

LICENSURE AND CERTIFICATION OF TRANSITIONING VETERANS

HEARING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY OF THE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

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LICENSURE AND CERTIFICATION OF TRANSITIONING VETERANS

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2007

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

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:17 p.m., in Room 334, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Stephanie Herseth Sandlin [Chairwoman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Herseth Sandlin, and Boozman.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRWOMAN HERSETH SANDLIN

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. The Veterans' Affairs Economic Opportunity Subcommittee Hearing on Licensure and Credentialing will come to order.

Before I begin with my opening statement, I would like to call attention to the fact that Mr. Michael Stack, Executive Director for ASIS International, has asked to submit a written statement for the hearing record. I ask unanimous consent that his statement be entered for the record.

Hearing no objection, so entered.

[The statement of ASIS International appears on p. 36.]

Over the past year, our Subcommittee has focused most of its energy on employment-related issues ranging from transition assistance to servicemembers, small business opportunities for veterans, and employment within the Federal Government. In today's hearing, we will continue to examine these issues and hear valuable insight as to how to better provide veterans and returning servicemembers with the resources to make the transition back to civilian life and receive the opportunities they deserve.

I look forward to hearing from veteran service organization (VSO) representatives on concerns their members have encountered when seeking certification or licensing in the civilian sector, to include enforcing laws to ensure those responsible are doing their job.

I also look forward to hearing about the possibilities of expanding existing laws to provide more opportunities and resources to our Nation's veterans seeking ways to start new careers in the civilian sector.

Throughout my tenure in Congress, I have been approached by several of my constituents to find ways to improve existing laws such as the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB). It is my belief that this Subcommittee has the opportunity to work together on these issues

with veteran service organizations, our colleagues in the Senate, and Administration officials.

This Subcommittee and this Congress has a responsibility to help bridge the gap between military service and veteran status and assist these brave men and women as they transition back to the civilian sector to pursue new educational opportunities, start new careers, and establish themselves in the communities they help to protect.

With that I now recognize the distinguished Ranking Member, Mr. Boozman, for any opening remarks you may have.

[The prepared statement of Chairwoman Herseth Sandlin appears on p. 24.]

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN BOOZMAN

Mr. BOOZMAN. Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you also for highlighting the need to improve opportunities for veterans to have their military training and education counted toward qualifying for civilian occupations.

As you remember we authorized the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) to conduct a pilot licensing and certification project. I am very eager to hear what progress VETS has made toward implementing that authority.

I am also a little bit concerned that the continuum of responsibility beginning with the Military Services to the U.S. Department of Labor (DoL) and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and any of the States has really never been solidified. Without making the connections, veterans will continue to experience delays in qualifying for civilian occupations for which they have been trained during their military service.

Taxpayers will also see valuable training dollars and experience wasted. States bear a measure of responsibility, too, by setting qualification standards for everything from commercial driver's licenses (CDLs) to teachers and physicians. States are the final arbiter of whether military training will count toward qualifications.

I am disappointed that the National Governors' Association was not able to be with us today and I hope that they will come to talk to us soon about their role in this issue.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Congressman Boozman appears on p. 24.]

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Thank you, Mr. Boozman. I would now like to welcome our panelists testifying on the first panel before the Subcommittee today. Joining us is Mr. Ron Chamrin, Assistant Director on the Economic Commission for the American Legion; Mr. Dennis Cullinan, National Legislative Service Director for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW); and Mr. Rick Weidman, Executive Director for Policy and Government Affairs for the Vietnam Veterans of America.

I would like to remind our panelists that your complete written statements have been made part of the hearing record. Please limit your remarks to 5 minutes so we may have sufficient time to follow up with questions once everyone has had the opportunity to provide their oral testimony.

Mr. Chamrin, lets begin with you. You are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENTS OF RONALD F. CHAMRIN, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, ECONOMIC COMMISSION, AMERICAN LEGION; DENNIS M. CULLINAN, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE, VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES; AND RICHARD F. WEIDMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR POLICY AND GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS, VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

STATEMENT OF RONALD F. CHAMRIN

Mr. CHAMRIN. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. It is an honor to be back and it is good to see you and Ranking Member Boozman. Once again, thank you for this opportunity to present the American Legion's view of the licensure and credentialing of servicemembers and veterans to the Subcommittee today.

The American Legion asserts that veterans have been trained, educated, disciplined, and molded by the greatest military that the world has ever seen, yet a large number of these skills are deemed non-applicable in the civilian sector.

With all of these great skills and abilities, a casual observer would assume that veterans are easily employed and can transition their military experience to the private sector with ease. Unfortunately, that is not the case.

The American Legion supports efforts to eliminate employment barriers that impede the transfer of military job skills to the civilian labor market and that the DoD take appropriate steps to insure that servicemembers be trained, tested, evaluated and issued any license or certification that may be required in the civilian workforce.

The American Legion supports making the GI Bill available to pay for all necessary civilian license and certification examination requirements, including necessary preparatory courses. We also support efforts to increase the civilian labor markets acceptance of the occupational training provided by the military.

Speaking of military training, the DoD provides some of the best vocational training in the Nation for it's military personnel and establishes measures and evaluates performance standards for every occupation with the Armed Forces. There are many occupational career fields in the Armed Forces that can easily translate to a civilian counterpart. Additionally, there are many occupations in the civilian workforce that require a license or a certification.

Upon separation, many foreign military personnel certified as proficient in their military occupational career are not licensed or certified to perform the comparable job in the civilian workforce, thus hindering chances for immediate civilian employment and delaying career advancement. This situation creates an artificial barrier to employment upon separation from military service.

The VA and their potential impact on licensure and credentialing.

The American Legion applauds the fact that since January of 2006, all eligible veterans using the GI Bill programs can now receive reimbursement for licensing and certification tests. However,

the government is paying twice and sometimes three or more times for training and licensing of the same task. DoD also spends billions of American tax dollars each year training members of the military. Some civilian skills are very similar in nature to those duties performed while in the military, yet taxpayers may be funding training twice for the same individual through the DoD and then the VA, through the GI Bill program.

This is financially irresponsible and counterproductive to individual veterans who must use their earned GI Bill benefits to take civilian proficiency tests. The American Legion also notes that there have been veterans who are reservists called to active duty that are losing their earned education benefits once they complete their service contract. Therefore, they must find alternative means for funding.

The most recent visible example of this unjust denial of benefits is the demobilization of 2,600 members of the Minnesota National Guard who has just performed the longest, continuous combat tour in Iraq of any military unit to date. Mobilized for 22 months, they are ineligible to enroll in the GI Bill active duty because they fall short of the required 24-month deadline by only 2 months. If they wanted to use the GI Bill for licensing and certification after they are done with the National Guard and the Reserve Service they can't, because they are no longer in the Reserves.

Military transcripts. Military transcripts provided from each of the Armed Forces provide a very limited training education record and at times are incorrect, missing, or additional information is listed. I myself have three military occupational specialties (MOSs) from the Army but it has five listed in my military transcript. So I have to go through the steps to correct that and take off additional MOSs that I am not even qualified for.

Once again, highlighting the Guardsman in Minnesota, many of them infantry, these servicemembers have enormous talents, skills, and attributes they have used while in theater. However, because tasks they performed are so unique and difficult to succinctly describe, they are left with an empty shell of a resume.

We observe that Transition Assistance Program (TAP) modules are excellent avenues for each individual U.S. State to access transitioning servicemembers. When servicemembers are at these TAP sites around the country, each State workforce agency or credentialing board can provide important information. Better coordination, communication and interaction of credentialing boards and the training commands of each of our Nation's Armed Forces are needed. Furthermore, military trainers, doctrine writers, and evaluation tests for military skills should coordinate with their civilian counterparts and attempt to synchronize military tests with their civilian counterparts.

My final point will be the National Association of Boards and the Counsel of Licensure Enforcement and Regulation that has a database of national approving boards. Each TAP site should coordinate with boards to have a representative participate. Additionally, each U.S. State regulatory board should also coordinate with TAP personnel and brief on transitioning servicemembers the unique relevant requirements needed for certification.

In conclusion, there have been estimates that approximately 60 percent of the workforce will retire by 2020 and competent, educated, and capable individuals must replace the workforce in order to assure the United States retains its competitive edge in the world. The veterans of this Nation make up a well-qualified disciplined pool of applicants. Increasing recognition of military training by integrating licensing and credentialing must be strengthened to assist our country's finest to achieve their professional goals.

Madam Chairwoman and Ranking Member Boozman, I appreciate the opportunity to present the American Legion's views on these important issues. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Chamrin appears on p. 25.]

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Thank you very much for your testimony. Mr. Cullinan, you are now recognized.

STATEMENT OF DENNIS M. CULLINAN

Mr. CULLINAN. Thank you very much, Madam Chairwoman, Mr. Boozman. On behalf of the men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, I want to thank you for inviting us to testify at today's important hearing.

As cited in the September 2005 "Study on Coordination of Job Training Standards with Certification Standards for Military Occupational Specialties," our Nation needs an increasingly skilled workforce. We would all agree that there is no more deserving or valuable a group of American workers than our Nation's servicemembers and veterans. Key to our facilitating a smooth and ready transition from the military to the private sector workplace is civilian credentialing.

Civilian credentials maximize a servicemember's ability to demonstrate that the skills acquired in the military are on a par with their civilian counterparts. This results in diminishing the periods of unemployment or underemployment that might otherwise occur when moving into the civilian workforce.

The civilian workforce increasingly relies upon credentialing as a way to regulate entry into certain occupations and to promote accountability for performance and public safety. Its value to the military is also being increasingly recognized. Credentialing offers professional growth and development opportunities for individuals in the service and has been used by the Military Services for both recruiting and retention.

The gaps that exist between the requirements for civilian occupational credentials and the world class education, training, and experience provided by the military continue to make it difficult for transitioning military to make a smooth entry into the appropriate civilian sector employment.

Additional challenges to credentialing the servicemember include statutory fiscal constraints. Insufficient legal authority exists for the Armed Forces to expend appropriated funds for servicemembers to acquire civilian and or commercial occupational credentials. For example, absent specific statutory authority, appropriated funds may not generally be used to pay for commercial certifications, although appropriated funds may be used to pay for commercially

contracted training courses that include an examination leading to credentials if the examination logically relates to the training and is part of a purchase price of a course package. Reserve forces face additional constraints.

Even with these constraints and challenges, the credentialing picture for our servicemembers transitioning into the civilian workforce has improved markedly with the current and continuing programs of each of the Military Services and the cooperative efforts between DoD and Defense. Excuse me. The Department of Labor and Defense.

It is clear, however, that much more needs to be done and done quickly. The situation is especially urgent not only in the context of doing the right thing by our young men and women in uniform moving into civilian lives but in considering that a high number of these important jobs are now being carried out by baby boomers.

Over the next 10 years over half of this aging population will be retiring. It is very much in our national interest to make sure we have the right people in place to assume these very important, highly demanding occupations. This is a matter of our collective economic and governmental security.

Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Subcommittee, Mr. Boozman, this concludes my testimony. I would urge you to review the attached VFW Resolution Number 618 entitled, "Licensure and Certification," which urges in part a standardized licensure and certification requirement be adopted by the appropriate Federal and State agencies and that recently separated servicemembers be afforded the opportunity to take licensing and certification exams based on existing skills acquired while in the military.

Thank you very much. I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Cullinan appears on p. 27.]

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Thank you very much for your testimony. Mr. Weidman you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD F. WEIDMAN

Mr. WEIDMAN. Madam Chairwoman, Mr. Boozman, thank you very much, both of you, for your continued bipartisan leadership on these vital issues of employment and training and economic opportunities for America's veterans.

The subject this morning of licensure and certification to many seems a dry and arcane one, but it is by no means a dry and arcane one. It is a significant barrier to employment and more importantly to utilizing the skills for which the taxpayers have spent billions of dollars. The grand daddy of all training institutions is the United States military. They do it well. They do it extensively. They leave no one behind. And you have to get it right. There is no do over when you are doing explosive ordinance disposal. You either learn it and you learn it cold and you get it right coming out of school or you die. It is as simple as that. And that is just one example of many military occupations.

But the occupations to run the United States military and work the modern battlefield cover virtually every type of work that our society needs performed today in order to remain competitive in the world and get our Gross Domestic Product up and to compete in

the global markets. Yet we are not certifying those acquired skills for which, literally, we have spent billions to teach people how to do this, to acquire this knowledge, to acquire these extraordinary skills. And for the lack of the civilian certification to be marketable in the job market once they come out of the military we are throwing all of those resources away that we can ill afford to let go.

We are very grateful to the Congress for all of the increases in the Montgomery GI Bill and our hope is that we will return to a World War II style GI Bill for people in the future, but that is more billions. But in the meantime, let's capitalize off what we have already spent. With some thought and with bringing stakeholders together we can in fact begin to move forward.

One of the most notable examples following the Vietnam War was the MEDEX program and it began with one program called the MEDEX program at the Dartmouth College it was then. It is now Dartmouth University in Hanover, New Hampshire. I was in Vermont and the Vermont State College System at that time and one of my other duties as assigned, if you will by my college president, was to help recruit medics and corpsmen for that first class in medics in Dartmouth, because I was in Northern Vermont.

The whole profession of physician assistants (PAs) really grew from that one program and from the desire to capitalize off that wealth of experience, knowledge, and skills that we brought home. Many of us knew things far beyond what one would anticipate. I could not even get a job on an ambulance if I wanted it because I was not a certified emergency medical technician (EMT). However, in Vietnam, I delivered babies. Not of GI's but of Vietnamese nationals. I did not just cryacheo tracheotomies but tracheotomies. I could do cut downs. I did inserted chest tubes. And I could go on and on and on.

The point about it is, and I was not unusual as a medic. Many other people did the same thing and had those kinds of skills but there was no place to get them credentialed within our society. I think many of us know, and certainly in South Dakota and Arkansas and other rural-area physician assistants, have become an absolutely indispensable part of the medical network for delivery of medical care. This is just one example. And we can do this right across the board with forethought and with relatively little expenditure of funds.

As part of Public Law 106-50, the Congress recognized that and created a credentialing element, if you will, but unfortunately put it in the Veterans Corporation. And the Corporation was not even up and running. It should have been at the Department of Labor all along. It should be placed at the Department of Labor today. And we should not just authorize it, but put some significant funds behind it.

And how to do that, if I may be so bold as to suggest, is not in a formal hearing, but a roundtable bringing stakeholders together from DoD, from VA, particularly from VA Voc Rehab, Department of Labor, the Veterans Service Organization since Shirley, but also others like business leaders. I would call your attention to the fact that the business community is crying out for skilled workers and it is having a tough time recruiting.

One of the things that Vietnam Veterans of America does, and we are a full member of the United States Chamber of Commerce, is we are active on the Institute for a Competitive Workforce. And big business and small businesses are deeply concerned about finding people who can perform the tasks that they need performed.

What we should be doing is credentialing those people coming out of the military so that they can get those jobs and help American business continue to grow our Domestic Product, Gross Domestic Product. We cannot have a strong defense if we can't pay for it, so why in the world are we wasting the billions that we have used to train people who can help our economy stay strong, prosperous, and growing even more quickly than it is today.

Madam Chairwoman, that concludes my statement. I would be happy to answer any questions that you or the Ranking Member may have.

Once again, thank you very much for the opportunity to join you here today.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Weidman appears on p. 29.]

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Well thank you. I appreciate the testimony from all three of you and the insights you have provided.

Let me start with you, Mr. Chamrin. You had stated that we are essentially funding the same training twice. As my constituents in the audience leave to catch their flight back, this is an issue that is important. I will let them go. They are terrific folks with the American Legion from South Dakota. Jean and Reed, we will see you back in the State.

As they are leaving, Reed brought up an issue to me that relates to this topic. In the Air National Guard, some of the mechanics trained to take care of the aircraft at Joe Foss Field, via a civilian Federal agency with the Federal Aviation Administration, mechanics must go through a different process by which to get the credentialing to work on planes on the other side of the runway.

When we talk about paying for the training twice, have you done any analysis of what skills we are talking about where this is most frequently taking place in terms of the training provided at DoD? Then how is that training getting duplicated unnecessarily, in your opinion and in your testimony, to meet certain certification requirements once there is a transition to the civilian sector utilizing VA benefits?

Have you done any kind of categorization or inventory of which skills-sets were the most frequent?

Mr. CHAMRIN. Unfortunately, there are no studies, but I can provide you numerous letters from our constituents and our members to the American Legion.

I was primarily focusing on the testing and having to use the GI Bill to pay for these licensing and certification testing when, if the DoD could provide a license through DoD dollars rather than having the veteran use their GI Bill benefits for the licensing and certification.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Okay. I appreciate that clarification.

On a similar line, I have a question for all three of you. Has there been any analysis done and you stated this in your testimony Mr. Chamrin where you make reference to the President's Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance? Of

the 105 military professions that require licensure and credentialing, which of the 105 are giving veterans the most difficulty when transitioning to the civilian sector?

Do we have any inventory or analysis there?

Mr. CHAMRIN. Thanks. Rick alluded to that. The medical fields are really difficult, because they are so precise and so technical.

[To Rick Weidman.] If you know the exact ones, I don't know the exact ones.

But I know that if you were a GP in the military, it might be more easy to transfer that skill of general practitioner. But if you were a cardiologist or a specific skill, it is going to be really hard to get the military training—the military certification over to the civilian, unless you take that State Board and then you are certified there.

I couldn't talk about all 105, though.

[To Rick Weidman.] Maybe, do you know?

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Before you follow up on that, I think Mr. Cullinan and you had stated in the resolution that you referenced what VFW has proposed. When you say if they have not taken a State Board, is the problem here the fact that there is DoD policy whereby funds don't exist to pay while on active duty to meet State Board requirements or other certification requirements?

Mr. CULLINAN. Well, there were a couple. I think it was alluded to earlier. You take the case of the Guard and Reserve, Ron, I think you mentioned that. You leave the Guard and Reserve, you don't have an educational benefit anymore so you are out of luck.

The other issue that we are looking at as an organization, there are certain skills that are acquired while in the military, be that as it may, if you want to go into a given profession, say you know electronics, the healthcare field. Oftentimes, the State will require you to go through a certain educational process before you can take the exam.

What we are saying is if the military standards are equivalent that individual should either be able to take the exam without any kind of educational or minimal or reduced requirement. And that is our proposal.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Thank you. Mr. Weidman, did you have a followup?

Mr. WEIDMAN. A lot of it is not money. It is not going to cost you any money out of hand. I will use the example of the EMT with the Army medics. One of the things that we started with some other folks and it was actually started by a guy by the name of Doug Taylor, who is tired of listening to me crab about it, who was the veterans representative on the Job Training Partnership Council for the State of New York. And Doug took the lead and it was backed up by Jim Hartman who was a USD of Well Vets Director for the State of New York. And we got other folks, including the Governor, behind it.

And we were able to get the attention of the services and particularly of the Army at Fort Sam Houston where all Army medics train. So since that time, and I think it is still going on, when people graduate from Fort Sam, from the Medical Training Center, they have the option of taking an EMT exam. What took 3 years was getting all 53 jurisdictions to agree to accept this one exam

that was a combination of written, oral, and practical. And they finally achieved that.

And, therefore, you would have this credential even at the beginning of your Army career so when you came out you could always find a job. EMT's are always in demand, whether you are in an urban area or a rural area, and particularly if you have hands on experience, which obviously medics since the advent of Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) have a great deal of hands on experience, more than enough to last seven lifetimes.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. I appreciate that. Before I recognize the Ranking Member, let me comment that when you bring up EMT's as one example we have a number of National Guard and Reservist in South Dakota, and I am sure a lot of other States, that actually are EMT's in their communities. In rural areas in particular. Time and again, and particularly both trips that I have made to Iraq, the comments of the generals are, "Oh, with the National Guard and Reserve, they bring all of these other skills to the table," from their civilian careers.

I would think that if we are transferring it more readily one way, then we should be able to transfer it more readily the other way. Let me now recognize Mr. Boozman for his questions.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Thank you very much. I guess this is something that I have really been interested in and it just makes all the sense in the world, but it is difficult. It seems like there is really a couple things going on. You have the actual certification that you have to do. So if you are a truckdriver, and I just came back from Kuwait and Iraq and Afghanistan. We have a lot of National Guardsmen in Kuwait and that is the area where they are bringing all this stuff in and then they are trucking it over. And, in fact, they had an impromptu pinning of a couple of guys with Purple Hearts that were truckdrivers. About one in ten of the convoys get hit. And so these guys are driving these huge rigs that are up armored and stuff. And those same guys when they come back to the States, if they are on an interstate and driving an Army truck, it is perfectly all right to do.

So the credentialing is a problem. It seems like there should be some mechanism that those guys get their commercial drivers license by basis of their Army training. That is one problem we have and it does not matter the profession.

The other problem, though, is getting licensed in a State. And that is not just an Army or not just a military problem. I am an optometrist. I am from Arkansas and if I decided that I wanted to go and practice in a sunny, nice retirement State, it would probably be very difficult for me to get a license there. These licensures should be strictly just for competence but they are also designed to keep people out.

And that is just the way it is. Now what has happened in the last several years that has been broken down to a large extent. When I started practice in Arkansas 30 years ago, you had to own property in Arkansas for a year before you could take the test.

So we have these other problems. And that has all gone away now, but it does—most States now, have reciprocity where they work back and forth. Not all of them, but most of them do. So the

other thing is figuring out how the military is almost like a State where it has reciprocity like the rest of the States.

So I guess what I am saying is that this thing is something that we have to get done. It is a commonsense thing, but there are some things out there that we have just got to work through. And some of the problems that we are dealing with aren't inherent just to the military.

The other problem, I think, is that again, if a guy has been in Iraq, say he has been in the military 10 years and he has been a truckdriver the whole time regardless of where he has been, he has run up and down the interstates, is getting credit for those 10 years and that I think is really one of the bigger deals of all this is when he hires on at a major trucking company or an independent, that it is recognized, and that he has 10 years behind the wheel and so many miles. And many times, they don't do that. Okay?

So those are kind of the problems. You can comment about those things if you would like. I think the roundtable approach to some of these things might be a good idea because it is really difficult to kind of get to the root of some of this stuff, unless you aren't just kind of visiting back and forth and maybe have some of the heads of the State Boards in different professions that can give us input. And, again, like I said, in some cases, I think we will find that this is not just a military problem, it is just a problem in general.

Mr. CHAMRIN. Madam Chair, may I say something? Regarding the truckdrivers, in the Army because I am still a Reservist, there are badges for safe driving according to the number of miles. I think it is 10,000 then 20,000. I couldn't tell you exactly, but there are badges.

And we were talking about some skilled professions, doctors and PA's, but just to transport ammunition you need a hazmat license and hazmat qualification. So people in my Reserve unit are going to Fort Meade, taking a class, getting a hazmat certification through the Army, transporting just M-16 rounds down to Fort A.P. Hill so we can fire them for a qualification. But that is only within the military. They can't go to Virginia and drive hazardous materials through the State of Virginia.

And, if I may, really quickly, going back to the Minnesota National Guard, a lot of them are 11-Bravo, which is infantry men. But many of us know that they have performed duties much, much more than infantry men such as like a chief advisor to a Mayor, a facilitator of incubators, maintenance at a local hospital, and more specified individual tasks. So if we can take those skills and also put it on the military transcript.

I can just speak for the Army Training Requirements and Resource System, they can put that in there. Not just their 11-Bravo where they can shoot an M-16 and a 249 and specific weapons, but what they actually did in Iraq and Afghanistan on there.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. I think there is some agreement here, that is a very good point. Currently, what is the barrier to integrating that on the transcript? As you described some of these other duties that folks serving in Iraq and Afghanistan are undertaking, duties that are not specific to the particular mission of the

National Guard or Reserve Unit that are really on Nation building responsibilities.

What is the current barrier to doing that?

Mr. CHAMRIN. I don't know if there is a barrier, but there are not a lot of mechanisms in place already.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Okay.

Mr. CHAMRIN. Because I believe the representative for the DoD can better answer this, but I know that for noncommissioned officers you have your evaluation reports. And that really contains what you do over the course of the year and that is also in your personnel records. But if you were just going to look in your military transcript then those duties aren't involved in your schooling and your education.

Mr. CULLINAN. And Madam Chairwoman, I would like to follow up on that, if I may? Something else we were discussing back in the office in a similar vein, another obstacle to people in the military pursuing a civilian sector job, be it EMT, truckdriver, avionic specialist, is there is so much uncertainty and differences from State to State as to what is required, what you have to do, what you have to do to get a license. Do you need a license? Is it simply a certification program? What is the educational requirements?

And what occurs to us is that years ago there was a similar situation, about 40, 50 years ago when it comes to things like business law. At one point in time every State had it's own business law practices. At a certain point in time a group of lawyers and business professionals got together and came together with a solidified code of business law and ethics. And it wasn't imposed from the Federal Government on down. It was simply made available for adoption. And eventually that is what the States did.

And I think there is something similar to happen along with the construction code. At one point every State had a different code, well engineering and other experts got together, came up with a code, presented it, made it available to the States for adoption. That is eventually what they did. And perhaps something along that line needs to be done with respect to credentialing and certification as well.

I realize it goes outside of the purview of this Committee. It is a bigger issue than that. But what we are talking about is addressing an issue that touches the military and the civilian sector. We need some kind of unified code. We need the experts to get together and devise it and hopefully the States would adopt it.

Mr. WEIDMAN. I think the major impediment is that nobody thinks it is their job. Now the military's prime job is defending a nation. And the job of the military is to kill people and destroy property. That is what we do. And training and everything that contributes to forced readiness to be ready to be at optimum strength to defend the Nation is the job of the military. But they don't see it as their job about what happens when people separate. But it needs to be defined as a national defense question. If you can't pay because our economy is faltering for that defense machine, then we are in deep, deep trouble.

So the question is, is it part of the job of the military to assist in an active way with the certification? The answer is yes. Is it—should it be them taking the lead? If DoD does it, the people will

start to listen. I am going to suggest that Labor, that role needs to be defined and Labor needs to exercise some proactive leadership for a change.

And I would also suggest that the private business sector, and that is why I keep suggesting the Chamber, not just because I am very familiar with it, but when the U.S. Chamber speaks, people listen. They represent the backbone of the engine that creates jobs and creates wealth in this country. And NFIB, National Federation of Independent Business, National Small Business United, they will all follow in the wake if in fact you get the Chamber moving. And we would be glad to help facilitate meetings with key people at the Chamber beginning as early as next week at the Institute for Competitive Workforce.

But what the Congress can do is define it, and get DoD to accept it as a role that they need to follow through on to credential all those people on the way out the door or to assist. And to achieve those many different agreements with the 53 jurisdictions for the certification and with the various professions that has to be the Department of Labor to take it's job seriously, to remove what is now a barrier to employment and in the barrier to fullest possible employment of the skills that we have spent billions to impart to these young men and women separating from the military.

Mr. CHAMRIN. And one thing that I think we forgot to add is, we are of the opinion that this will be a great recruitment and then retention tool. You can recruit people into the military if you are able to get a license when you leave the military. And then if you were to—if you chose to re-enlist, you know, it is usually senior NCOs and upper level captains or above who get the more technical certifications and skills-sets. So if they chose to remain in the military because they are able to get this stuff while in the military, you can aid in the retention of your total volunteer force.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Along that line, let us take just recruitment and retention within the National Guard over the last few years. Are any of you aware of any State Governor that has looked into coordinating with his or her National Guard adjutant to do precisely that?

Mr. CHAMRIN. I don't have any numbers. It is not because they are not out there, I just haven't researched it.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Okay. I think it might be helpful that we all look into that issue. Perhaps there is a model whereby someone got creative on the State level with National Guard and Reservist in their recruitment goals to coordinate the licensing from State Boards with the training that is happening in a transportation company, for example.

Let me ask one other question. Mr. Boozman, do you have a followup question? Okay.

Mr. Chamrin, you have recommended expanding Montgomery GI Bill benefits. Have you approached the VA or other VSOs regarding this recommendation to expand the MGIB benefits to include the examinations and preparatory courses for licensing and certification requirements?

Mr. CHAMRIN. It is loosely. We do have a resolution that says MGIB should be used for all education. And then that covers all the licensing, certification, and tests associated with that.

But formally approaching the VA, we have not.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Okay. Mr. Cullinan or Mr. Weidman, would your organizations—

Mr. CULLINAN. We have a similar resolution—

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Okay.

Mr. CULLINAN [continuing]. Calling for it to cover. And we also support portability for the Guard and Reserve.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Yes.

Mr. CULLINAN. That is a key obstacle right now. And for, as you know, that falls under Title 10. So that is, there is another problem. There is legislation out there to address that issue but I will stop there.

Mr. WEIDMAN. VA is committed to getting Senator Webb's bill passed on both sides of the Hill and to folding Senator Lincoln's provisions in there for the Guard and Reserve and to expanding the entrepreneurial training and vocational training and on-the-job training aspects of a brand new GI Bill for the 21st century.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Thank you. Mr. Boozman.

Mr. BOOZMAN. No.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Okay. We want to thank all of you for your testimony.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Thank you.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. We hope you will be able to stay and then we will perhaps have time to visit with you after the hearing to start coordinating some followup discussions on this issue.

I would now like to invite our witnesses on the second panel to the witness table.

Joining us on our second panel of witnesses are frequent visitors as well. Ms. Leslye Arsht, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy in the U.S. Department of Defense; Mr. John McWilliam, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training Services in the U.S. Department of Labor; and Mr. Keith Wilson, Director of Education Service for the Veterans Benefits Administration in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Your complete written statement has been made part of the record. Ms. Arsht, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENTS OF LESLYE A. ARSHT, DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (MILITARY COMMUNITY AND FAMILY POLICY), U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE; JOHN M. MCWILLIAM, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR; AND KEITH M. WILSON, DIRECTOR, EDUCATION SERVICE, VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

STATEMENT OF LESLYE ARSHT

Ms. ARSHT. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the progress that we have made, the Department of Defense, and the Military Services in providing information and assistance to servicemembers regarding licensure and credentialing.

Returning to private life after serving in the military is a very complex undertaking. When separating, retiring, or being released from active duty, the transitory servicemember's most immediate goal is finding a job, accessing education to change careers, and ultimately improving his or her long-term economic quality of life.

The Department recognizes that the attainment of a civilian credential is important to the servicemember's transition to comparable civilian employment. Great progress has been made in providing transition assistance during the past year. We have succeeded in providing licensing and credentialing information in a range of ways and in different formats in order to appeal to individual learning styles and ensure the widest possible dissemination.

The information is provided through classroom delivery from an instructor, by online interaction, and through one-on-one coaching so that servicemembers have the latest most accurate information about transition assistance benefits available at their fingertips in order to make informed decisions about their future.

An integral aspect of licensure and credentialing is it is being introduced to servicemembers early in their careers, not just at the time of separation. But let me start with the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). Transitioning servicemembers and demobilizing National Guard and Reserve personnel are provided information about licensure and certification through TAP, our traditional Transition Assistance Program. Now that offering is greatly enhanced by TurboTAP, our newest transition portal developed in collaboration with the Department of Labor and the VA.

TurboTAP's Pre-separation Guide for Active Component Servicemembers, a Transition Guide for the Guard and Reserves provides a wealth of information about credentialing programs. Through TurboTAP's Employment Hub, servicemembers can access a section entitled, "Translating your Military Skills." This hub also links to the Military Occupational Classification Skills Translator which helps military personnel translate their military specialties to civilian occupations.

Because we recognize that young servicemembers today are very savvy when it comes to technology, we have made the site easy to navigate and have deliberately placed access to information in multiple locations on the site. It is all there at their fingertips and accessible 24/7. I think you will agree that the Military Services have significantly augmented their focus on licensure and credentialing as well. The Army and Navy have conducted extensive research to link each of the military occupational specialties and Navy ratings to civilian jobs and applicable civilian licenses and certifications.

Through the Army and Navy Credentialing Opportunities Online Web site referred to as "COOL" soldiers and sailors are provided access to comprehensive information about certification and licensure. This site helps them understand what it takes to obtain the corresponding credentials and identifies resources that will help pay credentialing fees.

Air Force emphasis on licensure and certification is linked to associate degrees it provides to its enlisted force through the Community College of the Air Force. The Air Force has structured these

degree programs to replicate certification requirements for careers in the civilian sector.

The Marine Corps uses a variety of existing public and private sector resources to assist servicemembers with licensure and credentialing and funds one accredited certification per marine for those who don't have a college degree. Marine Corps Transition Assistance Management Program personnel are Certified Workforce Development Professionals who counsel marines one-on-one, helping to translate their military experience and training into information relevant to corresponding civilian careers.

The Department has stepped forward to take this commitment yet a level higher. As part of the commitment made in the Task Force Report to the President on "Returning Global War on Terror Heroes" a special DoD-DoL Credentialing Working Group is in the process of collecting and collating data on all occupational specialties by military service including National Guard and Reserves based on how many people are in each specialty. The Department will use the outcome of this study to identify adjustments that can be taken within the relevant Service Schools to potentially generate certifications in corresponding private sector jobs.

We acknowledge the importance of providing servicemembers clear and definitive information on licensure and credentials at many points in their military careers. Providing this information early on allows servicemembers to plan and seek out any additional required classes they need to complete and meet civilian occupational requirements and their goals.

Madam Chairwoman, on behalf of the men and women in the military today and their families, I thank you and the Members of this Committee for your steadfast support during these challenging times. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Arsht appears on p. 31.]

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Thank you very much. Mr. McWilliam, you are recognized.

STATEMENT OF JOHN M. McWILLIAM

Mr. McWILLIAM. Madam Chairwoman and Ranking Member Boozman, I appreciate the opportunity to talk with you today about the role of the Department of Labor in helping transitioning servicemembers and veterans in obtaining the licenses and certifications required for civilian jobs. Our Nation needs an increasingly skilled workforce. We recognize that the skills obtained during an individual's military service can meet the needs of the civilian workforce.

Since the start of the Global War on Terror, the Department of Labor has increased its focus on servicemembers transitioning from military to civilian employment. Our strategy is three-pronged. First, we work with the Department of Defense to get more troops to the Transition Assistance Program employment workshops. TAP is our earliest opportunity to identify transitioning servicemembers that might need help in obtaining licenses and certifications. That is one of the topics covered during the workshops.

Second, we are educating servicemembers and employers on their rights and responsibilities under the Uniformed Services Employ-

ment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) and vigorously investigating complaints under the law.

And, finally, we reach out to employers through our national "HireVetsFirst" Campaign, which highlights the value veterans bring to the workforce.

In April of 2006, a joint Departments of Defense and Labor Credentialing Work Group was formed to coordinate our efforts on licensing and certification. The Work Group has incorporated the guidance of Public Law 109-461. The group is focusing on military occupations that comprise a high proportion of exiting servicemembers and that can be matched to high-demand occupations in high-growth industries.

The Work Group will assess the instruction used to train servicemembers and contrast it to the civilian training that leads to credentialing. Working with the Service Schools and industries, the group will determine what military training is relevant to certification for civilian occupations. Since the enactment of Public Law 109-461, we have worked to identify funding to support the authorized demonstration. We are currently developing a competitive Solicitation for Grant Applications using available program year 2007 funding that will support a demonstration program for one MOS. The program will last for 3 years. We intend to request additional funding in the future years that will allow this single demonstration program to expand to the authorized 10 MOSs.

In addition, we intend to include licensing and certification for transitioning servicemembers as part of VWIP, the Veterans' Workforce Investment Program, funding for program year 2009. Currently, many of our VWIP grantees include licensing and certification as part of their services, but they base that on the individual's employment plan and military experience. The new effort under VWIP will support the Work Group by focusing on the Military Occupational Specialties rather than the individual veteran.

In addition, Department of Labor has worked with business groups and other organizations to acquaint them with military training and ease the transition to a civilian credential.

Madam Chairwoman, this concludes my statement. I will be pleased to respond to any questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. McWilliam appears on p. 34.]

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Mr. McWilliam, thank you. Mr. Wilson you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF KEITH M. WILSON

Mr. WILSON. Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairwoman Herseth Sandlin and Ranking Member Boozman. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss VA's education benefits for licensing and certification testing.

My testimony will address the details and background of the program for beneficiaries of the Montgomery GI Bill Active Duty, Selected Reserve, Reserve Educational Assistance Program, and Dependents Educational Assistance Program as they relate to licensing and certification exams.

While licensing and certification test reimbursements constitute a small portion of our overall payments, they nonetheless play a vital role in helping veterans and servicemembers make the transi-

tion from military to civilian life. An individual eligible for MGIB-active duty or Dependents Educational Assistance Program benefits can receive reimbursements for licensing and certification tests taken on or after March 1, 2001. Individuals eligible for MGIB-selected reserve and the Reserve Educational Assistance Program can receive reimbursements for licensing and certification tests taken on or after January 6 of 2006.

We do not consider Military Occupational Specialties when determining who gets reimbursed for taking an exam. The maximum education benefit payment per approved test is \$2,000. There is no limit to the number of tests that may be taken, except that an individual cannot exceed his or her maximum education benefit entitlement.

It is not uncommon for an individual to take a series of tests. For instance, a veteran or servicemember may take a series of exams to certify programming skills in different types of computer languages. Currently, there are over 4,300 exams approved for reimbursement benefits. Since the inception of the program, VA has made approximately 31,500 payments to 14,300 individuals with an average reimbursement of \$408 per exam.

Recognizing the importance of licensing and certifications, VA has appointed an individual with expertise in these areas to serve as a member of the Veterans Advisory Committee on Education. This individual provides advice concerning licensing and certifications and how these benefits assist in the transition from military to the civilian workforce.

We believe the continued provision of benefits for licensing and certification tests will play a valuable role in assisting eligible individuals with their readjustment to civilian life and prepare them for the critical roles in the twenty-first century.

Madam Chairwoman, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other Members may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wilson appears on p. 36.]

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Thank you, Mr. Wilson. Thanks to all three of you for your testimony. Mr. Boozman.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. McWilliam, did you say that you had identified the areas that you were going to look at as far as the professions in the pilot.

Mr. MCWILLIAM. There are two aspects, Mr. Boozman. One is the credentialing Work Group you will have with the Department of Defense. They are in the process of identifying all of the MOSs to look at. As soon as we have that information from them, we will use it to choose one of the first MOSs for the Veterans Workforce Investment Program Solicitation for Grant Applications later this year.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Okay. Good. I really would like to sit down with—because it is a complicated thing, you know. You have the unions involved. You have, in the case of medicine, where you have all 50 States, 53 entities, it is confusing. So that is a whole different deal. Like I said with plumbing, things like that, the unions are heavily involved. You have the unions involved with truck driving and you have the independent operator, that are very much not involved.

And so, if we could identify maybe, if you could give us a list of professions that you know you feel like are going to be there. And

maybe you have some others that are on the border, and you know if you are—but if we could get a few and just kind of work through it and get the parties involved around a table and just really go back and forth with really just discussing it. You know how it works so that we can all understand.

I think that would be real helpful and again that is something that you know we will talk to our Chair about and see if that is a possibility.

I don't have a lot of questions, but we just need to go forward with this. And it is just a matter of getting it done. As I said, we have the different things. We have the difference of the credentialing when you are in the service. You have issues of where we can figure out how to get the credential, then taking that credential and then getting licensed by a State.

And also in other professions having that credential and then getting credit for the time that you have driven. I am saying driven in the case of a truckdriver or whatever, a plumber is another example. The fact that you have performed as a master plumber for several years in the service. We would like to see when they go into the private sector, after the credentialing is squared away, that they get credit for that.

There are some things, again I think the truck driving is just an easy example. You can be a great truckdriver in the military and yet there are civilian rules that you have to show that you have a knowledge of things. We are really committed to do—I would like to move the thing forward. I would like to have a regular update on the progress of the pilot as to what we are doing, where it is going, what we have accomplished. And again, see if we can get this thing done.

Mr. MCWILLIAM. You point out some very good things, Mr. Boozman. There are different ways to attack each one of these occupations. The one that you have mentioned, transportation, we have been working quite closely with some trucking companies who have a great shortage in drivers and are in need of drivers. And they have been working to attempt State by State to change the rules to allow military experience and training to count. So it is a very good point.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Let me just ask one thing real quick. The Legion mentioned the Council of Licensure Enforcement and Regulation. Do you all have knowledge of this organization? Are you dealing with that? Or?

Mr. MCWILLIAM. I don't off hand. Mr. Boozman, I do not have that information today, but I can get back to you on whether or not we have had dealings with them.

[The information follows:]

The Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) looked into this further and they have had no contact nor did they seek out the Council of Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation. This organization does not deal with issues that might affect the trucking industry, as their transportation issues surround transportation for hire such as the taxicab industry.

The Council deals with professional practice services such as nursing, dentistry, doctors, certified public accountants, etc., which require individual State licenses to practice in a particular State or local government entity.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Okay. Good. Very good. Okay. Again, thank you. It is a very doable thing, though, but we have just got to move forward. And I think the pilot program really will be a good vehicle for us really to kind of root out all these different little problems. But I do think that the Department of Labor is going to have to be at the forefront of, as was stated by the earlier group, at the forefront. Somebody has to have ownership of this. And so, that is the key.

And I think that you all are the people that would logically be the people to have ownership.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Thank you, Mr. Boozman. Mr. McWilliam, the joint Credentialing Work Group thus far has accomplished what? Is the process of identifying the relevant MOSs based on the highest level of unemployment for people with those MOSs? How are you going about identifying the most appropriate ones that need attention here?

Mr. MCWILLIAM. Madam Chairwoman, the Work Group has been looking at the number of people in those MOSs in the military and matching them to the high-growth industries, which are the occupations that we have identified as high-growth industries within the United States to put the two of them together.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Right. Is that the same as the President's High Growth Job Training Initiative, the same 14 identified sectors?

Mr. MCWILLIAM. Yes.

Ms. ARSHT. We are actually looking at the top 10 MOSs of the population. The highest top 10 that have military people in them and correlating them to the high-growth need. Part of the complication is, as one person on the earlier panel said, the largest MOS is Combat Arms. What we have found in the Working Group is that we needed to be able to do exactly what the panelist suggested, which is look at the sub-specialties within that MOS to be able to align it to civilian demand.

So for instance, someone who had been in their career in Combat Arms, the large number of them would become technical trainers and technical trainers are in high demand in the civilian workforce. So that would be a sub-specialty of Combat Arms that could have a credential aligned to it.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. I don't want to second guess how you have structured this. I do hope that you will, to the extent possible. In other Subcommittee hearings, we have talked about whether it is in education benefits, whether it is other areas. We have made reference to the President's High Growth Job Training Initiative in the past.

To the extent that you can have that as a point of comparison so that we are not deviating entirely from that initiative, but looking for as much common area—

Ms. ARSHT. Right.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN [continuing]. Reaching all these various objectives—

Mr. MCWILLIAM. Certainly.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN [continuing]. With some kind of nucleus that we are working around.

When do we anticipate that they will identify, finish identifying those relevant MOSs so that the demonstration project can begin? Can you give us some sort of timeline? I agree with Mr. Boozman that regular updates on the process would be helpful, especially if we are going to be working in conjunction, in a roundtable fashion, to have that information.

Can you provide a timeline for us for when this will be complete?

Ms. ARSHT. We expect to have identified MOSs by the end of the year.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Okay. Mr. McWilliam, if they are identified by the end of the year, then how much lead time do you need to actually get the demonstration project underway? How long do you anticipate that taking?

Mr. MCWILLIAM. Madam Chairwoman, we plan to go ahead and write the Solicitation for Grant Application and just fill in the blanks when we identify the MOSs. So at the start of the year, and we have anticipated making the award in early springtime.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Okay. Mr. Wilson, when was the last time we updated the \$2,000 limit for use of taking a licensure certification exam?

Mr. WILSON. I will have to get back to you. I don't have the date on that.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Okay. Do you have any thoughts if the average, as you have stated in your testimony, was \$408 on the, I think was it 35,000? I can't remember the number of veterans you identified that have utilized—

Mr. WILSON. Roughly 14,000, I believe.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Fourteen thousand.

Mr. WILSON. About 35,000 separate tests for roughly—

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Okay.

Mr. WILSON [continuing]. Fourteen thousand individuals.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Does the VA have a position on whether or not the remaining almost \$1,600 could be applied toward preparatory courses in taking those exams?

Mr. WILSON. We have not looked into that at all. I would add, though, that for the great majority of the training that is needed to qualify for the fields that we are talking about, VA does pay for the training for that. For example, if an individual is looking to be certified as an EMT, in all likelihood that individual has gone to a community college for the EMT training, which was paid by the GI Bill.

The one small segment that we do not pay for are study courses specifically geared toward an examination. So it would be a very small segment that we would be looking at. But, again, we have not looked at that specifically.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Okay.

Ms. ARSHT. But DoD's Voluntary Education does cover course work. So, servicemembers can draw from the different programs to support getting their credentials. We cover course work in voluntary education and the GI Bill covers the certification, licensing fee.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Okay.

Mr. WILSON. I would be happy to investigate that a little bit further though, concerning how we could take, for instance, DoD's ex-

perience and apply it to veterans and see what we could do to provide reimbursement for those.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Well, I think that would be helpful. First, it brings us back to the point that Mr. Chamrin was making on the training. You know where you have benefits that apply to training, are we being duplicative? In terms of the training they have already received on active duty and finding a way to streamline that training.

If you could work to see what they are doing. I also think we should be open and that would lead to another question that I will submit to you in writing: If we can track the number of veterans who are taking these exams and how many are passing.

I think that would lead us in a direction of having additional information to determine whether or not that other money, that \$1,600 should be applied to preparatory courses. In terms of just those of us that take exams to pass the State bar exam and everything, they are useful reviews of some of the more technical information and sometimes will be a benefit in taking those exams.

Mr. WILSON. We would be happy to look at that.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Okay. One final question and then there will be others that I will submit in writing.

I think that the Ranking Member and his counsel were visiting about this a little bit too as it relates to TAP. I think Mr. McWilliam you mentioned that TAPs provide the earliest opportunity to identify veterans who may need assistance in licensure and credentialing.

We know it is not mandatory, so we know we may be losing some there, but is that too late? TAP gets us back to the issue of can we somehow integrate earlier in one's military career in a way in which to identify those MOSs that have the highest level of unemployment or the most difficulty in getting their military training and experience to match up with jobs in the civilian sector?

Do any of you have any thoughts on that issue?

Ms. ARSHT. Actually the Army is engaged in this process, and has for a year included promotion points for certification during active duty in line with your military career. And Navy is doing this as well, in fact Navy has a credential aligned to each one of its rating levels.

So we are getting more and more closely aligned and beginning to discuss this very early in the military career. And we do see this discussion, understanding what career track you are on and how that career might advance through your military career and how it aligns to what your civilian opportunities are, as part of a retention process.

One of the best examples I think of this is in the IT area where most of the young people coming into IT recognize that there are commercial certifications that they need that are very valuable when they move into the civilian world. And so they can acquire them during their active-duty period.

And so we believe that this conversation is getting bolder earlier because it works both for your military career and after the servicemembers have left us.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Mr. Boozman, do you have any followup questions?

Mr. BOOZMAN. No. The only thing I would comment, I think your comment about looking at the test, looking at the courses that help you prepare for tests—I guess my thing is, to me, we really want stuff that is going to help people be successful and complete their courses and it is just a different ball game now. You know, those kind of things have almost become part of the curriculum, to be successful.

And so, I also think I would really encourage you to look at those, and make sure we are doing the right thing in that regard. But that is something that is very helpful that again can help people that have worked very hard to go ahead and complete that last step and be successful in what they are trying to do.

Thank you all very much for being here.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Yes, I want to thank you all, as well as our witnesses on the first panel, again for your insight, your testimony, and your ideas today. We always value it and the ongoing service that you are providing for our Nation's veterans. We'll look forward to seeing you again soon.

Again, thank you for the testimony. The hearing does stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:24 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

Prepared Statement of Hon. Stephanie Herseth Sandlin, Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

Over the past year, our Subcommittee has focused most of its energy on employment related issues ranging from transition assistance for servicemembers, small business opportunities for veterans, and employment within the Federal Government.

In today's hearing we will continue to examine these issues, and hear valuable insight as to how to better provide veterans and returning servicemembers with the resources to make the transition back to civilian life and receive the opportunities that they deserve.

I look forward to hearing from veteran service organization representatives on concerns their members have encountered when seeking certification or licensing in the civilian sector, to include enforcing laws to ensure those responsible are doing their job. I also look forward to hearing about the possibilities of expanding existing laws to provide more opportunities and resources to our Nation's veterans seeking ways to start new careers in the civilian sector.

Throughout my tenure in Congress, I have been approached by several of my constituents to find ways to improve on existing laws, such as the Montgomery GI Bill. It is my belief that this Subcommittee has the opportunity to work together on these issues with veteran service organizations, our colleagues in the Senate and Administration officials. This Subcommittee and this Congress have a responsibility to help bridge the gap between military service and veteran status, and assist these brave men and women transition back to the civilian sector to pursue new educational opportunities, start new careers and establish themselves in the communities that they helped protect.

Prepared Statement of Hon. John Boozman, Ranking Republican Member, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

Good afternoon, Madam Chairwoman, and thank you for highlighting the need to improve opportunities for veterans to have their military training and education counted toward qualifying for civilian occupations.

As you remember, we authorized the Veterans Employment and Training Service to conduct a pilot licensing and certification project. I am eager to hear what progress VETS has made toward implementing that authority.

I am also concerned that the continuum of responsibility beginning with the Military Services, through the Department of Labor and VA, and ending with the States has never been solidified. Without making the connections, veterans will continue to experience delays in qualifying for civilian occupations for which they have been trained during military service. The taxpayers will also see valuable training dollars and experience wasted.

States bear a measure of responsibility, too. By setting qualification standards for everything from commercial drivers' licenses to teachers and physicians, States are the final arbiter of whether military training will count toward qualifications.

I am disappointed that the National Governors' Association was not able to be with us today and I hope they will come talk to us soon about their role in this issue.

Madam Chairwoman, I yield back.

**Prepared Statement of Ronald F. Chamrin,
Assistant Director, Economic Commission, American Legion**

Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for this opportunity to present The American Legion's view on the licensure and credentialing of servicemembers and veterans to the Subcommittee today.

The American Legion asserts that veterans have been trained, educated, disciplined, and molded by the greatest military the world has ever seen and yet a large number of these skills are deemed non-applicable in the civilian sector. The Department of Labor's Hire Vets First lists attributes that make veterans marketable to the civilian sector. The American Legion strongly agrees that veterans have attributes to make them extremely productive in the civilian sector. These attributes include an accelerated learning curve, leadership, teamwork, diversity and inclusion in action, efficient performance under pressure, respect for procedures, technology and globalization, integrity, conscious of health and safety standards, and the ability to triumph over adversity.

With all of these abilities, a casual observer would assume that veterans are easily employed and can transition their military experience to the private sector with ease. Unfortunately, that is not the case.

The American Legion supports efforts to eliminate employment barriers that impede the transfer of military job skills to the civilian labor market and that the Department of Defense take appropriate steps to ensure that servicemembers be trained, tested, evaluated and issued any licensure or certification that may be required in the civilian workforce.

The American Legion supports making the Montgomery GI Bill eligibility available to pay for all necessary civilian license and certification examination requirements, including necessary preparatory courses. We also support efforts to increase the civilian labor market's acceptance of the occupational training provided by the military.

MILITARY TRAINING

The Department of Defense (DoD) provides some of the best vocational training in the nation for its military personnel and establishes, measures and evaluates performance standards for every occupation with the armed forces. There are many occupational career fields in the armed forces that can easily translate to a civilian counterpart; additionally, there are many occupations in the civilian workforce that require a license or certification.

In the armed forces, these unique occupations are performed to approved military standards that may meet or exceed the civilian license or certification criteria. Upon separation, many former military personnel, certified as proficient in their military occupational career, are not licensed or certified to perform the comparable job in the civilian workforce, thus hindering chances for immediate civilian employment and delaying career advancement. This situation creates an artificial barrier to employment upon separation from military service.

A study by the Presidential Commission on Servicemembers' and Veterans' Transition Assistance identified a total of 105 military professions where civilian credentialing is required.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS IMPACT IN LICENSURE AND CREDENTIALING

The American Legion applauds the fact that since January 6, 2006, all eligible veterans using the Montgomery GI Bill Active Duty (MGIB-AD, Title 38, Chapter 30), Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR, Title 10, Chapter 1606), Veterans Education Assistance (VEAP, Title 38, Chapter 32), Dependents Educational Assistance (DEA, Title 38, Chapter 35) and the Reserve Education Assistance Program (REAP, Title 10, Chapter 1607) can now receive reimbursement for licensing and certification tests.

However, the government is paying twice and sometimes three or more times for training and licensing for the same task. DoD spends billions of American tax dollars each year training members of the military. Some civilian skills are very similar in nature to those duties performed while in the military, yet taxpayers may be funding training twice for the same individual through DoD and then the VA. This is financially irresponsible and counterproductive to individual veterans who must use their earned MGIB education benefits to take civilian proficiency tests.

Most licenses or certifications have fees associated with them that are charged by the credentialing board. Some of the typical fees paid directly to a credentialing board include

- **Application Fees**—from \$20 to \$200
- **Exam Fees**—from \$20 to \$200
- **Renewal Fees**—from \$10 to \$150 (typically renewed every 1 to 3 years)

The American Legion also notes that those veterans who have been Reservists called to active duty are losing their earned education benefits once they complete their service contract, therefore, they must find alternative means for funding.

Ninety thousand members of the Reserve component are entering the civilian sector each year. The most visible example of this unjust denial of benefits is the demobilization of 2,600 members of the Minnesota National Guard who have just performed the longest, continuous combat tour in Iraq of any military unit to date. Mobilized for 22 months, they are ineligible to enroll in MGIB-AD because they fall short of the required 24-month deadline by 2 months. This travesty is not unique to these guardsmen and passing of the Total Force GI Bill would at least allow members of the Reserve components to apply their earned benefits toward licensing and certification exams.

MILITARY TRANSCRIPTS

Military transcripts provided from each of the Armed Forces provide a very limited training and education record and at times incorrect, missing, or additional information is listed. The Army Training Requirements and Resource System (ATRRS), Navy's Sailor **Marine American Council of Education (ACE) Registry Transcript (SMART), and the** Air Force Institute of Advanced Distributed Learning (AFIADL) are all accepted by the American Council on Education.

Once again, highlighting the Guardsmen of Minnesota, (many of them infantry), these servicemembers have enormous talents, skills, and attributes that they have used while in theater. However, because the tasks they performed are so unique and difficult to succinctly describe, they are left with an empty shell of a resume.

When transitioning military careers to civilian careers, many servicemembers can only list 11-B, Infantryman. It would be more advantageous if they can write 11-B, Infantryman, chief advisor to mayor of Iraqi town, facilitator of incubator maintenance at local hospital, and more specified individual tasks. They, along with hundreds of thousands of OIF and OEF veterans, have performed duties that could fall in line with many civilian professions. If a system is devised that can translate to the full nature of a servicemember's skills and abilities (as opposed to only listing a military occupation code) individual veterans would be positively affected.

ONLINE ASSISTANCE

There are so many Web sites for servicemembers and veterans to visit that it can become extremely confusing and complex. The Army and Navy COOL (Credentialing Opportunities Online) Web sites are excellent tools for potential recruits, current servicemembers, and transitioning veterans to use. The Air Force Personnel Center is also a useful tool. The Career One Stop and the Operational Information Network Online, or O*Net, both operated by the Department of Labor, are more helpful tools.

These sites should be made easily accessible at all recruitment and transitioning stations. However, for those individuals who are constrained for time, have limited Web access, are deployed overseas, and those with poor Internet savvy, these Web sites are just not enough. The American Legion recommends more access of licensing and credentialing services at TAP sites.

ACCESS AT TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FACILITIES

The American Legion observes that transition assistance modules are excellent avenues for each individual U.S. State to access transitioning servicemembers. The American Legion supports mandatory TAP for transitioning servicemembers at least 180 days prior to the end of their contractual obligation. When servicemembers are at these TAP sites around the country, each State workforce agency or credentialing board can provide important information.

Better coordination, communication and interaction of credentialing boards and the training commands of each of our Nation's Armed Forces are needed. Furthermore, military trainers, doctrine writers, and evaluation tests for military skills should coordinate with their civilian counterparts and attempt to synchronize military tests with their civilian counterparts.

The majority of the onus and responsibility is on the veteran to contact authorization boards to ascertain what they will require to be successful in the profession that they choose. However, these boards should have two-way communication so that the onus is not completely on the veteran, especially in a time of war when they are focusing on their immediate tasks.

The Council of Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation has a database of national approving boards. Listed below are selected members of this national database.

Each TAP site should coordinate with at least the following boards to have a representative participate. Additionally, each U.S. State regulatory board should also coordinate with TAP personnel and brief on transitioning servicemembers the unique relevant requirements needed for certification.

- National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA)
- National Council for Architecture Registration Boards (NCARB)
- The Federation of Chiropractic Licensing Boards (FCLB)
- National Association of State Contractor Licensing Agencies (NASCLA)
- American Association of State Counseling Boards (AASCB)
- National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE)
- National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying
- International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards
- National Association of Insurance Commissioners
- Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards
- National Association of Boards of Examiners of Long Term Care Administrators
- Association of Marital and Family Therapy Regulatory Boards
- The Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB)
- National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN)
- Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry (ARBO)
- National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP)
- The Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy (FSBPT)
- Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards
- The Association of Real Estate License Law Officials (ARELLO)
- Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB)
- American Association of Veterinary State Boards (AAVSB)

Web sites and online interaction are great tools but nothing can replace personal interaction. Personal visits by representatives of national and State boards at TAP sites and training commands can assist the transfer of military licensing and certification. At a minimum, these boards can provide a pamphlet or information sheet to put into a veteran's hand.

CONCLUSION

There have been estimates that approximately 60% of the workforce will retire by 2020 and competent, educated, and capable individuals must replace the workforce in order to assure the United States retains its competitive edge in the world. The veterans of this Nation make up a well-qualified disciplined pool of applicants. Increasing recognition of military training by integrating licensing and credentialing must be strengthened to assist our country's finest to achieve their professional goals.

Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Subcommittee, this concludes my testimony. I appreciate the opportunity to present The American Legion's views on these important issues.

Prepared Statement of Dennis M. Cullinan, Director, National Legislative Service, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States

MADAM CHAIRWOMAN AND MEMBERS OF THIS SUBCOMMITTEE:

On behalf of the 2.4 million men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. (VFW), this Nation's largest combat veterans' organization, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the above noted subject.

As cited in the September 2005 "Study on Coordination of Job Training Standards with Certification Standards for Military Occupational Specialties," our Nation needs an increasingly skilled workforce. We would all agree that there is no more a deserving or more valuable group of American workers than our Nation's service members and veterans. Three key areas governing access to today's high paying and highly technical job areas are the following credentials:

Licensure—Licenses are granted by government organizations to regulate the practice of a profession. A license is a mandatory credential.

Certification—Certifications are granted by industry stakeholders to attest to an individual's attainment of knowledge and skills. A certification is a voluntary credential, but often required or preferred by employers.

Apprenticeship—Registered Apprenticeship is a training system, combining on-the-job learning and related instruction, in which workers learn the practical and theoretical aspects of a skilled occupation leading to a nationally recognized Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship.

Civilian credentials maximize a servicemember's ability to demonstrate that the skills acquired in the military are on a par with their civilian counterparts. This results in diminishing the periods of unemployment or underemployment that might otherwise occur when moving into the civilian workforce.

We acknowledge that the Military Services have made significant strides in addressing civilian credentialing. Even with these accomplishments, however, there is no centralized oversight of civilian credentialing. For most civilian occupations, there is no single entity responsible for all of the aspects of credentialing. There is a lack of accreditation of certification agencies and uniform standards and a lack of centralized information on certification requirements of information on civilian credentialing requirements across occupations. This in itself offers a significant impediment to our men and women leaving the military from transitioning smoothly into the modern civilian workforce environment even though they are often highly qualified for particular technical jobs.

The civilian workforce increasingly relies upon credentialing as a way to regulate entry into certain occupations and to promote accountability for performance and public safety. Its value to the military is also being increasingly recognized. Credentialing offers professional growth and development opportunities for individuals in the service and has been used by the Military Services for both recruiting and retention. Civilian credentialing can be viewed as an opportunity for servicemembers transitioning to the civilian workforce to demonstrate to employers the comparability and value of their military education, training, and experience.

Occupational credentialing is an official recognition of a process of meeting a set of defined standards, generally through education, training, experience, and testing. Licensure, certification, and Registered Apprenticeships are the primary types of occupational credentialing.

The gaps that exist between requirements for civilian occupational credentials and the world class education, training, and experience provided by the military continue to make it difficult for transitioning military to make a smooth entry into the appropriate civilian sector employment.

Additional challenges to credentialing the servicemember include statutory fiscal constraints. Insufficient legal authority exists for the Armed Forces to expend appropriated funds for servicemembers to acquire civilian/commercial occupational credentials. For example, absent specific statutory authority, appropriated funds may not generally be used to pay for commercial certifications, although appropriated funds may be used to pay for commercially contracted training courses that include an examination leading to credentials if the examination logically relates to the training and is part of the purchase price of the course "package." Reserve forces face additional constraints.

Even with these constraints and challenges, the credentialing picture for our servicemembers transitioning into the civilian workforce has improved markedly with the current and continuing programs of each of the Military Services; and the cooperative efforts between the Departments of Labor and Defense.

It is clear, however, that much more needs to be done, and done quickly. The situation is especially urgent not only in the context of doing the right thing by our young men and women moving from military to civilian lives but in considering that a high number of these important jobs are now being carried out by baby boomers. Over the next 10 years over half of this aging population will be retiring. It is very much in our national interests to make sure we have the right people in place to assume these very important and highly demanding occupations—this is a matter of our collective economic and governmental security.

Madam Chairwoman and Members of this Subcommittee, this concludes my testimony, and I would urge you to review attached VFW Resolution No. 618 entitled "Licensure and Certification" for additional recommendations on this topic. I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Resolution No. 618
LICENSURE AND CERTIFICATION

WHEREAS, every year, over 200,000 members of the armed forces leave the military; and

WHEREAS, skilled servicemembers leaving the armed forces miss out on the opportunity to quickly move into a career and/or long-term employability because they must undergo lengthy and expensive retraining in order to meet civilian licensure and certification requirements; and

WHEREAS, many of those individuals clearly possess the skills and knowledge to meet licensing and certification requirements due to their military occupations; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge a standardized licensure and certification requirement be adopted by the appropriate Federal and State agencies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that recently separated servicemembers be afforded the opportunity to take licensing and certification exams based on existing skills acquired while servicing in the military.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

Approved by the 108th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

**Prepared Statement of Richard F. Weidman,
Executive Director for Policy and Government Affairs,
Vietnam Veterans of America**

Good afternoon, Madame Chairwoman, Ranking Member Boozman and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for giving Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) the opportunity to offer our comments regarding licensure and certification activities that could, if put in place, materially enhance the lives of the men and women returning to civilian lives from today's wars.

The United States military is still the largest and arguably the most effective training institution in America. Skills are taught ranging from computer programming to meteorology to flying to allied health care professions to language proficiency to public relations to virtually anything that one can think of as a type of work or skill that would be required in any facet of our society. They do what they do very well indeed. Servicemembers are able to acquire extraordinary proficiencies and skills even in a short military career. The one thing that is generally lacking, however, are "civilian paper credentials" that document what they know and can do in a manner that is transferable and accepted in the civilian economy and the civilian job marketplace. This lack often means that extraordinary skill and well grounded subject knowledge is often lost to the individual as a credential that can be marketed in the civilian world, and thus often very expensive training paid for by the American taxpayer becomes an economic opportunity loss to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It means jobs not filled, leadership potential and skills not put to productive use, and a general loss to our overall economic growth. Frankly, this is an intolerable situation that the Nation can no longer tolerate.

The need for formal credentialing of skills, knowledge, and training acquired in the military in a way that will be accepted in the civilian world has been apparent to many for at least 35 years. One of the major successes in capitalizing on experience and training began with the MEDEX program at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire to train former Navy Corpsmen and Army Medics as Physician Assistants or "P.A.s" that began in 1971. The entire profession in medicine now known as Physician Assistants really began with that one program. Physician Assistants are now widely accepted in civilian medical settings, and in the military itself, where there are even P.A.s serving as Commanding Officers of Medical Companies. In fact, Physician Assistants are highly respected and have a broad range of practice almost everywhere in U.S. medicine, except the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Two other successes also involved Army Medics, and occurred in the late 1980s. One was an effort that began with one of the more forward thinking State Directors in the Veterans Employment & Training Service of the U.S. Department of Labor, and some of the staff of the State government in his State who together helped initiate a dialogue that led to all graduates of the Army's Medical Training Center at Fort Sam Houston, Texas being offered the opportunity to take a certification exam to be licensed as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) with a credential that is recognized in all 50 States. It took almost 3 years to achieve consensus and approval from the credentialing entities in all 50 States. A similar effort to try and get automatic licensing of Registered Nurses separating from the military in all 50 States did not succeed, even though it made great sense, particularly in States that have urban areas with the most acute nursing shortages. One thing that did succeed, at least for a time, was to use Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) funds to pay for additional classroom and on-the-job training of former Navy Corpsmen and Army

Medics to become Organ Transplant Coordinators. These were very good jobs, although tough in hours and emotionally. However, they were paid \$35,000 per year while in training and average wages upon completing the 18 month training was a starting salary in excess of \$60,000 per year plus benefits (and this was in 1990 dollars).

The Congress recognized that there was still a large unfilled need when it passed the legislation that became Public Law 106-50, in 1999. One provision created a mechanism for pursuing many additional fields where servicemembers could obtain civilian recognized certification that would enable them to market their skills and expertise acquired during military service in the civilian job market. Unfortunately this function was located in the National Veterans Business Development Corporation (AKA—The Veterans Corporation) which was yet to get organized, and which had more than enough of a challenge just getting organized to try and meet their primary mandate.

Frankly, the function should be formally moved to the Department of Labor, and impetus from the Congress marshaled to ensure that Labor actually moves forward, in cooperation with the accrediting bodies for the professions and skill trades in the States, to create smooth transition for those separating today and in the future, especially disabled veterans.

The best work we know of being done anywhere today is the National Organization of Competency Assurance (NOCA). They were most interested in the area following the enactment of Public Law 106-50, but became disillusioned over time as there was no real movement toward getting military cooperation and all parties moving to come to workable solutions. It became clear early on the Veterans Corporation was not able to handle this task, nor did they want it. While there was some activity after the actual function, if not the legal responsibility, was moved over to the Veterans Employment & Training Service at USDOL, there has not been any major progress to our knowledge. They are having a major conference on the rapidly changing field of skill certification in San Antonio in November, which will be attended by employers as well as certifying entities and professionals in this field.

There are some tools and information available on the VETS Web site regarding certification and credentialing, but actual certification agreement and arrangements for military occupations does not appear to be something that is being pursued. Frankly, there needs to be clarification of responsibilities and accountability for pursuing this effort, and funding provided if there is to be any serious effort to capitalize on the considerable investment the Nation has already made in the training and education of separating servicemembers.

The Nation's business community is very concerned with finding skilled workers who are disciplined and ready, willing, and eager to work. In fact VVA is a member of the United States Chamber of Commerce, and active in the activities of the U.S. Chamber's Institute for a Competitive Workforce, which is having a major conference here in Washington, DC next week. I have made details of this event available to your staff. VVA is pursuing a number of private efforts with business and privately owned military job boards because we are getting more return for our efforts per hour invested than with the Federal entities that should be in the forefront of this effort.

The point is that businesses large and small are scrambling to locate and hire good, trained workers at a time when military separatees do not know where to turn, or do not have the civilian certification of the actual skills they possess. This matter of skill certification and proper matching of veterans with jobs is matter that directly and materially affects the ability of the younger veterans in being able to quickly enter the civilian labor force at a level which will maximize their competence.

May I be so bold as to suggest that it would be fruitful for this Subcommittee to hold a semi-formal/informal "roundtable" in the next few months that would involve members, business leaders, VETS/USDOL, VA Vocational Rehabilitation & Education, DoD, veterans and military organizations, representatives from the Institute for a Competitive Workforce and similar entities, representatives from NOCA and similar entities, as well as other stakeholders as determined by you to try and articulate the needs, and "brainstorm" what might be a productive course of action to meet the needs of both the returning veterans and of American business in the second session of the 110th Congress.

Madame Chairwoman and distinguished Members of this Subcommittee, that concludes VVA's formal statement. I welcome your comments, and will be pleased to answer any questions you may have. Again, on behalf of VVA National President John Rowan, the VVA National Board of Directors, and our membership, thank you for allowing VVA to appear here today to share our views.

**Prepared Statement of Leslye A. Arsht, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense
(Military Community and Family Policy), U.S. Department of Defense**

Madame Chairwoman and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the progress made by the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Military Services in providing information and assistance to servicemembers regarding licensure and credentialing.

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

Returning to private life after serving in the military is a very complex undertaking. At the point of separating, retiring or being released from active duty as a member of the National Guard or Reserves, the transitory servicemember's most immediate goal is finding a job, accessing education to change careers, and ultimately to improve his/her economic quality of life for the long term. DoD believes that none of our efforts are more important than creating an uninterrupted continuum of opportunities at every level, as our service personnel and their families transition from military service to veteran status.

The Department recognizes that the attainment of a civilian credential not only promotes professional growth, but communicates to employers the transferability of military training and experience. It is important for servicemembers to be able to capitalize on their military experience in order to reach and achieve their employment potential and aspirations in civilian life.

Great progress has been made in providing transition assistance during the past year. We've succeeded in providing licensing and credentialing information in a range of ways and in different formats in order to appeal to individual learning styles and ensure the widest possible dissemination. The information is provided through classroom delivery from an instructor, by online interaction and through one-on-one coaching so that servicemembers have the latest and most accurate information about transition assistance benefits available at their fingertips in order to make informed decisions about their future. An integral aspect of licensure and credentialing is that it is introduced to servicemembers early in their careers not just at the time of separation.

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TAP)

The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) was created to assist servicemembers once they decide to separate or retire. During TAP, servicemembers receive information about licensure and certification.

TAP is a collaborative partnership among DoD and the Military Services, the Department of Labor (DoL), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Each agency is responsible for delivering its component of TAP.

Transitioning servicemembers and demobilizing National Guard and Reserve personnel receive relevant information about licensure and certification through the four components of TAP (Pre-separation Counseling, DoL TAP Employment Workshop, VA Benefits Briefing, and the Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP)). National Guard and Reservists receive a Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights (USERRA) briefing in lieu of the Employment Workshop. However, the Department of Labor has reached out to each State's Adjutant General to provide TAP employment workshops whenever and wherever desired.

During the mandatory pre-separation counseling phase of TAP, servicemembers learn about licensing, certification, and apprenticeship resources. These include resources such as the DoL "America's Career Info Net" Web site, Army and Navy Credentialing Opportunities Online (COOL) Web sites, the DoD Verification of Military Experience and Training (VMET) document, the DoD/DoL U.S. Military Apprenticeship Program, the DoL Occupational Information Net (O*NET), DANTES, and TurboTAP. During pre-separation counseling, "Licensure and Certification" is contained in a module on the DD Form 2648 and DD Form 2648-1.

The Military Services also provide one-on-one counseling, coaching, detailed briefings, guidance and other assistance required by the servicemember. Various workshops are provided to assist them in writing effective resumes, translating military skills to civilian skills, and skills and self assessments.

The pre-separation counseling session also includes a discussion of the Department of Labor's Web site, "Career One Stop." In this application, servicemembers link to the *Credentials Center*, which they can use to locate State-specific occupational licensing requirements, agency contact information and information about industry-recognized certifications. There are also associated workforce education and examinations that test or enhance knowledge, and experience or skills in related ci-

vilian occupations and professions. These sites have been developed and improved through close partnerships between DoD and DoL.

DoD also developed a DoD Pre-separation Counselor Training Course in conjunction with the National Learning Center, University of Denver at Colorado. The curriculum provides the minimum standards all counselors must achieve when explaining the licensing and certification module during the pre-separation counseling session.

TURBOTAP

Our newest tool for transitioning servicemembers is TurboTAP (<http://www.TurboTAP.org>). The Department launched this new Web portal on June 9, 2007. It was developed in collaboration with DoL and VA. Among the many features of the site is a Pre-separation Guide for Active Component Servicemembers, a Transition Guide for the Guard and Reserves, and an Employer Hub. Both guides deal with Employment Assistance, and provide a wealth of information on Employment Assistance and Credentialing Programs. They also link directly to Army and Navy COOL, the O*NET, the Occupational Outlook Handbook and many other resources relating to licensure and credentialing. Through the Employer Hub, servicemembers can access a section entitled "Translating Your Military Skills." This hub also links to the Military Occupational Classification (MOC) Skills Translator, developed by O*NET to help military personnel translate their military specialties to civilian occupations. It also provides them an occupational profile and they can get detailed employment information about that occupation.

Because we recognize that our young servicemembers today are very "savvy" when it comes to technology, we have made the site easy to navigate and have deliberately placed access to information in multiple locations through the site. It is all there at their fingertips and accessible 24/7.

TASK FORCE REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT: "RETURNING GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR HEROES"

One of the recommendations in the *Task Force Report to the President: "Returning Global War on Terror Heroes,"* calls for the improvement in civilian workforce credentialing and certification. A special DoD-DoL Credentialing Working Group was established to address the actions required to implement this recommendation. A key tasking is to identify 10 major Military Occupational Specialties (MOSs) that may require minimal additional training or training adjustments to the curriculum of relevant Service Skills Development Schools that could result in certification in correlating civilian occupations. The Working Group is in the process of collecting and collating data on ALL MOSs by military service (including the National Guard and Reserves) based on how many people are in each MOS. They will narrow that list down to the top 10 MOSs based on how many people are in each MOS and conduct a cross-walk of those MOSs that correlate with the 10 high-growth civilian industries. We expect that the results of that analysis will show the gaps between the MOSs and the credentialing requirements for the top 10 growth industries. The final step in this process will be to identify adjustments within the Service Schools required to support certain credentials. More work remains, but the final results will be a win-win for our servicemembers and for the Nation's employers.

The Credentialing Working Group is developing appropriate goals, objectives, and outcomes that will help remove credentialing barriers that some veterans and transitioning servicemembers face today, such as variations in State licensing requirements. The Group is developing recommendations that will help us (1) map career pathways between military occupations and civilian occupational employment, (2) promote uniformity/reciprocity across States with regard to occupational licensing, and (3) promote efforts to maximize the transferability of military education and training for purposes of credit toward licensure and certification requirements.

Now I would like to share with you some of the programs and tools the military Services have in place to assist servicemembers with licensure and credentialing.

MILITARY SERVICES PROGRAMS AND TOOLS

I think you'll agree that the Services have significantly augmented their focus on licensing and credentialing.

ARMY

Since April 2002, the Army has embraced licensure and certification as a key means of helping soldiers apply their military training and work experience to the civilian workforce. They have conducted extensive research to link each of the Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) to civilian jobs and applicable civilian licenses and certifications. The Army found that 95 percent of its enlisted MOSs correlate with applicable civilian credentials; 93 percent of active duty soldiers serve in these MOSs.

The extent to which soldiers are able to use their military training and experience to attain civilian licenses and certifications is determined through comprehensive gap analysis comparing MOS training with civilian credentialing requirements. The gap analysis is conducted on credentials determined to be most directly related to the MOS or to the skills attained through MOS training and experience.

In conducting the gap analysis, an attainability rating is assigned to each relevant credential. This rating indicates the estimated ability of a first term soldier to obtain a given credential. Attainability ratings reflect the likelihood of a soldier attaining the corresponding credential during his or her first term of service, attaining it in a subsequent enlistment, or encountering difficulty in translating their military training and work experience to a civilian credential.

The results of the research linking MOSs to civilian jobs and credentials, along with the results of the gap analysis, are available to soldiers through the Army Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) Web site (<https://www.cool.army.mil>).

This robust site provides soldiers, counselors, family members, and employers with comprehensive information about certification and licensure relevant to Army MOSs. It helps soldiers find civilian credentialing programs related to their Military Occupational Specialties. It also helps them understand what it takes to obtain a credential and identifies resources that will pay credentialing fees. The Web site is designed to specifically aid soldiers in translating their military training and work experience to the civilian workforce. COOL Web site usage has been high. There have been over 4 million users since the site was launched in April 2002. Two-thirds have been MOS-specific. The evidence is clear. Users are particularly interested in finding information specific to their MOS. Additionally, soldiers can receive one-on-one counseling in licensure and credentialing from education counselors at each installation.

NAVY

In 2006, the Navy followed the Army lead and created the Navy COOL Web site (<https://www.cool.navy.mil>). Like the Army, sailors are able to use their military training and experience to attain civilian licenses and certifications by comparing rate training (Navy ratings are the same as MOSs) with civilian credentialing requirements. The Navy also conducted research and gap analyses on those credentials that have been determined to be most related to the skills attained through rating training and experience. It, too, has an attainability indicator for each relevant credential. Navy COOL also provides sailors, counselors, family members, and employers with comprehensive information and counseling about licensure and certification relevant to Navy ratings.

AIR FORCE

Air Force emphasis on licensure and certification is linked to degrees conferred to its enlisted force by the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF). CCAF confers associate degrees in each enlisted members career field. The Air Force considers this to be the equivalency to the civilian world's certification. Air Force policy is to fund one license/certificate per Air Force career. Further, all Air Force Specialty Codes translate to comparable civilian work experience.

MARINE CORPS

The Marine Corps uses a variety of resources to assist servicemembers with licensure and credentialing. These include the Department of Labor's America's Career InfoNet Web site, Army and Navy COOL Web sites, the Verification of Military Experience and Training Document (VMET), the U.S. Military Apprenticeship Program, the Occupational Information Network O*NET, the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) and TurboTAP, the newest DoD Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Web site. Marine Corps Transition Assistance Management Program (TAMP) personnel are Certified Workforce Development Professionals and possess the skills necessary to assist Marines in translating their military experience and training into understandable civilian terminology.

CONCLUSION

We acknowledge the importance of providing servicemembers clear and definitive information on licensure and credentials at many points in their military careers. Providing this information early on allows servicemembers to plan and seek out any needed additional required classes to complete to achieve their personal objective.

Madame Chairwoman, this concludes my statement. On behalf of the men and women in the military today and their families, I thank you and the Members of this Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity for your steadfast support during these demanding times.

**Prepared Statement of John M. McWilliam,
Deputy Assistant Secretary, Veterans' Employment and Training Service,
U.S. Department of Labor**

Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to talk about the role of the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) in helping transitioning servicemembers and veterans attain the licenses and certifications required for so many civilian jobs. The Department is grateful for the interest of the Committee on this very important issue for veterans, especially for those veterans returning from the Global War on Terror who are interested in obtaining a license or certification to either pursue a career using a skill-set learned in the military or acquire a new skill-set that requires a license or certification.

Our Nation needs an increasingly skilled workforce and both the Department of Labor (DoL) and the Department of Defense (DoD) recognize that the skills obtained during an individual's military service can meet the needs of the civilian workforce.

Since the start of the Global War on Terror, VETS has increased its focus on servicemembers transitioning from military to civilian employment. Our strategy is three-pronged:

First, we are working with the DoD to get more troops to the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) employment workshops. TAP is our earliest opportunity to identify transitioning servicemembers that might need help in obtaining licenses or certifications to pursue civilian careers. Through TAP, attendees are linked to the Federally funded One-Stop Career Centers, where veterans receive priority for employment and training services in their home towns. Licensure and certification is one of the topics covered in the TAP employment workshops. The instruction describes credentials and their purpose and importance in the civilian job market. The workshops also point the servicemember toward available resources, including electronic tools to assist the servicemember in obtaining information on licensing and certification.

At One-Stop Career Centers across the Nation, veteran employment specialists are dedicated to identifying employment opportunities for veterans, including those that require a license or certification. Specialized assistance is available at the One-Stops to get veterans the help they need to qualify for and obtain meaningful jobs with career paths.

Specialized services are also offered to those returning Global War on Terror veterans who are seriously wounded and injured through the Department's Recovery and Employment Assistance Lifelines (REALifelines) Program that provides one-on-one employment assistance.

Second, we are educating servicemembers and employers on their rights and responsibilities under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), and vigorously investigating complaints under the law.

Finally, we continue to reach out to employers through our national HireVetsFirst Campaign, which highlights the value that veterans bring to their workforce. The HireVetsFirst Campaign is coordinating with each State to stage at least one job fair between November 1st and the 15th. Overall, VETS expects there will be over 70 veteran-only job fairs during this timeframe. Our goal is to achieve maximum visibility and demand for veterans' employment with employers throughout the United States.

Public Law 109-461

Section 604 of Public Law 109-461, December 2006, authorizes the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training to carry out a demonstration project on credentialing for the purpose of facilitating the seamless transition of members of the Armed Forces from service on active duty to civilian employment.

DoD/DoL Work Group

Prior to the enactment of P.L. 109-461, a joint Credentialing Work Group was formed in April 2006 to coordinate efforts on licensing and certification. This group is composed of representatives from the DoD, DoL's Employment and Training Administration and VETS. The Work Group has incorporated the guidance of P.L. 109-461 into its efforts and is developing a strategy to work with Service Schools, industries, and certifying bodies to develop new pathways for obtaining qualifications and certifications for transitioning servicemembers.

The Work Group considered various methods of identifying which military occupations to target. We decided to focus on military occupations that comprise a high proportion of exiting servicemembers, and that can be matched to high-demand occupations in high-growth industries. We anticipate that these selection criteria will

result in the greatest impact for the largest number of transitioning servicemembers.

The group is gathering data on the most densely populated Military Occupational Specialties (MOSs) in the services. They will then analyze these MOSs and correlate them with high-demand, high-growth occupations. The Work Group will also take into account factors such as wage rates in identified civilian occupations, and types of credentials such as State or Federal licenses, apprenticeship completion certificates, or other certifications.

The Work Group will assess the curricula used to train servicemembers for selected military occupations, and contrast it to the civilian training that leads to credentials in corresponding in-demand civilian occupations. Working with Service Schools and industries, the Work Group will determine what military training is relevant to certification for the civilian occupations. Finally, the Work Group will work to identify qualifications and certifications that take advantage of military skills and experience.

Our objective is to determine how to best align the military and civilian training, and provide opportunities for servicemembers to obtain civilian credentials either through their military training or with minimal additional training.

Other Credentialing Initiatives

Both the Army and the Navy have Credentialing Opportunities Online (COOL) Web sites (www.cool.army.mil and www.cool.navy.mil) that map MOSs with civilian occupations, and identify the steps and organizations that can help an individual obtain the necessary credentials. The DoL-sponsored America's CareerInfoNet (ACINET) includes a military to civilian occupation translator (www.acinet.org/moc) that also helps servicemembers match military skills and experience to civilian occupations, and identifies pathways to certifications. The VMET (Verification of Military Experience and Training) is another tool to transfer military skills to a civilian career. It is a document provided to servicemembers that lists his or her military experiences and any training they received. We are working to familiarize private industry with the VMET and its value in determining whether a veteran has the required skill-set to succeed in a particular occupation.

Identification of Funding

Since the enactment of Public Law 109-461, VETS has worked to identify funding to support these licensure and credentialing efforts. We are developing a competitive Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA) using available program year 2007 funding that will support a demonstration program for one MOS. The SGA will ask the applicants to identify and resolve barriers faced by transitioning servicemembers in obtaining a license or certification.

Because the civilian workforce increasingly relies upon credentialing as a way to regulate entry into certain occupations, DoL intends to request additional funding in future years that would allow this single demonstration project to expand to cover 10 MOSs, thereby creating easier, better, faster paths to certifications and licenses from relevant military training and experience.

In addition to these focused efforts, we intend to include, as part of the workforce investment activities funded by Veterans' Workforce Investment Program funds for program year 2009, the identification of barriers to licensure and certification for transitioning servicemembers, and we encourage potential grantees to apply for grants to address this issue.

Other Licensing and Certification Initiatives

In addition to the efforts of both Departments in the Work Group, I want to describe some other initiatives DoL has with business groups and other organizations.

One example is a trip VETS arranged for a site visit to the Aberdeen Proving Grounds for members of the Trucking Renting and Leasing Association including representatives from three major companies. The purpose of the visit was to introduce the leaders of these companies to how the military prepares its recruits to be truck mechanics. They learned that selected Army MOSs for mechanics are designed to meet the job specifications for Automotive Service Excellence civilian licensing certifications through the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence.

While touring the Grounds, these industry representatives addressed the monthly TAP employment workshop being held at the time and answered questions about opportunities for transitioning servicemembers in their industry.

We recognize that many servicemembers are interested in obtaining a commercial driver's license (CDL) and working in the trucking industry upon discharge. We have worked with the major trucking associations to see how the acquisition of a CDL can be made easier. We are hopeful that in time, the Army MOS for mechanics

and drivers will be accepted in the trucking industry without the need for extensive recertification.

Madam Chairwoman, that concludes my statement and I would be happy to respond to any questions.

**Prepared Statement of Keith M. Wilson,
Director, Education Service,
Veterans Benefits Administration, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Herseth Sandlin, Ranking Member Boozman, and Members of the Subcommittee. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) education benefits for licensing and certification testing. My testimony will address the details and background of the program for beneficiaries of the Montgomery GI Bill Active Duty (MGIB-AD), Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR), Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP) and Dependents Educational Assistance Program (DEA) as it relates to licensing and certification exams.

Overview

While licensing and certification test reimbursements constitute a small portion of our overall payments, they nonetheless play a vital role in helping veterans and servicemembers transition from military to civilian life. An individual eligible for MGIB-AD or DEA benefits can receive reimbursement for licensing and certification tests taken on or after March 1, 2001. Individuals eligible under the MGIB-SR or REAP can receive reimbursement for licensing or certification tests taken on or after January 6, 2006. We do not consider Military Occupational Specialties when determining who gets reimbursed for taking an exam. However, since Department of Defense (DoD) programs, such as the Army's Credentialing Opportunities On-Line and Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support, provide such a valuable service in helping individuals transition from the military to the civilian workforce, we offer links to those programs on our GI Bill Web site for interested individuals who may benefit from such assistance. (We would defer to DoD as to which Military Occupational Specialties pose the greatest challenge for veterans in transitioning from the military to the civilian workforce. We also must defer to DoD as to how many veterans and servicemembers receive credentialing while in the military.)

The maximum education benefit payment per approved test is \$2,000. There is no limitation to the number of tests that may be taken, except that an eligible individual may not exceed his or her maximum education benefit entitlement. It is not uncommon for an individual to take a series of tests. For instance, a veteran or servicemember may take a series of exams to certify programming skills in different types of computer language. Currently, there are over 4,300 exams approved for reimbursement benefits. Since the inception of the program, VA has made approximately 31,500 payments to 14,300 individuals with an average reimbursement of \$408 per exam.

VA appointed an individual with expertise in matters relating to licensing and certification to serve as a member of the Veterans Advisory Committee on Education (VACOE). This individual provides advice concerning licensing and certification and how these benefits assist in the transition from the military to the civilian workforce.

We believe the continued provision of benefits for licensing and certification tests will play a valuable role in assisting eligible individuals with their readjustment to civilian life and prepare them for critical roles in a 21st century economy.

Madam Chairwoman, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or any of the other Members of the Subcommittee may have.

Statement of ASIS International, Alexandria, VA

ASIS International, with more than 35,000 members, is the largest organization worldwide for security professionals. For over 50 years ASIS, a not for profit entity, has been dedicated to increasing the effectiveness and productivity of individuals working in the security field, with a consistent focus on education, professional development and certification. ASIS strongly believes that security industry credentialing through ASIS certifications can help transition members of the Armed Forces into high demand and well-paying civilian jobs.

ASIS offers three professional security certifications; Certified Protection Professional (CPP); Professional Certified Investigator (PCI) and Physical Security Professional (PSP). The CPP Certification was established in 1977 and clearly it is not an opportunistic “9/12” security certification program. It is the security industry’s highest recognition of practitioners, and all ASIS certifications are SAFETY Act Designated. In 2004, the U.S. Air Force Security Forces Directorate integrated CPP Certification into the professional development of its security forces. Earning ASIS certification increases both short-term and long-term job prospects and for veterans can use their in-service experience to satisfy ASIS certification eligibility requirements. For government, military, or law enforcement professionals planning to leave the public sector, ASIS certification provides a way to build on previous experience and transition to a successful second career in the private sector.

In 2007, the United States Marine Corps (USMC) commissioned a study on behalf of all military branches to assess the value of ASIS security certifications to military security professionals. The study undertook “side-by-side” comparisons of ASIS certifications with other security professional development offerings and concluded that “(t)he professional development and certification opportunities available through ASIS would provide significant, unique value to the USMC/DoD.” It recommended that the Marines Corps and DoD “should investigate courses of action, to include ASIS professional development and certifications, to build and sustain an all-inclusive career development program for its Military and Civil Service security professionals.”

ASIS International is ready, willing and able to work with the DoL, DoD and the VA and Congress to create opportunities and provide assistance for transitioning veterans to become ASIS certified. Specifically, ASIS seeks to be included in the DoL Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (VETS) “Demonstration Project on Credentialing and Licensure of Veterans” currently being set up pursuant to the Veterans Benefits, Healthcare, and Information Technology Act of 2006. The legislation states the program is to facilitate the transition of members of the Armed Forces to civilian employment by reducing barriers to certification in industries with high growth and high worker demand. Given this worthy goal, the Subcommittee should encourage DoL VETS to work with ASIS International to make ASIS security certifications more accessible and obtainable for veterans, and thus increase their ability and likelihood to gain successful and stable employment in the increasingly important and burgeoning security field.

For more information on ASIS International please go to www.asisonline.org.

**Statement of James Kendzel, MPH, SPHR,
Executive Director, National Organization for Competency Assurance**

The National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony to the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity regarding its hearing on the licensure and certification of transitioning veterans. Often, a credential is the quickest and most efficient pathway to employment, transitioning into a new occupation, or advancing in one’s current occupation, hence NOCA is pleased that the Subcommittee is giving this issue its fullest attention.

NOCA’s Longstanding Commitment to Assisting America’s Veterans

NOCA has long been committed to reaching out to Federal agencies and the veteran service organization (VSO) community to ensure that veterans have access to occupational certification opportunities that will allow their post-military careers to flourish.

NOCA has been significantly involved in military transition issues for almost a decade. In 2001, NOCA leaders were appointed¹ to serve on the Professional Certification Advisory Board (PCAB). Established by Sec. 202(a) of Public Law 106–50, the PCAB’s statutory mission is to advise the Board of Directors of the National Veterans Business Development Corporation (NVBDC) in the creation of uniform guidelines and standards for the professional certification of members of the Armed Forces in order to aid in their efficient and orderly transition to civilian occupations and professions, and to remove potential barriers in the areas of licensure and cer-

¹See *NOCA Appointed to Professional Certification Advisory Board*, NOCA Press Release (2001). Available at <http://www.noca.org/portals/0/pcab.doc>.

tification. NOCA also worked side by side with VSOs to secure startup appropriations for the National Veterans Business Development Corporation.

The passage of the Veterans Benefits and Healthcare Improvement Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-419) in November 2000 expanded opportunities for veterans to use their Montgomery GI benefits to pay for professional certification tests. NOCA strongly supported this legislation and assisted the U.S. Department of Labor in developing standards for organizations to achieve should they want their certification tests to be eligible for Montgomery GI reimbursement. NOCA has enthusiastically promoted this program to its members to ensure that as many certification organizations as possible meet the requirements.

NOCA leaders were appointed² by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to serve on the Professional Certification and Advisory Committee (PCLAC) in 2001. Established by Public Law 106-419, the purpose of the PCLAC was to advise the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on the requirements of organizations that offer licensing and certification tests to veterans using their Montgomery GI benefits as payment. As decreed in the PCLAC's enabling legislation, the PCLAC ceased operations in December 2006.

NOCA also supported Chairman Filner's efforts to expand the use of education benefits under the Reserve Montgomery GI Bill for licensing or certification tests. These enhanced benefits, enacted in 2006, permit members of the Selected Reserve to use up to \$2,000 of Reserve Montgomery GI Bill educational assistance benefits for payment for licensing or certification tests.

NOCA sought to provide additional resources to military personnel and veterans by redesigning its Web site. A special section on NOCA's Web site is designed to provide information to veterans about what kinds of certifications exist in the private sector. NOCA has encouraged other interested organizations to link to its Web site. The site may be reached at <http://www.noca.org/Advocacy/MilitaryandVeterans/tabid/88/Default.aspx>.

NOCA played an active role in the Task Force for Veterans Entrepreneurship, a coalition of VSOs and other interested parties which joined together a number of years ago to advocate for stronger entrepreneurial opportunities for veterans. The Task Force is especially committed to advocating the needs of service-disabled veterans and the special challenges they face in returning to civilian life.

NOCA's advocacy efforts on behalf of veterans have been recognized with a 2002 "Associations Advance America" award from the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE). The Associations Advance America Awards program recognizes associations that propel America forward, by recognizing innovative projects in education, skills training, standards-setting, business and social innovation, knowledge creation, citizenship, and community service.

NOCA also has plans to hold a 2008 educational event on Capitol Hill that will allow legislators and staff to learn more about occupational certification. Representatives from the U.S. Army and Navy "Credentialing Opportunities Online" (COOL) programs have indicated they plan on partnering with NOCA for this important event.

More Work Needs to Be Done

Many Federal agencies are still not maximizing the use of the Internet as a tool to reach the widest audience possible. Some agencies, however, have made great strides toward providing comprehensive, easy-to-use, online certification resources. The Department of the Army's "Credentialing Opportunities Online" (COOL)³ Web site is an exceptional example of how the Internet can be used to reach out to servicemembers and veterans. NOCA provided assistance and expertise to the Army as the COOL Web site was being developed. We continue to partner with the Army to share information and expertise so that Army personnel might benefit from COOL.

The U.S. Navy has followed the Army's lead with the creation of its own COOL Web site.⁴ The COOL Web site provides an excellent model for other military branches interested in providing similar resources for their service personnel and veterans.

NOCA has continued to offer its expertise to the Veterans Employment and Training (VETS) program at the U.S. Department of Labor to reach the widest audience possible about credentialing opportunities. NOCA hopes that Congress continues to provide adequate levels of funding to VETS so that the agency has the necessary

²See *NOCA Past President Appointed to Veterans' Advisory Committee*, NOCA Press Release (2001). Available at <http://www.noca.org/portals/0/pclac.doc>.

³Available at <https://www.cool.army.mil/>.

⁴Available at <https://www.cool.navy.mil/>.

resources to carry out its important mission. Of particular value would be an extensive effort to identify the full universe of certification programs that may offer additional transition opportunities for servicemembers. We have previously recommended the creation of a “one-stop” listing of all certification programs, highlighting the education and training requirements and the administrative procedures for applying for and taking test requirements. The Department of Labor’s Career One-Stop Web site appears to be just such a resource. In addition to providing up-to-date information about credentialing opportunities, the site contains information specific to military personnel transitioning to the private sector.⁵ NOCA commends the Department of Labor on the Career One-Stop project and hopes Congress will continue to fund this innovative tool.

NOCA has previously recommended that the full resources of the certification community be brought to bear when attempting to create more professional opportunities for military veterans. NOCA has attempted to reach out to all branches of the armed services and Federal agencies to share information, ideas, and ingenuity. We continue to encourage the military branches to reach out to NOCA to access our expertise in identifying new and existing certification skill-sets and in establishing pathways to certification for military personnel. To leverage the time and resources devoted to the men and women in the armed services, their skills and training should have identified pathways to certification and licensure.

Previously, NOCA identified the need for uniform standards to be created for armed services certification programs to ensure that military personnel receive the highest quality certification with maximum transferability to the private sector. We continue to feel that this is of the greatest importance. NOCA has developed standards⁶ for certification that can be used as a starting point for the development of quality uniform standards for certification programs. Professionals in a wide variety of fields work hard to earn their credentials and rely on certification organizations to ensure that certifications are relevant to performance on the job. Any effort to “dumb down” professional certification standards is a disservice to military veterans—as well as the public, whom certification program standards are designed to protect.

We note that legislation in previous years has been introduced to create other Federal advisory boards purporting to advise the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and others about military transition. We respectfully suggest that the formation of additional advisory boards is no longer necessary, but there may be some use in reforming the Professional Certification and Licensure Advisory Committee. Upon its sunset in December 2006, the PCLAC submitted its final report⁷ to the Secretary as required by its enabling statute. The final report contains a roadmap of recommendations for policymakers to follow to enhance additional transition activity.

About the National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA)

NOCA, the oldest and largest organization representing certification agencies, testing companies, and consulting firms and individuals involved in professional certification, was created in 1977 as the National Commission for Health Certifying Agencies (NCHCA) with Federal funding from the Department of Health and Human Services. Its mission was to develop standards for quality certification in the allied health fields and to accredit organizations that met those standards. With the growing use of certification in other fields, NCHCA’s leaders recognized that what is essential for credible certification of individuals in the healthcare sector is equally essential for other sectors. With this vision, NCHCA evolved into the National Organization for Competency Assurance. NOCA is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization, committed to serving the public interest by ensuring adherence to standards that ensure the highest competence of certification programs.

NOCA’s membership is composed of more than 600 organizations responsible for certifying specific skill-sets and knowledge bases of professions and occupations at the national and international level. Through certification, NOCA members represent more than 15 million individuals around the world and include certification programs of some 150 professions and occupations, including 60 healthcare professions. NOCA members certify individual skills in fields as diverse as construction, healthcare, automotive, and finance. A current roster of NOCA members is included in the appendix.

NOCA’s mission is to promote excellence in competency assurance for individuals in all occupations and professions. No other organization has the presence in or commits the resources to the field of certification. NOCA is proud of its position as

⁵ Available at <http://www.careeronestop.org/militarytransition/>.

⁶ See <http://www.noca.org/NCCAAcreditation/Standards/tabid/93/Default.aspx>.

⁷ The report is included in Appendix II of this testimony.

the international leader in competency assurance for certification programs, as well as its role in promoting excellence in competency assurance for practitioners in all occupations and professions.

What Is Certification?

The certification of professional and occupational skill-sets affirms a knowledge and experience base for practitioners in a particular field, their employers, and the public at large. Certification represents a declaration of a particular individual's professional competence. In some professions certification is a requirement for employment or practice. Doctors, mechanics, accountants, surveyors, and many others establish their credentials and capabilities through certification. In all instances, certification enhances the employability and career advancement of the individual practitioner or employee.

The benefits of credentialing include:

- Consumer confidence and safety through verification of competence.
- Protecting the general public from incompetent and unfit practitioners.
- Establishment of professional standards for individuals in a particular field.
- Assisting consumers in making informed decisions about qualified providers.
- Assisting employers in making more informed hiring decisions.
- A more productive and highly trained workforce for employers.

A number of occupational certifications have been deemed so rigorous by State regulatory bodies that passage of the certification examination itself is often used as the basis of licensure. Certification is distinct from licensure in that it is voluntary and requires recertification to maintain the credential. Recertification frequently requires continual education or periodic testing. Recertification provides a reaffirmation of competency assurance by ensuring that the certificant is up-to-date with the latest training techniques, research, and methods for a particular field.

Accreditation of National Voluntary Credentialing Programs

The National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) is the accreditation arm of NOCA. Accreditation provides a mechanism for certification organizations to demonstrate to the profession it represents and the general public it serves that its credentialing program has been reviewed by a panel of impartial experts that have determined that the certification program has met the stringent standards of NCCA. NCCA accreditation provides certification programs and many NOCA members with a way to answer the question "who vetted your certification program?"—a question often posed by members of an occupation, employers, customers, and, sometimes, the courts.

Conclusion

Improving the prospects for employment of servicemembers when they leave the military will go a long way toward meeting recruiting goals, improving military morale, enhancing the quality of our civilian workforce, and keeping our economy competitive. These men and women of the armed services deserve access to the resources that will help transition the training they received in military service into marketable skill-sets in their post-military careers. NOCA stands at the ready to assist in this mission.

Respectfully Submitted,

James Kendzel, MPH, SPHR,
Executive Director,
National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA)

APPENDIX I

NOCA Organizational Members

NOCA's Organizational Members consist of the following associations, certifying organizations, customer groups, and government agencies:

AACE International
Academy of Ambulatory Foot and Ankle Surgery
Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals
Academy of Lactation Policy and Practice
Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools
Aerobics and Fitness Association of America
Alliance of Information and Referral Systems

American Academy of Health Care Providers in the Addictive Disorders
American Academy of Nurse Practitioners
American Academy of Micropigmentation
American Academy of Pain Management
American Academy of Wound Management
American Association for Medical Transcription
American Association for Respiratory Care
American Association of Clinical Coders and Auditors
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Critical-Care Nurses Certification Corporation
American Association of Medical Assistants
American Association of Medical Audit Specialists
American Association of Physician Specialists
American Association of Poison Control Centers
American Board for Certification in Orthotics and Prosthetics, Inc.
American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence, Inc.
American Board for Occupational Health Nurses
American Board of Cardiovascular Perfusion
American Board of General Dentistry
American Board of Industrial Hygiene
American Board of Lower Extremity Surgery
American Board of Multiple Specialties in Podiatry
American Board of Nursing Specialties
American Board of Opticianry
American Board of Pain Medicine
American Board of Registration of Electroencephalographic and Evoked Potential Technologists, Inc.
American Board of Surgical Assistants
American Board of Transplant Coordinators
American Board of Veterinary Practitioners
American Certification Agency for Healthcare Professionals
American Chiropractic Board of Radiology
American Chiropractic Board of Sports Physicians
American Chiropractic Neurology Board
American Chiropractic Registry of Radiologic Technologists
American Clinical Board of Nutrition
American College of Sports Medicine
American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists
American Construction Inspectors Association
American Council on Exercise
American Fitness Professionals and Associates
American Health Information Management Association
American Hospital Association Certification Center
American Institute of Certified Public Accountants
American Indoor Air Quality Council
American Manual Medicine Association
American Medical Massage Association
American Medical Technologists
American Midwifery Certification Board
American Nurses Credentialing Center Commission on Certification
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Optometric Association Commission on Paraoptometric Certification
American Organization for Bodywork Therapies of Asia
American Physical Therapy Association
American Registry for Diagnostic Medical Sonographers
American Registry of Magnetic Resonance Imaging Technologists
The American Registry of Radiologic Technologists
American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery
American Society for Clinical Pathology
American Society of Anesthesia Technologists and Technicians
American Society of Military Comptrollers
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
American Staffing Association
American Veterinary Chiropractic Association, Inc.
American Veterinary Medical Association
APICS—The Association for Operations Management
Aquatic Exercise Association, Inc.
Architectural Woodwork Institute

Art Therapy Credentials Board
 ASIS International
 Association for Death Education and Counseling
 Association for Investment Management and Research
 Association of Christian Alcohol and Drug Counselors
 Association of Government Accountants
 Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry
 Association of Surgical Technologists, Inc.
 Association of Water Technologies, Inc.
 Axiom Resource Management, Inc.
 Behavior Analyst Certification Board
 Biofeedback Certification Institute of America
 Board for Certification in Clinical Anaplastology
 Board for Certification of Addiction Specialists
 Board for Certification in Pedorthics
 Board for Orthotist/Prosthetist Certification
 Board of Canadian Registered Safety Professionals
 Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing
 Board of Certification in Professional Ergonomics
 Board of Certification of Medical Illustrators
 Board of Certified Safety Professionals
 Board of Environmental, Health & Safety Auditor Certifications
 Board of Pharmaceutical Specialties
 Board of Registered Polysomnographic Technologists
 Breining Institute
 California Association for Alcohol and Drug Educators
 California Association of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors (CAADAC) and the
 California Certification Board of Alcohol and Drug Counselors (CCBADC)
 California Association of Drinking Driver Treatment Programs
 California Certifying Board for Medical Assistants
 California-Nevada Section, American Water Works Association
 California Water Environment Association
 Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators
 Canadian Board for Respiratory Care, Inc.
 Canadian Chiropractic Examining Board
 Canadian Council of Professional Engineers
 Canadian Nurses Association
 Center for Credentialing and Education
 Certification Board for Music Therapists
 Certification Board for Radiology Practitioner Assistants
 Certification Board for Sterile Processing and Distribution
 Certification Board for Infection Control and Epidemiology
 Certification of Disability Management Specialists Commission
 Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards, Inc.
 Certified Fund Raising Executive International
 Certified General Accountants Association of Canada
 Certified Mine Safety Professional Certification Board
 Certifying Board for Dietary Managers
 Chartered Realty Investor Society
 College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta
 College of Massage Therapists of Ontario
 College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Ontario
 College of Medical Radiation Technologists of Ontario
 College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario
 College of Pharmacists of British Columbia
 College of Physiotherapists of Ontario
 College of Respiratory Therapists of Ontario
 Commission for Case Manager Certification
 Commission for Certification in Geriatric Pharmacy
 Commission on Dietetic Registration of the American Dietetic Association
 Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools
 Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification
 Competency and Credentialing Institute
 Convergys
 The Cooper Institute
 Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards
 Council on Certification of Health, Environmental, and Safety Technologists
 Council on Certification of Nurse Anesthetists

Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation
 Council on Professional Standards for Kinesiotherapy
 Crane Operator Certification Authority
 CFA Institute
 CSI Global Education
 Dental Assisting National Board
 Department of Environment and Labor Province of Nova Scotia
 Entertainment Technician Certification Program (ETCP-ESTA)
 Esthetic Skin Institute
 Examination Board of Professional Home Inspectors
 Financial Planning Standards Board
 Financial Planners Standards Council
 Financial Planning Association of Australia
 Florida Certification Board
 Fundação Luis Eduardo Magalhães
 Hand Therapy Certification Commission, Inc.
 The Healing Oasis Wellness Center
 Healthcare Compliance Certification Board
 Healthcare Financial Management Association
 Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society
 Healthcare Quality Certification Board
 Human Resource Certification Institute
 Illinois Department of Financial & Professional Regulation
 Infocomm International
 International Medical University of Natural Education (IMUNE)
 Indian Alcoholism Commission of California
 Infusion Nurses Certification Corporation
 Institute for Safety and Health Management
 Institute of Certified Construction Financial Professionals
 Institute of Certified Management Accountants
 Institute of Hazardous Materials Management
 Institute for Supply Management
 International Accounts Payable Professionals, Inc.
 International Air Filtration Certifiers Association
 International Alliance for Fitness Professionals
 International Association for Colon Hydrotherapy
 International Association of Eating Disorders Professionals Association
 International Association of Forensic Nurses
 International Association of Healthcare Central Service Materiel Management
 International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners
 International Code Council
 International Executive Housekeepers Association, Inc.
 International Fitness Association
 International Lactation Consultant Association
 International Pilates Certification
 International Society for Clinical Densitometry
 International Society of Arboriculture
 International Society for Performance Improvement
 Irrigation Association
 ISA, The Instrumentation, Systems, and Automation Society
 Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology
 Kassian Dyck & Associates
 Knowledge Assessment Calculator (formerly American Payroll Association)
 Lamaze International
 Liaison Council on Certification for the Surgical Technologist
 Marketing Research Association
 Medical Massage National Certification Board
 Michigan Institute for Health Enhancement
 NAA Education Institute
 NAADAC—The Association for Addiction Professionals
 National Academy of Sports Medicine
 National Alliance Wound Care
 National Assistant at Surgery Council
 National Association of Medical Staff Services
 National Association for Health Professionals
 National Association of Boards of Pharmacy
 National Association of Certified Valuation Analysts
 National Association of College Stores

National Association of Federal Credit Unions
 National Association of Forensic Counselors
 National Association of Legal Assistants
 National Association of Mortgage Brokers
 National Association of Social Workers
 National Association of State Contractors Licensing Agencies
 National Asthma Educator Certification Board, Inc.
 National Athletic Trainer's Association Board of Certification
 National Board for Certification in Hearing Instrument Sciences
 National Board for Certification of Hospice and Palliative Nurses
 National Board for Certification of Orthopaedic Technologists
 National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy
 National Board for Certification of Orthopedic Physician Assistants
 National Board for Certified Counselors
 National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
 National Board for Respiratory Care
 National Board of Certification for Community Association Managers, Inc.
 National Board of Chiropractic Examiners
 National Board of Examiners in Optometry
 National Board of Nutrition Support
 National Board of Orthodontics, U.S.
 National Board of Surgical Specialists
 National Business Aviation Association
 National Center for Competency Testing
 National Certification Board for Diabetes Educators
 National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Body Work
 National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine
 National Certification Corporation for the Obstetric, Gynecologic, and Neonatal
 Nursing Specialties
 The National Commission for Health Education Credentialing
 National Commission for Certification of Continuing Medical Education
 Professionals
 National Commission for the Certification of Crane Operators
 National Concrete Masonry Association
 National Contact Lens Examiners
 National Council for Interior Design Qualification
 National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification, Inc.
 National Council of Architectural Registration Boards
 National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying
 National Council of State Boards of Nursing, Inc.
 National Council on Strength and Fitness
 National Credentialing Agency for Laboratory Personnel
 National Dental Hygiene Certification Board
 National Enrichment Teachers Association
 National Examining Board of Ocularists
 National Exercise Trainers Association (NETA)
 National Exercise and Sports Trainers Association (NESTA)
 National Federation of Professional Trainers
 National Fitness Professionals Association
 National Ground Water Association
 National Healthcareer Association
 National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence
 National Institute for Certification in Engineering Technologies
 National Institute for Metalworking Skills
 National Kitchen and Bath Association
 National League for Nursing
 National Occupational Competency Testing Institute
 National Paramedical for Technician and Assistants
 National Recreation and Parks Association
 National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians
 National Registry of Food Safety Professionals
 National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) Certification Commission
 Natural Therapies Certification Board
 Nephrology Nursing Certification Commission
 North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners
 North American Registry of Midwives
 North Carolina Substance Abuse Practice Board
 The Nuclear Medicine Technology Certification Board

Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation
 Ontario College of Pharmacists
 Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers
 Ophthalmic Photographers' Society, Inc. Board of Certification
 Pediatric Nursing Certification Board
 Petrofac Training International
 Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada
 Pharmacy Technician Certification Board
 Pilates Method Alliance, Inc.
 Professional Golfers' Association of America
 Professional Healthcare Institute of America
 Professional Landcare Network
 Professional Photographers of America
 Psychiatric Rehabilitation Certification Program
 Radiology Coding Certification Board
 Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc.
 Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America
 Rocky Mountain Masonry Institute
 School Nutrition Association
 Society of Actuaries
 Society of American Foresters
 Society of Cable Telecommunications Engineers
 Society of Certified Senior Advisors
 The Society of the Plastics Industry
 Society of Tribologists and Lubrication Engineers
 Software Engineering Institute
 Southern California Crane and Hoisting Certification Program
 Transportation Professional Certification Board, Inc.
 UCSD—Center for Criminality Addiction Research, Training, and Application
 (CCARTA)
 Universal Public Purchasing Certification Council
 U.S. Green Building Council
 Veterinary Hospital Managers Association
 The Wedding Planning Institute
 Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nurses Certification Board

APPENDIX II

Professional Certification and Licensure Advisory Committee,
 Department of Veterans Affairs,
 Washington, DC
April 10, 2007

The Honorable R. James Nicholson
 Secretary of Veterans Affairs
 810 Vermont Avenue, NW
 Washington, DC 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary,

The Professional Certification and Licensure Advisory Committee (PCLAC) met in Washington, DC, on October 26, 2006. The meeting marked the final assembling of members as the PCLACs sunset occurred on December 31, 2006. The following members attended the meeting:

Sandra L. Winborne, Ph.D., Chair	Ms. Lisa Lutz
Mr. Michael Clark	William G. Harris, Ph.D.
Mr. Wade B. Delk	Ms. Donna H. Mooney, RN
Roy Swift, Ph.D.	Ms. Carolyn Baker (Ex-Officio, DoD)

Department of Veterans Affairs Staff Present:

Mr. William Susling
 Mr. Salminio Garner

Guests Present:

Mr. Joseph Sharpe (American Legion)	Ms. Devon Siebert (HVAC)
Mr. Juan Lara (American Legion)	Mr. Ron Horne (DoD)
Mr. Jim Kendzel (NOCA)	
Giles Larrabee (Ret. Ed Service)	

PCLAC members discussed the legacy of the committee and emphasized the importance of having their concerns for the Veterans Affairs' certification and licensure programs under the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) be somehow incorporated into another advisory group's domain for future discussions. Perhaps the Education Advisory Committee is best suited for this. PCLAC developed a list of six recommendations that we feel the Department of Veterans Affairs should consider for future directions on how professional certification and licensure is handled by the agency. The recommendations are found on page three of this document.

PCLAC members attempted to address the magnitude of the changing workforce and how veterans need to understand those changes where professional certification and licensure may be necessary to obtain employment or maintain employment. The Montgomery GI Bill's long history of association with traditional education makes it reasonable to explore ways to expand veterans' understanding of professional certification and licensure and the possibilities that it may enhance their career opportunities should they explore it.

I personally want to thank you, Mr. Secretary, and your staff in Education Services who provided many hours in meetings and follow-up to ensure that PCLAC remained on task and oriented toward the mission as stated under Public Law 106-419. I also thank each member of PCLAC who are experts in professional certification and licensure and I sincerely hope that if the committee is resurrected that you would invite each member to return to a position.

In closing, I appreciate my selection as chair of PCLAC and I am available for consultation on professional certification and licensure issues. My contact information is 850.452.1111 Ext. 3213.

Respectfully,

Sandra L. Winborne, Ph.D.
Chair

Attachment (1) Final PCLAC Recommendations
Attachment (2) October 26, 2006 PCLAC Meeting Minutes

Attachment (1)

The Professional Certification and Licensure Advisory Committee (PCLAC)

Final Recommendations

1. Add a component of licensure and certification to quality assurance process.
 - This should be similar to the education process to fulfill VA's oversight responsibility.
2. Due to the increase of credentialing agencies and the decrease in the number of veterans utilizing the benefit, immediately improve current outreach activities.
 - a. Improve
 - b. Analyze
 - c. Expand for new entitlements
3. VA should strengthen partnerships with other Federal agencies with credentialing organizations and their accrediting bodies, as well as other experts in the field of certification and licensure. Maintaining and enhancing VA's existing knowledge through this partnership can accomplish this.
4. Reconstitute the Committee under the VA.
5. Develop a policy to mandate that credentialing organizations perform a periodic review of licensure and certification programs to ensure and continue compliance with the DVA approval criteria.
6. Recommend legislation that would expand the GI Bill benefit to include payment for tutorial assistance needed to pass licensing and certification exams.

POST-HEARING QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES FOR THE RECORD

Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity
Washington, DC
October 30, 2007

Keith M. Wilson
Director, Education Service
Veterans Benefits Administration
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Mr. Wilson:

Please review and respond to the enclosed hearing questions by the close of business on November 30, 2007. These questions are in reference to our House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity hearing on "Licensure and Credentialing" on September 20, 2007.

In an effort to reduce printing costs, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, in cooperation with the Joint Committee on Printing, is implementing some formatting changes for material for all Full Committee and Subcommittee hearings. Therefore, it would be appreciated if you could provide your answers consecutively on letter size paper, single-spaced. In addition, please restate the question in its entirety before the answer.

Due to the delay in receiving mail, please provide your response to Ms. Orfa Torres by fax at (202) 225-2034. If you have any questions, please call (202) 225-3608.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Herseth Sandlin
Chairwoman

Questions for the Record
The Honorable Stephanie Herseth Sandlin, Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
September 20, 2007

Hearing on Licensure and Credentialing

Question 1: When was the last time VA updated the \$2,000 limit reimbursement for classes taken toward a credential or licensure?

Response: The \$2,000 limit for reimbursement is for the examination fee itself, not for classes taken toward license or certification. Classes taken toward a license or certification exam could potentially be payable under regular Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB Chapter 30) benefits if the classes are approved as part of the individual's program of education.

The \$2,000 reimbursement limit for license or certification examination fees was established by law under section 122 of Public Law 106-419, and would have to be amended by Congress. It should be noted, however, that a brief review of our records found no reimbursements that have approached the \$2,000 threshold.

Question 2: What is the number of veterans per year who take a licensure and credential exam? How many pass?

Response: In fiscal 2007, the total of all individuals who received a reimbursement for a license or certification exam was 4,094. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) does not maintain records on the pass/fail rate for individuals taking license or certification exams.