a welder, where are those jobs? What is the forecast for that type of work over the next 10 years? And they can identify the specific areas of the country that have better prospects in that area for them so they can target their job opportunities and research in that area.

Mrs. DAVIS. And I think part of what we are trying to understand is the extent to which everybody who is engaged in this really is familiar with the kinds of programs and information that is really out there. Because in many cases, and I know that we have some phenomenal programs in San Diego, for example. They have really been working very hard on this. There are many organizations that want to be involved. But the reality is that we don't necessarily have the opportunities for everybody.

And so you have to identify where those jobs are. And I think that for some programs that have been able to not just employ two or three veterans, in some cases, but really are looking for large numbers and how—you know, how you make sure that those are available.

Mr. MORAN. There are actually two other comments I would like to make. One is that we also work collectively with the Joining

Forces Initiative at the White House. And there are many companies making commitments to hire thousands of veterans in—and service members. So one of the things we make sure we do within our employment workshop is get that information out, that fresh information out, as it occurs so that our instructors can tell the folks in the training class who is making commitments, where those commitments are being made, and what type of work is available.

The other point I wanted to make is that the Department of Labor, through its American Job Centers, is also actively engaged in working with any veteran or separating service member who is looking for assistance to find the work that he or she may want. So between those two, the Transition Assistance Program and the American Job Centers, I think we have a pretty robust system out there right now to help everybody find the type of work that they are qualified for and to be able to make decisions about where to move in this country to find that work.

Mrs. DAVIS. All right, my time is up. Mr. Chairman, we will come back later and try and focus more on that. Thank you.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much.

Dr. Joe Heck, of Nevada

Dr. HECK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you all for what you are doing to try to make sure that our returning veterans can transition to civilian life. I tend to concentrate on the Reserve Components, having spent 23 years in the Reserves. And I know that reservists that serve more than 180 days are eligible for the program. But according to the DTM [Directive-Type Memorandum], they are supposed to begin their pre-separation counseling as soon as possible in their remaining periods of service.

So right now, most tours, at least the initial tours, is, you know, 1 year. So how can they mobilize, and you know they have a 1-year period—and start their transitioning out at the same time that they are actually still transitioning in? How is it working for reservists?

Dr. KELLY. That is a very good question. And I will tell you, that is one of the biggest challenges in this particular—in the current model of Transition GPS. The Army actually experimented this summer trying to find out the best way to give the Transition GPS curriculum and all the services and information to the reservists as they were demobilizing. The rule that that is followed, though, is that they have to go through Transition GPS before they separate. There are some exemptions in that DTM in reference to the DOL employment workshop and some of the other parts of the curriculum based on if they are returning to a job after their 1-year mobilization or if they are returning to a course of study at the university or a college.

So some of those reservists, as they were coming back, those numbers shrank down, if you allow me that term, and not as many had to stay for the full course. But the issue that you bring up is exactly why the—we have the second spiral and the second model of the military life cycle.

So that preparation for a civilian career, aligning your goals for the civilian career, and reservists go back and forth, have a continuum of service. The military life cycle requires the services to

identify touch points for both the Reserve Component, the Guard, and the Active Duty as to when the parts of Transition GPS will be provided, as well as what are those touch points that commanders, first sergeants, et cetera, ask that military member to deliberately do some planning as to how they are going to use their military training, not only their technical training, but also their experiences and leadership in team building, decisionmaking, et cetera, and how that is going to apply for their long-term goals in their civilian careers.

Or how can they apply that to the jobs that they are returning to as reservists or guardsmen. So that is exactly why we did not stay satisfied with a just before you end your Active Duty or your mobilization. We are pushing it across the military life cycle. That was a major concern for us.

Dr. HECK. So as that demobilizing reservist is going through the GPS process, and they get to that point where they are supposed to have their capstone, how is that done for reservists? And what happens if that is not accomplished? You know, they are back at their demobilization site, or you know they have got a REFRAD [Release From Active Duty] order that is going to release them on a certain date, if they don't complete their capstone what happens?

Dr. KELLY. They are staying to get the through the Transition GPS and that capstone. They are having their career readiness standards verified before they are sent home.

Dr. HECK. So they will get an order, an extension of an order, to stay on Active Duty until they are?

Dr. KELLY. They do not, they do not. So this is an institutional shift for us. And we have to start embedding that planning, just like the Department had to adjust to do the postdeployment health assessments, the redeployment health assessments. We had to extend that time when they came back, which decreased the time that they could be in-theater. We are going to have to do the same in reference to Transition GPS and getting these curriculums under their belts.

But again, that is also why the virtual curriculum is going to be so helpful for the Reserve Component, and the Guard.

Dr. HECK. And then just to, in my remaining minute, you have all expressed concerns about H.R. 631. I know, I have read through your statements. There is, you know, some detailed concerns. But what, in your opinion, is the number one issue behind H.R. 631 that you think is going to be an impediment to the current transition process?

Dr. KELLY. As I expressed, I think, in my written statement it is the curtailment of the DOL employment workshop, making that an optional track. The Department agrees with the original intent of the Vow to Hire Heroes Act, that even after you complete college education, technology training, you are going to be looking for a job and joining that workforce. You need the skills that the DOL employment workshop provides. We think that needs to be sustained as mandatory and not an optional track.

Dr. HECK. And the gentlemen, any other concerns?

Mr. MORAN. If I could add one concern to that, and it is essentially this, that we are in the process now of rolling out a really nice sophisticated new program. And we haven't really given it an

opportunity to prove itself fully. And to make changes to that right now, we don't think is in the best interest. I think it makes sense to see how this program is working as designed. We think it is meeting the mark. We are very confident in it so making changes right now just doesn't seem to be a wise move.

Dr. HECK. Great. Again, thank you all very much for what you are doing for our service members and our veterans.

I yield back.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Dr. Heck.

And we will now recess for votes. And we will resume with Congresswoman Madeleine Bordallo, of Guam.

[Recess.]

Mr. WILSON. Ladies and gentlemen, the Subcommittee on Military Personnel will resume. And we will proceed to Dr. Brad Wenstrup of Ohio.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also would like to reiterate what the others have said about the work that you are doing to try and help our troops and subsequent veterans make the transition. And I was just wondering, is there an opportunity to work with the directors of each State VA? Because a lot of times, really, jobs available and things like that are well known on a local level. And would that be a good avenue to work with DOD directly with the State VAs to try and transition people into employment?

Mr. MORAN. Thank you for the question. Let me first talk about what DOL has out there, at the very local level that you speak of, to help that process. We have a network of 2,700 job centers across the country. And within those job centers, we employ State employees. We fund State employees, called Disabled Veteran Outreach Program specialists. Their job is to work with veterans at the local level to match them with the jobs they are looking for in that local community.

In addition to the DVOP, Disabled Veteran Outreach Program, specialists, we have what is called a local veterans employment representative at those sites. Their mission is to be working in the local community to find jobs specifically for veterans. So within the Department of Labor, we have that structure in place, we are working that every day, and it is proving beneficial. Now the VA and DOD may also have some programs that they would like to speak to.

Mr. PUMMILL. From a VA perspective, how we get involved is mostly with the service members that have a disability, they are disabled. And that is through our VR&E [Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment] counselors. And basically, we work with them on the military installations and in our regional offices on a one-on-one basis. Where we provide a counselor to determine what their individual disability is, how that impacts their ability to work. And then we coordinate with DOL to find out what is available and what we can get them into.

And depending on your disability, depending on what you can and can't do, determines the length of the time that we stay with that individual.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Thank you.

Dr. KELLY. I would like to add to that. One of the main emphasis of the TAP redesign was to build a bridge from Active Duty to the

resources that are in the communities where the military members are relocating. So part of that capstone is a warm handoff. If a member is deemed at risk or does not have immediate employment and wants immediate employment, et cetera, there is a handoff between the TAP managers to the local resources, the DOL American Job Centers as well as the veterans centers.

So that is one of the pieces that was deliberately built into the TAP redesign. The warm handoff to a bridge between Active Duty and the community resources of our partner agencies.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Thank you very much.

I yield back.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Dr. Wenstrup.

We now proceed to Congressman Austin Scott of Georgia.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And ma'am, gentlemen, thank you for being here today. And in the testimony about TAP you highlight the point that service members can select different self-elected tracks. And so my question, and I think this would be for you, Dr. Kelly, is when our service members are selecting these tracks, higher education, technical training, what tools, if any, are we providing them to make sure that they are making a decision that is in their best interest? In other words, not falling for aggressive marketing towards service members by institutions that, in some cases, may not be accredited?

Dr. KELLY. Well, we start off first by taking them through an MOC [Military Occupation Code] crosswalk comparing what they have gained in their military skills; compare that to the civilian occupational codes. Then leading them to the DOL, my next move, looking at the geographic location to which they are moving, what is in demand in that job market, if the career field that they had chosen or their MOC is not going to be in demand in that job market. What is your plan B, where else can you relocate to? Or what is the career field, the second career field that you want to choose. Both the technical training and the education tracks build upon that MOC crosswalk as well as the DOL employment workshop, which actually is a very, very detailed step-by-step process to take them through the employment market.

But the education track guides them through a series of questions after they have been through the MOC crosswalk, the DOL employment workshop. What is the best institution for your career field in your area? What is the best course of study for the career field that you have chosen? As well as what is your financial strategy—on top of that Post-9/11 GI Bill, very generous, but what is your financial strategy to avoid debt while you are going to school. And then finally, how to fill out that application.

So it is a lot of information, a lot of Web-based tools that are kept up to date by the Department of Education and our other partner agencies that the military members learn to navigate and use over and over again.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you. Can you tell me just briefly what are we doing with organizations in our efforts to end misrepresentation to our service members. People that are there, quite honestly, just to get the money, not to provide an education that is actually going to benefit the men and women that have served this country? What are we doing today with that?

Dr. KELLY. We are steering them towards those Web sites sponsored and developed by the Department of Education to show them the accredited schools, either nationally accredited or regionally accredited, that are recognized by the Department of Education, that are recognized by VA, as reimbursable for their GI Bill. We are taking them to the Web sites, the established Web sites from our Federal partners and educating them about the institutions that are out there.

The efforts to exploit the service members and use that Post-9/11 GI Bill, and they come out with nothing, they are very carefully warned. And that is exactly why we develop the technical training track and the education tracks. It is chockfull of information.

Mr. SCOTT. Are we requiring them to go an accredited institution to use the GI Bill?

Dr. KELLY. Yes. And that is the VA has to approve those institutions for reimbursement for the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Montgomery GI Bill. But I will let my VA partner speak to that.

Mr. PUMMILL. Yes, the institutions do have to be approved by the VA. And in the course of instruction that we give the service members for both in the Transition program, the 4-hour briefing that we give, we have 1 hour dedicated to education. The GI Bill is an incredible benefit to service members and their families, and we want to make sure it is used wisely and they make the best decisions.

And the same thing on our technical track. And we tell them things like it is, you know, not just a school. Is it accredited university? What is the graduation rate, how do you find out the graduation rate? How much does it cost to go to that school? What kind of job are you going to get when you get out? What kind of income are you gonna get? Are you going to have any additional bills that you have to pay off yourself? And to think through all those things and to research them before you make decisions when you want to go to a school.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, I am almost out of time.

I will yield the remainder back to you.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much, Mr. Scott. And we will proceed with another round for any persons who want to participate.

Mr. Moran, I am particularly concerned for disabled service members. What are the special services that are provided for our wounded warriors?

Mr. MORAN. Yes, thank you for the question, Mr. Chairman. The programs that we have at the Department of Labor to help wounded warriors begin where we forward-deploy, if you will, our Disabled Veterans Outreach Program specialists from our State offices, to medical treatment facilities. So while the wounded warrior is going through care, we are working with that person one-on-one to help them understand the labor market they may be interested in, how to find a job, help them build a résumé, work with them on interviewing techniques.

All of the things we do in the Transition Assistance Program for a class of 35 to 50 we do, if you will, on an individual basis for the wounded warrior right at the bedside. And further, once that per-

son is moved out of the medical treatment facility he may or may not go through our TAP program, depending on the ability. We also make sure they understand that that DVOP [Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program] specialist is still available to the wounded warrior when they leave the service. They can come through an American Job Center and work again with the DVOP to get the services they need to find the job they are looking for and prepare résumés, interviewing techniques, et cetera.

And even take advantage of some training opportunities that we provide through the Department of Labor if that is necessary to land the job he or she is looking for. And the other thing I would like to mention is that we are participating with DOD and VA in building the virtual TAP solution, as well. So when you have a wounded warrior who is not able to make it to a brick and mortar classroom, our virtual solution is going to help in that case, as well, so that they can take advantage of all the learning that their counterparts who were able to go to brick and mortar receive.

Mr. WILSON. And do you feel like they understand they have re-employment rights?

Mr. MORAN. Yes, sir. With respect to reemployment rights, one of the other things about DOL is we are not only an employment agency, we also protect employment rights. A couple programs we have specifically within the organization is protecting rights around veterans preference and USERRA [Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act], Uniformed Services Reemployment Act. So we brief all service members routinely, prior to deployment, on all of their rights with respect to USERRA, when they come back from deployment what their rights are to get back into the job they left, what they are—if they were to receive a promotion while they were gone how their rights are protected for that particular aspect, as well.

We also have, throughout the Department of Labor outside of my organization, other protection agencies who work with any issues that may be present; Office of Federal Contract Compliance, for example, is another area and department that we make sure the contractors who have Federal contracts are employing veterans at the appropriate rate.

Mr. WILSON. And to any of the three of you, is there, in terms of metrics, does anyone maintain any substantiation of jobs secured? And then additionally, I was very encouraged. We had a job—veterans jobs fair at Aiken, South Carolina, on Monday. And I was really encouraged. The South Carolina Army National Guard has a program which is monitoring unemployment rates among veterans. And in South Carolina, to my joy, it went from 16 percent to 3.9 percent among veterans.

And so if you want a good example, South Carolina comes in well. And I just know, in meeting with the personnel, that it was very encouraging. But has anyone maintained jobs secured or—and/or the level of unemployment among veterans?

Mr. MORAN. Yes, Mr. Chairman. The Department of Labor, through the Bureau of Labor Statistics, tracks the unemployment rate not only on a monthly and quarterly, but also a yearly, basis. Yearly is usually the best statistic because you have a better sampling of the population. And veterans, generally speaking as a

whole, are employed at a better rate than the average American citizen. But then when you look at that further and you break it into various categories, then you see some differences among the groups.

So, for example, Gulf War I era veterans have a 5.9 unemployment rate compared to the general population at 8.1 percent. Gulf War II veterans have a 9.9 overall unemployment rate, so it is a little bit higher than the average population. And then, certainly, within that Gulf War II population you have that age that we are all concerned about—the 18- to 24-year-old, the generally younger person. And those rates are quite a bit higher than most of the other rates. So a lot of the efforts all three Departments focus on is trying to work that 18- to 24-year-old group to bring that number down as far as we can.

Mr. WILSON. Well, thank you again for all of your service.

And we will now proceed to Mrs. Davis.

Ms. DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You know, you all mention the bridge and the handoff. And I am just wondering, between the TAP manager, local resources and the veterans' center we have a lot of organizations that really want to help. I think every community has them, some perhaps more than others depending upon their job markets. And I think one of the things that has been a little frustrating is the coordination of that. And in some cases, you may have groups of the Chamber that have stepped in, you may have other military affairs organizations.

How are you evaluating that, or how can you tell whether there is an interface there that is actually working? And what role might we have in that, as well? How can we do that better? I guess the other question is, the use of social media around some of those extensions of the community that are there. There is no, maybe one good place to try and look at this information and understand it within communities. How can we help?

Dr. KELLY. One of the things that we have that has been mandated is the National Resource Directory, which lists all of the resources in local communities. And that is a joint project VA and DOD. So that is open, that is on a Web site, the National Resource Directory. So that is open to all of our staff members to be able to use during this warm handoff that I was describing earlier. So it is not only the agencies of the Department of Labor and Veterans Affairs, but also any of those helping agencies that is deemed to be helpful for that service member or their family during that reintegration into that local community.

So it is not solely focused on the Department of Labor and Veterans Affairs. We have that great asset, the National Resource Directory, and we use that extensively.

But in reference to how each one of those local communities mobilize their resources and use them most efficiently and most effectively is a question that we have also asked. DOD, and with the executive steering committee, we actually have a study going on right now to try to get at least a peek into that, into different communities and to find out if we can identify some best practices at each one of those communities. And there are different types of communities, and we are eager to see some of the results of that.

Mrs. DAVIS. Do you have any idea when some of that might be available?

Dr. KELLY. It is a year-long study. It is being conducted by CNA [Center for Naval Analyses] for us, and we are very eager to see those results. And we will be happy to share those with you.

Mrs. DAVIS. And I would hope that there is a lot of good outreach to the community in trying to really get it from their perspective.

Ms. KELLY. The researchers are in those communities and actually talking with those agencies.

Mrs. DAVIS. Are they able to look at social media as well to understand how that might be best used?

Ms. KELLY. Within those local communities? I don't think that is an aspect of the study. No, I am—that is unfortunate.

Mrs. DAVIS. Yes. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. MORAN. But I would like to add, if I could, that you are on to a very important point. What I have seen over the time I have been in the Department of Labor is that there has been a lot of activity among everybody to try to solve the problem, if you will, of veteran unemployment. And that is good, and everybody should be doing what they can. However, sometimes what we see is there are so many independent efforts that are disjointed that it can become confusing to the service member who is looking for that help or the veteran looking for that help.

So one of the things we have under way right now through the Veteran Employment Initiative Task Force is to look at, at least within the Federal Government, how can we sort of bring our resources together instead of DOD, VA, DOL, Education, you name it, all building some solution for this employment problem. How can we bring our resources better together for what we are calling the "Single Portal Initiative." So that we are able to point—this is our goal—be able to point to everybody who is interested in trying to find a job for a veteran to one single portal that is going to bring them to the best applications that are available out there so that we no longer have confusion and have veterans hit on a database, for example, that has duplicative job announcements or outdated job announcements.

That we know that we are pointing them to the best source that is out there. That work is under way right now. In fact, a meeting of that group is happening this afternoon.

Mrs. DAVIS. Well, that would be good to know. I would love to get that information.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 75.]

Mrs. DAVIS. Because I actually think that there is a group that I am aware of that is working on that in a regional way. And so that would be helpful also.

And very, very briefly, where you have groups of individuals, for example, retired physicians who would like to be helpful in helping bridge the gap between corpsmen, for example, and other health providers that we really need in our system today and they want—so how are we organized to take in some of that interest and to be able to direct people to resources? Is there any way to do that at this point? Is that all local, you know?

Mr. PUMMILL. From a VA perspective, we have had some success through our Veterans Service Organizations. We have a long history of dealing with them. You know—the VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars], AMVETS [American Veterans], Paralyzed Veterans, Purple Hearts—that seem to be all over the country and have a good idea of what is going on in communities. We have even invited them to our sessions, particularly out in your district out in San Diego. They attended all the TAP briefings and stuff like that to give us ideas and give us some input.

We are also finding in the VA that there are some organizations out there, private organizations, NGOs [Non-Governmental Organizations] that do a really good job at this, at transition. And we are—we don't have a formal method yet, but we are trying to figure out as part of, you know, studies VA how do we get to them, how do we get to their ideas and stuff like that. And we are just at the beginning of that, though, right now.

Mrs. DAVIS. Okay, thank you. Thanks, thank you all for being here.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mrs. Davis.

We now proceed to Dr. Wenstrup.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Yes, just one quick question. We were talking about some of these ancillary agencies that are diligently trying to help our troops, as well. Are you familiar or have you have any contact with the Easter Seals program, the Dixon Center? That seems to be a fairly large one. Admiral Mullen, I believe, is working with them and people like Gary Sinise. And I didn't know if you have any familiarity with that agency and any connection with them at all.

Mr. MORAN. I do have some familiarity with it. I am not steeped in knowledge on it. I know that they are out there. They are an organization that is trying to help crack this nut relative to veteran unemployment. We do work a lot with hundreds of different organizations. We are constantly at the Department of Labor Veterans' Employment Training Service meeting with everybody on who is doing what and trying to see how we can help and collaborate with each others efforts. I am aware we have worked with Easter Seals, but I don't have a lot of detail on that right now.

Mr. PUMMILL. We do, Congressman—on the VA side from VHA, the Veterans Health Administration, especially with the wounded warriors, deal with a lot of those agencies in transitioning them back to civilian life. They have a lot that they can provide us as far as the severely disabled, the soldiers and marines that have lost limbs and things like that. They have a lot of experience with that, and we share a lot of information. As far as jobs and stuff like that, though, I wouldn't know.

Dr. WENSTRUP. I get the impression they are fairly large because I have seen them in several cities making their pitch and bringing companies together and giving large presentations to big companies in my district—Procter & Gamble, Cintas—and trying to work with them. And it might be a good relationship to build in some way, and maybe we can help facilitate that here.

Dr. KELLY. We are actually meeting under the efforts of the Joining Forces efforts with Mrs. Obama and Dr. Biden, with the Fortune 500 companies and with the companies that are signed up

with the 100,000 Jobs Initiative, looking at mentoring, using those private corporations who have members or employers who are willing to mentor service members as they become veterans and also while they are veterans. The Small Business Administration has also stepped up to a tremendous commitment for the service members.

They have developed the entrepreneurship track, a 2-day curriculum. And at the end of that 2-day curriculum the service members are invited to complete an online—an 8-week course online free of charge. And at the end of that course they are connected to a mentor, small business mentor, a successful businessman, a successful businesswoman in that same area to help the service member veteran through those first years as a small business. So there are lots of mentoring efforts that we are engaged in, but not one-on-one through DOD. It is through the Joining Forces, 100 [100,000] Jobs Initiative, the Small Business Administration, et cetera.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Thank you. And along the line of skills training or getting a 4-year degree, whatever the case may be, do you feel that the potential students are readily informed of what the job opportunities are with that? In other words, you know, not a great time to necessarily get a degree in philosophy and expect to find a job, you know. No offense to anyone who has got a philosophy degree. But do you know what I am saying? I mean, are they aware of what the odds are of finding employment after going through that training?

Dr. KELLY. Well, again, the DOL employment workshop does a terrific job of taking those service members to those Web sites, particularly My Next Move. Again, that geographic location, the job market, what is the prospect for that particular career field for the next 10 years. It has green jobs. And in the pilots that I have sat through, the military members just jump on that Web site. They are thrilled to see it; you have a hard time pulling them off of it to proceed with the rest of the curriculum. Very, very valuable. My Next Move and O*NET. So those are tremendous Web sites for that.

Mr. MORAN. If I could also, if a veteran comes into an American Job Center that I spoke of earlier a piece of the process is to sit down with that person and ask, you know, what are you interested in? What kind of training do you have already? And be able to assess gaps that may be in that training. And then through the American Job Center, we are able to provide veterans with various training opportunities to fill those gaps.

So they may want to be, as I said earlier, a welder. And they have so much training towards that goal, but they need a couple more courses. Through an American Jobs Center service they can get those courses free of charge, which will position them for the job. And, of course, American Jobs Center can also work with them to actually attach them to the employer. So that is what the DOL brings to the table on that.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Well, thank you very much. And thanks for all you are doing.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Dr. Wenstrup. And thank all of you for being here today. We can certainly see your commitment to work-

ing with military service members, military families and retirees.
So thank you for what you are doing.

There is no further business. The Subcommittee on Military Personnel shall be adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:44 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

APRIL 24, 2013

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

APRIL 24, 2013

Statement of Hon. Joe Wilson
Chairman, House Subcommittee on Military Personnel
Hearing on
Status of Implementation of the Requirements of the VOW
Act and the Recommendations of the Presidential Veterans
Employment Initiative Task Force for the DOD Transition
Assistance Program—Goals, Plans, and Success (GPS)
April 24, 2013

Today the subcommittee will hear testimony on the Transition Assistance Program run by the Department of Defense, Department of Labor, and Department of Veterans Affairs which assist transitioning military members as they prepare to separate from their military service to civilian life. Normally the military transitions just as many service members back to society as they enlist every year; but during the next several years as the military reduces end strength, that number will grow, so it is critical that transitioning service members are provided with the right information they need to make important decisions to support their future endeavors.

When Congress established Transition Assistance Program in 1991, the military was also undergoing a drawdown; but it was not conducted after more than 10 years of combat with men and women participating in multiple combat deployments. The high number of deployments and the high unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans has generated several changes that affect the program. First, the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 requires all service members who have been on Active Duty for more than 180 days to participate in the program. Second, the Veterans Employment Initiative Task Force made recommendations to revamp and improve the existing program to ensure members were provided the information and services they needed, tailored to their postmilitary initiatives.

Today we will hear from the witnesses about the status of implementation, the changes and improvements to Transition Assistance Program, and what mechanisms are available to identify and share best practices, receive feedback from service members, and how does each agency define success.

I would like to welcome our distinguished witnesses:

- Dr. Susan S. Kelly, Deputy Director, Transition to Veterans Program Office, Department of Defense;
- Mr. John K. Moran, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Veterans' Employment and Training Service, Department of Labor; and
- Mr. Danny Pummill, Director, Veterans Benefits Administration—Department of Defense Program Office, Department of Veterans Affairs.

Statement of Hon. Susan A. Davis
Ranking Member, House Subcommittee on Military Personnel
Hearing on
Status of Implementation of the Requirements of the VOW Act and the Recommendations of the Presidential Veterans Employment Initiative Task Force for the DOD Transition Assistance Program—Goals, Plans, and Success (GPS)
April 24, 2013

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased that we are holding this important hearing on the current status of the transition assistance program. Let me also welcome our witnesses, Dr. Kelly, Mr. Moran, and Mr. Pummill. Welcome. We appreciate all of you being here.

Today's hearing will focus on how the Departments of Defense, Labor, and Veterans Affairs are working together to enhance the transition of service members back to their communities. Over the past several years, the unemployment levels of those who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan have received much attention. Many of these individuals following their service returned home to a job market that has been challenging, to say the least, and to communities that have been hard hit economically.

While the economy and the job market continue to slowly improve, the transition of service members remains a focus of attention. Efforts to improve the transition services provided to service members to ensure that they are provided the tools they need to ensure a smooth reentry into society is vital to ensure the long-term stability of these individuals.

In our efforts to help service members transition, there has been considerable attention paid to how we can improve the transfer of military skills and certifications, but what is less clear is whether we have an understanding of where the jobs in the private sector really are, and whether these new programs provide the capacity for a service member to transition their skills to meet the demands of the job market.

For example, in 2012, we authorized the Services to allow transitioning service members to participate in apprenticeship programs while still in service. The program in San Diego, which I have visited a number of times, is quite impressive and has trained a number of marines who have gone into civilian jobs following their successful completion of the program.

Transitioning out of the service and back into civilian life can be one of the most stressful events in a person's life. It is important we provide the tools these individuals need to succeed.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses, especially on how we are doing to implement the new requirements under the VOW Act and the recommendations from the President's Task Force on Veterans Employment. I am also interested in learning how the Departments will measure the effectiveness of these changes, and whether there continues to be gaps in the program that need further focus. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

29

STATEMENT
OF
DR. SUSAN KELLY
DIRECTOR
TRANSITION TO VETERANS PROGRAM OFFICE
OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND
READINESS
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
BEFORE THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL
HEARING
ON THE
TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

APRIL 24, 2013

Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Davis, distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the status of the Department's implementation of the requirements of the HR 613 Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) Act of 2011; our progress on the redesign of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and the views of the Department of Defense (DoD) on HR 631, "Service members' Choice in Transition Act of 2013."

Today's Veterans face a number of challenges in making the transition to civilian life. Among them is the opportunity to embark on a productive post-military career. Since 2001, two million men and women have completed their service in uniform to our nation and returned to civilian life. We anticipate approximately 250,000 to 300,000 Service members will separate annually over the next 4 years. Most of us here today are familiar with the unemployment statistics of our veterans. While roughly 19 percent of our enlisted personnel (27 percent within the Army and Marines) separate from active duty from occupational fields that are not easily transferable to the civilian sector (e.g. Combat Arms), our re-designed TAP will assist them in understanding and communicating what great skills and abilities they do bring to our Nation's workforce (like team building, leadership, decision making, problem solving and the ability to perform under stress). To be successful in their transition, we must provide the assistance, curriculum, training, skills building and tools our members need so they are prepared, and most importantly, career ready to achieve their goals in civilian life.

TAP is the cornerstone of the Department's transition effort. In collaboration with the Department of Labor (DOL), and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Department of Education (ED), the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the Department has re-designed the program. In a sweeping overhaul, the two-decade old TAP has been reshaped into a cohesive, modular, outcome-based program that

bolsters and standardizes curriculum, training, services, and opportunities that better prepare members to pursue their post-Service career goals. It is the primary platform used to deliver information on an array of services and benefits to all eligible Service members, including eligible National Guard and Reserve members.

The overarching goal at DoD is to assist Service members in preparing for a successful transition to civilian life and make members ready for their next step – whether that next step is pursuing a higher education, a credential, finding a job in the public or private sector, or starting a business.

REDESIGNED TAP

The redesigned TAP was built around four core objectives:

- **Adopt standards of career readiness for transitioning Service members**

Service members will leave the military having met clearly defined career readiness standards. Career Readiness Standards (CRS) are outcome based standards at the heart of the re-design. Just as a Service member must meet military mission readiness standards while on Active Duty, Service members will meet CRS before their transition to civilian life. They are a set of common and specific associated deliverables (e.g. 12 month post separation budget or a quality resume) focused on individual goals, whether higher education, career and technical training, or civilian employment. Achieving these standards a Service member demonstrates they are “career ready”.

- **Implement a redesigned TAP curriculum (Transition GPS, (Goals, Plans, Success))**

Service members should be provided with a set of value-added, individually tailored training programs, information and services to equip them with the skills and tools they need to make informed decisions to successfully pursue their post-military goals.

- **Implement a “Capstone” Event**

Service members should be afforded the opportunity, shortly before they depart the military, to verify that they have met the CRS’s, ensure they have developed a viable Individual Transition Plan (ITP), received the services they required and, if needed, provided an opportunity for a “warm handover” with Agency partners and steered to additional resources and benefits to help ensure their successful transition.

- **Implement a “Military Life Cycle” (MLC) transition model**

Establishment of the military life cycle will embed preparation to meet the career readiness standards throughout the span of a Service member’s military career, beginning with their Individual Development Plan (IDP).

The redesigned TAP complies with the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, which mandates all Service members discharged or released from active duty after serving their first 180 continuous days or more (including National Guard and Reserves) on active duty under title 10, shall participate in Pre-separation Counseling, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Benefits Briefings and the Department of Labor (DOL) Employment Workshop.

The redesigned TAP, in particular the Transition GPS curriculum, purposefully balances the military Services' flexibility to modify the program to reflect unique Service culture and existing management systems, while ensuring all transitioning Service members are achieving standard learning objectives and outcomes. Military Departments are afforded the flexibility to modify the program but not change the program's standardized core curriculum or mandatory learning objectives. This flexibility provides opportunities to adjust for Service members' individual transition goals and Service mission requirements. The end state is for each Service member to meet the CRS for the career plan they have chosen, ensuring Service member choice is a key component of this program, no matter from which Service the member is departing.

TRANSITION GPS ELEMENTS:

The building blocks of the new Transition GPS consist of Pre-separation Counseling, the Transition GPS Core Curriculum, Transition GPS Tracks and Capstone.

- **Pre-separation Assessment and Counseling:** Each transitioning Service member must go through mandatory pre-separation counseling to introduce them to the full range of programs and services available during their transition. While some pre-separation needs are common, other specific needs are identified for individual Service members resulting in immediate referral to installation resources. Needs and referrals are documented in an official form that becomes part of the Service member's permanent personnel file.

Service members are introduced to the requirement of developing an ITP, which helps them determine the actions to take to achieve their career goals. The

newly standardized ITP is a tangible and substantive change and improvement to the previous TAP.

Through the ITP, all Service members, regardless of their branch of Military Service, are required to consider their personal circumstances and plans for moving through this important transitional phase. Sources and/or possible indicators of risk such as family circumstances, housing, finances, employment, personal networks, training and education, gained military skills, and transportation are addressed and personal transition milestones are determined. Additionally, the ITP must contain the concrete deliverables that meet the CRS, e.g., job applications or technical training program acceptance. The ITP is an evolving document that is reviewed and modified throughout the entire transition process.

The mandatory registration in *eBenefits* connects the Service member to benefits and services provided by VA, and other Federal Agencies. This registration gives VA a connection to the Service member for life as well as provides Service members information on their Veterans entitlements, benefits and services.

Our transition efforts also assist those highly trained Active Duty Service members who want to continue to serve in a Reserve capacity following separation. Within pre-separation counseling, Service members will be educated on the opportunity to continue their military service by joining a Reserve Component and will be connected with the appropriate recruiter.

The Service member is also informed about the Transition GPS Core curriculum, the Service member elected tracks, and Capstone. Scheduling for these classes, based upon the goals of the Service member, also takes place. The counselor

will use the pre-separation counseling process to identify Service members in the target population and ensure referrals to resources and individualized assistance are provided.

- **The Transition GPS Core Curriculum includes the following:**
 - **Transition Overview:** The Transition Overview provides Service members with an understanding of the importance of preparing for transitioning from military service. It highlights some of the many challenges that are inherent with any life changing event and the opportunities to receive information and engage with professional and supportive staffs during the Transition GPS program.
 - **Resilient Transitions:** The Resilient Transitions module introduces participants to other key issues such as transition stress, family considerations, the value of a mentor and other issues Service members may encounter as they transition from military Service. These issues may have a significant impact on the transition process if overlooked. The focus of the curriculum is to connect the Service member with helping agencies and staff based on the need for support and guidance.
 - **Financial Planning Seminar:** A workshop on financial planning provides Service members with the information and tools needed to identify financial responsibilities, obligations, and goals after separation from the military. Upon completing the Financial Planning module, Service members will be prepared to build an integrated 12-month post-separation budget that reflects their employment, education, or training goals, ultimately helping to ensure their personal and family financial security. Instructors and financial planning staff

will be available for follow-on counseling as requested by the Service member or as identified by the subject matter expert.

- **Military Occupational Code (MOC) Crosswalk:** The MOC Crosswalk is a module on translating military skills, training, and experience into credentialing appropriate for civilian jobs. Upon completing this module, Service members will have documented their military career experience and skills; translation of their military occupation experience to civilian sector skills; and identification of gaps in their training and/or experience that need to be filled to meet their personal goals. Members will be able to develop a clear path from their military skills and training to their chosen career fields. This will permit a targeted job search and self-development by each Service member. Instructors and education and employment experts are available for further personal assistance.
- **VA Benefits Briefings I & II:** Workshops on VA benefits are divided into four- and two-hour sessions (VA Benefits Briefings I and II) that inform transitioning Service members of their Veterans benefits. VA modules include the VA Education Benefits Briefing (Post 9/11 and Montgomery GI Bills, and other Federal student aid programs). Information for those who have or think they have a service-connected disability is also provided. Under the legacy VA Briefing, this is called the Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP). That information is now embedded in the VA Benefits I and II briefings. The VA Briefings also provide an overview on *eBenefits* and VA health care, as well as information on the full range of other VA benefits and services. Upon completing these modules, Service members should know how to apply for Veterans health,

education, home loan guaranty, insurance, and disability benefits for which they are eligible. Service members will know how to connect with VA staff.

- **DOL Employment Workshop (DOLEW):** The redesigned DOLEW is a comprehensive three-day curriculum that is up to date and current with emerging best practices in career development and is engaging and relevant in light of the unique challenges facing transitioning Service members. Service members benefit from taking the DOLEW because eventually a vast majority of Service members will seek employment regardless of their immediate plans upon leaving military service. Even Service members who intend to enroll in school or start a business will need the skills that are provided during the DOLEW, such as translating their military skills into “civilian speak”, interviewing skills and building a résumé of their accomplishments. At the completion of the DOLEW, post-9/11 Service members will obtain a DOL “Gold Card,” which entitles them to six months of priority services at local American Job Centers, as well as access to case management services. In addition, Veterans and their eligible spouses receive priority of service at all DOL-funded employment and training programs.
- **Individual Transition Plan Review:** Each Service member is required to develop an ITP which, step-by-step, helps the Service member determine the actions they must take to achieve their career goals. Each plan will be tailored, and the documents required by the plan reviewed by the Commanders or their designee. Service members will deliver those products to serve as evidence that they are indeed, prepared for their transition and postured to meet their post-separation goals.

- **Transition GPS Tracks:** Service members may also select one or more two-day tailored tracks within the Transition GPS curriculum: There is a Higher Education Track, for those pursuing college education; a Technical Training Track, for those seeking job-ready skills and industry-recognized credentials in shorter-term training programs; and an Entrepreneurship Track, for those wanting to start a business. In order to meet established Career Readiness Standards, most service members will complete one of these self-elected tracks.
 - **Higher Education Track:** The Higher Education Track addresses such topics as identifying one’s educational goals, education funding, how to research and compare institutions, and how to successfully apply to an institution of higher learning. Upon completion, Service members will be prepared to submit an application to an academic institution, and schedule a session with a counselor from the institution. As needed, Service members will be able to meet with installation education counselors for individualized preparation.
 - **Technical Training Track:** Service members pursuing further technical training and job-ready skills will get help in selecting a training institute/college/program and technical field. The Technical Training Track addresses such topics as how to select a reputable technical training program or postsecondary institution the application process to a school from start to finish, how to use certification finder “Web tools” and other Internet resources. Similar to the Education Track, upon completing the Technical Training Track, Service members will be prepared to submit an application to a career and technical education training

institute/community college/college/program, and schedule a session with a program counselor.

VA provides educational and vocational counseling available in accordance with Chapter 36, Title 38, U.S. Code. Such counseling will be done on an individual basis. VA will provide the application for individual counseling to Service members during their VA presentations. Appointments are made by a Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) counselor upon VA receiving the applications.

- **Entrepreneurship Track:** Service members pursuing self-employment in the private or non-profit sector will learn about the challenges faced by entrepreneurs, the benefits and realities of entrepreneurship, and the steps toward business ownership. Upon completing the two-day Entrepreneurship Track, Service members will have developed initial components of their feasibility study and will be invited to participate in a free 8-week online entrepreneur course (roughly 10 hours per week). Together, the intense two-day and follow-on eight-week instruction provides Service members and Veterans with connections to a small business owner to mentor and guide them through their business start-up. This is a tremendous effort by SBA and we are grateful for their commitment to our Service members.
- **Capstone:** Capstone is a singular activity to take place no later than 90 days before separation which verifies the Service members have met the CRS and have a viable plan to achieve their transition goals. For example, Service members will demonstrate they are financially ready by providing a 12-month post-separation budget. If a Service member has not met the CRS or created a viable transition plan, they will be referred to

the appropriate curriculum, training, or individualized services or counseling for remedial assistance. Each Service will design and pilot their Capstone to fit their TAP redesign processes appropriate for their Service members. Representatives from DOL, VA, SBA, and other community organizations will participate in the Military Services' Capstone processes to ensure Service members connect with the proper resources as they become Veterans. Upon completing the Capstone, all Service members will have been counseled on their ITP, referred to enhanced training and services, as needed, and connected to Agencies and organizations that provide continued benefits, services, and support to Service members when they become Veterans. The Military Services are developing their Capstone activity and we anticipate they will begin implementing Capstone by the end of fiscal year 2013.

IMPLEMENTATION

DoD and interagency partners are implementing the redesigned TAP according to the mandates and intent of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 and the recommendations from the Veterans Employment Initiative Taskforce (VEITF). We have been implementing parts of the redesign since November 2012 and are currently in the second phase of implementation of Transition GPS. It is targeted for completion by the end of fiscal 2013. Furthermore, we are on course toward implementing the Military Life Cycle Transition Model by the end of fiscal year 2014.

The redesign began with the Department, along with our interagency partners, conducting and evaluating seven pilots of the Transition GPS Core Curriculum over the summer of 2012. In total, 954 service members and 14 spouses participated in the pilots. We evaluated these pilot

programs rigorously – seeking the feedback of Service members by deploying a 10 person cross-interagency team to every site.

To help us garner grassroots feedback, we developed Web-based assessment tools for Service members, facilitators, and the team of observers who attended each pilot. The Department also executed five “TAP Auditor Sensing Sessions” as part of our pilot evaluation. We identified those who already completed the legacy TAP, but are still on Active Duty, to go through the redesigned TAP and give us feedback. Overall, the Transition GPS Core Curriculum scored high marks for improved content and skills building.

In the on-line assessments of the core curriculum pilots, we asked military members about their levels of preparation and confidence in their ability to transition from military service. Ninety-five percent of those members reported an increased level of preparation and confidence in meeting the challenges of transition. Assessment results also indicated that the Department had increased Service members’ abilities to meet the established learning objectives.

LESSONS LEARNED

Pilot results indicated these redesigned curriculums were hitting the mark. There has been incredible support across the Military Services, Unit Commanders, installation staffs, and our interagency partners. The revised DOLEW, Financial Planning workshop and VA Benefits Briefings I & II received positive feedback. Feedback indicated that we must align the curriculum across all interagency partner modules to ensure a seamless learning experience and the best use of time for Service members.

The pilots also showed us that Service members value the information, websites, skills building, and practical work they must accomplish in order to successfully complete the

program. For example, the Financial Planning exercise of developing a 12-month post-separation budget illustrated the importance of financial planning and preparedness post military life. Service members have to calculate and document how they will financially meet the first 12 months of post-separation costs for expenditures such as healthcare, changes in the geographic cost of living, dependent care, taxes, medical, transportation, life insurance and such. In the pilots, Service members became very engaged in deliberate personal planning and preparation of their post military budget.

Some additional lessons learned include:

- Service members are learning to translate their military skills into civilian language and to navigate the DOL Labor Market Information website to find details on what employment opportunities exist in their preferred geographical relocation areas.
- Commanders and installation leadership “hands-on” involvement are critical to the success of the pilots.
- Limiting the class size to 50 students is a significant improvement and facilitates engagement and learning. Having classrooms equipped with audio-visual equipment, computers and access to the internet enhances the learning environment.
- The MOC Crosswalk curriculum was confusing to participants and needed modification to meet Service members’ needs.

The Department completed the analysis of all core curriculum pilot evaluations at the end of September 2012 and assembled a group of subject matter and functional experts who modified the curriculums in October 2012. The modified Transition GPS Core curriculum, to include the MOC Crosswalk, was in place by November 21, 2012, to ensure VOW Act compliance and Service members were provided the improved curriculum.

In August 2012, the Department piloted the Accessing Higher Education Track at Joint Base San Antonio and, in November 2012, SBA piloted their Entrepreneurship Track at Mildenhall, England. In March 2013, the Department and VA piloted the Technical Training Track at Quantico, VA. Through these initial pilots we learned more work was needed to ensure these curriculums hit the targets.. As a result, we modified the curriculums and will again pilot these tracks this spring and summer.

Throughout implementation, we continue to gather lessons learned with recommendations to improve our process. We've also established a permanent participant assessment process where our military members give us feedback about each module of the curriculum. We will also track the level of learning against the standardized learning objectives for each portion of the curriculum. Service members will be asked, "Did this program enhance confidence in transition planning?" and "To what level was it beneficial in helping me gain the information and skills to better plan my transition?"

This on-going assessment is critical to ensuring the curriculum remains relevant, learning is taking place, and Service members feel prepared to transition from military service and pursue other career goals.

While a traditional classroom will be the primary setting for curriculum delivery, there is a need and desire for virtual approaches to achieve the transition program standard outcomes and to fulfill the "VOW Act" mandatory participation requirements. The availability of virtual delivery mechanisms will enable the Military Services to more efficiently reach Service members who are geographically distant from training locations. Virtual curriculums may also be advantageous for those Service members who find an e-learning environment more engaging

or for those members who would like to repeat portions or all of TAP at various points throughout their military career.

To develop an asynchronous virtual capability on a platform that both Service members and Veterans can access, the DoD, in collaboration with our interagency partners, is leveraging the virtual curriculum and information technology expertise of the DoD Joint Staff's Joint Knowledge On-Line (JKO) team. Leveraging the capability of JKO ensures all asynchronous Transition GPS curriculums will have the same look, feel, and quality interactive features in a familiar, effective and efficient web based environment. The virtual Transition GPS curriculum will be developed, tested and evaluated and deployed for use by Service members and Veterans in the summer of 2013.

MILITARY LIFE CYCLE TRANSITION MODEL

We have learned that we cannot wait until the end of a Service member's military career to help them succeed and reach their goals post separation. We have to start early and afford them the opportunity to consider and develop personal goals, and reach milestones throughout their careers.

Therefore, starting in fiscal year 2014, the Department will migrate from our current TAP program model, which occurs toward the end of a military career, to an innovative Military Life Cycle Transition Model that will start at the beginning of a Service member's military career. The objective of the model is for transition to become a well-planned, organized progression that empowers Service members to make informed career decisions and take responsibility for advancing their personal goals. Service members will be made aware of the career readiness standards they must meet long before their intended separation. They will be engaged

throughout their military careers in mapping and refining their individual development to achieve their military goals and their post-military goals for employment, education, career technical training, or starting their own business.

Service members will have various key “touch points” throughout their Military Life Cycle (MLC) which will provide them opportunities to align their military career with their civilian goals. An example of a key “touch point” within a Service member’s MLC is their decision to reenlist. Leadership plays a key role in working with the Service member and their family to plan for both their next three to six years of service as well as their strategy for achieving their long-term goals

When it is time for the member to separate, their plan for individual development will migrate into the ITP -- a roadmap that will assist the Service member navigate thru their transition process.

The MLC transition model requires Service members meet their individually selected CRS described earlier and then these CRS will be verified at a Capstone activity prior to their separation.

A successful transition is a shared responsibility. Military leadership at every level within the command structure must ensure that Service members receive opportunities to prepare for and meet career readiness standards. In tandem, there must be strong personal involvement by the Service member and his or her family. DoD and our interagency partners are assuming responsibility to provide robust skills building experiences for separating members. The ultimate success of the redesigned TAP will also depend on Service members personally investing in their transition preparation.

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS TAKEN

We are on track with the phased implementation of Transition GPS. By October 2013, our curriculums will include the different tracks for those Service members who elect post separation education, technical training or entrepreneurship as part of their transition plan. By the end of FY14, transition and career readiness will be embedded across the military life cycle. Earlier this month we provided the President with the DoD/VA Veterans Employment Initiative Task Force's implementation plan for the recommendations that we presented and that he accepted in December 2011.

Accomplishments to date:

- We published a Decision-Type Memorandum on 21 November, 2012 which established Departmental policy regarding the re-designed TAP.
- We created an official DoD form called the ITP Checklist (DD Form 2958) which is used to verify Service member has met CRS.
- We coordinated and developed a Web-based capability to document attendance to Pre-separation counseling, the attainment of CRS and attendance at all Transition GPS components which includes demonstrating VOW compliance. No longer are we doing manual tracking and cumbersome paper reporting processes.
- In August we piloted the Accessing Higher Education Track and made revisions as appropriate.
- As stated earlier, we have piloted the VA's Technical Training Track and received extremely valuable feedback. Based on the feedback the VA took immediate action to revamp the curriculum before further roll out. That work is currently ongoing.

- The SBA, to whom we're very grateful, completed their Entrepreneurship Track pilots in January 2013. They conducted at least one pilot for each Military Department. Their curriculum is being rolled out now.
- We have also developed and operationalized a Web-based Transition GPS Participant Assessment for all Transition GPS components to include the Virtual Curriculum which ensures Transition GPS performance is a measurable, outcome-based program and monitored quarterly.
- A formal Memorandum of Understanding is being staffed which, once signed by all parties, will formalize the agreement between the Department of Defense (DoD) and the interagency partners regarding their continued collaboration on and delivery of the redesigned TAP.

By the end of FY 2013 we hope to have these curriculums and the Services' Capstones fully implemented across 206 active component military installations. We'll have the assessment process in place, and we'll be well positioned towards embedding career readiness and transition preparation within the military life cycle.

LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

On the 10th of April, the House Veterans Affairs Committee hosted a legislative hearing on the newly proposed "Servicemembers' Choice in Transition Act of 2013" (H.R. 631) legislation. The Department's view is that this legislation would negatively impact transitioning Service members and would significantly impede the full implementation of the redesigned TAP. While the Department believes the intent of H.R. 631 is to improve the transition process for separating Service members by ensuring more of the program is mandatory, we have concerns

over how it would contradict the requirements of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, codified in Chapter 58, Title 10, U.S. Code.

With limited exemptions, the VOW Act requires the DOL employment workshop to be a mandatory portion of TAP as almost every separating military member will at some point in their future seek employment. H.R. 631 conflicts with the VOW Act by making the employment workshop an optional choice within a statutorily mandated 5-day program. At the same time, this proposed legislation would make one of the other member selected tracks mandatory. The Department agrees with the original intent of the VOW Act-- all Service members benefit from taking the employment workshop regardless of their immediate plans upon leaving military service because they will need job search skills at some point in the future. The Department of Labor's job search workshop, delivered by contracted subject matter experts, provides those employment skills especially needed by our youngest Service members and those being separated from service involuntarily.

The VOW Act was intended to prepare transitioning Service members to join and be competitive in the labor market and the DoD VEI Task Force has collaborated diligently with DOL to develop, pilot, and launch the Employment Workshop to build job search skills for our Service members. The DOL EW, delivered in full by contracted subject matter experts, is a centerpiece of the TAP redesign and is structured to help Service members meet specific Career Readiness Standards. As a result, the EW currently requires three full days of adult learning instruction. HR 631 limits this EW to two days under the optional election, reducing time for skills practice, thorough skills building and engagement with subject matter experts.

The Department is unable to support this bill, as written, as we believe it would undermine the current implementation of the redesigned TAP, described previously. The

Services and partner agencies are engaged in staffing and training for new curriculum delivery, equipping classrooms with IT capabilities, logistics, establishing data collection processes, and in some cases, actually building classrooms to accommodate the new 50-participant limit standard. The model proposed by HR 631 will cause a re-calibration in many of these activities—with additional costs. Such a re-do would also hamper immediate service delivery to the surge of Service members separating in the near future due to force drawdowns and as combat operations come to a close in Afghanistan and our military departments reshape and resize their standing end strength to meet current and future requirements.

The prescriptive timeframe proposed in HR 631 reduces the ability of the entire redesigned TAP to evolve into the Military Life Cycle (MLC) TAP and to mature to keep pace with changes in adult learning, adjust to include skills-building that our Service members request, and respond to developments in the job search arena. Time needed for specific skills-building could contract or expand. This time-focused mandate could hinder the Services from delivering a program that effectively meets the needs of their individual Service members as those needs change. Further, the virtual curriculum of the entire Transition GPS, accessible 24-7, and available to Service members to take over and over again, will render the prescribed timeframes in H.R. 631 irrelevant.

The Department of Defense, Military Departments and our interagency partners are successfully implementing the redesigned TAP, to enable our Service members to meet CRS. We need time to implement the program and realize the fruit of our efforts. DoD believes that the best course of action at this time is to continue the implementation of the newly redesigned TAP in accordance with the VOW Act and the recommendations of the Veterans Employment Initiative Task Force.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, transition and the career readiness of our the military isn't just about what's best for the Armed Forces, but it is also about what's best for our nation in the years ahead.

Service members are a national talent pipeline and ambassadors for the next generation of our all-volunteer force. The redesigned TAP is a keystone to fulfilling our national commitment to our Service members and it is best to ensure a career readiness mindset is ingrained throughout members' military life cycle. Career readiness, just like military readiness, means empowering Service members with the best training, skills, tools and opportunities to make informed career decisions, prepare for their civilian future and take responsibility for advancing their personal goals.

The redesigned TAP and the Transition GPS components, spread across the span of a military career, will enable our Service members to align their significant skills and experience gained during Active Duty to their future civilian careers. This MLC model articulates the truth that if all goes well, every Service member will, at some point, separate from military service. As each Service member learns from their military experience, every campaign must have an exit strategy. Plan your exit strategy!

That is the redesigned TAP's intended message and intended culture change.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. On behalf of the men and women in the military today and their families, I thank you and the members of this Subcommittee for your understanding of our critical transition mission and your continued steadfast support.



Susan S. Kelly, Ph.D.
Principal Director, Transition to Veterans Program Office
Office of Under Secretary of Defense
(Personnel and Readiness)



Dr. Susan S. Kelly leads the implementation of the redesigned Department of Defense (DoD) Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to meet the needs of Post 9/11 Service members as they separate from active duty and enter civilian life. This cultural change intends to make Service members 'career ready' before separation. Dr. Kelly also serves as the co-chair for the Improvement Process Team of the DoD/VA Veterans Employment Initiative Task Force, mandated by the President. Dr. Kelly is a member of the Senior Executive Service.



Dr. Kelly previously served as the Special Advisor for the DoD Transition Assistance Program (TAP) in the Office of Wounded Warrior Care and Transition Policy (WWCTP), Office of the Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness). Dr. Kelly was responsible for DoD Transition Assistance Program oversight and policy development for DoD transition assistance related initiatives. Dr. Kelly has an extensive history of helping organizations successfully transform and excel in meeting performance management goals based upon key strategic priorities. Dr. Kelly also served as the Special Assistant, Deputy Chief Management Officer (DCMO). She led DCMO's response to the Secretary of Defense's direction to infuse risk into the decision making of DoD processes.

Her first senior executive level position in the Defense Department was as Director, Office of Strategic Planning and Performance Management, Executive Secretariat for Joint Executive Council/Senior Oversight Committee for Wounded Ill and Injured. Prior to this Dr. Kelly served in policy and strategic planning roles in the Department of Defense while assigned to the Pentagon. Dr. Kelly also served as the acting Director for the new Defense Language Office and authored the Department's Language Transformation Plan.

Dr. Kelly holds a doctorate in Marriage and Family from St. Louis University; a Masters of Arts in Education and Counseling from the University of Georgia; and a Bachelors of Arts in Social and Behavioral Science from the University of South Florida.

She has been awarded various awards and meritorious citations including the USAFE Commander's Award of Excellence and the Office of the Secretary of Defense Medal for Exceptional Civilian Service.

52

**STATEMENT
OF
JOHN K. MORAN
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY
VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**

BEFORE THE

**HOUSE ARMED SERVICES
MILITARY PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE**

April 24, 2013

Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Davis, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today to discuss the Department of Labor's (DOL or Department) implementation of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (VOW Act) and the recommendations of the Presidential Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI) Task Force for the Transition Goals, Plans, Success (GPS) program.

President Obama, Acting Secretary of Labor Seth Harris, and Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) Keith Kelly are committed to ensuring that these brave men and women have the opportunities, training, and support they deserve to succeed in the civilian workforce. The Department will continue to work with the Members of the Subcommittee to provide our returning Servicemembers, Veterans, and their families with the critical resources and expertise needed to assist and prepare them for meaningful careers, maximize their employment opportunities, and protect their employment rights. The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) is an integral part of these efforts.

Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Employment Workshop

TAP, as codified under 10 U.S.C. 1144, is an interagency effort among the Departments of Labor, Veterans Affairs (VA), Defense (DoD), Homeland Security (DHS) and other Federal agencies aimed at providing separating Servicemembers and their spouses with the training and support they need to successfully transition to the civilian workforce. Through TAP, DOL brings to bear its extensive expertise in employment services to provide a comprehensive three-day Employment Workshop at U.S. military installations around the world.

To date, the Department has provided training and services through Employment Workshops to over 2.6 million separating or retiring Servicemembers and their spouses. Last year alone, DOL conducted more than 4,500 Employment Workshops to over 160,000 participants at domestic and overseas locations.

Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI) Task Force for a Career-Ready Military

In August 2011, the Department initiated a major effort aimed at revamping and updating the Employment Workshop curriculum to bring it up to date with emerging best practices in career development and adult learning through new delivery methods, student

hand-out materials, and tools to help Servicemembers match their military experience to jobs that require similar training and skills. The result is an enhanced Employment Workshop that provides a highly effective training forum to prepare Servicemembers for a successful transition to the civilian workplace.

Around the same time that DOL initiated the Employment Workshop redesign, the President established the joint VEI Task Force to develop proposals to maximize the career readiness of all Servicemembers. This effort built on the existing TAP program to improve transition-related activities and services, and provide a clear path to civilian employment; success in an academic or technical training program; or the successful start-up of an independent business or non-profit organization.

The Task Force includes representatives from DOL, DoD, VA, DHS and the Department of Education, the Small Business Administration, and the Office of Personnel Management. The President approved the Task Force's recommendations to fundamentally redesign TAP, which launched an effort to adopt the enhanced training and service-delivery mode in July of 2012, called the Transition Goals, Plans, Success program or Transition GPS.

The VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011

The Task Force also established goals for partner agencies to bolster their respective components of the TAP program and incorporate the requirements of the VOW Act, which the President signed into law in November 2011. In particular, the VOW Act mandated several reforms to further enhance TAP, including mandating participation in the DOL Employment Workshop for nearly all transitioning Servicemembers.

In addition, the VOW Act required that DOL use contract facilitators in delivering its Employment Workshops to ensure a standardized, high-quality professional cadre of facilitators. Over the past few months, the Department completed the transfer to contract facilitation, as well as the full implementation of the new Employment Workshop curriculum at all military installations worldwide.

DOL Employment Workshop Redesign – Pilot

DOL has worked closely with its partner agencies, including those on the VEI Task Force, to ensure that the redesigned Employment Workshop is seamlessly integrated into the overall

Transition GPS model. In February 2012, DOL conducted a three-month pilot of the redesigned TAP Employment Workshop at eleven military bases, including:

- Air Force (2) – Travis AFB, CA, McGuire AFB, NJ
- Army (4) – Ft Bragg NC, Ft Belvoir VA, Ft Knox KY, Ft Drum NY
- Coast Guard (1)– US Coast Guard Training Center Cape May, NJ
- Marine Corps (2) – Marine Corps Base Quantico, VA, Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, CA
- Navy (2) – Naval Air Station Jacksonville, FL, Naval Base San Diego, CA

During this pilot phase, the Department also conducted a formal third-party evaluation to determine if the redesigned curriculum provided exiting Servicemembers with the skills, tools, and resources needed to transition back into civilian employment. The evaluation's findings and recommendations were based on over 5,200 comments from: (1) observational visits to the 11 military bases piloting the new TAP curriculum; (2) in-person interviews with facilitators involved in conducting the pilot-tests at these bases; (3) a survey of participants attending workshops at the pilot sites; and (4) a survey of facilitators conducting these workshops. Proposed revisions included:

- Reduce the size of the participant manual.
- Improve content by correcting editing mistakes, inaccuracies, outdated material, and by ensuring that high interactivity is built into the curriculum.
- Develop remedial/retraining methods to help current TAP facilitators become familiar with the newly designed curriculum.
- Rollout new revised DOL Employment Workshop by July 2, 2012 in conjunction with DoD Transition GPS Pilots.

Based on the findings above and comments from hundreds of different organizations and individuals, including Federal and State governmental entities, Veterans' Service Organizations (VSOs), Members of Congress, experts in adult learning, State Workforce Agencies, Veterans, and transitioning Servicemembers, DOL fine-tuned the Employment Workshop curriculum and finalized it in June 2012.

Transition Goals, Plans, Success (GPS) Program

In July 2012, President Obama announced the launch of "Transition GPS" which is the culmination of the TAP redesign efforts, which establishes career readiness standards, extends the transition preparation through the entire span of a Servicemember's career, and provides counseling to facilitate the development of an Individual Transition Plan (ITP). The

ITP provides a framework for the Servicemembers to achieve realistic career goals based on an assessment of their personal and family needs as well as unique skills, knowledge, experience, interests and abilities.

The enhanced TAP consists of a five-day series of training sessions and workshops that make up the core curriculum which all Servicemembers are required to attend. As part of the core curriculum, transitioning Servicemembers also have the option of participating in tailored tracks including: (1) an education track; (2) a technical training track; and (3) an entrepreneurship track.

The Transition GPS Core curriculum was piloted from July to August 2012 at seven installations, with pilots conducted by each of the Services, including both the Active and Reserve Components. Each location had representatives from DoD, VA and Labor on-hand to provide assessment of the curriculum for the Core Transition GPS and the Department of Labor Employment Workshop. The result is a well-received, well-tested curriculum that was developed to be responsive to customer input and inclusive of training best practices for adult learners.

3-Day DOL Employment Workshop - Curriculum

The redesigned DOL Employment Workshop focuses on experiential learning and best practices, with an increased emphasis on networking and communicating the Veteran's job skills to the employer. The new curriculum is specifically geared toward the mechanics of getting a good job, exploring career interests, searching the labor market, building resumes, preparing for interviews, and negotiating job offers.

For example, on Day 1 participants learn how to develop a "Change Management Plan" to identify an overall strategy for transitioning into the workforce, explore new careers that complement the skills and expertise learned through their military service, develop a master job application from which targeted resumes can be built, and learn how to research the job market using the latest search tools.

On Day 2, participants learn how to analyze the job market, understand the difference between applications and resumes, use social media in job searches and networking, and develop targeted resumes.

During Day 3, participants learn about Federal jobs and how that process differs from the private sector. Finally, they work extensively on their interviewing skills and end the workshop with a mock interview exercise.

I am happy to report that the new curriculum has been well received as demonstrated by preliminary feedback from over 2,000 attendees during January and February of this year, who gave the Employment Workshop an overall rating of 4.4 on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the highest rating. The data strongly suggest that the Department's revised Employment Workshop is meeting the high expectations of its customers.

Continued Support through Priority of Service

During the DOL Employment Workshop, Servicemembers will be given a "Gold Card" which entitles them to enhanced intensive services for six months by an employment specialist through the almost 2,700 American Job Centers (AJC). The AJCs serve as the cornerstone for the Nation's workforce investment system and provide a range of services from counseling, resume writing workshops, job skills assessments, occupational training, and on-the-job training and job placement services.

Veterans and eligible spouses receive priority of service in all qualified DOL- funded employment and training programs. As a result, DOL offers continuous employment services support to veterans and leverages department-wide programs to ensure holistic job services are provided. In addition, veterans with significant barriers to employment will receive intensive employment services at AJCs by Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists funded through the Jobs for Veterans Service Grant (JVSG) program.

H.R.631 – "Servicemembers' Choice in Transition Act of 2013"

H.R. 631, the "Servicemembers' Choice in Transition Act of 2013," would amend TAP to require it to consist of at least five days of instruction as follows: (1) at least one day of service-specific pre-separation training; (2) up to one day for instruction in preparation for employment, preparation for education or career or technical training, preparation for entrepreneurship, or other options determined by the Secretary of the military department concerned; (3) at least two days of in-depth instruction of the participant's choice in any of

the aforementioned subjects; and (4) up to one day of training in VA benefits provided as well as other subjects determined by the Secretary of the military department concerned.

The Department has serious concerns about H.R.631 because we believe it would significantly undercut our efforts to support the intent of the VOW Act to provide separating Servicemembers with the training and support they need to successfully transition to the civilian workforce. H.R.631 would undermine the implementation currently underway for the redesigned DOL Employment Workshop and the new Transition GPS training and delivery model that DoD, VA, DOL and other agencies have been working together to execute.

Section 1144 of Title 10 requires the Secretary of Labor to “establish and maintain a program to furnish counseling, assistance in identifying employment and training opportunities, help in obtaining such employment and training and other related information and services to members of the armed forces...” Congress, through the VOW Act and other legislation, also mandated that DOL include certain elements in the TAP Employment Workshop.

The VOW Act further enhanced TAP by requiring mandatory participation for almost all transitioning Servicemembers and requiring contractor facilitation of the Employment Workshop to ensure a standardized curriculum. As the VOW Act intended, Servicemembers benefit from taking the DOL Employment Workshop regardless of their immediate plans upon leaving military service. Even Servicemembers who intend to enroll in school or start a business will need the skills that are provided during the DOL Employment Workshop, such as translating their military skills and building a résumé of their accomplishments.

Moreover, as the Members of the Subcommittee know, the Department just completed a major effort aimed at redesigning the Employment Workshop curriculum to align it with emerging best practices in career development and to make it more engaging and relevant in light of the unique challenges facing returning Servicemembers. The redesign of the Employment Workshop was an extensive process that evolved over 2 years, involving many federal agencies, pilot programs and curriculum reviews. DOL wanted to ensure we were providing the best possible product.

After extensive review and consultation with experts on training, education and the military services, DOL determined that the optimal delivery was a three-day format. This decision was based on the amount of time it would take to properly deliver all the material

required under Section 1144 of Title 10 and to meet the learning objectives and ensure an effective and efficient program to prepare our separating Servicemembers for their transition to the civilian workforce.

Over the past few months, the Department completed the transfer to contract facilitation and full implementation of the new Employment Workshop curriculum at military installations worldwide. As stated previously, the new curriculum has been well received and while the data strongly suggest that the Department's revised Employment Workshop is headed in the right direction, H.R. 631 could significantly undermine these efforts.

Under H.R.631, the Department would have to completely redesign the new curriculum in structure, content, and delivery in consultation with other agencies, which would significantly increase program costs. Moreover, the Department would likely have to re-compete and re-negotiate the facilitation contract. The Department has serious concerns about the feasibility of implementing all of the proposed changes in only six months.

Most importantly, however, the overall impact of this legislation would delay effective assistance to transitioning Servicemembers. These men and women deserve the best possible services we can provide, and this bill would force us to start over.

Conclusion

The Department looks forward to working with the Subcommittee to ensure that our transitioning Servicemembers have the resources and training they need to successfully transition to the civilian workforce. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Davis, distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, this concludes my statement. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Deputy Assistant Secretary — John K. Moran

Born and raised in Worcester, Massachusetts, Mr. Moran graduated from Westfield State University with a B.S. Degree in Criminal Justice. Early in his career, he served as a member of the United States Capitol Police, and as a Federal Air Marshal/Special Agent with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).



Mr. Moran progressed through a variety of managerial and senior executive positions during his 32 years of Federal service including: Special Agent in Charge, Washington, D.C. Civil Aviation Security Field Office; Chief of Staff, FAA Office of Airports, Program Assessment and Evaluation Officer, FAA Office of Civil Aviation Security; and Director, Red Team and Explosives Security Division, FAA Office of Civil Aviation Security.

Following the September 11th attacks on the United States, Mr. Moran played a significant role in helping shape the legislation that founded the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and was instrumental in building TSA from the ground up. For his work during this time, Mr. Moran received a September 11th Service Medal from the Secretary of Transportation in recognition of dedicated service to his country. He became the TSA Assistant Administrator responsible for all aspects of training a 50,000 person workforce and served as Vice Chair of the Federal Law Enforcement Training Accreditation Board. In 2005, Mr. Moran was asked to serve as the acting Associate Administrator and Chief Support Systems Officer, during a leadership change at TSA. During this time, he was responsible for TSA's Offices of Human Resources, Finance and Administration, Security Technology, Information Technology, Training, and Acquisitions.

Currently, Mr. Moran serves as the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Veterans' Employment and Training Service at the Department of Labor. In this position, Mr. Moran leads the operations and management functions of the agency, including formula and competitive grants administration, the transition assistance and compliance programs, and the human resources, budget, and performance management functions.

Mr. Moran has completed a variety of executive programs including; U.S. Coast Guard Academy for new SES and Flag Officers, and the Homeland Security Executive Leaders Program at the U.S. Navy Postgraduate School in Monterey, Ca.

Mr. Moran is married and has two sons. He and his family reside in Oakton, Virginia.

STATEMENT OF
DANNY G. I. PUMMILL
DIRECTOR, VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION /
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE PROGRAM OFFICE
VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION (VBA),
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS-(VA)
BEFORE THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES MILITARY
PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE

April 24, 2013

Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Davis, and Members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the recommendations of the Presidential Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI) Task Force, including the Transition Goals, Plans, Success (GPS) program and the status of the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) implementation of the requirements of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (VOW Act).

Presidential Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI) Task Force

In August 2011, the President announced his comprehensive plan to address the issues of unemployment and the educational and entrepreneurial opportunities for, returning Servicemembers and Veterans struggling to find a job suitable with their experience and talent. A key part of the President's plan was his call for a "career-ready military." He specifically directed the Department of Defense (DoD) and VA to work closely with other Agencies and his economic and domestic policy teams, in leading a joint VEI Task Force. The task force's main goal was to develop a new training and services delivery model to ensure all Servicemembers have the support they need and deserve when they transition from military to civilian life. In December 2011, the task force provided four recommendations to the President for a redesigned Transition Assistance Program (TAP), called Transition GPS.

The first recommendation was to adopt standards of career readiness for transitioning Servicemembers so when they leave the military they have met defined standards of career readiness.

The second recommendation was to implement a revamped TAP curriculum (now known as Transition GPS) to provide Servicemembers with a set of value-added training programs and services to equip them with the set of tools they need to pursue their post-military goals successfully. VA was charged with re-defining the introduction of VA benefits and services to transitioning Servicemembers, and for the development of the Technical Training Track, one of three two-day Transition GPS Tracks that Servicemembers have the option of attending. The new Transition GPS extends the length of the transition program period from three days to five to seven days, strengthens, standardizes, and expands counseling and guidance for Servicemembers before leaving the military, and transforms the military's approach to education, training, and credentialing for Servicemembers.

The third recommendation was to implement a "Capstone Event." This means Servicemembers should have the opportunity shortly before they depart the military to validate and verify they have met the Career Readiness Standards, receive the services they desire, and be directed to the resources and benefits available to them as Veterans.

The fourth recommendation was to implement a "Military Life Cycle" transition model to prepare Servicemembers for transition over the entire span of their military career and not just in the last few months of their service in the military. The Capstone Event and Military Life Cycle will be implemented by the end of fiscal year (FY) 2013 and FY 2014 respectively.

These overarching recommendations intend to transform Servicemembers' transition to Veteran status into a well-planned, organized progression which equips

them to make informed career decisions and advances them toward achievement of their goals. The end state will be a transformed process that takes place throughout a Servicemember's military career, in addition to the new Transition GPS program.

VOW Act

In November 2011, Congress passed and the President signed the VOW Act, which included steps to improve the existing TAP for Servicemembers. Among other things, the VOW Act made participation in several components of TAP mandatory for all Servicemembers (except in certain limited circumstances), including pre-separation counseling, a VA briefing, and DOL's Employment Workshop by November 21, 2012. TAP is conducted under the auspices of a memorandum of understanding between VA and the Departments of Labor (DOL), Defense (DoD), and Homeland Security, who work together to coordinate transition programs on installations.

In July 2012, President Obama publicly announced the redesign of the Transition GPS program to assist our separating Servicemembers with successfully transitioning to the civilian workforce, starting a business, and/or pursuing higher education.

VA's Implementation of VOW / VEI

VA met the VOW Act timeline. As of November 21, 2012, VA is providing the VA Benefits Briefing to 100 percent of transitioning Servicemembers. As of April 1, 2013, briefers have been deployed to conduct the enhanced VA briefings at 37 percent of the 208 Transition GPS locations within the United States. The other 63 percent of the locations are still receiving the legacy briefings. To date, VA has deployed 165 contract briefers to deliver the enhanced program and by the end of FY 2013, all 208 locations within the United States will be receiving enhanced briefings.

VA is also in the process of working with DoD in defining a memorandum of agreement to begin deploying the enhanced briefings overseas. VA is already working with the Army in delivering virtual briefings to Servicemembers across the globe, in which instructors provide Live Meeting sessions to students grouped together, learning

the content material at the same time. Additionally, we are working with DoD to develop online courses of the VA briefings to be housed on DoD's Joint Knowledge Online website, which allow participants to access courses according to their own schedules and to train at their own pace.

VA's Transition from Legacy TAP

Before discussing the enhanced VA briefings, I would like to explain VA's legacy TAP briefing. VA's legacy briefing is slide-intensive and provided by trained VA personnel (to include Military Services Coordinators (MSCs), Veterans Service Representatives (VSRs), etc.) from our regional offices on military installations in the United States and Puerto Rico. This legacy briefing is also provided to Servicemembers stationed outside the United States by overseas MSCs who are temporarily assigned in the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Spain, Okinawa, Japan and Korea. Additionally, VA provides transition assistance briefings to demobilizing Reserve and National Guard members at the request of the Services. These briefings are typically held at the unit's home station after completion of a deployment.

VOWVEI required VA to create enhanced benefits briefings within the Transition GPS Core Curriculum, as well as develop curriculum to provide the Transition GPS career technical training track, which is training for those seeking job-ready skills and industry-recognized credentials in shorter-term training programs. VA's revised briefings for Transition GPS take the place of the legacy briefing and include six hours of interactive instruction, replacing the previous lecture and slide-deck presentation. The new format is dynamic, instructor-led, and classroom-based. Questions, activities, videos, and research are interspersed to keep Servicemembers engaged. It is flexible to enable blended delivery methods in support of long-term Service objectives. The six hours are broken down into two briefings known as the VA Benefits I Briefing which is four hours in duration and includes information provided in the legacy Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP), and the VA Benefits II Briefing which is two hours long. They are provided by both VA employees and contract personnel that are instructors who go through a rigorous two-week training prior to facilitating the classes.

Rather than viewing a lengthy slide presentation, Servicemembers participating in Benefits I and II Briefings experience interactive activities that teach them how to review, apply for, and receive the benefits and services they have earned. The VA Benefits I Briefing informs Servicemembers about VA benefits including education, health care, compensation, life insurance, and home loans, as well as vocational rehabilitation and employment benefits and counseling provided by VA. The VA Benefits II Briefing provides an orientation to benefits registration (including an introduction to the eBenefits portal and MyHealthVet) and a detailed overview of the disability compensation process. It also provides additional information about healthcare options available through VA.

Transition GPS Technical Training Track

As part of the roll out of the Transition GPS Curriculum, Servicemembers will have the option of selecting from three two-day tailored tracks within the Transition GPS curriculum: an education track for those pursuing a college education; a career technical training track for those seeking job-ready skills and industry-recognized credentials in shorter-term training programs; and an entrepreneurship track for those wanting to start a business. VA developed and piloted the technical training track curriculum, which consists of 16-hours of instruction during which participants will define career goals, identify prerequisites and credentialing options, and find technical training opportunities.

After piloting the track at the Marine Corps Base in Quantico, Virginia and demonstrating it to key stakeholders in February 2013, VA is currently making modifications and will pilot the revised technical training track curriculum in June 2013 for the remaining Service components. VA and its agency partners will assess the technical training track pilots during July 2013 and begin deployment shortly thereafter.

Measuring the Quality of Briefings and Briefers

Quality delivery of VA's products and services is essential to the success of Transition GPS and implementing the task force's VEI recommendations. As previously mentioned, there have been many changes to the VA briefing and curriculum. During the summer of 2012, pilots were conducted to test the revised VA Benefits curriculum and, as a result, modifications were made to how the current briefings are delivered today. VA continues to make improvements to the curriculum on a quarterly basis through feedback provided by Servicemembers, briefers, and VA subject matter experts to ensure consistency and accuracy of the program and individual presentation skills.

We also have set high standards for our contract briefers delivering the enhanced briefings. During the two-week training process where they learn presentation skills and the VA curriculum, they also take a written exam comprised of 30 questions that measure their ability to research and understand VA benefits. The exam ensures the contract briefers are able to utilize resources to answer questions related to VA benefits.

A presentation evaluation was also put in place to measure instructor proficiency in presenting the 4-hour and 2-hour VA benefits briefings. Trainees must show 80 percent proficiency in their platform skills to pass the training. Criteria for evaluating briefers includes accuracy in relaying content; professionalism; student engagement; use of technology; and control of the classroom. Once in the field, briefers must demonstrate at least a 90-percent proficiency on quality assurance evaluations to continue providing briefings. Briefers who do not meet the minimum proficiency will be provided additional guidance, education, and assistance to help them achieve the minimum quality standards.

In addition to VA Benefits I and II Briefings, VA contract briefers also offer individual guidance, providing one-on-one benefits assistance to Servicemembers. Individual assistance does not include assisting Servicemembers in filing disability compensation claims. VA contract briefers answer specific questions inherent to the VA benefits briefings and assist in the navigation of eBenefits. They also refer

Servicemembers who need assistance with disability claim development and other VA services to the appropriate Veterans Service Organization, Military Services Coordinator, VA Regional Office, VA Medical Center, National Call Center, or Vet Center, as well as referring them to DoD points of contact, installations, and resources.

Measuring Success of Transition GPS

Measuring the overall success of the VOW Act and VEI is multi-faceted, comprehensive, and requires close coordination with all VEI Task Force members. VA continues to work with our partner stakeholders through a DoD/VA Executive Steering Committee and is participating in a Performance Management Working Group. The Working Group has identified 17 performance metrics for which we are establishing baselines in fiscal year 2013. DoD has also implemented a participant assessment application, which went live on April 1 to track participant satisfaction with all components of the Transition GPS program, to include the VA curriculum. We are expecting the first consolidated report in June 2013.

In addition, VA has begun to collect demographic data to assess participation and attendance and to understand and refine the resources required to provide optimum delivery of services to military personnel and their families. We are also measuring our throughput data to compare to DoD's annual projections of approximately 307,000 Servicemembers participating in TAP per year. The collection of this information will allow us to determine if VA has the right capability in the right place. Currently, we are on track, however, to validate the demand numbers and staffing, we need to fully roll out the program prior to making any major adjustments or modifications to VA's current implementation and staffing strategy.

As the implementation process continues, we expect to gain insights into what is operationally working and what needs improvement, and we will appropriately modify the program to address needs of Servicemembers. The Task Force may also modify aspects of the program to address areas in which Servicemembers' transition outcomes

may be falling short and to ensure Career Readiness Standards for Servicemembers are met.

Legislation and Potential Impacts

Recently, a bill was introduced in the House, H.R. 631, "Servicemembers' Choice in Transition Act of 2013," that would amend section 1144 of title 10, United States Code, concerning TAP to add a new subsection delineating the Program's format and content. This bill would require that TAP consist of at least five days of instruction to include: (1) at least one day of service-specific pre-separation training; (2) up to one day for instruction in preparation for employment; preparation for education, career, or technical training; preparation for entrepreneurship; or other options determined by the Secretary of the military department concerned; (3) at least two days of in-depth instruction of the participant's choice in any of the subjects described under (2), above; and (4) up to one day of instruction in benefits provided under laws administered by VA and in other subjects determined by the Secretary concerned.

It is our view that the programs implemented as a result of the VOW Act and the President's VEI satisfy the intent underlying H.R. 631. We believe those initiatives should be afforded the opportunity to be fully implemented and assessed before further legislation in this area is enacted. Allowing agencies to proceed under current plans would provide greater flexibility in implementing improvements and making adjustments based on accurate data analysis during assessment.

Conclusion

VA is honored to continue our role in assisting with the transition of Servicemembers from military to civilian life. This program is designed to give men and women in the Service and their families an opportunity to hear and learn more about their benefits, research benefits to fit their individual needs, and equip them with a plan for success outside of the military. VA continually seeks to improve the quality and breadth of our outreach services to all components -- Active Duty, Reserves, and National Guard -- and work with our agency partners. VA fully supports the

Administration's and Congressional efforts to ensure that transitioning Servicemembers are ready for employment or education upon separation.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other Members of the Subcommittee may have at this time.

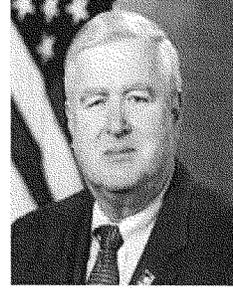


Department of Veterans Affairs
Senior Executive Biography

Danny Pummill, MNSS, MMAS

**Director, Veterans Benefits Administration/Department of Defense Program Office
Veterans Benefits Administration**

Danny Pummill Currently serves as the, Director Veterans Benefits Administration, Department of Defense Program Office, (VBA DoD Program Office), Veterans Benefits Administration in Washington D.C. The VBA DoD program office is responsible for all coordination between the Department of Defense and the Veterans Benefits Administration. The office is also responsible for all programs and activities involving the Department of Defense to include, Transition Assistance, Veteran Employment, Disability Evaluation Process, and Wounded Warrior Programs.



Mr. Pummill was appointed to the Senior Executive Service in September 2007 Prior to assuming his present position as Director Veterans Benefits Administration, Department of Defense Program Office he served as Deputy Director for Policy and Procedures in the office of Compensation and Pension Services, Veterans Benefits Administration in Washington D.C., and as a Senior Executive for the Department of the Army. While with the Army he served as the primary advisor to the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) responsible for policy and performance oversight for human resources (civilian and military), wounded warrior program, training, readiness, mobilization, military health affairs, force structure, manpower management, recruiting, and other critical matters as part of the Army leadership team.

CAREER CHRONOLOGY:

2012 – Present	Director, Veterans Benefits Administration, Department of Defense Program Office Veterans Benefits Administration
2010 - 2012	Deputy Director for Policy and Procedures, Office of Compensation and Pension Services, Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration
2007 - 2009	Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Medical and Health Operations, Office of Assistant Secretary of the Army Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Headquarters, Department of the Army
2003 - 2007	Director of Operations, Assistant Secretary of the Army Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Headquarters, Department of the Army
2002 - 2003	Student, National War College, Fort McNair, Washington DC
2001 - 2002	Executive Officer to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Human Resources, Headquarters, Department of the Army

MAJOR MILITARY ASSIGNMENTS/AWARDS/DECORATIONS:

Mr. Pummill retired as a Colonel from the United States Army after serving for 33 years. He served as an Adjutant General Corps Officer and an enlisted Field Artillery and Infantry soldier in a variety of assignments. He has served at every level in the Army from squad through Headquarters Department of the Army. Commanding two separate Battalions, his duties have taken him to Panama, Central America, Korea, Europe, the Balkans, the Middle East and various locations throughout the United States.

EDUCATION:

2007 Wharton School of Business Advanced Management Program
2002 Masters in National Security Strategy (MNSS), National War College, Fort McNair, Washington DC
1996 Masters in Military Arts and Sciences (MMAS), Army Command and General Staff College,
Leavenworth, KA
1983 BS in Law Enforcement, Northern Michigan University, Marquette, MI

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS:

Planning Programming Budgeting and Execution Certificate
Wharton School of Business Advanced Management Certificate
Lean Six Sigma (Green Belt)
International Security Strategy, Army War College, (North African Concentration)

AWARDS AND HONORS:

Legion of Merit U.S. Army
Meritorious Services Medal U.S. Army
Horatio gates Gold Medal
Soldiers Medal U.S. Army
Army Commendation Medal
National School Board Award
Horatio Gates Silver Medal

**WITNESS RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ASKED DURING
THE HEARING**

APRIL 24, 2013

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MRS. DAVIS

Mr. PUMMILL. [The information was not available at the time of printing.] [See page 9.]

Mr. MORAN. The Department of Labor does a great deal of work with the Easter Seals program and strongly supports their efforts on behalf of Veterans, including the work being done by the Dixon Center. In addition, the Department has provided funding to Easter Seals organizations throughout the country through our discretionary grants programs such as the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP). [See page 17.]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING

APRIL 24, 2013

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. GIBSON

Mr. GIBSON. 1) With regard to the VRAP program, according to the VA, as of today, there are currently 113,914 applications received, 98,132 applications approved, and yet only 43,637 veterans currently enrolled in training.

- a) What is the delay in getting these veterans enrolled into the training program?
- b) What steps have DOL and VA taken to increase staffing to meet the additional demand for the VRAP?
- c) I hear reports of conflicting acceptance letters to the VRAP program being sent to veterans that are subsequently followed by VRAP program denial letters. In these cases where an approval letter has been received and training begun, the veteran is stuck with a bill for this training. Are you aware if this is happening, and if so, why it is happening?
- d) Does the VA Educational Office in Buffalo have the resources it needs in order to accomplish their mission?
- e) Do you see any issue with the VA centralizing educational and job training claims at one claims center? (Buffalo)

Dr. KELLY. The Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) offers a limited number of months of retraining assistance to Veterans who meet specific criteria. This program is managed by the Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Labor, who can best provide you with the enrollment status, staffing, resources, and management of VRAP.

Mr. GIBSON. 2) With regard to the VRAP program, according to the VA, as of today, there are currently 113,914 applications received, 98,132 applications approved, and yet only 43,637 veterans currently enrolled in training.

- a) What is the delay in getting these veterans enrolled into the training program?
- b) What steps have DOL and VA taken to increase staffing to meet the additional demand for the VRAP?
- c) I hear reports of conflicting acceptance letters to the VRAP program being sent to veterans that are subsequently followed by VRAP program denial letters. In these cases where an approval letter has been received and training begun, the veteran is stuck with a bill for this training. Are you aware if this is happening, and if so, why it is happening?
- d) Does the VA Educational Office in Buffalo have the resources it needs in order to accomplish their mission?
- e) Do you see any issue with the VA centralizing educational and job training claims at one claims center? (Buffalo)

Mr. MORAN. a) The online VRAP application process requires each eligible veteran to have in mind the course of instruction, their "high demand" training objective and the training institution they have selected before their application is submitted. Once the appropriate Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) office approves each application, a certificate of enrollment (CoE) is issued to the veteran. Each veteran is responsible to take the CoE issued to their selected place of training to enroll.

b) The VRAP program has a relatively short authorized time period and no additional resources were appropriated for the Department of Labor's (DOL or Department) administrative costs. As a result, the Department of Labor has not increased permanent Federal staff in response to our VRAP responsibilities. However, the Department did redirect funding from other activities to implement VRAP including entering into contracts for technical assistance and information technology needs that are necessary to support DOL in responding to the additional demands created by VRAP.

c) DOL sends an e-mail to all veterans who receive a CoE from the VA. This e-mail is separate from the VA's approval/denial letters and the Department defers to the VA on issues relating to those letters. However, the Department of Labor is committed to assisting veterans that received VRAP denial letters in a variety of ways including helping them understand the reason for the denial and how to properly process appeals. In addition, State agencies receive information about individuals that were terminated from VRAP for noncompliance with the program requirements in order to contact those individuals to offer them alternative training and employment related services. Veterans receive priority of service in all DOL-funded

employment and training programs, including the many programs operated out of the American Job Centers (AJC) across the Nation.

d) The Department of Labor defers to the VA on subparts (d) and (e).

Mr. GIBSON. 3) With regard to the VRAP program, according to the VA, as of today, there are currently 113,914 applications received, 98,132 applications approved, and yet only 43,637 veterans currently enrolled in training.

a) What is the delay in getting these veterans enrolled into the training program?

b) What steps have DOL and VA taken to increase staffing to meet the additional demand for the VRAP?

c) I hear reports of conflicting acceptance letters to the VRAP program being sent to veterans that are subsequently followed by VRAP program denial letters. In these cases where an approval letter has been received and training begun, the veteran is stuck with a bill for this training. Are you aware if this is happening, and if so, why it is happening?

d) Does the VA Educational Office in Buffalo have the resources it needs in order to accomplish their mission?

e) Do you see any issue with the VA centralizing educational and job training claims at one claims center? (Buffalo)

Mr. PUMMILL. [The information was not available at the time of printing.]

