

**EXAMINING VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT ISSUES
IN NORTHEAST INDIANA**

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

OCTOBER 19, 2011

FIELD HEARING HELD IN FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

Serial No. 112-33

Printed for the use of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs



U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

71-385

WASHINGTON : 2012

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

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EXAMINING VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT ISSUES IN NORTHEAST INDIANA

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2011

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

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:00 a.m., in the Main Branch of the Allen County Public Library, 900 Library Plaza, Fort Wayne, Indiana, Hon. Marlin A. Stutzman [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Members Present: Representatives Stutzman and Braley.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN STUTZMAN

Mr. STUTZMAN. Good morning. I'd like to welcome you all to the Subcommittee hearing, the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity. I want to welcome each of you here today. This is a great crowd. Thank you for coming out today for this official meeting of the Subcommittee.

I'm Congressman Marlin Stutzman and to my left is Congressman Bruce Braley, who I'll introduce to you here in a little bit. I want to say thank you to our panelists and to each and every person who is here, and especially to our veterans today. We want to say a special thank you to you for your service to our country.

Usually, when we hold hearings we are sitting in Washington. Today I'm delighted to be here in Fort Wayne. Northeast Indiana is home to 48,000 veterans. These men and women have served our Nation with honor, and it is my honor to serve as their voice in Congress on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. Chairing the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, I have the opportunity of working on veterans' employment and education issues alongside the Ranking Member of this Subcommittee, the Honorable Bruce Braley, who represents Iowa's 1st Congressional District.

And we actually just had a hearing in Iowa on Monday and the hospitality in Iowa is just as generous as I hope you'll find here in Indiana. Earlier this week we hosted that committee, and we heard from Iowa veterans, and I'm happy to have him here today and I want to welcome him.

Fort Wayne has a long history beginning with settlements by Native Americans in the area followed by a fort built by General Mad Anthony Wayne in the 1790s. Since then, Fort Wayne has played an important role in Indiana's history and is known for our manufacturing, education, insurance, health care, logistics, defense, secu-

riety, and agriculture. Fort Wayne has been named an All-American City on three occasions, and most recently in 2009.

We are here today to hear from Hoosiers about the employment difficulties facing far too many members of the Indiana National Guard, the Reserves, and those returning from active duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, and other parts of the world. While the unemployment rate for all Indiana veterans was 6.9 percent, data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show that the 35.6 percent of America's Gulf Era 2 veterans, ages 20 to 24, are unemployed. While 8.8 percent of Gulf Era 2 veterans, ages 25 to 54, were unemployed.

More shocking is anecdotal information that as much as 30 percent of returning members of the guard and reserves do not come home to a job. Clearly, we need to find ways to reduce all of those numbers. The House Committee on Veteran Affairs has taken a first step towards that end last week by passing H.R. 2433, a bill that would provide up to a year of GI Bill benefits to unemployed veterans between the ages of 35 and 60. The bill now goes the Senate. We hope to get the bill to the President for his signature by Veteran's Day along with several other improvements to veteran's benefits.

I want to take a moment to explain that this particular meeting is a formal hearing. It is to be inserted into the official congressional record. Keeping with the standard protocol of official committee hearings, we will not be taking questions from the audience during the hearing today. Rather, we'll be taking testimony from our panelists that we have arranged for the hearing today.

I'm also pleased to announce that afterwards, as many of you know and hopefully are aware of, that we will be having an open house at the conclusion of this meeting outside in the hallway. And looking forward to hearing from veterans, but that will be after this hearing today.

At this time I'd like to yield to the gentleman from Iowa, Bruce Braley. We actually not only work together on this Subcommittee, on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, but our offices are actually next to each other on the 7th floor in Longworth, as well.

Thank you, and welcome, Mr. Braley.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Stutzman appears on p. 41.]

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BRUCE L. BRALEY

Mr. BRALEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure to be here today in Fort Wayne, and it's great to see so many veterans out in the audience because we know these issues impact you, your friends, and your family. So we're delighted to have you here. I've told the chairman on more than one occasion that the thing that binds my home town of Waterloo, Iowa to Fort Wayne is that we were both original franchises in the National Basketball Association. And then they stole your franchise and moved it to Detroit. They stole ours and moved it to St. Louis and then to Atlanta. So that's the one thing that brings us all together is our unified opposition to people who come in and take great sports franchises out of places like Fort Wayne.

Most of what I know about veteran's issues I learned from my father. My father enlisted in the Marine Corps when he was 17. He was a farm kid in Iowa. He landed on Iwo Jima the day both

of the flags were raised on Mount Suribachi. And when we had our hearing in Iowa I read from his discharge form which was a two-page form that really didn't have much information on it. It had what his interests were when he went back home, which was farming.

It had an interest in exploring education when the GI Bill was brand new. But other than that, there really wasn't a lot of assistance he received at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center when they sent him packing and he got on a train and headed back to Iowa.

The good news is we've come a long way in helping veterans try to transition from an active-duty deployment, whether they're active or in the Guard and Reserve, into the civilian workforce. But we've got a long way to go. The statistics the Chairman cited are totally unacceptable. When one out of every four returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan are out of work, that is a shameful legacy for this country, and that is the entire purpose of the Economic Opportunity Subcommittee that I'm fortunate to work on with Chairman Stutzman. And we aren't going to rest, and no American should rest, until every veteran who wants a job has a job.

We heard very compelling testimony in Iowa on Monday, and I know we're going to hear compelling testimony today. But the thing that came through loud and clear from many veterans who have served their country with honor and distinction in harm's way, seen their friends injured and killed, is that it's one thing when you come home to have someone say thank you for your service, but the best way I know of to thank a veteran is hire a veteran. And what we want to do is come up with some creative solutions to help employers who are looking for great employees and veterans who are looking for work, bridge that gap so that we can find jobs for veterans who want them, and we can address the huge problems of unemployed veterans that concern us all.

So I'm very delighted to be here. I'm anxious to hear the testimony of our witnesses, and I look forward to talking to you afterwards.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Braley appears on p. 41.]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you. And I would just say this: One of the joys that I have working on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, is the bipartisanship that is on the Committee. And you hear a lot of wrangling out of Washington, but I can tell you that both parties, Republican and Democrat, do see the need. And one of the things that I've appreciated about the President's Jobs Bill and other leadership in Washington is that we are now focusing more on hiring veterans as they do come home because this is a great need.

We heard testimony from a gentleman in Iowa who was a captain in the military, a farm kid, had a family, small family. If you would see him walk through the door, you would say that young man should be able to find work fairly easy, and he is having a very difficult time finding work, and we hear stories like that. And Congressman Braley, the heart that he has and the passion that he has for helping veterans is evident as we have heard testimony

from several folks from his district on the problems that they face, whether it's in housing, whether it's in finding employment.

And so this is a great opportunity for us, and we're excited that we moved out of Washington and are doing these hearings back in our districts because we not only want to highlight the problem, we also want to find solutions and in connecting people and helping our veterans because we are going to have a great challenge in front of us as veterans come home from these wars. As they dwindle down, we want to make sure they come home to opportunities, and so that is what our task is on this committee.

And so with that, we will start the hearing. And at this time I want to welcome our first panelists today. We are joined by Mayor Suzanne Handshoe of Kendallville; and Mr. Mark Dobson of the Warsaw-Kosciusko County Chamber of Commerce; Mr. Mike Landram of the Greater Fort Wayne Chamber of Commerce; Mr. Gregg Norris of BAE Systems, a company right here in Fort Wayne; Mr. Chris Straw of Team Quality Services, a company from Auburn; and Mr. Tony Tabler of ITT Systems, another defense contractor here in Fort Wayne that employs folks right here at home.

Each of you will have five minutes to summarize your testimony, and your full written statements will be made part of the hearing record today. I want to say thank you to each you for taking time to come to this. We believe it's very important, and I believe you do as well. And we're anxious to work together.

Our timer is here. We don't have a clock. But if you watch the lights, green means we go, yellow means slow it down, and red means stop. But we do want to hear your testimony, so feel comfortable. And I'm sure that not only us, but I'm sure the audience welcomes you, as well.

Mayor Handshoe is a veteran, and her husband is actually in Guantanamo Bay and is going to be home in time for Christmas. So we're praying for his safe return. Start with you for your testimony. Thank you for being here.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. SUZANNE HANDSHOE, MAYOR, KENDALLVILLE, IN; MARK DOBSON, PRESIDENT WARSAW-KOSCIUSKO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, FORT WAYNE, IN; MIKE LANDRAM, PRESIDENT AND CEO, GREATER FORT WAYNE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, FORT WAYNE, IN; GREGG NORRIS, HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER, BAE SYSTEMS, ELECTRONIC SYSTEMS SECTOR, FORT WAYNE, IN; CHRIS R. STRAW, CO-FOUNDER, TEAM QUALITY SERVICE, AUBURN, IN; AND LTC ANTHONY D. TABLER, USA (RET.), SENIOR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, COMMUNICATIONS AND FORCE PROTECTION SYSTEMS, ITT ELECTRONIC SYSTEMS, FORT WAYNE, IN

STATEMENT OF THE HON. SUZANNE HANDSHOE

Ms. HANDSHOE. Congressman Stutzman, Congressman Braley, and gentlemen, thank you for the opportunity to be here today to discuss the very important issues of veterans. I would like to share some of my own experiences, both good and bad, and those of family members. First, I'm a retired Marine Corps Chief Warrant Officer 4. When I returned to Kendallville after Desert Storm, the

economy was weak and jobs were not easy to find. I did find a job as a temporary at Kraft Foods while I worked on my degree.

During the mid 1990s, while an active Marine Corps reservist and Desert Storm veteran, I applied for a position as a caseworker with the Department of Family and Children. During the interview process, I was asked if I had to attend any training that would require me to be absent. I explained that I would be gone for a minimum of 2 weeks of training a year and possibly additional longer to attend educational requirements of my rank. I was flatly told that it would be unfair for the other members of the staff to pick up the slack when I would be gone for the case loads. So it just wouldn't be fair to them. Needless to say, I did not get the job.

The Northeast Indiana Special Education Cooperative hired me because I was a Marine. The executive director was a former Marine and felt that I could handle any of the challenges he threw my way. When I was activated in 2003 for Operation Enduring Freedom as a casualty assistance officer for Northeast Indiana and Western Ohio, they held my position and were extremely supportive, not only of me, but of my family.

As mayor we've had a councilman deployed twice in the past few years to Afghanistan and Iraq. We supported him in any way that we could during his absence. We also had a firefighter activated for duty in Afghanistan and, obviously, his position was held and we welcomed him back to our ranks on his return.

The City of Kendallville was recently awarded the employer support of the Guard and Reserve, the above and beyond award for the support that we show to our military members, and it was really an honor for us.

A great story of patriotism is my brother-in-law. He is employed by Graphic Packaging in Kendallville. He joined the Army due to the events of September 11th. He served for 5 years and did three combat tours. When he was honorably discharged, Graphic Packaging not only gave him his job back, but they gave him all 5 years of seniority while he served.

I've also learned, since we spoke last evening, that Kraft has also held some positions for people who were called to duty. One of the positions was a maintenance personnel who was actually a temporary and Kraft held that as a full-time position and gave it to him when he returned.

Shouldn't we be recognizing or rewarding companies who follow these actions? I feel we should.

Last year my husband, Randy Handshoe, interviewed for a teaching position at a middle school. The panel looked at his résumé and commented that he was in the Navy Reserve. He answered, that is correct. One of the members asked him, does this mean that you could be deployed? He responded with, yes, every person that wears a uniform has this risk. The next comment was, well, where would that leave us? He was not hired.

Shouldn't we be feeling good about putting on our résumé that we are veterans, instead of feeling that maybe we should hide it so that we could get the job? Randy did receive orders several months later and was called to duty December 26th, 2010, and he's still serving as a chief petty officer with the staff judge advocate's office in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. What is troubling to me is that

he will return at Christmas with no job, and he holds a Bachelor's Degree in education. I'm certain that I have other constituents that are having trouble finding work, or worse, not being offered work because they're reservists who have had multiple deployments or the threat exists that they would be called to duty.

As the war continues, it is no longer fashionable to support military members. How sad. Perhaps, some consideration should be given to incentivize companies, through tax credits, who do hire veterans.

I thank you, respectfully.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Handshoe appears on p. 42.]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Dobson, you're recognized for five minutes.

STATEMENT OF MARK A. DOBSON

Mr. DOBSON. Good morning. Congressman Stutzman, Congressman Braley, thank you so much for holding this hearing here in Fort Wayne today and for the one in Iowa yesterday. That you're holding this hearing in Indiana and Iowa shows how much commitment the Congress sees for the veterans of America, and we greatly appreciate that. I'm humbled and honored to be here to speak on this very important issue; one that distresses us all when we hear testimony, such as the mayor's testimony, on the difficulty of re-employment when you return. Our country's brightest and our country's best have given of themselves so we may continue to enjoy the freedoms that we all have. They've stepped forward and they've heeded the call to duty. And for that, we are all grateful, so now we're compelled to do all we can to make sure that veterans return to America and take their rightful place in the private sector.

The dichotomy here is that veterans expect no special treatment. They do not wish to have opportunity handed to them. They, more than anybody else in the room, understand what America stands for, and they will carve a significant path in our society. So I feel like it's our duty to make sure we break down any barriers that might exist out there so they can transition to the private sector.

With these thoughts in mind, I contacted 30 businesses in Kosciusko County and the veterans officer at Grace College to understand what are some of the issues. And it seemed as though the consistent feedback came to three very significant things at this point. The first thing they all did was tell me how much they value and prize our military and express their sincere appreciation. But I knew we had to dig deeper and so we did, and three themes came out; economic constraints caused by the sagging economy, lack of business engagement with the military, and transitional training for veterans.

The economic constraints are reflected by the state of our economy today. Companies facing the uncertainty out there are putting off hiring decisions. They're making hard decisions not to hire whether it be veterans or those who have not served. In a climate where unemployment is over 9 percent, job seekers are seeking greater competition when they're out there. And, arguably, the training received in the military would give you a competitive ad-

vantage, but that advantage is diminished when the pool of job seekers is so great.

The private sector's engagement with the military is an additional challenge. Quite often businesses do not have knowledge of veteran's issues or the availability of veterans. They don't know who the contact points are, and they don't know when a veteran might be back and available for employment. When a deployment ends or a veteran retires, it's sometimes the first that we know of in the private sector.

And, finally, another consistent comment was that, while the veteran's training is excellent, the transitional skills sometimes are challenging. Quite often assistance is needed with résumé development, interviewing skills, and transitional job training. Obviously, some skills in the military are very easily transitionable to the private sector. If you've been a pilot, you probably can find private sector work.

But if the job description in the military, and pardon the candor or pardon the hilarity, includes blowing up things, it's really hard for the private sector to understand how can I translate those skills into my workforce. So we believe there are some things that can be done to help and move this issue forward. The Post-9/11 GI Bill is a terrific program to help transition veterans to the private sector, but we think it could be more effective if chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, Work One agencies, and those engaged in the private sector are a part of the process.

Today we're not traditionally contacted and don't often know when vets are training for a new job opportunity. Yet, we survey our workforce. We do job databases, and we are probably the best resource for characterizing what our community needs in terms of employment. If you have high level aeronautical skills, as an example, I can find you a position in Kosciusko County in the orthopaedic industry because the skills are quite often very similar.

The second issue that we think we can do to help on this is have some advanced communications with entities such as ours. If we could begin to notify employers in our community that a deployment is ending in the near future, we believe we could become a resource for veterans in hiring. Perhaps positions can be held for those vets as they come back. We realize the challenge that the military doesn't want to exactly say when they're leaving a deployment or ending a deployment, but the sooner we can get advanced notice, the more we can be a resource.

And finally, the U.S. Chamber has launched the Hiring of Our Heroes program. It's a hundred chambers and the U.S. Chamber working specifically on this issue. We have spoken this morning. Our chamber and the Fort Wayne chamber are going to be involved in a Hiring of Our Heroes event. That engagement, we think, can be of assistance and can help in this transition, and we're honored and humbled to be able to be a part of that.

And I see I've gone over my time. Thank you for this opportunity. [The prepared statement of Mr. Dobson appears on p. 43.]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Landram, you're recognized for five minutes.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL S. LANDRAM

Mr. LANDRAM. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Mike Landram, President and CEO of the Greater Fort Wayne Chamber of Commerce. We're the third largest chamber in the State of Indiana with over 1700 members. And those members collectively do about 18 billion dollars a year in annual revenues and serve over 750 different industries.

The Greater Fort Wayne Chamber of Commerce is very involved in veteran affairs issues. In addition to having veteran-owned businesses as our members, we're heavily engaged in advancing the defense industry and cluster in Northeast Indiana. What my testimony will center around is sharing with you the many initiatives this collective group is doing currently as solutions and offerings to the topic of today's session. Like the rest of the country, we are acutely aware of the employment struggles veterans are faced with. We have a unique insight into the issues due to having a large National Guard base here in Fort Wayne. We're in regular communications with the base on the issues facing their guardsmen and are actively pursuing programs to fight unemployment among veterans. The Greater Fort Wayne Chamber of Commerce is a charter member of the Northeast Indiana Defense Industry Association board, or also known as NIDIA. NIDIA's membership is composed of businesses, higher Ed, congressional staffers, all working together toward the common goal, funding the defense industry and providing regional support and promotion of the industry and the contributions made to the defense industry in Fort Wayne and Northeast Indiana.

Secondly, workforce development is a critical concern for the defense cluster. Many of the members of NIDIA have worked together to define their future staffing needs. Due to primarily an aging engineer workforce, engineers in many specialized areas will be retiring. Members of NIDIA work very closely in collaborative fashion to communicate their skill needs with the university partners as a way to ensure future graduates will meet the industry needs.

Additionally, many small businesses in Northeast Indiana started and serve within the supply chain of the defense industry. For example, NIDIA conducted a member expo as a way for various small business members to describe their products and services to the defense industry. At monthly meetings presentations are done by businesses to the board that outline how businesses can work collaboratively with the defense industry in hiring and employing veterans.

Lastly, Northeast Industry started the PTAC, Procurement Technical Assist Center, in 2009. PTAC serves as an advisor to businesses to inform them how to qualify themselves to do business with the government. In many ways this can be an option and an outlet for veterans starting their own business.

In addition to our involvement with NIDIA, the chamber's assisting the National Guard base with implementing a STARBASE program in Fort Wayne. STARBASE is geared towards elementary students, primarily Fifth Graders, to expose them to STEM subject matter. These students are nationally—or traditionally at-risk students. The program encourages their learning in areas of academics that are historically underrepresented in STEM. Military

volunteers from the National Guard, Navy, Marine, Air Force Reserve, and Air Force bases across the Nation work with students to set and achieve goals by helping apply these abstract principles in these disciplines to real-world situations. STARBASE is a perfect example of the investment we can make in young people of our society in hopes that they'll take the experience and apply it to whatever field they choose to pursue.

We know the issue of unemployment among veterans is an issue that will continue for the unforeseeable future given our current economic state. To that end our chamber, along with U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and, as Mr. Dobson had already alluded to, will be hosting a Hiring Our Hoosiers event in Fort Wayne. And we're going to consider even expanding it to Northeast Indiana sometime in the next year. The scheduling of this event has not been set precisely due to the uncertainty of deployment schedule in our area. These events will benefit not only veterans but are open to their spouses, as well.

The issues veterans face concerning unemployment are substantial. As home to the National Guard base, we hear stories of soldiers being deployed only to return to jobs that have been downsized or eliminated. At the same time in this double-dip recession, their spouses are having trouble maintaining employment. While these issues are not unique to veterans, they are exacerbated by the inability to determine their schedule.

As part of our commitment to further advancing the military in Fort Wayne, I sit as the secretary of the newly formed Fort Wayne Base Community Council. Our purpose, as stated, is to continue to improve the outstanding relationship between the civilian community and the military service community centered around Fort Wayne, Indiana and to promote the general welfare, prosperity, and quality of life between the military and civilian population. By being involved in this council, our goal is to partner with businesses and military in order to create a mutually beneficial partnership.

To conclude my testimony, we have been very active at the state level trying to support our state representative, Tom Dermody's bill to study these effects of the 3 percent pricing preference for veteran-owned businesses. We are continuing to push in that cause. We actually got one of our chamber members, Mr. Jerry Hogan, appointed through Senator David Long's office through the Military Affairs Commission to be able to explore the matter further. If the Greater Fort Wayne Chamber of Commerce can be of any assistance in this important fight, I encourage you to call us.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Landram appears on p. 45.]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Norris, you're recognized for five minutes.

STATEMENT OF GREGG NORRIS

Mr. NORRIS. Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, as a representative of an employer of nearly 1,000 employees in Northeast Indiana, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss with you the experiences we have had recruiting and employing nearly 100 veterans into our

business. My name is Gregg Norris, and I am the human resources manager for the BAE Systems facility here in Fort Wayne. BAE Systems is a global defense and security company with approximately 100,000 employees world-wide. At our Fort Wayne facility, we manufacture a variety of both commercial and defense electronics for avionics applications. Our workforce is comprised of approximately 650 union represented hourly production workers with a balance of 300 support personnel. Our company, including legacy owners, has been in Fort Wayne since 1985. We have been very fortunate to be able to grow the Fort Wayne business, from just over 700 employees in 2004, to a planned population of nearly 1,000 by the end of this year. Veteran hiring has played a significant role in the success of this effort. Local hiring efforts that focus on veteran hiring include participation in the BAE Systems Corporate Warrior Integration Program of which I have provided additional information in my written testimony.

Local hiring efforts also reach a large military audience by advertising all of the Fort Wayne openings through vetjobs.com. Career Builders talent network is also utilized which reaches 98 percent of transitioning military through their partnerships with the top military job boards, Department of Veterans Affairs, and the primary social media source, *Facebook*.

BAE Systems participates in a variety of corporate hiring career fairs across the country, including last year's participation in Chicago where Fort Wayne employees attended. When we consider veterans during our recruiting process, we feel there are many positive skill sets that these individuals automatically offer to our company. Two of the talents that servicemen and women offer immediately, as a result of their military experience, are teamwork and a sense of self-discipline. It is critical to our business that we have employees with the necessary skills to effectively work together. Like the military, for us to be successful, we must all work together towards a common goal or mission. The discipline that is instilled in soldiers, as part of their military background, is also a strongly desired employee attribute. We need people that show up for work, arrive on time, support our leadership, and have a strong sense of respect for themselves, their co-workers, and the company's values. All characteristics we typically find in our veterans.

In terms of the recommendations that I would offer to the Committee based on feedback from our recruiting team, I would first and foremost encourage continued focus on education and opportunities for veterans to return to school. Many of the positions within BAE Systems require college degrees which can be an obstacle for veterans.

Although the majority of our positions are hourly associates in Fort Wayne and require only a high school diploma, post-secondary educational experiences can still be of great value to a veteran candidate in differentiating themselves from a very large pool of potential candidates.

As I considered other recommendations, I thought it might be beneficial if I spoke with a veteran that we recently hired. For purposes of this testimony I will refer to our veteran employee as Bruce. Bruce is an 11-year veteran who served in both Afghanistan and Iraq. He served in multiple capacities, including his final duty

as lead security for his executive officer. Bruce saw extensive combat action while in theater and was eventually released from duty in 2007 due to severe injuries he had sustained. It gave me a profound sense of gratitude and honor to listen to Bruce describe the sacrifices he had made for our country.

I asked Bruce how he had heard about our job openings and why he applied for one of our positions. He told me that he had maintained a close relationship with his former executive officer who had retired from the military and taken a position with BAE Systems in Fayetteville, Georgia. Bruce's former executive officer had recommended BAE Systems as a strong company with good values. Bruce also recalled several instances of BAE Systems equipment that he had used while on active duty. Bruce then did an Internet search on BAE Systems and found our production associate job posting online. He applied, met all the selection criteria and joined our team on August 29th, this year.

I then asked Bruce what recommendations he might have for the Subcommittee. Bruce hesitated for a long moment and said, tell them I would describe how I felt when I left the service in one word, helplessness. Bruce went on to tell me that he vividly recalls receiving his military paperwork and being told he was free to leave, but he had no idea what to do next. He had been provided some résumé building assistance, but he had no idea where or how to start finding a job, let alone a career.

After listening to Bruce's story I would respectfully recommend some attention be given to what is provided in the way of out placement services for our veterans. Résumé building is one small piece of this process. There is, however, so much more in the way of career counseling provided by out placement companies. These services would provide immeasurable benefit to our veterans. BAE Systems uses similar companies to provide this much needed service for our employees that are impacted by reductions in force. The employees that we are no longer able to employ are very appreciative of this service. I would expect that our veterans would feel the same sense of appreciation should they be offered this assistance as they rejoin civilian life.

Chairman Stutzman and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, we at BAE Systems are proud to be able to support our fighting men and women, both in combat, and in the workplace when they return to life at home. Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak with you today.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Norris appears on p. 46.]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Straw, you're recognized for five minutes.

STATEMENT OF CHRIS R. STRAW

Mr. STRAW. Thank you. Good morning. My name is Chris Straw and I'm a business owner with Team Quality Services located in Auburn, Indiana. And I have unique perspective being on this panel because I am both an employer and I am also a veteran. And I've been on both sides of that table when you're trying to be interviewed and when you're interviewing. It does, it provides a unique perspective for me, and I see both sides. I flew for the Air Force Reserve out of Grissom from 1994 through 2003, was deployed to

Afghanistan after September 11th, started my company in 1997. And trying to run a company from halfway across the globe is quite challenging as you can imagine. And that actually is what forced me to get out of the military in 2003. I had to make a choice of what I was going to do, and I was fortunate that I had a job to come back to because I knew the boss very well. It was me.

And when I looked at this testimony today, I tried to break it down into three main areas that I felt were important based on my point of view. And one of them is the lack of familiarity with Northeast Indiana with the military. There's just not a lot of involvement for regular folks to interact with the military and get to know how the military works. Being in the Air Force Reserve, I got to travel all over the globe and throughout the United States. And in my written testimony I made an example of the State of Texas which has a lot of military bases there. The cities are very familiar with the military. You take San Antonio, countless military bases in that one city alone. The chances that somebody there probably knows a veteran, probably knows somebody that works at a base, or they work at a company that supports the base. They understand a little bit better than what I think Northeast Indiana does of how the military works and what those people are like.

And with that, unfortunately, we're faced with getting an education of the military in Northeast Indiana through resources such as the news, Hollywood. And that's where our perspective comes from which as we know, and I know as a veteran, that's not the truth. And so unfortunately there's kind of a clouded view when it comes to perception of military veterans in Northeast Indiana.

The second thing I would say is that it has to do with the skill set, and I refer to Mr. Dobson's testimony where he said the military does an excellent job of training their people for specific jobs and a lot of those excellent skill sets of teamwork and things Mr. Norris touched on do transfer over, but it is a very competitive environment right now, and there needs to be more than just that.

Those are great things that the veteran brings along, but I'm also interviewing people with high unemployment, I'm getting people for jobs that are maybe an hourly type of a job, and I get people with Ph.D.'s coming in, and they've been unemployed for 9 months, a year, year and a half. So it really puts the military member almost at a disadvantage, especially if they don't have the education to match that.

And I would say the third thing would be the interaction with the Guard. And being a Reserve guy myself, I completely understand how the Reserve system works, and I understand the commitments that are caused by that. However, again, based on the lack of education in Northeast Indiana and the businesses that are here, they don't.

And what Ms. Handshoe was talking about where when people get interviewed, are you a member of the Guard Reserve? Yes. You know, as you're interviewing people, it's sad to say, you're looking for reasons to eliminate this person because I've got to narrow my field down to who can take this job. And that's a—I would consider our company a small business. And in a small business I don't have thousands of people in my office. I have ten. And so to hire somebody that may or may not be able to be there, I look at the size

of my office and what that means if somebody, all of a sudden, get a notice that they're deployed. What does that mean to me? Well, that means I have to either replace that or absorb that in my other colleagues.

Companies operate as lean as possible right now especially, and so it's very difficult to absorb it because you've built it so that you can't absorb it. And so what do you do? Do you bring in somebody to temporarily fill that assignment, hire them on as an employee only to let them go when the reservist comes back and then I'm faced with unemployment, for paying the guy that I hired in temporarily.

So you can see the struggle and the uphill battle that the veteran faces when he's sitting in the interview.

Unfortunately, you're almost considering whether I put that on a résumé or not, and that's very sad, very sad.

But I think, like I said, it has to do a lot with the education of, not only the veterans, but also the people in this community to embrace and understand what it means to be veteran and what a veteran can bring to them.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Straw appears on p. 48.]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Tabler, you're recognized for five minutes.

STATEMENT OF LTC ANTHONY D. TABLER

Colonel TABLER. Congressman Stutzman, Congressman Braley, I would like to thank you in advance for giving me an opportunity to share my views on ways to help veterans, the National Guard, reservists. My name is Tony Tabler. I work for ITT Electronic Services. I spent 22 years in the army retiring as a lieutenant colonel in 2001. And since retiring I've had regular contact with members of the active military and veterans. I've spoken to them at their military places of duty, in the community, and at the Fort Wayne Rescue Mission. I'm going to share my views on what I think can be done to help decrease the unemployment rate for veterans.

Helping veterans to find employment starts when they transition from the military units and they return to civilian life. When I transitioned from the military at Fort Gordon, Georgia, I received guidance and coaching at the transition office on how to write a résumé and how to best describe my skills and capabilities in a way that the civilian sector would understand. Transitioning for me was easy. I was a lieutenant colonel with an advanced degree, many contacts in defense companies. However, this is not the case for our younger veterans. The excitement of leaving the military quickly fades for some veterans when they arrive at their home town, and try to figure out what they want to do as civilians.

I believe it is important for the veteran to be able to visit, for lack of better words, a civilian in processing center that provides an opportunity for them to take a job aptitude test to determine the work that would best be suited for them. Not sure where this would occur, but potentially it could be conducted at an existing Veteran Affairs facility.

During the civilian in processing, the veteran should be given assistance in further developing their résumé that allows them to

match their skills against the job skills needed in the community. At the in-processing facility, they should also be coached on how to participate in a job interview. It would also be valuable if, at that in-processing facility in the community, they had a listing of military friendly businesses and job opportunities.

With regard to military friendly businesses, I believe that offering some type of tax credit to companies who hire veterans would encourage them to be military friendly and make it appealing for them to hire veterans. Also, as was mentioned before, veterans should be encouraged to provide higher education. Many soldiers have little or no family support when it comes to pursuing higher education even though they have educational benefits.

Once in the community, I believe it's also important to encourage veterans to periodically visit a veteran gathering place for professional development. This could potentially take place at a Veteran Affairs, National Guard facility or places of worship. But this would be a great opportunity for caring professionals in the community to periodically speak with and mentor veterans. I'm sure that professionals in the community would be willing to donate their time and offer free seminars that benefit veterans. Places of worship should also be encouraged to reach out to the military and their families. Opportunities for people arise when they have personal connections with other people who are interested in their success.

I would now like to just share a few things about what ITT is doing to recognize and care for our veterans. ITT hires veterans in the course of our normal hiring activities. We e-mail job openings to NAVNET for posting. We also post to recruitmilitary.com and vetjobs.com. We periodically attend recruit military career fairs and place advertisements in the Search and Employ quarterly magazine sponsored by Recruit Military. The Web site nd.com scrapes our geospatial systems Web site daily, and they post job listings to numerous Web sites and provide opportunities for veterans.

In addition, we post to Monster which has military.com and LinkedIn which is a business related social networking site in an effort to target veterans. In Fort Wayne ITT is also a member of the Northeast Indiana Defense Industry Association which was discussed before. And this group also focuses on the employment of veterans and does so by sharing résumés between the various companies. Although I have made just a few brief comments I hope that I've sparked a few ideas that will result in ways to reduce the unemployment rate of veterans.

And in summary, veterans need organized help with writing their résumés, finding jobs in military friendly businesses, and encouragement to get their college degrees. They need caring and mentoring professionals from the community to come alongside them to keep them focused on professional growth. Last, but not least, they need caring members of the community who are looking out for them.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

[The prepared statement of Colonel Tabler appears on p. 49.]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you. At this time I typically limit members on the Committee five minutes, but since it's just the two of us and we're in charge, we're going to go ahead and extend our

question and answer time, especially due to the size of the panel. And politicians typically do need a limit, but we're going to waive that today because I think there's some important information here.

But I'd like to start with Mayor Handshoe. The Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act, known as USERRA, prohibits employers from refusing to hire or rehire someone because of their military status. Just like your husband's experience, would you feel that his rights were violated and was there any consideration of pursuing those rights under USERRA, which is a difficult position to be in?

Ms. HANDSHOE. We did talk about that. I do feel they were violated because, as I indicated to him, you can't ask a person their marital status or if they have children. He felt that would black mark being in a small community, looking for another teaching position from other corporations in our community. And you know how small Kendallville is, and that's a strong possibility, so that's why we didn't pursue it.

Mr. STUTZMAN. As you work with businesses in Kendallville in your community, and I know you as a veteran are a strong advocate for veterans in employment, do you find employers in Kendallville and the businesses that you communicate with, are they aware of the incentives that are currently available for hiring veterans and is there any emphasis from a lot of the businesses you talk with regarding hiring veterans.

Ms. HANDSHOE. I think the larger corporations do, and I did mention two of them. And I think that is a culture within that corporation that does that. I think it would be helpful if we did do some sort of, as the other gentlemen spoke of, some sort of a hiring—if we could collaborate as a region, not just have Fort Wayne or Kosciusko, but if we did it as a region to talk about hiring veterans and heroes.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Because that's one of the things I've found over these discussions. And me being a small business owner, before being a Member of Congress, I was not aware of those incentives available. It seems that the larger companies do have a program. I just visited UPS this morning, and they have a program. I visited the GM plant yesterday. They have a program and, actually, have a fantastic wall there in the main lobby recognizing their veterans. But I think for a lot of the smaller businesses—and I know the challenges they have—they're trying to stay above water. They're trying to survive in a difficult economy. That's not something that's at the forefront.

And I think, maybe, Mr. Landram, you might have some comments regarding that, as well, and how can we communicate that better to small business owners because small businesses make up a large portion of those who are hiring.

Mr. LANDRAM. Yes, that's very correct, Congressman. I know that 86 percent of our members employ 50 or less employees. And I know that Fort Wayne, Northeast Indiana, also mirror that's same statistic. So the large companies are going to have in-house H.R. professionals like Mr. Norris next to me that are going to be very well aware of that. But the small business owner, you know, is trying to get the doors open on time every day and is trying to get

the product out the door, and has a lot of balls in the air they're juggling. So ways to keep disseminating that and re-reminding people, whether it's outreach done from the various military support, you know, and other employment supportive type of services, you know, mini campaigns, if you will, will be helpful to keep that in front.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Mr. Landram, you mentioned a bill that State Representative Tom Dermody has filed in the state legislature. Could you talk a little bit more about that and how that would work, more of the details about that.

Mr. LANDRAM. Yes, exactly. Well, in the last legislative session, House Bill 1183 would have essentially provided a price preference, you know, for a veteran owned business to be able to compete. You know, in Indiana you've got minority and women-owned businesses that have a higher price preference, and it does put a veteran-owned business, if you will, at a disadvantage. And I admit having many conversations. Mr. Hogan, as an example, explained that he just would opt not to bid on certain projects because he knew, in the end, you know, that he wouldn't be considered under that case.

And he was quite voiceful about that situation, and we had campaigned in the last session hard to, at least, get the conversation started. The conditions weren't fertile to get the bill passed. But I think through our efforts and the efforts of others, a study summer session committee was formed. And we were able to get Mr. Hogan placed on that commission to explore that, and we're hopeful that we could get that advanced in the next legislative session in 2012.

Which again, starting a business, you know, for a veteran becomes another viable option in as much as gaining good high quality employment.

Mr. STUTZMAN. And maybe just to segue off of that, then I'll come back to Mr. Dobson, Mr. Straw, you are a small business owner and a tough boss, it sounds like. Why did you want to start a small business? And did any of the other men and women that you served with in the military talk about starting their own businesses? It's difficult because, obviously, right now the economy is not great—I talk to a lot of folks that say if I were trying to start a business today, I wouldn't mess with it. But, when you have an idea and you have a dream to do something, you set out to do it, and you set out to accomplish that. Can you talk a little bit about that and then also your experiences in hiring veterans and what you see and hear.

Mr. STRAW. Sure. First of all, as a small business, start-up company, you're right, the thing you're focusing on is making sure the doors stay open, for one. And when I hear what Mr. Norris is saying about all the things that they have to hire veterans, I'm envious, but just don't have the time or the staff to dig that deep into it. When we have a position that's open, it's not like we have a big forecast of when it's going to be open. It's open until next Tuesday. Very quickly we need to get candidates in, get them interviewed and get them hired.

And I would say as the reason for starting my business, my goal, since I was probably 7 years old, was to fly airplanes, so that was the ultimate dream, and went to college at Purdue to study that. But then you get out of Purdue with all my certificates to fly air-

planes, of course nobody wants to ride on a airplane with a pilot that doesn't have experience. That was when I joined the military, was to do that, fly out of Grissom. What was unique about that is I'm flying alongside the guys, because we're a reserve base, these guys fly for United, Delta, everywhere else during the week. They come fly at Grissom on the weekends or one night a week. It gave me perspective into the airline life before I actually got into it. And I realized, as I was also starting a family, that might not be the life for me, and so then I started looking at other options. And once again, I have a very specialized skill that I need to take to market. You know, luckily it was flying airplanes, which was great, versus I loaded ordinance or something like that. But it's a tough market, tough market. Born and raised in Indiana, I wanted to stay here. Not a lot of airlines based out of Northeast Indiana. And so I looked at starting a business. Did that. We've been very successful, very fortunate, very lucky, but it hasn't been easy along the way.

And when you're faced with I need the right candidate for the position, I need the right person. Unfortunately, being a veteran and a college degree, they're about the same. I really need somebody who can do the specific job, don't have a lot of time for training. We don't have some elaborate training program, so I need somebody that can come in and start running right away.

And like I said, it's sad, but it's like that. But as a small business person, it's the truth.

Mr. STUTZMAN. And to follow up on that, do you know how many veterans do you employ currently? And when you're doing interviews, you have the ability to identify with veterans. And as they are doing interviews, is there something that you consistently see and say, as you interview a veteran, this is going—if they were doing an interview—since they're doing an interview with me and I am a veteran, and I understand where they're coming from, if they were doing an interview with someone who wasn't a veteran, this is going to turn that particular person off? Is there something that you see, particularly?

Mr. STRAW. When I'm interviewing a veteran, I understand where they're coming from. I know what is out there. As far as how many veterans we have on staff right now, there's six, and that's current. In previous years we had a gentleman that was National Guard flew helicopters in Michigan at a guard unit out there and that was right around September 11th, and so the whole world changed as we know.

And we had to deal with that. You can't just give up as a small business. This is my income, so we had to find ways to work with him and work around it.

And I'm trying to remember your last question, I'm sorry.

Mr. STUTZMAN. As far as, Mr. Norris mentioned résumé building and we heard that out in Iowa as well. Do you see things that come in on résumés that you would say, you know what, if I were filling out your résumé, I would give you this sort of advice? Do you see that typically on résumés, as a hiring employer, because, as they put their résumés together, is there something that we can do in that transition to help them put résumés together better.

Mr. STRAW. Yes. I think Colonel Tabler elaborated on that a little bit, when you right write a résumé don't just say, I was part of this

unit. That doesn't mean anything to most people, tell the skills that you learned, which might be the technical skill, but also elaborate on the teamwork and things that you do within your unit. Show me those transferable skills because that's the first thing that comes to my mind. Great that you're in this unit or did this. What's it going to do for me.

I hate to sound me-centered but, when you're hiring somebody, that's what you're doing, you're trying to fill a position. I need a candidate that best matches that position, so having somebody help a veteran write a résumé. And nowadays you can't just have a generic résumé. They've got to be very tailored for what job you're looking for.

Generic résumé, for a small business guy, isn't going to do it.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Mr. Dobson, you had mentioned that 30 companies responded to your survey, and you mentioned that one of the major challenges is that businesses do not know where to find available veterans in your testimony. Your 9 members, are they aware of DVOPS, which is Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Specialist, and LVERS, Local Veteran Employment Representatives? Members of your chamber, are they aware of them, and do they have any interaction with those particular entities?

Mr. DOBSON. Great question. Thank you. The larger companies, Fortune 500's, such as Biomet, Zimmer, or DePuy, yes, they would know that. They have the H.R. staff, professional staff. The disconnect kind of follows along Mr. Landram's testimony; that is, about the same number, about 83 percent of our members employ 50 or less. They don't have a specialized H.R. department. They aren't aware of that. That's where I believe, and thank you for asking the question, because that's where I believe a chamber of commerce can become a resource. If we can connect with those same folks, we can get that word out to our members. We serve our members by providing information to them, one of the things we do, by providing information. And if we could do that, I think we can strengthen or we can help in the process. There'll still be some challenges in communication, but we hope we can bridge that gap. I know all of us would want to be able to do that.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Do you have any suggestions or ideas how the state employment services could communicate better through DVOPS, through LVERS, through their tools that they have, whether it's to chambers or to small businesses.

Mr. DOBSON. You know, small businesses are challenged. Mr. Straw has spoken to it well. I used to run one of those myself. Trying to keep the door open, trying to stay on top of things, and you use your trade association or your local chamber as your reference source. There are great trade associations throughout the State of Indiana that can help bridge that gap. Local chambers, the state chamber can help bridge the gap. I would, you know, suggest those folks be in contact with the various trade associations and various chambers and educate us on what they do and how we can help, and then let us start to communicate to our members because our members will respond to that type of information. They'll be very excited to get it.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Colonel Tabler, you mentioned several things that made your transition from the military easy. Any suggestions on the transition assistance program, to improve it.

Colonel TABLER. The transition assistance program actually they have with the military, I think it's on track, but, unfortunately, it's rushed. It's quick, and you'll just get kind of like an opportunity to work a résumé at one time, but you really haven't thought through what you really want to do when you get out of the military. I think in the military transition itself, I think it was fine.

I think the issue was when you get to the community. You just don't know what to do at that point. You know, soldiers are accustomed to showing up in formation, spending time with their non-commissioned officers, giving guidance, giving direction, somebody right there with them to mentor them. So I think it's when they get to their community, that's when they're just really lost. I know when I got to Fort Wayne I was fortunate because I went to work with ITT. I already knew a lot of those guys there because we had worked together on active duty.

But the problem is when they show up at their home towns, they just don't know where to turn. They just don't know what to do. They don't know how to tailor those résumés to make sure that they're talking about the skills that are transferable into the civilian sector. I know, when I got to Fort Wayne, I really wasn't pointed to any type of veteran's office, per se. It was just the other veterans that I worked around that came alongside me.

So I think in the military, it's fine, but that just gets you started. Once you hit the civilian community, you still need some type of mentoring and help.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you.

Mr. BRALEY, I yield to you for questions.

Mr. BRALEY. Let's follow up on that, Lieutenant Colonel Tabler, because after 9/11 one of the biggest problems that was identified was this problem of interoperability, the inability of various response agencies to communicate with each other.

Colonel TABLER. Right.

Mr. BRALEY. On our Subcommittee we hear over and over and over again one of the biggest obstacles for veterans transitioning to the civilian workforce is that they come out of a world of acronyms, which can be a huge asset to you if you're looking for work in the defense industry, which lives and dies with those acronyms.

Colonel TABLER. Right.

Mr. BRALEY. But if you're working for an employer who doesn't have that same culture, it can actually be an obstacle to you in getting employment. And I mentioned in Waterloo, what we need is a Rosetta Stone program for transitioning veterans to understand how to use those same job skills and language in a much different workplace, and I don't see that coming anytime soon.

But you made a comment about how job aptitude coming out of the military is rarely assessed the same way it is going in. When I was in high school a hundred years ago, we took the armed services vocational aptitude battery test. It was mandatory for every high school boy. And it was designed to assess your aptitude for military occupations.

But it seems to me we don't do anything. When you're coming off of active duty or returning from your guard and reserve unit, we don't do anything to assess what your aptitudes are for civilian employment. And it seems to me that may be an area where we can start to focus on helping veterans understand more. Many times they may have been deployed for extended periods, they've been working in the military for a long time and, all of a sudden, their career goals have changed dramatically from when they went in.

So what's your suggestions on how we deal with that?

Colonel TABLER. Well, what would I say is, first of all, there has to be a way of some office, some organization translating those military skills that they have and the language that the civilian sector understands. And I don't know, maybe it's one of the veteran's offices in the Fort Wayne community. But just somebody has to sit down and I guess really do that work to say, okay, you've got leadership skills. You've got certain technical skills.

You've got skills that are great for training other individuals. You've got logistic skills. There's just a whole myriad of things that those soldiers do in the course of their everyday activities. It could be as simple as coming up with a matrix and then, as they see certain jobs that are open, you know, helping them to write résumés that are tailored to those jobs. But there's going to have to be somebody who comes alongside those soldiers when they get back to the community. That's probably one of the veterans affairs offices that should be their first stop, that hands them maybe a little cheater booklet or something that just really coaches and mentors them. Somebody's got to be there in the community, and they have to know that that individual is there, so they can go looking for them. I didn't know of anyone, per se. Now, if I would have Googled the Internet, I would found folks in the Fort Wayne area who could have potentially helped me. But like I said, for myself it was those vets that I worked with on active duty that I went to work with at ITT, so it made it real easy for me. Younger vets don't have any of those types of things available to them.

So there has to be identified a location in cities or towns that those vets know, hey, when you get to such and such a town, go see this person, and then that person needs to be equipped with some materials, some ideas to just help and coach and mentor that young man or woman.

Mr. BRALEY. Thank you. Mayor Handshoe, Semper Fi. One of the things that you testified about went directly back to what Mr. Straw said. Because I think a lot of us were shocked by the comment that your husband heard during that interview. Yet, that is the reality of small business owners in terms of how they're thinking about filling any job position. And it strikes me, we have an enormous educational challenge ahead of us because, as someone whose wife teaches, my mother's 82 years old, she's still substitute teaching in my home town, I have tremendous respect for the role that teachers play in educating the next generation of Americans.

And education isn't just something that happens in a classroom. And if your husband had gotten that job and been deployed, the students he was teaching would have had an enormous opportunity to learn about sacrifice and thinking of someone other than your-

self when you're called to a duty. So I feel badly that we missed that opportunity by him failing to get that job.

Ms. HANDSHOE. Ironically, the high school had him speak for Veterans Day before he left, and all of the students that attended that have hit him on *Facebook* communicated with him since he's deployed on *Facebook* and how much they miss him, thank him for his speech so it's kind of ironic.

Mr. BRALEY. And one of the other things you identified was economic incentives to employers to give them that extra incentive to hire veterans. One of the things that I've done is introduced a bill called Combat Veterans Back to Work Act which is modeled on an existing incentive that was in place in 2010 that gave employers across the country incentive to hire unemployed workers, generally. By giving them a break on the employer's share of FICA, for hiring an unemployed veteran, and then giving them an additional tax incentive if they keep them on the payroll for a year, is that the type of program that you think might be beneficial to hire more unemployed veterans?

Ms. HANDSHOE. I do. Because communities have a toolbox of incentives that they give to a new business starting, tax abatements, whatnot. But to be able to further that with employees, either be it through the state or Federal Government, would just be a plus.

Mr. BRALEY. Right. Mr. Norris, at our hearing in Waterloo, we had three of Iowa's largest employers. One of whom I'm sure you've heard of, Rockwell Collins, which is in the same avionics industry as BAE. And we had John Deere and Principal Financial Group. And one of the things we know is that employers in the defense industry, like your company, have a level of sophistication about hiring veterans that some other businesses, particularly small businesses, don't. So what lessons can you share with us, based on BAE's experience, that could be helpful in mentoring other businesses who lack that sophistication.

Mr. NORRIS. It's a great question. I don't have a lot of visibility into some of the corporate activities that go on in some of the areas you're talking about, but certainly, I am a beneficiary of some of the things like the Wounded Warrior Integration Program I talked about. I think we clearly recognize what these men and women bring to our business and I think it's—I can appreciate what Mr. Straw has said, the difficulty with the small business because with a thousand employees it's little bit easier for us to cover when someone's not there. I do appreciate that.

But I think that it's very important. I want to kind of walk back to one thing I mentioned in my presentation about the out placement service. We talked about résumé building. That's one very small piece. I've probably personally done about 500 interviews in the last 5 years of people coming in. It's really more about the experiences and the interviews. Yes, the résumé's important to get your name out there, but it's really more important, I think, with some of the out placement services, in terms of coaching for interviewing, helping people realize what they bring when they sit down in an interview, and helping them to express that to a team or the person they are talking to across the table.

So I think that's one of the things that we have an advantage, that we can go to out placement companies to help with our own

employees when we have to go through reductions in force. But I certainly see that as a possibility for veterans, as well, to have a service that's more around counseling, not just around résumé building.

The other thing I thought was interesting, when I talked to Bruce, the individual veteran that I just mentioned that we just hired. He networked through his executive officer. He found out about us through that executive officer. So, perhaps, there's more that we can do in terms of networking with current vets that are out there in the workplace. You know, having them work with those individuals coming in. I think Lieutenant Colonel Tabler had mentioned this. I think that's a great way to look at how can we do better with the network of current veterans that are in our businesses today, have them act as mentors and helpers and focusing these people in the right direction so they can get these great jobs. So we would certainly, as a business, love to see some help in that regard, as well, just connect those people with us.

Mr. BRALEY. Let me transition that comment to you, Mr. Straw, because I used to be Chair of the Small Business Contracting and Technology Subcommittee and we worked a lot to try to expand awareness of contracting opportunities with the Federal Government because 90 percent of those contracts are issued to firms inside the beltway around Washington, D.C., and 90 percent of them go to larger companies. And one of our biggest challenges is to try to help small businesses be more competitive through that process. A lot of assistance comes through groups like SCORE, Service Corps of Retired Executives.

What I'm hearing here is we almost need a service corps of retired veterans who can help mentor other people, business owners, people wanting to start a small business, and share experiences of making this transition and doing it successfully.

Mr. STRAW. I agree. And I was also thinking, when Mr. Dobson was talking, how do you reach out to businesses, how do you educate them? Some of the benefits you mentioned I've never even heard of. So how do you do that? Do you go door to door? I think he's right, you go through the local chamber. Small businesses are typically active in their local chamber because they see it as a marketing tool.

They're eager to get anything they can get from them. And if it's something like that that can help give me a competitive advantage of some kind, I'm all for it.

Mr. BRALEY. Well, and I'm glad you mentioned that because there's so many small businesses that fail because of lack of understanding of the world that they're entering. And when you have tremendous resources like we have available online through all of these agencies and programs, to help you learn how to do a good business plan, how to do a financial plan, how to go find mentors who can look over your shoulder. It seems to me we need to do a better job of helping business owners identify resources to help them fulfill the mission that brings us all here today.

Mr. STRAW. Absolutely, absolutely. That's the key, getting the business owners, the people doing the hiring, educated about what things they can have at their disposal to make that process easier.

And if it involves helping a veteran getting a job, I think everybody would agree that would be a winner on both sides.

Mr. BRALEY. I want to direct this last question to you, Mr. Dobson, and to you, Mr. Landram, because you have similar experiences. We've talked about how most veterans, when they are separating, have these strengths going for them; they're highly motivated, they have critical thinking skills, they have experience with creative problem solving, and they have a strong work ethic, and they have experience in teamwork. Now, to most employers those sound like incredibly valuable assets.

Why is it, in your opinions, that we have such a problem making this transition, with great potential employees, to veterans in the workplace.

Mr. DOBSON. That might be a loaded question. Do you want to jump on board.

Mr. LANDRAM. I'll jump on that one first. Well, I think the Lieutenant Colonel here intimated to it earlier. I mean, the business as a workplace is changing very rapidly as we all know. And, you know, if you just take a look at what does a career really consist of and provide for an individual, if you just take \$40,000 a year, and you're going to work 30 years, and do the math, you know, you're putting a nose bed on yourself of \$1.2 million, is what that means. And it goes back to the career preparation. You know, what you mentioned earlier, Congressman, those are all great skill sets. You know, people in general, you know, veterans included, have difficulty translating that to an employer, you know. And people need to be prepped and given those, quote, how-tos. How do I articulate that to an employer; how do I take these credentials on my résumé, these experiences and translate them into a skill conversation that says here's where I am the value added? I mean, no one will argue what military does for self-discipline, initiative, teamwork, leadership, work ethic, integrity, honesty. Nobody will argue that with somebody who has served our country. The point is those are all high corporate values, business values. People just simply need help when they are re-entering the workforce in being able to do that, not just on their résumé, but how do they do that face-to-face with an employer? And I would advocate and support what you're on to. I think that's very good.

Mr. DOBSON. Thank you, Mike. Great comments, and I agree entirely with what he said. That's why I think I testified—or I know I testified that I think, arguably, a former military has a better base for work. These are all desirable qualities, so I think the disconnect then becomes matching the skills to the industries in the community. And the Work One office shared that one of the challenges is quite often, and rightfully so, a veteran wants to return to the home town community and, perhaps, the home town community job market does not match those skill sets. And so we need to counsel to help, perhaps, with some additional training to leverage those skills.

If you were to return to Kosciusko County, Mr. Straw's experience in aviation would be similar to ours. We're not the aeronautical capital of the world, but we can certainly use some advanced machinists. There's a critical need for that in Kosciusko County. There's a critical need for advantaged agricultural folks.

And if these folks who are counseling, as the Lieutenant Colonel talked about, these veteran affairs offices were engaging with folks that have this industry knowledge, we might be able to guide them a little bit better and help them use either the GI Bill that they opt to use once they're done or help them connect with a local Ivy Tech, so they can take those high quality skills learned in the military and convert them and use them in the industry.

It wouldn't make a lot of sense to come back to Kosciusko County and think, I'm going to be become a pilot and I'm going to be able to fly for a major airline. But transportation and logistics are important to us, and there's probably some way that we can turn those skills around and use them in our community. And we want to be that source. We want to be able to help. So thank you for a very good question.

Mr. BRALEY. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you. That concludes this panel. I think one thing I think we can recognize is that all of these witnesses have shown the importance of education and information to the veterans and also the importance of using the GI Bill's education and training benefits, and specifically there is some counseling offered in Chapter 36 of that.

And, Mr. Norris, I appreciate your testimony. You touched on some great points and gave some ideas on communicating those needs that we have.

So I want to say thank you to each and every one of you. At this time you're excused, and we will call up the second panel.

Okay. The second panel is going to consist of Mr. Mark Everson of the Indiana Department of Workforce Development, Mr. Gary Tyler of the Veterans Employment and Training Service, and Lieutenant Colonel Marcus Thomas of the Indiana National Guard. Thank you to each of you gentlemen for being here today, and we will look forward to each of your testimony. And I believe we'll start with Mr. Everson. You'll all be recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. Everson, you're recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENTS OF MARK W. EVERSON, COMMISSIONER, INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, INDIANAPOLIS, IN; GARY TYLER, INDIANA STATE DIRECTOR, VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR; AND LTC MARCUS THOMAS, INDIANA NATIONAL GUARD

STATEMENT OF MARK W. EVERSON

Mr. EVERSON. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Braley, thank you for the opportunity to testify. The Department of Workforce Development manages all state unemployment insurance programs, as well as Federal workforce training programs in Indiana. As such we operate 90 one-stops, as they're commonly called, or here in Indiana Work One centers across the state. Service to veterans is an employment element of both these programs. Indiana's labor force is approximately 3.1 million, down from just over 3.2 million in the summer of 2007. The state's unemployment rate peaked in June 2009 at 10.9 percent. Since that time the unemployment rate has fallen to just below 9 percent.

In January 2010 over 271,000 Hoosiers collected unemployment insurance benefits from either the state or the Federal Government. Since that date, the number of Hoosiers collecting benefits has declined to approximately 115,000 at present. So things are better, but there is still a high level of unemployment which is, of course, a concern to us all.

The 2010 American Communities Survey, or the ACS, conducted by the Census Bureau, estimates that Indiana is home to approximately 469,600 veterans or nearly 10 percent of the adult population. However, almost 200,000 Indiana veterans are over 65, and generally not in the workforce.

Veterans age 18 to 65 total approximately 276,000. According to the ACS the 2010 unemployment rate among Indiana's veterans was 12.4 percent, compared with the total state unemployment rate of 10.7 percent during the same period. Additionally, ACS indicates the education level of Indiana's veterans tends to be higher than that of civilians with the exception of those that have obtained a Bachelor's Degree or higher.

Indiana is committed to providing quality employment services to veterans at its Work One centers. Veterans receive priority service, and most of the centers have an on-site veteran specialist to assist with the employment needs. DWD currently receives funding to employ 62 veteran employment and training staff throughout Indiana. 34 of these positions are the LVERS, mentioned by the chairman already, and 28 of these are the DVOPS. All of the LVERS are required to be veterans. And the DVOPS must be veterans with a service-connected disability.

For all training programs overseen and managed by DWD, eligible veterans are provided with priority service.

Additionally, DWD ensures that veterans are provided with priority service in the job-matching program, meaning in our online web tool, veterans see the postings 24 hours before anybody else gets to see them.

DWD believes that there are four primary challenges veterans encounter regarding employment opportunities. First, veterans have oftentimes been employed in industries among the hardest hit by the economic recession. According to a report issued by the U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee in May of 2011, Post-9/11 veterans are more likely than non-veterans to have been employed in manufacturing, construction, transportation, and other industries that experienced significant job losses during 2008 and 2009.

We agree with this finding. Veterans continue to struggle with securing gainful employment, especially in the manufacturing sector, which in Indiana is down 18 percent from its peak employment in 2007. While veterans from the Guard or Reserve receive statutory protection to retain pre-deployment position on upon completion of their deployment, as has already been mentioned, if an employer's workforce has been downsized due to layoffs, the returning veteran may not always find a job opening upon return.

The second challenge deals with the skills veterans developed while serving in the military and their ability to translate those skills into private sector employment. We have found that some of the skills veterans develop do not always directly correlate to certifications and credentials often required for private employment.

For example, a veteran may have operated heavy equipment and vehicles during his or her service, but does not hold a commercial driver's license that is often a requirement for operating heavy transportation vehicles in private-sector employment.

Additionally, DWD has found that many veterans experience difficulty expressing what specific skills they acquired throughout their service and how these skills transfer to the requirements of private sector job openings. Many veterans are modest about their service and particularly the skills and aptitudes they developed while serving. Although a veteran may have developed and utilized essential job skills, his or her inability to relate those skills to the requirements of a job opening, can lead a hiring manager to not fully appreciate the skills the veteran has to offer.

Third while a veteran is deployed overseas, a number of facets in his or her home life may have changed. Some of these changes can include the birth of a child, the loss of a family member, or even the dissolution of a marriage. In addition, returning veterans may need to locate a place to live, establish bank accounts, locate transportation, and complete many other daily activities for which they may not have been responsible during their period of service. These factors often complicate the job search process which may be given less initial priority by the returning veteran.

Finally, there are an increasing number of veterans returning home with some form of physical or mental disability. With advances in medical care, as you well know, fatalities have declined, but an increasing percentage of veterans return home with a physical disability potentially limiting future employment opportunities.

In addition, there are incidences of mental health issues, including post-traumatic stress disorder among the veteran population returning from abroad. In our experience Indiana employers have displayed a great willingness to provide employment opportunities to veterans who have served the United States. However, some employers may be somewhat cautious in hiring veterans due to concerns about how PTSD or other mental health issues may affect performance in the workplace. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Everson appears on p. 51.]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Tyler, you're recognized for five minutes.

STATEMENT OF GARY TYLER

Mr. TYLER. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Braley. Thank you very much for this opportunity to testify before the Committee about the work we are doing at the Department of Labor to address the important issue of decreasing unemployment for veterans, National Guard, and reservists. We also appreciate the opportunity to discuss the work we are doing in Indiana. With nearly 500,000 veterans in the state it is critical that we provide them with services and support they need to find and obtain good jobs.

Again, my name is a Gary Tyler. I'm the State Director for the U.S. Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service in Indianapolis. I am dedicated to helping our veterans and returning servicemembers achieve the goal. I am accompanied today in the audience by Heather Higgins, my regional adminis-

trator from the ten-state Chicago regional office. I would like to let you know that I am a Vietnam veteran having served with the famous fighting 4th Infantry Division of the United States Army.

The 2010 unemployment rate among Indiana veterans in our data was 9.0 percent compared to the total state unemployment rate of 10.2 percent for the same time period. That differs a little bit from what the commissioner just stated. It depends, frankly, on the cohorts used in measuring at that point in time. I think the bottom line is that the unemployment rate of veterans is higher than the general population. And the unemployment rate of veterans between the ages of 18 to 24 is particularly high.

VETS proudly serves veterans and transitioning servicemembers by providing resources and expertise to assist and prepare them for obtaining meaningful careers, maximize their employment opportunities, and protect their employment rights. We do this through a variety of nationwide programs that are an integral part of Secretary Solis's vision of good jobs for everyone.

I would like to begin by briefly discussing some of the programs, along with other initiatives that assist America's veterans in getting to or back to work and then focus specifically on information that you requested in your invitation.

Our principal program is the Jobs for Veterans State Grant Program. The Jobs for Veterans State Grant Program is the principal program that funds the DVOPS and LVERS that have been referenced today already. Last year the Jobs for Veterans Program provided services to nearly 589,000 veterans, and 201 veterans found jobs. The program in our state is operated by the Indiana Department of Workforce Development.

We also have in our department, Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program. Not every state has a Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, but we do have one in Indiana, operated mainly in the Indianapolis, Marion County area to meet the needs of these homeless veterans and help integrate them into the workforce. VETS administers this program. In the program year 2009 over 14,000 homeless veterans participated in the program through 96 grants, and 8,470 were placed into employment. Data for program year 2010 is not yet available as figures for the fourth quarter are still being verified.

Another program that we have is the Veteran Workforce Investment Program which is not operated in each state, but we do have one in the State of Indiana and operated through the Indiana Department of Workforce Development and provides veteran's services throughout the State of Indiana under this program. In fiscal year 2009 the Veterans Workforce Investment Program was focused to provide training and employment services in green energy occupations as envisioned in the Green Jobs Act of 2007. Nationwide there are currently 22 grants serving over 4,000 veterans in fiscal year 2011. In Indiana training and placement services have been provided to approximately 3,000 veterans statewide through the program since 2002.

We also participate in transition assistant programs with active military bases, as well as with the guard and reserve members to the extent that we can at Camp Attebury in Southern Indiana. Our primary program for assisting individuals with their transitions

from military to civilian workforce is the transition assistance program. VETS provides an employment workshop that is a comprehensive, two-and-a-half-day program during which participants are provided relevant skills and information such as job search techniques, career decision-making processes, and current labor market conditions.

As you know, VETS is currently in the process of redesigning and transforming the transition assistance program and employment workshop. We are creating experiential, effective, and enduring solutions for successful transition from military to civilian life and employment. A new TAP will be based on established best practices and career transition. Last year nearly 130,000 transitioning servicemembers and spouses attended the TAP employment workshop given at one of 270 locations world-wide.

Another endeavor that we've participated in and we're proud of is our connection with the employer community, employer partnerships. VETS is also implementing a new approach to employer outreach which involves pilot programs in partnerships with the private sector including, as mentioned earlier, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Society for Human Resource Management. We do that here in Indiana through the state SHRM, Northeast SHRM, and through various chambers throughout the state. The U.S. Chamber is also scheduled to partner with us with the veterans workshop that we have with Operation Hire A Hoosier Vet Career Fair, our 6th annual career fair that's going to take place next April in Stout Field, Indiana.

Recognizing that we have the red light on at this point, you have our written testimony and the data, and I appreciate this opportunity.

Thank you, gentlemen.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Tyler appears on p. 55.]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you.

Lieutenant Colonel Thomas, thank you for being here.

You're recognized for five minutes.

STATEMENT OF LTC MARCUS THOMAS

Colonel THOMAS. Good morning, Congressman Stutzman, Ranking Member of the panel, also veterans who are here in the audience, as well. I'm Lieutenant Colonel Marcus Thomas, the State Family Programs Director for the Indiana National Guard.

I also have here with me the employment support for the Guard Reserve, Mr. Doug Gibbons.

Well, in reference to the current economic conditions within the State of Indiana, several Indiana National Guard service soldiers and airmen have been impacted by higher unemployment and unemployment. The Indiana National Guard partners with many organizations who stand ready to assist our servicemembers in finding and maintaining quality jobs in today's job market.

Couple facts I'm going to share, according to a recent report from the Civilian Employment Index used by the National Guard Bureau, over 20 percent of our Army National Guard is unemployed across all states and territories.

Indiana Civilian Employment Index shows 12.6 percent; however, we are 61 percent completed on the index with another 39

percent of soldiers yet to be loaded. The Indiana National Guard Employment Coordination Program, of which we've stood up out of Hyde, conducts multiple face-to-face assessments with guard units, soldiers and commanders around the entire state and tracks the unemployment percentage to be closer to 20 percent. Of note, this also includes the recent addition to our high school graduates who are also entering the job market for the very first time this year. We see some of the highest unemployment rates in areas that are hit hardest economically across the state. Places like Elkhart, South Bend, Gary and those kind of areas. The 219th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, which is currently deployed to Iraq, have at least 25 percent of their force projected to return to an unemployment situation. That's about 425 soldiers deployed. About 105 of those have been projected to come back to an unemployment situation.

Four of the five largest Army National Guard states have the highest military unemployment rates or percentages in the Nation those states include Texas, California, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and North Carolina. The Indiana National Guard ranks third overall, and we're the fourth largest guard state with over 14,000 soldiers and airmen in our state. We stood up this employment coordination program and since for the past two and a half years, we have successfully placed over a thousand servicemembers and spouses in jobs across the state. This includes all branches of the military, not just the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard, all servicemembers within Indiana. We actively leverage the combination of education and part-time job employment. We, actually, also leveraged the power of encouraging servicemembers and their families, spouses to maximize the use of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, provide ongoing employment counseling and financial counseling, as well. We have 112 employer partners with almost 400 active jobs available that we're constantly pushing through our social media outlets and our web portals to get servicemembers and families access and make themselves available to apply for those positions. We have actually assisted in over 2,100 résumé writing counseling sessions with our servicemembers across the entire state, matching those specific unique skills that were talked about in previous testimonies with the jobs that are actually out there with our partners. And we provide constant follow up with our community partners and employer partners to make sure those jobs that have been available to our veterans are working out, to make sure that it's a best fit for both our servicemembers and the employers. We coordinate across the state with various types of community programs. The employer support of the guard reserve is a strong partner of ours, as well. Several vocational and vet centers across the state, various types of apprenticeship programs are partners as well. The Indiana Workforce Development office, we work very closely with, as well. We conducted this last year over 20 job fairs specifically for our military and their families, military expos. The annual operation of Hire a Hoosier Veteran with over a hundred employees that show up every year, 25 universities and various veteran service organizations come and support servicemen and their spouses and families who are interested in finding a job.

And then finally, my boss, the Adjutant General R. Martin Umbarger, Adjutant General of the State of Indiana, has taken all these assets to establish this the Employment Coordination Program out of Hyde. There is no additional dollars received from the National Guard Bureau or other Federal funds to set up a program to directly work with each individual servicemember and their family with helping them to find a job. He consistently encourages all employers to consider a veteran for any open position especially the young men and woman who are returning from deployment overseas. And in a recent comment, business leaders across the state of Indiana know and praise the value of employees with military experience. These community leaders want to make sure that our men and women who serve this great state and nation are cared for by partnering up with the community to ensure that jobs are available for those to apply.

Thank you very much.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you very much to all of you for your testimony. I'll begin with a couple of questions.

Mr. EVERSON, given the high level benefits that the current GI Bill has, why do we see many of the younger veterans coming back, needing employment assistance instead of attending school? The benefits that the GI Bill offers are, I believe, very good. Where is the disconnect there? Why do we not see more utilizing it and to their full extent, as well?

Mr. EVERSON. I've not thought about that specific question, but I would try and back up to the whole population. And I wouldn't think it would be that different for veterans. Frankly, when people come into our offices, and obviously the veterans are an important but a small portion of those people, they are extremely interested in a job and a job now. Training and education by definition is it's extending out over a longer period of time. And oftentimes the individual, he or she really wants to get working right away. And what maybe they should do is just what you suggested, they really should be getting more training, but there's often a reluctance to do that, I would say, because you want to get back and you want to get working. And particularly these folks, they've been working as has already been indicated.

Mr. STUTZMAN. And if I understand it correctly, do businesses have the ability to it, obviously, has to be a joint relationship between the serviceman to go to school and to work. But is there any tools within the GI Bill that give them the ability to go to school, and is there a benefit to an employer to employ them while they're going to school at the same time under the GI Bill.

Mr. EVERSON. I don't specifically know the answer to that in terms of the GI Bill. The constraints, though, generally, look, we've got a big manufacturing base here. A lot of this is shift work. There are particular times that somebody comes on, and that's true in lots of businesses. So there's an inherent tension and conflict as was mentioned. I thought the first panel, by the way, was excellent in terms of the range of issues that were covered. Issues are different for big businesses versus small businesses.

Small businesses you got ten employees. It's all hands on deck all the time. And if somebody's off getting training even afternoons or in the evening, it's tough to manage that. And frankly, just the

overall economic difficulties are really what is making the most complex and the most daunting, I would suggest to you.

Mr. STUTZMAN. And I think we see the same thing in the civilian world, as well, with adult education.

Mr. EVERSON. Yes.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Transitions that we're seeing within our economy, the global competition that we face. Things are moving constantly. But we do want to utilize and make sure that our men and women that are coming out of the military, I mean, utilize those benefits in the GI Bill as much as possible.

Mr. EVERSON. We certainly point them in that direction if that's appropriate. But again, each case has got a complicated set of issues for the individual, the family. We talked about the disabilities. Approximately, we think, about one in seven of the veterans who come through to see us have a disability and one-third of those have a serious disability. So all of this sort of plays together. And if you want to lay training on top of it, that can be a logistical challenge for the individual.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Could you talk a little bit about the work that's being done at Work One centers across the state. And, obviously, you are providing education and training. But as far as veterans coming into Work One facilities, can you kind of walk us through what you see and hear.

Mr. EVERSON. Sure. I think that, again, we give the vets priority which means, even when they just come in, if there's a queue or in terms of, as I talked about, the job board that we have. The dedicated resources that were mentioned earlier, and then by Mr. Tyler, that's a great help because that's a dedicated resource. That means that the individual is not in competition, if you will, with other Work One personnel, so they get the direct care and feeding of that individual.

The other thing that happens that I think makes this program a model frankly is those individuals are all vets themselves. They've got good contacts into the communities. They know the voluntary agencies that are working in this space, and they can make those referrals. They know the network. So I think this is a pretty—when I compare this to the average individual who has suffered a layoff, I think the vets, because of this dedicated resource and the direct ties that our folks have to the rest of the community and back into the guard or into the veterans administration, all of that works pretty well. The tough thing, though, as we said, is all these complex challenges that these individuals face and, again, the overall economy.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Mr. Tyler, one of the primary responsibilities of DVOPS and LVERS is outreach into the employment community and into businesses. Can you give us an idea, there seems to be a disconnect between a lot of, specifically, smaller businesses. But we heard from the first panel, and we constantly hear this, that there seems to be a lack of information and what is available. Can you tell us a little bit about what are the DVOPS and LVERS doing to get that information out to businesses, chambers, other entities.

Mr. TYLER. Yes, sir. And that question may also want to be addressed by Commissioner Everson in that the structure of the Indiana Department of Workforce system is such that the LVERS in

the Work One employment service system work and are members of what are called business services or business solutions teams, so that they are integrated as part of the overall business services and employment outreach efforts on the part of the individual one stop workforce centers throughout the state.

And there is a concerted effort on the part of these LVERS to go out and meet with the various chambers of commerce. They engage in seminars with the chambers of commerce. We oftentimes see human resource professionals who are representing their companies come to those venues. We are oftentimes invited to participate in those. And not only does it give us an opportunity, as the Veterans Employment Training Service, to bestow the virtues of a veteran, you know, the 10 reasons to hire a veteran, but also affords us the opportunity to talk about employer and company responsibilities and USERRA and re-employment matters.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Mr. Everson, would you like to comment?

Mr. EVERSON. I guess one comment I was going to make sort of gets at all this. There is a distinct difference between large employers and small employers. 62 people, that's a fair number of folks doing this work. It's dedicated, it's effective, but it has its limits. You're not going to be reaching out to somebody who's got 30 employees unless you have a specific lead that says, geez, that fella's going to be great with veterans. There's just too much traffic going through there.

So I thought Mr. Dobson's comments were very interesting in terms of working with the Chamber. We work very closely with the Chamber at the state level. I think that's an opportunity for more communication.

The other point I would make here that I think underlies all of this were the comments by the mayor. And I think Secretary Gates has made much the same comment in terms of the disconnect between the Nation and the military at this stage of our country's evolution. Because of the reasons that the Lieutenant Colonel mentioned, we've got the fourth largest guard. We have a high penetration of veterans, I think the situation here, in terms of appreciation of the role of the military is probably rather more positive than in many parts of the country.

Nevertheless, that's a real challenge now with the war fatigue and this disconnect between service by a few or some and not participation by others. So that's another piece in here that just makes this tougher in addition to all the traffic we have with these busy offices.

Mr. STUTZMAN. What can you just tell us, in general, and some specifics, if you can think of them, about the 3,000 unemployed Hoosier veterans, what they're dealing with, what they're looking for, some of the experiences they have.

Mr. EVERSON. When I visited our offices, I think that they do not stand out in terms of their approaches or their problems. If somebody's unemployed, they're unemployed, and they're all looking for the same thing. What the vets have, I think, we sort of got to that at one point on the earlier panel, what they've got, what you mentioned, Congressman, they've got the great soft skills, was what we call them. As I travel around meeting with employers across the state, sure there's a technical skills gap that gets talked about

again and again here. That plays here. That does play because, as I mentioned before, vets don't necessarily match up on the technical skills exactly. You've got to bridge that gap. But I think that we probably don't do enough to emphasize the soft skills, the leadership skills, the desire to get to work on time, to be a part of a team. They can take criticisms.

If you talk to major employers and smaller employers, as I do, they'll tell you they have a lot of attrition. One of the great challenges of this economy right now is, despite the high rates of unemployment, we have many jobs that go unfilled because employers have a great deal of difficulty finding someone who has those life skills, those soft skills, that motivation to do work, and sometimes to do pretty tough work in some of the factories or other areas.

And I think the vets braid out very well in all those areas. It's just a question of making the connections and then selling them, if you will.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Lieutenant Colonel, final question: You mentioned you had 20 job fairs. What kind of success have you had with those? Could you elaborate a little bit more on those.

Colonel THOMAS. My understanding is we're averaging about a 50 percent placement rate across the entire state. These are very tough decisions that families have to make because these jobs are all over the state. In some cases they require a decision to pick up and move to where the job is. So through counseling, through our on-staff joint family services support professionals that counsel with these families and our servicemen and women to make decisions, because sometimes it's not just getting a job, but it often includes maybe picking up and moving, as well. We're experiencing about a 50 percent placement rate across the entire state.

I would say also, sir, that as we talk about veterans, I'm here representing the National Guard even though we work with all branches of the military in our state. Inside the veteran population, the National Guard servicemen and women and the Air National Guard, these are men and women who are from within the community, started in the community, may have deployed, come back to the community. All the skills deficit we talked about veterans not having, many of our guardsmen have all of these skills. They are teachers, and they are elected officials, and they are firemen, and they have vast amounts of skills. And so as I look at the veteran population, unemployment impact on our veteran population, it impacts the National Guard soldier as well, but the skill deficit, I wouldn't think that it's equally distributed across because these are men and women, both Reserve and reserve component, that started out in the community, deployed, and may come back to the community as professionals and as laborers, and what have you.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Braley.

Mr. BRALEY. Lieutenant Colonel, let's follow up on that conversation. I come from a state that has no military bases, so most Iowan's contact with the sacrifices being made on our behalf comes through the Iowa National Guard. And we've talked a lot about the impact of combat deployments on the employability of the Guard and Reserve, but I want to get a little bit more specific.

And I don't know if I just have bad luck, but this has been my fifth year in congress. When I was sworn in on January of 2007, the Iowa National Guard was part of the longest combat deployment of any unit in Iraq. And in less than a month after I was sworn, we had one of the worst ice storms in our state's history that left 500,000 people without power and the Guard was there.

Colonel THOMAS. Yes, sir.

Mr. BRALEY. During the 2008, demobilization from Iraq, welcome home ceremonies. We had the worst tornado in the United States in my district and a week later the worst flooding in our state's history, and the Guard was there.

In 2010, we have more severe flooding, and we have the largest deployment of our Guard since World War II to Afghanistan.

In 2011, we have all the demobilization and welcome home ceremonies at the same time the Missouri River is in the longest sustained flood in the history of this country, and the Guard was there. So we know the concept of weekend warriors is a myth in the way our current military engages the Guard and Reserve.

How do those type of strains combined impact the ability of somebody to keep a job when they're being called away all the time or to get a job when they're employer is aware that all of those things have been happening.

Colonel THOMAS. I think that first recognizes or underscores the value of the National Guard in your state and in all states and territories. I would say that through partnerships, like with the employment support of the Guard Reserve, the ESGR program, we cannot sustain our National Guard employment percentages from climbing even higher without those types of solid partnerships. So if it wasn't for the great work that the ESGR Program does with helping employers understand that these are conditions outside of your employee's issue at this point—and so it's through solid partnerships, understanding, working, bridging strategies to ensure that the servicemen and women, the Guardsmen can go and do it's job or do his or her job and come back. It's through partnerships. It's through partnerships.

And it's recognizing employers who are going the extra mile also. And so as a commander, what I tell my soldiers often is I need for you to help me recognize your employers for the great job and sacrifice that they're also making on behalf of this great state and our Nation. And so there are all kinds of awards that we have, and opportunities we have to recognize their sacrifice, as well. But it's a partnership effort.

Mr. BRALEY. Well, and I'm glad you brought that up because I went down to Camp Shelby as part of the pre-deployment train up with the Iowa National Guard before they went to Afghanistan. And while I was there it was in the middle of a Boss Lift program that brought a lot of Iowa employers that were in ESGR down to observe their training to get a better sense of what they were doing and the risk that they would be taking while they were sent overseas.

In your experience do programs like that help educate employers about the value and importance of hiring employees who are going to be called up and missing from work?

Colonel THOMAS. Absolutely, sir, absolutely. Without those kind of programs, our employers know—I think on the first panel there was discussion about employers not really knowing how to even engage the military community, the veteran community in this community. So when the guard reaches out to its employer population and brings them into training opportunities, Boss Lift opportunities, it's for the specific purpose to educate these employers about what these servicemen and women are going through. And without those kinds of programs, it's hard for them to understand and appreciate. And I think stronger relationships are built from those kinds of programs and creativity to better support our vets. And it allows certain types of organizations who decide to even support even on greater level, maybe even financially to help a service-members who's going through tough financial times to give back to that effort, as well. So just as employers are seeking to support their employee and the military, they're also seeking in some cases to go a little bit extra because they recognize the sacrifice, but we pull them in through those kind of programs. It's very, very beneficial.

Mr. BRALEY. Mr. Everson, when my father came home from Iwo Jima there was no diagnostic category known as post-traumatic stress disorder. He died in 1980, and 11 years later I learned for the first time that he saw one of his best friends vaporized by a shell burst on Iwo Jima and suffered from what we now know as post-traumatic stress disorder. And I know that because he went through two severe bouts of depression when I was in high school and college. And I can tell you the people in my family know who came and struggled with us during that period, and we know who didn't.

And you were good enough to raise the issue of PTSD as a factor in the employability of many combat veterans, and it's something we talk about a lot in Washington.

Mr. EVERSON. Right.

Mr. BRALEY. And I was at the hearing at Walter Reed when General Shoomaker said, very publicly for the first time, PTSD is real. And I thanked him because of my personal background.

Mr. EVERSON. Right.

Mr. BRALEY. But we still have a huge knowledge gap in this country. There is still a huge stigma associated with a diagnosis of PTSD.

Mr. EVERSON. Right.

Mr. BRALEY. And we have lot of veterans with what is called mild traumatic brain injury, which sounds like it ain't that bad, but can have profound impact on their ability to get and hold a job.

Mr. EVERSON. Right.

Mr. BRALEY. So what should we be doing to help educate potential employees who are veterans who may be suffering from PTSD and TBI, and what should we be doing to help educate their employers about the type of accommodations they may need and they deserve because of the sacrifice they've made for us.

Mr. EVERSON. This is such a tough issue, and I'm not sure that I have any easy answers, but we see it in our centers. And if we have a vet who's coming in, he may choose to sit in the back of the room to be participating in a training class. We sensitize all of our

people to signals or just making sure they're not overly arbitrary as sometimes bureaucrats can be and really work with the folks in a way that is sensitized, let's say, to this issue. I just think that this is something where the country is evolving and that we just—the reason I put it in there is just, as you said, because I think it needs discussion and prominence and education.

That's about all I can say, sir.

Mr. BRALEY. Well, thank you. One of the things you also mentioned in your testimony was the impact in Indiana since 2007 manufacturing being down 18 percent.

Mr. EVERSON. Yes.

Mr. BRALEY. Well, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in the last decade we have lost 54,000 manufacturers nationwide, manufacturers not employees. So when I'm back in Waterloo, I'm privileged to have about half of John Deere's world-wide production in my district. And a lot of my veteran friends are people who worked in those factories coming out of Vietnam, coming back from World War II and Korea.

Mr. EVERSON. Right.

Mr. BRALEY. Those opportunities don't exist the same way that they used to, do they.

Mr. EVERSON. No, they don't. This gets a little out of my lane, so I don't want to be brushed back by the Governor later if I've said something that's out of my channel. But nevertheless, in terms of economic policy, I think it's absolutely essential that the country and the Congress emphasize manufacturing because it creates jobs.

Mr. BRALEY. I agree with you.

Mr. EVERSON. I'm going to live in a home in Indianapolis. I've got a condo. I can rent that. I can own that. They're not moving where I live to China. But you can move a lot of those manufacturing facilities to China, so we should be doing everything we can to incent manufacturing and activities like that that are good strong jobs through things like the R and D credit. Recognition I would suggest to you, again, we talk here about the differentiation between big and small employers. Small employers have taken it particularly hard during this recession emphasizing things that are of value to small employers I think is of great importance as you both operate as members beyond the jurisdiction of the veterans community.

Mr. BRALEY. Well, and the reason why that's important, I agree a hundred percent with you, that when we talk about our manufacturing policy in this country, we have to understand it has a huge impact on veterans because many veterans work in manufacturing facilities.

Mr. EVERSON. Absolutely.

Mr. BRALEY. And the other thing we forget is that there are a lot of parts suppliers, small manufacturers around Waterloo, Iowa that produce component parts for John Deere and also produce component parts for the automotive industry and Detroit, and those are small businesses, many of them, and so this all tends to come back together.

Mr. EVERSON. Yes.

Mr. BRALEY. But the reason we're here today is not to talk about a broader economic policy, but how these things combined together impact the employability of veterans.

Mr. EVERSON. I agree with you a hundred percent; however, you've got to fix the whole to fix this part. The veterans are not going—you're just not going to construct something where the veterans are going to get jobs, and nobody else is going to get jobs.

Mr. BRALEY. Absolutely. And I don't think veterans are asking for that.

Mr. EVERSON. And I'm not suggesting they are.

Mr. BRALEY. Mr. Tyler, I wanted to talk to you just briefly about your Homeless Vets Reintegration Program. That's another one of those things that we like to push off into the corner and not think about because it makes us feel uncomfortable but the reality is we have far too many homeless veterans in this country. And one of the factors can be if you don't have a job, it's hard to have a home. And a lot of times that's when families break down, is because of the lack of economic security. What's been your experience with that and how does that relate to what we're talking about here today.

Mr. TYLER. Yes, homelessness is a national concern.

Many of the homeless individuals also have been, you know, incarcerated. That's part of the problem, too. Finding employers that are willing and ready to commit time and resource to working, you know, with a homeless person or a person who is educationally or economically, you know, disadvantaged in that particular state is an issue.

We've worked quite closely with the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority on the state Homeless Planning Commission. We've worked with the Indy Connect Annual Fair which we bring together at the Indianapolis, Indiana Convention Center with various groups and offer multiple services for a homeless person. The concern for a homeless person, whether they're a veteran or not, is of a comprehensive nature. You know, they're dealing with probably a personal concern with alcoholism, perhaps drug abuse. Oftentimes, they have lost their driver's license. You know, they may have been suffering for years, Vietnam veterans, with post-traumatic stress disorder and not know it and have a problem getting to the VA, no transportation. You know, they're separated from their families. So it's important to avail multiple services, wrap-around services for veterans or any individual in a homeless situation, and to do as much as we can to prevent homelessness, to catch and do what we can with, perhaps, financial management, with some kind of economic assistance. You know, when folks are borderline, they're not able to make their house payments, to be able to intervene, as soon as possible, in those kind of endeavors, also affording them with some type of legal assistance, okay, that can overcome a particular barrier that is posing as a challenge for them to really get a job.

Mr. BRALEY. Thank you.

I yield back.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you. As Mr. Everson and Mr. Braley started to talk economic policy I was about ready to loosen my tie and order pizza. We could be here probably the rest of the day.

Mr. EVERSON. I'm sorry, I apologize.

Mr. STUTZMAN. No, no, because it is all intertwined.

Mr. EVERSON. It is.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Specifically with veterans, the economy and policies that we have broadly across the country do affect this issue, very much so.

Mr. Tyler, I did have one question and I want to go back to something that Mayor Handshoe said earlier, and she talked about her husband's situation and how he was denied employment.

Mr. TYLER. Yes.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Would you see that as a violation of USERRA.

Mr. TYLER. Yes, yes. As it appears, yes.

Mr. STUTZMAN. What are you doing under the forces.

Mr. TYLER. What we're trying to do, we work quite closely—of course, in Indiana we're fortunate to have a very close relationship with the Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve for the Indiana community. Servicemembers, particularly those returning to their jobs, who believe they may have a problem, you know, on the job or getting back to their position that they left prior to deployment, you know, we encourage them to touch base with the employment services for the guard and reserve, to contact that employer toward arriving at a resolution.

There's always education that is needed, you know, at some level, at some level throughout, you know, the employer or the company.

We try to avail ourselves to as many forums and opportunities of chambers of commerce to talk about their responsibilities under the law but to also, in so doing, let them know that, as a Federal official myself, as an investigator, a USERRA investigator, that we understand, different from when I was in Vietnam, served 365 days and came home, that today's servicemembers are deploying on multiple occasions, and that is rough on, particularly, the smaller industries. So in addition to, you know, trying to educate, trying to participate in various forums in which we can talk with the employers, we also want them to understand that, while we recognize, you know, that they support, you know, protection of our country, and that they will give time off, you know, to their employees to participate in drills and to go off overseas that, you know, we understand that it is a strain. They have those responsibilities, but we want to be able to talk and communicate. Oftentimes, as a regulator, it is difficult, you know, for us to get before the employer community.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you. And I want to thank you as a panel for being here today. I know you have a tough job, but we are counting on you and all that you do. We want to thank you though for your service, as well. This completes our hearing. I just want to say to Indiana's veterans that the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman, Jeff Miller from Florida, has challenged us and has a goal to reduce veteran employment to 5 percent or less. I know it's a tall order, but it's a goal I think that is worthy and one that, hopefully, we can be successful at and that we'll see better economic times for all of us.

I want to also mention too last week our colleague who serves on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Tim Walz from Minnesota, had a bill that passed the House of Representatives that finally recognizes the contributions of our Guard and our Guard Reservist retirees as veterans. Who would have thought? I didn't even realize that until he brought that forward, but I think it's very well de-

served and want to thank all our veterans in every branch of the military.

And then, finally, I saw her here earlier, I don't know if she's still here, but Tina Acosta was here a little bit ago, and she is with Turnstone Center here in Fort Wayne. And she testified in front of our committee.

Tina, there you are. Hi. Thanks for being here.

But she testified in our committee regarding the U.S. Paralympic program and the work that they do at Turnstone, and she shared a story of a special person who's here with us today, I believe, Tim Leonard. And he is from Fort Wayne. And he returned home without the use of his legs. But he has been successful as an athlete and he has qualified for the Midwest Valor games, and he is Indiana's one representative, I believe. And so we are very proud to have him here with us today. Look forward to shaking your hand.

Are you a shot putter?

Mr. LEONARD. Just one question. I already went to the Midwest games, I've already placed gold. It's the veterans games next summer that I've just also qualified for.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Congratulations. Thank you. Are you a shot putter.

Mr. LEONARD. Shot putter and powerlifter.

Mr. STUTZMAN. I was going to say, that arm looks big. Congratulations. We are very, very proud of you, and we wish you the very best of success.

So with that, I want to thank Congressman Braley. I had a great tenderloin in Cedar Falls, Iowa. I saw King Gyros had a special on tenderloin, feel free to stop by there. Thank you for being here. And do you have any closing comments?

Mr. BRALEY. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. It was an honor for me to be here in Indiana today, and I'm going to say something shocking. Chairman Stutzman and I are good friends. He's a Republican. I'm a Democrat. When I found out I was going to have the honor of working with him on this committee, the first thing I said to him is what can I do to help you be successful because, when it comes to serving our Nation's veterans, there is nothing that should be more non-partisan than helping our veterans in every way that we can, and that's why I am so proud to serve with him. I like Marlin. I think he likes me, and, you know, I think that you rarely see that on TV these days. And it happens a lot more than you think. And I think if we did more hearings like this and spent more time outside Washington talking to real people whose lives are impacted by the policies we set, we'd all be better off. And I'm just very honored to be here with you today. So thank you.

Mr. STUTZMAN. I want to thank you, Mr. Braley, as well.

And I do like him. And I think that he and I both have an understanding that the challenges that we face as Americans aren't Republican problems or Democrat. They're American problems, and we have to address them as Americans because the rest of the world wants to have what we have, and that is they also want to destroy our way of life. There are also those who do want to destroy our way of life. We need to protect America because we do live in the greatest nation.

I just want to say I ask unanimous consent that members have five legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks. Hearing no objection, ordered.

Once again, thank you for coming. Thank you to each of you on the panel for your testimony. Thank you again to our veterans, and this concludes the Committee hearing.

[Whereupon, at 12:15 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

Prepared Statement of Hon. Marlin Stutzman, Chairman, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

Good morning. Usually when we hold hearings, we are sitting in Washington. Today, I am delighted to be here in Fort Wayne. Northeast Indiana is home to 48,000 veterans. These men and women have served our Nation with honor, and it is my honor to serve as their voice in Congress on the House Veterans Affairs Committee. In Chairing the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, I have the opportunity on working on veterans employment and education issues alongside the Ranking Member of this Subcommittee, the Honorable Bruce Braley, who represents Iowa's First Congressional District. Earlier this week he hosted me in Waterloo, Iowa where we were able to hear from many Iowa veterans. I am happy to introduce him to you today and welcome him to Fort Wayne.

Ft. Wayne has a long history beginning with settlements by Native Americans in the area followed by a fort built by General Mad Anthony Wayne in the 1790s. Since then, Ft. Wayne has played an important role in Indiana's history and is known for its manufacturing, education, insurance, health care, logistics, and defense and security. Ft. Wayne has been named an All American City on three occasions, most recently in 2009.

We are here today to hear from Hoosiers about the employment difficulties facing far too many members of the Indiana National Guard, the Reserves, and those returning from active duty. While the unemployment rate for all Indiana veterans in September was 6.9 percent, data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show that 35.6 percent of America's Gulf Era II veterans ages 20 to 24 were unemployed, while 8.8 percent of Gulf Era II veterans ages 25-54 were unemployed.

More shocking is anecdotal information that as much as 30 percent of returning members of the Guard and Reserves do not come home to a job. Clearly, we need to find ways to reduce all of those numbers. The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs has taken a first step toward that end last week by passing H.R. 2433, a bill that would provide up to a year of GI Bill benefits to unemployed veterans between the ages of 35 and 60. The bill now goes to the Senate and we hope to get the bill to the President by Veterans Day along with several other improvements to veterans benefits.

I want to take a moment to explain that this meeting is a formal hearing to be inserted into the official Congressional record. In keeping with the standard protocol of official committee hearings, we will not be taking questions from the audience during the hearing. I am pleased so many of you are here today and I look forward to speaking to you, answering questions, and listening to your comments and concerns after the conclusion of this hearing in the main hallway.

Again, I am delighted to be with you today and I will now yield to the gentleman whose office is next to mine, the distinguished Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, my good friend, the Honorable Bruce Braley.

Prepared Statement of Hon. Bruce L. Braley, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

I would like to thank Chairman Stutzman for inviting us to the great state of Indiana. Great to be in the Midwest where the genuine people remind me of being back in my home state of Iowa. We are honored to be able to hear firsthand the concerns of hard working Americans and heroes who sacrifice so much for our country. We have a great list of people providing testimony and I look forward to hearing from your constituents and how we can help improve conditions for all our Nation's veterans.

Today's field hearing will provide us the opportunity to review existing programs that help veterans secure employment; discuss recruiting and retention tools; and review barriers to employment.

I hope our panelists will provide insight into the shortfalls of Federal and state programs while providing specific recommendations for us to consider to help improve veteran employment. I know that we have a poor economy but our veterans have acquired first rate skills that should be highly sought after by employers. We need to help our veterans translate their experiences and help employers understand the value of these skills. Hiring veterans is a win for the employer because they get a top notch employee with a strong sense of dedication and a win for the community because it decreases veteran unemployment.

Let me be very clear, we have been and remain committed to getting our Nation's veterans back to work. This is not a VA issue, or a local issue, it is a national issue that demands our attention right now. This is why we have come together in a bipartisan manner and pledge to work to address the employment needs of our Nation's veterans.

I want to thank everyone for being here today and I look forward to hearing today's testimony.

Mr. Chairman, Thank you for having us here in Indiana and I yield back.

Prepared Statement of Hon. W. Suzanne Handshoe, Mayor, Kendallville, IN

Congressman Stutzman,

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today to discuss the very important issue of Veterans employment.

I would like to share some of my own experiences both good and bad and those of family members.

First, I am a retired Marine Corps Chief Warrant Officer Four. When I returned to Kendallville after Desert Storm the economy was weak and jobs were not easy to find. I found a job as a temporary at Kraft foods while I worked on my degree.

During the mid 1990's while an active Marine Corps Reservist and Desert Storm Veteran, I applied for a position as a case worker with the Department of Family and Children. During the interview process I was asked if I had to attend any training that would require me to be absent. I explained that I would be gone for a minimum of 2 weeks training usually in the summer months and occasionally maybe longer to attend educational requirements of my rank.

I was flatly told that it would be unfair to the other members of the staff to pick up my case load for 2 weeks plus 2 weeks of vacation. It just wouldn't be fair.

Needless to say I did not get the job.

The North East Indiana Special Education Cooperative hired me because I was a Marine. The Executive Director was a former Marine and felt I could handle any challenge he threw my way. When I was activated in 2003 for Operation Enduring Freedom, as a Casualty Assistance Officer, they held my position and were extremely supportive of not only me but my family.

As Mayor, we have had a Councilman deploy twice in the past few years to Afghanistan and Iraq. We supported him in any way we could during his absence. We also had a Firefighter activated for duty in Afghanistan. Obviously his position was held and welcomed him back to our ranks upon his return. The City of Kendallville was recently awarded the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve "Above and Beyond Award" for our support shown to our military members.

A great story of patriotism is my brother in law he is employed by Graphic Packaging in Kendallville. He joined the Army due to the events of September 11th and served for 5 years with 3 combat tours. When he was Honorably Discharged, Graphic Packaging not only gave him his job back, they gave him the 5 years seniority of his service time.

Shouldn't we be recognizing or rewarding companies who follow these actions?

Last year my husband, Randy Handshoe interviewed for a teaching position at a Middle School, the panel looked at his resumé and commented that he was in the Navy Reserve. He answered "that is correct". One of the members then asked "Does this mean you could be deployed?" He responded with "yes, every person that wears a uniform has this risk". The next comment was, "Where would that leave us"? Needless to say he was not hired.

Randy did receive orders several months later and was called to duty December 26th 2010 and is still serving as a Chief Petty Officer with the Staff Judge Advocates office in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

What is troubling to me is that he will return at Christmas with no job, and he holds a Bachelor's Degree in Education.

I'm certain that I have other constituents that are having trouble finding work, or worse, not being offered work because they are reservists who have seen multiple deployments or the threat exists they will be called to duty.

As the war continues it is no longer fashionable to support our military members. Perhaps some consideration should be given to incentivize companies through tax credits, who do hire Veterans.

Respectfully.

**Prepared Statement of Mark A. Dobson, President, Warsaw-Kosciusko
County Chamber of Commerce, Warsaw, IN**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The attached document reflects the information obtained by the Warsaw-Kosciusko County Chamber of Commerce in relation to Veteran's Unemployment. Nearly 30 businesses and a local College contributed to the information obtained. The consistent messages heard from businesses regarding barriers to employing veterans were:

- ECONOMIC CONSTRAINTS CAUSED BY A SAGGING ECONOMY
- LACK OF BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT WITH MILITARY
- TRANSITIONAL TRAINING FOR VETERANS

There are rolls and responsibilities for all of us in resolving this issue. Chambers of Commerce across the Country are an invaluable resource to help solve the challenge. A higher level of engagement by interested parties is needed to ensure that Veterans are seen as the very valuable employment resource they are. The testimony given today will outline a few steps we believe will help break down barriers for our Country's brightest and best.

Good Morning. Congressman Stutzman & Honorable members in attendance today—thank you for holding this Congressional Sub-Committee hearing in Ft. Wayne. That you hold this hearing shows our Veterans how much America values their service to our Country. I am humbled and honored to be here to speak on this most important issue.

The issue of Veterans' Unemployment is one that distresses all of us. Our Country's brightest and best have given of themselves so that we may continue to enjoy the freedoms granted to us by our forefathers. They have stepped forward and heeded the call to duty. For that we are all grateful. And so now we are compelled to do all we can to ensure Veterans take their rightful place in the private sector.

The dichotomy here is that Veterans desire no special treatment. They do not wish to have opportunity handed to them. They, more than any of us in the room, understand what America stands for. They will carve a significant path in society. It is our duty to help break down any barriers and help our Veterans transition to the private sector.

With these thoughts in mind I contacted businesses in Kosciusko County to gain a deeper understanding of the barriers and challenges of hiring Veterans. Input was received from nearly 30 businesses. Additionally Grace College's Assistant Registrar/Veterans Services Officer provided invaluable information that helped form the basis of my testimony today.

The consistent feedback received from our Business Community is the gratefulness for the Veterans military service. All expressed their appreciation for our Veterans. Additionally, comments indicated that many companies value the specialized training obtained in the military. They value the discipline and level of responsibility that a former serviceman displays on the job.

So, we dug deeper to understand why there is an unemployment issue. I believe it breaks down into three main categories:

- ECONOMIC CONSTRAINTS CAUSED BY A SAGGING ECONOMY
- LACK OF BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT WITH MILITARY
- TRANSITIONAL TRAINING FOR VETERANS

The Economic Constraints are reflected by the state of our economy today. Sustained unemployment continues to be near historical highs. Additionally, the uncertainty of the economy has companies putting off hiring decisions until there is a clear direction which way we are headed. In a climate where unemployment aver-

ages over 9 percent, job seekers see greater competition for any available opening. Arguably the training received in the military is a competitive advantage. But that advantage is diminished by the large number of people seeking the same job.

The Private Sector's engagement with the military is an additional challenge. Businesses do not have Knowledge of the availability of Veterans. Or the contact points to know where to find available Veterans. They don't know when a Vet will be available for employment. When a deployment ends, or a Veteran retires, the private sector is unaware of their availability. Or the notice comes after significant hiring decisions have been completed.

Finally, another consistent comment was that while Veterans' training is excellent, the transitional skills are not up to par. Quite often Veterans need assistance with résumé Development, Interviewing Skills, & Transitional Job Training. Some military functions are easily relatable to their civilian counterparts. It is easy to understand what skills a Military Aircraft Mechanic might bring to the table. But some Military duties are hard to translate to the private sector. If the job description from the military has one "blowing up stuff", the private sector employer may not understand how they can use those same skills.

So what can we do to help? The United States has transitional programs available to their Veterans—but we can all do more:

- I. The Post-9/11 GI Bill is a wonderful program to help transition Veterans to the private sector. However, how much more effective would that program be if there was engagement with Community Development entities. Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Agencies, WorkOne's and other entities charged with community development are the best resources for understanding the job market in a particular community. As an example, our Chamber maintains a jobs database, has a partnership arrangement for assisting with placement of trailing spouses, and routinely surveys the business community to understand what skills are needed in the workforce. So, if one were to characterize the needs in Kosciusko County, there is a strong need for advanced production workers, skilled machinists, advanced welding, and bio-engineers. We are the Orthopedic Capital of the World, home to the largest screen manufacturer in the world, and are one of Indiana's most productive agricultural regions. Think of what a useful resource we can be for those who counsel Veterans on what skills they should train for with their GI Bill for jobs in Kosciusko County. We recommend that those engaged in transitioning Veterans become involved with entities such as ours at a greater level.
- II. Advance communications with entities such as the local Chambers when deployments are ending—or there are significant numbers of Veterans returning to our community. The sooner we can communicate with our local businesses, the better prepared the business community will be to assist with employment issues. I acknowledge this is a challenge. The military doesn't want to divulge when troops will be leaving a region. But businesses make large hiring decisions up to a year in advance. Better lead times mean a better chance that businesses will look to the pool of returning Vets as potential hires.
- III. The U.S. Chamber has launched the Hiring Our Heroes initiative. This initiative is a commitment by the U.S. Chamber & Local Chambers throughout the Country to connect 100,000 veterans and their spouses to jobs through local Chambers in 100 communities throughout the Country. Our Chamber will be hosting such a job fair in early 2012. So, we should ask, how strong is the relationship between those who help Veterans transition to the private sector & the Chambers of Commerce throughout the United States? Are Chambers looked to as a resource for those involved with Veteran transition as a resource to help? Chambers exist because we serve our members. One of the most important things we do is engage on Workforce issues.

I want to thank this committee for hearing testimony today. As I said before, I am honored to speak on this issue. Simple words of appreciation cannot express the gratitude I feel for those who chose to protect our freedoms. I was taught that actions speak louder than words. It is only through action can we all truly express our gratitude to those who have defended our freedoms.

Respectfully submitted.



Prepared Statement of Michael S. Landram, President and Chief Executive Officer, Greater Fort Wayne Chamber of Commerce, Fort Wayne, IN

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Mike Landram. I am President and CEO of the Greater Fort Wayne Chamber of Commerce. We are the third largest Chamber in Indiana with over 1700 members who do a total of \$18 billion of business in over 750 industries in Northeast Indiana.

The Greater Fort Wayne Chamber of Commerce is very involved in veteran's affairs issues. In addition to having veteran-owned businesses as members, we are heavily engaged in advancing the defense industry in northeast Indiana.

Like the rest of the country, we are acutely aware of the employment struggles veterans are faced with. We have a unique insight into that issue due to the large National Guard base in Fort Wayne. We are in regular communication with the base on issues facing their Guardsmen and are actively pursuing programs to fight unemployment among veterans.

The Greater Fort Wayne Chamber of Commerce is a charter member of the Northeast Indiana Defense Industry Association Board (NIDIA). NIDIA's Membership is comprised of businesses, higher education, Congressional staffers, all working toward a common goal: funding the defense industry and providing regional support and promotion for the industry and the contributions made to the defense industry in Fort Wayne.

Secondly workforce development is a critical concern for the defense cluster. Many of the members of NIDIA have worked together to define their future staffing needs. Due to the aging engineer workforce, engineers in many specialized areas will be retiring. Members of NIDIA worked very closely in a collaborative fashion to communicate these skill needs with their university partners as a way to ensure future graduates will meet industry needs.

Additionally many small businesses in Northeast Indiana have started and serve within the supply chain for the defense industry. For example, the NIDIA group conducted a member expo as a way for the various small business members to describe their products and services to the defense members. At monthly NIDIA meetings presentations are done by businesses to the Board that outline how the businesses can work collaboratively with the defense industry in hiring and employing veterans.

Lastly Northeast Indiana established PTAC (Procurement Technical Assistance Center) in 2009. The PTAC serves as an advisor to businesses informing them how to qualify themselves in doing business with government.

In addition to our involvement with NIDIA, our Chamber is assisting the National Guard base with implementing a STARBASE program in Fort Wayne. STARBASE is geared towards elementary students, mainly fifth graders, to expose them to STEM. These students are traditionally at-risk students. The program encourages their learning in areas of academics that are historically under-represented in STEM. Military volunteers from "National Guard, Navy, Marine, Air Force Reserve and Air Force bases across the Nation work with students to set and achieve goals by applying abstract principles to real world situations".¹ STARBASE is a perfect example of the investment we can make in the young people of our society in the hopes that they will take this experience and apply it to whatever field they choose to pursue.

We know the issue of unemployment among veterans is an issue that will continue for the unforeseeable future, given our current economic state. To that end, our Chamber, along with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, is planning on hosting a Hiring Our Hoosiers event in Fort Wayne in the next year. The scheduling of this event has not been set due to the uncertainty of the deployment schedule in our area. These events benefit not only veterans, but are open to their spouses as well. The issues Veterans face concerning employment are substantial. As home to a National Guard base, we hear stories of soldiers deployed, only to return to jobs that have been downsized or eliminated. At the same time, in this double dip recession, their spouses are having trouble maintaining employment. While these issues are not unique to veterans, they are exacerbated by their inability to determine their schedule.

As part of our commitment to furthering the advancement of the military in Fort Wayne, I sit as Secretary of the newly formed Fort Wayne Base Community Council. Our purpose is as stated: to continue and improve the outstanding relationship between the civilian community and the military service community centered around Fort Wayne, Indiana; and to promote the general welfare, prosperity, and

¹ DoD STARBASE. (2011). Program Description. Retrieved from: http://www.starbasedod.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=66&Itemid=60.

quality of life between military and civilian populations. By being involved with this Council, our goal is to partner businesses and military in order to create a mutually beneficial partnership among them.

In closing, our focus is not confined to working in our community. We are also engaged at the State level in legislation that will benefit Veterans. During the 2011 General Assembly, our Chamber supported State Representative Tom Dermody's bill, House Bill 1183, to study the effects of a 3 percent price preference for veteran-owned businesses in Indiana. It was assigned to the Commission on Military and Veterans Affairs for study in the interim. We know that, while small, this is an important step forward for Veterans and a step in the right direction in addressing the unemployment issues among them. In addition to supporting this bill, our Chamber was instrumental in getting one of our Members, Jerry Hogan, a veteran and business owner in northeast Indiana, appointed to the Commission to ensure that Veterans were getting the most benefit from the price preference.

If the Greater Fort Wayne Chamber of Commerce can be of any assistance in this important fight, I encourage you to call on us. Thank you again for your time and attention to this significant matter.

**Prepared Statement of Gregg Norris, Human Resources Manager,
BAE Systems, Electronic Systems Sector, Fort Wayne, IN**

Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. As a representative of an employer of nearly 1000 employees in Northeast Indiana, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss with you the experiences we have had in recruiting and employing nearly 100 veterans into our business.

About our Company

My name is Gregg Norris and I am the Human Resources manager for the BAE Systems facility in Fort Wayne, Indiana. BAE Systems is a global defense and security company with approximately 100,000 employees worldwide. The Company delivers a full range of products and services for air, land and naval forces, as well as advanced electronics, security, information technology solutions and support services. Our division serves the aerospace and defense community with capabilities and products that improve operational safety and enhance mission effectiveness.

At our Fort Wayne facility, we manufacture a variety of both commercial and defense electronics for avionics applications. Our workforce is comprised of approximately 650 union represented hourly production workers with the balance of 300 support personnel in various disciplines including engineering, finance, operations, and supply chain management. Our Company (including legacy owners) has been in Fort Wayne since 1985.

We have been very fortunate to be able to grow the Fort Wayne business from just over 700 employees in 2004 to a planned population of nearly 1000 by the end of 2011. In addition to this growth, there has been significant attrition as a result of many of our employees retiring. Consequently, we have hired nearly 500 employees over the past 5 years. Veteran hiring has played a significant role in the success of this effort.

Veteran Hiring

Local hiring efforts that focus on veteran hiring include participation in the BAE Systems Corporate Warrior Integration Program which I will describe more fully later. We reach a large military audience through advertising all of the Fort Wayne openings on Vetjobs.com. Career Builder's Talent Network is also utilized which reaches 98 percent of transitioning military through their partnerships with the top military job boards, Department of Veteran Affairs, and the primary social media source—Facebook. BAE Systems participates in a variety of Corporate Gray hiring career fairs across the country including last year's participation in Chicago where Fort Wayne employees attended. As I mentioned earlier, currently about 10 percent of our employee population are veterans, including 12 new veterans hired this year.

When we consider veterans during our recruiting process, we feel there are many positive skill sets that these individuals automatically offer our Company. Two of the talents that servicemen and women offer immediately as a result of their military experiences are teamwork and a sense of self-discipline. It is critical to our business that we have employees with the necessary skills to effectively work together. Like the military, for us to be successful, we must all work together toward a common goal or mission.

The discipline that is instilled in soldiers as part of their military background is also a strongly desired employee attribute. We need people that show up for work,

arrive on time, support our leadership, and have a strong sense of respect for themselves, their coworkers and the Company's values; all characteristics we typically find in our veterans.

The Wounded Warrior Program

It is my pleasure to have with me today, James Rodriguez. James is the Director of BAE Systems' Warrior Integration Services. BAE System's Warrior Integration Program has been very successful and I would like to share some information about the program with you today.

Although there are challenges facing veterans with disabilities as they return to the workforce, there are a variety of organizations and businesses within the country who are working diligently at assisting veterans to overcome these obstacles and BAE Systems is one of them. The employees of BAE Systems have resolved to positively impact these issues and to directly enhance the transition of our veterans and Wounded Warriors by establishing a Warrior Integration Program. The defining word in our Warrior Integration Program is **INTEGRATION**. We are integrating veterans, Wounded Warriors, and their families into a company that can serve as an extension of their military careers. The program provides employment positions with which they can identify and still maintain a connection with supporting their former soldiers, sailors, airmen, Coast Guardsmen and Marines. The value of service that these young men and women bring to our workforce is immeasurable. Due to their unique set of military skills, training, and leadership experience, they bring a new perspective to the way we do business and the products we build. It is a worthy and necessary investment to actively find ways to employ Wounded Warriors within BAE Systems and to dispel the perception that they are not employable. In order to do this, our business leaders from the corporate senior leadership team to the first line supervisors have chosen to take a leading role in the implementation, and sustainment of the program. From the beginning of our program initiative in 2008 to the current Warrior Integration Services we have today, we have known that our success in this great endeavor depends on two words—leadership and education. We have successfully established a supportive infrastructure within BAE Systems for our Warriors which adds to our talent pipeline, strengthens our customer connections, enhances our military charity partner relationships, and extends our view of **diversity and inclusion**. In essence, our employment position fundamentally provides mission-centered work with which the veteran can identify, contribute, and be passionate. It also provides an opportunity for *career progression and growth*.

We have the opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of these young men and women by creating employment opportunities in an uncertain environment. BAE Systems is committed to assisting our Nation's heroes with a new uniform and the same commitment to which they are accustomed. The Warrior Integration Program has had a dramatic impact on the veterans' abilities to successfully transition to the workforce after their military service. It has also made a positive impact on the business and the stability of the veterans' families.

BAE Systems Military Leave Policies

BAE Systems Military Leave policies exceed Federal legal requirements in supporting its employees who serve in the military. Employees who are actively serving in the military are eligible to receive a military pay differential that covers the difference between military pay and their regular BAE Systems salary. Reservists on duty for annual training may receive up to 2 weeks of differential pay, and employees called to active duty may receive up to 6 months of differential pay. Additionally, if applicable, we are able to implement a flexible work schedule to allow for mandatory medical appointments for veterans and Wounded Warriors. In these specific instances, alternate shifts serve to accommodate absences. Medical appointments can be attended during non-working hours and the veteran or Wounded Warrior can be assured his or her employment within the business remains intact while they serve our country at home or overseas.

Recommendations

In terms of recommendations that I would offer to the Committee, based on feedback from our recruiting team, I would first and foremost encourage continued focus on education and opportunities for Veterans to return to school. Many of the positions within BAE Systems require college degrees which can be an obstacle for veterans. Although the majority of our positions are hourly associates in Fort Wayne and require only a high school diploma, post secondary educational experiences can still be of great value to a veteran candidate in differentiating themselves from a very large pool of potential candidates. Although the Fort Wayne site is a manufac-

turing location, most of our salaried support positions require technical degrees typically in electrical and mechanical engineering.

As I considered other recommendations, I thought it might be beneficial if I spoke with a veteran that we recently hired. For purposes of this testimony I will refer to our veteran employee as Bruce. Bruce is an 11-year veteran who served in both Afghanistan and Iraq. He served in multiple capacities including his final duty as lead security for his executive officer. Bruce saw extensive combat action while in theater and was eventually released from duty in 2007 due to severe injuries he had sustained. It gave me a profound sense of gratitude and honor to listen to Bruce describe the sacrifices he had made for our country.

I asked Bruce how he heard about our job openings and why he had applied for one of our positions. He told me that he had maintained a close relationship with his former executive officer who had retired from the military and taken a position with BAE Systems in Fayetteville, Georgia. Bruce's former executive officer had recommended BAE Systems as a strong company with good values. Bruce also recalled several instances of BAE Systems' equipment that he had used while on active duty. Bruce then did an internet search on BAE Systems and found our production associate job posting online. He applied, met all of the selection criteria and joined our team on August 29th this year.

I then asked Bruce what recommendations he might have for the Subcommittee. Bruce hesitated a long moment and he said, "Tell them I would describe how I felt when I left the service in one word—helplessness." Bruce went on to tell me that he vividly recalls receiving his military paperwork and being told he was free to leave; but he had no idea what to do next. He had been provided some résumé building assistance but he had no idea where or how to start finding a job, let alone a career.

After listening to Bruce's story, I would respectfully recommend some attention be given to what is provided in the way of outplacement services for our veterans. Résumé building is one small piece of this process. There is, however, so much more in the way of career counseling provided by outplacement companies. These services would provide immeasurable benefit to our veterans. BAE Systems uses similar companies to provide this much needed service for our employees that are impacted by reductions in force. The employees that we are no longer able to employ are very appreciative of this service. I would expect that our veterans would feel the same sense of appreciation should they be offered this assistance as they re-join civilian life.

Chairman Stutzman and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, we at BAE Systems are proud to be able to support our fighting men and women, both in combat and in the workplace when they return to life at home. Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak with you today.

Prepared Statement of Chris R. Straw, Team Quality Services, Auburn, IN

Team Quality Services
Auburn, IN.
October 13, 2011

Marlin Stutzman
Chairman
Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

Dear Congressman Stutzman:

Regarding veteran employment issues in Northeast Indiana, I have a very unique perspective. Being born and raised in Northeast Indiana I am very aware of the perceptions and beliefs and the regional culture. I am also a veteran, so I have personal experience in being on that side of the employment line as a veteran. Lastly, now as a business owner and employer I frequently deal with employment issues from that side of the table.

I feel that employment issues for veterans in Northeast Indiana fall into three basic categories; little interaction or presence of military units in the region, low or unrelated skills/lack of higher education and finally, uncertainty of availability of the servicemember.

Little interaction or presence of military units in the region. Compare Northeast Indiana with a state like Texas. Texas has many military bases across the state. These are typically prominent employers and major players in the community. People may know someone who works at the base. They certainly know about the base,

have maybe been on the base at an open house or possibly their jobs provide services that support the base, etc. By just the proximity of the base to the communities, the people are more educated and familiar with the military and the military personnel on the base. I would also argue that in many cases the perception of the military is higher among those people than people who don't have that interaction or proximity.

Without that interaction, people in Northeast Indiana are left to make their own judgments based on the information they have either available or presented to them. Unfortunately, these perceptions, in many cases are through what they see in the news, what has been portrayed by Hollywood or their own past experiences. Reports have indicated that returning Veterans are encountering negative employer perceptions that Veterans are rigid, deficient in education and technological skills, and unstable due to PTSD. In an Associated Press (Yen, 2008) article describing this study, a Veterans group spokesperson observed that a "Wacko Vet Myth" is growing among employers — an unintended negative consequence of years of attention being directed at the mental health issues of returning Veterans. Perception is reality until shown otherwise.

Low skills/lack of higher education. Many returning Veterans, particular of college age, have very limited work experience outside the military. Many of those just out of high school have been delayed going to college because of deployments and many servicemembers who are members of the National Guard/Reserves have had to leave college mid-year or mid semester because they have been called to active duty. This has put many young members of the armed forces at a distinct disadvantage to their civilian peers. Then, when they get out of the military, their highly focused skill doesn't match the qualifications required by employers in our region.

Uncertainty of availability of the servicemember. Employers are very aware of the increase in deployment activity of our servicemembers. Guard and Reserve personnel are routinely deployed overseas to support the war on terror. The length of this current campaign has required even multiple deployments for some personnel. Add to that the knowledge that there doesn't seem to be an end anywhere on the horizon and employers are reluctant to invest the time and money into on-boarding a new employee who may or may not be at work because of a Guard/Reserve commitment. This is especially the case with high unemployment numbers, the abundance of qualified candidates in the marketplace and sluggish economy forcing employers to work as lean as possible. What's an employer to do while the servicemember is deployed? Is he supposed to hire a replacement, then lay them off and pay unemployment to them because you have to keep the servicemembers spot open for them? What would you do?

Now, look at the cumulative picture of all of these points from the viewpoint of a Northeast Indiana employer with the perceptions and beliefs typical of this region. Unfortunately, the odds aren't in the favor of the vet. So how do you overcome these issues? Education, involvement, publicity and predictability are the things that I feel will help reverse the perceptions and trends in Northeast Indiana.

Sincerely,

Chris R. Straw

**Prepared Statement of LTC Anthony D. Tabler, USA (Ret.),
Senior Business Development Manager, Communications and Force
Protection Systems, ITT Electronic Systems, Fort Wayne, IN**

My name is Anthony D. Tabler (Tony), and I am currently serving as a Senior Business Development Manager in ITT's Communications and Force Protection Systems business area located in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

I graduated from the United States Military Academy in July 1975. I spent 22 years in the U.S. Army attaining the rank of rank of Lieutenant Colonel and retired from the Army in 2001 after which I was hired by ITT in Fort Wayne.

During my time at ITT I've had regular contact with members of the military to include active Army, National Guard and reservists. I have spoken with them at their military places of duty, in the community and at the Fort Wayne Rescue Mission. I understand the challenges they face as they transition from military to civilian life. I also understand the challenges they have in finding and keeping a job, and that the challenges of transitioning from the military is often greater for lower enlisted servicemembers than for senior military officers such as myself.

I'm clearly not an expert on addressing unemployment issues for veterans, but I will share my views on what I think can be done to help decrease the unemployment rate for veterans, National Guard and reservists. I will also provide insights on what ITT does in Fort Wayne to help veterans find and maintain employment. For sake of simplicity I will only make reference to veterans through the remainder of this testimony.

I think it is only fitting to first answer the question, why do we care about veterans? My answer would be that veterans and their family members sacrifice much as they serve our country in time of war and peace. Our veterans are willing to give their all to protect the interests of the Nation and allow you and I enjoy the freedoms we have in America. They may not fully understand or appreciate how important their job is, but veterans deserve our care, compassion and help.

Helping veterans to find employment should start when they transition from their military units and return to civilian life. When I transitioned from the military at Fort Gordon, Georgia, I received guidance and coaching at the Fort Gordon transition office on how to write a résumé, and how to best describe my skills and capabilities in a way that the civilian sector would understand. Transitioning for me was easy because I was a Lieutenant Colonel, member of the Army's acquisition corps, had a masters degree in electrical engineering and many contacts in the defense companies who offered to help me get a job in their respective companies. My rank, job skills and degree made it easy for me to transition but this is not the case for the younger veterans. Every veteran, however, possesses valuable skills that can add tremendous value to any community. Some possess detailed technical skills, while all possess leadership skills that will serve them well in every job profession that I can think of.

The excitement of leaving the military quickly fades when the veteran arrives at his hometown and they try to figure out what they want to do as a civilian. I believe it is important for the veteran to be able to visit, for lack of better words, a civilian in-processing center that provides an opportunity for them take a job aptitude test to determine the type of work they would best be suited for. I'm not sure where this would occur but it potentially could be conducted at an existing Veterans Affairs facility. I would compare this to a student taking a college aptitude test to determine which career field is the best match for them. During this civilian in-processing, the veteran should be given assistance in developing a résumé that allows them to match their skills against job opportunities in the community. I found that writing and rewriting my résumé really forced me to think about what I wanted to do when I departed the military. The veterans should also be coached on how to dress and participate in a job interview. I would highly recommend that a case worker be assigned for those who want and need extra help. It would also be of tremendous value if the civilian in-processing facility had a current listing of military friendly businesses and job opportunities in the community.

With regard to military friendly businesses, I believe that offering some type of tax credit to companies who hire veterans would encourage them to be military friendly and make it appealing for them to hire veterans.

Once the veteran finds a job I believe it is important to offer them a military friendly place they can periodically visit that helps them get and stay connected to the community. This could potentially take place at Veterans Affairs or National Guard facilities, American Legion Posts, Veterans of Foreign Wars Posts or Disabled American Veterans Chapters or places of worship. This would give veterans a place to congregate to talk about what is happening in their lives. This would also be a great opportunity for caring professionals in the community to speak with and mentor veterans on topics of concern. I am sure that professionals in the community would be willing to donate their time, offer free seminars or lead discussion groups on topics that educate and benefit veterans if they knew there was a need.

I would like to mention one other aspect of transitioning from the military. Places of worship should be encouraged to reach out to the military and their families. Many veterans, especially those returning from war, have serious emotional issues that they need to deal with. Their families suffer and often do not know where to turn for help. Places of worship should not try to deal with serious emotional and mental issues, but there is no substitute for a caring person coming along side another to deal with the struggles of life. Places of worship need to become better educated in the area of veteran issues and develop creative ways to reach out to veterans and their families.

I would now like to share some ideas on things that ITT is doing to recognize and care for our veterans.

ITT in Fort Wayne hires veterans in the course of our normal recruiting activities. Although we do not have a formally documented program that we follow to hire veterans, we do include veteran friendly organizations in our normal recruiting out-

reach. For example we target Navy veterans for our Fleet Systems Engineering Team (FSET) and Army veterans for our Field Services Representative (FSR) positions. We e-mail FSET job openings to NAVNET for posting on their communications board. We also post to www.recruitmilitary.com and www.vetjobs.com. We also periodically attend Recruit Military career fairs and place advertisements in the Search and Employ Quarterly Magazine sponsored by Recruit Military.

Our employment records indicate that 83 ITT employees have self-identified themselves as U.S. veterans in Fort Wayne. This count is likely low because some employees elect not to identify veteran status when they are hired.

The Web site www.Indeed.com scrapes our Geospatial Systems Web site daily and posts job listings to numerous Web sites that provide focus for veterans seeking jobs. In addition, we post to Monster (Monster has military.com) and LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) which is a business-related social networking site in an effort to target veterans.

In Fort Wayne ITT is also a member of the Northeast Indiana Defense Industry Association (NIDIA) whose two fold mission is to support and grow the defense industry in NE Indiana (serving as a model statewide now) and to grow talent for the defense industry. This group also focuses on the employment of veterans. It is not uncommon for members of this group to share résumés of veterans between member companies.

ITT also is a member of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR). The mission of the ESGR is to “develop and promote employer support for Guard and Reserve service by advocating relevant initiatives, recognizing outstanding support, increasing awareness of applicable laws, and resolving conflict between employers and servicemembers.” ITT has received the ESGR Patriot Award in recognition of being an outstanding employer who supports members of the National Guard and Reserves.

ITT also participates in the newly founded Fort Wayne Base Community Council which supports the Guard and Reserve in Northeast Indiana. The Fort Wayne community has recognized this as important and has reached out to the Selfridge Air National Guard Base who has an established program in Michigan to help coach the establishment of our group.

Although I have made just a few brief comments, I hope that I have sparked a few ideas that will result in ways that could help reduce the unemployment rate of veterans, National Guard and reservists.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify before this Subcommittee and would be glad to be of service in the future. I'd be glad to take any questions at this time.

**Prepared Statement of Mark W. Everson, Commissioner,
Indiana Department of Workforce Development, Indianapolis, IN**

Introduction

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Braley, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you to discuss veteran employment issues in the state of Indiana. Providing employment and training services to veterans is among the highest priorities of the Department of Workforce Development in Indiana, where the U.S. Census Bureau has estimated that just below 10 percent of the adult population are veterans, with over half of those between the ages of 18 and 65. My testimony will provide a brief overview of Indiana's economy and employment outlook, and a summary of Indiana's workforce investment system and programs. I will also provide data regarding the characteristics of Indiana's veterans and share a summary of the employment and training programs made available to veterans around the state, and specifically in northeast Indiana.

Indiana Economic Profile

Indiana's labor force is approximately 3.1 million, down from just over 3.2 million in the summer of 2007. The state's unemployment rate peaked in June 2009 at 10.9 percent. Since that time, the unemployment rate has fallen to just below 9.0 percent.

In January 2010, over 271,000 Hoosiers collected unemployment insurance benefits from either state or Federal programs. Since that date, the number of Hoosiers collecting benefits has declined to approximately 115,000 at present.

Private sector employment in Indiana is estimated at 2.4 million jobs. Significant sectors include manufacturing (19.0 percent of private employment), along with private education and health services (18.3 percent), trade (17.4 percent), and professional and business services (11.7 percent). The importance of manufacturing to the

state's economy is hard to overstate because of historically high wages in the sector. The government sector employs over 400,000 Hoosiers.

Employment projections for the state indicate that employment opportunities in the future will be found in health care, transportation, and professional, scientific and technical areas. Indiana will need to continue to develop a skilled workforce to meet the demands of employers.

Northeast Indiana Economic Profile

DWD defines northeast Indiana (Economic Growth Region 3) as the geographic area including the following counties: Adams, Allen, DeKalb, Grant, Huntington, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben, Wabash, Wells, and Whitley. It is home to nearly 364,000 workers. The primary employment sectors within northeast Indiana are manufacturing (including the defense industry), private education and health services, professional and business services, trade, and agriculture.

Northeast Indiana's economy has been historically characterized by a relatively large number of high-paying manufacturing jobs. As has been seen in many parts of the United States, northeast Indiana was significantly impacted by the loss of a number of these jobs. However, over the last year, northeast Indiana has seen an uptick in its overall employment outlook. The unemployment rate for the region has decreased by nearly 2 percentage points to 8.9 percent, and employers have slowly begun to increase employment numbers. Current employment projections for the area indicate that both short and long term employment opportunities will be found in a range of manufacturing-related occupations (due primarily to retirements) and in health care. The area also has potential growth in sectors such as business and financial services, transportation and material moving, and construction occupations. DWD and its WorkOne centers recognize the need to develop a skilled workforce in northeast Indiana that can meet the demands of these growing sectors.

Indiana Veterans

The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing statistical survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. The information gathered includes employment status, income, veteran status, education level, and disability information. For 2010, ACS estimates Indiana is home to approximately 469,600 veterans, or nearly 10 percent of its adult population. However, almost 200,000 Indiana veterans are over 65 and generally not in the workforce. Veterans ages 18 to 65 years total approximately 276,600. Veterans between the ages of 18 and 34 total approximately 30,500; between the ages of 35 and 54 total approximately 126,800; and between the ages of 55 and 64 total approximately 119,300. 94.4 percent of Indiana's veterans are male and 5.6 percent are female.

According to ACS, the 2010 unemployment rate among Indiana's veterans was 12.4 percent, compared with the total state unemployment rate of 10.7 percent during the same time period. There are approximately 3,300 veterans collecting benefits at present. Almost 12,000 veterans have collected benefits over the past 12 months.

The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) recently conducted a survey that indicated, among other findings, that the unemployment rate of Gulf War II era veterans 18 years or older in the State of Indiana was 23.6 percent. Beyond the overall results of this survey, BLS has not provided any information on the survey's methodology nor the specific data that were collected. DWD believes this figure is overstated. It is our view that unemployment among these veterans is somewhat but not dramatically higher than that of the workforce as a whole.

Additionally, ACS indicates that the education level of Indiana's veterans tends to be higher than that of civilians, with the exception of those that have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher. 18.7 percent of Indiana's veterans have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with 23.2 percent of the non-veteran population. In addition, according to ACS, in 2010 a smaller percentage of Indiana's veterans (7.4 percent) lived below the poverty level than the non-veteran population (13.8 percent), but a higher percentage of Indiana's veterans had a disability (26.1 percent) than the non-veteran population (14.3 percent).

Indiana Workforce Investment System and Programs

DWD is the state agency that oversees and manages unemployment insurance compensation and federally-funded employment and training programs in Indiana. DWD manages federally-funded Workforce Investment Act, Wagner-Peyser Act, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Adult Education, and Veterans Employment and Training programs. DWD receives 100 percent of the budget for its education and training programs from Federal funds made available through the United States Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, with the exception of the Adult Education program, for which we receive both state and Federal funds.

Like all other states, Indiana is divided into a number of local service areas, which provide federally-funded employment and training services through a network of One-Stops (called WorkOne centers in Indiana). There are twelve local service areas, operating within 11 economic growth regions, and 90 WorkOne centers throughout the regions.

Each of the local service areas is governed by a workforce board, comprised of local business leaders, economic development professionals, labor and education representatives, and other community-based organization leaders. These boards hire staff and service-provider organizations to manage the WorkOne centers and to offer workforce investment services in collaboration with the staff of DWD.

All customers who visit a WorkOne center are offered access to services that assist them in gaining the skills necessary to become reemployed at a self-sufficient level, and will provide the customer with support throughout his or her period of unemployment. Specifically, WorkOne centers provide customers with access to unemployment insurance compensation, case management and career counseling, job search assistance, skill-building workshops, short and long-term training, as well as other supportive services. All enrolled WorkOne customers are placed into one of two tracks: the job-to-job track, where staff provide the customer with reemployment assistance; or the job-to-training-to-job track, where it is determined that the client needs additional training in order to become employed at a self-sufficient level.

DWD also places a high emphasis on making on-the-job training available to eligible, unemployed workers. Through on-the-job training, an unemployed worker is hired by an employer, and provided training on the specific skills needed to successfully perform the job. Since 2009, DWD has invested nearly \$6 million in on-the-job training, based on the belief that it is beneficial to both of its primary customers: unemployed individuals and employers. Unemployed individuals are provided with a job and the opportunity to learn new skills and employers are reimbursed for up to 50 percent of the participant's wages over a 6 month period in order to compensate for training costs.

In addition to the services made available to unemployed customers, WorkOne centers also offer a number of services to local employers, including job matching, job profiling, management of large hiring events, information regarding employment-based tax credits, and on-the-job training funds as just indicated. DWD provides annual funds which support a number of business services staff, who are responsible for connecting with local employers and providing them with no-cost, workforce services.

Indiana Veteran Employment and Training Services

Indiana is committed to providing quality employment services to veterans at its WorkOne centers. Veterans receive priority service, and most of the centers have an on-site veteran specialist who assists with employment needs. DWD currently receives funding to employ sixty-two Veteran Employment and Training staff throughout Indiana. Thirty-four of these positions are Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVER) and twenty-eight of these positions are Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Specialists (DVOP). All of the LVERs are required to be veterans and DVOPs must be veterans with a service-connected disability.

Services that are provided to eligible veterans at WorkOne centers include:

- Orientation to IndianaCAREERConnect.com, the State's largest jobs-board;
- Assistance looking for a job, developing a résumé, and preparing for an interview;
- Direct referral to jobs;
- Referral to other Federal, state and local agencies (as appropriate to their self-sufficiency needs);
- Assistance transitioning into civilian employment;
- Training incentives and grants;
- Guidance finding vocational training;
- Post-employment counseling; and
- Occupational skills assessment.

In order to ensure that veterans receive access to skill-building activities and training, DWD has pursued a number of special employment and training grants. Indiana was awarded and is currently managing a special Veterans Workforce Investment Program Grant. This United States Department of Labor grant of \$500,000, which was supplemented with \$250,000 from DWD, is designed to provide training that results in industry-recognized certifications to veterans with service-connected disabilities, veterans that have significant barriers to employment, and all recently separated veterans. Additionally, for all training programs overseen and managed by DWD, eligible veterans are provided with priority of service. This pri-

ority ensures that veterans are provided with first access to skill-building training when funds or available training slots are limited.

Additionally, DWD ensures that veterans are provided with priority of service in its job matching program. Veterans are provided with first access to open positions posted on IndianaCareerConnect.com; the open positions are held for twenty-four hours, allowing only qualified veterans to apply.

DWD recognizes the barriers that returning veterans face when attempting to access services, locate suitable employment, and reenter the civilian workforce. In order to assist returning veterans in accessing services, DWD has positioned a LVER at Camp Atterbury to assist demobilizing National Guard and Reserve personnel. This LVER provides servicemembers with employment information during their demobilization. In addition, the LVER collects individual employment information, and then provides it to the servicemember's state employment agency. DWD also continues to support the National Guard Yellow Ribbon Transition Programs around the State and at the two National Guard Air Bases. Although demobilizations have decreased in their frequency and size, DWD remains committed to providing employment services to this program. Since January 2010, several thousand soldiers and airman have received employment information through Camp Atterbury and/or participated in a Yellow Ribbon Program.

Finally, in order to assist veterans with locating suitable employment, DWD has supported and managed several career fairs specifically targeted to veterans. In April 2011, DWD sponsored "Operation Hire a Hoosier Veteran" career fair in Central Indiana. Over 100 employers and vendors participated in this career fair, and several hundred Indiana veterans attended the fair and had the opportunity to network with employers, submit résumés and applications for job openings, interview for positions, and attend skill-building workshops offered by DWD staff.

From July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011, over 20,000 veterans were provided with employment and training services in the state of Indiana through WorkOne centers.

Northeast Indiana Veteran Employment and Training Services

Approximately 32,000 veterans, age 18 to 65, live in northeast Indiana, representing nearly 12 percent of Indiana's working-age veterans. This number continues to grow as veterans return from Iraq and Afghanistan. There is a great need to ensure veterans in the region receive job training opportunities that will help them develop the skills required to find civilian employment.

Over the past year, WorkOne offices in northeast Indiana have conducted a comprehensive outreach campaign to veterans and veteran-serving organizations in the region. This campaign has had a singular mission: to increase the number of veterans engaged in workforce services. Activities included outreach efforts at Veteran's Administration locations that provided on-site delivery of a wide range of job-search workshops (résumé writing, interview skills, and online job searches); outreach efforts to regional homeless facilities, including the Fort Wayne Rescue Mission; and monthly outreach efforts to regional veteran's organizations (VFW, American Legion, and others) to ensure that the veterans community is prepared to identify and refer veterans in need of assistance to WorkOne Northeast for services.

Additionally, a military career fair was recently held in northeast Indiana that focused on supporting reservists/guardsmen and veterans. At this event, a dozen human resources professionals from regional employers were brought together to share information about available job openings and to offer advice and instruction to veterans in attendance on the best ways to access these opportunities. This event had the full support of the Wing Commander and his staff and will be replicated in other events.

In the past year, WorkOne centers in northeast Indiana provided employment and training services to approximately 3,000 veterans. Significantly, nearly 25 percent of these veterans received training to improve their technical skills, and increase their prospects for gainful employment. Also, during the same time period, veterans served through the WorkOne Northeast centers received approximately 5,000 referrals for potential employment, and were provided with career counseling support by WorkOne staff on approximately 2,000 occasions. The focus of this career counseling has been to help veterans understand and appreciate the transferability of their military skill sets to the civilian labor market.

Northeast Indiana meets or exceeds performance targets established for Veterans Employment and Training programs by the United States Department of Labor. During the current program year, WorkOne centers in northeast Indiana exceeded nearly all of their performance targets. For example, the Consolidate Veteran Entered Employment Rate was 61 percent, which exceeded the target by 11 percent, and the Consolidated Veterans Average Earnings was \$30,060 annually.

Challenges Affecting Veteran Employment Opportunities

DWD believes that there are four primary challenges veterans encounter regarding employment opportunities. First, veterans have predominantly been employed in industries among the hardest hit by the economic recession. According to a report issued by the U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee Chairman's staff on May 2011, Post-9/11 veterans were more likely than non-veterans to have been employed in manufacturing, construction, transportation, and other industries that experienced significant job losses during 2008 and 2009. DWD agrees with this finding. Veterans continue to struggle with securing gainful employment, especially in the manufacturing sector, which is down about 18 percent from its peak employment in 2007. While veterans from the Guard or Reserves receive statutory protection to retain their pre-deployment position upon completion of their deployment, if an employer's workforce has been downsized due to layoffs, the returning veteran may not always find a job upon return.

The second challenge deals with the skills veterans develop while serving in the military and their ability to translate those skills into private sector employment. DWD has found that some of the skills veterans develop do not always directly correlate to certifications and credentials often required for private employment. For example, a veteran may have operated heavy equipment and vehicles during his or her service, but does not hold a commercial drivers license that is often a requirement for operating heavy transportation vehicles in private sector employment. Additionally, DWD has found that many veterans experience difficulty expressing what specific skills they acquired throughout their service, and how those skills transfer to the requirements of private sector job openings. Many veterans are modest about their service, and particularly the skills and aptitudes they developed while serving. Although a veteran may have developed and utilized essential job skills, his or her inability to relate those skills to the requirements of a job opening can lead a hiring manager to not fully appreciate the skills a veteran has to offer.

Third, while a veteran is deployed overseas, a number of facets of his or her home life may have changed. Some of these changes can include the birth of a child, the loss of a family member, or even the dissolution of a marriage. In addition, returning veterans may need to locate a place to live, establish bank accounts, locate transportation, and complete many other daily activities for which they may not have been responsible during their service. These factors often complicate the job search process, which may be given less initial priority by the veteran.

Finally, there is an increasing number of veterans returning with some form of a physical or mental disability. With advances in medical care, fatalities have declined but an increasing percentage of veterans return home with a physical disability potentially limiting future employment opportunities. In addition, there are incidences of mental health issues, including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), among the veteran population returning from abroad. In DWD's experience, Indiana's employers have displayed a great willingness to provide employment opportunities to veterans who have served the United States. However, some employers may be somewhat cautious in hiring veterans due to concerns about how PTSD or other mental health issues may affect performance in the workplace.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, we at the Indiana Department of Workforce Development, recognize our obligation to veterans and honor their service to our country. We will continue to make every resource available to veterans, ensuring they receive the services needed to best overcome any barriers to employment opportunities they may face.

Thank you for allowing me to appear before you today. I would be pleased to respond to any questions from Members of the Subcommittee.

**Prepared Statement of Gary Tyler, Indiana State Director,
Veterans' Employment and Training Service, U.S. Department of Labor**

Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley, and Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Committee about the work we are doing at the Department of Labor (DOL or Department) to address the important issue of decreasing the unemployment rate for Veterans, National Guard, and Reservists. We also appreciate the opportunity to discuss the work we are doing here in Indiana. With over 500,000 veterans living in the state, it is critical that we provide them with the services and support they need to find and obtain good jobs.

My name is Gary Tyler, and as the Indiana State Director for the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS), I am dedicated to helping our Veterans and returning Servicemembers achieve that goal. I am accompanied today by Heather Higgins, my Regional Administrator.

VETS proudly serves Veterans and transitioning Servicemembers by providing resources and expertise to assist and prepare them to obtain meaningful careers, maximize their employment opportunities and protect their employment rights. We do this through a variety of nationwide programs that are an integral part of Secretary Solis's vision of "*Good Jobs for Everyone.*"

I would like to begin by briefly discussing some of these programs along with other initiatives that assist America's Veterans in getting to or back to work and then focus specifically on information for Indiana that you requested in your invitation.

Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program

The first program that I would like to highlight for you is the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) Program. Under this grant program, the Department offers employment and training services to eligible Veterans by allocating funds to State Workforce Agencies in direct proportion to the number of Veterans seeking employment within their state.

The Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program funds two occupations, the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program specialist (DVOP) and the Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER). DVOP specialists provide outreach services, and intensive employment assistance to meet the employment needs of eligible Veterans. LVER staff conducts outreach to employers and engages in advocacy efforts with hiring executives to increase employment opportunities for Veterans, encourages the hiring of disabled Veterans, and generally assists Veterans to gain and retain employment.

Last year, the JVSG provided services to nearly 589,000 Veterans, and 201,000 Veterans found jobs.

Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program

To meet the needs of homeless Veterans and help reintegrate them into the workforce, VETS administers the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP). Through HVRP, the Department provides competitive grants to state and local workforce investment boards, state agencies, local public agencies, and private non-profit organizations, including faith-based organizations and neighborhood partnerships. HVRP grantees provide an array of services utilizing a holistic case management approach that directly assists homeless Veterans and provides training services to help them to successfully transition into the labor force.

In Program Year (PY) 2009, over 14,000 homeless Veterans participated in this program through 96 grants, and 8,470 were placed into employment. Data for PY 2010 is not yet available, as figures for the 4th quarter are still being verified.

Veterans' Workforce Investment Program

Yet another way the Department is working to help Veterans get back to work is through the Veterans' Workforce Investment Program (VWIP). Through VWIP, the Department awards competitive grants geared toward focused training, re-training and employment opportunities for recently separated Veterans, Veterans with service-connected disabilities, Veterans with significant barriers to employment and Veterans who served on active duty during expeditions or campaigns for which specific badges were awarded. These grants are awarded to meet the needs of employers for qualified workers in high demand industries, particularly those occupations requiring a license or certification. The grants also promote the integration of public, private, and philanthropic organizations with the workforce system to create synergy and encourage innovative strategies to serve our Veterans better.

In FY 2009, VWIP was refocused to provide training and employment services in green energy occupations as envisioned in the Green Jobs Act of 2007. Nationwide, there currently are 22 grants serving over 4,000 Veterans in FY 2011. Here in Indiana, training and placement services have been provided to approximately 3,000 Veterans statewide through the VWIP program since 2002.

Transition Assistance Program

Our primary program for assisting individuals with their transition from the military to the civilian workforce is the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). TAP is an interagency program delivered via a partnership involving the Department of Defense, DOL VETS, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Department of Homeland Security. VETS provides an employment workshop that is a comprehensive two and a half day program during which participants are provided relevant

skills and information, such as job search techniques, career decision-making processes, and current labor market conditions.

Currently, VETS uses a mix of contractors, VETS Federal staff, DVOPs, and LVERs as TAP facilitators. Starting in late 2012, VETS will transition to all skilled contract facilitators.

As you know, VETS is currently in the process of redesigning and transforming the TAP employment workshop. We are creating experiential, effective, and enduring solutions for a successful transition from military to civilian life and employment. The new TAP will be based on established best practices in career transition.

Last year, nearly 130,000 transitioning Servicemembers and spouses attended a TAP employment workshop given at one of 272 locations world-wide.

Employer Partnerships

VETS is also implementing a new approach to employer outreach that involves pilot programs and partnerships with the private sector, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). These partnerships are giving us much broader access to employers so that we can communicate the value of hiring a Veteran and how to access this extraordinary source of talent. It also allows us to educate employers about the unique skills Veterans bring with them based on their military experience. Connecting the talent pool with the many companies looking to hire Veterans allows for a more efficient hiring process for many Veterans and employers.

The Chamber is working to hold 100 hiring fairs exclusively for Veterans, transitioning Servicemembers and their spouses. In the partnership, the U.S. Chamber and its affiliates focus primarily on securing the participation of employers while the VETS team focuses on obtaining participation by Veterans, transitioning Servicemembers and their spouses.

In fact, the Chamber is scheduled to partner with the VETS Indiana Office, Department of Veterans' Affairs, Indiana National Guard, Indiana Workforce Development, and others in the sixth annual "Operation: Hire a Hoosier Vet" career fair at Stout Field, Indiana National Joint Forces Headquarters in Indianapolis on April 12, 2012. VETS is working with SHRM to identify opportunities for VETS state managers to meet with local SHRM chapters to connect Veterans seeking employment with companies who are hiring. For VETS this is an effective and efficient way to connect employers and Veterans. We are also working with SHRM in the development of an H.R. Toolkit that will provide employers with the methods and procedures to establish a Veteran hiring program and to hire Veterans.

Indiana Specific Information

In your letter of invitation, you requested certain information about Veterans in Indiana. While some specific data is unavailable, we have nevertheless been certain to provide the most current information available. As you know, Indiana operates a Public Labor Exchange primarily funded by the U.S. Department of Labor to assist all job seekers with their employment needs. While it is available to all populations, Veterans are given priority of service. In Indiana, the Public Labor Exchange is known as the Work One Employment System of the Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD). The services and assistance offered at DWD range from employment preparation and comprehensive employment placement services, to intensive services through a case management approach for Veterans with special needs. Moreover, in FY 2011, DOL has approved funding for 61.5 FTE staff positions to assist Veterans, divided between DVOPs and LVER staff.

Level of Education of Veterans Seeking Employment Assistance

Over the past year, 26,265 Veterans have received services through DWD. Of the total population of Veterans served through the public labor exchange, 988 or 3.76 percent reported less than a high school diploma while 13,624 or 51.8 percent have a high school degree or a GED. The total number of Veterans reporting achievement of a post-high school degree or certification is 5489, or 20.8 percent. (See table below.)

Data Element	Indiana	Percent
Total Number of Vets, Eligibles and Transitioning Servicemembers	26,265	
Total Number of Vets, Eligibles and Transitioning Servicemembers who were not HS Graduates	988	3.76%
Total Number of Vets, Eligibles and Transitioning Servicemembers who had a HS degree or GED	13,624	51.8%

Data Element	Indiana	Percent
Total Number of Vets, Eligibles and Transitioning Servicemembers who had a Post-Secondary degree or are Certified	5,489	20.8%

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration Form ETA 9002 A: "Services to Participants" July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011.

U.S. Department of Labor, and Employment and Training Administration Form ETA 9002 D Services to Participants, April 1, 2010 through March 31, 2011.

Education level is not a required field when registering with the One-Stop Career Center system; therefore, the breakdown by education level does not equal the total number of Veterans served.

Average Placement Salary by Level of Education for Veterans

In Indiana, the 6 month Average Earnings for veterans are: \$15,378 or \$30,756 per annum. The principle source of information for this data element is the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration ETA 9002 Report, Services to Participants for Program Year Period July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011. While specific *placement salary data by education level* are not available, the ETA 9002, Performance Outcomes for Veterans, Eligible Persons and Transitioning Servicemembers does provide Average Earnings data.

Length of Unemployment for Veterans by Education Level

The Current Population Survey provides national data about the employment status of the civilian non-institutional population by educational attainment, age, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino and Non-Hispanic ethnicity. The same source provides data for unemployed persons by duration of unemployment, educational attainment, sex, and age as an annual average for the general population. However, data for length of unemployment by education level for Veterans as a separate population is not available.

Rate of Unemployment for Veterans by Education Level

In terms of unemployment rates for the general population, the Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) reports a 10.2 percent rate for Indiana in 2010. Comparatively, the Current Population Survey (CPS), collected by the Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics, shows that the unemployment rate for Veterans was 9.0 percent in Indiana on average in 2010. Unemployment rate data by education level by state is not available. (See table below.)

Data Element	Indiana
Unemployment Rates:	
Calendar Year 2010 (LAUS) General Population	10.2%
Calendar Year 2010 (CPS)—Veterans	9.0%

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Number of Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) Complaints Filed

VETS is honored to serve our Nation's Veterans. One of the agency's top priorities is to protect the employment rights of servicemembers when called to serve on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces. The goal of the USERRA is to ensure that no member or prospective member of the U.S. Armed forces endures any disadvantage or discrimination in employment because of their affiliation with the military, and to secure the reemployment rights of members of the military after active duty service.

VETS works closely with DoD's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Reserve Affairs' Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) to ensure that servicemembers are informed on their USERRA rights before and after they are mobilized. We conduct continuous USERRA outreach to educate and inform servicemembers and employers of their rights and responsibilities under the law.

The use of the National Guard and Reserves has increased dramatically in recent years, with more called to active duty than any other time since the Korean War. This has increased the complexity of issues resulting from the challenges faced by servicemembers and their families due to lengthier and multiple deployments. This is true for all servicemembers but because many National Guard and Reserve Units, in particular, contend with civilian employment issues, the claims activity post 9-11 has increased dramatically nationwide. Employers face equal hardships in the reintegration of servicemembers into the labor force as they deal with lengthy and multiple absences.

Your invitation asked for the number of USERRA complaints filed in Indiana. Below, is the breakdown of complaints filed within the last 5 years.

Data Element	Indiana
USERRA Complaints Filed:	
Federal Fiscal Year 2007	32
Federal Fiscal Year 2008	27
Federal Fiscal Year 2009	32
Federal Fiscal Year 2010	25
Federal Fiscal Year 2011	37

Source: USDOL/VETS Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act Information Management System

Conclusion:

Thank you again for allowing me to testify today and for your tireless support and commitment to our Nations Veterans. DOL and VETS look forward to continuing to work with you and your staff on Veterans' employment initiatives. I look forward to responding to your questions.

