

**OVERSIGHT HEARING ON TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
(TAP), THE HOMELESS VETERANS REINTEGRATION PROJECT
(HVRP), AND LEGISLATION AFFECTING VETERANS EDUCATION
SERVICES**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION, TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED FOURTH CONGRESS
SECOND SESSION

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OVERSIGHT HEARING ON TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TAP), THE HOMELESS VETERANS REINTEGRATION PROJECT (HVRP), AND LEGISLATION AFFECTING VETERANS EDUCATION SERVICES

THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 1996

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING,
EMPLOYMENT, AND HOUSING,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met pursuant to call, at 9 a.m., in room 334, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Steve Buyer (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Buyer, Barr, Filner, and Mascara.

Also Present: Representatives Montgomery and Tejada

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN BUYER

Mr. BUYER. Good morning. The subcommittee will come to order.

At today's hearing we will review the Transitional Assistance Program, the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project, and legislation affecting veterans education services.

We welcome the distinguished panels of veterans benefits experts from the VA, the State Approving Agencies, representatives from the Department of Defense, and representatives of the national veterans' organizations. And soon and hopefully, Mr. Tejada will be joining us. He's just down the hall.

I also would like to wish a special welcome to Mr. Bob Filner as our new Ranking Member of the subcommittee. Also, I enjoyed working with Ms. Waters while she was Ranking Member and enjoyed the relationship with her and the very fruitful and bipartisan manner, which I know will continue. Congratulations to you.

In the Defense Authorization Act for fiscal 1991, section 502 of Public Law 101-510 requires the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretaries of Veterans Affairs and Defense, to provide a program of transition assistance, including counseling, job search training and information, placement assistance and other information and services to military personnel and their spouses who are within 180 days of separation from active duty.

Indications are that TAP is succeeding, and we will continue to monitor its success. But it must be noted that transition assistance

is, and was, intended to be a permanent program to assist our transitioning military personnel.

The history of such transitional services dates back to at least the post-Revolutionary War era when land grants were given in return for military service. Civil service employment preference for veterans dates back to the period immediately following the Civil War when the earliest law providing for such preference was enacted in 1865. Programs for Mexican border veterans were established in 1917. World War I veterans were given employment assistance and as a result, 70 percent of the 1.5 million participants found jobs.

H.R. 2868 proposes to make permanent alternative certification programs, to help veterans gain teaching certification with their Montgomery GI Bill benefits.

In the area of improving the administration of education programs, H.R. 2851 proposes changes in the VA's 2-year rule regarding extensions and branch campuses of learning institutions.

In a related matter, H.R. 3036 would require the management, policy and other functions associated with the educational assistance programs in VA to be retained in the Washington, DC area.

As I mentioned when Secretary Brown visited the full committee on the 29th of March, I think the move of the education service to St. Louis makes no sense, and that the VA should reconsider its proposal in the absence of significant rationale for such a move. We have yet to receive satisfactory assurances that this move will improve the delivery of veterans educational services, nor have we been assured that the management and policy making abilities of the service will be unimpaired by this relocation.

Now I would like to recognize the distinguished ranking member of this subcommittee for any remarks he may have. Mr. Filner.

Mr. FILNER. Good morning. Thank you Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to be here as the Ranking Member of this very important subcommittee, and I look forward to working with you very closely. I thought I would be able to go through this Congress without having to learn how to pronounce your name, but I guess I'll have to make sure I get it right from now on.

Certainly, as a former educator myself, I consider the topics under our jurisdiction to be are extremely important for our veterans and for our Nation. So I'm pleased to be able to work with you. I'm looking forward to the testimony and serving in a cooperative and bipartisan spirit, I think, which has been the hallmark of this committee.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BUYER. I agree with you, Bob. Thanks. Mr. Tejada is not here. Let's move forward with the second panel as the first and Mr. Don Sweeney.

The second panel of Don Sweeney, Legislative Director for the National Association of State Approving Agencies. The SAAs are our partner in the administration of veterans education services and in protecting the benefits that our veterans have earned. Their importance will increase under H.R. 2851 and even more so under the changes proposed by the VA. I hope the SAAs will look at the big picture and see that what we want is to do what's good for them in the long run.

So Mr. Sweeney, thank you for being here and if you have a statement it will be submitted for the record and please summarize. You have 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF C. DONALD SWEENEY, LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE APPROVING AGENCIES

Mr. SWEENEY. Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee. I appreciate this opportunity to testify on H.R. 2851. As you are aware, we have submitted written testimony and do appreciate that it's going to be accepted into the record. Let me summarize it, as you have requested.

We believe that it's time for change. We believe that it's time for modification of the so-called 2-year rule. Schools are more creditable. Instructional processes are more varied. And, current laws and regulations certainly seem to be unnecessarily complex and confusing. So let's simplify, but let's also maintain integrity; integrity of the programs in which VA beneficiaries are enrolled, integrity in the process for approving these programs.

To accomplish this, we believe that certain things need to occur. First of all, retaining and applying the rule at the program level, to both branches and the home campus, is important and appropriate. We suggest that there be a few exceptions; ones that would apply to military base programs, programs leading to standard college degrees and to programs that are similar in character at the non-degree level.

Limiting the types of schools, to which the rule would apply we believe, also is important to reconstructing the 2-year rule. We suggest that it only be applicable to proprietary institutions.

Additionally, there are two other concepts in the written testimony that we suggest be applied to all institutions. One is built into the section that deals with transferability of credit, the other into the section that deals basically with nonpublic institutions and addresses transferability of ownership. In the written testimony we provide a suggested rewrite of the complete rule, address applicability of our recommendation to H.R. 2851 and, again, we discuss the need to maintain the rule at the program level.

We also provide a recommendation for enhancing Section 3675 to compensate for the liberalization of the 2-year rule.

So Mr. Chairman, that is a summary of the testimony that we have provided. I hope that it has been helpful and I'd be happy to answer any questions that you might have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sweeney appears on p. 60.]

Mr. BUYER. I do. I have several questions. In the written testimony you mentioned the need for maximum leverage to insure the quality and integrity of educational programs for veterans as a defense against those States in weak degree granting systems or State licensing laws. You also note the SAAs consider the 2-year rule as the first line of defense against abuse in the system.

Having said that, I'd like to know the standards by which SAAs use to determine whether or not a State has a strong degree granting program or a weak State licensing process.

Mr. SWEENEY. They certainly vary. I can try to give you an overview of our workings, inter-workings, and interrelationships with

the various licensing entities in each of our States since we too are State entities. Our evaluative process basically centers around how the licensing agency fulfills its responsibilities so I'll speak about that first. It's primarily focussed on how the licensing process evaluates program curriculum and instruction—the what is being taught and how it's being taught; other instruction methodologies; the financial stability of an institution; the administrative capacity of an institution; and those policies and practices of an institution that help the institution to fulfill its commitment to students; starting with the students that are admitted (admissions policies), grading policies, credit for prior learning policies, student conduct and attendance policies. Just an array of areas that we would evaluate in terms of trying to make a determination as to whether or not a State licensing process is well balanced, strong and has all the components necessary to insure that an educational program is appropriate for the offering to the VA beneficiaries.

Mr. BUYER. You listed some additional principles and considerations for retention of the 2-year rule. Of those you had mentioned, retention of the rule at the program level, and how it was consistent with most of the other approval criteria and in the "similar in character" provision as determined by the SAAs and the consideration of the "evolution of instructional methodologies." Can you expand on those concepts?

Mr. SWEENEY. Certainly. Approval at the program level, we feel, is key. It has really been the hallmark of the State approving agency process since our origin, our inception. I think it's really what separates the State approving agency process from all other processes; whether they be at the State level, at the national level or in the private sector. That's not to say that there aren't program related processes in existence that determine some similar things, but generally speaking, most of those other processes are institutional in nature and do not evaluate things at the program level. When looking at automotive technology diploma program, for example, you look at different things than you would if you were looking a bachelor's degree program in accounting and to do so really makes the difference between evaluating whether or not the school can deliver each program in a creditable way.

As far as the similar in character provision goes, that one really has to do with who makes the determination as to whether or not a program is similar to another. Assuming now that we retain the 2-year rule at the program level, because if it takes on an institutional orientation, then there's no need for a similar in character provision. If the rule is maintained at the program level as we suggest, then certainly there is the need for determining if a program is similar to another in terms of leading to the same general objective; using the same instructional methodologies, tools and equipment; similarly qualified faculty; and enrollment rules which are pertinent to the administration of both educational programs. I'm not saying it's the most appropriate phrase, but that's the one we've had for years and years, so I guess we've all gotten used to it to some degree. In summary, if the elements of what constitutes program B are similar to what constitutes program A, then program B should not be subject to the 2-year rule if program A is already approved.

Mr. BUYER. All right, thank you.

Mr. FILNER. Welcome, Mr. Montgomery. It's a little disconcerting to be sitting here in a senior position to a man who taught me everything I know. I want to thank you for being so much help to me personally and to this Nation. We're going to miss you.

I share your concern about some of the changes. You think your agencies will have, as they become more critical, any problem with the change of rules? The agencies will have more work and importance. Do they have the resources to do that job?

Mr. SWEENEY. That's part of the reason we ask for the rule to be retained at the program level. It's no secret, as you do here in Washington, we also exist in a political environment. So occasionally having that extra clout provided by a federal law or regulation is extremely useful. It helps with our overall impact and ability to meet the needs that are out there in terms of assessing the integrity and quality of educational programs. So I'd say yes, along with those changes that have been suggested for 3675 as well.

Mr. FILNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have no further questions.

Mr. BUYER. Thank you. Mr. Montgomery. It's a pleasure to have you here. You're recognized for 5 minutes.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. G.V. (SONNY) MONTGOMERY,
RANKING DEMOCRATIC MEMBER, FULL COMMITTEE ON
VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to commend Bob Filner on becoming the Ranking Democratic Member on this subcommittee. I hope I haven't held you up. I've been a good friend and have gone to your district several times over the years.

I'm particularly interested, Mr. Chairman, in H.R. 3036. This bill would require the VA to keep the Education Service in Central Office. Over the last several weeks we have worked with the Education Service staff here in Washington on problems we've had pertaining to the Montgomery GI Bill. We need them here. Maybe VA could reduce the size of the staff a little more, but should not just move them out of town. I hope this hearing today will make it clear that the Education Service should stay in this area.

Thank you.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Montgomery, in my opening comments I refer back to my comments to the Secretary that I disagree with that move and reinforce that today, so I appreciate your comments also.

Mr. Sweeney, I've got two other things real quick. Do you think that the proprietary for profit degree granting schools today pose a significant risk or abuse to the benefit program and if so, have many of the SAAs have recommended that they be dropped?

Mr. SWEENEY. Significant to the degree that we propose, the changes to the 2-year rule as we have in our testimony. It almost seems like the question, Mr. Chairman, that you ask is in reverse. The majority of the members of our national association have asked that the rule remain in place at the program level and be maintained primarily for proprietary for profit schools. The latter position was taken basically in a spirit of compromise, because we felt that was the way the committee was going. It also seemed from

earlier conversations with the VA that was the way they were going as well.

The vote was marginal to retain it at the proprietary for profit level. The organization could go either way. We could easily accept retaining and applying the rule to all private and proprietary institutions; in other words, nonprofit as well as profit.

Mr. BUYER. I'd also like to note the SAAs recommendation to allow the use of the GI bill benefits for courses of instruction offered on military installations and I think the change is good. It's a common sense approach to expanding opportunities to veterans to use their GI bill benefits and I wanted you to know that.

Mr. SWEENEY. Thank you.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Tejeda, would you like to ask any questions? You're recognized for 5 minutes.

If there are no further questions of this witness, you may be excused. Thank you very much.

Mr. Tejeda, would you, please? Mr. Tejeda, you are recognized for 5 minutes and you're a distinguished Member of this Panel. You may proceed however you wish.

STATEMENT OF HON. FRANK TEJEDA, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS

Mr. TEJEDA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I apologize for getting here a few minutes late. I got hung up in traffic.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for providing me this opportunity to testify before your Subcommittee on Education, Training, Employment and Housing in support of my veterans education legislation, H.R. 2868.

Mr. Chairman, more and more veterans who defended our country during hot and cold wars are now choosing to serve their country again by educating America's youth. Veterans are making a unique contribution through academic instruction and the sharing of life experiences and wisdom in the classroom.

Many elementary and high schools need talented and qualified teachers who can bring broad experience to the classroom. While we have many degreed professionals among our veterans, we lack the proper incentives to ease the transition to a teaching career. In an effort to remove some of the obstacles and to offer the proper incentives, I introduced legislation in 1994 that enables veterans to use their GI Bill benefits fully to obtain a teaching certificate through State-approved programs without requiring them to enroll in a lengthy university degree program either full-time or part-time.

In 1994, a fellow veteran and constituent, Richard Gray of San Antonio, wrote to inform me of his concern that existing law limited the ability of a veteran to use GI benefits to obtain the necessary training to earn a teaching certificate through a State-approved Alternative Certification Program. These Alternative Certification Programs enable individuals with college degrees who did not initially graduate from a teacher education program but want to pursue a teaching career the ability to obtain teacher certification. Participants must complete additional college or university course work in their desired education specialty and then participate in a school-based teaching internship program before receiving

their certification. More than 41 States have some form of an Alternative Certification Program.

Alternative Certification Programs are usually sponsored by a State-approved regional service center, a large local school district, or a college or university. The training provided by service centers and school districts is equivalent to that provided by colleges and universities since both require college-level course work and an internship.

Mr. Gray brought to my attention a serious disparity: while VA education benefits could be used automatically for certification programs affiliated with colleges or universities, they could not be used fully for certification programs run by a service center or school district. Specifically, VA education benefits could not be used for internships or course work sponsored by service centers and school districts, and veterans were required to pay 100 percent of these costs. Only the college course work would be covered. University or college sponsored programs are not available in every major metropolitan area.

The costs to veterans under prior law were significant. In the State of Texas, internship fees range from \$2,750 to \$3,200, which is deducted from the intern's salary, with additional fees for course work which may or may not be covered depending on who offers the courses. This barrier prevented many veterans from considering the transition to the teaching profession. To correct this disparity, the House Veterans Affairs Committee quickly responded to the needs of the veterans' community and established a 2-year pilot program to allow veterans to utilize their education benefits fully when attending an Alternative Certification Program not sponsored by a college or university.

Mr. Chairman, the 2-year pilot program expires on September 30, 1996, and I urge this subcommittee and the full committee to consider a permanent extension of this worthwhile program that has received positive support from veterans and the Department of Veterans Affairs. My legislation, H.R. 2868, would permanently extend the program.

Without the permanent extension, other veterans may not be able to follow the success story Mr. Gray represents. Mr. Gray entered an Alternative Certification Program sponsored by a State-approved service center after the completion of 15 credit hours of university course work and an internship program. Mr. Gray received his teaching certification last June. He now teaches students with learning disabilities and emotional problems at a local San Antonio area school district. He also runs an innovative and highly successful job counseling and placement program for hard to employ students.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to testify and I would be glad to respond to any questions.

[The prepared statement of Congressman Tejada appears on p. 58.]

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Tejada, let me personally thank you for your leadership on the committee and for you being a good listener and responsive to your constituencies and actually putting this together. You'll note that I'm also co-sponsor of your legislation,

along with Mr. Montgomery and let me yield to any questions Mr. Filner may have.

Mr. FILNER. I just want to say it's good to see you here, Frank. I know as a Marine on the battlefield you faced some tough situations, but probably not as tough as a recent health challenge. It's good to see you back and working so hard for your constituents.

Mr. TEJEDA. Thank you very much.

Mr. FILNER. I can only say, as a former college professor and a member of a school board in a metropolitan area, your testimony and your experiences and the position you outline is in accord with my own experience. I look forward to supporting you.

Mr. TEJEDA. Thank you very much.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Montgomery.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm very proud to be a co-sponsor of this legislation and I point out again for the record that Mr. Tejada is the most decorated Member we have in the Congress and we're very proud of the service to his country and his war efforts were outstanding and I'm certainly proud to support this legislation.

Mr. TEJEDA. Thank you very much.

Mr. BUYER. I do have one question for you, Frank. During the 2-year pilot program were you aware of any problems or concerns that we should know about that would make it permanent?

Mr. TEJEDA. No, I wasn't aware or I wasn't made aware of any great problems that may have existed. I was certainly made aware of a lot of thank you notes and thank you phone calls that we got and certainly many of the alternative certification programs made some calls and they were very concerned and they wanted to participate. So everything that I know worked out well. I don't know of any initial problems right away.

Mr. BUYER. I should have asked Mr. Sweeney when he was there—you can stay right there, Mr. Sweeney. The SAAs were monitored during that 2-year process, were they not?

Please come up to the mike. I should have asked you earlier. I apologize. This will be helpful to us before we make this permanent.

Mr. SWEENEY. Yes, Mr. Chairman, in those States where the programs were asked to be reviewed and evaluated, that did occur prior to the awarding of any benefits. We do support this bill, by the way. I wasn't asked to comment on it, but I for one have been personally involved in the drive toward the creation of alternative teacher certification programs, at least in the State of Maine. I have other colleagues who have done the same.

Mr. BUYER. I'll ask you the question I asked Mr. Tejada. Were there any problems or concerns that we should know about during that 2-year pilot program that should be corrected or, is it in fact, okay and we can make it permanent?

Mr. SWEENEY. None that I'm aware of and I think largely because there's some reservation around the country by our teacher certification divisions within our State departments of education, so their scrutiny was about as heavy as you could get.

Mr. BUYER. I like giving those alternatives to veterans to be able to use their benefits. Not everybody is college bound. There are other things out there that can be done and they should have those

expanded opportunities, other ways to earn that teaching credential which is basically what the bill allows for.

Mr. SWEENEY. I think that's tremendous.

Mr. BUYER. Very good.

Mr. TEJEDA. Let me just say at this point, as far as I know there's only 41 States that enable individuals to participate in this, so we'll take a look at the other 9 States.

Mr. BUYER. Very good. Thank you very much, both of you, for your testimony.

Are there further questions? Both of you gentlemen are excused. Thanks, Frank.

Mr. TEJEDA. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BUYER. I'd like now to seat Panel 3. We have Mr. Jim Hubbard, Director of the National Economic Commission, The American Legion; Mr. Ron Drach, the National Employment Director of Disabled American Veterans; Mr. Bill Crandell, Deputy Director of Government Relations for Vietnam Veterans of America; Mr. Terry Grandison, Associate Legislative Director of Paralyzed Veterans of America; and, Mr. Bob Manhan, National Legislative Service, VFW.

I'll remind each of you that you will be under the 5-minute rule and your statements will be submitted for the record and gentlemen if you can summarize and we'll just go from my left, your right to left. Mr. Grandison.

STATEMENT OF TERRY GRANDISON, ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR, PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA; ACCOMPANIED BY JAMES B. HUBBARD, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL ECONOMIC COMMISSION, THE AMERICAN LEGION; RONALD W. DRACH, NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT DIRECTOR, DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS; WILLIAM F. CRANDELL, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA; AND, BOB MANHAN, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE, VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

STATEMENT OF TERRY GRANDISON

Mr. GRANDISON. Good morning, Chairman Buyer. It's good to be here today. Before I begin my testimony I'd just like to welcome Mr. Filner and congratulate him on becoming the Ranking Member of the subcommittee and that the Paralyzed Veterans of America look forward to working with you, sir. And I'd also like to acknowledge Congresswoman Waters' contributions to this subcommittee and she'll be certainly missed by PVA and cohorts on the panel.

Mr. Chairman, we thank you this morning for this opportunity to present our views on veterans readjustment benefits. We will limit our comments to the Transition Assistance Program. I'd like to state for the record that PVA has no objections to H.R. 2851, H.R. 2868 or H.R. 3036 and I will limit my testimony to the TAP program.

The Transition Assistance Program has its genesis as a 1989 pilot project managed by the Department of Labor to provide the following transition assistance to eligible military personnel: (1) assist participants in identifying their transferrable skills; (2) enhance participant awareness in planning a well organized job

search; and (3) increase their ability in conducting a successful job search.

The Pilot TAP program was jointly sponsored by the Department of Labor, the Department of Defense, and the Department of Veterans Affairs, with each agency bearing a specific set of responsibilities. DOL spearheaded the TAP project by providing trained personnel to conduct workshops. DOD marketed TAP, provided the facilities and equipment and identified and registered eligible participants. VA disseminated veterans' benefits and services information during TAP workshops and provided educational and vocational counseling, guidance, and testing to eligible servicemembers.

With the advent of DOD downsizing and the anticipated return of servicemembers from the Persian Gulf there became an apparent need to expand the scope of the TAP to serve the increasing number of military personnel leaving the Armed Forces. As a result of these factors, Congress passed Public Law 101-510 expanding TAP to a full-scale basis, nationwide.

PVA supports the TAP concept and the services it provides. It helps to reduce the high rates of unemployment among our Nation's veterans. It also eliminates barriers to employment, both real and perceived. However, with DOD downsizing probably nearly complete, another issue has come to fore: whether the TAP program should indefinitely continue. According to DOD projections, some 250,000 individuals are expected to separate from the Armed Forces annually through the year 2000. Based on these projections DOD contends that TAP is needed and the program should be maintained to provide these individuals the transition assistance they need to fully reintegrate in society and compete successfully in the job market. In light of these projections, we recognize the merit and value of TAP. However, PVA recommends that the program be evaluated on a regular basis as this subcommittee is doing today to insure the purposes of the program continue to meet the requirements of military and veterans. For example, unforeseen manpower and fiscal needs of DOD may require an emphasis on recruitment and retention of military personnel, rather than downsizing an outplacement. PVA is intimately familiar with the need to provide separating servicemembers with all the necessary assistance they require to facilitate a smooth transition into civilian life. However, as fiscal constraints become more severe and the needs of DOD and veterans evolve, this program should be periodically reexamined.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. I'd be happy to answer any questions that I can. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Grandison appears on p. 85.]

STATEMENT OF RONALD W. DRACH

Mr. DRACH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On behalf of the DAV, I too would like to welcome Mr. Filner to this committee and look forward to working with him and I want to thank you too, Mr. Buyer, for having these hearings today so that we can discuss these very important issues on what I consider to be a timely basis.

You've heard about TAP and its response to the downsizing, but as was pointed out TAP was really established in 1989 prior to the downsizing issue, so TAP was never designed specifically for

downsizing. If you look at the projected discharges through the year 2000, they're not significantly below the discharge numbers that were effectuated during the downsizing, so we think the continuation of TAP is very imperative.

One of the major concerns that we have is when is TAP given to the discharging servicemember? The DAV works very closely in the TAP program and in calendar year 1995, our national service offices saw over 90,000 people who were being discharged. Almost half of them were being discharged within a month of their going to the TAP program and approximately two-thirds of those individuals were going to be discharged within 3 months of their discharge, not the 6 months that is required.

I've talked to several individuals about that and I'll talk about it in a few moments, but the other concern that we have is DTAP, the Disabled Transition Assistance Program which for all intents and purposes and from what I can find out no longer exists. What little bit is being done is being done haphazardly. We've talked to some, I've talked to some people recently who never—who are disabled veterans who were on medical hold and didn't get DTAP. They got TAP, but not the disabled portion of it.

DTAP has for too long been considered a stand alone program and is not part of the overall TAP program and that needs to change. Last week I had the opportunity to talk with six individuals who are making application with our organization to be national service officers. One of them was discharged in 1987 prior to TAP, but upon listening to some of the other comments, he mentioned he was very sorry that he didn't get to go through TAP. Another one was discharged in 1992 from Fort Campbell, Kentucky and was not given the opportunity to go through TAP and his comment was that in Fort Campbell, Kentucky, "they are so oriented to field duty they really don't care about the individual." Now I checked to find out that Fort Campbell had a TAP program at that time. They did. Fort Campbell started in 1991. This individual was discharged in 1992. He was very bitter in his comments to me about having the opportunity to have gone through TAP.

One individual is a female veteran who was in the Air Force, got discharged out of Panama, did not get TAP in Panama. However, when she relocated to Wydbey Island in the State of Washington, she contacted the naval base there and the naval base said come on it and you can go through our program here. So she went through it about 2½ months after her discharge and found it to be very beneficial.

Now one individual did go through both. He was a disabled veteran and he went through Fitzsimmons out in, which is now closed or about to be closed under the base closure program, but he went through TAP and DTAP and about 2 years ago as Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Rehab we went out to Fitzsimmons and viewed that program and it was a very good program. So I wasn't surprised to hear that he had good experiences at Fitzsimmons Army Base.

A third individual was discharged from the Marine Corps in February of this year, also a disabled veteran. He had heard about voc. rehab, but he didn't get any specific information about voc. rehab through TAP and of course he didn't go through DTAP, so he knew

enough to go to the VA and ask about the voc. rehab and that's how he got referred to us.

A fourth individual was discharged from Fort Leonard Wood and 2 weeks prior to discharge he said he received a lot of useful information that he is still using. Now it's interesting, I have two individuals with me today, Mr. Chairman, who are part of the training program, Jim Perceveli from our Pittsburgh Office and Carlo Ramirez from our Denver Office. Both, of course, are disabled veterans and are working for us in our service officer program. Jim heard about voc. rehab also but didn't get any specific information. He was assigned to a medical hold company in California with the Marine Corps. Did not go through DTAP. On his own he went to learn more about voc. rehab. Carlo Ramirez from our Denver Office was discharged from Fort Reilly, Kansas and went through the program about 2 to 3 months before discharge. Both found it interesting and informative and helpful, but again, voc. rehab information was not there.

One of the most disturbing comments that came from the six individuals last week, Mr. Chairman, was "officers and retirees received it early." Meaning the TAP program, that officers and retirees were being treated differently than the enlisted men.

I'm going to switch real quick and try to with some HVRP issues real quick. As you know, there are funding problems with HVRP. We think it's a very worthwhile program and needs to be continued. I have to ask of the 250,000 discharges a year, how many of those individuals are going to end up homeless. We think there are some that end up homeless and we need this program.

I want to comment and compliment Secretary Taylor, Assistant Secretary Taylor, even though he had no money, he was able to find \$1.3 million under the JTPA program and went to HUD and got Assistant Secretary Cuomo to commit to a matching \$1.3 million.

As you probably are aware, we've been critical of HUD in the past for being nonresponsive to homeless veterans, but I'd like to comment now that Assistant Secretary Cuomo has made some very significant steps to work with us, including the establishment of a veterans resource center at HUD and a few other items.

With that, I'll close, Mr. Chairman, and I'll be happy to answer any questions. Thank you.

Mr. BUYER. Thank you very much. Mr. Hubbard.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Drach appears on p. 69.]

STATEMENT OF JAMES B. HUBBARD

Mr. HUBBARD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To begin with, I would like to associate myself with the comments of my friends, and colleagues, Ron Drach and Terry Grandison, with regard to your holding these hearings and with the appearance of Mr. Filner as the Ranking Minority. We appreciate your having these hearings.

In preparation for the hearing today, I began to look at some information and a little bit of history of the years since I became Director of Economics of the American Legion. That was in February of 1989. What I found was that the veterans employment and training service has consistently been underfunded, both by budget request and by the appropriations process and that the people don't

seem to be paying attention anywhere in this city about the plight of veterans who are looking for employment.

A couple of months ago there was a newspaper story that made the front pages, at least to the business sections of some papers and the front pages, the A section of most papers. AT&T lays off 40,000 people, mid-managers, mid-level managers. And yet, the Department of Defense lays off 250,000 on an annual basis and nobody pays any attention to it. All these people need jobs. They all have skills. They're all certifiably drug free. We all know the litany of the good things that a veteran can bring to an employer. Everybody assumes that they're not going to have any problem finding jobs. Well, they do have problems finding jobs.

One piece of good news is that the American Legion study which will look at, we hope, if it's funded, the correlation between military occupational specialties and licensing or certification requirements and the recognition of school training in the armed services by licensing agencies will come to pass. That grant modification has been submitted. I am given to understand that it's probably on a good track to be approved. We will complete that study, I hope by the 30th of September, although time is getting short.

And then I found some other information. I found that the Employment and Training Administration has been issuing news releases about training grants elsewhere. Now recall that Veterans Employment and Training Service has been scraping and begging for money to do TAP. We have diverted DVOPs and LVERs from their regular jobs to go out to military bases and do TAP sessions.

At the same time, I find Labor Department issuing press releases, about \$4.4 million for 135 mine workers in Illinois; \$1.6 million for 125 plumbers in West Virginia; \$2.9 million for 194 coal miners in Illinois; \$4 million for 500 flood victims, and the list goes on and on and I've got the press releases if anybody cares to look and they're all from ETA.

Now where in the devil does all this money come from when we can't find anything for the veterans who are getting out of the Armed Forces? And then I find rumors of a document which is labeled Department of Labor budget priorities, fiscal year 1995 through 2006 and guess what's at the very bottom of the list? The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Employment. It's all under all else, as opposed to top priority and high priority where you find things like job corps, employment service, one stop career centers, and all these other kinds of things.

Mr. Chairman, I'm just having a lot of problem with this.

Mr. BUYER. Can I see that?

Mr. HUBBARD. Frankly, I'm getting a little angry about it and at this point, I'll stop talking before I get really angry about it.

Mr. BUYER. Actually, I'm sitting here and my knees are bouncing and I want to jump in and talk. Yesterday, we had an Indiana delegation meeting, and there was a lot of discussion of transition. Whether it was Indiana or even across the country and Congressmen, they want to be extraordinarily responsive whenever there's a transition out there with the Department of Defense and their care and concern for the plight of the federal civilian employee. It's amazing. Some bills were recently dropped with regard to the pension and protection of veterans and there were some other good

things. I threw out the question what about the military? I was pretty hot yesterday morning. That's why—

Mr. HUBBARD. I'm glad somebody is getting hot.

Mr. BUYER. I was a little hot. Were you finished, Mr. Hubbard?

Mr. HUBBARD. Yes. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hubbard appears on p. 66.]

Mr. BUYER. Go ahead, Mr. Crandell.

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM F. CRANDELL

Mr. CRANDELL. Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. Vietnam Veterans of America has a long and happy working relationship with Mr. Filner and we too, are glad to hear of your position. We've also had a long and happy working relationship with Ms. Waters and we will miss her.

The Transition Assistance Program was created to help new veterans find work in a marketplace that has no need for soldiers, sailors or fliers. The Department of Defense budgeted was taxed to pay for it and DOD thinks it has better uses for the money. VVA disagrees. This is an important program which must continue in a time of sluggish economic growth. A quarter of a million military personnel now annually must compete for jobs against civilians who have used their time to gain an education or job experience. It is a hard sell to persuade employers that years spent serving one's country by firing Tomahawk missiles or learning how to post the colors contributes toward becoming a useful employee.

TAP's job is to help newly discharged service personnel compete in the real world. DOD begrudges this meager expense on the theory that its enormous share of the pie should be reserved for the kind of spending that has made defense spending famous.

This attitude affects both morale and recruiting negatively. People leaving the Armed Forces have a right to assistance with phasing out of the peculiar culture and semi-saleable experience they have supported, many at the risk of their lives.

This is especially true for those who need the services of DTAP, which receives so unfairly little attention. What DTAP offers now is useful, but not enough. This is also true of TAP.

The help TAP offers with writing resumes is both excellent and critical. You cannot persuade a civilian employer that you speak competent English if the descriptions of your duties are laced with military phrases. People getting out of the military come from a world in which for the most part they do not apply for jobs, but are assigned jobs.

The Departments of Labor and Veterans Affairs conduct seminars and workshops for transitioning servicemembers and their spouses. These workshops cover personal appraisal, career decisions, applying for jobs, interview techniques, evaluating job offers and veterans benefits. They're usually accompanied by a 350-page participant manual developed by the National Veterans Training Institute, the finest, most comprehensive employment tool yet devised for veterans.

TAP reduces the unemployment insurance burden and contributes to the economy in general. America's service men and women are highly motivated, educated and one of the greatest assets this

country has. If we provide them the tools, they can be a moving force behind an economic recovery.

The Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project, operated by the Department of Labor, offers employment assistance dedicated to the homeless veterans who make up one third of America's the homeless. HVRP is an extremely cost-efficient program for turning people on public assistance into productive taxpayers. Since its inception it has placed over 11,000 veterans into jobs at approximately \$1,000 per placement. That is about the cost of 1 month of unemployment benefits in some areas of the country.

VVA's National Task Force on Homeless Veterans has found HVRP a sound, solid program that puts veterans to work who would otherwise remain on the street.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Crandell appears on p. 77.]

STATEMENT OF BOB MANHAN

Mr. MANHAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. On behalf of the VFW, I too, welcome Mr. Filner to your subcommittee. We know he has the background of being a former history professor, so I'm sure we'll all benefit by his expertise.

I want to stick to the outline of our testimony that you already have copies of. VFW is on record supporting strongly all three of the bills. They have a common denominator. They do enjoy your committee's bipartisan support. H.R. 2851 certainly shows a great deal of flexibility in allowing those people who use educational entitlements to become accredited, get a degree more quickly. Regarding bill H.R. 2868, there's nothing I could say that could state better what Mr. Tejada already said. This bill provides an excellent opportunity and it shows a lot of flexibility to allow younger veterans to use a portion of their VA entitlement to offset the costs of picking up or earning an alternate teaching certificate. H.R. 3036 at first blush looks like micromanagement. However, the VFW approves this bill as submitted because we feel that it is in the best interest of veterans to retain the centralization or policy there in Washington, DC. Unless VA can come up with some new information, we see no reason not to support 3036.

I'll go right into TAP, the Transition Assistance Program. The VFW views it the same way that Congress intended, as a permanent program run by Department of Defense. VFW looks upon TAP as being as important as DOD buying beans and bullets, gasoline, and jet fuel for its military machines. As we know TAP is 6 years old. We have heard stories from Mr. Ron Drach, an expert in this area, of individuals who are still falling through the cracks, not getting timely attention, not being allowed to attend TAP classes because the military mission comes first. But over the years, VFW believes TAP is getting better and better.

In fiscal year 1996, DOD authorized \$50 million for TAP. In 1997, they're asking for \$40 million. I know I'm going to mix apples and oranges now, but in fiscal year 1995, it cost the Department of Defense eight times that \$40 million just for their share of paying unemployment compensation to separated military personnel, who could not find an immediate job. What we're saying, in essence, is this program should be fully funded.

My last comments will deal with the Department of Labor's Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project (HVRP). VFW thinks it is a worthwhile effort. Historically, it's been funded at approximately \$5 million annually. The exception was in 1995. This Congress, reauthorized the HVRP for fiscal year 1997. However, the Administration's budget did not address the homeless veterans reintegration project. The VFW believes that after you have evaluated all of the testimony given here, this subcommittee will ask for an appropriation of approximately \$5 million to be used by VETS, the Veterans Employment and Training Service of the Department of Labor.

This concludes the summary of VFW testimony Mr. Chairman. I'll be glad to answer any questions you might have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Manhan appears on p. 88.]

Mr. BUYER. Thank you, Mr. Manhan. I think you're going to find that this committee tried in the last Congress to reauthorize that program for 5 years. It didn't work. It went to 1 year. I think you'll find cooperation from this subcommittee to expand it, to reauthorize it for up to 3 years and we may authorize it for \$10 million.

Mr. MANHAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's good news.

Mr. BUYER. Let me turn to the Ranking Member for any questions he may have.

Mr. FILNER. I thank you for being here and for helping to educate those of us who are new to these areas. A good part of this committee, the full committee and the subcommittee, are new members and you have to re-educate us essentially to what's happening. I have worked with all of your organizations, and I appreciate that education.

I am not a veteran, and so I need that even more than some of the others. We've worked with your local organizations, the Vietnam Vets in San Diego where I'm from. When I was on the City Council there and also as a school board member, I worked very closely with them through their standdowns to try to address these issues before they became appropriately a national priority. I've had some background working with you all, but we need to continually do that. Some of the things that you pointed out today with DTAP or the priorities of the Department of Labor or the homeless situation—we estimate half of the homeless in San Diego are vets and most of them are Vietnam Vets—there's something there that has to be really, really looked at. I'll be studying your testimony, working with you as we go on, and I pledge to work with you to finding some solutions to these problems. You're dealing with real people who have served our Nation and who deserve the assistance that you're talking about. Their problems have come about by some of the situations within their careers in the military, and we owe it to deal with these on a very, very close basis.

I'm looking forward to working with you and with this committee, to getting a national focus on those priorities and having some results.

Thank you very much for being here, as always.

Mr. BUYER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Barr? You're recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BARR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Drach, the document that you referred to earlier looks very ominous, it has in great big letters across the top underlined "Not For Release To The Public."

Mr. BUYER. This is Mr. Hubbard.

Mr. BARR. Oh, I'm sorry, Mr. Hubbard. I apologize. It is a very ominous document and has this across the top, yet it includes some very important information. Do you know why the Administration would not want the public to know this or can you speculate as to why they would not want the public to know what their priorities are?

Mr. HUBBARD. I hesitate to speculate on that, Mr. Bar. I can tell you that it arrived on my fax machine with no fingerprints. Apparently, the knife is misadjusted and it cut off whatever was supposed to be on the other end of the fax, so it's an over the transom type of thing. I have no reason to believe that it's not legitimate. I think it is.

Mr. BARR. I think it is too. I appreciate your bringing it to our attention. I think it will be the subject of further questions with the next panel. I appreciate your bringing that up here.

Mr. FILNER. Will the gentleman yield for one minute?

Mr. BARR. Let me go into my other question and then I'll be glad to yield.

Mr. Drach, your point about—am I getting it right this time?

Mr. DRACH. Yes sir.

Mr. BARR. I apologize for the confusion. Your point about the heavy workload on our LVERs and DVOPs, I think is well taken, given the considerable amount of responsibility that they have. How might you change their list of duties to lighten their workload?

Mr. DRACH. I don't know, Mr. Barr, that it's necessarily a function of changing their duties as much as doing what the law requires.

First of all, we've had a declining population of LVERs and DVOPs forever, I don't know, since the inception of the programs that there's ever been full funding for the programs.

But you know, the law doesn't say that the LVER and DVOP are the exclusive personnel who provide employment services to veterans at the local job service. I would like to see and as a matter fact there was a comment made about a year or so ago at a meeting when an individual was very proud of the fact that 80 percent of the placement in a particular State were made by LVERs and DVOPs and I said well, that means only 20 percent of the rest of the placements were done by job service personnel.

The law says that the employment service, the job service will provide services of employment, employment services to veterans. What I would like to see is more effort put on the job service to make them do what the law requires so that the LVERs and DVOPs can do more of the specific things such as outreach, job development and the TAP, DTAP programs.

Mr. BARR. Okay, do any of the other members of the Panel have any further thoughts on that? I think that's a very good point. Mr. Hubbard.

Mr. HUBBARD. The way to fix the workload on LVERs and DVOPs is to fully fund the program so that there are enough of those people out there to do the job they're expected to do.

Mr. BARR. Okay.

Mr. CRANDELL. I have to agree with both comments in that we need more DVOPs and LVERs, and at the same time we need the rest of the job service to provide the services they're supposed to provide to veterans.

Mr. BARR. Okay. I'd be happy to yield to the distinguished Ranking Member.

Mr. FILNER. I think the document which looks at priorities is very important. That's within the purview, certainly, of us to look at. I can see why the gentleman was a successful prosecutor. Regarding the "ominous" nature of this document: this is an internal budget matter. It's not unusual for internal OMB documents to be confidential—I mean, kept within the Administration until you go through a discussion period. So I think we ought to be discussing priorities, but let's reserve judgement about the "ominous" nature of this document because it is an internal document. It should be respected as that.

Mr. BARR. If I could reclaim my time. I think that there's more here than does meet the eye, that I think the subcommittee will probably be getting into about the lack of forthrightness on these issues upon the Administration. I think it is a legitimate point and I certainly understand that the Administration has certain documents that they use internally, but these are matters that we need to know about as well and that one ought not to really be afraid of sharing with the organizations and the public, but I appreciate the gentleman's insight.

Mr. FILNER. And I look forward to working with you to make sure that we have priorities that are consistent with our view of it.

Mr. BARR. Absolutely.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Mascara, you're recognized for 5 minutes. Thank you.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. FRANK MASCARA

Mr. MASCARA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I regret the lateness of my arrival, but I have come to find out there's just more things to do than there are hours in the day. It was not intended to make you feel slighted. My father was a World War I veteran and Silver Star winner. I had four brothers who served in World War II and I served in the Army, so my heart is here and I share the same frustration, Mr. Hubbard. I came in on the end of that, but I share that same frustration that you do. I'm not privy to what information they have, but one, first of all, I'd like to ask unanimous consent to place my opening remarks in the record. I'm sure that the Chairman will agree to that, but I just wanted to make several observations. I did take the time last evening to review the information and your testimony and just wanted to say, one, that I support Representative Tejeda's successful pilot project. As a former schoolteacher myself, I understand the importance of teacher certificate programs. I also support Sonny Montgomery's efforts to—although I love the people in St. Louis—to block the move

from Washington, DC to St. Louis. As a County Commissioner, I had the responsibility of administering educational programs and that was one of the reasons I selected the subcommittee because of my experience over 15 years as a County Commissioner. I can tell you that under the old Manpower programs, under the old CETA programs and specifically under the old CETA programs, I recall that in Washington County, Pennsylvania, where I served, the money provided to us enabled us to only serve 15 percent of those people who needed to be served. So I share that frustration. Then we came back to Washington, DC, and I offered testimony in Washington, DC when they were moving from CETA to JTPA, the J-T-P-A program. Lo and behold, everybody was so happy about this great program that we were about to embark upon and I come to find out that from CETA to JTPA we went from 15 percent of the people that needed to be served, to 7.5 percent of funding for the people who needed to be served. So I understand your frustrations and if we're going to do it, let's do it. Let's provide the funding that is necessary to carry out these programs.

I also support the—and it was one of the first affairs that I went to, it was for the homeless program. I think we need to reauthorize that. I think that's important. I think it's a disgrace to see our veterans on the streets and for an insensitive government to turn their back on these people would be a tragedy.

I also want to recognize our new Ranking Member, Mr. Filner. I look forward to working with you, Mr. Filner, on this committee.

I want to say this has been a bipartisan effort. I enjoy working with the Veterans committee, Mr. Buyer and Mr. Stump and others have been very fair with us, but gentlemen, I look forward to working with all of you and hopefully the day will come when—Mr. Hubbard, your comment, when you say I'm pleased that we're doing the right thing.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BUYER. I have a series of questions. We go through this here on this committee. We authorize and then it goes to the appropriators. So we can authorize \$10 million, the appropriators are going to throw in their \$5. So in your lobbying efforts and what you do on behalf of the veterans community, I remind you.

Mr. HUBBARD. Mr. Chairman, if I might respond. Our testimony for the appropriations subcommittee for this particular agency, meaning the Veterans Employment and Training Service was given to that committee 2 months ago.

We have had a great deal of difficulty in the past 4 to 5 years getting face time with that committee. We can never get scheduled for a hearing. They always want a submittal. They never want to hear from us in person.

The problem is one we're fighting, but we are there.

Mr. BUYER. You know that you have an open door here and we will—I'll be helpful to you.

Let me—Mr. Drach, I want to learn more about the six workbooks developed by your organization, how they're used and why DAV produced the books.

Mr. DRACH. Let me start, Mr. Chairman, with the last part of that question. When we were working with the Department of Labor in the early days of the development of the TAP program,

we saw the material that they were putting together and generally we're very happy with it. What we weren't happy with was that they were putting together one single document which was going to be about the size of a phone book, as I recall, and we felt that not every individual would need everything in that size of a book and we decided that the six areas in which we wrote these books were the areas that would be of the most interest, so that if one individual, for example, really wanted to walk away with the resume writing handbook and didn't need job interview skills, for example, he or she could take that one handbook and use that as a handy reference, rather than trying to carry around a larger book. So it was not, it was to address a need that we thought was there. We did an additional printing of about 10,000 copies each of the six books and as it's indicated on my written testimony, the distribution of those books. The books are now essentially out of print. What we've doing on an as-need basis is xeroxing them and sending them out, usually single copies. And it's been very beneficial to us, because not only are they used in a transition program, we get several letters a week from individuals who are just looking for employment. They may have been discharged years ago, so it has application to any unemployed person or soon to be unemployed person.

We've also authorized unlimited printing of the book itself so that if a military base or a VA office or for that matter anybody who wanted to reprint them either through photocopying or actually going to a printed, all we ask is that they make sure that we get the credit for the original publication by leaving our name in that publication.

I guess the downside of that right now is that some of the material in the books, and I'm not sure exactly which ones is a little bit outdated and needs to be brought up to date if we're ever to reprint them. But we have had very, very good responses. Voc. Rehab has them. A lot of LVERs and DVOPs have them. All the State Directors have them, so they're out there.

Mr. BUYER. Thank you. Mr. Grandison, I wanted to associate myself to some of your comments. I appreciate it gentlemen, if I could ask you about H.R. 3036. You've heard my comments several times now with regard to that. Would you please state the position of your organization, if you have taken one or not in regard to that bill, and go right down the line.

Mr. Grandison, that's to prevent the educational services from being moved to St. Louis.

Mr. GRANDISON. Yes sir, PVA has no objections to that legislation. There's nothing in the bill that is contrary to PVA's interest and positions.

Mr. BUYER. Thank you. Mr. Drach.

Mr. DRACH. Mr. Chairman, we don't have an official position on the bill, but the bill does raise some concerns as to where does decentralization stop and how are we really going to improve efficiencies? We're not sure that the restructuring effort of transferring the education service to St. Louis is going to improve services to veterans or efficiencies of government.

Mr. BUYER. You said that very well. I like decentralization, too, and in a way that makes sense. This one doesn't make sense to me. Thank you very much. Mr. Hubbard.

Mr. HUBBARD. Mr. Chairman, my remarks would be exactly those of Ron Drach. We don't have an official position, but to the extent it hurts veterans by moving the decision making process out of Washington, we would oppose the bill or I'm sorry, we would approve the bill.

Mr. BUYER. Support the bill?

Mr. HUBBARD. Support.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Crandell?

Mr. CRANDELL. VVA also supports the bill.

Mr. MANHAN. Mr. Buyer, we're already on record. VFW does support the bill.

Mr. BUYER. Thank you very much. Any other—do my colleagues have any questions for this panel?

Mr. HUBBARD. Mr. Chairman, if I might add one thing. With respect to Mr. Filner's remarks about this being an internal document, I have reason to believe that the document was produced by OMB. I have reason to believe that that couldn't be produced without some rather serious consultation on the second floor of the Labor Department and I would point out the document ceased to be internal when it arrived on my desk.

Mr. BUYER. Thank you very much. You gentlemen are excused.

The fourth panel may now please take seats.

The fourth panel today is Ms. Carolyn Becraft, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Personnel Support, Families and Education and the Honorable Preston Taylor, Assistant Secretary of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training. And appearing in his new capacity for the first time is Dr. Steve Lemons, Deputy Under Secretary of Veterans Benefits Administration who is accompanied by Celia Dollarhide, Director of VA Education Service.

Welcome each of you. If you would, please summarize your statements, your entire remarks will be entered into the record as written testimony.

Mr. Taylor, welcome.

Mr. TAYLOR. Good morning.

Mr. BUYER. Let me congratulate you.

Mr. TAYLOR. Thank you, sir.

Mr. BUYER. I think you've done an exceptional job over the last year and I appreciate that.

Mr. TAYLOR. Thank you.

Mr. BUYER. You'll note that I don't have any legislation breathing down your neck right now.

Mr. TAYLOR. no sir.

Mr. BUYER. I've been pleased and I think the committee has been pleased.

Please proceed.

Mr. TAYLOR. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF HON. CAROLYN H. BECRAFT, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, PERSONNEL SUPPORT, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION; ACCOMPANIED BY HON. PRESTON M. TAYLOR, JR., ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF LABOR, VETERANS EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING; AND HON. STEPHEN L. LEMONS, DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY, VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION, ACCOMPANIED BY CELIA DOLLARHIDE, DIRECTOR, EDUCATION SERVICE

STATEMENT OF HON. PRESTON M. TAYLOR, JR.

Mr. TAYLOR. Mr. Chairman, Members of the subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to discuss the Transition Assistance Program, known as TAP, and to share my views on the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project, or HVRP.

Both TAP and HVRP provide job-readiness assistance to special categories of at-risk individuals, those who are soon to be discharged from the Armed Forces and those veterans who are homeless.

TAP is designed as a three day workshop to raise participant awareness of the resources available to them, to assist participants in identifying their transferrable skills and to increase their ability to plan and conduct a successful job search.

My agency's primary role is to insure that Department of Labor resources are dedicated to the TAP delivery partnership and to facilitate workshops. Workshops are now facilitated by veteran dedicated staff from State employment security agencies augmented at high volume or remote sites by contract instructors and VETS' staff at the State level.

To evaluate TAP's impact and its operational strengths and weaknesses, the Department of Labor commissioned a series of reports over the past few years. Phase III of the impact analysis published on May 15, 1995, stated "there was survey evidence to suggest that TAP may have a positive effect by helping participants get jobs more quickly, reducing time unemployed by 3 to 7 weeks and that it may greatly reduce individual and family stress while increasing overall earnings." Further, the study says, "there is some evidence to suggest that the program pays for itself by eliminating the unemployment insurance claims of separatees."

Since 1993, more than 60 percent of the nearly 800,000 servicemembers discharged from active duty have received job search training through TAP before their release. In fiscal year 1995 VETS conducted 3,800 TAP workshops at 204 military facilities in 44 States and served 146,000 participants.

Our vantage point regarding employment and training programs for homeless veterans stems from administering homeless veterans reintegration projects for 7 years under the Stuart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. Much of the HVRP model is built around three main elements. First, outreach is performed by former homeless veterans who know exactly what homelessness means. Second, the HVRP program is employment focused, and third, there are linkages with other service deliverers who can provide support such as housing and educational training benefits.

The HVRP program was expanded when it was reauthorized a second time in 1992. For fiscal years 1993 and 1994, including Sep-

tember 30, 1995, there were 26 grants in urban areas and six in rural areas at a funding level of \$5 million for each of the 2 years. During that period there were 15,832 veteran participants of which over half, 8,070, were placed in jobs at a cost of approximately \$1,500 per placement.

Over its 7 years, HVRP has had a positive impact on many of the 41,000 veterans it has served. In July 1995, Congress rescinded HVRPs fiscal year 1995 appropriated funding of just over \$5 million. In February 1996, Congress authorized an appropriation of \$10 million for HVRP in fiscal year 1996. But to date, this fiscal year, the Department of Labor has operated under a series of continuing resolutions that have not included funding for the HVRP program.

In recognition of the on-going need for homeless assistance and in keeping with the Senate appropriations report language that urged the Secretary of Labor to provide pilot project funds sufficient to meet the needs of homeless veterans during fiscal year 1996, VETS took the initiative in February 1996 to use all of its remaining discretionary funds, \$1.3 million of its job training partnership act, to keep operating 21 HVRP projects located in cold weather areas. The funding amounts range from \$28,000 to \$109,000 per project. Additionally, the Department of Housing and Urban Development agreed to work with the Department of Labor in this effort and match our \$1.3 million. We're gratefully appreciative to HUD and Assistant Secretary Cuomo for helping us out.

The deadline for submitting grant applications for HUD funding is Wednesday, April 24. We anticipate that 25 awards will be made and that the range of awards will be from \$50,000 to \$100,000 per grant. Projects are expected to begin next month.

That concludes my remarks, Mr. Chairman, and I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Taylor appears on p. 99.]

Mr. BUYER. Thank you, Mr. Taylor. Ms. Becraft.

STATEMENT OF HON. CAROLYN H. BECRAFT

Ms. BECRAFT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the subcommittee. I truly appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to report on the Department's Transition Assistance Program and I have submitted my written statement for the record that outlines the responsibilities I have for this program. But on a personal note, I'd also say I've been a beneficiary. I am a veteran myself. My husband just retired from the military in 1992, 1993, pardon me, and I went through the 3-day program. He also was the beneficiary of the excellent services of the DAV. Ron Drach, he is a disabled veteran. So I have a personal attachment to this program. I knew about it before I came to the job and I have been a believer.

First, I would like to restate our commitment to our departing servicemembers. The Department of Defense remains steadfast in its commitment to offer separating servicemembers transition services well into the future.

Secondly, the transition assistance program is one of the top priorities of the Secretary of Defense's quality of life agenda.

I know that you share our pride and professionalism and dedication of today's Armed Forces. The end of the Cold War has required our forces to be smaller, more versatile and mobile. We recognize that we must reciprocate our military personnel for their service by caring for them and their families.

The Transition Assistance Program provides us an opportunity to meet the needs of our departing servicemembers and prepares them for civilian life, allowing them to remain productive citizens in the civilian job sector.

Operation Transition is a success. We are most appreciative of the outstanding cooperation from the Department of Labor, from Veterans Affairs and the State employment agencies. We have established close working relationships with these agencies and each has a distinct role to play in the transition process.

It has taken the combined efforts of all to effect a smooth transition for departing servicemembers. In addition, we have had valuable assistance from organizations such as the DAV, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, the American Legion, Noncommissioned Officers Association, Veterans of Foreign Wars and many others, who have donated resources and time at our CONUS and OCONUS job fairs.

Mr. Chairman, the best measurement of Operation Transition Success comes from servicemembers themselves. We have many comments and we collect them such as, and I will quote, "I was employed before I left the Marine Corps. I didn't think I had anything to offer the civilian market being a Major in the infantry. This program worked. I am proof."

Another wrote, "My education and skills got me the job, but it was the Defense Outplacement Referral System that gave me the exposure I needed to get this job."

We have many, many more testimonials like these. Additionally, this past year, we had a 152 percent increase in employer requests for our servicemember resumes.

We are currently conducting a job fair in Seoul, Korea. In May, we will also conduct an overseas job fair in Germany. The overseas job fairs provide a unique opportunity for prospective employees and separating servicemembers to meet and network face to face. The job fairs are particularly valuable for servicemembers overseas, who would otherwise have great difficulty in communicating and meeting with prospective employers. The feedback has been very positive from both employers, servicemembers and military commanders. One company wrote, "We are pleased with the overseas job fairs and we have hired many qualified applicants, anticipating hiring more applicants as they rotate back to the States." Another said, "The transition program has provided additional recruiting resources and a significant number of employment offers have been extended which is evidence of the commitment of our company to this program."

We have received testimonials from both the Far East and European based commanders. One Air Force Commander wrote, "I applaud DOD's commitment to transition personnel and to continue sponsorship of the Far East job fair because Air Force personnel leave far better prepared for the civilian life." And still another said, "The number of jobs received and the positive effect on DOD

families warrants this worthwhile program and I ask you to continue to support the program which continues to make qualify of life for military members overseas a reality." Our 1995 overseas job fairs provided 1,340 firm job offers.

Congress has directed the Department to report on phasing out the transition program. Although the report is still being prepared, I can tell you that the Department is committed to maintaining the transition program. We believe the transition program more than pays for itself through reduced unemployment costs to the Department.

Recent DOL and U.S. Army studies show that the program helps servicemembers find jobs more quickly and coupled with other facts such as availability of jobs and the economy, accounts for a cost avoidance of \$152 million annually that would be spent for unemployment compensation. In 1992, the Department spent an average of \$491 million on unemployment compensation compared to \$336 million in 1995 with roughly the same number of departees.

As we continue to face the challenges of reduced budgets, we recognize the need to target our programs and avoid overlap. We are committed to meeting this challenge.

Before I conclude, I would like to recognize the proud and professional service of Sonny Montgomery who I know was here before and was instrumental in the beginnings of this program.

I would also like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Members of the subcommittee for your continued interest and commitment to the men and women of the Armed Forces who have served their country honorably. I will also be happy to address any questions you may have.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Becraft appears on p. 91.]

Mr. BUYER. Thank you, ma'am.

Dr. Lemons, you're recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF STEPHEN L. LEMONS

Dr. LEMONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your kind welcome. I am pleased to be here today to present VA's comments on a number of legislative proposals affecting our benefits programs. With me today is Ms. Celia Dollarhide who is the Director of VA's Education Service.

There are three legislative proposals on this morning's agenda as well as a discussion of the Transition Assistance Program. I'd like to address the Transition Assistance Program first.

In concert with the Departments of Defense and Labor, VA shares responsibility for the 3-day seminars of transition assistance. VA Military Services Coordinators regularly conduct briefings at installations throughout the country and also conduct personal interviews to assist with filing of benefit claims.

The second component of the program is the Disabled Transition Assistance Program, DTAP. This program is structured for servicemembers who are separated for medical reasons. We believe DTAP is preferably conducted in conjunction with TAP to provide the servicemember with an overall briefing on a full range of VA benefits and services.

In addition to supporting TAP, VA provides benefit briefings at regular pre-separation and retirement programs and does outreach to members of the Reserve and National Guard. In fiscal year 1992, VA expanded its military services program to Europe and the Pacific theater. This was a jointly funded effort with the Department of Defense. This initiative was very well received by the military and resulted in placement of counselors in both theaters on 6-month rotations. Due to the uncertainty of the federal budget we called back all overseas counselors in September 1995. We expect, however, and are glad that we will be able to resume overseas assignments shortly.

In fiscal year 1995, we briefed over 360,000 servicemembers through TAP which resulted in over 114,000 personal interviews. A benefit we see from TAP is the quality and sophistication of benefit claims. Providing transition assistance to separating servicemembers will continue to be one of our highest outreach priorities.

I wish to limit the rest of my remarks to the concerns about H.R. 3036. H.R. 3036 would require that VA's education service remain in the District of Columbia. We do not support this proposal. Quite frankly, such a legislatively mandated organizational structure would create a hardship for us. Federal agencies nationwide have faced some challenging budgets and the Veterans Benefits Administration is no exception. As a result, we're undergoing an extensive review of our operations and organization. Every aspect of VBA is open for review, both in the Central Office and in the field. For decades, education claims were processed throughout the country. As more education programs were added and activity in some of these programs declined, decentralization processing was no longer viable. As a result we consolidated the processing of education claims to four regional processing offices in order to create a core of experts sufficient in size to manage the workload. This model is similar to our insurance program which has successfully operated at two sites for decades.

When education processing was dispersed across the country, we were able to most effectively provide policy guidance and program oversight in the Central Office. We believe that is now an outdated paradigm. Using our insurance program and operating offices in Philadelphia as our model, we believe we can achieve management and service improvements by moving the policy and management of the education program to the St. Louis regional processing office. Staffing is limited and will continue to decline. Our Central Office operations cannot remain static while our field operations continue to decline. The transfer to St. Louis will provide us the opportunity to leverage our Central Office staff so that we minimize the impact of diminished resources on program integrity. We believe we'll be able to shoulder any anticipated cuts in the Central Office in a way that allows us to take full advantage of the resources of a regional processing center. By co-locating the line and staff elements, we can strengthen communications and streamline development and testing of new initiatives. The people responsible for policy and procedures will have ready access to the front line which will facilitate the development of the procedures and the implementation of any needed adjustments.

I want to assure you, Mr. Chairman, that we are sensitive to the concerns of the subcommittee regarding the impact the move may have on established working relationships. We are very proud of the relationships that exist between our education service, the Departments of Defense, Education and Labor and other offices as well as the excellent collaborative relationship with this subcommittee. I can assure you that we intend to maintain those relationships. In fact, they're essential to our continued success.

We also recognize that the move may adversely affect some of our education service employees. This is regrettable because every one of these people is dedicated and knowledgeable. They're the reason our education programs run so well. We realize that we are presenting them with hard choices and challenges, but we also recognize the potential benefits to veterans from this change, and that must be our first consideration. We hope to relocate every employee who is interested and able to move.

Enacting H.R. 3036 will not only stop this restructuring initiative, it may very well set a precedent that will inhibit VBA from making any progress in meeting the budgetary and management challenges that await us and insuring that we remain responsive to our veterans' needs.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my remarks and I'd be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Lemons appears on p. 106.]

Mr. BUYER. Dr. Lemons, you've read H.R. 3036, have you not?

Dr. LEMONS. Yes, I have sir.

Mr. BUYER. There's nothing in that bill that stops or prevents you from doing any form of restructuring within personnel. Isn't that correct?

Dr. LEMONS. Not in and of itself, no sir.

Mr. BUYER. Say again?

Dr. LEMONS. Not in and of itself, no sir.

Mr. BUYER. All right, so your testimony says that it stops. It doesn't stop that effort at all. I just want to lay that on the table. It does not stop that effort. We're just saying if, in fact, you've got to move and you want to do it, I've not seen, nor has this committee seen, the justification for such a move and we judge it—you even made the correct statement, we judge it in how is it going to benefit veterans. Expand on that.

Dr. LEMONS. Certainly.

Mr. BUYER. How is that going to help provide—

Dr. LEMONS. We anticipate continued serious reductions of resources available to VBA. We are trying to look at our entire organization, both the centralized functions, as well as the direct service delivery functions at the field level. Historically, when we have been faced with declining resources, we've taken all those resource cuts at the direct front line activity at the regional office level and we're trying to see if there are ways that we can take a more balanced look across the organization, while at the same time insuring that we don't have the loss of functionality in our critical centralized functions. In response to your concerns expressed in the prior hearing in March, we believe that there is a rationale for maintaining some of the policy elements, some of the legislative elements, some of the liaison elements in Washington. But we believe that

systems design, procedural development and some of the other areas of the current service as specifically mentioned in H.R. 3036, could move into an operating environment. Any needed cuts that we may have to take, could be taken in at the RPO and would allow us some degree of flexibility to ensure that we have the continued viability of our mission in the centralized activities.

Mr. BUYER. You don't believe that the legitimate ends can be met by leaving the office here in Washington? You think that we have to put it out in St. Louis in order to meet those ends?

Dr. LEMONS. No sir. I don't believe that we have to put it out. I think it is the best advisable activity to put it out. The educational workload that occurs at the Regional Processing Office is somewhat cyclical in nature. We believe that if we suffer the serious reductions we anticipate and share that cut across the board throughout the organization, including centralized activities, some of which are operating in an operational environment, there will be some flexibility of movement of people and in sharing responsibilities in an operating environment. Now nothing is sacred about St. Louis. What is advisable about St. Louis is that's where a lot of our initiative activities are on-going as we speak. That's where stage 2 of modernization and development of the imaging capability for the education program are under development and we believe that that is therefore a viable location.

Mr. BUYER. What are the costs going to be for the move?

Dr. LEMONS. We've done a number of different scenarios on costs. In response to the last development of leaving a limited function here in Washington, DC—and phasing this in over a 2-year period, we see the cost to be around \$240,000 in fiscal year 1996, and a little over \$1 million in fiscal year 1997.

Mr. BUYER. For the move to St. Louis?

Dr. LEMONS. For the move.

Mr. BUYER. Let me yield now to the Ranking Member for any questions he may have. He's recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FILNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I understand your dilemma, Dr. Lemons. Congress and everyone is saying "cut your spending," and then you come up with something to try to handle that and we say don't do that either. But there is a bipartisan consensus, I think, on this committee that the relocation of the education service will have a strong negative impact on our education programs, and we value those as much as any of the other programs in the VA.

Let me just turn to another couple of issues briefly. The previous panel talked about the relationship or, more accurately, the lack of relationship between DTAP and TAP. Your collective testimony or lack of addressing that issue concerned me. Is there a way to integrate those programs, to put more emphasis on the DTAP? It seems it's getting lost, from the testimony and from your own comments or lack of them. How do we treat that in a more respectful and effective fashion?

Mr. TAYLOR. Can I address that, please? First, I'd like to welcome you, Mr. Filner, to the subcommittee. We look forward to working with you.

We are concerned about DTAP. In a previous hearing the Chairman urged the VA and the Labor Department to get closer with re-

gard to providing jobs for those who graduate from the VA's vocational rehabilitation program. That urging resulted in a memorandum of understanding which is working extremely well. But we also have another memorandum of understanding with the VA and the Department of Defense in regard to TAP. That's a fairly recent MOU. In that MOU, we address the establishment of an advisory committee. I have asked both the VA and the Department of Defense to convene that advisory committee and to address the DTAP question. They have agreed and we will be very happy to share their recommendations to us—

Mr. FILNER. Is that advisory committee an administration committee?

Mr. TAYLOR. That's an advisory committee that was generated as a result of the memorandum of understanding.

Mr. FILNER. Is it internal staff—

Mr. TAYLOR. Internal staff.

Mr. FILNER. Again, I have worked with the service organizations in my own town and around the country, and they have a lot of expertise in this. I would hope that they could somehow be involved in these of discussions as you proceed.

Mr. TAYLOR. That would be fine. We also have a Veterans Employment Advisory Committee at the Department of Labor which is there by law. That committee is chaired by Mr. Drach. We'll be talking with him and asking that his committee give us some ideas as to how we can improve.

Mr. FILNER. We look forward to hearing that. Just one last question, Mr. Taylor, you've heard also from Mr. Hubbard regarding a document he had. Do you have any comments on the priorities of your Department with respect to our veterans?

Mr. TAYLOR. As we all know, we're in a climate of declining budgets. Every Department and every Agency within Departments, it appears, is going to take cuts over the next several years. The only thing that's really set in concrete in regard to our budgetary numbers are fiscal 1997. We don't have a fiscal year 1996 budget yet, much less a fiscal 1997 budget. So as we look into the out years, we will be revisiting our budgetary requirements. I don't consider any estimates in the outyears to be set in concrete.

Mr. FILNER. The concern, I think, was not absolute figures—we understand cuts, but it was the sense that the programs under discussion today have a very low priority in the Department. I don't want to just jump to that conclusion, as I said earlier, from one internal document. I want you to have a chance to comment on that sense of priority.

Mr. TAYLOR. Since that internal document is now external, there's no question that the onus is on me to try in a better way to articulate the requirements for veterans employment within my own Department. As a matter of fact, Once I saw that document, I began discussions to raise the issue. I have been told that it would be revisited.

Mr. FILNER. I'm sure we'll be re-visiting that with other Members here. Thank you very much.

Mr. BUYER. Thank you. Mr. Barr, you're recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BARR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General, from what I know about you and your work with the committee and your work on behalf of veterans and veterans programs, I think you're a friend to those programs and certainly to veterans and a very articulate and strong advocate on their behalf. I conclude from that and in looking at this document that this document does not reflect your priorities. I know you're in a difficult political position, and I'm not asking for a comment. I'm not trying to put you on the spot there. I am concerned about it and would appreciate it if you would, as you have just indicated, you are committed to doing, but particularly now today since we're all aware of this, commit to us that you will do everything you can to make sure that it does properly reflect your priorities, our priorities and veterans' priorities.

My concern, for example, in just looking at this document is first of all, the prioritization. The veterans programs are just sort of lumped down here in the basement with everything else. Then we have the much vaunted Job Corps program and in every one of the outyears or in none of the outyears does Job Corps come in for a cut. Some years it stays the same, but it is not cut back in any of the years unlike the ASVET, the S and E, and grant programs which are cut back substantially in several of the years. So I would just urge you to do what I know you will do to make sure that these funding levels do reflect the proper priorities. I don't think they do right now and it is of concern to me.

Mr. TAYLOR. Yes sir.

Mr. BARR. With regard, General, to the HVRP program for 1996, and using some of the discretionary JTPA money to do so, looking at some of the figures here, what was the JTPA IVC budget for 1996? Do you have those figures?

Mr. TAYLOR. Within my own Agency?

Mr. BARR. Yes sir.

Mr. TAYLOR. We had about \$7 million and all of that money was accounted for. We had planned on issuing grants. We had a whole list of projects that we thought were worthy of grant money. But when it became apparent to me that we had a—we were going to have a problem this winter in some of the areas where we had previously provided HVRP money, I made a unilateral decision to take \$1.3 million and to fence it for homeless veterans in what I thought would be cold weather areas. It turned out that we had such a severe winter that almost everywhere in the United States was a cold weather area, but we did target those areas that we had historically targeted where the weather was really cold. I personally called Assistant Secretary Andrew Cuomo and told him that I didn't have any more money and that I certainly would appreciate some help. He helped us and we think we're going to do a lot of good with the \$2.6 million that we took out of our hides.

Mr. BARR. Are there other programs that received reduced funding or no consideration because of the funds for HVRP?

Mr. TAYLOR. No.

Mr. BARR. Okay, thank you.

Mr. TAYLOR. Your welcome.

Mr. BARR. That's all I have, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. BUYER. Thank you, Mr. Barr. Mr. Mascara, you're recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MASCARA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General and others, while the primary purpose of the military is to prepare our young men and women to defend this Nation and the number one goal should be military preparedness, I'm just wondering whether this—and I support the transition assistance operation, that that should be an on-going from day one when people enter the military. At that point, certain testing is done, certain aptitude testing is done, and that on an on-going basis after you complete your number one objective, we should be preparing on an on-going basis while they're in the military for post-military life and have that as a part of a program. Does such a thing exist currently, Ms. Becraft?

Ms. BECRAFT. Yes, our transition program exists just to do that to assist servicemembers as they leave into the civilian community. I would point out that we have 200,000 to 250,000 people that leave every year on a regular basis, whether they stay for one enlistment or leave after 10 years or whatever. Most everybody that leaves the military, even those who retire, go on into the civilian sector for a second career because our people when they leave are still young and then have the kind of high expense times of their lives and they continue on in the civilian sector.

I think it's very, very important that we continue to assist this transition.

Mr. MASCARA. That's fine and I agree with you. I support that. What I'm saying is if you have someone in the military for 4 years, or 10 years, or whatever it might be, that during that period of time, after your number one objectives are met to prepare them to defend this country, that somehow, given the information that you received from the testing initially, we think from Day 1 what's going to happen with these people after they leave the military. Using the information that you have at your disposal, somehow we have an on-going program that prepares them once they're—we're in a global economy. We all know what it's going to take this country to compete around the world in a global economy and somehow we have a program that's on-going, not only 6 months before they leave, or a few months before they leave we rush them through some program and say, "now we've prepared you for transition to the private sector."

Ms. BECRAFT. Sir, I would answer that by saying that the military has a very rich and diverse training program for our people, whether it's military training or access to off-duty education, tuition assistance. Our off-duty education program is huge. I myself am a recipient of benefits of that program. We continually encourage people to update their skills in a very broad and diverse way that helps prepare them, not only for their work in the military to be more productive in that work, but also to assist in the eventual transition at the time when they choose to leave.

Mr. MASCARA. The reason I'm so supportive, having come from local government and having handled many, many social programs, it's a case of "pay me now" or "pay me later." We do this and that we fund it properly so that once these individuals reach the private sector, if they're not prepared, if we can't find them jobs, then they become wards of the State and we end up paying anyway through Medicaid and welfare and health programs. It's almost like we're turning our back on an obvious problem nationally. It's not only

with veterans. The whole educational process in this country needs to be reviewed so that we have young people who are prepared to go into the private sector and hold a job. If they're not, we're going to pay anyway. Don't cut on the education side. Don't cut on the transition side is what I'm saying.

Ms. BECRAFT. Thank you.

Mr. TAYLOR. Congressman Mascara, there are a couple of other positive spinoffs from the TAP program about which Carolyn and I have talked on a number of occasions. By the way, we have a very good relationship with DOD and VA on these programs. We talk a lot about them.

Two of the positive spinoffs are: one, the Department of Defense pays unemployment for new separatees. It doesn't come out of the coffers of the governors of the States, but out of DOD coffers. In fiscal 1993 DOD paid approximately \$540 million in unemployment compensation. Because of the program, we think, it's now down to \$300 million. We really can't give you any absolute verification of that, but we see that number actually going down.

We have an all volunteer military and I've talked to a number of Generals and Admirals and enlisted people as I crisscross the country visiting TAP workshops. What I'm being told is that people that go through this program of TAP leave with a good feeling that the military actually allowed them time off to go to these three day seminars. It was extremely helpful to them. So when they go home they talk to their neighbors and their brothers and their friends about the military and they don't say bad things. They say good things about the military because of the investment that was made. So these are a couple of positive spinoffs that we've seen.

Mr. MASCARA. Thank you, General. I seem to have run out of time, Mr. Chairman, but quick math, there's a savings of \$247 million. So you're saying the States don't pay that unemployment, but the Department of Defense does?

Mr. TAYLOR. That's correct.

Mr. MASCARA. So "pay me now" or "pay me later."

Mr. TAYLOR. That's correct.

Mr. MASCARA. Thank you.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Taylor, since in the President's budget there was not funding for the National Veterans Training Institute, how are you going to train these instructors?

Mr. TAYLOR. That's an excellent question, Mr. Chairman, and it's one that we're wrestling with now, trying to come up with various ideas and strategies as to how to do that.

Mr. BUYER. Do you know why it was not submitted in the President's budget?

Mr. TAYLOR. As I understand it, the way they're doing the budget every one is asked to make a sacrifice based on the budgetary constraints. So we have to work around that. We still feel that our people need to be educated. We'll have to come up with ways and means to do it within the existing budget.

Mr. BUYER. We're talking about \$2.9 to \$3 million, right?

Mr. TAYLOR. That is correct, yes.

Mr. BUYER. Given your voice, I'm reading from your voice this is a tough one for you.

Mr. TAYLOR. It really is and we're wrestling with it and when we do come up with some strategies that we think that we would like to implement in order to meet the training requirement we'll share them with you and your staff.

Mr. BUYER. Thank you. When I looked at this now external document that you are talking about, this is a budget profile fiscal year 95 through 2006 budget priorities. My reaction is I wonder if this was part of what the President was putting together for a 10-year budget. Do you know?

Mr. TAYLOR. I really don't know how that document was put together. I was not consulted. I was just given the document.

Mr. BUYER. My first reaction is we'll bring in the VA if this is how the Department of Labor is going to treat you.

Mr. TAYLOR. Anything is possible. Everything has to be considered these days in order to service our veterans. We have to look at every possibility.

Mr. BUYER. Well, even though I threw that out, I also recognize we probably had the very same type of Budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs. We had the very same one. This was the same one where President Clinton, the Administration took a lot of hits because their reduction of the VA over 10 years was \$17 billion and that's a severe cut over 10 years, \$17 billion.

Mr. TAYLOR. I understand.

Mr. BUYER. And so I just wanted to throw that out. You know, when you give a compliment with regard to HUD and you praised HUD about the \$1.3 million for HVRP, I think I want to comment on several things here. If we recognize that a third, that's what Mr. Filner brought around, a third of the homeless population out there are, in fact, veterans. I recognize that our own Chairman, Mr. Stump, introduced a sense of the Congress, language in Public Law 103-446 stating that "a share of such grants more closely approximating the proportion of the population of homeless individuals who are veterans should be provided to community organizations that provide assistance, primarily to homeless veterans." I'll note on July 10th of 1995, Secretary Cisneros announced the awarding of nearly \$900 million to combat homelessness. Of that amount, only 2 percent, \$7.5 million was awarded to veterans' specific groups. Only 6 of nearly 200 nationally recognized veterans homeless projects were funded. Now if a third, in fact, are veterans, there's a complete disproportionality here which severely concerns me and in no way does it go with regard to the sense of this Congress.

Mr. TAYLOR. Well, as a result of what I consider to be a breakthrough with HUD, in regard to the \$1.3 million, I went over and visited with Mr. Cuomo and we discussed that very issue. As a matter of fact, he chaired a meeting with members of the VSOs on this issue. The concern was, and still is, that veterans' organizations have not been really aware of the process as to who to apply for this kind of money. I was in Boston a couple of days ago and I asked them up there if they were aware that this kind of money was available out of HUD. Most people don't know this and so what Mr. Cuomo is trying to do is to educate those in the veterans community in regard to how you can apply for this money.

As a matter of fact, he has even taken the initiative to have someone on his staff now to deal with veterans issues and so the question is getting the word out and encouraging homeless veterans providers to apply for the money.

Mr. BUYER. I appreciate it. I would encourage you to stay on that. I mean there's complete disproportionality there.

Mr. TAYLOR. I will continue.

Mr. BUYER. Thank you. As a reminder to all interested parties, there's a discussion draft available on improvements to veterans education services in the back of the room. I welcome you to pick those up and would also welcome your written comments. We expect a mark up of the proposed legislation at our May 15 subcommittee mark up.

Does anyone else have any further questions?

Let me take the discretion of the chair here for just a moment, with the indulgence of my colleagues. I am one that is a little stressed at the moment with regard to Dr. Steven Joseph, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs over at the Pentagon. I think he had fun at a press conference a couple of weeks ago. He had his fun because it was about 2 years ago when he sat in this very same room at a hearing we had on the Persian Gulf War Illness question, where he testified that it was not a problem on active duty, that the Persian Gulf War Syndrome, as he was referring to it, was not a problem on active duty. It only applied to reservists and it's a VA problem. I've told him time and time again don't refer to it as a syndrome. A syndrome is a sole-source cause. It's Gulf War illnesses. It's multi-faceted and there are some common denominators with regard to causation with some overlapping symptoms, but don't refer to it as a symptom. He said we only had about 87 cases on active duty. We really don't have any problems. He also testified before the National Security Committee when Ike Skelton chaired that hearing. I don't believe he was credible then and I don't believe he's credible today.

We then forced the 1995 Defense Authorization bill to open up access on the active side. 21,000 soldiers have come forward on active duty and 90 percent of the 21,000 that came forward with protocol physicals are suffering from some form of illness, one form or another. There are some simple facts that are in front of us: 696,000 men and women were in the total theater of operations in the Persian Gulf War, over 183,000 have been seen in VA hospitals for one reason or another and over 20,000 on active duty.

I think what occurred here is that perhaps Dr. Joseph was embarrassed, was very eager to show that he was correct 2 years ago. What, in fact, we have here is what he called his clinical review. He expended almost \$80 million which gives the illusion that they were very exhaustive in their efforts.

The clinical reviews, the protocols and the medical services that were performed were done in the normal course of military operations at those medical treatment facilities. \$80 million was not specifically set aside to do those types of services and the clinical review is neither a research project nor a study, so he set forth the protocols in the diagnostic criteria and for him to draw specific conclusions to say that, therefore, there is no Gulf War syndrome real-

ly was an act whereby you set up a strawman that you, in fact, get to knock down later.

The simple facts that we're faced with are that the illnesses are real. They're physiological, not psychological. We also have pushing the envelope of science being led by the private sector. Two years ago, Ross Perot called and said Steve, do you have any objections that I compete with the government? I said I have no objections if you do that, if you'll do this, will you go out there and look at the cocktail mix of inoculations.

I'm very concerned about that because when I looked at that, gentlemen, when you have a sailor in the Gulf, with a Marine in Kuwait, with a paratrooper in Iraq with an airman in Riyadh and they all have the same symptoms but never were interrelated, what's a common denominator?

And then we had testimony in this room 2 years ago that our own government has no idea what the human physiological impact of a cocktail mix of inoculations is upon the human body. So when I went to the United Kingdom and met with the Minister of Defense, Nicholas Sommes, their soldiers had far more inoculations than our soldiers. I've also asked that they also begin to look at the cocktail mix of inoculations because I think that we'd be very naive to think that the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States would not be an allies in a future conflict and let's take advantage of the peace to understand the science and what we're doing to our own.

That's what we're faced with here. What have we done to our own?

So I guess my message to Dr. Joseph is let's get over it. Let's get over it and let's get on with taking care of these veterans and the recognition of Duke University saying that yes, these cocktail mix of inoculations combined with the DEET and the pesticides has created a problem and Mr. Perot's research at the University of Texas will become public around the August time frame and we will continue to advocate the private sector to push the envelope of science and we'll backfund it with public financing and I wanted to share that with my colleagues.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your remarks. With various representatives of organizations and administration here, let it be known that the stress this Chairman feels is a bipartisan stress, and I see Mr. Crandell edging forward there. It's like dejuvu all over again. It's like a denial. We had similar things in Vietnam and it took a long, long time for people in official circles to recognize that there were specific medical and psychological problems that came out of that conflict that had to be addressed. It seems to be the same denial here, and we are not undermining, I think, our effectiveness of national security or our commitment to veterans to be honest about this. We have got to examine it seriously and whatever mistakes or whatever things we did, we better confront them and deal with them and not wait as long as we did with the Vietnam veterans who are still waiting.

So Mr. Chairman, I look forward to working with you because there's too many thousands and thousands and thousands of families that are affected, and we cannot allow their voice to be lost.

Mr. BUYER. Thank you.

Mr. MASCARA. Mr. Chairman, congratulations. I wish to associate myself with your remarks. I see that you're on top of it. I worked with two young ladies, one in my District in southwestern Pennsylvania and one in Florida, both of whom are now getting benefits. In fact, I introduced one of them to the President's Commission and the Government does not want to admit that there's a problem.

There is a problem. I mean to see these young ladies in the condition they're in after having served in the Gulf is a disgrace for us not to admit that there is a problem. I applaud you, Mr. Chairman, and offer my services any time to work with you on this situation.

Mr. BUYER. Thank you very much. I also compliment Lane Evans and Joe Kennedy for their leadership on the issue. This hearing is concluded. Thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 11:08 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

I

104TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 2868

To amend title 38, United States Code, to make permanent alternative teacher certification programs.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 23, 1996

Mr. TEJEDA (for himself, Mr. BUYER, Ms. WATERS, and Mr. MONTGOMERY) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to make permanent alternative teacher certification programs.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*
3 That section 3452(c) of title 38, United States Code, is
4 amended by striking out "For the period ending on Sep-
5 tember 30, 1996, such" and inserting in lieu thereof
6 "Such".

○

104TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 2851

To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for approval of enrollment in courses offered at certain branches or extensions of proprietary profit institutions of higher learning in operation for more than two years.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 5, 1996

Mr. STUMP (for himself and Mr. BUYER) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for approval of enrollment in courses offered at certain branches or extensions of proprietary profit institutions of higher learning in operation for more than two years.

- 1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
 2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*
 3 That section 3689 of title 38, United States Code, is
 4 amended—
 5 (1) by striking out subsection (c); and
 6 (2) in subsection (b)—
 7 (A) by striking out “or” at the end of
 8 paragraph (5);

1 (B) by striking out the period at the end
2 of paragraph (6) and inserting in lieu thereof “;
3 or”; and

4 (C) by adding after paragraph (6) the fol-
5 lowing:

6 “(7) any course offered by a proprietary profit
7 institution of higher learning at a branch or exten-
8 sion of such institution if—

9 “(A) the course has been offered at the
10 principal location of such institution for more
11 than two years and is approved under this
12 chapter; and

13 “(B) the course has been offered by an-
14 other branch or extension of such institution
15 approved under this chapter which has been in
16 operation for more than two years.”.

○

104TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 3036

To amend title 38, United States Code, to require that the offices for management, policy, and other functions associated with the educational assistance programs of the Education Service of the Department of Veterans Affairs be in the District of Columbia.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 6, 1996

Mr. MONTGOMERY (for himself, Mr. STUMP, Mr. BUYER, and Ms. WATERS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to require that the offices for management, policy, and other functions associated with the educational assistance programs of the Education Service of the Department of Veterans Affairs be in the District of Columbia.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 SECTION 1. PROGRAMS, PROJECTS, AND ACTIVITIES OF
2 THE EDUCATION SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF
3 VETERANS AFFAIRS.

4 (a) LOCATED IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.—
5 Chapter 3 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by
6 adding at the end the following new section:

7 **“§ 7705. Management, policy, and operations func-**
8 **tions associated with the educational as-**
9 **sistance programs of the Education Serv-**
10 **ice**

11 “The offices of Education Procedures Systems, Edu-
12 cation Operations, and Education Policy and Program Ad-
13 ministration, and any successor to any such office, of the
14 Education Service of the Veterans Benefit Administration
15 of the Department shall be in the District of Columbia.”.

16 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents
17 for such chapter 77 is amended by adding after the item
18 relating to section 7703 the following new item:

“7705. Management, policy, and operations functions associated with the edu-
cational assistance programs of the Education Service.”.

○

[DISCUSSION DRAFT]

APRIL 17, 1996

104TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION**H. R.** _____

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. BUYER introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee
on _____

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve veterans
education benefits, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. ELIMINATION OF DISTINCTION BETWEEN OPEN**

4 **CIRCUIT TV AND INDEPENDENT STUDY.**

5 (a) VETERANS' EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PRO-
6 GRAM.—Section 3482(f) of title 38, United States Code,
7 is amended by striking out “in part”.

2

1 (b) SURVIVORS' AND DEPENDENTS' EDUCATIONAL
2 ASSISTANCE.—Section 3523(c) of such title is amended
3 by striking out “, except that” and all that follows through
4 the end and inserting in lieu thereof “not leading to a
5 standard college degree.”.

6 (c) ADMINISTRATION OF EDUCATIONAL BENE-
7 FITS.—Section 3680A(c) of such title is amended by strik-
8 ing out “, except that” and all that follows through the
9 end and inserting in lieu thereof “not leading to a stand-
10 ard college degree.”.

11 **SEC. 2. MEDICAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR FLIGHT TRAINING.**

12 (a) CHAPTER 30 AND 32 PROGRAMS.—Sections
13 3034(d)(1)(B) and 3241(b)(1)(B) of title 38, United
14 States Code, are each amended by inserting before the
15 semicolon at the end the following: “before beginning such
16 training and within 60 days after successfully completing
17 such training”.

18 (b) SELECTED RESERVE.—Section 16136(c)(1)(B)
19 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by inserting
20 before the semicolon at the end the following: “before be-
21 ginning such training and within 60 days after success-
22 fully completing such training”.

3

1 **SEC. 3. BENEFITS FOR PURSUIT OF PROFESSIONAL**
 2 **RECERTIFICATION AND SKILLS IMPROVE-**
 3 **MENT COURSES.**

4 [To be provided]

5 **SEC. 4. COOPERATIVE PROGRAMS.**

6 Section 3482(a)(2) of title 38, United States Code,
 7 is amended by striking out “full-time”.

8 **SEC. 5. RECOGNITION OF CREDIT HOURS GRANTED.**

9 (a) MONTGOMERY GI BILL GENERALLY.—Sections
 10 3011(a)(2) and 3012(a)(2) of title 38, United States
 11 Code, are each amended by inserting “, or is granted cred-
 12 it for,” after “successfully completed” both places it ap-
 13 pears.

14 (b) ELECTIONS MADE RELATING TO VOLUNTARY
 15 SEPARATION INCENTIVES.—Sections 3018B(a)(1)(B) and
 16 3018B(a)(2)(B) of such title are each amended by insert-
 17 ing “, or is granted credit for,” after “successfully com-
 18 pleted” both places it appears.

19 (c) SELECTED RESERVE.—Section 16132(a)(2) of
 20 title 10, United States Code, is amended by inserting “,
 21 or is granted credit for,” after “has completed” both
 22 places it appears.

23 **SEC. 6. ROUNDING TO NEXT LOWEST DOLLAR OF EDU-**
 24 **CATIONAL ASSISTANCE AMOUNTS.**

25 (a) CHAPTER 30.—Section 3015(g) of title 38, Unit-
 26 ed States Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-

1 lowing: “The rates payable under this subsection for a fis-
2 cal year, if not a multiple of \$1, shall be rounded to the
3 next lower multiple of \$1.”. **【Q: Should this rule focus**
4 **on rates payable or the amount of educational assistance**
5 **payable?】**

6 **【Review:】** **【(b) CHAPTER 32.—Section 3132(a)(2) of**
7 **such title is amended by adding at the end the following:**
8 **“The amount payable under this subsection for a month,**
9 **if not a multiple of \$1, shall be rounded to the next lower**
10 **multiple of \$1.”】**

11 (c) CHAPTER 34.—Section 3482 of such title is
12 amended by adding at the end the following:

13 “(h) The monthly educational assistance allowance
14 payable under this section for a fiscal year, if not a mul-
15 tiple of \$1, shall be rounded to the next lower multiple
16 of \$1.”.

17 (d) CHAPTER 35.—Section 3532 of such title is
18 amended by adding at the end the following:

19 “(f) **【Except as provided by subsection (d)】**, the
20 monthly educational assistance allowance payable under
21 this section for a fiscal year, if not a multiple of \$1, shall
22 be rounded to the next lower multiple of \$1.”.

23 (e) CHAPTER 1606.—Section 16131 (b)(2) of title
24 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end
25 the following: “The rates payable under this paragraph

5

- 1 for a fiscal year, if not a multiple of \$1, shall be rounded
- 2 to the next lower multiple of \$1.” 【Q: Should this rule
- 3 focus on rates payable or the amount of educational assist-
- 4 ance payable?】

April 18,1996
**Oversight & Legislative Hearing
Transitional Assistance Program
and Homeless Veterans Oversight;
Education Program Legislation
Mr. Buyer, Chairman**

Good morning. The subcommittee will come to order.

At today's hearing we will review the Transitional Assistance Program (TAP), the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project (HVRP), and legislation affecting veterans education services.

We welcome distinguished panels of veterans benefits experts from the VA, the State Approving Agencies, representatives of the Department of Defense, and representatives of the national veterans organizations. And a special welcome to my colleague from the State of Texas, and a fellow member of the full Committee, Mr. Tejeda, who is on the first panel today.

I also wish to welcome Mr. Bob Filner as our new Ranking Member. I enjoyed working with Ms. Waters while she ably filled that capacity, and I felt she added a great deal to the deliberations of this Subcommittee. I am sure that our relationship will be as fruitful and bipartisan.

In the Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal 1991, section 502 of Public Law 101-510 requires the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretaries of Veterans Affairs and Defense, to provide a program of transition assistance, including counseling, job search training and information, placement assistance and other information and

services to military personnel and their spouses who are within 180 days of separation from active duty.

Indications are that TAP is succeeding, and we will continue to monitoring its success. But it must be noted that transition assistance is, and was, intended to be a *permanent* program to assist our transitioning military personnel.

The history of such transitional services dates back to at least post-Revolutionary War era when land grants were given in return for military service. Civil service employment preference for veterans dates back to the period immediately following the Civil War when the earliest law providing for such preference was enacted in 1865. Programs for Mexican border veterans were established in 1917. World War I veterans were given employment assistance and as a result, 70 percent of the 1.5 million participants found jobs.

H.R. 2868, we proposes to make permanent alternative teacher certification programs, to help veterans gain teaching certification with their Montgomery GI Bill benefits.

In the area of improving the administration of education programs, H.R. 2851, proposes changes in the VA's two-year rule regarding extensions and branch campuses of learning institutions.

In a related matter, H.R. 3036, would require the management, policy and other functions associated with the educational assistance programs in VA to be retained in the Washington, DC area.

As I mentioned when Secretary Brown visited the full Committee on the 29th of March, I think the move of the education service to St. Louis makes no sense, and that the

VA should reconsider its proposal in the absence of significant rationale for such a move. We have yet to receive satisfactory assurances that this move will improve the delivery of veterans educational services, nor have we been assured that the management and policy making abilities of the service will be unimpaired by this relocation.

Now I would like to recognize the new and distinguished ranking member of this subcommittee for any remarks he may have. Mr. Filner.

Do any of the members have opening statements?

Thank you for your comments.

I would like to seat the first panel.

With us today is a Committee colleague, Mr. Frank Tejada, to discuss alternative teacher certification. Mr. Tejada.

Thank you Mr. Tejada. On the second panel is Mr. Don Sweeney, the legislative director for the National Association of State Approving Agencies.

The SAAs are our partner in the administration of veterans education services and in protecting the benefits our veterans have earned. Their importance will *increase* under H.R. 2851 and even more so under the changes proposed by VA. I hope the SAA's will look at the big picture and see that what we want to do is also good for them in the long run. Mr. Sweeney.

Thank you for being here. I'd like to begin questioning now.

Mr. Filner, any questions?

I would like to seat Panel Three now.

We have Mr. Jim Hubbard, Director, National Economic Commission, The American Legion. Mr. Ron Drach, National Employment Director, Disabled American Veterans. Mr. Bill Crandell, Deputy Director, Government Relations, Vietnam Veterans of America. Mr. Terry Grandison, Associate Legislative Director, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and Mr. Bob Manhan, National Legislative Service, Veterans of Foreign Wars. Welcome everyone.

Please be reminded of the five minute rule, and if you'll summarize your statements, we'll enter your remarks in their entirety for the record.

Thank you all for joining us. I would like to seat the final panel.

On our fourth panel today are Ms. Carolyn Becraft, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Personnel Support, Families and Education; the Honorable Preston Taylor, Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans Employment and Training; and appearing in his new capacity for the first time, Dr. Stephen Lemons, the Deputy Under Secretary of Veterans Benefits Administration, who is accompanied by Celia Dollarhide, Director VA Education Service. Welcome.

Again, if you would, please summarize your statements as your entire remarks will entered into the record. Ms. Becraft, please begin.

As a reminder to all interested parties, there is a discussion draft available on improvements to veterans education services. We welcome your written comments on the draft, and we expect to mark-up this proposed legislation at our May 15 Subcommittee mark-up. I want to thank everyone for a very successful hearing. If there is nothing else, this meeting is adjourned.

House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Subcommittee on Education, Training, Employment & Housing

Background

Steve Buyer, Chairman

SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING ON H.R. 2851, THE 2 YEAR RULE; H.R. 2868, TEACHER CERTIFICATION; H.R. 3036; HVRP PROGRAMS; AND TAP

On April 18, 1996, the Subcommittee on Education, Training, Employment and Housing, will hold a combined legislative and oversight hearing. Bills under consideration will include H.R. 2851, the "two-year rule"; H.R. 2868, Alternative Teacher Certification; H.R. 3036 mandates management of educational assistance programs be located in the District of Columbia. Oversight will include Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project (HVRP) Programs and the Transition Assistance Program (TAP).

H.R. 2851

H.R. 2851 would amend title 38, United States Code, to modify the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) GI Bill "two-year rule" regulating veterans' attendance at institutions of higher learning.

The "two-year rule" is meant to ensure that only quality educational institutions and courses are offered to our nation's veterans. The rule originated after World War II, and resurfaced after the Vietnam War to negate the impact of "fly-by-night" operations that targeted veterans.

Things have changed. As a whole, the majority of non-profit and for-profit educational institutions offer quality course work with default rates well below VA's standards. These institutions are continually monitored for the VA by the State Approving Agencies (SAA).

- The proposed bill removes the current two-year operating rule for branch campuses of public or other tax-supported institutions.
- It would remove the rule for proprietary profit or nonprofit educational institutions where the branch and parent institution have been in operation two years.

The proposed legislation does not alter the stringent requirements currently in place, mandating that the institutions be degree granting and be recognized by a VA affiliated accrediting agency - SAA. The institution must also be licensed by the state in which it operates. This legislation allows veterans' participation on new branch campuses of proven institutions, providing flexibility to veteran beneficiaries of the Montgomery GI Bill.

H.R. 2868

H.R. 2868 would make permanent a program for Alternative Teacher Certification and further defines the term "non-traditional educational institution". H.R. 2868 would allow programs offered by school districts, or a consortium of school districts programs eligible for Montgomery GI Bill funding. This would provide some small financial advantage to veterans. Typically, a school district would offer certification through a combination of course work and student teaching under the guidance of a certified teacher.

**The Honorable Bob Filner
Subcommittee on Education, Training, Employment
and Housing
April 18, 1996**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am pleased to be the Ranking Member on this important Subcommittee, and I look forward to working closely with you to ensure that the programs under our jurisdiction are the best that they can be. The VA medical care system is critical to the well-being of millions of veterans, but the benefit programs for which we have responsibility are equally as critical and deserve our attention.

I also want to welcome the witnesses who are joining us this morning. I value your comments and observations, and I expect to learn from all of you.

I particularly want to welcome our colleague, Frank Tejada of Texas. I look forward to your testimony, Frank.

Again, Mr. Chairman, I look forward to serving with you on this Subcommittee.

Statement of
Representative Wes Cooley
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Subcommittee on Education, Training, Employment and Housing
Hearing on H.R. 2868, H.R. 2851, H.R. 3036, TAP, and HVRP
April 18, 1996

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, as well, to all of our distinguished guests who are here to testify today. I have listened carefully to your recommendations, and I will study your written submissions. As always, you have presented this committee with a well-considered analysis of the issues before us.

Our distinguished guests have stressed that the federal government's educational assistance programs -- while providing vital transitional benefits to our nation's veterans -- could be somewhat improved. This subcommittee is working in a bipartisan manner to build upon how these programs operate. The three bills before us today -- in a relatively minor way -- help ensure that veterans receive the educational assistance that they deserve. It takes five to six years for veterans to achieve wage parity with their private-sector counterparts. In order to continue to attract top-notch military recruits, we must continue to monitor the success of these programs. I trust that we will do so.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

STATEMENT BY CONGRESSMAN MASCARA

VETERANS' HEARING

APRIL 18, 1996

THANK YOU MR. CHAIRMAN. I AM DELIGHTED TO BE HERE THIS MORNING FOR THIS HEARING TO REVIEW SOME VERY IMPORTANT PROPOSED LEGISLATION.

HAVING SERVED ON THE SUBCOMMITTEE FOR OVER A YEAR NOW, I HAVE COME TO UNDERSTAND HOW IMPORTANT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS ARE TO OUR NATION'S VETERANS. THUS, I AM PLEASED THAT WE ARE GOING TO BE CONSIDERING BILLS ALLOWING VETERANS TO ATTEND A WIDER VARIETY OF INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING AND MAKING PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TEJEDA'S SUCCESSFUL PILOT PROJECT WHICH HAS OPENED ALTERNATIVE TEACHER CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS TO VETERANS.

I AM ALSO GRATEFUL THAT WE ARE GOING TO BE DISCUSSING THE LEGISLATION INTRODUCED BY OUR ESTEEMED RANKING MEMBER SONNY MONTGOMERY WHICH WOULD BLOCK THE VA FROM MOVING ITS EDUCATIONAL SERVICE OFFICE TO ST. LOUIS.

NOW ST. LOUIS IS A FINE CITY, BUT AS I HAVE I STATED SEVERAL TIMES BEFORE OUR VETERANS, AND THEIR WIDOWS AND ORPHANS WHO SO GREATLY RELY UPON THE MONTGOMERY G.I. BILL AND OTHER VA EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS, DESERVE TO HAVE A PERMANENT PLACE AT THE CENTER OF VA POLICY MAKING HERE IN WASHINGTON, D.C. THEY ARE NOT SECOND CLASS CITIZENS AND THEIR CONCERNS AND NEEDS SHOULD NOT BE SHUTTLED OFF TO THE MIDDLE OF THE COUNTRY.

I AM HOPEFUL SONNY WE CAN HEAD THIS MOVE OFF AT THE PASS. I CERTAINLY STAND READY TO WORK WITH YOU AND HELP IN ANYWAY POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL.

I ALSO HAVE SOFT SPOT IN MY HEART FOR THE HOMELESS VETERANS' REINTEGRATION PROGRAM. ONE OF THE FIRST RECEPTIONS I ATTENDED ON THE HILL AFTER BEING SWORN IN WAS HOSTED BY THIS FINE ORGANIZATION. AND SINCE THEN, I HAVE REPEATEDLY BEEN IMPRESSED WITH THE WAY ITS PROGRAMS HAVE HELPED HOMELESS VETERANS COME IN FROM THE COLD AND GIVE THEM A CHANCE TO REORDER THEIR LIVES.

I KNOW THERE ARE SOME WHO THINK THIS EFFORT SHOULD BE ABANDONED, BUT I DO NOT AGREE. I AM HOPEFUL WE CAN PASS THE PROPOSED 3-YEAR REAUTHORIZATION AND GIVE THIS PROGRAM AT LEAST A FIGHTING CHANCE TO WIN AN ADEQUATE FISCAL 1997 APPROPRIATION.

FINALLY, I AM NOT THAT FAMILIAR WITH THE TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, BUT AGREE IT SHOULD BE CONTINUED AND STRENGTHENED.

HAVING SERVED IN THE ARMY AS A YOUNG MAN, I KNOW HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO GET SOME ASSISTANCE IN MAKING THE TRANSITION BACK TO CIVILIAN LIFE. OUR YOUNG MILITARY PERSONNEL NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE MONTGOMERY G.I. BILL AND HOW THEIR MILITARY SKILLS CAN TRANSLATE INTO MARKETABLE JOB SKILLS. I AGREE THAT THIS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT TODAY WHEN THE MILITARY IS CONTINUING ITS PRESS TO DOWNSIZE.

AGAIN, THANK YOU MR. CHAIRMAN AND I LOOK FORWARD TO LISTENING TO TODAY'S TESTIMONY.

--THE END--

HR 2868, VETERANS' EDUCATION LEGISLATION**STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN FRANK TEJEDA
BEFORE THE
HOUSE VETERANS AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION, TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT, AND HOUSING****APRIL 18, 1996**

Mr. Chairman, thank you for providing me this opportunity to testify before your Subcommittee on Education, Training, Employment, and Housing in support of my veterans education legislation, HR 2868.

Mr. Chairman, more and more veterans who defended our country during hot and cold wars are now choosing to serve their country again by educating America's youth. Veterans are making a unique contribution through academic instruction and the sharing of life experiences and wisdom in the classroom.

Many elementary and high schools need talented and qualified teachers who can bring broad experience to the classroom. While we have many degreed professionals among our veterans, we lack the proper incentives to ease the transition to a teaching career. In an effort to remove some of the obstacles and to offer the proper incentives, I introduced legislation in 1994 that enables veterans to use their GI Bill benefits fully to obtain a teaching certificate through state-approved programs without requiring them to enroll in a lengthy university degree program either full-time or part-time.

In 1994, a fellow veteran and constituent, Richard Gray of San Antonio, wrote to inform me of his concern that existing law limited the ability of a veteran to use GI benefits to obtain the necessary training to earn a teaching certificate through a state-approved Alternative Certification Program. These Alternative Certification Programs enable individuals with college degrees who did not initially graduate from a teacher education program but want to pursue a teaching career the ability to obtain teaching certification. Participants must complete additional college or university coursework in their desired education specialty and then participate in a school-based teaching internship program before receiving their certification. More than 41 states have some form of a Alternative Certification Program.

Alternative Certification Programs are usually sponsored by a state-approved regional service center, a large local school district, or a college or university. The training provided by service centers and school districts is equivalent to that provided by colleges and universities since both require college-level course work and an internship.

Mr. Gray brought to my attention a serious disparity: while VA education benefits could be used automatically for certification programs affiliated with colleges or universities, they could not be used fully for certification programs run by a service center or school district. Specifically, VA education benefits could not be used for internships or coursework sponsored by service centers and school districts, and veterans were required to pay 100 percent of these costs. Only the college coursework would be covered. University or college sponsored programs are not available in every major metropolitan area.

The costs to veterans under prior law were significant. In the State of Texas, internship fees range from \$2,750 to \$3,200, which is deducted from the intern's salary, with additional fees for coursework which may or may not be covered depending on who offers the courses. This barrier prevented many veterans from considering the transition to the teaching profession. To correct this disparity, the House Veterans Affairs Committee quickly responded to the needs of the veterans' community and established a two-year pilot program to allow veterans to utilize their education benefits fully when attending an Alternative Certification Program not sponsored by a college or university.

Mr. Chairman, the two-year pilot program expires on September 30, 1996, and I urge this subcommittee and the full committee to consider a permanent extension of this worthwhile program that has received positive support from veterans and the Department of Veterans Affairs. My legislation, HR 2868, would permanently extend the program.

Without the permanent extension, other veterans may not be able to follow the success story Mr. Gray represents. Mr. Gray entered an Alternative Certification Program sponsored by a state-approved service center. After the completion of 15 credit hours of university course work and an internship program, Mr. Gray received his teaching certification last June. He now teaches students with learning disabilities and emotional problems at a local San Antonio area high school. He also runs an innovative and highly successful job counseling and placement program for hard to employ students.

Mr. Gray credits his success as a teacher and that of the four other veterans in his special education teaching section to the military team work ethic and broad experiences they bring to the classroom. The successful performance of these positive role models in the classrooms constitutes an unparalleled example of veterans making a difference for our communities in their post-military lives.

Without the Alternative Certification GI Bill Pilot Program, Mr. Gary said he would not be teaching today and assisting children in my hometown. I strongly support making the availability of VA education benefits for Alternative Certification Programs permanent. This bill represents a winning combination for veterans and our nation's children.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify, and I would be glad to respond to your questions.

STATEMENT FOR
THE RECORD BY
C. DONALD SWEENEY
LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE APPROVING AGENCIES
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING,
EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

April 18, 1996

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on H.R. 2851. State Approving Agencies have long been a proud partner in the administration of the various educational assistance programs for our Nation's military personnel, veterans and their dependents. We are particularly pleased to be able to offer comments on Section 3689 of Title 38, U.S. Code, which we believe needs to be updated in order to keep pace with today's world of education and training.

We applaud the Committee's effort to revise a part of this Section. Furthermore, we would like to propose additional revisions to both the affected subsection and the remaining parts of the Section. Our recommendations are for the purpose of achieving greater consistency and continuity within the entire Section and with the needs of those who use it to ensure the quality and integrity of the educational programs in which our VA beneficiaries are enrolled.

The period of operation rule was instituted to help protect VA benefit recipients and the taxpayers from waste, fraud and abuse. It successfully served this purpose for decades. However, many proprietary institutions have worked hard to establish themselves as legitimate entities with as much desire to educate the citizenry as to make a profit. Most no longer require the same level of scrutiny and supervision that they once demanded. Additionally, Section 3689 and the regulations, that were subsequently promulgated to provide for its implementation, have been modified over the years to the point where they are complex, confusing, and at times difficult to administer. On the other hand, it is misleading to conclude that state, private sector and institutional policies and practices are sufficient to ensure the offering of only quality programs by all types of institutions at all of the sites where they operate.

To establish a baseline, we believe that the changes to Section 3689 of Title 38 should be predicated on the following objectives:

- Ensure that VA beneficiaries obtain quality educational experiences in a timely manner and graduate from programs that have provided them with the knowledge and skills that are consistent with the objectives of the programs and are sufficient to achieve placement in the career fields that they have chosen;
- Provide State Approving Agencies (SAAs) with the maximum leverage possible to ensure the quality and integrity of educational programs as a number of states do not have strong degree-granting or licensing laws. Therefore, Section 3689 (the so-called two-year rule) provides the extra clout that SAAs need in order to ensure that institutions can fulfill their commitment to offer quality educational experiences to VA beneficiaries; and
- Assist the DVA in reducing or eliminating waste, fraud and abuse of federal tax dollars. Section 3689 primarily serves as a first line of defense and important safeguard against waste, fraud and abuse.

Additionally, we believe that the following principles/considerations are important to accomplishing the above objectives:

- Retain the rule at the program level;
- Incorporate a similar in character provision with the decisions regarding it to be determined by SAAs;
- Consider the evolution of instructional methodologies as they exist today and for tomorrow; and
- Consider the track record of the various types of educational institutions that offer educational programs, either within the state in which they are chartered or in other states in which they operate.

Keeping the rule at the program level is critical. Throughout the years, SAAs have found that approval issues addressed at this level provide the greatest opportunity for the protection of VA beneficiaries and the hard earned dollars that they have to support their educational endeavors. Maintaining the rule at this level also is consistent with most all other approval criteria.

Let me now address this concept within the context of its application to H.R. 2851. As currently written, H.R. 2851 would allow an institution to offer any program in any state as long as the institution has successfully operated for two years in its home state and operated another branch somewhere for two years. For example, a proprietary for-profit institution in the State of Indiana could be offering a diploma program in automotive technology at its parent campus as well as at one of its branches located 75 miles away from the parent campus. Both sites are approved for veterans education

purposes. The school then decides to offer a cosmetology program in the State of California. According to the provisions of H.R. 2851, the California branch of the Indiana institution would not be subject to the two-year rule. Thus, the only processes for determining educational soundness of the cosmetology program and the institution's capacity to fulfill its commitment to students would be the State of California's licensing laws and/or the institution's accreditation by the private sector, should the institution have such recognition. In the absence of substantive evaluation from either one of these processes the State Approving Agency could easily find itself between the proverbial "rock and the hard place". As stated earlier, the two-year rule provides the extra clout needed by an SAA to ensure that an institution can fulfill its commitment. We therefore suggest that H.R. 2851 be revised to the extent that it addresses approval matters at the program level. Our recommended language is attached.

You will note in your review of the recommended language that we have provided a waiver for institutions that offer programs that are similar in character to those that they have offered in the past. Additionally, we recommend the extension of a waiver of the requirements for programs that lead to a standard college degree, since the degree granting processes in most states are generally more comprehensive and consistent from state to state than are the licensing processes. Furthermore, the phrase standard college degree is defined as a degree program that is accredited by a recognized accrediting agency. Although the real value of accreditation continues to be debated, we believe that it is a quality enhancement process that adds to the overall quality of many of our educational institutions.

Our recommendations for the complete rewrite of Section 3689 also can be found in the attachment to this testimony. They constitute changes that are much less restrictive than the current law; however, will be sufficient to help ensure the quality and integrity of the programs in which VA beneficiaries enroll. I will not make specific comments on each part of our recommendation, but I would like to highlight a few.

Section (a) of our recommended rewrite of Section 3689 addresses programs offered to active duty military. Current law restricts the population that can participate and to some degree the location where the programs can be offered. We suggest that the way to increase access to a greater number of VA beneficiaries and at the same time minimize the potential conflict with the interests of state and local governments and institutions is to not restrict the populations enrolled in the programs offered on military bases, but to restrict the locations at which the programs can be offered. In other words, all VA beneficiaries: active duty military, reservists, veterans and dependents, as well as civilians in the surrounding area, would be allowed to enroll in programs on military bases without a pre-established waiting period. This arrangement, from our experience, will provide greater stability to the institutions offering programs, and thus, allow the opportunity for institutions to meet the educational needs of more VA beneficiaries.

Another point for emphasis is that our proposal carries forth the same exceptions or waiver provisions as we proposed in our comments on H.R. 2851. Programs that lead to a standard college degree or that are similar in character to other previously offered non-degree programs are not subject to the two-year rule. This is irrespective of where the program might be otherwise offered, or whether or not it is actually offered by the parent or another branch of the parent.

You will also note on the attachment that we are recommending some changes to Section 3675 of Title 38, U.S. Code. This is to compensate for the liberalization of the two-year rule, should our recommendations be adopted.

In summary, we applaud the Committee's effort to revise a part of Section 3689 of Title 38, U.S. Code. Furthermore, we propose an alternative that we believe simplifies the existing rule in its entirety; maintains sufficient substance to help ensure program quality and integrity, institutional commitment, and beneficiary and taxpayer protection; and provides greater opportunities to VA beneficiaries and all types of institutions to meet the education and training needs and interests of our Nation's military personnel, veterans and their dependents.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to testify on H.R. 2851. I would be happy to respond to any questions that you might have.

NASAA RESPONSE TO H.R. 2851
REGARDING SECTION 3689, TITLE 38, U.S. CODE

(7) any course offered by a proprietary profit institution of higher learning at a branch or extension of such institution if --

(A) the course has been offered at the principal location of such institution for more than two years and is approved under this chapter; or

(B) the course has been offered by another branch or extension of such institution for more than two years in the same State or Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area and is approved under this chapter; or

(C) either the course leads to a standard college degree or is similar in character to a course previously offered by the institution for at least two years in the same State or Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area as determined by the appropriate State Approving Agency.

NASA PROPOSAL FOR
REVISING TWO YEAR RULE, ENDORSED 2/21/96

§ 3689. Period of Operation for approval

(a) The Secretary may approve the enrollment of an eligible person or an eligible veteran in a course offered by an educational institution under a contract with the Department of Defense or Coast Guard that is given on a military base regardless of the length of time that course has been offered.

(b) The Secretary may approve the enrollment of an eligible person or eligible veteran in a course regardless of the length of time the course has been in operation, except as provided in subsection (c).

(c) Except as provided in subsection (a) the Secretary may not approve an enrollment in a course unless the course has been in operation for at least two years in the same State or Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area when --

(1) The course is offered by a proprietary, for profit educational institution or any of its branches except if it (A) leads to a standard college degree or (B) is similar in character to a course previously offered by the institution for at least two years in the same State or Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area as determined by the appropriate State approving agency;

(2) The course is offered at a branch of an educational institution and the eligible person or eligible veteran will not receive appropriate credit for that course upon transfer to the main campus of the educational institution; or

(3) The ownership of the institution offering the course has changed, and the institution does not retain substantially the same curriculum, faculty, student body or the new owner does not acquire the assets, liabilities, refund and contractual obligations of the old owner.

§ 3675. Approval of accredited courses.

(b) As a condition of approval under this section, the State approving agency must find that --

(1) Adequate records are kept by the educational institution to show the progress of each eligible person or veteran and must include as a minimum (except for attendance) the requirements set forth in section 3676(c)(7) of this title;

(2) The educational institution maintains a written record of the previous education and training of the eligible person or veteran and clearly indicates that appropriate credit has been given by the institution for previous education and training, with the training period shortened proportionately; and

(3) The educational institution and its courses meet the criteria found in section 3676(c)(1), (2) and (3) of this title.

STATEMENT OF JAMES B. HUBBARD, DIRECTOR
NATIONAL ECONOMICS COMMISSION
THE AMERICAN LEGION
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT,
AND HOUSING
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
APRIL 18, 1996

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, for the opportunity to express the views of The American Legion on veterans transition programs. I have brief comments on HR 2851, HR 2868 and HR 3036.

With respect to HR 2851, this bill will allow the Department of Veterans Affairs to approve the use of GI Bill money to pay tuition costs for "distance learning" courses, and would also allow greater flexibility in selecting classes. The American Legion fully supports this legislation. Approved college courses offered on line can be used as credit toward a degree from accredited institutions across the country. Individuals taking the courses must meet all of the criteria necessary for enrollment in the institution granting the degree. Apparently, the Department of Veterans Affairs has taken the position that if a certain amount of classroom instruction is not involved, the Department cannot approve the use of GI Bill funds to pay tuition costs. The American Legion believes that if the course content has been approved by an accredited degree granting institution, the Department of Veterans Affairs has no basis for withholding use of GI educational benefits to pay the costs of the course, especially since other non-veteran educational assistance programs offer this benefit.

The alternative teacher training programs in some states have been able to use the inherent instructional skills of former members of the armed forces to relieve the teacher shortages in those states. This is a good and progressive use of the talents of those who leave the armed forces. The American Legion supports HR 2868, which would make permanent the alternative teacher certification program.

The American Legion has no position on HR 3036, which would require that the offices for management, policy, and other functions associated with the educational assistance program of the Department of Veterans Affairs be in the District of Columbia.

Mr. Chairman, before I address the topics of transition assistance and the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project, I would like to bring two other items to the attention of the committee. First, I am pleased to tell you that The American Legion has proposed a study to match military skills with civilian licensing requirements. The American Legion recently applied for modification to our existing Job Training Partnership grant

to complete this study. The grant modification proposal was forwarded to the Veterans' Employment and Training Service on Wednesday, April 10.

Second, the subcommittee is in possession of a document entitled US. Department of Labor FY 1995-2006 Budget Priorities. The American Legion's understanding is that the document was produced by the Office of Management and Budget. The top priorities are given to training and employment services. The high priorities are the Job Corps, Unemployment Compensation and worker protection. The very last funded item on the list is the budget projections for the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training. Mr. Chairman, this unconscionable. The Department of Defense discharges 250,000 people per year. Military personnel and their families face many barriers to employment and training when transitioning into the civilian work force. This is absolutely wrong and The American Legion encourages this subcommittee to investigate the issue.

Mr. Chairman, one of the success stories of the Office of the Assistant Secretary is the Homeless Veterans Integration Project (HVRP). As this subcommittee is well aware, homeless veterans make up a disproportionate number of the homeless population. These veterans are on the street, in many cases through no fault of their own. While shelter beds are available at facilities funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, until HVRP came along, no comprehensive approach was ever made to help them get back to being productive members of society.

The HVRP program offers the homeless veteran a broad range of help with a focus on eventually finding a job. This program, in short, makes taxpayers out of tax users. Mr. Chairman, The American Legion supports funding for this program and urges the members of this committee to recommend full funding for HVRP with the House Appropriations Committee.

Mr. Chairman, the subject of the Transition Assistance Program causes mixed emotions on our part. Recently, AT&T announced the layoff of some 40,000 workers as a method of cutting costs and reorganizing to be more competitive in the newly unregulated telecommunications industry. The announcement made front page news in most of the major newspapers in the country. Frequently, in such situations, the Department of Labor proudly issues press releases almost on a weekly basis about millions of dollars in grant money to help dislocated workers around the country. Meanwhile, the Department of Defense discharges or retires some 250,000 people into the civilian economy each year, and the office of the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment has trouble getting funding for the TAP program. A couple of egregious examples are relevant. On February 20 of this year, a press release announced grants totaling over \$2.8 million to assist 194 coal miners to find new jobs. That comes to over \$14,700 per miner. Another grant announced earlier this year awarded \$4.4 million to help 135 miners. That amounts to about \$35,000 per miner. At the same time, money was taken from the LVER/DVOP grants program to provide transition assistance to over 160,000 men and women who were discharged from the military.

The TAP program provides jobs for military personnel up to seven weeks earlier than if no assistance were provided. That time saved represents millions of dollars in savings in unemployment claims which were closed earlier than normal because the veteran found employment. Once again, a tax user became a taxpayer because of a successful program, and no one knows about it, or seems to care. The American Legion is concerned because factory workers, coal miners, textile workers and others receive a much higher priority in the Department of Labor than veterans.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for the opportunity to appear today. I will be happy to answer questions.

*STATEMENT OF
RONALD W. DRACH
NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT DIRECTOR
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT
AND TRAINING
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
APRIL 18, 1996*

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

On behalf of the more than one million members of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and its Auxiliary, I am pleased to appear before you today to provide testimony regarding the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) for separating military personnel and the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Project (HVRP).

Mr. Chairman, we are very pleased that you have decided to conduct this hearing to discuss these important issues. As we have stated in the past, the transition from military service to civilian life is not as easy as some would like us to believe. Some of the problems of this transition process and its aftermath follow:

- Historically, veterans' unemployment rates exceed their nonveteran counterparts for as long as ten years after discharge.
- Military training has limited transferability to civilian occupations. Some problems associated with that issue are recognition of skills that require licensing or some other certification by the civilian sector.
- Transitioning military personnel suffer a significant drop in earnings compared with that of their civilian counterparts.
- Statistically, veterans do not reach occupational parity with their nonveteran counterparts until about age 45.
- Younger, disabled, combat and minority veterans' unemployment rates generally exceed the rates of other recently discharged veterans.

We believe the establishment of TAP several years ago was a necessary and meaningful step toward easing some of the problems associated with this transition. The DAV has long provided assistance to transitioning disabled veterans by offering them free assistance and representation before the various Physical Evaluation Boards (PEBs).

Before the existence of TAP as we know it today, the Department of the Navy, in cooperation with the California Employment Development Department, was conducting Career Awareness Programs (CAPs) which provided briefings similar to those TAP now provides. The DAV supported and cooperated with that program and, of course, has cooperated whenever possible with TAP.

Mr. Chairman, I need to point out that TAP had its inception prior to the military "downsizing" prompted by the end of the Cold War. It was not established to address "downsizing" issues.

The DAV strongly supports this program. According to reports from our National Service Officers (NSOs) for the period January 1, 1995 to December 31, 1995, we found the following:

Many of our offices participated in TAP/DTAP (Disabled Transition Assistance Program) at various military installations. Our National Service Officers had contact with over 93,000 separating military personnel over the period January 1, 1995 to December 31, 1995.

Mr. Chairman, of those, 84,655 were male and 8,838 were female. We assisted in filing 72,842 claims for compensation. Of major concern is how close to discharge these individuals are attending the TAP session. According to our reports:

- 40,815 are within one month of being discharged;
- 23,835 are within two to three months of being discharged;
- 18,579 are within four to six months of being discharged; and
- 10,528 are within six months or more of being discharged.

The services we provide vary among installations, depending on local agreements among our offices, military installations, local employment service staff, and VA Regional Offices. The DAV services may include any of the following:

1. Medical Records Review -- Military service medical record review with completion of a claim for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) compensation and vocational rehabilitation. We review the medical record of the individual and complete claims for diseases or injuries which are documented in the records, advise them of how to obtain additional medical documentation for any undocumented complaints, and emphasize the importance of obtaining a copy of their service medical records prior to discharge. Representation at the VA Regional Office level is provided for those who subsequently request it.
2. Veterans' Benefit Presentation -- Often, the VA does not have sufficient staff to provide a briefing on veterans' benefits, which our NSOs willingly provide as necessary.

3. VA Compensation Benefits Briefing -- As veterans' advocates, DAV is in a unique position to focus on technicalities regarding service connection for service-incurred injuries or disease. VA benefits counselors, who commonly provide veterans' benefit information for the VA, are generally well-informed about the process and the applicable forms but are rarely trained in the compensation adjudication process. Some veterans' service organizations develop this as a particular area of expertise and are extremely well-suited for offering this complementary information to the veterans' benefits counselor's presentation. We believe the DAV is uniquely qualified to do this by virtue of our extensive training programs that assure our NSOs are imbued with the most current knowledge about the VA claims adjudication process.

The most crucial aspect of transition occurs after a servicemember is discharged. In the case of disabled veterans, their most critical needs include ensuring that their claims are properly adjudicated so they can begin receiving their earned benefits. Mr. Chairman, the ultimate goal is for these individuals to have an opportunity for meaningful careers and employment. Because of this, several years ago the DAV developed a set of six workbooks as identified below:

- **Hiring and Firing** -- Provides information about individual civil rights and administrative processes available to protect those rights.
- **Job Applications** -- Covers how to complete a job application and the importance of doing so thoroughly and neatly.
- **Interviewing Skills and Personal Appearance** -- Covers how to conduct oneself during an interview and the proper attire for an employment interview.
- **Employer Research** -- Covers how to research the job before the interview, including the use of employer and library resources for this important task.
- **Job Search Techniques and Stress Management** -- Covers how to structure the job hunting effort and rank the activities which may have the greatest results. Additionally, it provides information on how changing jobs creates stress and offers tips on what to do about it.
- **Resume and Cover Letter** -- Provides information on how to write and use a resume and cover letter effectively.

Initially, these books were mailed to:

- Every DAV National Service Office.
- Every military installation conducting military separations.
- Each State Director, Veterans' Employment and Training Service.
- Each VA Vocational Rehabilitation Office.
- Every VA VET center.
- Department of Defense civilian personnel offices.

- National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI).
- TAP sites based on their request for additional copies.
- Hundreds of other offices which provide services to veterans such as the Employment Service, County Veterans' Service Officers, and individual Disabled Veterans Outreach Programs (DVOPs) and Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs).

The DAV continues to mail copies of these booklets upon request and has authorized unlimited reproduction of this material by anyone who so desires.

Mr. Chairman, as you can well imagine, providing employment services at TAP sites by LVERs and DVOPs adds a burden to their already extremely heavy workloads. Although many would say that the downsizing of the military is over, the Department of Defense (DoD) is projecting 250,000 discharges a year from the various services through the year 2000. We believe it is crucial to continue providing meaningful services to not only our transitioning military, but to those veterans who continue to need employment services. In order to provide these employment services, it is imperative to have an adequate corps of DVOPs and LVERs. We were pleased to note in the President's fiscal year (FY) 1997 budget request an increase in the number of both DVOPs and LVERs over that provided for in FY 1996. While the numbers are not significantly higher, at least the request is not for fewer.

Mr. Chairman, Section 4104, Title 38 U.S.C. states that the Department of Labor (DOL) shall provide enough money to fund 1,999 DVOP positions. While the FY 1997 budget request would provide more positions than currently funded, it still falls far short of the Congressionally mandated level by approximately 350 positions.

The President's request for FY 1997 for LVERs would fund 1,397 positions. For FY 1996, the House has authorized 1,371 positions; and the Senate 1,326 positions. As of the FY 1997 budget request, there were 1,336 LVERs employed. The FY 1997 budget request would increase funding for LVERs, but again falls short by 203 positions of the Congressionally mandated level of 1,600 full time positions.

Mr. Chairman, as an organization whose membership is made up of veterans who have a service-connected disability, we continue to be concerned over the lack of emphasis on DTAP. DTAP was originally designed and intended to be a component of TAP and not a "stand alone" program, as is most often the case. It is indeed rare that we see TAP presentations being provided to hospitalized service members who are anticipating a medical discharge. DTAP, as it presently exists, is primarily a counseling session with either a counseling psychologist or vocational rehabilitation specialist from the VA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. We are not critical of the service being provided. Rather, we are concerned that not enough service is being provided to the disabled service member.

Overall, Mr. Chairman, we believe that TAP and DTAP provide important, meaningful assistance to transitioning military personnel. It is something that was long overdue and should have been available during the Vietnam-era. We believe had it been, many of the problems

suffered by Vietnam era veterans would not have occurred. TAP and DTAP need to be expanded and made mandatory for all separating service members.

Mr. Chairman, last week I had the opportunity to talk with several individuals who have been recently discharged as well as one who was discharged in 1987 and another in 1992. The other four individuals all had been discharged within the last seven months. I asked them about their experiences with the discharge process.

The four individuals who were discharged within the last seven months all had very positive comments about TAP and its importance to their transition. The individual who was discharged in 1987, of course, did not have any opportunity for the TAP session because it was not available at that time. He did say, however, after listening to the others, that he wished a program such as TAP had been available when he was discharged.

The first veteran I talked to was a woman who served in the Air Force. She was stationed in Panama just prior to her discharge. She said there was no TAP program in Panama. Approximately one and a half months after discharge, she contacted the naval base near her in Wydbey Island, Washington, and was able to take advantage of a TAP session there. That program was five days long. She felt the material was very informative and has been helpful to her since completion of the program. She was discharged February 9, 1996, and by choice has not worked since that time. She was not sure whether she was informed about the LVER/DVOP programs through the job service, but was going to visit her local job service upon her return to Washington state.

The second individual was discharged in December of 1995 and attended the TAP at Fitzsimmons Army Medical Center one month prior to his discharge. He received both the TAP and DTAP sessions and felt they were extremely beneficial to him in making plans for civilian life. He was very complimentary of the resume writing class in particular. He too, by choice, has not worked since his discharge and is now embarking on a job search. He was aware of the LVER/DVOP program but has not used it as yet.

The third individual was discharged February 1, 1996, from the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station, Yuma, Arizona. He was an intelligence analyst and went through TAP approximately one year before discharge. He was aware of vocational rehabilitation but had not received any specific counseling or instructions on the program until after his discharge when he filed for vocational rehabilitation. He was not advised during the TAP class of the vocational rehabilitation program. Though he thought the program was very worthwhile, he said that there was so much information given by each of the instructors that it should have been consolidated or he should have been provided a binder for all of the handouts. He said that he occasionally refers back to much of the material which he has found very informative.

A fourth individual was discharged from Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri in September, 1995. He attended the TAP session two weeks prior to discharge. He thought it was very good but would have liked to have had it sooner. He says he is still using much of the material provided during the session.

The fifth individual was discharged in March 1992 from Fort Campbell, Kentucky. He was not given the opportunity to go through TAP. He said that the personnel at Fort Campbell are "so orientated to field duty they really don't care about the individual." He was very bitter about not having the opportunity to receive the information provided through the TAP session.

During our discussions about the timeliness of going through TAP, three of the individuals indicated that "officers and retirees received it early."

Mr. Chairman, if that last statement is true and officers and retirees are receiving a different level of service, something needs to be done to correct this. Certainly, we cannot prejudge that this is happening nationwide from the comments of three individuals, but it certainly raises the question of whether or not it is happening even in isolated instances.

HOMELESS VETERANS' REINTEGRATION PROJECT

Mr. Chairman, homeless veterans continue to be a major concern. On any given night, it has been estimated that between 250,000 and 280,000 veterans are homeless. Several years ago, the Department of Labor initiated an outreach project for homeless veterans in an attempt to provide needed employment and training services. This program is known as HVRP. Regrettably, funding for this program in FY 1995 was rescinded. For FY 1996, both the House and Senate authorized an expenditure of \$10 million, but the monies were never appropriated. The President's budget for FY 1997 does not request any funding for HVRP.

Mr. Chairman, homelessness among veterans is now a chronic problem. When we testified on this issue in 1992, it was estimated that between 150,000 and 250,000 veterans were homeless on any given night. As indicated, that number now is estimated to be between 250,000 and 280,000. We mentioned earlier in this testimony the DoD projects a reduction of approximately 250,000 active military members a year through the year 2000. Many of these individuals at best will have "soft" transferable skills. Many -- particularly those trained in combat arms -- will have no skills recognized by employers as transferable to the civilian labor market. How many of them will end up in the unemployment or soup kitchen line is unknown, but we believe they are at risk. Last week several economic forecasters predicted an increase in inflation. This will only add to the problem.

The HVRP program has a history of providing meaningful assistance to our nation's homeless veterans. It is a program that primarily focuses on job training and employment assistance. Perhaps the most unique thing about HVRP is that a multi-disciplinary approach is taken to solving the problems of homeless veterans. It is not enough to say DVOPs or LVERs can do the job alone, because all too often the services needed cannot be provided by that individual. Because homeless veterans require very labor-intensive services, HVRP must be continued.

We would like to commend Assistant Secretary Preston Taylor at DOL for his insight into this problem. Mr. Taylor saw the need, particularly in cold weather states, and identified \$1.3 million of discretionary monies available to him through the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). However, before he committed those monies, he received an agreement from Assistant Secretary for Community Planning and Development Andrew Cuomo at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for matching funds. We would like to compliment and thank Assistant Secretary Cuomo for his interest in addressing the needs of homeless veterans.

While on the subject of Assistant Secretary Cuomo, we would like to note that the DAV has been critical of HUD in the past for its lack of attention and interest in homeless veterans. However, Mr. Chairman, we are pleased to report that in addition to the \$1.3 million targeted specifically for homeless veterans, Assistant Secretary Cuomo's office has reached out to the veterans' community in an effort to communicate with veterans' service delivery systems throughout the country to make them aware of the existence of funding availability from HUD for homeless projects. Additionally, Assistant Secretary Cuomo has:

- Announced the creation of the HUD Veteran Resource Center -- This center is designed to provide important information about the full range of resources and initiatives available from HUD. The Resource Center can be contacted through a toll free number (1-800-998-9999, Ext. #5475. Contact: David Schultz).
- Appointed a combat-disabled veteran to head the Resource Center. The first mission will be outreach to veterans' community groups as well as veterans' service organizations regarding the "1996 Homeless Assistance SuperNOFA (Notice of Funding Availability)."
- Established an outreach effort to us and is providing information on events and technical assistance to those interested in applying for HUD funding. This type of outreach is unprecedented at HUD.
- Agreed in February of this year to help DOL by providing \$1.3 million for HVRP.

Mr. Chairman, we believe that HUD working together with Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) will make a significant difference in the lives of many homeless veterans. However, we believe that funding must be made available to continue the good work that has been accomplished thus far through HVRP. Since the program started in 1987, 30,000 homeless veterans have been helped in some way and 13,000 were actually placed in jobs.

Assistant Secretary Taylor should also be applauded for his efforts in contacting every state governor asking for their assistance to bridge the gap after the loss of HVRP funding.

Mr. Chairman, in your invitation to appear today, you asked our views on three legislative proposals -- H.R. 2851, H.R. 2868, and H.R. 3036. The DAV has no official position on any of these legislative proposals. We would, however, like to comment on H.R. 3036 which raises some concerns within our organization.

As we know, the VA's Veterans' Benefits Administration (VBA) is reviewing its entire organization with a view toward restructuring and other management initiatives designed to improve how they do business. In that context, the idea of transferring the Education Service to St. Louis has arisen. The purpose of H.R. 3036 is to prohibit the transfer of those functions from VA Central Office in Washington, D.C., to an area outside of Washington. Like you, Mr. Chairman, we are concerned about where decentralization stops and will decentralization improve efficiencies and services to veterans? At present, we are neither supportive of nor opposed to H.R. 3036, but want to assure you that it is an issue that we will be watching very closely.

I will state, however, in regard to any proposal designed to change the way VA administers and delivers benefits and services, the DAV will be supportive when and only when such change will prove advantageous to veterans. Any proposal that has as its result the effect of being detrimental to veterans will meet with our total opposition. We look forward to continuing our discussions with VA Central Office personnel on this important issue.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my statement, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



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A Not-For-Profit Veterans Service Organization Chartered by the United States Congress

STATEMENT OF

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

Presented by

***William F. Crandell
Deputy Director,
Government Relations***

***Before the
House Veterans Affairs' Committee***

***Subcommittee on
Education, Training, Employment and Housing***

***on
Veterans Readjustment Benefits***

April 18, 1996

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) appreciates the opportunity to present its views on existing programs and proposed changes in veterans readjustment benefits. We bring to this hearing our perspective as the only Congressionally chartered veterans service organization created to represent the needs of a single generation of veterans that faces involuntary midlife economic transformation, and of a veterans organization founded on the principle that never again will one generation of veterans abandon another.

H.R. 2851 and H.R. 2868

VVA likes H.R. 2851, which amends title 38, United States Code, to provide for approval of enrollment in courses at certain branches or extensions of proprietary profit institutions of higher learning in operation for more than two years, and H.R. 2868, which amends title 38, United States Code, to make permanent alternative teacher certification programs. The former appears to be a sensible effort to clean up the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) rules. Mr. Stump's bill recognizes that extension campuses are essentially the same as different buildings on the same campus. Institutions of higher learning today are compelled to be flexible in competing for education dollars, and one way they manifest this is in providing better services through extension programs.

We understand that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will suggest changes in H.R. 2851 to provide even greater flexibility. We think that is the right direction to take.

As with the greater issue of eligibility reform in VA healthcare, sensible flexibility is a way of serving veterans' needs better and more cost efficiently at the same time.

The same is true of H.R. 2868, Mr. Tejeda's bill to make permanent the alternative teacher certification programs due to sunset on September 30 of this year. In short, these alternative teacher certification efforts have had their field test and proven satisfactory. They should be made permanent. Vietnam Veterans of America supports this bill.

H.R. 3036

What VVA has seen and heard of plans to reorganize the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) has raised a number of concerns. One of them is the notion of moving the VA's Educational Service to Saint Louis. Cutting off the Educational Service from its physical connections to the rest of VBA seems a sure way to make it wither into irrelevance and error.

Mr. Montgomery's bill would require that the Educational Service retain its physical location in the nation's capital. More than that, it sends a message to VBA that Congress values VA's educational programs, and insists that they remain part of VBA's core.

Fiscal difficulties cannot be used to justify pushing educational programs over the side at VBA. Forced relocation can only impose great personal difficulties on the staff of the

Educational Service, and the possibility that this is intended to lead to attrition is hard to escape. If VBA wants to drop educational services as one of its priorities, let it come before Congress and say so. VVA supports Mr. Montgomery's bill.

The Transition Assistance Program (TAP)

The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) was created to mediate the problem new veterans face in finding work in a marketplace that has no need for soldiers, sailors, or flyers. The Department of Defense (DOD) was given significant responsibility for TAP. Its budget was taxed to pay for it, and DOD thinks it has better uses for the money than to help its citizen-soldiers become plain citizens. VVA disagrees. This is an important program, one which must continue in a time of sluggish economic growth.

America is at the outset of an employment crisis for veterans. A 1993 Department of Labor (DOL) Policy Development Paper states, "after military service, it takes five years for a veteran to become equal in earning power to those peers who did not serve in the military...." Today veterans constitute a declining 14-15 percent of the overall work force, yet an increasing 21-26 percent of all workers dislocated by plant closings, layoffs and general economic transformation. The military plans to eliminate 250,000 men and women from its ranks each year for the rest of the century. The new veterans will receive significantly less pay than their civilian counterparts – worse yet if they are disabled, minorities, young, or saw combat.

No wonder. That quarter of a million military personnel let go annually into a flaccid economy must compete for jobs against permanent civilians, who used their time to train, gain an education, or get job experience. It is a hard sell to persuade employers that years spent serving one's country by firing Tomahawk missiles or learning how to post the colors contributes toward becoming a useful employee.

TAP's job is to help newly-discharged service personnel compete in what active duty troops still justifiably call "the real world." DOD begrudges this meager expense on the theory that its enormous share of the pie should be reserved for the kind of spending that has made Defense Procurement part of many comedians' routines. The military is a family until you want to leave home. Used cartridges are collected and recycled, but used soldiers are VA's business. This attitude affects both morale and recruiting negatively.

People have a right to leave the armed forces, and when they do, they have a right to some assistance phasing out of the peculiar culture and semi-saleable experience they have supported, many at the risk of their lives. This is especially true for those who need the services of DTAP – the Disabled Transition Assistance Program, which receives so unfairly little attention. What DTAP offers now – essentially a counseling session with a specialist from VA's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation or a psychologist, is useful, but not enough. This is also true of TAP.

The help TAP offers with writing resumes is both excellent and critical. You cannot

persuade a civilian employer that you can speak competent English if your descriptions of your duties are laced with the phrase "to include." People getting out of the military come from a world in which, for the most part, they do not apply for jobs, but are assigned jobs. "The real world" is a different planet.

Oddly enough, base commanders still contend that they cannot spare departing personnel from their assignments to attend TAP/DTAP training. People need TAP training at least two or three weeks before they leave the service, and our experience is that only officers and retirees receive that much time. This is particularly odd -- that a hierarchy which finds its officers and senior non-commissioned officers to be its most critical personnel also finds them easiest to spare for transition training.

TAP does good work given its budgetary limits and the foot-dragging of installation commanders. It needs to become more than an appendage to military service. There are civilian skills that need to be as much a part of military training -- during service rather than when it is over -- as much as physical training and how to roll your socks. A shrewd use of TAP would make it serve as minimal skills conversion training, so that military skills become civilian skills while they are still fresh.

The Department of Labor and Department of Veterans Affairs are responsible for conducting seminars and workshops for transitioning service members and their spouses. These workshops cover personal appraisal, career decisions, applying for jobs, interview

techniques, evaluating job offers and veterans benefits. They are usually accompanied by a 350-page TAP participant manual developed by the National Veterans Training Institute, the finest, most comprehensive employment tool for all veterans yet developed.

If DOD is unwilling to allocate enough time and money to do the job properly, there is one alternative to blunting this instrument of economic recovery. Give departing military personnel the option to out-process early, so they can return to their homes of record and receive TAP training there. This, at least, would allow DOL's Disabled Veterans Outreach Specialists (DVOPs) and Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVERs) to customize a program to fit regional economic conditions.

The Transition Assistance Program was designed to provide those individuals separating from the military the opportunity to translate, where possible, military skills and training into the civilian job market. TAP has the added benefit, if implemented properly, of reducing the Unemployment Insurance burden to the military departments and contributing to the economy in general. America's servicemen and women are highly motivated, educated, and one of the greatest assets this country has. If we provide them the tools, they could be a moving force behind an economic recovery.

The Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project

The Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project (HVRP), operated by the Department of Labor, is the only employment assistance program dedicated to the homeless veterans

who make up a third of America's homeless. Many homeless veterans are ready to work, but need the specialized counseling and resource linkage that they receive from HVRP. Others will need what HVRP offers after they complete other programs for mental health problems or substance abuse. HVRP is an extremely cost-efficient program for turning people on public assistance into productive taxpayers.

VVA has worked all year to salvage HVRP. Congress adopted legislation to extend a number of VA programs, including all VA's homeless efforts – homeless domiciliary care, the Homeless Provider Grant and Per Diem Program (HPG), Compensated Work Therapy (CWT), and others. HVRP was quite wisely included in this list, though it is a DOL effort. Programs extended by the VA Health Care Delivery Act are authorized through 1997.

Senator Paul Wellstone calls HVRP "one of the most successful job placement programs in the Federal Government. Since its inception it has placed 11,000 veterans into jobs at approximately \$1,000 per placement." That is about the cost of one month on unemployment benefits in some areas of the country. One of the things VVA likes best about it is that HVRP provides grants to community-based homeless veteran projects. Unlike other homeless, veterans have consistently said that their "number one need" is jobs.

HVRP programs have been extremely effective in fighting homelessness among veterans, and taking them off the streets and putting them to work. Vietnam Veterans of America has been active for a number of years in providing programs across the nation that help our homeless veterans. VVA's National Task Force on Homeless Veterans has found HVRP a sound, solid program that puts veterans to work who would otherwise remain on the streets.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes our testimony.



STATEMENT OF
 TERRY GRANDISON, ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR
 PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA
 BEFORE THE
 SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING
 OF THE
 HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
 CONCERNING
 VETERANS READJUSTMENT BENEFITS
 APRIL 18, 1996

Chairman Buyer, Ranking Minority Member Waters and members of the Subcommittee, on behalf of the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), I appreciate this opportunity to present our views on veterans readjustment benefits, specifically the Transition Assistance Program and the legislative proposals affecting veterans' education, in H.R.2851, H.R.2868, and H.R.3036.

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) had its genesis as a 1989 pilot project (Public Law 101-237) managed by the Department of Labor (DOL) to provide the following transition services to eligible military personnel: (1) assist participants in identifying their transferable skills; (2) enhance participant awareness in planning a well organized job search; and, (3) increase their ability in conducting a successful job search. The Pilot TAP program was jointly sponsored by the Department of Labor, the Department of Defense (DOD), and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), with each agency bearing a specific set of responsibilities. DOL spearheaded the TAP project by providing trained personnel to conduct workshops. DOD

PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA

marketed TAP, provided the facilities and equipment, and identified and registered eligible participants. VA disseminated veterans' benefits and services information during TAP workshops and provided educational and vocational counseling, guidance, and testing to eligible service members. With the advent of DOD downsizing and the anticipated return of service members from the Persian Gulf there became an apparent need to expand the scope of the TAP to serve the increasing number of military personnel leaving the Armed Forces. As a result of these factors, on November 5, 1990, Congress passed Public Law 101-510 expanding TAP to a full-scale basis, nationwide.

PVA supports the TAP concept and the services it provides. It helps to reduce the high rates of unemployment among veterans and to eliminate barriers to employment, both real and perceived. However, with DOD downsizing nearly complete, another issue has come to fore: whether the TAP program should indefinitely continue. According to DOD projections, some 250,000 individuals are expected to separate from the Armed Forces annually through the year 2000. Based on these projections DOD contends that TAP is needed and the program should be maintained to provide these individuals the transition assistance they need to fully reintegrate in society and compete successfully in the job market. In light of these projections, we recognize the merit and value of TAP; however, PVA recommends that the program be evaluated on a regular basis as this Subcommittee is doing today to insure the purposes of the program continue to meet the requirements of the military and veterans. For example, unforeseen manpower and fiscal needs of DOD may require an emphasis on recruitment and retention of military personnel rather downsizing and out placement. PVA is intimately familiar with the need to provide separating service members with all the necessary assistance they require to facilitate a smooth transition into civilian life. However, as fiscal constraints become more severe and the needs of DOD and veterans evolve, this program should be periodically reexamined.

LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS AFFECTING VETERANS EDUCATION

H.R.2851 - Proprietary Profit Institutions of Higher Learning

This bill would authorize approval of enrollment in courses offered at certain branches or extensions of proprietary profit institutions of higher learning in operation for more than two years.

COMMENT: PVA has no objection to this legislation.

H.R.2868 - Alternative Teacher Certification Programs

This legislation would make permanent the alternative teacher certification programs

COMMENT: PVA has no objection to this proposal.

H.R.3036- Educational Assistance Programs

This proposal would require that the offices for management, policy, and other functions associated with the educational assistance programs of the Education Service of the Department of Veterans Affairs be in the District of Columbia.

COMMENTS: PVA has no objection to this bill.

Mr. Chairman this concludes my testimony. I will be happy to answer any questions I can.

STATEMENT OF
BOB MANHAN, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITH RESPECT TO
**EDUCATION LEGISLATION AND OVERSIGHT OF TRANSITION ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM AND HOMELESS VETERANS REINTEGRATION PROJECT**

WASHINGTON, DC

APRIL 18, 1996

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

Thank you for inviting the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) to participate in this very important hearing. Because this is both a legislative and oversight hearing, I will address the three bills under discussion in numerical order. The remainder of this testimony will address in more general terms the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project (HVRP).

H.R. 2851. This bill was introduced about four months ago by Chairman Stump and you, Mr. Chairman. The VFW strongly supports the action to amend section 3689 of title 38, United States Code (USC). The overall thrust will provide a greater flexibility for veterans to use their educational benefits at places that have been operating less than two years. The VFW is very satisfied that past problems with similar institutions have been overcome primarily because such courses or classes have already been fully accredited and licensed by the respective states.

H.R. 2868. This bill was introduced by Congressman Frank Tejeda, you, Mr. Chairman, and other members of the Committee on Veterans Affairs. Obviously, this bill enjoys bipartisan support. The VFW strongly supports this action to amend section 3452(c) of title 38, USC, to allow veterans to use a portion of their educational entitlement to offset the cost of earning a teaching certificate under the Alternative Teacher Certification Program. This bill is similar but not identical to Department of Defense's Troops-to-Teachers program.

H.R. 3036. This bill was introduced by the full committee's ranking minority member, Sonny Montgomery, and the Chairman, Bob Stump, as well as other committee members on both sides of the aisle. The VFW has no objections to amending section 7705 of title 38 (USC) to require the policy and management portion of the Education Service of the Department of Veterans Affairs be located in the District of Columbia.

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TAP)

The VFW regards TAP as an ongoing and permanent Department of Defense (DOD) requirement rather than a program that can be activated or used when the need for a drawdown is indicated.

We believe that those who share this nation's commitment to a strong national defense will not have difficulty understanding that the responsibility entails more than merely providing the best equipment, armament, and ordinances for our military services. The commitment should also provide meaningful transition services for the men and women who wear the uniform and utilize the equipment to ensure they have an opportunity to return to the civilian sector with the least amount of social and financial disruption. A TAP in our view is part of the price our nation ought to be prepared to pay for that commitment.

Since becoming fully operational in FY 1991, the TAP overcame several problems--involving cooperation and coordination between principal agencies--and eventually met or exceeded most expectations for the program. Early on, the Department of Labor (DOL), which was responsible for stateside transition assistance, jointly developed a national Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs. This MOU was quite useful in establishing a cooperative tone and spirit for providing meaningful transition services.

The VFW has been involved in TAP briefings since inception of the program. Our involvement in TAP is through our network of service officers who are primarily located in cities where there is a VA Regional Office, or in some cases a VA Medical Center. During TAP seminars, the VFW presentation will routinely include discussion on medical conditions that occurred while in military service; how to gather supporting medical documentation; and how to successfully prosecute a medical disability claim with the VA should it become necessary. Finally, we brief participants on the appeals process whenever claims are denied and give them options that are available to them (servicemembers and their dependents) for free representation on all VA administered benefits to which they may be entitled.

Based on our direct participation in the TAP program we can firmly state that not only does this program work, but works exceedingly well. From our contact with numerous veterans who have completed a TAP seminar we find there is a near consensus that the program is very beneficial. We also find that the program is particularly attractive to military retirees who have been away from the civilian job market for an extended period and to younger veterans with no civilian related work experience whose only previous training has been in the area of military combat arms.

Mr. Chairman, in addition to our briefings at the TAP sessions, we also conduct veterans benefits seminars as part of an ongoing VFW outreach effort. We have conducted these seminars at several Army installations in Germany and Italy over the past three years and at Army and Air Force installations in Korea over the past two years. Our seminars are designed to convey much of the same information we cover during a TAP session. The major difference is that during our outreach seminars we use a staff of eight people compared to one person for TAP sessions. The outreach seminars last approximately three hours. We are therefore able to cover more subjects, entertain more questions, and provide more one-on-one counseling in this program.

At most of the overseas locations noted, we have established cooperative working relations with Army Career and Alumni Personnel (ACAP) who do a good job of providing transition assistance services on Army bases. Two years ago we joined the Army Alumni and Employment Network (AEAN) which is operated by the ACAP Job Assistance Centers. As you know Job Assistance Centers provide counseling and job search services for all military, civilian and family members served by an Army installation. By joining the Network, VFW members essentially agree to assist any service member who visits his post seeking information about the community and the local business environment.

This year the Pentagon is spending about \$50 million on transition assistance and is planning to ask for about \$40 million for FY 1997. These figures are interesting when compared to DOD's FY 1995 unemployment compensation costs of \$336 million for separated service members. In 1992 unemployment compensation cost DOD's \$491 million. We would like to think that as TAP becomes more effective more new veterans will be able to find satisfactory employment sooner. However, we are very much aware of the fact that the overall state of the nation's economy plays an important part in this job placement issue.

HOMELESS VETERANS REINTEGRATION PROJECTS

Mr. Chairman, it is the view of the VFW that homelessness is a national problem that cannot be allowed to persist any longer. The effort to eradicate the problem of homelessness will require more than a cooperative spirit and a seriousness of purpose by volunteer groups. It will also require an unwaivering commitment from the government and an adequate allocation of resources.

We continue to believe that the homeless veterans' reintegration projects (HVRP), with its emphasis on helping veterans get and retain jobs, plays a vital role among the community of agencies combating homelessness. We are therefore quite pleased that HVRP was reauthorized last January. Unfortunately, the administration did not make an FY 1997 budget request for HVRP because the budget was submitted prior to January 1996 when reauthorization was achieved. Nevertheless, we urge this committee to lend its support in seeking an appropriation for HVRP of no less than \$5 million for FY 1997. In sum, the VFW continues to support this specialized DOL program.

This concludes our testimony, Mr. Chairman. I will be happy to answer any questions you or any committee member may have.

**Prepared Statement of Carolyn H. Becraft
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Personnel Support, Families and Education)
Before the Education, Training, Employment Subcommittee
United States House of Representatives
April 18, 1996**

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE,
THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR BEFORE YOU
TODAY AND DISCUSS THE SCOPE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR
TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TAP), FOR MILITARY SERVICE
MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES. AT THE OUTSET, I WISH TO THANK
YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF OUR EFFORTS ON BEHALF
OF THE PATRIOTIC MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVE IN OUR
COUNTRY'S ARMED FORCES.

SINCE THE ENACTMENT OF PUBLIC-LAW 101-510, THE
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE IMPLEMENTED "OPERATION
TRANSITION," AS WE SOMETIMES CALL IT -- AN EXTENSIVE ARRAY
OF SERVICES AND BENEFITS DESIGNED TO EQUIP SEPARATING
SERVICE MEMBERS WITH THE BASIC JOB-HUNTING SKILLS AND
TOOLS NECESSARY TO SECURE SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENT IN
AMERICA'S WORK FORCE. WE ARE COMMITTED TO PREPARING AND
ASSISTING SEPARATING SERVICE MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES
WITH THE CHALLENGE OF STARTING NEW CAREERS AS CIVILIANS.
WE MUST PROVIDE THESE SERVICES TO OUR DEPARTING MILITARY
PERSONNEL BECAUSE IT IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO AND THE
SMART THING TO DO. I AM PLEASED TO TELL YOU, THAT WITH
YOUR HELP, WE ARE MEETING THE CHALLENGE.

OPERATION TRANSITION IS AN OVERWHELMING SUCCESS. WE ARE ESPECIALLY APPRECIATIVE OF THE EXTREMELY POSITIVE COOPERATION AND SUPPORT THAT WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM THE DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR AND VETERANS AFFAIRS, STATE EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES, AND OUR OWN MILITARY SERVICES. EVERYONE ASSOCIATED WITH THIS PROGRAM HAS GONE AND CONTINUES TO GO THE EXTRA MILE TO MAKE IT SUCCESSFUL.

I WOULD LIKE TO SUMMARIZE WHERE WE ARE TODAY IN PROVIDING TRANSITION SERVICES TO OUR SEPARATING PERSONNEL AND THEN ADDRESS SPECIFIC ELEMENTS OF OUR TRANSITION PROGRAM. WE PROVIDE TRANSITION SERVICES AT OVER 258 MILITARY INSTALLATIONS WORLD-WIDE. EACH OF THE MILITARY SERVICES, IN CONJUNCTION WITH DOD, THE DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR (DOL) AND VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA), AND STATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE AGENCIES, HAVE EFFECTIVE TRANSITION PROGRAMS IN PLACE TO FIT THE NEEDS OF SEPARATING MILITARY MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES. TRANSITION SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR AND THE VETERANS AFFAIRS INCLUDE PRESEPARATION COUNSELING, TRANSITION ASSISTANCE SEMINARS, AUTOMATED EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE, JOB FAIRS, AND VETERANS AND DISABLED VETERANS BENEFITS COUNSELING. WITH THE COMMITTEE'S HELP, WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO PROVIDE OUR SEPARATING SERVICE MEMBERS WITH USEFUL TRANSITION SERVICES.

I WOULD LIKE TO UPDATE YOU ON SEVERAL ASPECTS OF OUR PROGRAM.

PRESEPARATION COUNSELING. IN 1994, WE FIELDDED A STANDARD PRESEPARATION COUNSELING CHECKLIST, DD FORM 2648 COVERING THE ITEMS IDENTIFIED IN SECTION 1142 OF TITLE 10, UNITED STATES CODE. THE CHECKLIST IS PROVIDED TO ALL SEPARATING SERVICE MEMBERS AND RETAINED IN THEIR PERMANENT PERSONNEL FILE.

THIS PAST YEAR, WE ALSO DEVELOPED A NEW PRESEPARATION VIDEO. THIS VIDEO PROVIDES A BROAD OVERVIEW OF THE PRESEPARATION COUNSELING PROCESS. THE VIDEO WILL HELP US REACH THOSE INDIVIDUALS SERVING ABOARD SHIPS AND IN ISOLATED AREAS.

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE SEMINARS. DOD HAS WORKED CLOSELY WITH THE DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR AND VETERANS AFFAIRS TO PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT AND JOB TRAINING ASSISTANCE, RESUME WRITING, BENEFIT INFORMATION AND FINANCIAL COUNSELING THROUGH TRANSITION ASSISTANCE SEMINARS. THESE SEMINARS ARE NORMALLY GIVEN OVER A THREE-DAY PERIOD AND COMPRISE BUT ONE SEGMENT OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED THROUGH OPERATION TRANSITION. EACH MILITARY INSTALLATION WORKS WITH LOCAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES, DOL STAFF, AND CONTRACT FACILITATORS TO MANAGE THE TAP SEMINARS. FOR FISCAL YEAR 1995, DOD PROVIDED A TOTAL OF 3,800 TAP SEMINARS AT 204

MILITARY INSTALLATIONS. THROUGH THE SUPERB COOPERATION OF DOL AND THE AMERICA'S JOB BANK (AJB), TRANSITION SITES WERE ABLE TO START ACCESSING THE AJB VIA INTERNET THIS PAST SUMMER. THIS NEW CAPABILITY ELIMINATED THE WEEKLY MAILING OF DISKETTES CONTAINING JOB OPPORTUNITIES.

AUTOMATED EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE. THE DEPARTMENT'S INVESTMENT IN AUTOMATED EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS HAS BEEN EXTREMELY SUCCESSFUL. THE DEFENSE OUTPLACEMENT REFERRAL SYSTEM (DORS) IS THE AUTOMATED REGISTRY AND REFERRAL SYSTEM THAT PROVIDES POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS WITH MINI-RESUMES FROM MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PERSONNEL AND THEIR SPOUSES. DORS IS A VITAL PART OF OPERATION TRANSITION. THE NUMBER OF EMPLOYERS REGISTERED IN DORS HAS RISEN FROM 7,980 IN FY 1994 TO 13,431 IN FY 1995, AN INCREASE OF 68 PERCENT. EMPLOYER REQUESTS FOR RESUMES HAVE GONE FROM 10,533 IN FY 1994 TO 26,578 IN FY 1995, A 152 PERCENT INCREASE. WE HAVE SENT 881,448 RESUMES TO EMPLOYERS IN FY 1995, WHILE 430,981 WERE SENT DURING FY 1994, AN INCREASE OF 105 PERCENT. AS OF THE END OF MARCH 1996, EMPLOYERS NOW HAVE THE CAPABILITY TO ACCESS DORS RESUMES VIA INTERNET. ADDITIONALLY, OUR DORS RESUMES WILL BE CONVERTED TO RUN IN A MICROSOFT WINDOWS ENVIRONMENT BY JULY 1996. THE SECOND COMPONENT OF OUR AUTOMATED SYSTEM, A TRANSITION BULLETIN BOARD (TBB), ALLOWS EMPLOYERS TO LIST JOB OPENINGS THAT ARE THEN ELECTRONICALLY TRANSMITTED TO MILITARY INSTALLATIONS. IN

FY 1994, 16,827 JOB OPPORTUNITIES WERE LISTED AND 44,163 WERE LISTED IN FY 1995, AN INCREASE OF 163 PERCENT. BY THE END OF AUGUST 1996, EMPLOYERS AND DEPARTING SERVICE MEMBERS WILL ALSO HAVE ACCESS TO THE TBB VIA INTERNET.

OVERSEAS JOB FAIRS. OUR SEPARATING SERVICE MEMBERS, WHO ARE STATIONED OVERSEAS FACE A UNIQUE EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGE. THEIR ABILITY TO ACTIVELY PURSUE JOB OPPORTUNITIES IS OFTEN LIMITED BY TIME, DISTANCE, AND AVAILABILITY TO POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS. SINCE WE CANNOT GET THE SERVICE MEMBERS TO EMPLOYERS, DOD TAKES THE EMPLOYERS TO THE SERVICE MEMBER. WITH THE STRONG SUPPORT OF THE MILITARY SERVICES OVERSEAS, DOD SPONSORS JOB FAIRS IN EUROPE AND THE FAR EAST. THE JOB FAIRS ARE TREMENDOUS MORALE BOOSTERS FOR OUR PEOPLE OVERSEAS AND GIVES EMPLOYERS ACCESS TO A GROUP OF OUTSTANDING POTENTIAL EMPLOYEES.

FROM 1992 THROUGH 1995, DOD SPONSORED 15 JOB FAIRS FOR OUR SERVICE MEMBERS OVERSEAS. ALMOST 21,000 SERVICE MEMBERS HAVE ATTENDED THESE FAIRS. OVERALL, 3,566 OR 17 PERCENT OF ALL ATTENDEES RECEIVED FIRM JOB OFFERS AS A RESULT OF CONTACTS MADE AT THE JOB FAIRS.

VETERANS AFFAIRS COUNSELORS OVERSEAS. THE DEPARTMENT, WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE VETERANS AFFAIRS, PROVIDES VETERANS SERVICES AND COUNSELING IN EUROPE AND THE FAR EAST ON ESSENTIAL VETERANS BENEFITS INFORMATION FOR THOSE SERVICE MEMBERS NEARING SEPARATION. VETERANS'

COUNSELORS ARE FUNDED JOINTLY BY VA AND DOD. VA COUNSELORS ALSO PROVIDE DISABLED TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (DTAP) BRIEFINGS FOR THOSE SERVICE MEMBERS WHO ARE SEPARATED FOR MEDICAL REASONS. OUR TRANSITION MANAGERS AND SERVICE MEMBERS OVERSEAS ARE UNANIMOUS IN THEIR VOCAL SUPPORT FOR THIS INITIATIVE. DUE TO THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE FEDERAL BUDGET, ALL OVERSEAS COUNSELORS WERE RETURNED TO RESPECTIVE DUTY STATIONS IN SEPTEMBER 1995. IT IS EXPECTED, HOWEVER, THAT THESE OVERSEAS ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE RETURNED IN THE NEAR FUTURE, THOUGH AT A GREATLY REDUCED LEVEL.

COST EFFECTIVENESS. WE BELIEVE THE TRANSITION PROGRAM MORE THAN PAYS FOR ITSELF THROUGH REDUCED UNEMPLOYMENT COSTS TO THE DEPARTMENT. RECENT DOL AND UNITED STATES ARMY STUDIES SHOW THAT THE PROGRAM HELPS SERVICE MEMBERS FIND JOBS MORE QUICKLY.

THE DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 1996 DIRECTED THE DEPARTMENT TO REPORT ON PHASING OUT OUR TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND PROVIDE, WHAT, IF ANY, RESIDUAL FUNDING WOULD BE REQUIRED. THE CONFEREES EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THE TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM HAS BECOME A PERMANENT ENTITY, SAYING THAT IT WAS INITIATED AS A RESULT OF THE DRAWDOWN. THE REPORT LANGUAGE WAS BASED ON THE FALSE PREMISE THAT THE TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM WAS INITIATED TO ASSIST SERVICE MEMBERS ONLY DURING THE DRAWDOWN PERIOD. UNDER

PUBLIC LAW 101-510, THREE PERMANENT TRANSITION SERVICES WERE ESTABLISHED: PRESEPARATION COUNSELING, EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE, AND RELOCATION ASSISTANCE. CONGRESSMAN MONTGOMERY, WHO WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN THE DESIGN AND THE ENACTMENT OF PUBLIC LAW 101-510, AND ITS MODEL PILOT PROGRAM ESTABLISHED THE YEAR BEFORE BY THE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS WROTE TO SECRETARY PERRY IN OCTOBER OF LAST YEAR. IN HIS LETTER, CONGRESSMAN MONTGOMERY REAFFIRMED THE CONGRESSIONAL EXPECTATION AND THE INTENT THAT THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM WOULD BE PERMANENTLY AVAILABLE TO ALL SERVICE MEMBERS LEAVING THE MILITARY. IN OUR REPORT TO THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE, WE INFORM THE COMMITTEE THAT WE DO NOT VIEW THE TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AS A TEMPORARY PROGRAM AND WE DO NOT INTEND TO PHASE THE PROGRAM OUT. OUR TRANSITION PROGRAM IS A VITAL COMPONENT OF OUR QUALITY OF LIFE (QOL) INITIATIVE. WE ARE WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS TO REVIEW AND EVALUATE VARIOUS STRATEGIES FOR DELIVERING THE PROGRAM IN THE MOST COST EFFECTIVE MANNER POSSIBLE WITHOUT DEGRADING THE QUALITY OF SERVICES PROVIDED.

OUR ENTIRE SOCIETY, NOT JUST DOD, FACES THE DIFFICULT QUESTION OF HOW TO "TRANSITION" FROM THE COLD WAR ERA TO THE POST-COLD WAR WORLD. THERE ARE NO EASY, QUICK ANSWERS. THE PROCESS CAN BE FRUSTRATING AND AT TIMES PAINFUL. WE HAVE WORKED DILIGENTLY WITHIN THE

DEPARTMENT TO DEVELOP REASONABLE, PRUDENT, AND EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR PROVIDING TRANSITION SERVICES FOR OUR SEPARATING PERSONNEL AND THEIR FAMILIES. TRANSITION SERVICES ARE VITAL TO ENSURING THAT THE QUALITY OF LIFE REMAINS HIGH FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL, EVEN AS THEY PREPARE TO LEAVE THE MILITARY SERVICE AND EMBARK UPON NEW CIVILIAN CAREERS. TO QUOTE UNDER SECRETARY DORN, "I THINK WE'RE BEING A SMART EMPLOYER BY MAINTAINING TRANSITION PROGRAMS, SUCH JOB COUNSELING AND SOME OF THE COMPUTERIZED JOB BULLETIN BOARDS. I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT FOR US TO DO THAT - EVERY EMPLOYER OUGHT TO PROVIDE TRANSITION PROGRAMS LIKE THAT, AND DOD HAPPENS TO BE A LEADER IN TRANSITION, AND WE'LL KEEP THESE PROGRAMS IN PLACE."

MR. CHAIRMAN, MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE, THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED INTEREST AND COMMITMENT TO THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE ARMED FORCES WHO HAVE SERVED THEIR COUNTRY HONORABLY AND WELL.

THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR BEFORE YOU TODAY. I AM PREPARED AND WILL BE HAPPY TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE.

**STATEMENT OF
PRESTON M. TAYLOR JR.
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF LABOR FOR
VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING
BEFORE THE
HOUSE VETERANS' AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT & HOUSING
APRIL 18, 1996**

Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the Transition Assistance Program, known as TAP, and to share my views on the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project, or HVRP. Both TAP and HVRP provide job-readiness assistance to special categories of at-risk individuals -- those who are soon-to-be-discharged from the Armed Forces, and those who are homeless.

We in the Veterans' Employment and Training Service -- VETS -- of the U.S. Department of Labor have a special vantage point regarding these programs and the training needs of their participants. Our experience has taught us what works.

Transition services of one type or another have been available to active-duty military personnel for quite some time. While some program components were similar across the board, noteworthy differences were apparent in the level and type of assistance provided by the branches of Service and even by installations within the same branch of Service. This inconsistent approach to transition services began to change in late 1989 with the passage of Public Law 101-237, which created the Transition Assistance Program, to deliver standardized assistance to eligible servicemembers through the coordinated efforts of the Departments of Labor, Defense, and Veterans Affairs.

TAP was first established as a pilot program modeled after California's successful Career Awareness Program. The program's overall goal was, and still is, to enable separating or retiring servicemembers to make and carry out informed decisions regarding employment in the civilian labor market. TAP is designed as a three-day workshop (1) to enhance participants' awareness of the resources available to them, (2) to assist participants in identifying their transferable skills, and (3) to increase their ability to plan and conduct a successful job search.

My agency's primary role is to ensure that Department of Labor resources are dedicated to the TAP delivery partnership and to facilitate workshops. Workshops are now facilitated by veteran-dedicated staff from State Employment Security Agencies augmented at high-volume or remote sites by contract instructors and VETS' staff at the State level.

TAP's origin as a pilot in 1989 preceded the Persian Gulf War and the Department of Defense's downsizing initiatives. Because of TAP's recognized need and popularity, it was swept up by the intervening events and expanded on a full-scale basis nationwide. I am sorry to say that

the timing of the TAP expansion relative to the downsizing has resulted in some being misled regarding the true purpose and consequential value of this most beneficial employment assistance program. Hopefully the issue has been put to rest by Congressman Montgomery's clarification to Secretary of Defense William J. Perry in a letter dated October 20, 1995, in which he said --

It was simply fortunate timing that TAP was in place and ready to expand when the drawdown began. TAP was not then, and should not now be, perceived as a temporary program.

In response to a Congressional mandate for an assessment of TAP that would evaluate the program's impacts and its operational strengths and weaknesses, the Department of Labor commissioned a series of reports over the past few years. Phase III of the impact analysis was published on May 15, 1995. As a stated result, --

The survey evidence suggests that TAP may have a positive effect by helping participants get jobs more quickly, reducing time unemployed by three to seven weeks. Although the analyses do not reveal which particular element of TAP is responsible for these effects, important program elements include time spent in writing resumes and improving interview skills, in discussing how military skills transfer to the civilian sector, in helping participants translate their military skills for civilian understanding, and in helping identify career goals and expectations.

The Phase III study conclusion ends by saying --

Among its other benefits, if the estimated three-to seven-week decrease in average unemployment found here held for the entire population of separatees, TAP may greatly reduce individual and family stress and increase overall earnings. Furthermore, there is some evidence to suggest that the program pays for itself by limiting the unemployment insurance claims of separatees.

Mr. Chairman, from a VETS' standpoint, factoring in the salaries of State-grant veterans' employment specialists and VETS' staff who act as instructors, facilitator contracts, as well as travel and printing expenses, the TAP course costs about \$40 per participant. We think this is a huge savings to taxpayers, when you consider that Unemployment Insurance benefits for ex-servicemembers run about \$200 a week.

Since 1993, more than 60 percent of the nearly 800,000 servicemembers discharged from active duty have received job-search training through TAP before their release. In fiscal year 1995, VETS conducted 3,800 TAP workshops at 204 military facilities in 44 states, and served 146,000 participants, the vast majority of whom were separatees. We spent \$207,000 on field staff travel to TAP sites, \$205,000 on the printing of workbooks given to each participant, and \$1.5 million on contract services.

Unsolicited testimonials give us confirmation that the program is successful. A recent TAP graduate wrote thanking the staff for what he learned in their program. He said he bought a new suit, wrote a resume and networked for three months. He put his resume in the Defense Outplacement Referral System and received several calls. He accepted a pre-separation offer and is now making more than he was as an E-6.

Another wrote, "I think TAP is one of the best things the military offers. Because of TAP I was very prepared for my job hunt. TAP put me 2-3 months ahead on finding a job." He is working in the field he initially selected and geographically is with his family.

And finally, a local business owner consultant who volunteers as a TAP presenter reports of at least a dozen TAP graduates who have successfully started their own business as a result of having heard her "Starting your own business" presentation. These TAP graduates include a Marine Diving business, an apple farm, consultants, real estate brokers, and a retail store owner.

TAP is a program that really works.

Our vantage point regarding employment and training programs for homeless veterans stems from administering homeless veterans reintegration projects for seven years under the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act.

The HVRP program was initially authorized in 1987 by Public Law 100-77, as an approach to assist homeless veterans with whatever they needed to successfully return them to the civilian labor force. HVRP was reauthorized in 1990 and again in 1992. The second reauthorization was for a three-year period ending September 30, 1995. The authorized appropriation levels for fiscal years 1993, 1994, and 1995 were \$10 million, \$12 million, and \$14 million respectively.

Funds were first made available for HVRP in FY 1988. The actual amounts appropriated between 1988 and 1994 ranged from \$1.366 million in 1992 to a maximum of \$5.055 million in each of fiscal years 1993 and 1994. I would note, Mr. Chairman, that in 1994, the approximately \$5 million appropriated by Congress was augmented locally with a total of \$9.4 million.

In July 1995, Congress rescinded HVRP's FY 1995 appropriated funding of \$5.011 million. At the end of September, the program authorization expired. In the fall of 1995, both the House and Senate passed bills to reauthorize the HVRP program. A compromise agreement, enacted in February 1996, extended the HVRP program termination date until December 31, 1997, but authorized an appropriation of \$10 million for only one year -- FY 1996.

To date this fiscal year, the Department of Labor has operated under a series of continuing resolutions that have not included funding for the HVRP program. The Senate Appropriations Conference Report notes that the HVRP program is not funded in FY 1996 and says --

The Committee remains concerned about the problems facing homeless veterans, and urges the Secretary of Labor to identify and provide pilot program and demonstration project funds sufficient to meet the needs of homeless veterans during fiscal year 1996.

Secretary of Labor Robert B. Reich and I also have been continually aware of homeless veterans and their employment needs, especially during this year's cold winter. In mid-December Secretary Reich wrote a letter to each Governor. He pointed out that Congress eliminated funding for HVRP and other funds that had in the past come through the Job Training for the Homeless Demonstration Program. He asked for their assistance in placing special emphasis in their employment and training programs in addressing the needs of homeless veterans this winter.

In recognition of the continuing need for homeless assistance and in keeping with the Senate Appropriations Report language, VETS took the initiative in February 1996 to use all of its remaining discretionary funds, \$1.3 million of its Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) funds, to keep operating twenty-one HVRP projects located in cold climate areas. The funding amounts ranged from \$28,000 to \$109,000 per project.

Additionally, the Department of Housing and Urban Development agreed to work with the Department of Labor on this effort and to match our \$1.3 million. I cannot say enough about the compassion of Secretary Henry Cisneros and Assistant Secretary of HUD Andrew Cuomo in answering this winter's challenge for our unemployed, homeless veterans as part of their Department's continuum of care.

For the record, the Subcommittee should be aware that because the \$1.3 million that VETS used this winter to fund its twenty-one homeless projects was authorized under the JTPA, the eligibility rules for veteran participation in the projects differed to some degree from the broader HVRP eligibility criteria. Under the JTPA, veteran participants must have served during the Vietnam era, or been recently discharged, or have a service-connected disability. The HVRP program, not as restrictive, serves all homeless veterans.

I am pleased to report that the \$1.3 million provided by HUD soon will be distributed through competitive grants to State and local public agencies and nonprofit organizations. The deadline for submitting grant applications is Wednesday, April 24. We anticipate that twenty to twenty-five awards will be made, each for a period of nine to twelve months, and that the range of awards will be from \$50,000 to \$100,000 per grant. Projects are expected to begin next month.

The HUD-funded projects and activities also will enhance the employability of homeless veterans. Grantees must provide supportive services, with the main focus being on providing employment and training services that will enable homeless veterans to obtain jobs leading to economic self-sufficiency. They also will place homeless veterans into transitional and permanent housing through coordination of community resources.

Under the "continuum of care" approach fostered by HUD and other Federal agencies, achievement of independent living is a major goal in serving the homeless. This is linked to the fostering of employment opportunities in the community as well as the enhancement of the individual participant's skills. Services to be provided by the grantees should result, to the extent possible, in homeless veterans becoming successful wage earners and taxpayers.

The HVRP mandate to the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training under the McKinney Act is to develop an effective means of "reintegrating homeless veterans into the labor force." Assisting homeless veterans to fully re-enter the labor market is a significant challenge. Obtaining meaningful employment in the civilian sector is a major factor in restoring the dignity and a sense of worth in our homeless veterans -- essential qualities which are necessary in bringing them back into the mainstream of society. In pursuit of this objective, VETS, under the HVRP authority, has awarded grants, through the competitive process, to State and local governments and non-profit organizations.

During the first five years -- fiscal years 1988 through 1992 -- our HVRP grantees served 25,837 veterans and placed 10,608 into jobs. This was accomplished with a funding level for the first five years of \$2.0 million or less each year and an average of fifteen grantees nationwide during that period.

The HVRP program was expanded when it was reauthorized under Public Law 101-645. For fiscal years 1993 and 1994, including through September 30, 1995, there were twenty-six grants in urban areas and six in rural areas at a funding level of \$5.055 million for each of the two years. During that period, there were 15,832 veteran participants, of which over half, or 8,070, were placed in jobs at the cost of \$1,500 per placement.

Much of the HVRP model is built around three main elements. First, OUTREACH is done by our grantees to provide homeless veterans with information about the program and encouragement to avail themselves of its services. This outreach is performed in the HVRP program by former homeless veterans who know exactly what being homeless means.

The second element of the HVRP program is that it is EMPLOYMENT-FOCUSED. The HVRP program is built upon the recognition that a homeless veteran needs to become self-supporting in order to obtain permanent shelter. Some may need short term jobs to get back into the work routine, others may need retraining to polish or upgrade their skills, and still others may need nothing more than stabilizing their immediate environment so they can go to work. Job counseling, resume preparation, on-the-job training, job search techniques and job development and placement are among the services provided by our grantees.

The third element of the HVRP program is LINKAGES with other service deliverers who can provide support such as housing, education or training benefits the veterans are eligible for and entitled to, work clothes and tools, and treatment for substance abuse or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, problems that hinder recovery. The Local Working Committee, or LWC, that

we require to be formed by each project operator, is the agent for coordinating this necessary support with other agencies. The LWC's are comprised of State, Federal, and local agencies and organizations involved with the homeless or veterans. Through the LWCs, our project operators gain access to job placement and training resources available from such agencies.

The HVRP program has had a positive impact on a great many of the lives of the over 41,000 veterans it has served. Among those agencies that have operated HVRPs are veterans' organizations such as the "Vietnam Veterans Workshop in Boston" and the "Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program of Western Pennsylvania" in Pittsburgh. Private Industry Councils that administer JTPA resources are also among the grantees and operators. One such grantee is here in the Nation's capital is the homeless veterans' project run by the "D.C. Private Industry Council".

The programs mentioned above are located in major urban areas. We also set aside funds for demonstration projects in rural areas to better determine the ways to provide services to homeless veterans outside major metropolitan areas. In such areas, homeless veterans may be especially hard to reach, supportive services may be lacking, and transportation barriers can be formidable.

In closing, let me put some success-story faces on the job-placement statistics I just recounted, and thereby illustrate what the program does by telling you what it did for just two veterans -- one from California and the other from Indiana.

The first veteran -- I'll call him Michael -- lives in California. He had a history of substance abuse and was trying to turn his life around when he came to the HVRP for help. He had lost everything including a place to live, not only for himself, but for his 6-year old son. The HVRP staff developed and implemented a plan. Michael completed alcohol/drug treatment in a center that networked with the HVRP. In assessing Michael's work barriers, it was determined that his military skills were not feasible for civilian employment, he was homeless, lacked proper clothing, and had a history of drug and alcohol abuse as well as poor work habits. HVRP staff provided Michael with interview clothes, taught him interview skills, put together a resume, and sent him to interviews.

Michael was hired full-time at \$10 an hour with a major building supply corporation. HVRP assisted him with stable housing and provided him with public transportation assistance until he received his first check. HVRP followed him closely during his first three months on the job. When, some months afterward, HVRP staff called Michael on his job, they learned that he had received a promotion and pay raise. His supervisor told HVRP that Michael had won a top employee award and was given a weekend trip paid for by the corporation. He now is living with his son and comes to the HVRP office to talk to the new homeless veteran clients to give them hope.

The second veteran -- I'll call her JoAnn -- is from Indiana where she was living in her car after being kicked out by her family. She was not sure of her skills or how she could find employment. After working with the HVRP program, and utilizing the JTPA staff to sharpen her employability skills, she was able to see how her skills from procurement in the military could be applicable in the civilian world. She has since been employed as a procurement supervisor, with an annual salary of over \$31,000. She is now living in a home under contract to buy, and has been employed for over a year.

Mr. Chairman, this Subcommittee has a strong tradition of supporting the employment programs administered by VETS. Thank you again for the opportunity to share what we are doing. If you have any questions, I'll be glad to answer them at this time.

STATEMENT OF
STEPHEN L. LEMONS
DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR BENEFITS
VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
APRIL 18, 1996

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for holding this legislative and oversight hearing and for providing me the opportunity to present VA's comments on a number of legislative proposals affecting our benefits programs. These include H.R. 2851, amending our 2-year period of operation requirement, and H.R. 2868, making permanent our trial approval of the alternative teacher certification program. We also appreciate the opportunity to comment on H.R. 3036, concerning the move of the VA Education Service to St. Louis, as well as to give our views on the Transition Assistance Program (TAP).

**H.R. 2868 - Making VA's Alternative Teacher Certification Program
Permanent.**

In recent years, States have been increasingly interested in helping professionals with bachelor degrees pursue a second career as elementary or secondary school teachers. To do this, various States have developed plans whereby a student with a bachelor's degree can obtain a teaching certificate by means other than the usual route of earning one in conjunction with earning an undergraduate degree.

Many of these certificate programs were not approvable for VA education benefits because the entities offering them were either school districts or consortia of school districts which did not meet the definition of an educational

institution for such education benefits. Consequently, to determine the feasibility of allowing VA benefits for the pursuit of such programs, a 2-year pilot initiative, ending on September 30, 1996, was established by Public Law 103-466. That law amended the definition of "educational institution" found in title 38 to include any entity offering training required for completion of a State-approved teacher certification. This permitted such entities to automatically qualify as educational institutions for VA education benefits purposes.

H.R. 2868 would make VA's current trial program for approval of alternative teacher certification programs permanent. It, thereby, supports and encourages veterans to pursue second careers as elementary and secondary school teachers. Further, it recognizes the maturity, experience, and leadership qualities that are the natural assets veterans can bring to the profession, making them a valuable resource to enhance the underpinnings of our nation's education system. VA fully supports this proposal.

H.R. 2851 - Amending the 2-Year Period of Operation Requirement

In some cases, under title 38, individuals otherwise eligible for the GI Bill are not permitted to enroll in courses offered by an educational institution when the courses have been in operation for less than 2 years. That rule, which originated after World War II, was instituted in response to abuses of the World War II GI Bill program primarily by unscrupulous profit-making school operators who preyed on veterans.

The World War II GI Bill experience was plagued by numerous low quality, low budget, fly-by-night operations that sprang up solely to take advantage of the availability of the Federal benefits dollar. The 2-year operation requirement was designed to prevent such operations by requiring schools and courses to prove their quality and viability over time in the marketplace, without the substantial subsidy of Federal veterans benefits.

Today, however, circumstances have greatly changed. For one thing, veterans educational benefits represent a far less significant source of funds for

educational institutions. For another, on a more positive note, it is clear that the vast majority of today's educational institutions offer meaningful, quality course work. Moreover, the operation of these institutions is continually monitored for compliance by VA and the State approving agencies.

H.R. 2851 would eliminate application of the current 2-year operation requirement for courses offered at branch campuses of public institutions and proprietary nonprofit degree-granting educational institutions. It further would eliminate application of the 2-year operation requirement to any course offered by a branch of a proprietary profit institution of higher learning, provided, that the course has been offered both at its principal location for more than 2 years and by another branch or extension of the institution that has been in operation for more than 2 years.

In reviewing H.R. 2851, VA revisited the entire concept behind the 2-year period of operation requirement. As noted above, the requirement originally was promulgated to protect the veteran by requiring that a school show the value of a course in the marketplace by operating it for 2 years without Federal money. This concern over safeguarding the veteran's education benefits has led to the complexity of the current 2-year statutory provision which, in addition to stating the requirement prohibiting approval of courses in existence for less than 2 years, contains exemptions to that requirement, exceptions to the exemptions to the requirement, and even authority to waive part of the exemptions and all of the exceptions.

It is abundantly clear that the 2-year operation requirement is outdated in many respects, administratively cumbersome, and in need of revision. We agree with the concept of H.R. 2851 insofar as it seeks to streamline the 2-year requirement. However, we would expand the bill's approach to provide more equitable application of the 2-year operation requirement.

We propose that the 2-year operation requirement apply only to courses not leading to a standard college degree when offered either by a proprietary educational institution that has been in operation for less than 2 years or at a branch or extension of such institution that has been in operation for less than 2 years. Even in those cases, however, the requirement should not apply to

courses offered pursuant to a contract with the Department of Defense or Department of Transportation (with respect to the Coast Guard).

Further, in conjunction with this streamlining process, VA believes that the existing title 38 approval requirements for accredited courses should be enhanced. State approving agencies should have and exercise the authority to require that accredited courses meet certain of the specific criteria currently required for approval of nonaccredited courses. For instance, State approving agencies should be given express authority to examine whether accredited courses are consistent in quality, content, and length with similar courses already offered in the State, whether the institution has adequate space, equipment, instructional material and instructors to teach the course, and whether the educational experience of the instructors, directors, and administrators is adequate for offering the course.

We believe this modification of the period of operation requirement is consistent with comments and suggestions we have received from our staff in the field, as well as the educational community, and would make the approval process more efficient.

Transition Assistance Program

With the end of the Cold War imminent and the need foreseen to draw down the Armed Forces, Congress passed P.L. 101-237, the Veterans' Benefits Amendments of 1989, which established a pilot program to ease the transition of military personnel from active duty to the private sector. The resulting program, a combined effort of the Departments of Defense, Labor, and Veterans Affairs, was implemented in the spring of 1990. Under the Transition Assistance Program, commonly referred to as TAP, VA shares responsibility for a 3-day seminar of transition assistance activities designed to help service members make the transition to civilian life as smooth as possible. VA Military Services Coordinators (MSCs) regularly conduct briefings on benefits and services to military personnel at installations throughout the country and also conduct personal interviews to assist with filing of benefit claims.

P.L. 101-510, the National Defense Authorization Act for 1991, expanded the pilot program nationwide and also called for similar services to be provided to military personnel stationed overseas. Expansion of TAP began in the spring of 1991, immediately following the end of hostilities in the Persian Gulf War.

Each Veterans Services Division nationwide has a designated MSC, with some coordinators outbased to locations strategic to large military populations. MSCs and other Veterans Benefits Counselors, in addition to their support of TAP, provide benefit briefings at regular preseparation and retirement programs and are involved in outreach to members of the Reserve and National Guard.

In Fiscal Year 1992, through the support of the military service departments, VA's military services program was expanded to Europe and the Pacific Theater. This initiative was very well received by the military and resulted in placement of MSCs in both theaters on 6-month rotations. This effort was jointly funded by VA and DOD and continued through the end of Fiscal Year 1995. Due to the uncertainty of the federal budget, all overseas counselors were returned to their respective duty stations in September 1995. It is expected, however, that these overseas assignments will be resumed in the near future, though at a greatly reduced level.

A second component of the program, the Disabled Transition Assistance program (DTAP), is structured for the service member being separated for medical reasons. This component is a specialized and personal type of employment assistance/vocational rehabilitation counseling normally conducted at major medical centers where such separations would occur. DTAP is preferably conducted in conjunction with TAP to provide the service member with an overall briefing on the full range of VA benefits and services.

In Fiscal Year 1995, VA personnel conducted over 7,500 benefit presentations at TAP workshops, retirement seminars, and preseparation briefing sessions. These briefings were attended by over 306,000 service members and resulted in over 114,000 personal interviews.

Another measure of the tremendous success of the TAP is in the quality and sophistication of benefit claims being received. As a result of the information obtained through attending a TAP/DTAP briefing, veterans are submitting more complete and properly documented claims. The average number of disabilities being claimed has also increased since the implementation of the TAP/DTAP.

DOD separations are projected to average 258,000 personnel per year through the year 2000. VBA's outreach to these military personnel will continue to be one of our highest outreach priorities.

H.R. 3036 - Affecting the Education Service of the Department of Veterans Affairs

H.R. 3036 amends chapter 3 of title 38, United States Code, to require that the management, policy, and operations functions associated with the educational assistance programs of VA's Education Service be maintained in the District of Columbia.

We are certainly sensitive to congressional concerns about VA's proposal to move the Education Service to St. Louis, but we do not support this legislation.

We want to mention that the model selected for our education program operation has precedence. For decades, VA's insurance program has operated under such a model quite successfully. That program has been a long-standing leader within VA in innovation and customer service, proving that collocating the policy activity of the program at its principal production site saves time, promotes efficiency, and fosters a constructive partnership between line and staff elements. In addition, insurance program management has what we believe is an excellent working relationship with the Committee, albeit from a distance.

Thus, it is our belief that a similar organizational structure will realize many of the same advantages for our education benefit operations that we have for our insurance program.

We recognize that a move such as we have proposed will adversely affect some of the current Education Service's employees, presenting hard choices and challenges. We regret this and assure you that this also was a difficult management decision, not easily nor lightly made. At the same time, we recognize the potential in this change for benefiting the veterans we serve, and that must be our first consideration.

I would be pleased to answer any questions you or any other members of the Subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT OF
DR. JOHN G. SPERLING
FOUNDER & CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
UNIVERSITY OF PHOENIX
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 18, 1996

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

As a World War II veteran and former fighter pilot in the Army Air Corps, let me say how pleased I am to have the opportunity to make this statement for the Record. Let me also thank you for the fine work you and your staff do to ensure that America's veterans are treated with the honor and respect they so rightly deserve.

I have been asked to make this statement on the University of Phoenix's views on H.R. 2851, which would amend the "two-year rule," also known as the period of operation requirement. However, before I go any further I believe it would be beneficial to the members of the committee if they knew little bit about the University of Phoenix.

The University of Phoenix (UOP) is a for-profit, post secondary institution offering Master's and Bachelor's degree programs whose mission is to provide education to working adults. The University is regionally accredited by the North Central Association. UOP has grown from a single campus in Phoenix with a handful of students in 1976 to a network of 28 campuses and learning centers in 10 states. The University currently has over 28,000 students, making it the 5th largest private university in the country.

The University's educational philosophy is grounded in experiential learning rather than passive lecturing. Our classes employ interactive discussions, problem solving cases, simulation exercises and field experience. UOP only employs highly trained working practitioner faculty: people who teach in the evening what they practice during the day. All of these steps, and many more, are taken to make sure our graduates receive the training and guidance they need to succeed in the ever-changing global marketplace.

One of the key aspects of the University of Phoenix model is our ability to react quickly to the needs of our students and the demands of industry. The University's processes allow us to quickly revise current coursework or develop new programs and courses that meet the changing educational and career needs -- and reflect the changing work environment -- of our adult students.

The University's parent company, Apollo Group, Inc. (an educational holding company) is publicly traded on the NASDAQ Exchange where the stock has gone up more than 1,000 percent in a year and a half. This phenomenon is largely attributed to our ability to quickly tailor our courses to the needs of our students and make their educational experience as academically rewarding as possible. I also think it's worthy to note because it shows the clear view of Wall Street financial analysts that the University is financially sound, well managed and a stable, long-term opportunity to our students.

As a World War II veteran and University founder I understand the need to protect our veterans from "fly-by-night" miscreants. I also understand the original intent and need for the "two-year rule." As you know, however, the educational world is changing rapidly, and providing new and more creative opportunities to students. For that reason, I congratulate the subcommittee and the Members who introduced and cosponsored H.R. 2851 for their interest in reflecting those changes. We believe that H.R. 2851 is a significant improvement over the current two-year rule, widening veterans' opportunities and access to education.

However, we also believe that the current language of H.R. 2851 remains unnecessarily restrictive. As you know, as written, H.R. 2851 requires that in order for a veteran to be eligible to use his/her educational benefit eligibility a course must be offered at both a principal location for more than two years, and offered at another branch or extension which has been operational for more than two years. Since the language focuses specifically on how long the course has been offered, neither existing nor new learning sites can offer newly created programs to which veterans will be eligible, hindering a veteran from furthering his/her education by "requiring" him/her to take a course that fits the criteria of H.R. 2851. Students receiving student aid assistance under Title IV are under no such restriction, thus giving America's non-veteran students a distinct advantage over America's veteran students.

We believe that the intent of the original rule was to ensure that an institution was offering quality programs, and was financially and administratively able to manage additional sites, before making it available to veterans. The current two-year rule applies to *every* new site, ignoring an institution's track record and experience in operating such sites and extending quality to additional locations. While H.R. 2851 does recognize that contradiction, we believe it can offer further expansion of veterans' opportunities without sacrificing those significant concerns.

This is particularly true of a higher education institution such as the University of Phoenix. Because the current language focuses on each course specifically, it unnecessarily restricts a veterans' ability to choose the appropriate program. Some have noted the theoretical possibility of a school operating a completely different course at a second branch site, which would have no VA oversight under a revised two-year rule. This demonstrates, I believe, the need for distinguishing between a "course" and a "program."

In this context, I believe that the limit by course is overly restrictive. In theory, this could mean that if the University decides to offer a new *course* (say, Accounting in International Business) in a long-term *program* already being offered, such as the Bachelor's of Business Administration degree, the veteran student would have to wait two years to take the course!

There are two possible solutions to this problem. The first is to recognize a program of study, such as the degree or credential being sought, rather than each specific course. The other excellent solution would be that proposed already by the National Association of State Approving Agencies that exempts from this requirement a course that "leads to a standard college degree."

The current language also negates for veterans the opportunity to take advantage, as I mentioned earlier, of the University of Phoenix's extremely successful model of meeting market demands by offering relevant courses in a timely fashion. The current language effectively precludes veteran students from using their benefits to take a newly created program or course, in effect, preventing them from taking a course *they* deem necessary to furthering their educational goals.

In a nutshell, we are very pleased that the committee has had the foresight to recognize the ever evolving role of for-profit institutions in America's educational system. However, it is very clear that the 2-year rule is in need of revision. Respectable and successful proprietary institutions are not given the opportunity to offer relevant courses to veterans because of the other institutions' past improprieties. We thank you for your efforts but believe the 2-year operation requirement needs to be looked at further.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to testify on H.R. 2851.

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE APPROVING AGENCIES

Distance Education Task Force

REPORT

February 19, 1996

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I. Introduction

Advances in instructional technology are rapidly changing the educational environment, providing students new and multiple options for obtaining desired education and training through Distance or Non-Resident Instruction. The educational paradigm is shifting to focus more on the learning process and the learner rather than the traditional teacher-centered lecture course. New technologies portend major changes in the way education is designed and delivered to on-campus and off-campus individuals and groups. "Virtual universities" are even proposed, not to supplant traditional schools and institutions, but to make knowledge and learning available any time, anywhere through new and interactive technologies.

While many students will continue to prefer and benefit from traditional campus-based (or Resident) instruction, it is clear that other students will seek learning through new self-paced, self-directed learning opportunities which can take place in a wide variety of individualized but interactive settings, including more collaborative group learning environments.

At its meeting on February 18, 1992, it was resolved that the National Association of State Approving Agencies [NASAA] and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs [DVA], through a cooperative effort, would actively encourage and promote the increased usage of the Montgomery GI Bill. In meeting the legal requirements of Title 38, we should guarantee that the students eligible for Veterans benefits can take advantage of deserving programs through non-resident instructional means, including those delivered through new instructional technologies. NASAA must be at the forefront of national

discussions regarding program evaluation and approval. While credentialing remains the purview of faculty members and departments, approval of programs for students eligible to receive Veterans benefits is the legal responsibility of the State approving agency [SAA]. Principles and guidelines for SAA approval of Distance Education programs and their delivery must therefore be established.

II. Distance Education Task Force

In response to the technological advances rapidly changing the face of education, DVA Central Office [DVACO] and others have asked NASAA to review DVA regulations and provide suggestions as to possible changes. The Distance Education Task Force was appointed in September 1995, as part of the IHL Committee. It was charged with three tasks: (1) define the relevant terms involved; (2) develop a draft set of approval guidelines for discussion at the Mid-Winter Business and Training Meeting (February 1996); and after discussion and input from the membership, (3) develop a final document for presentation to DVACO and other interested parties by the end of March 1996.

Task Force members met by teleconference about once a month exchanging ideas and reacting to materials circulated among its members. Building on the excellent work begun last year by NASAA's Distance Learning Committee and shifting through a mountain of materials, the Task Force extracted what most directly met its needs. Heavy reliance was made on the work already done by the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (or WICHE) and the Task Force built upon WICHE's *Principles of Good Practice* for its recommendations which appear in Section IV.

III. Distance Education

While definitions for Distance Education abound, there appears to be general agreement on **what it is not** -- it is not face-to-face instruction between instructor and student in the same physical location during regularly scheduled times throughout a school term. Such traditional classroom instruction has been defined under DVA Regulations as Resident Instruction [.4200(r)].

Non-resident instruction then, can cover a whole range of instructional formats utilizing a growing array of new and traditional educational technologies. While these models vary, what they have in common is *their lack of dependence on the physical presence of both student and instructor in the same physical location*, hence the usage of the popular term -- Distance Education. Although the instructor and student are geographically separate, some form of student-faculty interaction is seen as an integral part of the process. Also, to be a program of education or training, it must consist of a planned sequence of related

instructional materials leading to a stated objective such as a diploma, degree, certificate, or award of college credit. (Under DVA regulations [.4230(b)(c)], the stated objective can be defined as educational, vocational, or professional and can be conducted at the collegiate [IHL] or non-collegiate [NCD] level).

Several forms of Distance Education have already been defined in DVA Regulations including: Correspondence Courses [.4256, 4279]; Radio Courses [.4252(d)]; and Open & Closed Circuit Television Courses [.4233(c)]. Also, the regulations cover educational practices which often comprise the non-residential component of residential programs: Independent Study [.4280(c)]; Practical Training/Internships [.4265]; and Cooperative Training [.4233(a)]. A whole subset of instructional models utilizing interactive compressed video, personal computers, e-mail; and the internet have arisen and allow students and faculty to interact electronically in a real-time environment. These have yet to be specifically covered within the regulations.

Since the forms of Distance Education will continue to proliferate, the Task Force has resisted the temptation to respond to specific models. Rather, it has grouped them all under the single label of Distance Education, and has recommended general approval guidelines (or criteria) which can encompass all forms of Distance Education. In a dynamic and growing environment, general educational criteria, based upon sound educational principles, can be interpreted to apply to new technologies as the situation warrants. Hence, the Task Force has laid its emphasis on the need for on-going review and development of guidelines within the context of a continuing process of professional development.

IV. Recommendations

- Recommendation 1. -- Increasing Access

In order to increase veteran's access to educational opportunities and maximize the utilization of their present educational benefits, the Task Force recommends the expansion of educational benefits to Distance Education, at both accredited and non-accredited Institutions of Higher Learning [IHL] and Non College Degree [NCD] programs for educational, vocational and professional objectives.

- Recommendation 2. -- Principles of Good Practice

Respecting the need for each State approving agency to apply its own specific standards, it is recommended that NASAA encourage the SAA to base its approval upon criteria in keeping with the following general Guidelines or *Principles of Good Practice* which are summarized below and described more fully in the Attachment.

1. Institutional Commitment. The institution must demonstrate its commitment to the program through (a) the program's consistency with institutional role and mission; (b) the provision of appropriate student and academic support services; (c) necessary faculty assistance; and (d) on-going financial/technical support.

2. Curriculum and Instruction. The program and its delivery system (a) must be appropriately designed to achieve its objective; (b) staffed and overseen by qualified and trained faculty and instructional designers; and (c) provide for frequent, regular and recurrent student/faculty interaction.

3. Evaluation and Assessment. The institution will conduct frequent evaluations of the program, its component curricula parts and its students, with particular reference to educational/learning outcomes.

- Recommendation 3. -- Interstate Program Approval

In order to assist states in approving distance education programs, especially in the case of programs transmitted across state lines, it is recommended that NASAA develop (1) a model application form and (2) suggested interstate approval protocol [based upon the *Principles of Good Practice*] which states **may** use in doing their approvals. Once developed they would be incorporated into the National Training Curriculum. In general, it is recommended that in regard to interstate programs:

1. Initial approval is the responsibility of the SAA in which the School is based [Home State]. As needed, other SAAs may accept the Home State SAA approval once they have reviewed the program and applied their own requirements.

2. To assist in the review of programs transmitted out-of-state, a commonly agreed upon application form will be offered to collect basic information which any state could use in making its own approval decision.

3. Consideration should be given to electronically depositing these applications with NASAA so that other states could readily examine them, creating a NASAA (or SAA) data base.

- Recommendation 4. -- Continuing Professional Development

In order to support the State approving agencies in doing approvals of Distance Education, it is recommended that NASAA offer a program of continuing professional development designed to keep its membership up-to-date and fully informed as to developments in this field.

- Recommendation 5. -- DVA Regulations

With regard to the DVA Regulations, the following is recommended:

1. That the present approval criteria be consolidated into a single Distance Education (or Non-Resident) Section with a set of general approval criteria based upon the *Principles of Good Practice* found in Recommendation 2 (above) and if needed, an approval process for interstate programs which reflects Recommendation 3 (above).
2. If instruction by Distance Education is only one component of an educational or training program at an IHL or NCD, such as a Practicum, Independent Study Course or an Open Circuit TV Course, then as long as that component is less than half of the total program, no special approval criteria should apply apart from Sections .4253 and .4254. If more than half of the educational or training program is via Distance Education, then the Distance Education criteria should apply. New programs designed exclusively for Distance Education and currently approved programs for Resident Instruction that meet the 50%+ threshold, must meet Distance Education Guidelines. At the determination of the State approving agency, it may approve the school to offer Distance Education programs, rather than approving each individual program.
3. If all forms of Distance Education are approved by the SAA and subject to the above guidelines, then all credit should be treated equally with no differencing credit in terms of payment.

* * *

On February 19, 1996, at the Mid-Winter Business and Training Meeting, the Report of the Task Force was presented to the general membership of NASAA for discussion and input. The members comments are addressed in a cover letter to this Report. On a voice vote, the Report of the Task Force was accepted.

ATTACHMENT

GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR SAA APPROVAL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

I. INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT

A. Role and Mission:

1. The program is consistent with the institution's role and mission.
2. There is an established institutional approval process that ensures the appropriateness of the distance education mode of delivery being used to meet the program's objectives.

B. Student Services:

1. The institutional catalog will provide clear, detailed and current information specific to the mode of delivery of the distance education program. This must include at a minimum: curriculum description, course and degree requirements, faculty-student interaction, required technical skills and/or competencies, any technical equipment requirements, the institution's policy and regulations relative to the standards of progress for the distance education program, and the availability of academic support services and financial aid resources.
2. The institution will accept only those students with the appropriate background, knowledge and/or technical skills necessary to undertake the program in its particular mode of delivery.
3. Enrolled students will receive documentation which describes reasonable and adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support their learning.
4. The institution ensures that appropriate learning resources such as library services are available to students.
5. Advertising, recruiting, and admissions materials clearly and accurately represent the program and the services available.

C. Faculty Support:

1. The institution ensures that faculty receive training appropriate to the mode of delivery used for the distance education program.
2. Appropriate faculty support services specifically related to the distance education mode of delivery of the program will be provided by the institution.

D. Commitment Support:

1. Policies for faculty evaluation will include appropriate consideration of teaching, scholarly and other activities related to the mode of delivery of the distance education program.
2. The institution demonstrates financial and technical commitment to ongoing support and to continuation of the program for a period sufficient to enable students to complete a degree/certificate.

II. CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Each program results in learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree/certificate and is consistent in quality, content and length with similar programs offered on campus.
2. The instructional delivery system is coherent, complete and appropriate to the program's objectives.
3. The program provides for frequent, real-time or delayed interaction between faculty and students and among students if appropriate to the mode of delivery.
4. Qualified faculty with requisite expertise in distance education will design and provide appropriate oversight of a program delivered by any distance education mode.
5. The institution will treat successful credit earned through distance education the same as credit earned through residential instruction.

III. EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

1. The institution will frequently evaluate a program delivered through distance education for educational effectiveness, including assessment of student learning outcomes, student retention, and student and faculty satisfaction. The SAA and students will have access to such program evaluation data.
2. The institution will provide for assessment and documentation of student achievement in each course, and at completion of the program including, interim progress reports if appropriate, final grade and length of time to complete each course.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
 RESPONSES TO POST-HEARING QUESTIONS
 CONCERNING THE APRIL 18, 1996 HEARING

FROM THE
 HONORABLE STEVE BUYER
 CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING,
 EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING
 HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

H.R. 2851

1. The 2-year rule was an important element in protecting the education benefits for veterans. I know this was covered during your testimony, but could you review the historical perspectives for the need of the 2-year rule, and why we are able to move away from it now?

Answer: Following World War II, a significant number of veterans were discharged in a relatively short period of time. The opportunity to make a fast profit from these veterans was seized upon by unscrupulous individuals who opened schools that were of low quality, had low operating costs, and whose main objective was to separate veterans from their GI Bill benefit dollars. It was within this framework that the two-year period of operation requirement arose. The intent of the rule was to protect veterans from opportunistic school operators. In the ensuing 50 years, we have observed the expansion of the public college system. There are now colleges in nearly every county in the United States. We have seen the expansion of some private colleges across the country. Our experience, together with the fact that there are fewer veterans receiving VA educational assistance than following World War II, has assured us that accredited colleges and universities are not being operated just to obtain the veterans' educational benefits.

2. In reviewing the SAA proposals for the 2-year rule as presented by Mr. Sweeney, it seems as though the SAAs would allow for many instances whereby the Secretary of VA would be granted waiver authority for any number of issues.

- **Can you comment on the waiver proposals as outlined by the SAAs testimony, and are such authorities consistent with streamlined management of the education service?**

Answer: The recommendation submitted by the National Association of State Approving Agencies (NASAA) includes a waiver for institutions offering programs similar-in-character to those that have been offered by the school in the same State or Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA), as determined by that State approving agency.

Under current procedures, determinations regarding whether courses are similar in character to instruction previously offered by a school are based on review of the courses offered by the branch or facility offering the new course(s). The recommendation by NASAA specifies that courses must be similar in character to courses offered by a school in the same State or SMSA.

If the State approving agencies were authorized, as we propose, to examine accredited schools' ability to provide the instruction and administer programs, there would be no need to determine whether two courses are similar in character.

The NASAA recommendation provides that determinations that courses are similar in character shall be made by the State approving agencies. Currently, all approval decisions made by the State approving agencies are subject to review by VA. Because of the

additional approval authority proposed to be given to the SAAs, there is no need for the similar-in-character provision.

Tap Program

3. What was the President's budget request for FY 1997 for the VA's work in the TAP program? Is this sufficient?

Answer: The Transition Assistance Program is not budgeted as a separate line item. It is included in the Veterans Services Program as part of our outreach effort. However, we estimate that the TAP/DTAP portion of our overall budget for FY 1997 will be approximately \$2.5 million. This figure provides for a full-time equivalent (FTE) level of 47.9 employees. Our estimate also takes into account military base closures and DoD estimates of the number of service members expected to leave the service during FY 97. It ensures our continued support of TAP/DTAP briefings and provides for a base level of service at military facilities in other forums in which VA information and assistance are furnished, such as pre-separation and retirement briefings, and job fairs.

4. Is the current MOU between the Departments of VA, Defense and Labor effective?

Answer: The current MOU is effective in defining the objectives of the Transition Assistance Program and the responsibilities of each department. It officially establishes the cooperation, oversight, and periodic review necessary to conduct the program effectively.

Military Services Coordinator (MSC)

5. In VA testimony, it was noted that each Veterans Services Division nationwide has a designated Military Services Coordinators (MSC) with some coordinators out-based to locations strategic to large military populations.

- **How many MSCs are there nationwide?**

Answer: The full-time equivalent (FTE) of employees who perform MSC duties is 53.3. However, there are approximately 80 Military Services Coordinators or veterans benefits counselors nationwide who conduct benefit briefings and provide claims assistance to military personnel participating in TAP/DTAP, pre-separation and retirement programs, military job fairs, and other forums in which benefits information and claims assistance is furnished.

- **What are the qualifications of the MSCs and are these permanent employees, or do they serve on a rotational basis?**

Answer: Military Services Coordinator must have a thorough working knowledge of the full range of VA benefits and services, and the interpersonal skills necessary to conduct effective benefit presentations and furnish assistance to individual claimants in applying for and obtaining VA benefits. Full-time, permanent employees apply for the six-month temporary position of MSC. After serving in the position they return to their previous position.

- **How are they trained?**

Answer: Since a thorough working knowledge of VA benefits is a prerequisite to becoming a Military Services Coordinator, little additional training is required for those who are selected or designated as a MSC. The overwhelming majority of incumbent MSCs were formerly journeymen veterans benefits counselors. As such, they were

required to complete a comprehensive training program that included classroom and on-the-job instruction for a minimum of 2 years before attaining journeyman status.

In June 1991, we held a national workshop for newly selected MSCs. This workshop covered a number of military issues, and emphasized the importance of benefit presentations as a component of our overall outreach effort. Today, new MSCs are trained locally with continued emphasis on presentation (e.g., benefits to be covered in TAP briefings, instructional aides, and course material).

- **What are examples of large military populations?**

Answer: DoD can better respond to this question as our figures are approximate. However, from a VA perspective, the following facilities are considered to have large active duty populations:

| | |
|--|---------|
| Norfolk Naval Base (including Marines) | 100,500 |
| Ft. Hood | 45,000 |
| San Diego Naval Station | 43,000 |
| Ft. Bragg | 40,000 |
| Camp Lejeune | 40,000 |
| Camp Pendleton | 33,000 |
| Ft. Campbell | 24,000 |
| Ft. Benning | 22,000 |
| North Island Naval Air Station | 20,000 |

VA's obligation is to the active duty service member and his or her family. In many facilities, the number of family members equals or exceeds the active duty strength. For this reason, any listing of the size of the facilities provides an incomplete indication of the potential TAP workload.

- **What are the Department's projection to resume the overseas assignments of the Military Services Coordinators (MSCs)?**

Answer: We plan to resume overseas assignments as soon as funds are available.

6. Testimony from the hearing indicated some concern by some of the veterans organizations regarding the Disabled TAP portion of the program.

- **How well is the Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) working?**

Answer: The goal of DTAP is to encourage and assist potentially eligible service members in making an informed decision about VA's Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Chapter 31). DTAP is also intended to facilitate the expeditious delivery of vocational rehabilitation services to eligible persons.

Whenever possible, DTAP presentations are adjoined to regular TAP sessions and service members with service-related injuries or disabilities are encouraged to attend. In addition, liaison is maintained with military medical facilities and procedures have been established at each VA regional office for intervention on behalf of service members who are hospitalized, convalescing, or otherwise unable to attend a TAP/DTAP session. Since FY 92, we have obtained a yearly average of nearly 16,000 chapter 31 applications as a result of our efforts. In addition, our Vocational Rehabilitation & Counseling (VR&C) staffs follow established policies of providing priority service based on degree of disability. For these reasons, we believe that DTAP is working well.

- **How does VA work with the veterans service organizations on this program?**

Answer: There are no uniform procedures for involving veterans services organizations (VSOs) in the program. However, we maintain liaison at the national and local level with the major veterans services organizations and keep them informed about DTAP activities through a variety of mediums. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Under Secretary for Benefits, and other key officials within the Veterans Benefits Administration participate in a variety of national or local forums in which VA benefit programs and services, including DTAP, are reviewed or discussed. In individual cases where VSOs have received powers-of-attorney, VR&C staff work with service officers as needed to facilitate service delivery to mutual clients. Service officers or other representatives of the major veterans organizations also participate directly in a variety of benefit briefings, including TAP/DTAP.

- **What are the notification mechanisms involved between the Department of Defense and VA declaring that a service member is in need of DTAP services?**

Answer: VA staffs work closely with local DoD transition managers at their assigned facilities to coordinate the delivery of DTAP services. Any separating service member who believes he or she may have a disabling condition incurred as a result of military service can choose to receive DTAP services. The notification mechanisms for DTAP are similar to those for TAP and vary from one military facility to another. The mechanisms may include announcing TAP/DTAP sessions in base newspapers, daily orders, flyers or integrating the information into formal separation briefings. Service members physically unable to attend a TAP/DTAP session are provided DTAP services individually or in small groups. VR&C staffs typically provide this service and work closely with DoD personal, especially medical administrative staffs at military medical centers, to identify those service members requiring personalized DTAP services.

- **How long does a service member need to wait prior to receiving the proper DTAP services when necessary?**

Answer: DTAP services are provided through briefings scheduled at least monthly to reach service members eligible for medical separations. In the case of severely disabled service members who are hospitalized, convalescing, or otherwise unable to attend TAP/DTAP sessions, VA staff attempt to visit each such individual within a few days of the notification of the need for a personal visit.

- **Can you measure the program's success?**

Answer: The success of DTAP is directly related to the success of TAP. A major goal of DTAP is to encourage and assist potentially eligible service members in making an informed decision about VA's Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Chapter 31). The first introduction that many service members have to Chapter 31 emanates from their participation in TAP or other types of benefit briefings. Since FY 1992, we have conducted more than 28,000 benefit briefings. Attendance at these briefings exceeded more than 1.2 million active duty members, military retirees, reservists, and members of the National Guard. During that same time, we have conducted over 459,000 personal interviews, many of which were in conjunction with DTAP. As a result of service members attendance at TAP/DTAP sessions, we have obtained nearly 63,000 applications for Chapter 31. At a minimum, these numbers suggest we have been successful in achieving the aforementioned goal.

7. One of the more interesting notes from your testimony is how the quality of benefit claim has improved since the introduction of TAP.

- **With a better quality claim, how much quicker has VA been able to process claims from TAP participants?**

- **How does this translate into a savings of FTEE?**

Answer: While it is true that claims are improved and more sophisticated, this does not always parlay into savings of time or FTE because of the increased complexity and number of disabilities claimed per case.

8. The average number of disabilities being claimed has also increased since the implementation of TAP/DTAP.

- **What are the numbers of disabilities prior to TAP as opposed to the number of disabilities claimed subsequent to TAP?**

Answer: Our reports were not modified until 1994 to separately identify original compensation claims where 8 or more disabilities are claimed.

Education

9. Your Department's views on the discussion draft on veterans education that was distributed at the hearing of April 18 would be appreciated as well.

Answer: Comments on the Discussion Draft dated April 17, 1996, follow. Please note that enactment of all of these provisions would result in an increase in direct spending of less than \$5 million over five years.

Section 1. Elimination of Distinction Between Open Circuit TV and Independent Study.

Under current law, VA may not approve enrollments in a course of instruction offered by open circuit television unless the instruction is an integral part of a resident training course leading to a standard college degree. This section would remove that bar and consider open circuit television to be a form of independent study, and approvable as such.

The existing law allows students to pursue all other nontraditional courses without a concurrent enrollment in resident training. In the current American educational milieu, open circuit television is considered to be a form of independent study. There is no reason to treat open circuit television differently from other forms of independent study.

For these reasons, we support this provision subject to the following changes. We recommend deleting the change to 38 U.S.C. 3482(f) since the program involved, the Vietnam-era G. I. Bill, has expired. We recommend that 38 U.S.C. 3523(c) and 38 U.S.C. 3680A(c) be amended by putting a period after "radio" and striking all that follows.

Section 2. Medical Qualifications for Flight Training.

Current law provides that VA may approve an enrollment in flight training if certain conditions are met. One of these conditions is that the individual meet the medical requirements necessary for a commercial pilot's license.

Some individuals meet the requirements at the beginning of their training and then, during the course of their training, the medical certification lapses. Thus, at least for a period of time, the medical requirements are not met. Veterans' flight training awards must then be terminated. With enactment of this provision, veterans will not have their flight training terminated just because of a temporary lapse in their medical certification.

For these reasons, we support this provision.

Section 3. Benefits for Pursuit of Professional Recertification and Skills Improvement Courses.

Legislative language was not provided for this section. However, we support the concept of permitting educational assistance for such training.

Current law provides that individuals may not receive VA-administered education benefits for an educational objective for which they are already qualified. Thus, veterans who were previously trained as professionals and who now wish to return to or continue in their chosen profession are barred from receiving benefits for continuing education courses, even those required for recertification.

Teaching is an example of one profession in which veteran members would benefit if this change were made in the law. With the decline in basic academic skills of American students, there has been renewed interest in quality teaching. This change would also help to improve the quality of our teachers and assist those veterans who have been certified in a particular profession to use their education benefits to sharpen their skills.

Accordingly, we would favor an appropriate amendment to title 38, U.S.C., that would permit education benefits for pursuit of such courses.

Section 4. Cooperative Programs.

Current law provides that cooperative training must be pursued as a full-time program. This section would permit benefits to be paid for cooperative training pursued at other than a full-time rate. The minimum training time permitted should be half time. Entitlement would be charged commensurate with the training time pursued.

Today's economic conditions in the work place have altered the way employers hire. To remain competitive, employers must keep costs in check by curtailing work hours or benefits. Some employers prefer to hire part-time employees to reduce the cost of fringe benefits and, in some cases, have reduced existing cooperative students to less than a full work week. This prevents students from obtaining VA benefits due to their inability to find full-time cooperative work.

For these reasons, we support this section, subject to the limitation that cooperative training must be pursued on a half-time or greater basis and that payments to beneficiaries be made in accordance with their training time.

Section 5. Recognition of Credit Hours Granted.

At present, establishing entitlement to chapter 30, Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) education benefits and chapter 1606, Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR) benefits generally requires that eligible participants complete the requirements of a high school diploma (or equivalent) or 12 college degree credits before separation from active duty.

This amendment would recognize that some individuals are granted credit for 12 or more credit hours without having had to complete any course work. There is no substantive reason to deny individuals in this category their MGIB or MGIB-SR benefits. Therefore, we support this section.

Section 6. Rounding to Next Lowest Dollar of Educational Assistance Amounts.

It is our understanding that the latest version of this discussion draft no longer includes this provision; therefore, we believe there is no need to comment on this section.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
 RESPONSES TO POST-HEARING QUESTIONS
 CONCERNING THE APRIL 18, 1996 HEARING
 FROM THE
 HONORABLE BOB FILNER
 RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
 EDUCATION, TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING
 HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

1. Regarding the VA proposal to amend the 2-year rule, I just want to confirm for the record that trade schools and other non-degree granting institutions WOULD NOT be affected by the relaxation of the rule. Is that correct?

Answer: Essentially that is correct. Specifically, we are proposing that the 2-year operation requirement apply only to courses not leading to a standard college degree when offered either by a proprietary educational institution that has been in operation for less than 2 years or at a branch or extension of such institution that has been in operation for less than 2 years. However, even in those cases, we are proposing that the requirement should not apply to courses offered pursuant to a contract with the Department of Defense or Department of Transportation (with respect to the Coast Guard).

- **Isn't it true that the vast majority of problems with proprietary schools have involved those that do not grant college degrees?**

Answer: Yes, that is true.

2. In your comments regarding the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) I want to correct your characterization of the genesis of TAP. This committee initiated TAP before the drawdown of the Armed Forces was ever contemplated, and made it clear that we intended it to be a permanent program.

Later in your statement you mention that VBA outreach to the military will continue "through the completion of the downsizing." I just want to emphasize that TAP is permanent and will be a continuing VA responsibility.

Answer: We regret that our comments left the impression that we intend to provide transition assistance only through the completion of downsizing. VA has a long history of providing benefits information and special assistance to military personnel and their families. Even before the existence of TAP, we were reaching out to service members and recently separated veterans in a variety of ways to help ease their transition to civilian life. We fully expect to do the same in the future.

3. Since the Veterans Services Division has been disbursed, what has happened to the Military Services Coordinators (MSCs)? Have they been disbursed among the other Services?

Answer: We believe that your question relates to a recent reorganization of VA Central Office, which resulted in the Veterans Assistance Service (VAS) being abolished. Oversight and direction in administering the Military Services Program was previously a part of VAS. However, this responsibility now belongs to the Veterans Services Program Staff, which is aligned organizationally to the Office of the Chief Information Officer. This reorganization was virtually transparent to our field stations and did not result in a dispersal of the MSCs to other Services. We still have MSCs at each of our VA regional offices.

- **You note that MSCs are involved in outreach to members of the Selected Reserve. Specifically, how is this accomplished? How many such contacts were made in FY 95?**

Answer: Benefit briefings are the principal method of outreach to members of the Selected Reserve. MSCs work with local DoD officials to arrange these briefings and provide claims assistance as needed. Special attention is given to units ordered to active duty for other than training, such as occurred during the Persian Gulf War and now, to a lesser extent, Bosnia. These briefings are conducted as part of the broader Military Services Program and, as such, are reported collectively with other benefit sessions, which include briefings held in connection with TAP, DTAP, preseparation and retirement programs, and military job fairs. Thus, we can not say how many of the 7,500 benefit presentations conducted during FY 95 were held with units of the Selected Reserve.

- 4. It is unfortunate that VA has not been able to provide overseas counselors this fiscal year. I can understand, though, why it would have been difficult this year.**

To what degree can computer capability fill that void? Has an e-mail system been established between VA counselors here and overseas bases?

Answer: VBA does not currently have an electronic mail system available to our overseas MSCs. While detailed to overseas locations, our MSCs receive logistical support (e.g., phone service, computer access, use of facsimile machines) from their DoD hosts.

Computers have already advanced the quality of our transition services to military personnel living overseas. For example, service members who have access to the Internet can now obtain a wealth of VA information from VA Home Page, our world wide web site. We are continuously improving the information and forms available through VA Home Page in an effort to make it an even more valuable outreach tool.

5. I'm interested in the Disabled Transition Program (D-TAP).

- **How many DTAP sessions were held during FY 95?**

Answer: DTAP sessions are not reported separately from the other types of benefit briefings conducted by MSCs. DTAP briefings are part of the broader Military Services Program which include TAP sessions, preseparation and retirement briefings, and military job fairs. Thus, we can not say how many of the 7,500 benefit presentations conducted during FY 95 were DTAP sessions.

- **Who conducted these sessions? Are Vocational Rehabilitation and Counseling (VR&C) staff basically in charge of DTAP?**

Answer: The overwhelming majority of TAP and DTAP briefings are conducted by MSCs, who are members of Veterans Services Divisions, or their equivalents, at VA regional offices. In some instances, VR&C staff do participate in these briefings. The VR&C Officer at each VA regional office is responsible for maintaining liaison with military medical centers and medical holding areas at military installations, and establishing procedures to ensure that members who are hospitalized, convalescing, or otherwise unable to attend TAP/DTAP sessions are assisted.

- **How does DTAP training differ from regular TAP training?**

Answer: DTAP is an integral component of TAP. A DTAP session is more specialized and personal than TAP, as it focuses on those service members who are being separated for medical reasons or who may have service-related disabilities which may potentially qualify them for VA's Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Chapter 31). The session includes a comprehensive discussion of VA's vocational rehabilitation services, and

provides an opportunity for participants to complete all necessary forms, thus allowing for more expeditious service. Severely disabled service members may not always be able to attend scheduled TAP/DTAP sessions. When we learn of these persons, Vocational Rehabilitation and Counseling staff do everything possible to arrange for face-to-face, and even bedside, interviews at the medical facility. Where possible, both for the service member and the VA staff, the initial evaluation and counseling for services may begin while the service member is still on active duty and the service member may actually begin receiving rehabilitation services. This is particularly beneficial for those persons who are severely disabled and need to begin the rehabilitation process as quickly as possible.

6. In your testimony you allude to the impact TAP/D-TAP has had on the number of claims filed by separating military personnel. Actually, TAP has had a profound effect on VA's caseload. For the record, could you describe that effect since FY 1992?

Answer: Veterans claims have increased dramatically over the last five years. Claims submitted as a result of attendance at a TAP/DTAP briefing have increased 7% from 1992 to 1995. Overall original claims have increased an average of 36% for this same period.

7. I see no point in debating the proposed move of the Education Service. I do want to make it clear, though, that we disagree with your evaluation of the effect the relocation of the Education Service will have on veterans. We strongly believe this move will adversely affect all those participating in VA education programs. To suggest that a service can be relocated 1,000 miles from Central Office and not have its input and influence diminished is nonsense. We value VA's education programs no less than the compensation, pension, housing, vocational rehabilitation and medical programs.

Answer: We respect your opinion on this difficult issue.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS FOR HON. CAROLYN BECRAFT, DOD - APRIL 18, 1996

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TAP)

1. QUESTION: What was the requested TAP funding level for FY 1997? Is this level sufficient?

ANSWER: The FY 1997 President's budget submission for TAP was \$39.9 million; this level is sufficient.

2. QUESTION: What is the optimum time period prior to release from military service that a service member needs to use the services offered through TAP most effectively?

ANSWER: The optimum time would be 180 days prior to separation.

3. QUESTION: How is DoD ensuring attendance at TAP during this time period is being accomplished?

ANSWER: Attendance at TAP is not mandatory. However, everyone that goes through pre-separation counseling is signed up for TAP training.

4. QUESTION: Can you respond to the Vietnam Veterans of America's (VVA) concern that some base commanders contend that they cannot spare departing personnel from their assignments to attend TAP/DTAP training?

ANSWER: In the first year or so of TAP, we heard this concern; however, now that all base commanders are familiar with TAP, we have not encountered this problem.

5. QUESTION: One of my concerns is that the quality, availability, and scope of the TAP program be as uniform as possible. You mentioned that video presentations were prepared for shipboard and isolated servicemembers. Obvious obstacles may hamper our efforts to reach those even on larger installations overseas.

- What and how are our overseas members receiving TAP services?
- Is the quality comparable to that received here in the states?
- Will you re-institute the overseas counselors?

ANSWER: CONUS and overseas servicemembers receive all TAP services mandated by law. The quality of these services in OCONUS and CONUS is the same. Additionally, during our overseas job fairs we speak at length with departing servicemembers to ascertain the quality of services provided. Accordingly, we have determined that departing overseas servicemembers are receiving high-quality service. Also, our overseas base commanders have written to us on several occasions expressing their support of the TAP. The counselors were brought back to the States because of the Continuing Resolution and the uncertainty of the federal budget. However, they will return overseas on or about July 1, 1996.

6. QUESTION: In your testimony, you spoke of the job fairs overseas, and the resultant job offers for servicemembers.

- Are you aware of the kinds of jobs that were being offered?
- Was the federal government among those potential employers at these events?

ANSWER: Yes. The types of jobs being offered are: engineers, project managers, truck drivers and mechanics, computer operators, accounting and finance positions, intelligence analysts, sales people, technical writers and editors, police officers, security officers, restaurant managers, and many more. This year, the Central Intelligence Agency went to the Far East. In the past, the U.S. Marshals Service, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the U.S. Department of State have participated.

7. QUESTION: What are the outcomes expected of your review of the TAP program with each of the military services? Name some strategies.

- ANSWER: Our review will assist us in making determinations about sizing and scope of the program. Our strategies will include regionalization where we can consolidate functions in areas with high concentrations of military, including those areas with two or more co-located installations. Another strategy will be targeting populations. We plan to identify the groups with the greatest need for service and test new ways to reach them. We have instituted job fairs to target overseas populations who have no opportunity to access the job market prior to return from overseas. In CONUS, we will rely more heavily on job fairs in local communities and wider access to the Transition Bulletin Board (TBB) via Internet.

TAP TECHNOLOGY & MANAGEMENT

8. QUESTION: Aside from DORS and TBB, how is DoD preparing to use advanced technology to improve delivery and access to TAP programs?

ANSWER: We now have DORS on Internet, and the TBB will be on Internet by the end of August.

9. QUESTION: Much of the services provided under TAP come from VA and Vets.

- How can the working relationships with the Departments of Labor and Veterans Affairs be improved? Is the current status of the MOU sufficient?

ANSWER: Only a small portion of the services provided under the DoD TAP comes from the VA and DoL. The working relationship between DoD, DoL, and VA has been, and continues to be, a cooperative partnership. We have open lines of communications, keeping each agency informed of developments and on-going initiatives that may affect TAP. The roles and responsibilities at the site level are spelled out in local MOUs. In several regions, transition managers and local DoL staff hold quarterly meeting to discuss a range of TAP topics. The current MOU is sufficient.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS FROM THE HONORABLE BOB FILNER
RANKING DEMOCRATIC MEMBER OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION, TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING

HEARING OF APRIL 18, 1996
TO THE HONORABLE CAROLYN BECRAFT - DOD

1. QUESTION: As you know, we feel strongly about the preseparation counseling provided to individuals before they leave the military particularly counseling regarding Montgomery GI Bill benefits.

Section 1142(b) (1) of title 10 requires that counseling include a discussion of the education benefits to which the individual is entitled. Our expectation was that, under this section, servicemembers would be told what their individual entitlement would be so that they would enter school fully informed of their benefits.

Does this, in fact, take place? Are individuals told their entitlement level before they leave active duty?

ANSWER: Yes, this does happen.

2. QUESTION: Section 1142 also requires that relocation assistance services be provided. Would you describe the assistance now provided?

Are you familiar with a proposal made by a private company that would provide separating servicemembers with direct assistance in buying and/or renting a home when they arrive at their new location? If not, contact Committee staff and they will give you more details. You might want to look into this.

ANSWER: The Relocation Assistance Program provides services for all types of military moves, including separations and permanent changes of station. The purpose of the program is to ensure that members are well informed and prepared to manage all aspects of relocation from logistics and procedures to family readjustment and finances. Services include destination area information, relocation needs assessment, relocation planning assistance, briefings, seminars and workshops. No, we are not familiar with a proposal by a private company to provide relocation assistance, and we will contact the Committee for more details.

3. QUESTION: Career change and financial planning counseling are also required. Who provides this counseling? Are the counselors skilled in these important areas of concern?

ANSWER: Career change is addressed by site transition managers and the DoI, TAP class. Financial counseling is provided through the Family Service Centers. Yes, counselors are skilled in these areas of concerns.

4. QUESTION: You note that TAP sessions are generally given over a three-day period. Staff has visited several bases, however, where the seminars last only 2 days.

Who makes the decision regarding the length of the seminar? Does a shorter seminar period have to be approved by you or can the base commander independently make that decision?

In terms of quality control, are you comfortable with the shorter seminars? Is quality adversely affected?

ANSWER: The length of the seminar is determined by the local partnership between DoI, VA and DoD. Some Services provide a General Officer, Senior Executive or Senior Enlisted 2-day seminar. These are very limited seminars. General Officers and Senior Executives prefer the 2-day seminar. Sometimes ships request these seminars just prior to deployment. Yes, we are quite comfortable with the quality of the seminars.

5. QUESTION: Interest in the Defense Outplacement Referral System (DORS) has obviously increased significantly.

Do you have any idea how many matches have been made through the DORS connection?

How do employers register to participate in this program?

How long do the resumes stay in DORS? How is the system updated.

ANSWER: We do not track matches made through DORS. Employers register in DORS by either calling a 1-800 number or faxing or mailing a request for registration. A resume may stay in DORS for a year. Applicants can submit their resumes 180 days prior to separation; they can update their resumes up to 90 days after separation, which will give them another 90 days to have their resumes on file.

6. QUESTION: The Transition Bulletin Board (TBB) also seems to have attracted a lot of attention.

Do you know how many placements have been made through the TBB?

Do you know the types of jobs that are listed? Are they blue collar, white collar, professional, casual labor?

ANSWER: We do not track TBB placements. The TBB lists blue-collar, white-collar, professional, and casual jobs. Job listed on the TBB include engineers, project managers, truck drivers and mechanics, computer operators, accounting and finance personnel, intelligence analysts, sales people, technical writers and editors, police officers, security officers, restaurant managers and many more.

7. QUESTION: I understand the overseas Job Fairs are very impressive. Are they ongoing? Are new employers being sought to participate? Must the employers commit to having a given number of job openings in order to participate?

ANSWER: Yes, the overseas Job Fairs are ongoing. New employers are added to each. Each employer must commit to a goal of making a minimum of 50 provisional/conditional job offers to qualified candidates.

8. QUESTION: I understand that DoD employees have gone to remote areas including Turkey and perhaps Bosnia to provide TAP training. Is this correct? Please provide the Subcommittee with more details about this effort.

ANSWER: Yes, the Army has provided TAP training in Bosnia and Turkey. The training provided is the same TAP training given at all CONUS and OCONUS TAP sites.

9. QUESTION: I'm pleased that TAP has proven to be cost effective. Please provide the Subcommittee with additional numbers and information supporting this conclusion.

ANSWER: The transition program, combined with other economic factors including availability of jobs, has accounted for a cost avoidance of \$152 million annually in unemployment compensation.

10. QUESTION: Thank you for your comments regarding DoD's understanding of Congressional intent regarding TAP. This was, is, and ever more shall be a permanent program.

Would you supply the Subcommittee with a copy of your report to the Appropriations Committee regarding TAP?

ANSWER: We are enclosing a copy of the TAP report to the Appropriations Committee.

11. QUESTION: How much money for transition services is included in the President's budget request for FY97?

ANSWER: The President's budget request for FY 1997 is \$39.9 million.

12. QUESTION: It has been suggested that TAP participation be mandatory. In your view, would this be productive?

ANSWER: No, I think the program is working quite well without mandatory participation. People are enthusiastic about TAP, and military commanders are stressing the importance of attending TAP.

13. QUESTION: Several witnesses expressed concern about the rather high percentage of TAP participants who are within one month of discharge. Congressional expectation was that individuals would ideally be 3-6 months away from discharge.

What can be done to improve this situation?

ANSWER: On average, over 53 percent of all departing servicemembers attend pre-separation counseling within 90 days prior to separation. We will continue to stress the importance of pre-separation counseling attendance and monitor it quite closely.

U.S. Department of Labor

Assistant Secretary for
Veterans' Employment and Training
Washington, D.C. 20210



May 15, 1996

The Honorable Steve Buyer
Chairman
House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on
Education, Training, Employment and Housing
335 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Buyer:

Thank you again for the opportunity to share with the Subcommittee at its April 18, 1996, hearing what is being done by the Veterans' Employment and Training Service in the transition assistance program and for homeless veterans. Enclosed are my responses to your April 23, 1996, questions following that hearing.

Sincerely,


PRESTON M. TAYLOR JR.

Enclosures

**Questions and Answers
Resulting from Hearing
April 18, 1996**

Question 1. What was the President's FY 1997 budget request for TAP services through VETS?

Answer: The President's proposed FY 1997 budget requested \$2,151,000 for VETS' transition assistance program (TAP). This funding level would support 4,000 TAP workshops and serve 164,000 TAP participants.

Question 2. When should someone attend TAP?

Answer: Three-day TAP workshops are provided to members of the Armed Forces during the 180-day period prior to their separation from active duty. Spouses also are eligible to attend. Workshops are designed to provide employment and training assistance for a smooth and timely transition to the civilian workforce. The earlier a person is able to attend a TAP workshop the more time he or she has to use the information obtained in what is often a lengthy search for the "best" civilian job.

Question 3. Is enough being done to ensure attendance at TAP during this time period?

Answer: VETS continually works to maximize attendance to what is largely a voluntary opportunity for self improvement. All we can do is increase program access and awareness of TAP's long-term value. To these ends, we work closely with officials from the Department of Defense (DoD) and the individual military Services. Our workshop facilitators team with their counterparts at over 200 military installations to publicize the scheduling of sessions. VETS also has produced and made available to DoD a short TAP "marketing" video for use in promoting the value of attending workshops. Additionally, VETS has provided DoD with a TAP workshop video set for servicemembers who attend a regular session.

Question 4. You spoke of a Department of Labor study and the publication on May 15, 1995, of a Phase III impact analysis on TAP. In that survey, evidence suggested that TAP reduced unemployment time by three to seven weeks. It also suggested that the program more than pays for itself in the savings in unemployment insurance benefits. Could you expand on the notion of how TAP pays for itself?

Answer: On average, the Federal government pays about \$200 per person in unemployment compensation for each week an individual is out of work. If a TAP participant gets a job three to seven weeks sooner than a non-participant, it is estimated that TAP provides a cost avoidance of between \$600 and \$1,400 per workshop attendee. For VETS, the TAP workshop cost is about \$40 per attendee.

Question 5. Is the MOU with DOD and VA still valuable and effective?

Answer: Yes. When the first Memorandum of Understanding regarding the administration of the transition assistance program was signed in January 1991 by the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Labor, it committed the three agencies to a comprehensive assistance program for all separating servicemembers. The MOU was updated in December 1994. It continues to provide the framework for the joint administration of a program to meet the transition needs of over 250,000 service members separated from active duty every year.

Question 6. You've funded both urban and rural-area projects for homeless veterans. You've also stated the three main thrusts of HVRP [Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project] to be outreach, employment and linkage. How is the program working in rural areas?

Answer: The HVRP appropriation was rescinded in the summer of 1995. Through the winter of 1995-1996, VETS used other funding sources to keep 21 cold weather projects operating at significantly reduced funding levels. Four are considered "rural". They are in Idaho, Kentucky, Washington, and Virginia. These, and our other previously funded rural grantees, have been surprisingly successful.

Little is known about rural homelessness veterans. The key features of HVRP -- outreach and employment resource linkages -- have been maintained in the rural projects, and each project is operated by a seasoned service provider. The principle of using formerly homeless veterans as outreach workers has proven particularly successful in rural projects. These veterans, being known within the area, can tell how and where to find fellow veterans in need. Enclosed is an article from the agency's publication VETS NET which describes the rural homeless veteran programs and highlights its success.

Question 7. I applaud your creativity in funding HVRP for FY 1996 and using some of your discretionary JTPA money to do so. But I have some concerns about using JTPA for these purposes.

What was your JTPA budget for FY 1996?

What were your other uses for JTPA funds?

What other programs received reduced funding or no consideration for funding because of the use of funds for HVRP?

Answer: VETS' JTPA, Title IV, Part C budget for Program Year (PY) 1995 (July 1, 1995 - June 30, 1996) is \$8.8 million. Approximately \$7 million of that was used to fund for a second year 13 of 14 program operators who had been competitively selected in PY 1995. Of the remaining nearly \$2 million known as "discretionary" funds, \$1.3 went to 21 cold weather area HVRPs. The balance was distributed as follows:

- * \$82,000 to South Carolina for a "Veterans Helping Veterans" project;
- * \$249,000 to Alabama to maintain and disseminate information relating to the Federal Contractor Program as required by section 4212 of title 38 United States Code;
- * \$99,500 to American GI Forum to conduct a demonstration project for a "one-stop" model to address the needs of eligible veterans while linking with other funding sources to provide comprehensive holistic services beyond basic employment and training, and
- * \$150,000 to N.Y. Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program to demonstrate distance learning capabilities while providing employment and training services to veterans in four different locations in the State of New York.

Every year VETS receives "unsolicited" proposals from various sources seeking funding to provide a wide variety of services. Some of these proposals are discounted immediately because they do not meet the statutory requirements nor do they propose to serve eligible veterans. Our ability to fund "discretionary" projects is limited. Many unsolicited proposals request funding far in excess of our available resources. To stretch our resources, VETS negotiates virtually every selected proposal to a funding level that it believes will yield the best possible product or service. This allows the agency to maximize the number of projects it is able to fund.

In PY 1995, VETS received approximately 40 unsolicited proposals offering to provide a wide variety of services, from conducting an expensive marketing campaign to Fortune 500 companies to a duplication of our TAP program at a single military installation. In light of the HVRP funding rescission and because of the severe winter weather, my decision was to allocate a substantial portion of the JTPA IV-C discretionary funding to provide employment and training assistance to homeless veterans. If additional monies were available, such decisions and our ability to fund other unique and innovative ideas would not be as difficult.

**Follow-up Questions from
The Honorable Bob Filner
Ranking Democratic Member**

Question 1. San Diego has been the site of several very successful "Stand Downs". What role does the Veterans' Employment and Training Service play in these events?

Answer: To determine how successful Stand Downs as short-term one-time events are in combating homelessness, VETS provided funding for a follow-up study of the Vietnam Veterans of San Diego's (VVSD's) efforts. VETS also funded a technical assistance grant for VVSD staff to provide hands-on "know how" to those who wished to replicate the San Diego model. VETS, in conjunction with the VVSD, has encouraged the nationwide expansion of Stand Downs to areas showing an interest in staging similar events. From one event in San Diego in 1988, the Stand Down initiative has grown. In 1995, there were over 100 such events held. VETS field staff and State-grant funded staff have been integral partners in the planning and staging of virtually every Stand Down.

Question 2. Your job placement record under HVRP is impressive. Is it the "veteran reaching out to a fellow veteran" aspect of this program that makes it so successful?

Answer: Having the formerly homeless as staff is considered the linchpin of the HVRP program. In their project evaluations over the years, service providers have named this as the one aspect they would like to maintain. Also contributing to the HVRP success are its program flexibility and linkages with other community service providers.

Question 3. In your view, can homeless veterans be served as successfully under programs not targeted specifically to their needs?

Answer: The HVRP was successful because of its special features and its flexibility to serve the unique needs of homeless veterans. The Clinton Administration supports the development of employment assistance programs for homeless veterans. Within available resources, VETS will do whatever is necessary to serve this special population.

Question 4. With current staffing levels, have DVOPs and LVERs been able to fully participate in TAP?

Answer: Yes. In the DVOP/LVER allocation process, VETS takes into account the TAP workload in each state. To augment current State-grant staffing levels, we have increased our reliance on our own VETS' Federal staff to facilitate TAP workshops. We continually monitor the situation, and at this time, do not believe that TAP workloads adversely effect the Job Service's ability to assist veterans at either the local office or TAP site.

Question 5. How many contract personnel are you now using to conduct TAP sessions? Do you expect to continue to use that same number over the next few years?

Answer: VETS currently is using about 40 contract TAP facilitators to provide a projected 800 TAP workshops in fiscal year 1996. If VETS' budget for TAP continues to decrease, however, the agency will decrease its reliance on contractor support.

Question 6. In the earlier days of TAP, we occasionally heard that some military bases were reluctant to provide appropriate space for the TAP sessions. Does this continue to be an issue or has that problem been largely solved?

Answer: The problem of appropriate space largely has been eliminated. That is not to say that it is not an issue from time to time. When it does occur, our Directors for Veterans' Employment and Training work closely with installation officials for a quick resolution.

Question 7. As you know legislation is moving through Congress which will fundamentally change our nation's employment assistance system. Will the LVERs and DVOP's be able to continue their participation in TAP under a new system?

Answer: Based on our current understanding, State-grant veterans' employment specialists will be able to continue providing TAP services under all labor exchange plans now being considered by Congress.

VETS NET

One Good Job Deserves Another
Veterans' Employment and Training Service

Vol. IV, No. 5

US Department of Labor

May 1995

HVRP at Work in Rural America

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NVTI News

Homelessness among veterans remains a serious problem in the United States, both in urban and rural locations. Transitioning these homeless veterans into the labor force is the goal of a program called the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project (HVRP). HVRP was initiated under the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act in 1988. Of the current 31 HVRPs operating nationwide, 6 of those are rural programs.

While much knowledge has been gained by the HVRP experience in urban areas, little was known about the plight of homeless veterans in rural areas of our country. To explore what works in less populated areas, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment & Training, which administers HVRP, set aside funds for a rural grant competition in 1993 and awarded 6 grants.

Jobs are the key outcome for HVRP, along with the need for supportive services and housing. After more than a year and a half of operation, the rural HVRP experience has shed some light on the differences from their urban counterparts.

In both Washington State and California, program directors are able to make the contrast more vividly. The Vietnam Veterans of California operate both an urban program (Sacramento) and a rural program in northern coastal California based in Eureka. Washington State features a tripart urban HVRP consisting of Seattle, Olympia and Tacoma, along with a twelve county rural program in rural Washington based in Vancouver. Other rural programs operate in eastern Kentucky, southeast Idaho, the

northern "panhandle" area of Idaho, and in rural Virginia. According to the Washington State HVRP manager, the rural program has been an eye opener for his agency. All the program operators generally agree that there is a scarcity of services, transportation, and affordable housing in the rural areas.

Outreach proved to be challenging because of the large geographical areas to be covered. The Kentucky HVRP tried public service announcements but found that classified ads worked better in their 14-county area of western Kentucky. Modern communications helped, such as an extra phone line for veterans to call collect. Washington found that cellular telephones and faxing enrollment information helped break down the distance barriers.

Articles about the program helped raise the visibility in Pittsylvania County, Virginia. Flyers distributed to where the homeless or their friends might see them, such as grocery and outdoor stores.

See HVRP, page 5

Tell Us!

Each and every time an LVER, DVOP, manager, VA Voc Rehab Specialist helps a veteran, or TAP facilitator helps a participant in a workshop, it brings our "caring enough" pledge to life. The jobs NVTI graduates do continues everyday to the betterment of so many lives.

We're preparing to celebrate the 20,000th time a participant has successfully completed an NVTI course. We know what reaching this milestone means... that all of us NVTI grads are better able to help our customers, who by their service have earned our very best efforts in employment and career assistance.

We want you to tell us about an NVTI grad whose best effort did make a difference. That's what we're celebrating, and will recognize as many of the best efforts you tell us about as possible. We're looking forward to hearing from you by July 1, 1995. Thanks!

A recent survey showed at least 271,000 veterans are homeless on any given night.

Federal agencies have estimated that one third of the adult homeless population are veterans.



IT'S SPRING!

HVRP, continued from page 1

churches and local service organizations. A lot of legwork was put in by staff. The California manager notes that you can find hundreds of homeless veterans within a few city blocks. In their rural program, over 8,600 miles were covered by outreach workers in the last 18 months.

Often homeless veterans in rural areas are in encampments, isolated from the rest of the populations and not easily accessible. Such encampments occur in northern California where the beaches, the bush and an isolated peninsula house this population. Outreach workers located one veteran living in the stump of a redwood tree. They were able to gain his trust and after detox treatment, he is working as a roofer. In rural Kentucky, such veterans are hidden in the "hollers" or valleys between the hills.

There are no concentrated services in rural areas. Even if the veteran calls and is interested, he or she often needs transportation to the program. While bus tokens may be available to get urban HVRP participants to job interviews and services, public transportation mostly does not exist in the rural areas. The grantee in southeast Idaho has access to a van used to transport veterans to the nearest VA medical center which is in Salt Lake City, 200 miles away. When a homeless veteran was identified in Salmon, Idaho, arrangements were made at no cost to fly him down to the program's location via the local mail plane.

Housing is exceptionally difficult to obtain in rural areas. Kitchenette motel units proved to be a workable solution to emergency and transitional housing needs in parts of rural Washington. Kentucky sought assistance from community action agencies with FEMA funds to assist in private rentals. Both northern and southern Idaho have their own transitional facilities, but the demand is overwhelming.

... homeless veterans ... in the rural areas are highly motivated to obtain a job.

It was noted that the homeless veterans encountered in the rural areas are highly motivated to obtain a job. There is less chronic homelessness and more attachment to families among this group. Most have been affected by layoffs in the predominate industries in their area.

The fishing and timber industries on the northern coast of California, for example, have greatly declined.

When a movie was being filmed in a nearby town, the program placed twenty homeless veterans as extras.

Despite this, the diligent work of the Vietnam Veterans of California's rural HVRP staff gained them recognition from the California Employment Development Department as "Veterans Employer of the Year." When a movie was being filmed in a nearby town, the program placed twenty homeless veterans as extras.

The Pittsylvania County HVRP in Virginia was able to place homeless veterans in textile and furniture making jobs prevalent in the area. In Kentucky, the Volunteers of America helped 15 veterans with truck driving experience in the military obtain their commercial drivers license. Participants obtained jobs hauling coal long distance for an average hourly pay of \$15 to \$20. They also put participants through mine safety school to qualify for well-paying mining jobs. One person was placed as a patrolman in a rural Kentucky town where he is now the Chief of Police.

A homeless veteran in rural northern California and his wife had been living in their car. The homeless veteran had no money or housing and had legal problems out of state. He was helped by being referred to the emergency shelter. The agency wrote a letter to the Department of Social Services for emergency food and general relief. The case manager contacted the District Attorney's office in Oregon and mitigated the outstanding charges with a payment plan for the client to make restitution and have the charges dropped after the fines had been paid off. The job developer contacted several employers and successfully placed the client in employment. The client is presently making \$12.55 per hour with benefits and is in permanent housing and has now paid all his out of state fines and the charges have been dropped.

Linkages prove vital to the rural HVRPs as illustrated by the following example. A Vietnam veteran who saw considerable combat and suffered from post traumatic stress for several years was referred to the rural Washington HVRP program. He was awaiting admission to the Department of Veterans' Affairs Menlo Park PTS Treatment program. The waiting period was uncertain. He was housed by the program and referred for emergency work through the LVER until he was admitted. He had secured housing upon his return from treatment. He was married shortly thereafter and obtained a job as an electrician earning \$25 per hour with full benefits.

All programs have noted that assistance rendered from DVOP and LVER staff to their programs was invaluable and they hope for continued assistance.

All programs have noted that assistance rendered from DVOP and LVER staff to their programs was invaluable and they hope for continued assistance. The rural grantees will be sharing their experiences with others in a series of rural homeless interactive workshops this spring sponsored by the Department of Agriculture, FEMA and the Interagency Council on the Homeless. Learning more about the needs of the rural homeless is part of the overall federal plan to end homelessness.

These rural programs have contributed a hard-earned share of the 4,200 job placements made by HVRP programs in fiscal year 1993. As demonstrated above, VETS believes that the rural HVRPs have shown "true grit" in their first year of operation.

Follow Up Questions

James B. Hubbard, Director
National Economic Commission
The American Legion

May 1, 1996

1. In Testimony, Mr. Hubbard spoke of a document delineating the budget priorities of the Department of Labor. On this list, VETs is the last funded item coming in behind Job Corps and Unemployment Compensation.

* Do you have knowledge whether this was an OMB document or a product of the Labor Department?

Answer: I have no direct knowledge of the origin of the document. I was told by a Labor Department official that it originated in OMB. I have been told by others who have reason to know that OMB officials say they don't recognize it.

* What does your organization make of this document?

Answer: The American Legion views this document as a threat to the future of the veterans' employment system. As I mentioned in testimony, we are not happy that the Cabinet department charged with training and employment of the US labor force placed such a low priority on the 250,000 men and women who leave the armed forces each year by underfunding the agency responsible for their successful transition into civilian society. The vast majority of these dedicated young Americans entered the military straight out of high school and have never experienced a job search.

2. The American Legion efforts to match skill with civilian licensing requirements appears to be a solid effort in the employment area.

* Tell us more about your effort and the circumstances that led the Legion to undertake this project.

Answer: This project developed as a result of the National Economic Commission's concern over the problems faced by service people, who have attended some of the finest technical training schools in the world, when they attempt to enter the workplace. Even a cursory view of the situation reveals problems. For example a medic who treated gunshot wounds in desert storm is unable to treat gunshot wounds in Washington, DC or the Air Force trained air traffic controllers who worked in Air Force towers and then ran the US air traffic control system during the PATCO strike are now unable to work in a civilian tower without FAA training etc. After a comprehensive review of the issue, the Commission developed a resolution calling for a Labor Department study and presented it to the National Executive Committee of The American Legion where it was adopted last October.

Concurrently with the review conducted by the Commission, The American Legion audited the funds spent, and not spent, on the training program conducted in conjunction with Laborers International Union of North America. It became apparent that all funds could not be spent prior to the expiration of the grant on June 30, 1996. The American Legion staff suggested

that an appropriate use of excess funds might be to accomplish the study requested by the resolution. Staff at VETS agreed and a grant modification request is now pending at the Labor Department to permit The American Legion to subcontract for the study.

3. What does The American Legion make of the amounts of grant money being given to dislocated workers, especially in view of the difficulties the LVER and DVOP programs has in receiving adequate funding?

Answer: The American Legion views this as a travesty. It is unconscionable for the US Government to make grants of up to \$35,000 per worker for 135 coal miners in Illinois, or plumbers in Kentucky while the Veterans Employment and Training Service has to beg and scrape for money to help 250,000 dislocated military people who have made certain sacrifices to serve our nation find jobs in the civilian community. We find this an unacceptable order of priorities and respectfully suggest that Congress should do some reordering.

Questions from Mr. Filner

1. I agree with all of you that additional Federal dollars should be directed toward assisting homeless veterans. I also believe, however, local communities can make a difference. Do our organizations have programs which assist veterans on the local level? Have your organizations participated in Stand-Downs across the country?

The answer to this is yes. American Legion Posts have been involved nationwide in both comprehensive programs providing housing, counseling, financial assistance, and jobs for homeless veterans to cooperating with other organizations in Stand-Downs.

2. Some of you expressed concern about the D-TAP program. What specific steps could be taken by VA, DoD, or DOL to improve the quality of service provided to separating disabled veterans?

Answer: D-TAP was designed to be a follow on to the TAP program conducted by DOL. In some places it is working, and in some places it is not being done. In our view, the VA must be responsible for teaching separating military people about potential benefits which derive from injuries or illnesses suffered while on active duty. It is the responsibility of the local military commander to make separating military people available to attend these sessions at some time prior to separation. If the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs and the Chiefs of Staff of the military services were to exercise some command influence on their subordinates, there is no doubt that D-TAP would become a more successful program.

**RESPONSES TO THE HONORABLE STEVE BUYER'S
AND BOB FILNER'S QUESTIONS RELATIVE TO
THE APRIL 18, 1996 SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION,
TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING
HEARING**

**RONALD W. DRACH
NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT DIRECTOR
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS**

RESPONSES TO THE HONORABLE STEVE BUYER'S QUESTIONS:

- 1.) Although DAV had no official response or position on H.R. 3036, the bill generated in response to VA's desire to move the Education Service to St. Louis, your comments are worth talking about further.

- Do you have concerns about any other program's policy and management functions?

At the present time, we are not concerned about any specific program's policy and management functions, but rather the entire concept of restructuring within the Veterans' Benefits Administration (VBA) as well as Veterans Health Administration (VHA). In that context, we will be watching any proposal designed to change the way the VA administers and delivers benefits and services. When, and only when, we believe change will prove advantageous to veterans will the DAV be supportive. In other cases, we will let our opposition be known. Someone once said: "Change is inevitable. Progress is by choice." What we hope to see is positive progress rather than change driven primarily by budgetary motives.

It is also difficult for a program's policy and management functions to be decentralized. Policy guidance and management directives need to be developed and implemented from a central function. I can assure you that we will be watching this issue very closely and will continue to work with VBA in their efforts to modify any administration or delivery of benefits and services.

- 2.) Thank you for your list of problems veterans face in transitioning into civilian life. This subcommittee recognizes that all veterans -- able-bodied as well as the disabled -- encounter special problems in reentering civilian life, because of the interruption of their normal lives by military service. The value of any benefits package is judged upon the merit of services delivered, and, you expressed some concern about DTAP.

- Can you expand on your concerns, and what might be suggested to fix the problems?

Since the beginning of the development of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), we have continually expressed concern that any such program must keep the needs of disabled service members as a major focal point. That never occurred. The Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) was never meant to be a "stand alone" program. Rather, it was intended to be complimented by the total TAP presentations, so disabled service members would receive the same information as well as additional information about what they face ahead in a civilian labor market. The disabled service member, especially those in the hospital or assigned to a medical hold company, are a "captured audience." We believe that as soon as a service member becomes injured or disabled and it appears will be discharged because of that disability, immediate action should be taken on an ongoing basis for regularly scheduled DTAP classes. That must include more than just a counseling session with the VA's vocational and rehabilitation staff. It should include the entire curriculum provided to other non-disabled separating service members.

Additionally, a new component must be developed specifically for those disabled service members that addresses needs and concerns that they may have that would not be necessary for the non-disabled service member. For example, the disabled service member, when they are discharged, may be entitled to certain special appointing authorities for jobs in the federal government. They may need special equipment available through the VA that will help them overcome any physical impairments that will make it easier for them to be rehabilitated and ultimately join the labor force. Information must be developed and provided about their rights and remedies under various statutes to include, but not limited to the protections contained in Chapter 42, Title 38 U.S.C., the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Employers are required to make reasonable accommodations to disabled veterans' disabilities. That type of information is not being provided.

Federal agencies are also required to make reasonable accommodations and are prohibited from discriminating against people with disabilities, including disabled veterans. That information is not being provided.

I just obtained a copy of the Department of Labor's *Transition Assistance Program Participant Manual*. I have attached a copy of the table of contents which is devoid of any specific reference to rights or benefits for disabled veterans. Admittedly, there is some discussion about VA benefits for disabled veterans throughout the manual, but there is nothing specifically on a disabled veteran's rights under various laws providing protection to people with disabilities in employment.

Every military base that has a medical hold company or discharge function with a medical center, should be providing DTAP sessions along with TAP. For those individuals with obvious medical problems who are ambulatory, special efforts should be made to have them attend the overall session. For those who are not ambulatory, the TAP/DTAP session should be provided at the medical facility whenever possible.

RESPONSES TO THE HONORABLE BOB FILNER'S QUESTIONS:

- 1.) I agree with all of you that additional Federal dollars should be directed toward assisting homeless veterans. I also believe, however, local communities can make a difference. Do our organizations have programs which assist veterans on the local level? Have your organizations participated in Stand Downs across the country?

Many of DAV's departments and chapters are involved at the local level with homeless veterans. Sometimes it is as simple as providing meals at "soup kitchens" to running our own projects, independent of others, or in concert with others. I have attached some articles from the *DAV Magazine*, highlighting some of our involvement.

- 2.) Some of you expressed concern about the D-TAP program. What specific steps could be taken by VA, DOD or DOL to improve the quality of service provided to separating disabled veterans?

Please see my response to Chairman Buyer's question #2 above.

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Homeless Vets Receive DAV Help in Florida, New York

A growing number of DAV Chapters and Departments are responding to the escalating numbers of homeless veterans through a variety of programs and services. Two recent examples in Florida and New York demonstrate unique approaches to solving some age-old problems.

SYRACUSE RESPONSE FOCUSES ON NEED

DAV Chapter 167 in Liverpool, N.Y., has entered into a unique partnership with county officials to manage a transitional home for homeless veterans.

A county-owned house was leased to the chapter for \$1 a month. The county has done some repairs, but about \$27,000 in DAV funds has paid for an extensive rehabilitation of the house and new furnishings.

Homeless veterans will live in the house as part of a new program managed by DAV officials and designed to help ease troubled veterans back into the community's mainstream.

According to Ray Dctor, who spearheaded the chapter's efforts to start the program, eventually four veterans will live in the house. One of the requirements will be that a veteran hold down at least a part-

time job and contribute \$120 a month for utilities and other expenses.

Officials estimate several hundred homeless veterans live in the Syracuse area. The program is designed to offer transitional support services for homeless



The Schaffhauser family, above, are welcomed to their temporary Florida home by DAV National Service Officer Lonny Hudson and Department Senior Vice Cdr. John Engwiller. Below, DAV volunteers helped move the family after their home was heavily damaged by Hurricane Andrew.

veterans who have completed other VA programs, but who still require time to gain self-sufficiency.

"We saw the need on the streets," Dctor said of the chapter's efforts. "We're going after our second house now. For us in the chapter, we started by giving clothes to homeless vets. From clothes we went to raising money, and from money now to a home. We do it because if we can help one of those veterans, you can't find an award to give any of us to make us feel that good. It's just the satisfaction you get out of helping someone. He's our brother."

SHELTER FROM THE STORM

Hurricane Andrew destroyed thousands of homes and racked up billions of dollars in damage, but it hit some families harder than others. Disabled veterans were perhaps among the hardest hit in South Florida, and it's taken many of them the longest time to bounce back.

Take, for example, the case of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Schaffhauser, whose home

DAV MAGAZINE

.....

***“It’s just the satisfaction you get
out of helping someone.
He’s our brother.”***



At dedication ceremonies for the transitional home for homeless veterans in Liverpool, N.Y., DAV officials (like NEC member Ray Deter, above, and National Adjutant Charles E. Joeckel, at right) and county officials launched a cooperative effort designed to help ease troubled veterans back into the community's mainstream.



was virtually destroyed by the hurricane. Both are confined to wheelchairs. He is a DAV life member who was wounded during World War II and became a paraplegic as a result.

The plight of the elderly couple, compounded by their disabilities, threatened to push them out into the streets until local DAV officials stepped into the picture.

The DAV Department of Florida and national service officers from the St. Petersburg National Service Office found a VA-owned property that was vacant, arranged for the Schaffhauser's to occupy it and moved the family into their temporary home.

"This is one of more than 500 disabled veterans and their families that the DAV has assisted as a result of Hurricane Andrew," Department Adjutant Albert H. Linden said.

Thanks to cooperation among the department, National Service Office, local chapter and VA personnel, the Schaffhauser's have a roof over their heads, and the time they need to rebuild their home in Florida.





Classroom instruction in custodial, groundskeeping and machine repair skills is one employment training component at the West Los Angeles VA homeless veterans program. (Photos by John W. Emmons)

DAV "Forging Partnerships" for

HOMELESS VETERANS

"Homeless." For some, the word evokes black and white images of blanketed bodies huddled in alleys or stretched out across city sidewalks. Beneath the gray hoods and tattered clothing are sunken eyes, unshaven faces, gnarled hands reaching out for "change," a bowl of soup, a bed for the night. Some hold signs reading "Homeless vet. Please help."

But for many homeless veterans that bleak picture, due to some innovative and resourceful approaches toward homelessness by the DAV and homeless veteran advocates around the country, is becoming a distant blur. While traditional homeless programs have focused on food, shelter and health care, homeless veterans programs with DAV participation in Los Angeles and other areas of the country have expanded the horizon to include alcohol/drug abuse treatment, employment and vocational rehabilitation programs, housing assistance and independent living skills.

Employing a "whole-life, tough-love" rehabilitation approach with a focus on training and obtaining jobs, these programs are effectively transitioning homeless veterans from the streets to mainstream American society. And they're accomplishing that mission not only through creative approaches, but also through networking, coalition building, uniting community and government resources and sharing expertise to provide the army of services homeless veterans need.

The advocates and players behind these programs, from small business owners and veterans' representatives to lawyers and government officials, use phrases like "opening doors," "get-

ting on track," "forging partnerships," and "new beginnings." Retired Marine Col. Joseph N. Smith of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs in Los Angeles, Calif., describes "a tinker-toy network of manageable parts, where we find the people who can functionally put it all together." He adds that to work, the process requires selfless participants. "Slash the egos and get the job done. We don't care who gets the credit."

Four relatively "new beginnings" in Los Angeles supported by the DAV — a homeless shelter, a VA intake center, a transitional housing program and a proposed transitional training program — illustrate how these advocates and their fresh approaches are effectively restoring homeless veterans' lives.

SAVED BY THE BELL

Some seven years ago, Los Angeles County, which has one of the highest concentrations of homeless veterans in the country, experienced a rare but severely cold winter. Some homeless people were dying from hypothermia on the streets. A federal judge noticed a shortage of shelter space, and set into action a plan to alleviate the suffering. First he proposed opening up the U.S. courthouse in Los Angeles to the homeless at night. Then he learned that homeless advocates had first rights to surplus federal property. But he faced opposition from local community groups when he proposed turning a federal storage warehouse in an industrial section of town into emergency housing for homeless, giving priority to homeless veterans.

"I recall the headline in the *Los Angeles Times*: 'Federal Government Warehouses Homeless.' It sounded like a concentration camp," says the judge, Harry Pregerson of the U.S. Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit.

The federal government, he discovered, was more supportive than the media. Through Louise Oliver, a deputy director of the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) office in Los Angeles, Pregerson arranged to have the Salvation Army lease the facility, now the Bell Shelter, from GSA for \$1 per year. The experience illustrated that even the federal bureaucracy can be a facilitator of homeless veterans programs.

"Obtaining federal property doesn't have to encompass a lot of bureaucracy. If the organization is credible, there's no reason why the process can't be simple," says Oliver. She adds, "You can look beyond the rigid rules and find ways, creative programs where government agencies can improve the lot of homeless. It's exciting to me that I can facilitate these programs. It's very rewarding because we have to solve myriad problems in trying to heal the heart, soul and body."

Looking back, Pregerson characterizes the establishment of the Bell Shelter as "ten months of hard work." To stifle community opposition and build diverse resources, he invited them into the process — and they remain to this day. He signed up DAV Los Angeles NSO Supervisor Bob Jordan, who

has remained an active player in various homeless veterans projects in L.A. County. Pregerson also enlisted paralegals and young lawyers in the community to assist homeless veterans with any legal, Social Security or VA concerns. When he learned that the Bell facility could use a fitness room to help homeless veterans build their self esteem, he requested a donation of weight equipment from Gold's Gym. Joe Gold, a 100-percent service connected disabled veteran, was happy to respond. And when he learned that the L.A. police had confiscated 5,000 contraband T-shirts at a Los Angeles rock concert, he found a home for them at the Bell shelter.

"The hardest part was finding the people to run it," says Pregerson, who was the first recipient of DAV's Helping Hand Award for helping establish a homeless shelter at the former Chief U.S. Army Base in Ball, Calif. "But we were fortunate to have a lot of resources, a lot of caring people here. We just needed to contact them and give them a mission."

Since it was established, the Bell Shelter, which houses some 50 veterans, has evolved into a comprehensive transitional program for the homeless. In addition to weekly in-house Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings, the facility offers personal counseling, employment and vocational rehabilitation programs, including computer training, and job placement assistance in the community. The Shelter provides shuttle bus service to skills and apprentice training programs in the community. Also, Shelter facilitators are arranging contracts between community businesses and homeless veterans at Bell for custodial and kitchen services, among others.

"We try to hone in on their skills, and then try to find them jobs, place them in labor pools and trade centers," says Daryl Ogden, Executive Director of the Shelter.

Does the formula work? Do those who leave the Bell Shelter find and retain jobs and housing? "We don't have the case workers to do followup," says Ogden. "But the programs here work because the concept is to educate, while most shelters are just band-aids," he adds, noting that Bell is partly modeled after the New England Shelter for Homeless Veterans in Boston, Mass., which has transitioned thousands of veterans back to society.

"Also," says Ogden, "if you could see the compassion, the enthusiasm, the spirit and the support these people are giving each other through these programs, it would significantly change your view of the homeless."

"My goals are to enroll in school, find a job, find an apartment."

— Mike Douglas, 36, homeless Army veteran who has found a temporary home at the Bell Shelter.



TRANSITIONING, NOT SHELTERING

Another program trying to change the view and lives of homeless veterans is a proposed intake center for homeless veterans at the West Los Angeles VA Medical Center. Co-designed by two VA employees, the proposed project would tap into both community and VA resources to provide homeless veterans with access to needed treatment and services.



The numbers of homeless people across the country are growing. Administrators of homeless programs say they're at a loss about how to cope with dwindling resources and funds. But in the nation's capital there is a creative, effective, and privately funded solution that, importantly, is also serving a large number of homeless veterans.

Samaritan Inns and Lazarus House provide recovering drug- and alcohol-addicted homeless people a safe environment to begin to build new lives. The programs' effectiveness prompted the DAV's Charitable Service Trust to grant the Inns \$15,000 to continue its successful programs.

During a recent interview, Kilian Noe, Program Director of Samaritan Inns, and her colleague David Erickson, President of Samaritan Inns, described the programs and how they work. Two of the three Samaritan Inns are for men who are in recovery from drug and alcohol addictions. The other is for pregnant women and their newborn babies. Lazarus House provides longer-term housing and stable community living once the residents at the Inns are ready to move on.

The Inns are the first step away from an initial 28-day drug- and alcohol-addiction treatment facility. Samaritan Inns get about 45 percent of their referrals from the VA's drug and alcohol treatment programs and the rest from other District of Columbia treatment programs. Noe said the Inns exist because individuals who completed their 28-day treatment had nowhere to go but back to the streets. The Inns provide a homelike environment, house

managers (linkeepers), group living, continuing addictions counseling, access to education, health-care and financial-management assistance, and a support network.

The program gives the residents the opportunity to work on their recovery beyond the initial 28 days of their rehabilitation. According to Noe, the most important part of the program is the aspect of being part of a family. "We're relentless about it."

Erickson agreed, adding: "Being accountable and being part of a community is an intentional part of our program and sets it apart from others. It's what fights the isolation that drags people back into their drug and alcohol addictions."

The first inn was started in 1985 with help from corporate funding, private donations, and minimal rents. The same funding principles work for it today. It receives no government funding. The success of the Inns can be measured by the effective use of the money received. Compared to the D.C. government's cost of \$30 per day for a shelter bed, the Inns provide not only the bed, but counseling, social service support and meals for about \$23 a day. The Inns also work with other community homeless groups and job referral agencies.

Through the years, programs have been adapted to meet the ever-changing needs of homeless people. Initially, the Inns' residents were chronically homeless, older alcoholic men. "Then crack cocaine hit town," said Erickson, "and we assumed we knew what we were doing. We didn't."

Noe said the staff developed new ways of coping with younger individuals and the unpredictable violence that often accompanies crack addiction. She said the program has tougher rules and stronger accountability, but works equally well with either alcohol or drug addictions.

Once that adjustment was made, another problem showed up. Many residents were successfully coping with their recovery and were ready to move on — but to where? Even if residents had a job, it was usually at minimum wage, which did not pay nearly enough for affordable housing in a large metropolitan city. Noe recalled helping move a former resident into the only place he could afford. She said the apartment was dark, depressing, and the occupant had to share a bathroom with an obvious drug user. It would have placed the recovering addict right back in the environment that contributed to his addiction in the first place.

The solution was Lazarus House. Built in 1991 from a gutted former crack house, Lazarus House provides long-term housing (1-5 years), affordable housing (less than half the market rate), a drug- and alcohol-free environment, an in-house social services team, and private rooms. Four to six rooms are grouped in clusters, or suites, with a common kitchen, and laundry and bath facilities. Each week the residents have "Suite Accountability" meetings to discuss how their recovery is progressing, and to



Above, Natl. Cdr. Joseph C. Zengerle chats with Air Force veteran Timothy Gray, former resident, now the Assistant Manager of Lazarus House. Left, is one of three Samaritan Inns, whose residents are former homeless men who are in recovery for drug and/or alcohol addictions.

encourage and support one another. To live at Lazarus House, each resident must be able to make monthly rent payments, be employed, and drug and alcohol free for six months. As opposed to the Samaritan Inns, Lazarus House is entirely self-supporting. Rents received completely cover the operating costs.

DAV National Commander Joseph C. Zengerle initially learned about the Inns through a chance meeting with Noe. She said Zengerle reacted differently than most people when she explained what Samaritan Inns did. "People usually just say something like, 'That's great, we need more of those kinds of programs,' and move across the room to the next person. Joe was genuinely interested and enthusiastic, so I just unloaded on him."

Zengerle said that what intrigued him was the fact that so many of the residents are veterans. Indeed they are. During a recent visit to Lazarus House, Zengerle first met the Assistant Manager, who is an Air Force veteran. While they stood talking in the clean, secure and well-lit lobby, the next three residents through the front door were Army, Navy and Marine veterans. "This is why I told the Trust about Samaritan Inns. They're doing an outstanding job helping veterans in need," Zengerle said.

In transmitting the grant, William R. McCartin, Chairman of the Trust, said, "Samaritan Inns offer real help to veterans who are struggling to climb out of the depths of homelessness brought on by alcoholism, drug addiction, psychological disability and other problems. In the face of one of our nation's most challenging problems, Samaritan Inns extends the hand of hope to veterans who are searching desperately for that hope."

The programs provided by Samaritan Inns and Lazarus House are turning that hope into reality. Erickson told a story about a man who had a son with Down's Syndrome. When he first came to Samaritan Inns, the man could barely take care of himself, let alone a disabled son. Now he's visiting that son every week. "He's learned how to take responsibility not only for himself, but for his son as well."

Noe described a woman veteran who was referred through the VA's treatment program and was recently diagnosed as HIV positive, which is the virus that causes AIDS. When this woman found out about the diagnosis, she told her group at the weekly meeting that all she wanted to do was get rid of the fear and the pain by getting drunk or high. Noe said the other residents of-

tered such an outpouring of love and concern that the woman is now strong enough to be a part of an outside support group, helping other women who have also been diagnosed as HIV positive.

Erickson also noted an interesting coincidence involving one particular Vietnam veteran. When the vet came back from Vietnam, his homecoming party was held at the building that is now Lazarus House. Many years later, he's back at the same building working as the residents' full-time addictions counselor. In this case, it's a veteran helping other veterans — and beyond.

For more information about Samaritan Inns and Lazarus House, write: 2523 14th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

Top photo: Brother Francis, Samaritan Inns' Social Services Director, leads a weekly "Overcomers Meeting" for residents at one of the Inns. Below: From left, Samaritan Inns' Director of Development Eric Letsinger, President David Erickson and Program Director Killian Noe talk with Natl. Cdr. Joseph C. Zengerle about homeless veterans.



Homeless veterans at the Detroit Veterans Center are looking beyond the horizon to resuming independence and gainful employment, says Darnell Maxwell, one of the program providers at the Center.



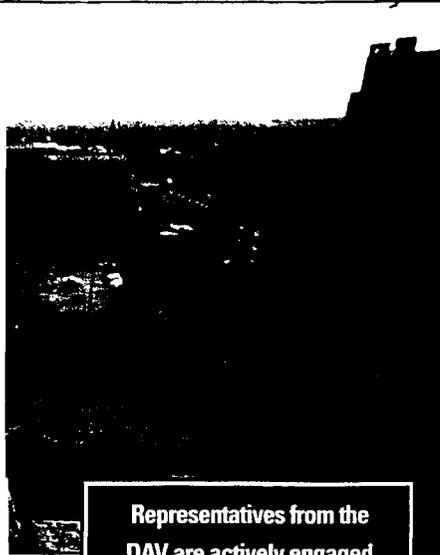
Detroit Homeless Veterans Program HELPING STRUGGLING VETERANS

At its conception the Detroit Veterans Center was an ambitious homeless veterans project. Supported by a \$1.8 million federal grant, the Michigan Veterans Foundation purchased a 13-story, 300-room hotel, an office building across the street and a 22,000 sq. ft. warehouse on the same block in downtown Detroit. After renovation, the hotel will eventually house up to 350 homeless veterans in barracks, dormitories and single rooms. The office annex or "Services Building" will provide homeless veterans with an array of services from VA veterans benefits counselors, educational and vocational rehabilitation specialists, mental health practitioners, alcohol and drug abuse programs, a physician and a nurse practitioner, and representatives of veterans service organizations, including the DAV. The warehouse will be used exclusively as a job-training center.

In December 1992, then Executive Director Richard Fitzpatrick characterized the Center as a "campus approach" designed for "one-stop shopping" for homeless veterans, bringing all the rehabilitative resources they need to one complex to help them restore their lives. Incorporating the employment com-

ponents of the New England Shelter for Homeless Veterans (see "Treating Homeless Veterans: A Staggering Challenge," DAV Magazine, Feb. 1992, pp.12-17), the Detroit Veterans Center planned to be a comprehensive and practical program for homeless veterans. Then the reality of funding, staffing and operating such a far-reaching program set in.

While the Board did obtain the federal grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the money may only be used for new construction and renovation of the existing buildings, not for operating expenses -- funds the Center desperately needs in its fifth month of operation. Only a few of the dozens of offices in the "Services Building" down the street are filled. Also, an underground gasoline storage container was discovered beneath the warehouse, an environmental hazard that will delay renovation and use of the building. And with only 31 homeless veterans at the Center — ranging from World War II to Desert Storm vets and including at least one homeless woman veteran — the program is far from its goal of 350. To defray costs, the Center opened up the hotel, formerly the



Representatives from the DAV are actively engaged in claims work and benefits counseling and making sure the homeless veteran is being given every opportunity to get off the streets and back on his feet.

Edystone Hotel, to non-veterans at low rents.

"We're not a hotel, we're a program. But we need time, money and tender-loving care," says working Foundation Board member Jesse Correll, a strategic planner who has taken on some of the Executive Director duties after the departure of Fitzpatrick. Correll, other Board members and program providers at the Center have discovered that just as many homeless veterans are struggling to get back on their feet, programs designed to help them face struggles as well.

Despite the obstacles, the Detroit Veterans Center is providing effective programs and bringing in community resources — including the VA and VSOs — to help homeless veterans reintegrate themselves back into mainstream society. Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous representatives hold

Former Homeless Veteran Helps "Turn Lives Around"

Psychological issues are the roots of homelessness for many homeless veterans.

"We're dealing with people with low self-esteem and low self-confidence. We have to find out what their needs and goals are, what they want to do with their lives. We then develop a treatment plan to help them do that and also refer them to the resources and social services they need to do that," says VA Vet Center counselor Clarence Sutton, 44, a Vietnam veteran.

In addition to providing one-on-one counseling at the Center, Sutton holds open, unstructured group sessions on Monday and structured on-going groups focusing on personal issues on Fridays. "We talk about Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), loneliness, alienation, relationship problems as well as environmental issues like stress on the job," says Sutton.

Because he's a veteran who was raised in Detroit, became homeless partly because of some PTSD issues, and then pursued and obtained a master's degree in social work, Sutton says he's a good role model for Center clients. "I can empathize with them and they can empathize with me. I have to tell them the hard truth about life, but also that they can turn their lives around."

In helping Center clients do that, Sutton says he helps them focus on long-range career plans, rather than survival jobs at fast-food restaurants. "We have to focus on long-term goals, not just a job that's going to bring them back here," says Sutton.

With a staff of one, himself, how does he do followup and track the success rate of clients who leave the Center?

"From the moment a homeless veteran sits down here I'm doing followup. I have to make sure he meets his commitments on a daily basis, that he takes his test for a GED (General Educational Development) test for his high-school equivalency," says Sutton. He adds, "This is very individualized treatment, which the homeless veteran needs to be able to see the potential in himself."



Clarence Sutton, former homeless veteran.

DAV Extends A Helping Hand

Since the mid-1980's, VA domiciliaries have been moving away from their "old soldier's home" traditions and towards a more active treatment model focusing on psycho-social rehabilitation.

As thermometers recorded sub-zero temperatures and snow blanketed much of the nation in recent months, the efforts of DAV members across America enabled homeless veterans to find a bit of warmth and a ray of hope.

While many DAV chapters, departments, and Auxiliary units have developed homeless veterans programs in their local areas, the DAV Charitable Service Trust has allocated nearly \$340,000 to assist homeless veterans since awarding its first grant in 1988.

The majority of the grants awarded by the DAV Charitable Service Trust have gone to the Homeless, Chronically Mentally Ill and Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans Programs established by the Department of Veterans Affairs in 1987, according to DAV Charitable Service Trust Chairman William R. McCartin.

The VA's Homeless Chronically Mentally Ill Program empha-

A homeless veteran sits on 5th Avenue in New York City.

sizes community outreach and provides time-limited residential treatment services through contracts with non-VA facilities. Case managers at each program site make regular visits to shelters, soup kitchens and other places frequented by the homeless to contact homeless mentally ill veterans, particularly those not receiving mental health services from the VA.

These veterans are then tracked by the case managers to facilitate their access to VA medical and psychiatric services and, in selected cases, are placed in contract residential treatment facilities. Case managers are also expected to continue to monitor the care of veterans during and after residential treatment to assure the veteran has continued access to services and involvement in treatment.

The Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans Program provides longer-term residential treatment and rehabilitation at VA medical centers, admitting many homeless veterans who were referred from other VA programs. This program builds on a century-old VA tradition of providing shelter to homeless, frequently elderly, veterans with either psychiatric or medical disabilities.

Since the mid-1980's, however, VA domiciliaries have been moving away from their "old soldier's home" traditions and towards a more active treatment model focusing on psycho-social rehabilitation. In recent years, as more emphasis was placed on shortening the length of hospital stays, VA domiciliaries have been increasingly used to facilitate discharge and community re-entry from acute inpatient programs.

DAV Charitable Service Trust grants have also enabled several DAV chapters to purchase and renovate residences to shelter homeless veterans. Two prime examples are DAV Chapter 8 in Greeley, Colo., and DAV Chapter 167 in Liverpool, N.Y.

"We got started in this about eight or nine years ago when we made a downpayment on a house once owned by the University of Northern Colorado that needed to be renovated," said Chapter 8 Secretary-Treasurer John Wiedeman. "We then got some surplus Army double-decker bunks, put in a shower, and added



Photo: Mark Larrabee / AP

California Earthquake Affects DAV, VA Operations



The January earthquake that devastated Southern California also took a toll on the operations of the DAV and the VA, although most services are still available to disabled veterans.

The DAV National Service Office in Los Angeles is still operating, although some interruptions in service occurred in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. Bob Jordan, supervisor of the DAV's Los Angeles National Service Office, said DAV National Service Officers (NSOs) from other parts of the state have arrived in Los Angeles to assist his staff and the NSOs have been providing disaster relief assistance to qualified disabled veterans.

"We've also received tremendous support from the Department of California, DAV chapters, and DAV Auxiliary units throughout the region," said Jordan, whose personal home was heavily damaged by the earthquake. "Despite our misfortunes, it's really gratifying to see everyone come together when the chips are down."

The VA was forced to close its Sepulveda Medical Center after it suffered structural damage and lost power following the earthquake, which measured 6.6 on the Richter Scale. About 330 patients were moved to other VA medical facilities in West Los Angeles, Long Beach and Loma Linda. A number of VA mobile medical vans were also brought into the area to treat patients.

Immediately following the earthquake, DAV Transportation Network volunteers were among the first to offer their services at Sepulveda VA Medical Center. Hundreds of veterans have since been given rides to other VA facilities by DAV Transportation Network volunteer drivers, while other DAV volunteers pitched in to help clean up the Sepulveda VA Medical Center.

"We're carefully monitoring the situation in California and are providing assistance where necessary," said DAV Washington Headquarters Executive Director Arthur H. Wilson. "Our prayers and thoughts are with everyone who had to endure that terrible ordeal."

Wilson said those wishing to assist the quake victims should send contributions to:

**DAV Disaster Relief Fund, DAV National Headquarters,
P.O. Box 14301, Cincinnati, Ohio 45250-0301.**

a laundry room in the basement to provide a shelter for veterans who had no place else to go."

Wiedeman said the home now can house 10 veterans in the basement and the upper floor is used by a county veterans service officer to assist veterans. VA psychiatric counselors from Cheyenne, Wyo., and Colorado Labor Department job counselors also visit the facility weekly to provide assistance. The veterans, who can stay at the house for up to 30 days, are fed breakfast and dinner each day.

"We have a strict policy of no drugs or alcohol allowed in the house, and the veterans have to be in each night by 10 p.m.," Wiedeman said. "Over the years, we've had some great success stories. One guy who got help from us sent us \$100 a month for over a year once he got back on his feet. It's folks like that who remind us that all the work we do is well worth it."

DAV local assistance is not confined to the chapter level, however, as two projects advanced by the Departments of Maryland and Indiana illustrate.

In Maryland, the department is helping fund the Paul L. Thompson Learning Center in conjunction with the State of Maryland's Homeless Veterans Program. The learning center, which was slated to begin operation in February, is named after the DAV's first African-American national commander and tireless homeless veteran advocate. Among other services, the Paul L. Thompson Learning Center will assist in providing educational training, including instruction on computer software, for homeless veterans, said Department of Maryland Adjutant Tom Johns.

In Indiana, Department Adjutant Jim Powers has applied to the DAV Chantable Service Trust for funds to assist in start-up costs for the Far From Home Foundation, a transitional housing project for homeless veterans in Indianapolis. Department of Indiana members have also been instrumental in raising funds

and providing support for the project, McCartney said.

In Los Angeles, the DAV Chantable Service Trust awarded a \$40,000 grant in April of 1993 to assist homeless veterans through the Salvation Army's Bell Shelter and Los Angeles Veterans Initiative, Inc. Several DAV chapters and units worked closely with Los Angeles DAV National Service Office Supervisor Bob Jordan to get that program underway.

"Every member of the DAV and the DAV Auxiliary can take great pride in what the DAV has done to help our nation's homeless veterans," said DAV National Commander Richard E. Marbes. "As we all strive to do more, let's remember that if circumstances had been different, any of us could have ended up homeless. That's certainly no way for any American veteran to have to live."



Homeless veterans, male and female, some families, enjoy the dinner provided by DAV Department of Indiana. Personal packages and clothing were also provided.

STAND DOWN

Putting Those Who Need With Those Who Care

For homeless veterans, life is a daily struggle to survive. It's begging for food and change. It's sleeping over subway vents to stay warm. It's feeling alone and abandoned.

For many homeless veterans a place to sleep or rest is an abandoned car, a condemned building, an open doorway, a levy under a bridge, or a dumpster. Don't be surprised. A dumpster is a sturdy hiding place and, often as not, contains scraps of food. A little cardboard and newspaper can turn one into a bed. And now and then, dumpsters are where the lifeless body of a veteran is cast aside to be hauled away like garbage and buried from the sight of society.

If the plight of the homeless veteran sounds grim, that's because it is. But

there's a rumble of something being done about it. It's the rumble of people working to build a future that removes the "homeless" from homeless veterans. It's called "Stand Down."

Battle-weary soldiers in the Vietnam War coined the term "Stand Down." It described a brief respite in a relatively safe area where soldiers could get some sleep, a shower (or if luck was really on your side, a bath), a hot meal, medical care, a little rest, and re-supply before returning to battle. Today, Stand Down is the term used to describe a brief period of time for homeless veterans and their families to take a break from the battle of surviving in the streets day to day. Stand Downs usually begin on a Friday and run through Sunday. They are not intended to be continuous. They are meant to be a beginning; a chance to come in from the cold. They are a foundation for a better future; an extended hand up, not a hand out.

Stand Down first addresses the immediate need of food, clothing, and shelter for the homeless veterans and their families who attend. Second and potentially more impacting, Stand Down brings a variety of services, such as health, legal, financial, and social services, to the homeless veteran. Third, the door to follow-up services (a continuum of care) is opened for the homeless veteran.

The first Stand Down was put together by a Vietnam veteran in 1988 in San Diego, Calif. It was a gathering of homeless

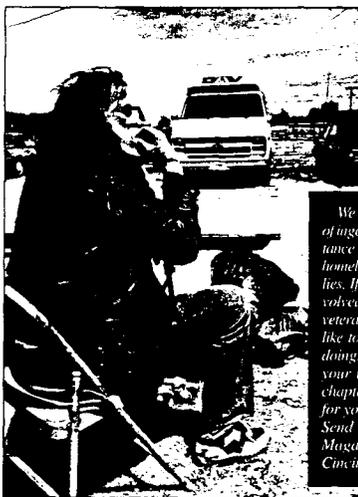
veterans with people who cared about them. More than that, it was a gathering of homeless veterans with people who had the skills and resources to do something about the problems homeless veterans and their families face every day. The DAV and Auxiliary were among those people.

The titles and turf represented by people who came to the first Stand Down were not an issue. They didn't come to build egos or reputations; they came to help homeless veterans, and they came to learn. They came from Boston and Detroit, from Florida and Oregon, from the nation's capital and the metropolis of Los Angeles — they came from everywhere with skills, curiosity, and a desire to do something to help homeless veterans and their families. Among them were Social Security counselors, social workers, politicians, fellow veterans, doctors, lawyers, VA representatives, employment counselors, mental health professionals, veterans' organization representatives, law enforcement officers, and many more. They started the rumble that has grown louder year after year.

A gathering of professionals with varied skills is nothing new. But what happened at the first Stand Down, while not entirely unique, was refreshing. In large measure, the people who came to help kept sight of their mission — they helped homeless veterans and their families. The amazing part of this effort was that turf issues were laid aside for the benefit of helping homeless veterans and their families. It was reported that politicians and social workers were actually seen working together. The in-fighting between organizations and systems that often occurs was laid aside for a few days, and the effort expended in these clashes was directed toward helping the homeless veterans and their families. And for a few days a lot of people benefited, and they weren't all homeless veterans.

The first Stand Down demonstrated that no single organization or system could overcome the challenges faced by homeless veterans. But by working together, success was possible.

The years that followed the first Stand Down were akin to starting a fire. First, there was the smoke of one Stand Down in 1988 and 1989, and a small flame appeared in 1990 with three Stand Downs. By 1993 there were 31 Stand Downs as the fire spread throughout the nation. By the end of 1994, more than 60 Stand Downs will have occurred, and DAV and Auxiliary members are becoming more and more involved in local Stand Downs.



A homeless veteran wraps up a hot lunch with some fresh fruit at a homeless veterans Stand Down in Clermont County, Ohio, June 3-5. He'd attended a similar Stand Down in Cincinnati in 1993.

We're confident there are a lot of ingenious and innovative assistance projects underway to help homeless veterans and their families. If your chapter or unit is involved in assisting homeless veterans and their families, we'd like to hear about what you are doing. We may even publish your ideas to share with other chapters and units. If it works for you, it may work for others. Send your stories to: DAV Magazine, P.O. Box 14301, Cincinnati, OH 45250-0301.



Annie R. Pope, left, chief of social work service at Hines, Ill. VA Medical Center, accompanies DAV National Employment Director Ronald W. Drach, VA Secretary Jesse Brown, and DAV National Service Officer Luis A. Morales as they review the activities and services offered at the Stand Down in Chicago.

From White City, Oregon, to Boston; from Milwaukee to Dallas; and places in between, like Pittsburgh, Murfreesboro, Tenn., and Prescott, Ariz., Stand Downs are getting help from DAV and Auxiliary members.

The possibilities for helping homeless veterans at Stand Downs are nearly limitless. For example, DAV Department Officers (NSOs) are serving on planning and task force committees, DAV service officers at all levels are providing claims, benefits and referral assistance to homeless veterans, Hospital Service Coordinators (HSCs) and DAV Transportation Network drivers are providing transportation for homeless veterans to and from Stand Downs. Chapters and units are gathering and donating food, clothing, and money for Stand Downs. Chapter and unit members are pitching in at Stand Downs to cook, distribute clothing, pass out information, set up tents and cots, and talk and care for countless other homeless veterans' needs.

"Homelessness among our veteran population is a growing and serious problem that the DAV and Auxiliary can and are doing something about," DAV National Commander Donald A. Sioss said. "The homeless problem is a relatively new issue for the DAV, and while we are involved, there is a lot more we can do, especially on the local level. DAV departments, chapters and units are encouraged to do what they can. Whether it's participating in a Stand Down, working in a soup kitchen or channeling homeless veterans to other resources that can help them, every effort counts. And nothing works better than a disabled veteran helping a disabled veteran, one on one. That's DAV service at its best."

Becoming involved in a Stand Down

is relatively easy. The VA is involved in virtually all Stand Downs, directly or indirectly. To find out if a Stand Down is slated in your area, call your local VA medical center (VAMC). If they don't know, ask them to check and get back to you. You may even want to volunteer to help plan and organize a Stand Down if one isn't scheduled.

The only way to get involved is to get involved. That's what the DAV and Auxiliary did with the DAV Transportation Network Program, and its success has been extraordinary. But to be extraordinary, we had to not only purchase the vans for the program, we had to volunteer to drive them to ensure the program worked. The same is true for becoming involved in Stand Downs. We must be involved at all levels. That includes going into the streets to find homeless veterans who need help.

By getting involved, DAV and Auxiliary members can truly help homeless veterans change their lives for the better. Yes, together we can even save lives.

In his remarks before the VA National Summit on Homelessness Among Veterans in Washington, D.C., last February, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jesse Brown reiterated the need to work together, saying, "We must make sure everybody realizes that homeless veterans are everybody's business. While we at the VA feel a very special and strong responsibility to assist homeless veterans, we simply cannot do the job alone...together we can build a new national campaign to end homelessness among veterans. And along the way, we will do our share in the larger effort to end all homelessness in the United States."

No one knows better than disabled veterans that unity of purpose breeds success.



Bill Reinhart, a member of DAV Chapter 116, Newport, Ky., sorts and hangs clothing items to be distributed to homeless veterans and their families attending the homeless veterans Stand Down in Clermont County, Ohio, June 3-5.

Homeless veterans and their families need all the success they can get.

It is estimated that on any given day, as many as 250,000 veterans are living on the streets or in shelters. As many as twice that number may experience homelessness in the course of a year. And still more are at risk of becoming homeless. The 60 plus Stand Downs this year will provide assistance to an estimated 20-25,000 homeless veterans and their families. It requires no complicated mathematics to realize far more homeless veterans need help.

There is no better time to extend a hand up to our comrades than now. ■



Newly elected DAV National Commander Donald A. Sioss, left, discusses homeless veterans issues with VA Secretary Jesse Brown during a Stand Down jointly sponsored by Chicago-area VA medical centers. The Stand Down took place during the same week the DAV and Auxiliary National Convention was held in Chicago. Secretary Brown, also a DAV member, has made assistance to homeless veterans a VA priority.

COVER STORY

Greeley DAV Homeless Veterans Shelter Offers a Helping Hand on the Road Home

The sign over the back door at 1830 8th Avenue in Greeley, Colo., reads, "DAV Shelter Entrance." For countless homeless veterans, stepping across this threshold begins the long journey home.

For many homeless veterans, a shelter is the next logical step back to productive society after contact outreach at a homeless veterans "Standown."

This is especially true if the shelter offers homeless veterans enough time to "get it together" (have enough time to find a job, save enough to get a place to live, and purchase basic necessities such as food and clothing). Greeley DAV Chapter and Auxiliary Unit 8 set out to accomplish this with their DAV Homeless Veterans Shelter, and along the way strengthened the very foundation upon which the DAV is built — to provide the finest veterans' service programs available anywhere to all of America's 2.1 million disabled veterans and their families.

The Homeless Veterans Shelter is actually an offshoot of the Greeley DAV Outreach Center which opened in 1984. At that time Chapter 8 Treasurer John Wiedeman was the adjutant of the DAV Department of Colorado. The Outreach Center opened on the heels of a Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) counseling group. Mr. Wiedeman, a resident of Greeley and chapter treasurer, hired Joan Paris, a psychologist who'd worked part-time for the Department of Defense in Japan during the Vietnam War. Hiring Joan was the first step toward a shelter for homeless veterans in Greeley.

"At first, Joan counseled veterans at home in her basement," Mr. Wiedeman said. "By 1985, the group was so large the Department rented office space, and Joan was hired as full-time counselor. We also hired her husband Bill (William A. Paris) as our Outreach Center coordinator."

Bill, a retired Army Major and member of Chapter 8, and Joan, a member of Unit 8, went to work. Soon the Greeley outreach center was helping veterans. But, Joan soon noticed one group of veterans — homeless veterans — needed far more help than was provided. The center provided one-day service. Veterans came in for counseling and returned to their homes and work until their next counseling session. For the homeless veterans, this type of service was a Band-Aid on a gaping wound. They were receiving counseling, being put up for the night and sent on their way the next day without any lasting results. The homeless veterans wanted and were coming in for help, but couldn't get their lives together in a few hours.

"Our outreach center was successfully rehabilitating veterans suffering PTSD, but Joan knew it wasn't enough," Mr. Wiedeman said. "She was counseling homeless veterans who needed more than counseling — they needed a place to live and time to get back on their feet. That's when Joan proposed an idea for a homeless veterans shelter."

The chapter and unit supported Joan's idea and managed the down payment on a house formerly used by college students near the University of Northern Colorado. Another \$11,000 was used to bring the house up to city codes, and chapter and auxiliary volunteers pitched in to remodel the home.



At left, Chapter 8 Commander John Liddle cleans out his coffee cup at the end of a visit to the DAV Homeless Veterans Shelter operated by the chapter in Greeley, Colo.

"It's the 'Buddy System.' They share job prospects, directions, and advice, but it only works for those willing to work."

Originally the main floor of the home was rented by the Department of Colorado and housed the Outreach Center. The basement was converted to a shelter with two bedrooms to sleep 12. It also contained a small resident manager apartment (one room with a bath), a living/recreation room, a kitchen, and a bathroom. The shelter was furnished entirely with donations from members, other organizations and people in the community.

When the shelter opened in November 1987, veterans moved in immediately. When Mr. Wiedeman retired from the Department of Colorado in 1992, the department moved its office back to Denver. The chapter still had \$483.50 payments to make each month and the loss of rent could very well force the shelter to close. Tough decisions, hard work, and innovative problem solving began. The chapter even considered selling its chapter home to finance the shelter.

Closing the shelter may have been easier, but chapter and unit members saw the dire need for the shelter and weren't about to give it up.

"Bill Paris came up with the solution," Mr. Wiedeman said. "He suggested that we approach the Weld County Commissioners and offer to rent the main floor to house the Weld County Veterans' Service Office, which had been moved from place to place in various county offices. Veterans Counselor Dorothy Strong worked with most veterans at the shelter, and we figured having the office over the shelter would solve our rent problem and provide easier access to services for homeless veterans."

The county inspected and approved the site, and 1830 8th Avenue has been the Weld County Veterans' Service Office ad-

dress ever since. Having the office above the shelter is a real plus for the veterans. Ms. Strong is available during the day to answer questions, and offer assistance and advice. Additionally, a Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist and a Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) provide services at the office once a week; a Denver VA Regional Office Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor works out of the office at least once a month; three VA Work Studies personnel work at the office; and a VA Vet Center Individual, Family and Group Counselor from Ft. Collins holds counseling sessions at the office when his schedule permits.

The idea of selling the chapter home originated as an emergency measure to save the shelter, and since that time, the chapter has concluded that the home isn't actually used enough to keep it. The chapter home is now up for sale and has had several inquiries already.

Some may consider the sale of the chapter home a sad end, but many chapter and unit members believe selling the home and investing the money in the homeless shelter program is the finest legacy they can provide to needy veterans and their families.

"We may even look for another building," Mr. Wiedeman said. "We'd really like a place for homeless families to stay. We've had families come here for shelter, but we couldn't help them because we only shelter males. To turn away a family makes you feel terrible. Once, I had a veteran call me for help. He and his wife, with their little child, were here from the Dakotas. They were flat broke and about to lose the motel room where they were staying. I gave him money for the night and helped him get a place for a week the next day. He was trying to find work and had just run out of money. The help we gave him was all he needed to get back on his feet. Within a week he had a job and was getting his family settled."

Jobs are an important aspect of the services at the shelter, according to Mr. Wiedeman.

"When we started out, we knew we were helping people to resolve their PTSD, but we weren't helping them find work," Mr. Wiedeman said. "As a result, many were soon back on the streets not knowing how to find a job or apply for one. When that happened, it wasn't long before they were right back in here."

Joan Paris and Outreach Center secretary Cathy Wilkinson started cutting out newspaper help wanted ads for veterans to check. When a veteran found a job they wanted to check into, Paris and Wilkinson would instruct the veteran in how to apply for the job. Later a job service counselor came to the center and

began assisting veterans seeking employment.

Eventually the Outreach Center was closed and Joan and Bill Paris left the area. Running the shelter became Mr. Wiedeman's responsibility, with guidance from a chapter program committee. Mr. Wiedeman is assisted by Orval Neighbors and John Chaplain, two former homeless veterans who live at the shelter. As resident manager, the shelter is Mr. Neighbors' full-time job. He processes veterans in and out of the shelter, cooks, cleans, and takes care of minor maintenance and security at the shelter. Mr. Chaplain is employed at an area roofing company and assists and fills in for Mr. Neighbors part-time at the shelter.

Unlike Mr. Neighbors and Mr. Chaplain, most veterans stay at the shelter for no more than the established 30-day limit. When necessary and approved, veterans can continue living at the shelter for up to 60 days.

"The idea is to give the veteran an opportunity to find a job, earn a couple of paychecks, and save up enough to move out on their own," Mr. Wiedeman said. "The shelter can't be all things for all homeless veterans. Primarily, it's short-term and designed to provide temporary food and shelter to homeless veterans, affording them the opportunity to return to self-sufficiency."

"Veterans coming to the shelter willing to help themselves will get plenty of help from other veterans. They help each other to help themselves. It's the 'Buddy System.' They share job prospects, directions, and advice, but it only works for those willing to work."

The way the shelter operates is designed to encourage veterans to seek employment. During the week, residents aren't allowed to remain at the shelter during the day. They are expected to be finding a job or working. On a typical day, veterans roll out of bed around 5:30 a.m. to clean up, get dressed, and eat. They leave the shelter for work or to seek employment between 7:30 and 8 a.m. Some, like Mr. Chaplain, are up and off to work much earlier. After 4 p.m. the veterans are allowed to return to

(Continued on page 15)

Far left, John Wiedeman, Chapter 8 Treasurer and former Department of Colorado Adjutant, has been a driving force behind the DAV Homeless Veterans Shelter in Greeley, Colo., from concept to reality.

Below, Veterans Counselor Dorothy Strong discusses services and benefits available to veterans with Army veteran John Chaplain. The Weld County Veterans' Service Office where Ms. Strong works is located on the main floor of the same building occupied by the Greeley DAV Homeless Veterans Shelter.





John Chaplain does his laundry while talking about the homeless veterans shelter with DAV National Employment Director Ronald W. Drach. A former homeless veteran, Mr. Chaplain currently resides at the Greeley DAV Homeless Veterans Shelter, where he assists the resident manager. He is also employed full-time at a local roofing company.



World War II veteran Jack Grande arrived at the Greeley DAV Homeless Veterans Shelter with no money and in need of shelter. After 10 days at the shelter he was preparing to transfer into a two-week program at the Denver VA Medical Center. Mr. Grande said, "The shelter saved my life – the DAV treated me like a comrade."

Helping Hand (Continued from page 15)

the shelter for the evening. A curfew goes into effect at 10 p.m., and the shelter is locked for the night.

On the weekends the shelter is open all day on Saturday and Sunday. There are few if any appointments or interviews to be kept. Most of the vets sleep in on Saturday morning and have breakfast between 7 and 9 a.m. After breakfast, cleanup starts at the shelter. Everyone pitches in to vacuum, do wash, clean the bathroom, dust, and whatever else needs to be done. Afternoons are usually spent watching football. Occasionally one of the vets will rent a movie to watch on Saturday or Sunday night. Lunch on the weekend is a fend – for – yourself affair. Most of the vets have soup and sandwiches or something light. Dinners are more substantial.

During the week, Mr. Neighbors does the shopping for perishables, and two or three times a month picks up staples at a local food bank. On weekends he does the cooking and lays out a full meal. Sunday dinners are often served early so cleanup is done early, and the rest of the day can be spent relaxing.

Veterans from all walks come and go at the shelter. Some stay in contact later. Others are never seen or heard from again. One former resident was never seen again, but every month for nearly two years an envelope arrived at the shelter with a thank you note and a \$100 check. Then there are people like Ed Swanson. He is what the shelter is all about.

Mr. Swanson, a Vietnam era veteran served in the Navy from 1972 to 1978. He never thought he'd be homeless, but he was. He became homeless in December 1991 following a job loss and divorce.

"I lost my home, my job ... everything," Mr. Swanson said. "You don't know what it's like to be homeless until you are. When you're homeless you make people feel uncomfortable. They don't want to be around you. Many people turn and look the other way – that's just not right."

Mr. Swanson finally got off the streets when he was referred to a five-day church program for the homeless in Greeley.

"At the time I was trying to seek employment and better myself, but after five days I knew I'd be back out on the street," he said. "When my time was up I was referred to the DAV shelter. I went to the shelter and talked to Bill Pans. He explained the program and I checked into the shelter that day."

Mr. Swanson immediately sought work. He went to several job referrals and landed one in about five days, but it paid little more than minimum wage. While he was at the shelter he reestablished contact with a former supervisor at the Holiday Inn in Greeley. The supervisor rehired Mr. Swanson. When Mr. Swanson's 30 days were up at the shelter, the management at

the Holiday Inn allowed him to live at the motel until he got back on his feet.

Get back on his feet he did. Today Mr. Swanson is the chief engineer at the Greeley Holiday Inn. For him the DAV Shelter made the difference. It was the chance he needed to get on with his life.

Since that time Mr. Swanson has seen a lot of people who served their country who are now homeless. He has referred several to the DAV shelter.

"The shelter is clean, the food is good, and you have time to get yourself together if you want to," he said. "The shelter got me off the street, gave me a warm place to live, gave me a chance to find employment, and gave me someone to talk to when I needed it. It was very helpful for me."

Mr. Swanson lives near the shelter now and stops by now and then. From time to time the Holiday Inn donates items to the shelter, and Mr. Swanson drops them off. The shelter is always in need of sheets and bedding, and the motel has donated sheets on several occasions. He helps out because he knows shelters are important.

"I believe that if most homeless veterans get a little help, they'll wind up being productive," he said. "Not all homeless people are winos, burns, and tramps. They're people. My dad had a saying that I believe in. He always said, 'meet a man halfway.' If there are enough shelters to meet homeless people halfway, they can make it. Shelters help you to help yourself. I did."

DAV Chapter 8 Commander John Liddle sees the DAV Homeless Veterans Shelter as more than just helping—it's taking the time to care.

"The shelter is a very important project," Commander Liddle said. "It gives homeless veterans a place to live and get situated. It's a place to come home to while they find employment and a home of their own. It also shows veterans that the DAV cares about their welfare enough to provide for them until they're able to take care of themselves. We don't turn away, we reach out."

For John Wiedeman, the course of the homeless program set by chapter and unit members is under way.

"What we've done makes me feel good, because we're helping veterans," Mr. Wiedeman said. "We're doing what the organization was founded for, and absolutely any standard sized chapter can do what Chapter and Unit 8 have done. And we're not done yet. We still want to help homeless veteran families, and we're working on it. It can be done."

It's important to remember that there's a place for both large and small homeless veteran shelters, according to DAV National Employment Director Ronald W. Drach.

"There's no single answer for the homeless challenge," Mr. Drach said. "Big projects like Los Angeles and Boston are very important, but not everyone has the resources to operate homeless programs of that type."

"What is important is to get everyone involved in meeting the challenge of homeless veterans. In Greeley they're involved, and it's working. Most other chapters and units around the country can do what members in Greeley have done. All they have to do is begin," he said.

In Greeley they're meeting the challenge every day with an outstretched hand to help homeless veterans find a road home. ■



Detor House, transitional housing for homeless veterans, is the result of cooperative efforts between the DAV Chapter 167, the Syracuse VA Homeless Veterans Program and Onondaga County, N.Y.

DETOR HOUSE

The Last Stop on the Road Home

For many homeless veterans Detor House, a homeless veterans program in Syracuse, N.Y., is the final stop on the road to once more living independently and productively in their community.

Detor House is sponsored by DAV Chapter 167, Liverpool N.Y., and is named for a man who lives and breathes service to his fellow veterans - Past Department of New York Commander and former Chapter 167 Adjutant Ray Detor.

Mr. Detor and Chapter 167 had been major contributors to the Syracuse Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Homeless Veterans Program (HVP) for five years, when he accompanied fellow Past Department Commander Sam Danial to a meeting with DAV National Employment Director Ronald W. Drach to discuss the plight of homeless veterans at the 1991 DAV National Convention.

Mr. Danial, a member of DAV Chapter 30, Syracuse, was prompted to meet with Mr. Drach after reading a 1991 *DAV Magazine* article about homeless veterans, in which Mr. Drach was quoted. Armed with plenty of ideas and advice after the meeting, Mr. Detor and Mr. Danial returned to New York determined to help homeless veterans in their area.

From conversations with HVP Program Coordinator Timothy A. Kohlbecker, MSW, and Sandy Galvin, R.N., an HVP staff nurse, Mr. Detor discovered a pressing need for transitional housing for homeless veterans.

"I told Ray (Detor) we had a contract for transitional housing where veterans could live for up to six months," Ms. Galvin said. "But, in many cases, that wasn't enough time. We needed alterna-

tive transitional housing to allow veterans more preparation time before moving back into the community on their own."

Additionally, Mr. Kohlbecker had contacted then Chapter Commander Doug Stout and other members of Chapter 167 about the need to provide transitional housing to homeless veterans. He explained that six months was an extremely short period of time for a homeless person to become independent given that most, when found, were broke, in debt, suffering mental or physical problems (or both), without family support, and out of work with no job prospects. Instead of returning to the community independent and productive after six months, too many of these veterans wound up homeless all over again.

The need for transitional housing was all Mr. Detor needed. He and members of Chapter 167 went to work looking for ways to make it happen.

Meanwhile Mr. Danial, who also chaired the 15-member Onondaga County Veterans Advisory Board had asked County Executive Nicholas J. Pirro if there might be any county property that might be used for transitional housing.

"Mr. Pirro said he'd get back to me in two or three days," Mr. Danial said. "He called me the next day to say there were two houses on the property of the county's Van Duyn Home and Hospital on Onondaga Hill in Syracuse. It was a great location, fairly secluded with access to bus routes. The houses were formerly used as residences for the nursing home director and assistant director. He suggested we take a look at them, and we did."

Mr. Detor, Mr. Danial and Mr. Kohlbecker visited the sites with county representatives

in January 1992. They found the home at 5031 West Seneca Turnpike attractive and sound. It would need some remodeling and refurbishment, but was what they were looking for. The two-story, cedar-shingled house had a living room, dining room, kitchen and glass-enclosed sun porch on the first floor; three bedrooms and a bath on the second floor; and a large basement. Located on a big lawn and surrounded by tall Pine trees, it was the kind of house that people enjoy living in.

Spearheaded by Mr. Detor, Chapter 167 looked for resources and information to move ahead with the project.

In the annual State of the County address in early March, Mr. Pirro announced the proposal to lease the house to the DAV to house and help up to six veterans at a time. The County legislature approved the proposal and agreed to lease the home to Chapter 167 for \$1,000 per year. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Detor applied for a grant from the DAV Charitable Service Trust, and Mr. Danial filed for a grant from the Central New York Community Foundation. And Chapter 167 voted unanimously to sponsor and support the transitional home project for homeless veterans at their meeting on April 14, 1992.

Within months, both grants were approved, and a unique partnership between the DAV, the VA and Onondaga County made it possible to transform a vacant house into a home offering hope to homeless veterans.

But the job wasn't done. Repairs and remodeling were still on tap. And, that was a big job.

"It takes guts, ambition and knowing the feeling of what you can do for another person to walk into a house like we did," Mr. Detor said. "If we would have had to go out and pay for the repairs, we'd have been talking thousands of dollars. It was all donated by volunteers. I had experienced carpenters, plumbers, electricians - I had 'em all. We had inexperienced

people too, but we found jobs for everyone. One fellow asks me, 'what can I do?,' and I ask him, 'well, what can you do?' He says, 'I can't do anything. I'm not qualified to do anything.' I said, 'you know how to hold a paintbrush?' He said, 'sure I do.' I said, 'good! You're a painter....'

Even the Boy Scouts pitched in to help ready the house for the veterans.

"A Boy Scout Troop from Liverpool came to the house," Mr. Detor said. "They did the yard - cut the grass, cleaned the whole yard and landscaped it. They did the whole nine yards.

"At the end of the day most of the volunteers looked real tired, but it was a physical tiredness, because you could see in their faces that they felt good about what they'd done. They knew they were producing something - they knew they were doing something to help somebody else out. That's a good feeling.

"My biggest apprehension was getting the house done for the veterans. I didn't know what kind of volunteers we'd get. All I did was put word out about what we were doing and what we needed on the TV and radio, and at the hospital on the bulletin board. I actually figured I wouldn't get much of a response. But, boy, did I get a response. I can't tell you what it cost me to feed those guys every day."

When it was done, from new paint to pillow cases and food to forks, the house had been refurbished with grants from the DAV Chantable Service Trust and the Central New York Community Foundation, the DAV Department of New York, and chapter funds, as well as countless donations. Mr. Detor had a real knack for getting contributions, and if that didn't work, he bargained. He earned quite a reputation bargaining and gained generous support from local corporations and individuals who wanted to help the veterans' program.

On November 5, 1992, Chapter 167 held the grand opening of the first transi-

tional home for homeless veterans at the house. Many attended.

"This transitional living arrangement will offer homeless vets from this community a safe and secure living arrangement while they receive services such as vocational training and other counseling. The project represents an outstanding example of a public and private partnership with great potential for success. It is also a demonstration to military veterans in need that we recognize and remember their contributions," County Executive Pirro said at the grand opening.

After the house opened Mr. Detor continued to manage it for the chapter at the discretion of a board of directors made up of chapter members who oversee the program.

Veterans coming to live at Detor House are selected by HVP and the DAV, all are able to care for themselves and with continued support services and training, should be able to leave the program to live independently in the community within six to 12 months. HVP staff continue to provide weekly or as needed home visits and supportive services to the veterans at Detor House. The veterans also sign a tenant agreement with Chapter 167, agreeing, among other things, to: pay a specified amount of rent (currently \$160 per month) used by the chapter to pay utilities, phone bills, etc.; to help with chores at the house; and not use drugs or alcohol in the house.

"It's a transitional program with high quality, low cost housing that allows the veterans to continue to benefit from support and vocational services offered by our program," said Frank Ermenwein, HVP Health Care Coordinator. "We have a very, very good working relationship with the DAV. We participate jointly in screening veterans referred to the house and meet regularly to discuss all aspects of the program.

"We certainly hope to continue our in-



Adjutant Doug Stout, Chapter 167, Liverpool N. Y., who currently manages Detor House for Chapter 167, drops by to chat with veterans living at the house. Detor House is a transitional living facility for homeless veterans who are successfully rehabilitating and hope to return to independent living in the community.

volvement with the DAV and hopefully expand support services for more homeless veterans in the area."

Three veterans have successfully transitioned from Detor House back to living independent productive lives in the community. That makes it all worthwhile for Ray Detor.

"It's hard to describe the feeling you get knowing there is another fellow you are going to put out in the community, and he is going to be on his own," Mr. Detor said. "It's a tremendous feeling just knowing you reached the veteran in time to help him return to being the human being he was meant to be."

Ray Detor has been hospitalized since last July. He recently visited Detor House with Chapter 167 Adjutant Doug Stout. While Mr. Detor is in the hospital, Mr. Stout is managing the program in his absence. Both men agree that any medium sized chapter such as theirs can do what they've done for homeless veterans. For them it's service, and that's what the DAV is all about.

"Detor House is typical of what the DAV has always stood for," Mr. Stout said. "It merely exemplifies the dedication, insight and compassion that disabled veterans have for their fellow veterans."

For Mr. Detor there's a deeper personal reason that Detor House is a reality.

"I was in Europe on the front lines during World War II," he said. "I was a lucky fellow to come back. There were a lot of veterans that didn't. I told myself then that in some way or another I'd repay those fellows laying over there. That's what I'm doing." ■



Past Department Commander Ray Detor, DAV Chapter 167, Liverpool, N. Y., whose drive, dedication and determination played a major role in providing transitional housing for homeless veterans. The county-owned home leased by Chapter 167 is now called Detor House.



Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.

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A Not-For-Profit Veterans Service Organization Chartered by the United States Congress

May 9, 1996

Hon. Steve Buyer, Chair
 House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
 Education, Training, Employment
 and Housing Subcommittee
 335 Cannon House Office Building
 Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Buyer:

Thank you for holding the April 18 hearing on existing programs and proposed changes in veterans readjustment benefits. I would like to respond for Vietnam Veterans of America to the two questions Rep. Filner asked.

1. I agree with all of you that additional Federal dollars should be directed toward assisting homeless veterans. I also believe, however, local communities can make a difference. Do [y]our organizations have programs which assist veterans on the local level? Have your organizations participated in Stand Downs across the country?

VVA certainly does have programs which assist veterans on the local level. Three years ago VVA created a National Task Force on Homeless Veterans to coordinate these efforts, conducted by chapters and state councils in at least 20 states. Some of these programs are several years old, and more are coming into being at all times. The work of the VVA National Task Force on Homeless Veterans is in part to act as an information clearing house, helping these local veteran-operated programs know how they may maximize their effectiveness. In return, the VVA National Task Force on Homeless Veterans gathers information from practitioners in the field so that our efforts -- including the April 18 testimony and this letter -- are as well-informed about the needs of endeavors in the field as can be.

Similar work is being done through a number of veterans service organizations (VSOs) at this time. For the past year, the major VSOs have been pooling resource information through

the Veterans Organizations Homeless Council (VOHC), so that local programs could be better informed and success stories could be replicated elsewhere. What we have learned is that more is being done by veterans organizations than any of us knew. Still, we cannot do it all.

Many of our local programs began simply. Some started with one or two people making sandwiches and taking them to veterans sleeping under bridges. Others began by holding a Stand Down, an organized respite of 1-3 days from homelessness, in which veterans are given food, shelter and an introduction to services they desperately need.

The more any chapter did, the more its members learned that whatever they do must fit into a continuum of care that is aimed at changing the lives of homeless veterans and helping them to find work. That continuum of care includes, for some, substance abuse treatment and/or psychological treatment. Transitional housing, job training, and help with finding employment are all necessary components. These programs already combine the services of voluntary organizations, the nearest VA facilities and local governments. In general, VA is the only federal agency providing direct help.

Few of our local efforts provide all of this. Funding the full continuum of care is expensive, and the funding must come from both private and public sources, including local, state and federal dollars. In general, the federal dollars are provided through grant programs, all of which require matching funds and the mobilization of local resources, including in-kind donations of materials and labor. VVA's local chapters contribute money, provide supplies and labor, and help mobilize other community support through both non-profit organizations and contacts with local companies.

The only veteran-specific federal grant programs are VA's Homeless Provider Grant and Per Diem Program (HPG) and the Department of Labor's Homeless Veterans Employment Program (HVEP), formerly called the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP). They are excellent programs that are woefully underfunded, given the admirable return they have produced by putting homeless veterans back to work at lower cost than most employment programs.

As for Stand Downs, VVA literally wrote the book on Stand Downs. Drawing from our collective experience, VVA's National Task Force on Homeless Veterans published *Organizing a Stand Down: A Reference Document*. The second edition was published in July 1995. It is a comprehensive 28-page manual which VVA sells through its national office for \$5.00 a copy. VVA chapters have formed the backbone of some Stand Downs and taken part in many others. We believe that VVA members took part in every Stand Down conducted last year in the United States.

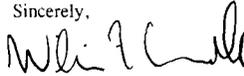
2. Some of you expressed concern about the D-TAP program. What specific steps could be taken by VA, DOD or DOL to improve the quality of service provided to separating disabled veterans?

Perhaps the greatest need is for Department of Defense (DOD) to take D-TAP seriously, and to require facility commanders to assure the participation of separating personnel in hospitals and medical hold units. The basic TAP program did not become effective until DOD made its will known to commanders, and the same step ought to work wonders for D-TAP.

Beyond that, VA and DOL provide the actual instruction in the larger TAP program. It is incumbent upon these agencies to make certain that a base commander participates in the whole program, which includes D-TAP. What D-TAP needs is not new components, but the participation of the service men and women it is designed to help. That participation depends on military commanders seeing that it happens.

We appreciate Rep. Filner's questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William F. Crandell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

William F. Crandell
Deputy Director
Government Relations



RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS
 SUBMITTED BY THE HONORABLE BOB FILNER
 RANKING DEMOCRATIC MEMBER OF THE HOUSE VETERANS' AFFAIRS
 SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING
 REGARDING THE
 VETERANS READJUSTMENT BENEFITS HEARING
 APRIL 18, 1996
 BY TERRY GRANDISON, ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR
 PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA

Question 1. I agree with all of you that additional Federal dollars should be directed toward assisting homeless veterans. I also believe, however, local communities can make a difference. Do your organizations have programs which assist veterans on the local level? Have your organizations participated in Stand Downs across the Country?

Response: While PVA did not address the issue of homeless veterans in our written testimony, it in no way suggests that we are not involved in helping homeless veterans. In fact, PVA's local chapters have been actively involved in providing assistance to the nation's homeless veterans. Specifically, PVA's local chapters have helped to organize and fund Stand Downs across the country. PVA's local chapters are involved in housing initiatives that purchase and renovate housing for homeless veterans. In addition, PVA's local chapters also donate durable medical equipment such as wheelchairs and medical supplies to homeless disabled veterans. Moreover, PVA's local chapters coordinate resources and manpower with VA regional offices, veterans service organizations, and community groups to provide comprehensive support to homeless veterans. PVA agrees that local communities and veterans service organizations can make a difference in the lives of homeless veterans, but we also recognize that the federal government bears ultimate responsibility to assist these veterans in attaining housing, medical care, and psychiatric treatment. PVA, like other service organizations, can only help a finite number of homeless veterans because of fiscal restraints. The federal government must take the lead in this endeavor to reach and assist homeless veterans.

Question 2. Some of you expressed concern about the D-TAP program. What specific steps could be taken by VA, DOD, or DOL to improve the quality of service provided to separating disabled veterans?

Response: The Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) is designed to provide disabled separating veterans instruction and information on employment assistance, vocational rehabilitation, and counseling services. PVA is very concerned about the quality of services provided to separating disabled veterans particularly severely disabled veterans. PVA believes that the vocational rehabilitation needs of severely disabled veterans are not given high priority. PVA recommends that the quality of services rendered to separating disabled veterans in the DTAP program can be improved by the Department of Defense (DOD), Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and Department of Labor (DOL) if they coordinate and administer the program as part of a multidisciplinary team approach. We contend that the DTAP sessions should be the starting point for delivering the full

PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA

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continuum of rehabilitative services to disabled veterans. PVA believes this framework will substantially improve the quality and efficiency of the DTAP program and would dramatically improve the services rendered to severely disabled veterans. Many severely disabled veterans require extensive training, equipment, counseling, and accommodations to reenter the job market. Veterans in this situation require that services be delivered and coordinated in a comprehensive manner to meet their unique needs during medical and vocational rehabilitation. For example, under a multidisciplinary approach, associated personnel could consult with veterans' primary care physicians, nurses, social workers, therapists and psychologists as part of the rehabilitation process. The VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Counseling (VR&C) service and DOL's Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) personnel would gain a comprehensive understanding of the individual veterans' physical limitations and abilities, emotional composition, academic and employment potential.

PVA believes consultation with the various disciplines of rehabilitative therapy would improve the outcomes of vocational rehabilitation initiatives. Disabled veterans would readily recognize the professional expertise devoted to their rehabilitation and would be encouraged to persevere to complete rehabilitation. In addition, a multidisciplinary team approach will provide information needed to monitor and measure the quality and efficiency of the DTAP, VR&C, and VETS programs.

VFW'S ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS
FROM APRIL 18, 1996, HEARING
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING,
EMPLOYMENT, AND HOUSING

QUESTION NUMBER 1

Tell us more about how the VFW works with the Army Career and Alumni Personnel to provide assistance at VFW posts around the country.

ANSWER NUMBER 1

The VFW enjoys a very positive working relationship with ACAP operations on the Korean Peninsula. Our association with ACAP involving VFW stateside posts can best be characterized as "Job networking." Two years ago while conducting a Veterans Benefits Seminar at Camp Red Cloud, Korea, personnel from the ACAP-Job Assistance Center asked us to join their Army Alumni and Employment Network (AEAN). The "Nework," of course, is a database of employers and service providers whom transitioning military members can count on and are encouraged to contact when relocating back to the States and starting their job search. Each of the 50 VFW state headquarters offices and some of our 11,000 posts are registered with AEAN as a service provider. By registering with the AEAN, each VFW office commits to helping the veteran in his job search in numerous ways, but primarily by identifying local job opportunities, arranging introductions, interviews, referrals, etc.

QUESTION NUMBER 2

Tell us more about the VFW outreach efforts in Asia and Europe.

ANSWER NUMBER 2

As part of our outreach effort the VFW conducts Veterans Benefits Seminars and Briefings at military installations in Germany and Korea. Outreach in Europe initially focused on military retirees, most of whom work for the U.S. military defense civilian agencies or with U.S. contractors who provide services to these agencies. Their chief concern at the time was how and to what extent would the military drawdown in Europe affect their jobs and their ability to continue to access vital health care services. In the absence of trained Department of Veterans Affairs counselors in the region, our intent was to fill the void and try to address these concerns.

In March 1992, a VFW official visiting an air force base in England was approached by several active duty members who requested a meeting. These service members were concerned about the ongoing drawdown and the absence of any kind of official communication as to what to expect. They basically expressed concern that no transition services were available to them and that members were being separated in Europe without the benefit of vital transition services.

The VFW subsequently sent a two-man team to Europe in September 1992 for a period of 10 days. During the first visit 7 briefings were held at installations in and around Heidelberg, Wuerzburg/Kitzingen, Nuremberg/Furth, Augsburg, and Vicenze, Italy.

Similarly, we started doing briefings in South Korea two years ago at the urging of local VFW post officials, who were often approached by service members nearing separation and who sought answers to their concerns. In the nearly 4 years since we started outreach to overseas locations, we find that they are quite beneficial to service members who generally do not have VA or VETS personnel permanently assigned to the area, but who nevertheless require the same transition assistance as troops stationed in the States.

QUESTION NUMBER 3

I agree with all of you that additional Federal dollars should be directed toward assisting homeless veterans. I also believe, however, local communities can make a difference. Do our organizations have programs which assist veterans on the local level? Have your organizations participated in Stand Downs across the country?

ANSWER NUMBER 3

Yes, many VFW posts routinely provide financial and other assistance to homeless veterans programs. Some of the more popular ventures involved collecting clothing and redistributing them to the homeless veterans; purchasing transportation tokens to assist newly hired veterans in commuting to and from their job, and working in partnership with the local job service office in organizing job fairs. Overall, during program year 1994-95 VFW posts were involved in community activity projects that provided nearly 12,000,000 hours of volunteer services. VFW and auxiliary members spent or donated nearly \$52 million to complete these projects.

Yes. Since the VFW formed the National Homeless Veterans Committee in 1994, many of our Departments (State VFWs) have been involved in Stand Down programs around the country. In a report presented at the 1996 VFW Washington Conference, twenty-four (24) VFW Departments indicated their members were involved in supporting Stand Downs. Some of the more active VFW Departments involved with Stand Downs are: California, Connecticut, Idaho, Florida, Kansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Rhode Island.

QUESTION NUMBER 4

Some of you expressed concern about the D-TAP program. What specific steps could be taken by VA, DoD, or DoL to improve the quality of service provided to separating disabled veterans?

ANSWER NUMBER 4

The VFW has always deferred to the expertise provided by the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) regarding the D-TAP program. Therefore, we have nothing new to add. However, it is important for this committee to know that while the VFW considers all veterans equal we do place the disabled veteran as first, among equals.

