

**EXAMINING THE RE-DESIGN OF THE TRANSITION
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TAP)**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY (EO)
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CONTENTS

September 20, 2012

	Page
Examining The Re-Design of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP)	1
OPENING STATEMENTS	
Chairman Marlin A. Stutzman	1
Prepared Statement of Chairman Stutzman	32
Hon. Bruce L. Braley, Ranking Democratic Member	3
Prepared Statement of B. Braley	35
WITNESSES	
Mr. Danny G.I. Pummill, Director, Veterans Benefits Administration/Department of Defense Program Office, Veterans Benefits Administration, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs	5
Prepared Statement of Mr. Pummill	35
Mr. John K. Moran, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Veterans' Employment and Training Service, U.S. Department of Labor	6
Prepared Statement of Mr. Moran	38
Mr. Rhett Jeppson, Associate Administrator for Veterans Business Development, U.S. Small Business Administration	8
Prepared Statement of Mr. Jeppson	43
Dr. Susan Kelly, Deputy Director, Transition to Veterans Program Office, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, U.S. Department of Defense	9
Prepared Statement of Dr. Kelly	46
Brigadier General Robert F. Hedelund, Director of Marine and Family Programs, U.S. Marine Corps	18
Prepared Statement of General Hedelund	51
Brigadier General Jason T. Evans, Adjutant General, U.S. Army	19
Prepared Statement of General Evans	53
Mr. Edward Cannon, Fleet and Family Readiness Program Director, U.S. Navy	21
Prepared Statement of Mr. Cannon	55
Brigadier General Eden J. Murrie, Director of Services, U.S. Air Force	22
Prepared Statement of General Murrie	58
Rear Admiral Daniel Neptun, Assistant Commandant for Human Resources, U.S. Coast Guard	23
Prepared Statement of Admiral Neptun	60
QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD	
Hon. Marlin A. Stutzman, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity to VA Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs	61

EXAMINING THE RE-DESIGN OF THE TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TAP)

Thursday, September 20, 2012

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

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:29 p.m., in Room 334, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Marlin A. Stutzman [Chairman of the Committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Stutzman, Braley, and Walz.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN MARLIN A. STUTZMAN

Mr. STUTZMAN. Good afternoon. Welcome all of you to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. I want to welcome you all this afternoon. And sorry for our tardy start. We are just done with a round of votes so we should have a good time to fulfill our time here in the Committee hearing.

I want to recognize, we have got some folks in the back I believe that are here with the, I believe it was the Air Force Sergeants Association? Is that correct? If you all would want to stand we would like to just recognize you and thank you for your service. There we go.

[Applause]

Mr. STUTZMAN. And thank you very much for your service and for being here this afternoon. Of course, I want to thank any veteran or anyone who is serving in our military for your service. We appreciate you so much and for what you do for our country.

We are here today to receive testimony on the redesigned Transition Assistance Program, or TAP. To differentiate between the original TAP and the redesigned version I am going to refer to the new program simply as TAP2. Kind of original there.

TAP has been around for about 20 years with little change over that time other than to update the changes in the various benefit programs. And while the original TAP was let us say minimally effective, today's participants and today's civilian environment necessitated a revised approach from what has become known as death by power point. Until the passage of last year's VOW to Hire Heroes Act TAP was not mandatory except in the U.S. Marine Corps. And I am pleased that the other services have committed to comply with the VOW Act's mandatory attendance provisions.

What the VOW Act did not do was describe what types of training must be provided under the mandatory attendance provision.

And I would like to offer some thoughts on what TAP2 should provide.

Ultimately the goal of TAP2 is to smooth the way to civilian employment. That said, there are many paths to reach that ultimate goal and TAP2 should offer participants training that reflects at least the primary paths.

Following discharge some servicemembers may choose to seek the full time permanent job path. Others will choose to use a path using their G.I. Bill or vocational rehabilitation benefits. Still others will choose the entrepreneurial career path or one involving training in the trades. So regardless mandatory TAP2 training must, and I repeat must provide detailed training in each of these areas. Otherwise we are failing that one percent who defend us.

I have a couple of slides that I would like to illustrate why the tailored approach is so important. If you look at the monitors this first slide shows the importance of ensuring that individuals who are going to use their G.I. Bill get a full explanation of how best to use their benefit.

[Slide]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Slide one shows that four years of Post 9/11 G.I. Bill benefits for someone attending a private institution amounts to over \$141,000. I would point out that the numbers are averages and can be significantly higher.

The second slide, if I would put that up on the monitor, shows the curriculum DoD is implementing for TAP2.

[Slide]

Mr. STUTZMAN. You will note that it does not provide a time-frame for instruction in the various paths that I have mentioned. Rather, days two, three, and four are devoted entirely to job hunting skills, something that is fine for those who intend to seek full time permanent employment following discharge. But what about a typical class made of mostly first term enlistees, 50 percent of whom indicate they intend to use their G.I. Bill benefits soon after discharge? What about those who want to start their own business, or enter trades? The DoD model of mandatory TAP2 as presented to us here on the monitor does not appear to include training tailored to their needs.

I would offer that mandatory training must include those alternative paths and that forcing every servicemember to sit through three days of job hunting skills at the expense of training tailored to their post-discharge intentions is a poor use of resources.

Slide three illustrates one way to achieve what I am suggesting.

[Slide]

Mr. STUTZMAN. To be fair, some DoD officials have indicated that students will have the "option" to attend more tailored training on days six and seven. But unfortunately there seems to be a mixed opinion from officials as to whether those days are considered as part of the mandatory training. My staff along with the Ranking Member's staff recently observed TAP2 at Randolph Air Force Base and Miramar Marine Corps Air Station. And at Randolph the class was mostly senior enlisted members, most of whom already had at least an associates degree and nearly all of whom intended to seek permanent jobs after discharge. They were given the DoD model, which was appropriate for that class' demographics.

The class at Miramar included primarily first termers who received a more tailored model. Service specific pre-separation counseling, and VA benefits were condensed to one day of training. The Department of Labor workshop was condensed into two days of training, and the remaining two days allowed the Marines to choose a track that best fit their transition goals.

The staff's observations were that the Marines enjoyed the choice of the tracks. The Marines confirmed that if the tracks had been pushed to a second week and were not mandatory their supervisors probably would not give them the extra time off. I say that not to criticize those supervisors, but rather to emphasize what may be a significant weakness in the DoD curriculum.

It is clear to me that a tailored model is the better approach. A program of providing a core instruction summarizing the highlights of the details tracks followed by allowing the servicemember to choose a track as part of the mandatory coursework is in my opinion a superior approach to meeting the needs of TAP participants.

Finally I want to address the oversight role of this Subcommittee. While I realize that what is now being taught under TAP2 is in formative stages, having DoD employees question Congress' oversight role is inappropriate. I hope that confrontational attitude regarding our constitutional oversight responsibility ends. We are all working towards the same goal, and I hope that we can work together to find what is most beneficial for our servicemen and women as they make the transition back into the workforce.

I now recognize the distinguished Ranking Member Mr. Bruce Braley for his remarks.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Stutzman appears in the Appendix]

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BRUCE L. BRALEY

Mr. BRALEY. Well Mr. Chairman, I think this is an appropriate time as this is our last Subcommittee hearing before the election to thank you for the great working relationship we have enjoyed with you and your staff. And we talk a lot about important policy in this Subcommittee but it is sometimes important to put a human face on that.

And you were here when a constituent of mine named Andrew Connolly came and testified about some of the challenges he faced as wounded warrior who was in need of adaptability benefits to transition his home into a more livable circumstance. And because of that testimony and the great work of your staff and the Full Committee staff on both sides of the aisle, I am very proud that on August 6th the President signed into law the Andrew Connolly Veterans Housing Act, which doubled the benefit for temporary adaptability assistance for many of our wounded warriors who come home and frequently live in their parents' homes before they complete their education and go on to a more permanent residency.

And Andrew Connolly died a year ago but I am very proud of the fact that I called his wife. It happened to be Andrew's 29th birthday. And she was thrilled to know that his legacy will live on and help improve the lives of other wounded warriors. And that would not have happened without your cooperation and assistance and

the great staff that we have on Veterans' Affairs. So I just wanted to thank you again for making that happen.

I am also glad to have the opportunity to talk about the importance of the Transition Assistance Program because it has been one of the most important things that I hear about from my constituents who are in need of assistance when they are transitioning out into the civilian workforce. We have had field hearings on this in both of our districts. We have had great input from a variety of employers, from the largest employers in my district to the smallest. And we know that this is an ongoing obligation and commitment we have to make sure that we fulfill our promise to the people who serve this country in uniform.

We know that TAP will help military members explore their career readiness and obtain the tools they need to apply in the civilian workforce and to pursue their Post 9/11 G.I. Bill secondary education benefits. I am pleased that we are leaving behind the more conventional route of one size fits all and death by power point, and moving toward a more individualized TAP plan. That is what we hear from people who are in need of that assistance. Our goal should be to provide service to men and women with a comprehensive Transition Assistance Program that prepares them for life after the military so they can pursue whatever endeavor they wish. Whether it is employment, education, or starting a new business. And I am hoping today we will hear from our witnesses on how we can work together to make that happen. With that, I will yield back.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Bruce L. Braley appears in the Appendix]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Well, thank you. And I want to thank you for your remarks as well. I want to tell you I have really enjoyed working together on this staff. We really have had a, I feel we have been able to accomplish a lot. And definitely hearing from constituents and servicemen and women as they make a difficult transition. So I want to thank you for your work and for Mr. Walz as well working together, and with our staff. I feel very good about what we have been able to do.

Mr. Walz, would you like to make any?

Mr. WALZ. I defer to—

Mr. STUTZMAN. Very good. Thank you. At this time I want to ask our first panel is at the table. With us today is Mr. Danny Pummill from the Department of Veterans Affairs, Mr. John Moran from the Veterans Employment and Training Service, Mr. Rhett Jeppson is from the Small Business Administration, and finally Dr. Susan Kelly from the Office of the Secretary of Defense. I thank you all for being here today. Let's start with Mr. Pummill from the VA, and we recognize you for your testimony with five minutes.

STATEMENTS OF DANNY G.I. PUMMILL, DIRECTOR, VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION/DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE PROGRAM OFFICE; JOHN K. MORAN, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT, VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR; RHETT JEPPSON, ASSOCIATE ADMINISTRATOR FOR VETERANS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION; AND DR. SUSAN KELLY, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, TRANSITION TO VETERANS PROGRAM OFFICE, OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

STATEMENT OF DANNY G.I. PUMMILL

Mr. PUMMILL. Yes. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Braley, members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Department of Veterans Affairs Transition Assistance Program, or TAP. My testimony will cover what we are currently doing in the TAP program, the current TAP reengineering efforts, and the newly designed TAP pilots, and the program for entering the new TAP program. TAP2 I will call it from now on.

Currently TAP is conducted under the auspices of a memorandum of understanding between the Departments of Labor, Defense, Homeland Security, and VA. The departments work together to schedule briefings and classes on installations to best serve servicemembers and their expectation as they prepare for their transition from active military service. Quarterly meetings among the departments are held to oversee the operations of the program and plan enhancements to TAP.

VA's current TAP briefings are provided by trained military service coordinators, MSCs, from the regional offices with jurisdiction over military installations in the United States and Puerto Rico. We provide these services to servicemembers stationed outside the United States through seven overseas MSCs.

VA also provides transition briefings to demobilizing Reserve and National Guard servicemembers. These briefings are typically held at the Reserve component servicemember's home station upon completion of their deployment.

At TAP briefings servicemembers learn about the array of benefits and services available from VA. Servicemembers learn how to complete applications and are advised about what evidence is needed to support their claims. Following the general instruction segment, personal interviews are conducted with those servicemembers who want assistance in preparing and submitting their application for disability compensation or other benefits.

In October, 2011 VA joined the Department of Defense, the Department of Education, the Department of Labor, and the Small Business Administration in forming a team to develop and implement the new law. This five-agency team has met regularly over the past year and has developed a completely revised and enhanced TAP experience.

The project team, with the assistance of the Department of Education, completely revised and enhanced the current VA briefing,

creating a new adult education oriented briefing that is much more interactive. No more death by power point.

Along with this new briefing we are in the process of developing a web-based version of the VA's portion of TAP to be available in both a web and webinar formats. We are also actively collaborating with the Department of Defense to create a virtual TAP experience. These virtual briefings will be used by servicemembers and veterans in lieu of the existing brick and mortar classroom.

We have committed to ensuring that our newly designed TAP is available to 100 percent of departing servicemembers from all components by 21 November, 2012, as directed by Congress and legislation.

The newly designed VA TAP briefing is being actively piloted at six primary locations. Our efforts to improve the VA portion of TAP include three main elements. Expand the training of our briefers; continually update our briefers; and greater oversight of the program. The classroom TAP presentation has been revised and updated, eliminating the briefing slides in favor of the interactive learning experience. Training has been completed on the new briefing and is being tested at the pilot locations. A web page has been created to keep our briefers up to date on all changes on benefits and resources.

As part of the continual development of the VA portion of TAP, VA along with the Department of the Defense and our other agency partners are conducting continuous review interviews of the information and metrics coming out of our pilot locations.

Mr. Chairman, we at the VA are proud of our continuing role in the transition of servicemembers from military to civilian life, and seek to continually improve the quality and breadth of our outreach efforts to active duty, Reserve, and National Guard members. We are aggressively piloting and developing implementation plans for the newly designed TAP and are excited about the opportunities it provides to our servicemembers and their families.

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

[The prepared statement of Danny G.I. Pummill appears in the Appendix]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you. Mr. Moran, you are recognized for five minutes.

STATEMENT OF JOHN K. MORAN

Mr. MORAN. Good afternoon Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's important hearing.

My name is John Moran. As the Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Veterans' Employment and Training Service at the Department of Labor, I am proud of the work the department is doing to support our veterans, transitioning servicemembers, and their families.

The Veterans' Employment and Training Service's mission is straightforward and easily remembered by our three Ps: prepare, provide, and protect. We prepare our separating servicemembers and their spouses to transition from the military to the civilian

workforce through the Transition Assistance Program, which I will talk about in great detail in a moment. We provide them with the critical resources, expertise, and necessary training to assist them in locating and obtaining meaningful employment. We protect the employment rights of these brave men and women to ensure the jobs they left to serve our Nation in uniform are there when they come home.

Since its inception, the TAP employment workshop has been a valuable tool for servicemembers transitioning into the civilian workforce. However, while the needs of transitioning servicemembers have changed, TAP had remained largely unchanged for 20 years. For example, today's servicemembers use social media as a key tool for a variety of purposes, including job search and networking. Twenty years ago social media was not even a term in our collective consciousness.

Last year the department initiated a major effort aimed at re-vamping and updating the employment workshop to bring it up to date and current with emerging best practices in career development and adult learning. In doing so DOL worked with DoD, the services, academia, and veterans service organizations to make the workshop more engaging and relevant in light of the unique challenges our servicemembers will be facing as they transition into civilian life during a time of economic uncertainty.

Aside from a new curriculum, delivery methods, and materials, the redesign of the employment workshop also includes new tools, such as My Next Move for Veterans to help servicemembers match their military experience to jobs in the civilian market that require similar experience, training, and skills.

The redesigned DOL employment workshop has put increased emphasis on networking and how to effectively communicate to employers the value proposition of hiring veterans. This new three-day curriculum, which has been through a battery of acceptance testing, relies heavily on interaction and adult learning principles. Approximately 40 percent of the curriculum involves participant interaction or exercises. It is specifically geared toward the hard mechanics of getting a good job and includes exploring career interest, searching the labor market, building resumes, preparing for interviews, and negotiating a job offer.

We have been delivering the new employment workshop over the past two months at seven pilot sites covering all services. The feedback has been very positive. We are confident the curriculum has been well tested, responsive to customer input, and inclusive of training best practices for adult learners.

Through the Veterans Employment Task Force we worked with our partners at DoD and the VA and have integrated our workshop into the agreed upon GPS delivery model. Additionally, we have accommodated a Marine Corps request to modify the delivery approach of our workshop to facilitate the Marine Corps Pathways model. Both approaches ensure Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Airmen, and Coast Guardsmen all receive the elements of the employment workshop as required by the VOW Act.

As mandated by the VOW Act, DOL recently awarded a contract to GBX, Inc. to provide the instructor/facilitator cadre to deliver our new curriculum. We are well ahead of schedule and will be

fully rolling out our new curriculum and contracted facilitation team at all TAP sites worldwide in January of 2013.

In conclusion, preparing separating servicemembers and their spouses for their transition to the civilian job market is central to our mission and we take that mission seriously. In the next five years over one million servicemembers will be transitioning from active duty to civilian life. We owe them the best services and benefits our Nation can provide. The department along with the rest of the administration is firmly committed to fulfilling that sacred obligation. We strive daily to do so through our programs and services designed to prepare, provide, and protect our veterans, transitioning servicemembers, and their spouses.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Braley, members of the Subcommittee, this concludes my statement. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of John K. Moran appears in the Appendix]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you. Mr. Jeppson, you are recognized for five minutes.

STATEMENT OF RHETT JEPPSON

Mr. JEPPSON. Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley, and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me to testify. My name is Rhett Jeppson. I currently serve as the Associate Administration for Veterans Small Business Development at the U.S. Small Business Administration. I am also a veteran and have run a family-owned small business. I have submitted a full written testimony to the Committee which I request be made part of the hearing record.

As small business owners, veterans continue to serve our Nation and create jobs in our communities. According to the most recent U.S. Census data, nearly one in ten small businesses are veteran-owned. These businesses generate about \$1.2 trillion in receipts and employ nearly 5.8 million Americans.

Research demonstrates that veterans over-index as entrepreneurs. In the private sector workforce veterans are at least 45 percent more likely than those with no military service to be self-employed.

Today there are over 300,000 servicemembers transitioning from active service. To ensure that we are addressing the needs of these returning servicemembers, SBA is focused on providing the training, tools, and resources they need to make the transition from military servicemember to successful business leader. At the heart of these efforts is an initiative called Operation Boots to Business: From Service to Startup.

Boots to Business is the entrepreneurial track of the new TAP, or Transition Assistance Program. Boots to Business builds on SBA's role as a national leader in entrepreneurship training. SBA is leveraging its ongoing collaboration with Syracuse University's Institute of Veterans and Military Families to provide comprehensive training materials specifically geared toward the transitioning servicemember.

SBA's expert nationwide resource partner network, including the Women's Business Center, support chapters, Small Business Development Centers, and Veterans Business Outreach Centers, which already provide targeted, actionable, real world entrepreneurship training to over 150,000 veterans every year, will be responsible for delivering this training to our transitioning servicemembers.

The Boots to Business program has three phases which include exposure to entrepreneurship as a potential career path. This will be offered to all servicemembers leaving the military. Following that, there is a two-day course focused on the development of a feasibility plan for a potential business idea. And then if interested a transitioning servicemember may enroll in an eight-week online course on the fundamentals of small business resulting in the development of a business plan.

In June, 2012 Boots to Business pilot was launched with the Marine Corps at four locations: Quantico, Virginia; Cherry Point, North Carolina; Camp Pendleton, California; and 29 Palms, California. In August of 2012 three Navy locations were added to the pilot: Anacostia; Kings Bay, Georgia; and Bethesda, Maryland. And in October of this year the U.S. Army will host its first pilot at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

Following our assessment of the pilot, we plan to roll out the program nationally to all the branches of the military in fiscal year 2013, subject to funding. We know our Nation's veterans helped reshape the American economy following World War II. They helped to build one of the longest periods of economic growth in our history and we know that they can do it again if they are encouraged and supported with the right tools and right opportunities. That's what Boots to Business is all about. And that is why we are committed to ensuring these amazing men and women have the access and opportunity they need to fully realize their potential as entrepreneurs and small business owners.

Thank you for your time in allowing me to appear before this Committee today.

[The prepared statement of Rhett Jeppson appears in the Appendix]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you. Dr. Kelly, you are recognized for five minutes.

STATEMENT OF DR. SUSAN KELLY

Ms. KELLY. Good afternoon, Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley, and the distinguished members of the Subcommittee. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today with my colleagues from the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Labor, and the Small Business Administration, and the military services, to discuss the redesign of the Transition Assistance Program known as TAP.

TAP, the cornerstone of the department's transition efforts, is a collaborative partnership between the Department of Defense, the Department of VA, and the Department of Labor, and is the primary program used to deliver an array of services and benefits information to separating servicemembers. Our overall goal at the Department of Defense is to ensure those who are leaving the service are prepared for their next step, whether that step is pursuing additional education, finding a job in the public or private sector,

or starting their own business. To that end, the department and its partners have fundamentally redesigned TAP, making the needs of today's servicemembers and their families a top priority.

The President has emphasized reforms to ensure every servicemember receives training, education, and credentials needed to transition to the civilian workforce, pursue higher education, and reach the goal of being career ready upon leaving active duty. Additionally the VOW Act of 2011 also contains specific TAP related provisions as discussed in detail in my written statement that we are required to implement by November of this year.

The culmination of the TAP redesign efforts, the transition GPS, which stands for Goals, Plans, Success, encompasses the President's intent and the requirements of the VOW Act. Moreover, it establishes the new career readiness standards, extends the transition preparation through the entire span of a member's career, and provides counseling to facilitate the development of an individual transition plan.

Transition GPS also recognizes the military services' cultural differences by allowing the services the flexibility to modify the program, but not change the program's standardized curriculum or mandatory learning objectives. The end state for servicemembers is to meet the career readiness standards for the career path they have chosen regardless of the branch of service.

To implement the new TAP curriculum this summer we conducted seven pilots of the core curriculum, which includes the new DOL employment workshop. The pilots have provided us valuable servicemember feedback and we have engaged our partners to apply lessons learned and refine the curriculum based on this feedback to further improve the Transition GPS experience for our transitioning servicemembers.

We are eager to pilot the Transition GPS optional tracks in education, career technical training, and entrepreneurship. These are scheduled for early 2013. They will allow servicemembers to tailor their individual preparation to posture them for successful civilian careers. In other words, they are career ready.

Starting in fiscal year 2014 the department will migrate from our current TAP program, which occurs at the end of the military career, to an innovative military life cycle transition model that will start at the beginning of a servicemember's military career. The objective of the model is for transition to become a well planned, organized progression that empowers servicemembers to make informed career decisions and take responsibility for advancing their personal goals.

Servicemembers will be made aware of the career readiness standards that they must meet long before they separate. They will be engaged throughout their military careers in mapping and refining their development plans to achieve their military goals and their post-military goals for employment, education, career technical training, or starting their own business.

In closing I want to note that the department expects approximately 300,000 servicemembers per year to participate in the redesigned TAP over the next four years. The end state for this program will be manifested by a population of servicemembers who have the tools and resources to empower themselves to make in-

formed career decisions, be competitive in the workforce, and continue to be positive contributors to the community as they transition to civilian life.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my statement. On behalf of the men and women in the military today and their families, I thank you and the members of this Subcommittee for your steadfast support and leadership in this important area. I am happy to answer any questions you or the other members of the Subcommittee may have.

[The prepared statement of Susan Kelly appears in the Appendix]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you. And I thank each of you for your testimony. And I will begin the questions. And to Dr. Kelly, the first question that I have, would servicemembers be required to choose what you have described as an optional track and to attend the track of their choice during the sixth and seventh days of TAP2?

Ms. KELLY. Sorry. Can you repeat that?

Mr. STUTZMAN. Yes. Would servicemembers be required to choose what you have described as an optional track and to attend the track of their choice during the sixth and seventh days of TAP2?

Ms. KELLY. Thank you for that question. Because this lets me answer and describe how the TAP GPS is actually designed. What we started off with with the service TAP program managers was actually to answer the question what is it that our servicemembers need to posture them for a successful transition to civilian life? We talked about the concrete products that they needed to show that would make them career ready. We started off with the end state, and that end state is the career readiness standards. And those career readiness standards are both common track and career track readiness standards. Meaning you have a financial plan for the first 12 months post-separation, or you are registered in VA's ebenefits so we automatically have them connected to Veterans Affairs. Those are a couple of examples of the common readiness standards.

There are also readiness standards that are connected to other paths that a military member may choose. And those career readiness standards might be for education, a completed application to an appropriate college to which they can apply for G.I. benefits showing they can make informed decisions to what those colleges are. For a technical training path, if that is what they are choosing for their own individual plan, it would be an application to that technical training institution, or an acceptance from that technical training institution. So there are specific career readiness standards that military members must meet based on that choice that they make in their path.

Mr. STUTZMAN. So let me understand. So would, so you are saying according to the path that they choose?

Ms. KELLY. That is correct.

Mr. STUTZMAN. So they would be required to choose an optional track?

Ms. KELLY. They choose. It depends on what their plans are. If they are planning to go immediately into the civilian workforce they have to meet the career readiness standards for employment. If they are choosing to go onto college or a community college, they

have to meet the career readiness standards for that particular path. The same for technical training.

Mr. STUTZMAN. So would the tracks be mandatory as a matter of the DoD policy?

Ms. KELLY. Well the issue is that, first of all, we are in agreement that one size does not fit all.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay.

Ms. KELLY. The military member gets to choose the path that they want. When they choose the path, they then tie themselves to meeting those career readiness standards.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Let me—

Ms. KELLY. And the curriculum and the path is what builds the skills to make them career ready.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Let me ask you this. You state that we must align the curriculum along all partner modules. Does that mean that every service will deliver the exact same curriculum model?

Ms. KELLY. We have allowed flexibility with the services. What they have to do is provide the standardized curriculum, the learning objectives that build the skills for the servicemember to meet the career readiness standards.

Mr. STUTZMAN. So the Marines, the Marine Corps would not have to adjust their curriculum then?

Ms. KELLY. The Marine Corps has to ensure that their separating Marines meet the career readiness standards. We are not imposing a certain number of hours. We are not imposing on any servicemember that they must attend a particular path except what is required by the VOW, which is the DOL employment workshop. The law mandates that they attend that workshop. So we are not forcing military members to choose their paths. They choose those. What they have to do, and what each of the Services have agreed to do, is ensure that the military members meet the career readiness standards that are connected to the path that the individual members chooses.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay.

Ms. KELLY. One of the issues that we were criticized for is creating a program that seemed to be one size fits all. We have moved away from that. We have created the Transition GPS so that it is based on the military member's choice.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Thank you. Mr. Moran, why do you believe the five-day model that tailors training to the immediate post-discharge needs of the servicemember is deficient compared to the model that requires all participants to attend the model that limits mandatory training to three days of employment focused training? Could you address that particular—

Mr. MORAN. Yes. Thank you for the question. I know that there is some confusion around this. First off, when the department undertook its revamping of its Transition Assistance Program employment workshop, we looked at what the law required the Secretary build and there were nine specific elements that we believed was necessary to meet the mark of Title X. We built our Transition Assistance Program workshop to those elements. We worked with academia. We worked with subject matter experts. And we worked with servicemembers and heard what they were looking for.

We built a curriculum based on those needs which times out to be a three-day curriculum. Our three-day curriculum then we believe is what the VOW Act has told the Secretary of Labor to put together. We built that curriculum and worked with DoD and the services, and in the GPS model we found that that three-day curriculum works nicely within the five day period. With DoD beginning on day one, with DOL taking over on day two, three, and four, and VA coming in on the fifth day. And then all the tracks that any particular servicemember wants to pursue follow those mandated requirements.

So I think in the process we get the best of both worlds. We meet all the VOW Act requirements but we also provide the flexibility and the addition transition assistance through the tracking or pathways process that the various services and DoD have put together.

Mr. STUTZMAN. I may be a little confused here. Can any of you clarify, are days six and seven, are those mandatory?

Ms. KELLY. It depends on the military members's choice of the path that they choose. What is mandatory is for them to meet the career readiness standards. The curriculum provides the skills building for young military members to be able to develop the products that show that they are career ready. We are mandating the career readiness standards—

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay, so—

Ms. KELLY. —for the military member to meet. If they choose the path—

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. So we are mandating, we are mandating readiness standards not necessarily mandating attendance?

Ms. KELLY. We are not mandating a set number of hours. We are not mandating attendance. They have to meet the career readiness standards. For instance, you may have a very senior Lieutenant Colonel who is in the Air Force who has earned two masters degrees.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Mm-hmm, sure.

Ms. KELLY. But who wants to continue their education after separation. The servicemember has already gone through the process of choosing colleges. That particular military member can meet the career readiness standards.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay.

Ms. KELLY. They have done it before. But whereas you may have a first termmer who is separating who is really daunted—

Mr. STUTZMAN. Sure.

Ms. KELLY. —by having to choose an appropriate community college or a four-year college. Who is overwhelmed by the application process. Who is not aware of the financial aid that is available to them other than the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill. The curriculum is built to help them meet those career readiness standards.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. That helps. Thank you. Mr. Braley?

Mr. BRALEY. Mr. Jeppson, the Small Business Administration has a host of resources available to help any small business owner avoid the alarming rate of small business failures in the first year. And when we are dealing with veterans separating out, who may or may not have the type of background and preparation to be one of those successful small business owners, can you help us under-

stand what this program will do to help them understand the importance of knowing what a business plan is? And financial plan? Having a qualified lender who can help you raise capital? And avoid all those missteps that you know from your personal experience so many small businesses struggle to overcome at a time when they are ready and full of energy and can't wait to get out there and start their own business. How are we going to help them with this program plug into that network of resources to increase the success rate of entrepreneurs who are in the program?

Mr. JEPPSON. Great, thank you for the question. I think that if I could boil it down to one thing. We are going to give them some training and education and just walk them through the basics of business ownership, the basics that they may or may not have depending on the rank and the service experience. But we will give them an opportunity to get into an even more detailed program in the eight-week course, which actually helps build a business plan. Along the way we will explain the fundamentals and then help them write the business plan.

But the single most important thing that we do from the SBA is we help them. Is we will introduce them to the resource partner network that we already have in the SBA, with our SBDCs, the women's chapters, the VBOCs. Many of these have veterans officers in there to help specifically with veterans issues. And that we can introduce them to people who can mentor and help them along the way.

So I think, as we give them some training, which will be valuable, is they go back home. They will be able to find their local SBA resource partner there who will understand how the banking system, the capital markets are in their area. And will have a better sense of the business market in their area and will be able to help them tailor their business plan. I believe that those three things will actually help us as we move the servicemember from service to a business owner.

Mr. BRALEY. In my first term I Chaired the Small Business Contracting and Technology Subcommittee which dealt with a lot of the government procurement programs that had veteran owned preferences. Is that going to be a component of this program at all, given the fact that unfortunately so many of those dollars go into the area in the Beltway here when they are just as easily available to businesses outside of this area if we had a better way of educating and preparing people to take advantage of those procurement opportunities?

Mr. JEPPSON. Absolutely, yes sir. There is a module within the curriculum. And it is mentioned in the two-day curriculum briefly and then expanded in the eight-day curriculum on what the opportunities for veteran-owned businesses and then especially the service-disabled veteran-owned, which many of our veterans meet the qualifications for these days.

Mr. BRALEY. I helped the Quad Cities Business Community set up a conference that is now an annual conference with the Rock Island Arsenal and a lot of the small businesses that are involved in procurement through the Arsenal. And it might be a good resource for this program to see how private businesses and local small business can come together and help educate and prepare

people for those opportunities. And we would be happy to work with you if that would be of any assistance.

Mr. JEPPSON. Absolutely. We look forward to it.

Mr. BRALEY. Mr. Pummill, one of the things I wanted to ask you about is the fact that we have talked about employment opportunities, we have talked about educational opportunities, we have talked about entrepreneurial opportunities, but there are people that are going through these programs who may have left right out of high school. They may be interested in learning a trade, serving as an apprentice. What are we going to be doing for them through this new revised program to plug them into ongoing existing apprenticeship programs to give them the type of job skills they might need that don't require a college education and don't require them going to work for a paycheck for somebody right after they separate?

Mr. PUMMILL. One of the modules that we are offering in this program that all the agencies put together is a technical training module. That is one of the two-day add-ons. If a servicemember determines that he or she would like to go into a technical field, they would enroll in the technical module. The technical module is being developed and led by the Veterans Administration and the intent is to acquaint them with the tools.

First of all, we want to find out based on your military occupation what you did in the military, your specialty, how close to you, how close are you to becoming an apprentice, a journeyman, or qualified in a trade? Can you advance in a trade based on that? What skills do you have? We provide them information on, let us say for example an individual wants to be an air frame mechanic and that is what he did in the military. And he wants to find out how he or she can be certified. We check out the certification. Then we find out, well where are you going to live? "Well, I am going to live in Green Bay, Wisconsin." We make sure that there is jobs of that kind of Green Bay, Wisconsin. Or we advise the servicemember that, you know, this is a great field, this is a great way to become an apprentice in that field, to care for your family. But you might consider one of these cities because these are where the jobs are.

It is a pretty good curriculum. We are about 80 percent done developing it right now. And it will be ready to roll out in about the next three weeks.

Mr. BRALEY. Thank you.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you. Mr. Walz?

Mr. WALZ. Well thank you, Chairman, and the Ranking Member. Thank all of you for being here. It's great to see the collaborative approach. We obviously all want to get this thing right. We want to do morally right by our warriors. But it makes sense economically to get folks transitioned back to civilian life, get them working, and going forward. So I'm very appreciative to have you here.

I am speaking a little bit as I look at this, and I hear where we are trying to get to. Having over the last, I have several Marines in my office who have gone through this. Myself, when I transitioned after a deployment in 2004 we, the chaplain showed us "The Horse Whisperer" and then we went home. And that was

what happened. And, and my soldiers ask me the moral of that story and I was not quite sure.

But, and then last October my Marines, I have one and I asked him to write down for me their experience on this. And coming back and actually doing this, returned from Afghanistan, six hours of class given by another sergeant. Nobody from VA, nobody from DOL, and not single mental health professional were present. Now I know we are all trying to get at this. And I say this not as derogatory or whatever. I think we should probably be asking that whole group of sergeants in the back. I am hearing about all these things they have to go through. They are simultaneously taking their warrior leadership courses, their ALCs and everything else. They are trying to figure that out. They are trying to move forward. How are we going to make sure that what looks good on paper is going to be implemented and have a result that actually does what we are supposed to? Because I think we are finally trying to get our mind wrapped around this.

But I have to be very honest when I look at them, I really liked what you said, Dr. Kelly, about this military lifestyle transition. I think the only way you can do this is if it is built in, it is long term, and you do not just jam it down towards the end. Because I know how that goes. They want to get the heck out of there and go on and do whatever.

And so it is not for lack of effort in many cases by all of our agencies. It is just, I am a teacher, our preparatory set is bad. They are not prepared to hear it, they are not prepared to go on. So how do we track this? How do we get buy in? Because first and foremost these warriors need to do their military job. And we never want to cross into that realm, where we are interfering with the job of the day or the mission that needs to be implemented. But we also have to be smart. We take them off the streets, transition them into warriors. It does make sense to transition them back into the civilian sector and not put up barriers to them.

So I liked, Mr. Pummill, your point about this. And we have addressed this issue, or starting to, this vet skills to job to make sure your certifications cross over, make sure at the state level. But if each of you, I know it is a bit of a subjective question, tell me how we can ensure that we are not just adding another layer? Because I see those young soldiers in the back and I am guessing they are thinking, or Airmen, I hear they are saying, "God dang it, it sounds like more for us to do." Just curious.

Ms. KELLY. If I could take that, please? I think that is a great question and that is exactly why the response for the task force with all of our partners, we developed three phases of transition preparation with moving into the military life cycle being our goal.

Each one of the services have already developed a schema of how they would start embedding transition preparation. Some of them start as early as basic training. Others start at that first permanent duty station. And part of the military training is to have a development plan. This is your MOS, these are the squares you are going to have to fill, if you allow me that vernacular, and this is the training that you are going to get. And here is your IDP. Some of the Services are actually looking at training even better their ca-

reer counselors to also look long term and to help the military member look at their post-separation goals.

Again, the Marines and now much of the Army are first termers. You are going to be with us four years or six years, whatever. Look at that IDP. This is what you are going to get out of your military training. How does that match up with what you want to do when you separate four years, six years, whatever that might be after your first term? Because that is the model for some of our services. It is a first, we take most people for one—

Mr. WALZ. And this is just integrated seamlessly so it is not an addition at the end of the workday? Come over here and do this, or whatever? We are seamlessly putting it in so it is happening?

Ms. KELLY. We are actually looking at the IDP, that individual development plan that military members already have, morphing that in into this individual transition plan. So that as they move towards the actual end of their military career, they are synched up.

We are also looking at developing virtual curriculum. We are developing the curriculum in the GPS. We are trying to get the curriculum right and the skills building piece right first. And then embed this virtual curriculum. And actually looking at the services learning management systems right now.

Mr. WALZ. And we are going to field this as soon as possible?

Ms. KELLY. The learning management systems are being reviewed now, we are still piloting the curriculum. We piloted some of the curriculum this summer. We are going to be piloting the education track, the tech training track, and the entrepreneurship in 2013. But we are going to embed all of that into a virtual curriculum so that it is available in a very high quality product. We have developed standards that we are all agreeing to for virtual curriculum. And embedding that into the learning management systems of each one of the services. That is where military members go anyway to get their online military training. Transition will be part of those same learning management systems.

But it is a step by step process and we are just getting started. But we are excited to see it through to fruition.

Mr. WALZ. Thank you. I yield back, Chairman.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you. If I could, I have one more question for Mr. Pummill. The VOW Act requires that DOL contract for TAP instruction. What is VA's position on contracting for the VA portion of TAP? And why should not VA and DOL jointly contract for TAP2 instruction?

Mr. PUMMILL. Mr. Chairman, we actually thought what DOL did was a great idea. I met with a senior member, the deputy over at Department of Labor, to look at the contract, see what they did, how they did it. With the thought of maybe we could use their contract and tie into it. It's a great contract. It was, you know, well written, it covers all the aspects of what they need to have done. The problem is it was too far down the road and out of scope for what we needed for the VA. So what I did was borrow a lot of what they had in their contract and we are developing a similar type contract for VA.

We have not determined at this point whether we are going to permanently contract out or use government FTE, because this is

a new task and new jobs. But what we do not want to do is as we are rolling this out and piloting it over the next year to 18 months, we do not want to hire permanent civilian people, put them in a location, and then find out that maybe we got the through put incorrect, the number of servicemembers going through is not right, the time period is not right, and we find out we have got too many or too few people at a location.

So we are going to start out with a contract option and then look at the contract option and do what is fiscally the right thing to do after we analyze it.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Thank you. Any other questions from the Committee? Okay, thank you. You all are dismissed.

I would like to recognize and invite our second panel to take the seats at the table. With us today on our second panel is General Robert Hedelund from the U.S. Marine Corps; General Jason Evans from the U.S. Army; Mr. Edward Cannon from the U.S. Navy; General Eden Murrie from the U.S. Air Force; and Admiral Daniel Neptun—Neptun, is that how that is pronounced?

Admiral NEPTUN. Neptun.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Yes, sir. Thank you. Sorry about that. From the U.S. Coast Guard. Welcome each of you and we will go ahead and start taking your testimony. And General Hedelund, when you are ready we will let you start. And you will be recognized for five minutes. And since you are a Marine, Marines are first to the fight. You are up.

STATEMENTS OF BRIGADIER GENERAL ROBERT HEDELUND, DIRECTOR OF MARINE AND FAMILY PROGRAMS, U.S. MARINE CORPS; BRIGADIER GENERAL JASON T. EVANS, ADJUTANT GENERAL, U.S. ARMY; MR. EDWARD CANNON, FLEET AND FAMILY READINESS PROGRAM DIRECTOR, U.S. NAVY; BRIGADIER GENERAL EDEN J. MURRIE, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES, U.S. AIR FORCE; AND REAR ADMIRAL DANIEL NEPTUN, ASSISTANCE COMMANDANT FOR HUMAN RESOURCES, U.S. COAST GUARD

STATEMENT OF BRIGADIER GENERAL ROBERT F. HEDELUND

General HEDELUND. Absolutely. We relish the opportunity. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Braley, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, on behalf of the Commandant of the Marine Corps, thank you for your steadfast support of Marines. And especially your attention to the needs of veteran Marines.

General Amos identified his commander's intent for transition assistance in his 2010 planning guidance. That guidance was direct and purposeful: revolutionize transition assistance. Later he provided additional direction. First, Marines must have skin in the game. Second, give Marines a choice of career transition pathways to include staying Marine through the Marine Corps Reserves. Third, ensure all mandatory training was completed. And fourth, all training must be provided by quality instructors at sufficient numbers to support the practical application of the training.

Partnerships in this process are crucial. We have been working with Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), our sister services, and key departments throughout the federal government to trans-

form our program and ensure our Marines and families are transition ready. Our transition readiness seminar remains a work in progress. With nearly a year of piloting and evolution of curriculum based on input from our Marines, we are nearing the desired end state and our Commandant's intent, which I stated here 15 months ago in this very room, our Marines want to attend our transition readiness seminar.

So the question becomes, how can you help us? Number one, give us the flexibility to determine and deliver our program in a manner which best prepares Marines and families for transition while meeting established standards. Second, give us the ability to evolve our program as we learn more about what works best. Thirdly, consider the benefits of a virtual piece to transition, which we have already discussed at some length, to assist spouses and family members and for veteran reach back. And fourthly, continue to educate our country, as you do so well at this Subcommittee, on the benefits of hiring veteran servicemembers.

I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Brigadier General Robert Hedelund appears in the Appendix]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you. General Evans, you are recognized for five minutes.

STATEMENT OF BRIGADIER GENERAL JASON T. EVANS

General EVANS. Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for providing me the opportunity to appear before you on behalf of America's Army. The United States Army is committed to ensuring the life-long success of our soldiers. Preparing our soldiers for transition by enhancing the training and service models and beginning the transition process early provides the greatest opportunity for post-military success.

The Army continues its commitment to support the soldier throughout the military life cycle, to include life after the Army. Our responsibility is to keep the soldier Army strong by providing essential counseling and training to ensure soldiers return to their local communities better prepared for civilian life.

Under the transition policy signed by the Secretary of the Army in August of last year, transition is no longer the end of the service event. Under our new military life cycle model all new soldiers will receive counseling pertaining to their educational and career goals within 30 days of reporting to the first permanent duty station. They will also be required to create an individual development plan that is recorded and tracked and can be adjusted during their tour of duty. The individual development plan will also serve as the basis for a soldier's individual transition plan. Under the Army's new policy, transition is now the commander's program. Additionally, transitioning soldiers will have to attain career readiness standards for the first time rather than just attend briefings, create a resume, and fill out a job or school application.

The Army Career and Alumni Program is actively engaged in testing and improved and expanded core curriculum and career readiness modules at various pilot assessment sites. We are staffing our installations, mobile and forward support teams, virtual

center, and a 24-hour call center to be ready for the November 21, 2012 implementation date.

In order to reach this goal we are adjusting our transition process in six phases. The first phase of implementation was creating the strategic plan. This occurred from January to April, 2012. Transition partners developed their respective curricula through the Office of the Secretary of Defense in coordination with Departments of Labor, Veterans Affairs, Education, Office of Personnel Management, and the Small Business Administration.

Phase two from May through June, 2012 concluded modifications to support the contract and funding. These modifications included the expansion of software capabilities to capture soldiers' transition progress and risk assessment. They increased the number of counselors needed for forward transition mobile support teams, as well as installation centers.

Phase three is currently in progress with an end date of November, 2012. During this recruit, hire, train, and pilot phase all new curricula will be developed and tested and new personnel are being trained. Pilots are currently active at several assessment sites to validate the Army's ability to implement the VOW Act transition requirements.

During phase four, which we will begin November 21, 2012, Army execution of the VOW Act becomes fully operational. All soldiers will receive the mandated pre-separation counseling, Veterans Affairs benefits briefing, and the Department of Labor employment workshop. These mandatory requirements will be completed over a 12-month period before separation.

Phase five will fulfill the choice based plans, success, and goals, and capstone requirement. This phase begins with core curriculum to include the requirements of incorporating the military occupational code crosswalk, the applications, financial planning, and individual transition planning courses, and ends with the capstone. The pilot will begin in March, 2013 and conclude no later than October, 2014.

The final phase is the military life cycle for transition and will be implemented no later than 2014. The military life cycle centers on pairing career readiness standards with career progression by synchronizing Army career tracker with transition training. The soldier will select a track based on career goals to include one of the following: employment, technical training, education, or entrepreneurial opportunities.

We have invested a tremendous amount of resources and deliberate planning to preserve the all volunteer force. We are continued to ensuring soldiers who have sacrificed so much in service of America's defense are taken care of as they begin the next chapter of their lives.

To conclude, I wish to thank all of you for your continued support. The Army is committed to being the leader of the Department of Defense transition efforts by finding the right solution for our soldiers and our veterans.

[The prepared statement of Brigadier General Jason T. Evans appears in the Appendix]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you. Mr. Cannon, you are recognized for five minutes.

STATEMENT OF EDWARD CANNON

Mr. CANNON. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Braley, distinguished members of this Committee, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify about the Navy Transition Assistance Program, or TAP, soon to be TAP2, and our continuing efforts to successfully transition Sailors to civilian life and employment.

I am pleased to discuss the current status of the Navy's Transition Assistance Program and how we will meet the Veterans Opportunity to Work Act that will be the foundation of our efforts to meet the career readiness standards of our Sailors.

The Navy has continued to provide top quality transition programs to a very diverse group of Sailors who are within 24 months of retiring or 12 months of separation. The Navy separates or retires approximately 39,000 Sailors each year from an overall force strength of approximately 322,000. In rough numbers approximately 50 percent transition after their first enlistment.

Many Sailors are sought over by civilian employers because of the training and skills they obtained in the Navy and we have a robust transition program in place to prepare our Sailors who possess these skills.

Every Sailor receives one on one pre-separation counseling to inform them of the programs and services that are available to assist them with their transition to civilian life. The Navy currently provides a four- to five-day transition workshop at Navy installations worldwide via our Fleet and Family Support Centers. Fleet and Family Support Centers also conduct first term and mid-career workshops in a four-day course to provide information that will enhance our active duty servicemember in achieving Navy and future civilian career goals.

Navy is collaborating with OSD, Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Labor, Department of Education, Small Business Administration, and the Office of Personnel Management to pilot a five-day curriculum that consolidates our current efforts with additional offerings designed to meet all elements of the VOW Act. This mandatory workshop will educate our Sailors on transition services that are available to them. It will help them translate their military training and experience into civilian skill sets and identify gaps in their training and experience that need to be filled to meet their personal goals, financial and individual transition goals.

Employment workshops and benefits and application briefings will also be provided as well as workshops on higher education, technical skills, and entrepreneurship. A capstone event provided 90 days prior to separation will verify that transitioning Sailors completed the five-day curriculum and achieved their career readiness standards.

In addition, all Sailors will be offered a warm hand off to appropriate government agencies and organizations that will provide our transitioning servicemembers continued benefits, services, and support as veterans.

The Navy wants to retain trained, qualified Sailors to continue to protect and serve the country. For those who choose to separate or retire, we are committed to ensuring that they leave the Navy with tools to be successful in their career transition.

Mr. Chairman, I have submitted the rest of my statement for the record and stand by to answer your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Edward Cannon appears in the Appendix]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you. General Murrie?

STATEMENT OF BRIGADIER GENERAL EDEN J. MURRIE

General MURRIE. Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Mr. Braley, and distinguished Subcommittee members for the opportunity to discuss the redesigned Transition Assistance Program. As always, we greatly appreciate the leadership and support this Subcommittee continuously provides on matters affecting the readiness and quality of life for our Airmen and their families.

The strategic direction for the Air Force Transition Assistance Program targets the emerging needs of our Active Guard and Reserve members and focuses on ensuring current and relevant solutions for today, tomorrow, and the years to come.

I am very proud of the men and women in our Airmen and Family Readiness Centers and in our Education Centers. These are the members under the leadership of our installation commanders entrusted with the front line planning and day to day execution of transition support and services to our total force Airmen. We are strengthening our traditional Transition Assistance Program model to help forge a stronger Air Force community, evolving and expanding our services to meet the constantly changing needs of our Airmen and their families.

The Air Force has a long history of providing support to its Airmen and families as they prepare to transition from military life back to the private sector. For years the Air Force has publicly stated that voluntary education is a primary recruitment and retention tool. Our members, enlisted and officers, take great advantage of this educational opportunity as we detail what is needed to help ensure maximum success in uniform and out.

Consequently this same educational opportunity and the manner in which our members embrace it plays a key role in their preparation for transition back to civilian life at the end of their military duties.

The redesigned Transition Support under the Veterans Opportunity to Work and the Veterans Employment Initiative result in even greater services and support to our separating and retiring total force members. Accordingly, we are closely linked with a wide range of partners to include the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Department of Labor, Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Education, the Small Business Administration, and other agencies to ensure VOW and VEI are well executed.

The Air Force is committed to sustaining this partnership as a critical platform to reaping the benefit of every opportunity and rendering sharp transition support and services to our Airmen and their families.

Thank you for the opportunity to be with you here today and I look forward to any questions.

[The prepared statement of Brigadier General Eden J. Murrie appears in the Appendix]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you. Admiral Neptun, you are recognized for five minutes.

STATEMENT OF REAR ADMIRAL DANIEL NEPTUN

Admiral NEPTUN. Good afternoon Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley, and the distinguished members of this Subcommittee. It is a pleasure for me to appear before you today to discuss the Coast Guard's Transition Assistant Program. On behalf of the men and women of the Coast Guard I thank this Subcommittee for its strong advocacy and support for our veterans.

Consistent with the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1995, the Coast Guard established transition assistance for its military personnel in October of 1994. Pursuant to such all separating and retiring servicemembers are provided access to transition assistance services. Involuntarily separated members also receive specific benefits. As with the other branches of the armed forces, the Coast Guard is committed to ensuring our veterans are prepared for their transition from active duty to civilian life.

While many features of the Coast Guard's Transition Assistance Program are similar to what the Department of Defense provides for transitioning members, there are some noteworthy differences between our services, our military members, and our programs.

First, when compared to the other armed forces the Coast Guard is relatively small in size and its personnel are broadly dispersed geographically. Additionally, many of the skills and experiences that our Coast Guard personnel acquire over their careers, ranging from administrative to financial management, human resources to law enforcement, maritime safety and security, and environmental response are often considered readily transferable to the civilian workforce. Finally, although some Coast Guard members have served overseas in war zones the Coast Guard does not have the same proportion of combat veterans as the other armed forces.

All of these factors are considered in developing and delivering transition assistance programs to best serve our Coast Guard members. The Coast Guard's program is designed to assist servicemembers and their families in making an informed and effective transition from military service to civilian life. An integral aspect of this vital effort is to ensure separating members are made aware of and have access to the numerous programs and services available to assist them in the transition process.

The Coast Guard has taken steps to ensure our men and women receive the support they need to transition successfully. For example, command representatives meet with all members separating, retiring, or entering the disability evaluation system usually 180 days before separation but not later than 15 days after official notification of separation. During pre-separation counseling, which must occur at least 90 days prior to separation, the command representative assists members in achieving educational, training, and employment objectives as well as those of their spouse.

Additionally, formal Coast Guard TAP seminars are delivered at our 13 Coast Guard bases. These seminars, developed in coordination with the Departments of Defense, Labor, and Veterans Affairs, provide instruction on skills identification, resume preparation,

interview techniques, and veterans entitlements. Seminars typically are five days in length.

The first three days include the core curriculum focused on the job search process provided by the Department of Labor. The last two days include presentations on veterans benefits, educational opportunities, TRICARE, retired pay, insurance, and the DD-214. Over the past several years approximately 1,600 of the 3,000 active duty and Reserve members who transition out of the Coast Guard each year elected to attend a transition seminar.

Pursuant to the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, the Coast Guard is developing plans to increase the number of scheduled seminars offered. Given the dispersed location of Coast Guard units, the service is exploring alternative delivery methods for members that cannot physically attend a seminar. The Coast Guard is currently working with the Departments of Defense, Labor, and Veterans Affairs to develop a comprehensive virtual solution for members who, for whatever reason, cannot attend a seminar on person. And we look forward to continue working with those departments to share ideas and tools.

Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today and for your continued support of the United States Coast Guard. And I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Rear Admiral Daniel Neptun appears in the Appendix]

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you to each of you for your testimony. I will begin with several questions. First of all to General Hedelund. General, can you please tell us about the feedback you have received from the Marines who have participated in the tailored model and their view of the tracks? And do you believe that they would be better off with the model proposed by OSD?

General HEDELUND. Thank you for that question, Mr. Chairman. The feedback that we have received, as you well know I think, that we have been in this business for quite a while of revising our curriculum, as I mentioned in my oral and written testimony. And the feedback that we get from Marines focuses on the choice. They, that is probably the biggest plus that we get from our Marines, is that they enjoy the opportunity to choose. They recognize, of course, the importance of the information that is received from the core curriculum as well. But having a little control over what they are about to experience in transition seems to really do well with them.

The, specifically if you are referring to the pilot in Miramar, we worked very hard with all of our partners to put together a package that best met our Commandant's intent of providing those pathways and quality instruction, but also complying with those elements of the VOW Act that are clearly mandatory.

So the feedback we have received from that has been very good as well. There are, there were some other, there were some outliers, if you will. But overall it was a pilot, after all, and the whole idea with the pilot is to take those lessons learned, put them to work, refine the content, and then roll it back into future pilots and future full scale curriculum. So I think that, I think that covers the question that you wanted.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Yeah. Could you touch a little bit on the lessons learned out of that pilot program?

General HEDELUND. I think, yes, sir. I think the first, the most important lesson that we can take away from that, from the pilot, and from doing this work together, is that the team is important. So while we sit here in Washington, D.C. and talk about how important this process is, what really is important to our individual Marines who are transitioning is how well does that team work out there at the installations where they are participating in the program?

Mr. STUTZMAN. Yes.

General HEDELUND. As we stabilize the curriculum and we put these teams together that will be executing this work out there, it is imperative that they understand the holistic approach so that they are well integrated. Right now, it, because this, because pilots are pilots, and curriculum are sometimes being rolled out for the first time, there are obvious places where there may be either redundancy overlap or friction points that have to be worked on. So the closer that team works together over time, the better that program and that deliver of the curriculum will be.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Yes.

General HEDELUND. So I think overall that is probably the biggest take away that we would say, is that teamwork is the key to success out there.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay, thank you. Admiral, do you believe that the virtual TAP that you described in your testimony fulfills VOW Act requirements that all servicemembers attend TAP? And also, could you describe how that process works and the results that you are seeing?

Admiral NEPTUN. Mr. Chairman, thank you for the question. I hope that virtual TAP for our purposes will allow us to expand to that other 47 percent of the Coast Guard that has not historically taken a TAP seminar. And that will help us get to compliance with the VOW Act. And it will also provide some choices. Because the, I think the best of e-learning is what we are really pursuing and collaborating with our sister services, as well as Department of Labor and Department of Veterans Affairs. We hope to come up with something that will really draw more people that tend to be reluctant to respond to a TAP seminar.

The second part of the question, I missed that, sir.

Mr. STUTZMAN. What kind of results? What type of feedback are you receiving on the virtual experience that you are giving to members?

Admiral NEPTUN. Mr. Chairman, we do a fair amount of our member training, departmental requirements, Coast Guard requirements, through the virtual e-learning environment. And it seems to go quite well. There is always some challenge getting 100 people in a classroom at any given time. Giving people e-learning alternatives, they can pick the time of the day that they choose to do it. That is a huge advantage and that is also what we see as an opportunity for any sort of eTAPs that we are able to put together. It lets people do that during their time. And I am very inspired by what the SBA representative presented in terms of the eight-week online curriculum for people that want to become mem-

bers of business. That is one of those tools I really look forward to offering to them as a way to get to their specific desires once they leave the Coast Guard.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Thank you. And if I could, if you could just give me a yes or no answer to the question from each of you. Do you believe that the tracks where the student can choose a class that fits their transition goals should be made mandatory? And I will start with you, General Hedelund.

General HEDELUND. Absolutely.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay.

General EVANS. Sir, not at this time. I would like to take it back and evaluate it.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. So a no for now?

General EVANS. Yes, sir.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Mr. Cannon?

Mr. CANNON. Similar to the Army. No for now, but we are looking at that possibility of making it mandatory.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Thank you. General Murrie?

General MURRIE. Sir, the same for me. I would say no at this time. We need to look at it. Once again, it is new and I think it will be important to take it as we go forward and reevaluate.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you. Admiral?

Admiral NEPTUN. Mr. Chairman, we are not looking to make it mandatory for people to choose a particular track.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Thank you very much. Mr. Braley?

Mr. BRALEY. General Hedelund, I know that Friday night was a tough night for the Marine Corps. And I just want you to know that my thoughts and prayers are with the families of Lieutenant Colonel Raible and Sergeant Atwell.

And without reigniting this interservice dispute that my fearful Chairman started I just want to point out that I had the opportunity earlier this year to go back to Iwo Jima with 12 World War II veterans who served there with my dad, who landed there the day both flags were raised on Mount Suribachi. And he landed on LST-808 that was piloted by Navy and Coast Guard personnel. And the mission was to clear the airfield so the Army Air Corps B-29s could land on Iwo Jima. And before he left Iwo Jima he was providing fire support to Army personnel. And General Hedelund, you said the most important lesson is that the team is important. And seeing you all sitting there, and thinking back on what my father experienced reminded me of why this is important.

And I took the flag that was presented to my mother at my father's funeral, exactly 31 years to the day before I went up Mount Suribachi, up there with me. And when you go there you will see these totems that are left by Navy corpsmen for John Bradley, who is in the statue across the river commemorating the flag raising at Iwo Jima.

And General Evans, I had the privilege of attending a wedding of a constituent named Ian Ralston, who was an Army combat medic, who is now paralyzed from the neck down. And he is living with one of the combat medics who served under him. And I was talking to his best man at the wedding about the difficulties he is having finding employment in the medical field despite the fact that his real world training would probably surpass anything he

could get working through a nursing program or any other type of emergency medical personnel program.

And I know Mr. Cannon, you identified opportunities to earn occupational credentials and licenses prior to separation. It seems to me with the huge demand in the healthcare field this is one of those areas we have to do a much better job of, is identifying all these specialty medical requirements in each of the 50 states and trying to find some way to standardize how we can transition trained medical personnel when there is high demand in the civilian community and they do not have to go through reeducation programs to relearn what they have already learned serving their country.

So I would be interested in hearing from our panel on ways we can make that happen based on your experiences dealing with this problem.

General EVANS. Well sir, thank you for the questions. One of the things the Army is doing, the Training and Doctrine Command, we are doing just that. Experimenting with and piloting those particular military occupational skills that are being taught in the school. And can we get those to translate to an EMT in a particular state? So sir, I am with you on that. And so that work is ongoing right now.

We are also, we have got a task force together looking at apprenticeship programs. Allowing soldiers who are transitioning to participate on duty time in those particular apprenticeship programs.

General HEDELUND. Sir if I may, first I want to make sure that I answered the question correctly about the mandatory nature. That applies to the Marine Corps. Okay? I would not want to say that we want to impose upon the other services. They have different demographics, they have different populations, and they have a different ethos and culture than the Marine Corps does. So we like the nature of a mandatory program but it may not work well for other services. That is number one.

Number two, I appreciate your comments, Ranking Member Braley, about Otis. Otis, that is Lieutenant Colonel Raible, was an instructor of mine at Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron 1 when I was the Commanding Officer (C.O.). So we were very, very close to him. And I appreciate your comments on that.

And thirdly I will answer much like my Army brother did here about the credentialing piece. We are currently working on a pilot for our, because since we do not have medical personnel per se, we do adore our corpsmen. But we are putting together a pilot for our warehousemen and supply folks and also for our heavy equipment operators so that we can make that transition again for, whether it is a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) on the heavy equipment side, or credential required for the warehousing piece, to be much more smooth. And so I am looking forward to the opportunity to team with the private organizations as well as with the Army on making that work.

Mr. BRALEY. Well I was able to drive an MRAP in Kuwait and my CDL expired a long time ago. So I just want to put that on the record, that I had a great time.

Mr. CANNON. Congressman Braley, three quick points to go there. First of all, as far as looking at the skill sets we currently

have 670 military career counselors embedded throughout the fleet. And so they on a daily basis are working with our military members to crosswalk those skill sets. To make sure that we are looking at not only today but how do they meet their career readiness standards and how are they preparing for the future?

The second point, you talk about teamwork. We had great reports back on the Small Business Administration pilot that we held at Joint Base Anacostia/Bolling. And in that class we had Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine. We got great feedback. In fact the only thing bad about it was I got a call from MCPON and CNO saying hey, how come we did not get to go to this as well? It was very popular. We got very good feedback from that.

And lastly, I just met today with Mrs. French, who is the ombudsman at large, and she hosted today, for the Navy, excuse me, she hosted today the Military Spouse Employment Program. And we specifically talked about credentialing for nurses and teachers and making sure that we can, from state to state, help our spouses out. I know this is specifically about veterans but it really all ties together. Are we looking out for how that can slide from your military career, from it being a spouse, to getting a job out in the community? So thank you, sir.

Admiral NEPTUN. If I may, sir, I would like to use my wife as an example. It reminded me that our spouses are very much a part of that veterans equation. And I am in my 20th assignment. She has been a registered nurse and a nurse practitioner across a variety of states. She has had to keep credentialed in five different states. And it is more challenging for nurse practitioners to do that. So she has chosen to just sort of hold back for now until I settle down finally and then get back into the business of nurse practicing. But it just is representative of the challenge that all of our spouses face as well. And for the members themselves, and try to match their credentials to what is available on the outside, we are very much in favor of finding ways to expedite and help people get there.

General MURRIE. Mr. Braley, like all of my colleagues we are looking at all of the credentialing. We have some very obvious skills that transfer very easily. Aircraft maintenance being one of those. But there are some not so obvious ones that we are making sure that we can take care of the folks that have those skills and make sure that they can transition to the outside.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay, thank you. Mr. Walz?

Mr. WALZ. Well, thank you Chairman. I want to thank all of you for the professionalism, for the enthusiasm you bring to this task. It, this is a part of readiness and it has to be done. It is about keeping faith with those who are willing to serve and about letting folks know ahead of time. And as I said, I think it is not just fulfilling that moral responsibility, it is smart economics for this country in a time we want to use those dollars wisely.

So I guess the question I would ask all of you is the devil is certainly in the details of delivering these. I want to make sure that we are not overly prescriptive because all of you will, you will take your orders from the civilian leadership and make it work. I want to know candidly if you think, are we providing the resources? Are we doing the right thing? Because I do think there is a, we have

to be cognizant of the mission first that needs to be done. And then for you to be able to simultaneously deliver on a long range plan. Are we getting that right in terms of what we are prescribing in law that comes to you, and then is written into regulation, and then the resources to fulfill what we are asking you to do? Is that, from a leadership perspective are we getting it right?

And I ask you to speak candidly if you can. It is just help us to get it. I know that, I understand that, I understand the nature of the question. But for me all I care about is for you to, I know you want to deliver it. Are we getting that part right?

Admiral NEPTUN. Sir, I will speak from the perspective of the Coast Guard because we are probably the most resource challenged of all the services. And this is important enough that we will find a way to get there. And in terms of the tools that you provide through the VOW Act and others to give us a bar to reach for, I think it is absolutely the right place to be. Our veterans deserve every bit of that focus. Thank you, sir.

General MURRIE. Sir, I agree with that. I am really proud of the program we have now but every program can get better. And the VOW Act and the VEI give us some guidance and some direction and some resources to help us assist that. Over 90 percent of our Airmen go beyond the mandatory pre-separation counseling for a three- to five-day course that we already offer. But we are going to make it better. We are going to do that with this direction. And so we appreciate the guidance.

Mr. CANNON. Congressman, very similar comments. About 85 percent of our folks currently go through the full TAP program. So anything we can do now that we are saying that it is mandatory, having that consistent curriculum, being forced to go through the pilots and learn from them, and then make adjustments has been very helpful. The only other concern we initially had, and we have worked through it, was there was honestly much concern about the amount of money required for computers and space. But we have worked through that. The Navy is very supportive of it so we are in the process now of rolling that out. And so we are looking very much forward to this program. Thank you.

General EVANS. Sir, we agree that we have the resources we need. The Army had started a study in 2009 by West Point and studied specifically the pre-separation program. And determined out of that that there was a couple of wins that we could get out of that quick. And that was one, getting commanders involved and making it a commander's program, and two, starting earlier instead of 90 days out. And so we issued an execution order in December, 2011, right before the VOW Act, became law. That, this is now a commander's program and soldiers will start 12 months out. So we welcome the guidance, sir.

General HEDELUND. Sir, I think we are fortunate that we have a Commandant and his Mrs. who are both very focused on this as a high priority. So the Marine Corps will make decisions based on those priorities. So while there are portions of this that could be fiscally challenging we do meet those challenges with setting priorities appropriate to the need.

We also would like to just state, as I mentioned briefly in my oral statement, that Marines are mission oriented. You give us the

task, you give us the objective to achieve, and we will achieve the objective. Tell us to take the hill, don't tell us how to take the hill. And we will be more than happy to meet that expectation, meet those standards, and deliver a quality product.

Mr. WALZ. Well again, I am very appreciative of all of you. And I think we need to keep sight of that we are going to take care of every single one of these folks. And while the unemployment rate is too high, we are moving folks out into the sector. We are having successes. We are improving those numbers. And we will not be satisfied until we get it all right. But I do applaud you on certainly taking this for the spirit of what is behind it and making it work. So with that, I yield back.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you. And since we have you here, could each of you describe, or give us a timeline for each of your services, for the full implementation, the timeline for the full implementation of TAP2? I mean, if you could give us some idea—

General HEDELUND. Mr. Chairman, if you mean by TAP2 the VOW Act, VOW compliance, the Marine Corps is VOW ready today. Now we have to implement across the Marine Corps, but we have the pieces in place that we need to be VOW compliant today.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Thank you. General Evans?

General EVANS. Sir, ditto. We are prepared to implement the VOW Act on the 21st of November.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Is this at all locations?

General EVANS. Yes, sir.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Thank you. Mr. Cannon?

Mr. CANNON. Yes. We will also be VOW Act compliant on the November date. Yes.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Thank you. General Murrie.

General MURRIE. Yes, sir. The same for the Air Force.

Admiral NEPTUN. Mr. Chairman, we have our tools in place to get there. And as I mentioned, the e-learning capability I think will help us get to a much closer to 100 percent participation, which is our biggest challenge right now. We do approximately 60 seminars a year across the country. We need to get that up to about 100, maybe more, so that we can reach out. And we will do that as well as e-learning and I think we will be able to achieve the goal.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Okay. Thank you. And you know, I would just mention that I would be interested in knowing more, or maybe an update down the road of how the success of e-learning is working for you all. And if it is something that, we can take look at and the success or the shortcomings of how that is working for your members. So—

Admiral NEPTUN. Yes, sir.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you. Any other questions from any of the members? Okay. I want to thank our final panel. I would ask our Ranking Member if he has any closing comments?

Mr. BRALEY. Well I just think that the amount of time we have spent in the last two years focusing on this specific program is justified by the demands for outplacement and preparation and information that is not just practical but is accessible. And so when we talk about things like e-learning we know that even though it may have some shortcomings, it is better than no learning. And so I think that our mission is to make sure that we are giving all the

resources we can in the most easily accessible and retrievable way possible. So that not just during the initial demobilization but for as long as necessary afterward those resources can easily be retrieved by the servicemembers who need them and we can be proud of the product they are getting. And with that, I will yield back.

Mr. STUTZMAN. Thank you. I hope today's hearing has shed some light on the need to continue our oversight of TAP2. It is just too important. As Mr. Braley mentioned, the work that we have put into it, and I know the need for those being discharged for employment is such an important aspect for them as they make the transition.

I would say to the witnesses that I hope you will see some of the logic of making attendance in the various tracks mandatory and adjust TAP2 accordingly. This Subcommittee will continue to monitor the implementation of TAP2 as the full implementation is rolled out.

I know that this Committee has discussed a possible trip sometime to view a training facility and I mentioned to staff that maybe we will see what the outcome of November and December looks like, but maybe we could find a time in December to possibly make a trip to see how programs are working.

This is maybe the last meeting. Obviously I do not know what the next two months brings. But I just want to say thank you to each of you who serve in each branch for your service, and I want to thank our staff. And of course it has been a real privilege to work alongside both Mr. Braley and Mr. Walz and the other Committee members as well. And I hope that we can continue to work together to make sure that we do serve our men and women who serve us in our military the best that we can.

So I ask unanimous consent that all members have five legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include any extraneous material related to today's hearing. Hearing no objection, so ordered. This Subcommittee is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:00 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

Prepared Statement of Hon. Marlin Stutzman, Chairman

Good afternoon. We are here today to receive testimony on the redesigned Transition Assistance Program or TAP. To differentiate between the original TAP and the redesigned version, I am going to refer to the new program simply as TAP 2.

TAP has been around for about 20 years with little change over that time other than to update the changes in the various benefit programs. And while the original TAP was, let's say, minimally effective, today's participants and today's civilian environment necessitated a revised approach from what had become known as "Death by PowerPoint."

Until the passage of last year's VOW to Hire Heroes Act, TAP was not mandatory, except in the U.S. Marine Corps, and I am pleased that the other Services have committed to comply with the VOW Act's mandatory attendance provisions. What the VOW Act did not do was describe what types of training must be provided under the mandatory attendance provision and I would like to offer some thoughts on what TAP 2 should provide.

Ultimately, the goal of TAP 2 is to smooth the way to civilian employment. That said, there are many paths to reach that ultimate goal and TAP 2 should offer participants training that reflects at least the primary paths. Following discharge, some servicemembers may choose to seek the full time permanent job path. Others will choose to use a path using their GI Bill or Vocational Rehabilitation benefits. Still others will choose the entrepreneurial career path or one involving training in the trades. Regardless, mandatory TAP 2 training must, and I repeat must, provide detailed training in each of these areas otherwise we are failing that one percent who defend us.



What is the Post-9/11 GI Bill Worth?

\$18,077 – Max 2012 private school T&F
 X 4 - years
\$72,308

\$ 1,350 - Avg monthly Stipend
 X 36 - months
\$48,600

\$120,908 - Total T&F + Stipends
+\$ 4,000 - 4 yrs Book Stipend
\$124,908
+\$16,800 - 4 yrs @ Avg Yellow Ribbon

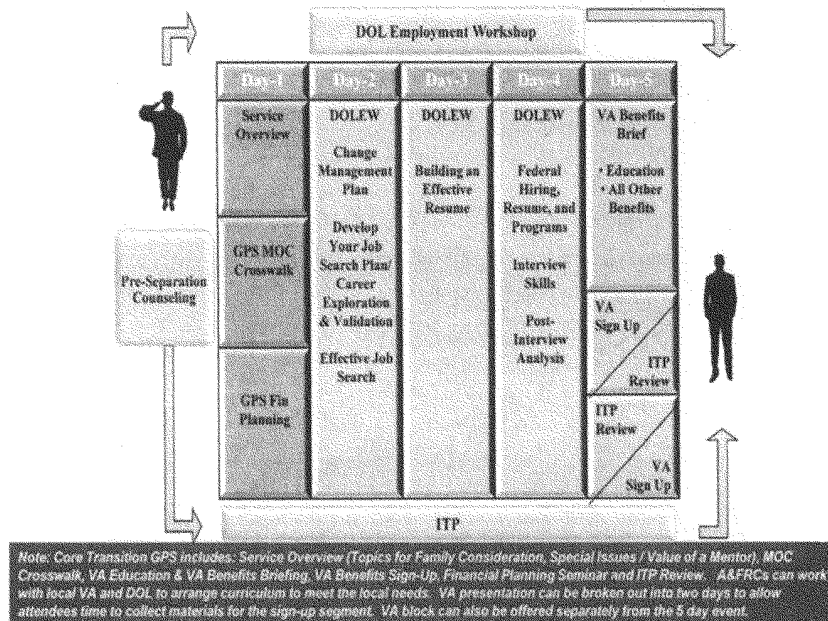
\$141,708 - Total Nominal Value

I have a couple slides to illustrate why the tailored approach is so important. If you will look at the monitors, this first slide shows the importance of ensuring that individuals who are going to use their GI Bill get a full explanation of how best to

use their benefit. Slide 1 shows that 4 years of Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits for someone attending a private institution amounts to over \$141,000. I would point out that the numbers are averages and can be significantly higher.

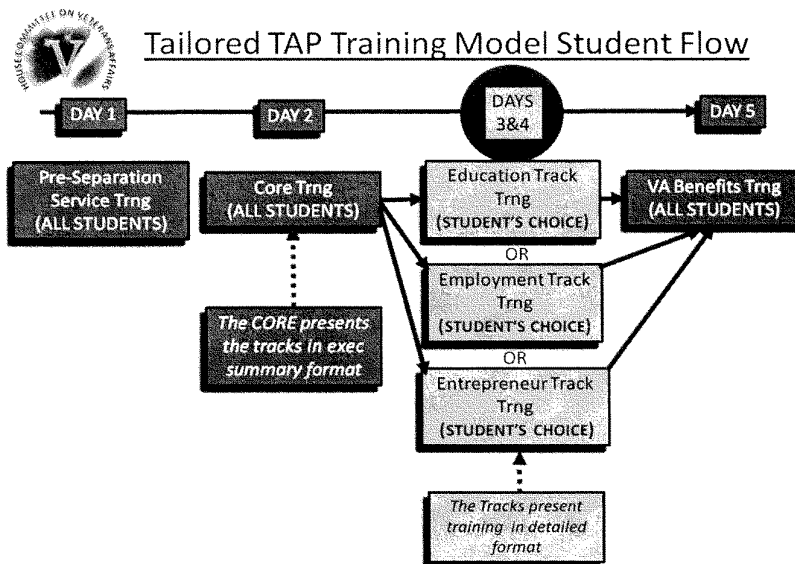
DoD's Notional Transition Model – Curriculum Presentation

Each day begins around 8:00 a.m. and ends around 5:00 p.m.



The second slide shows the curriculum DoD is implementing for TAP 2. You will note that it does not provide a timeframe for instruction in the various paths that I have mentioned. Rather, days 2, 3, and 4 are devoted entirely to job-hunting skills, something that is fine for those who intend to seek full time permanent employment following discharge.

But what about a typical class made of mostly first-term enlistees, 50 percent of whom indicate they intend to use their GI Bill benefits soon after discharge? What about those who want to start their own business or enter the trades? The DoD model of mandatory TAP 2 – as presented to us – does not appear to include training tailored to their needs.



I would offer that mandatory training must include those alternative paths and that forcing every servicemember to sit through 3 days of job-hunting skills at the expense of training tailored to their post-discharge intentions is a poor use of resources.

Slide 3 illustrates one way to achieve what I am suggesting. To be fair, some DoD officials have indicated that students will have the “option” to attend more tailored training on days 6 and 7. Unfortunately, there seems to be a mixed opinion from officials as to whether those days are considered as part of the mandatory training.

My staff, along with the Ranking Member’s staff recently observed TAP 2 at Randolph Air Force Base and Miramar Marine Corps Air Station. At Randolph, the class was mostly senior enlisted members, most of whom already had at least an Associate’s Degree and nearly all of whom intended to seek permanent jobs after discharge. They were given the DoD model which was appropriate for that class’ demographics.

The class at Miramar included primarily first termers who received a more tailored model. Service specific pre-separation counseling and VA benefits were condensed to one day of training. The Department of Labor employment workshop was condensed into two days of training and the remaining two days allowed the Marines to choose a track that best fit their transition goals.

The staff’s observations were that the Marines enjoyed the choice of the tracks. The Marines confirmed that if the tracks had been pushed to second week and were not mandatory, their supervisors probably would not give them the extra time off.

I say that not to criticize those supervisors, but rather to emphasize what may be a significant weakness in the DoD curriculum.

It is clear to me that a tailored model is the better approach. A program of providing a core instruction summarizing the highlights of the detailed tracks followed by allowing the servicemember to choose a track as part of the mandatory coursework is, in my opinion, a superior approach to meeting the needs of TAP participants.

Finally, I want to address the oversight role of this Subcommittee. While I realize that what is now being taught under TAP 2 is in its formative stages, having DoD employees question Congress’ oversight role is inappropriate. I hope the confrontational attitude regarding our Constitutional oversight responsibility ends now. We are all working towards the same goal.

I now recognize the distinguished Ranking Member for his remarks.

Prepared Statement of Hon. Bruce L. Braley

I'm glad we are taking this opportunity to conduct oversight on the redesign of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) once more before the end of this Congress. This is a critical stage in the program and we must ensure that the launch of the new TAP is successful in meeting the needs of our separating servicemembers. The TAP redesign is being lead by an interagency team composed of the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Labor, Education, and Homeland Security. I hope that all the agencies are working together to achieve this goal because the restructuring of this program is vitally important.

TAP will help military members explore their career readiness, obtain the tools necessary to apply their military careers to the civilian workforce and understand the benefits of using their Post-9/11 GI Bill to pursue a secondary education. The newly redesigned program gives participants a more tailored learning experience with updated content. I am pleased to see that we are leaving behind the more conventional route of "one size fits all" and "death by power point" towards a better individualized TAP.

Our goal is to provide our service men and women with a comprehensive transition assistance program that prepares them for life after the military so they can pursue any endeavor they wish, be it employment, education, or starting a new business. I'm hoping that today we will hear our witnesses discuss how the newly revamped TAP reflects the priorities of this Committee to revitalize the program and, most importantly, how it will prepare our servicemembers for civilian life.

Prepared Statement of Mr. Pummill

Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley, and Members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the redesign of the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) support to the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). In July, 2012, President Obama announced a redesign of TAP to help our separating servicemembers successfully transition to the civilian workforce, start a business, or pursue higher education. My testimony will summarize legacy TAP, our redesign efforts, and our implementation of redesigned TAP.

Legacy TAP

TAP is conducted under the auspices of a Memorandum of Understanding between VA and the Departments of Labor (DOL), Defense (DoD), and Homeland Security. The Departments work together to schedule briefings and classes on military bases to assist Servicemembers as they prepare to transition from active military service. Quarterly meetings among the agencies are held to oversee the operations of the program and to plan enhancements. VA TAP briefings are provided by trained military services coordinators (MSCs) from our regional offices on military installations in the United States and Puerto Rico. TAP briefings are also provided to Servicemembers stationed outside the United States by overseas MSCs who are temporarily assigned in the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Spain, Okinawa, Japan and Korea. In addition, VA provides transition assistance briefings to demobilizing Reserve and National Guard members. These briefings are typically held at the reserve component's home station after completion of a deployment.

Attendance at VA TAP briefings has been voluntary, and participation has been at the discretion of each Military Service. In fiscal year (FY) 2009, VA provided 3,523 TAP briefings for 134,626 attendees, while 276,615 Servicemembers separated from active duty status according to the Defense Manpower Data Center. In FY 2010, 144,207 attendees participated in 3,918 TAP briefings, while 268,918 Servicemembers separated. In FY 2011, 147,718 attendees took part in 3,470 briefings, while 273,000 Servicemembers separated.

VA believes that it is in Servicemembers' and their families' best interests to acquire a good understanding of Federal and state benefits that could impact their life, home, and work. Servicemembers who attend a TAP briefing are made aware of an array of VA benefits and services that can help ease their transition from the military to civilian life. Servicemembers are also advised of required supporting documentation and the process to apply for various benefits. Upon request, counseling services are provided by professional staff from VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program. Information on VA benefits is predominately delivered in a non-interactive lecture format.

Redesign Efforts

In the current labor market, which places a premium on job-ready skills and work experiences, knowledge of Federal and state benefits is critical to a successful transition from military to civilian life. As demonstrated by unemployment rates from DOL's Bureau of Labor Statistics, Servicemembers often find that embarking on successful and productive post-military careers is very challenging. In June 2011, the unemployment rate for post-9/11 Veterans was 13.3 percent. With a renewed focus on hiring Veterans in the public and private sectors, the unemployment rate for this cohort improved to less than ten percent in June 2012. However, VA and other stakeholders recognize that Servicemembers, particularly younger Servicemembers completing their first enlistment, would benefit from a more tailored TAP with a focus on employment assistance.

Administrative Action

In August 2011, the President directed DoD and VA to lead the Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI) Task Force and provide recommendations to maximize the career readiness of all Servicemembers. The Task Force members met weekly for five months. In late 2011, the members recommended a comprehensive training and service-delivery model with an end-goal of strengthening the transition of Servicemembers from military to civilian status. The proposed model consisted of four key features: career readiness standards; transition assistance integrated into the military life cycle; an outcome-based training curriculum; and an end-of-military-career event.

In early 2012, an interagency Executive Steering Committee was established to develop implementation strategies for the VEI Task Force principal recommendations. The core outcome-based training curriculum, entitled Transition Goals, Planning, and Success (GPS), consists of five days of instruction provided by the military services, DOL, and VA. In addition to the core Transition GPS, two-day electives are offered for three tracks— education, technical training, and entrepreneurship. Prior to separation, a Servicemember will participate in an end-of-military-career event where a designated official will certify that Transition GPS requirements have been fulfilled.

Congressional Action

The VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 was enacted in November, 2011. It required VA, DOL, and DoD to expand current programs to ensure a seamless post-military transition for Servicemembers. This legislation, in addition to the steps being taken by the VEI Task Force, aggressively addressed the high unemployment rate of Post-9/11 Veterans through a multitude of comprehensive provisions, including improvements to TAP, retraining opportunities for unemployed Veterans, and employer tax credits for hiring unemployed Veterans. In addition, the VOW to Hire Heroes Act mandated participation in previously voluntary portions of TAP by November 21, 2012, as well as pre-separation counseling, a VA briefing, and DOL's Employment Workshop.

VA Responsibilities—Redesigned TAP

VA's portion of the Transition GPS includes four hours of interactive instruction, which replaces the previous lecture and slide-deck presentation. The new format allocates one hour to VA education benefits and three hours to all other VA benefits and services. With assistance from the Department of Education (ED), a VA project team completely revised the current VA briefing, creating an interactive curriculum that incorporates adult-learning principles. This revision reduced the overwhelming number of slides by over 50 percent. Rather than viewing a static and lengthy slide presentation, Servicemembers will now participate in interactive activities that teach them how to review, apply for, and receive the benefits and services they have earned. To ensure that Servicemembers have access to all the information they need, VA has also developed new user-friendly classroom reference materials to augment this curriculum, including the VA Benefits Reference Guide, which highlights each benefit or group of benefits, outlines eligibility requirements, and provides actionable steps to access the specific benefit. The VA Benefits Reference Guide also provides web addresses and information on other resources to assist Servicemembers in making the most informed decision when choosing their benefit options. VA personnel have delivered TAP briefings in various venues, which are not always conducive to adult learning. Auditoriums and meeting spaces on military bases that can accommodate hundreds of Servicemembers are commonly used. In the newly designed TAP program, the number of Servicemembers attending the four-hour VA benefits module generally will be 50 maximum Servicemembers to one VA instructor.

VA was also tasked to lead development and implementation of the two-day technical training track, during which time Servicemembers are provided advice on different technical fields as potential career choices. In addition, VA is providing assistance to other agencies to develop the other two tracks, education and entrepreneurship, to ensure pertinent VA benefits information is included. All of the two-day elective tracks and the end-of-military-career event are currently under development. The number of students permitted to attend the two-day technical training track has been limited to 50 students per instructor. A minimum student load has not been finalized and will depend on the number of Servicemembers who express an interest in attending.

In addition, VA is in the process of developing a virtual version of VA's portion of TAP to be available in different eLearning modalities. Virtual briefings will mirror the classroom environment and will be used by Servicemembers where appropriate. VA is actively collaborating with DoD to define functional requirements for this virtual option. An interagency working group has proposed guiding principles for development of the virtual TAP curriculum to meet the needs of separating Servicemembers.

Implementation

Successful implementation of the redesigned TAP is critical to providing servicemembers with the tools required for successful transition. VA continues to assess the number of Servicemembers who will participate and the resources required to provide an optimum delivery of services to military personnel and their families. VA has met with DOL officials to review the delivery of its portion of TAP by contractors and to determine if it is feasible, as well as legally and fiscally permissible to acquire the services of DOL for the delivery of the VA portion of TAP. VA expects to complete its analysis in the next 60 days.

VA will continue to work with Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) located on or near military installations. VA informs Servicemembers that VSOs are independent of VA and can provide expert advice when they are interested in applying for VA benefits. The VA Benefits Reference Guide given to each Servicemember contains a link to information on VSO representatives in a specific geographic area. VA values the relationship we have with our VSO partners and the assistance they provide. We look forward to continuing this positive relationship that results in best outcomes and improved services for our Servicemembers and Veterans.

Demand-Driven Planning Factors

The historical annual demand for VA TAP briefings has averaged just over 142,000 attendees between FY 2009 and FY 2011. Based on the VOW to Hire Heroes Act, VA is now required to provide a TAP briefing to all separating Servicemembers. As such, VA's planning model to implement the VOW Act and VEI Task Force requirements is demand-driven, using total separation numbers provided by the Military Services. For resource modeling purposes, VA currently projects that approximately 307,000 Servicemembers will separate, demobilize, or deactivate per year for the next four years. The Military Services have provided VA with projected transitioning Servicemembers at all military installations in the United States and at overseas locations. For resource modeling, VA may need to have a presence 251 military bases, with VA staffing levels driven by the projected demand at each site. VA will continue to work with the Services throughout implementation to refine our resource requirements.

Pilot Sites

Prior to any pilot being conducted, VA staff accompanied DoD personnel in performing site assessments to determine initial operational capabilities. During these site visits, interagency teams met with local military installation personnel to discuss infrastructure and operational requirements that needed to be in place for the pilot. The redesigned VA TAP has been piloted at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, FL; Naval Station Norfolk, VA; Randolph Air Force Base San Antonio, TX; United States Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, CA; and Army Fort Sill, OK. In addition, VA conducted pilots with the Guard and Reserve components to include Fort Hood, TX, for the Army Reserve and Camp Shelby, MS, for the Army National Guard.

An interagency evaluation team consisting of representatives from DoD, the Military Services, VA, DOL, and the Small Business Administration (SBA) were present at pilot sites to observe and provide constructive feedback that will be used to improve the VA TAP session. Feedback indicated that VA met its stated learning objectives for each training module, but several comments indicated that facilitators need to have an increased awareness to integrate their portion of TAP into the overall GPS curriculum to ensure a well-coordinated delivery and to minimize duplication of effort.

In addition to feedback from the evaluation teams, an interagency project team developed a survey to track attendance and customer feedback from both the pilots and the full TAP program deployment. This tool provides VA with valuable information, including participation rates, customer satisfaction data, and qualitative feedback, which will help VA to better meet the needs of transitioning Servicemembers. VA, DoD, and our other agencies are reviewing data from the survey at the pilot locations to continue making improvements.

Timeline

Implementation of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act and VEI Task Force requirements will occur using a sequential, phased-in approach. Phase 1 will implement the VOW Act by November 21, 2012; Phase 2 will implement Transition GPS, and Phase 3 will implement other VEI Task Force recommendations. VA is committed to taking action on overarching implementation strategies and will complete key operational and programmatic goals through multi-agency collaborative efforts with DoD, Military Services, DOL, ED, and SBA.

During Phase 1, which focuses on implementation of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act, VA will expand the previously optional four-hour VA TAP briefing to a mandatory VA benefits briefing with a ratio of 50 attendees to one instructor. VA will use feedback from pilot sites and interagency evaluation teams to improve our training. During Phase 1, VA will work with DoD to enhance its online version of TAP. These web-based formats will allow Veterans as well as Servicemembers in remote locations to go back and review the latest information concerning VA benefits and services.

During Phase 2, which centers on implementing the Transition GPS, VA will develop the curriculum for the optional technical training track, and will assist DoD and SBA with curriculum development for the education and entrepreneurship tracks. VA will provide support to our agency partners with the implementation of the full VEI Task Force recommended curriculum. In addition, VA will continue to assess and improve the delivery of TAP information deployed in Phase 1.

Phase 3 will institutionalize VEI Task Force components of the redesigned TAP. VA will assist DoD and the Military Services in implementing other VEI Task Force recommendations, including a capstone event prior to a Servicemember's transition to verify and enhance transition services. VA will also assist with the implementation of a military life cycle transition model to incorporate preparation for Servicemembers' career transition throughout their military service.

Conclusion

VA is proud of our continuing role in the transition of Servicemembers from military to civilian life and seeks to continually improve the quality and breadth of our outreach efforts to active duty, Reserve, and National Guard members. VA has aggressively piloted its revised benefit briefings, developed implementation plans for the newly designed TAP, and is excited about the opportunities it provides to our Servicemembers and their families. VA fully supports the Administration and Congressional efforts to ensure that transitioning Servicemembers are ready for employment or education upon separation.

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

Prepared Statement of Mr. John K. Moran

Good Morning Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's hearing on "Examining the Re-Design of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP)". With the drawdown outlined in the recently released Defense Strategic Review, the number of returning and transitioning Service Members is expected to increase over the next five years by an estimated 200,000 per year. The TAP redesign is an important part of the Administration's efforts to ensure that America fulfills its obligations to these Service Members, Veterans, and their families.

Every day, we are reminded of the tremendous sacrifices made by the Members of the U.S. Armed Services, National Guard and Reserve. They leave their friends, families and careers behind to defend our freedoms around the world. These brave men and women deserve a hero's welcome and a chance to utilize their unique skills to help rebuild our economy when they return home. Yet, all too often, those who have given so much for America face a difficult transition back to civilian life and struggle to find a job worthy of their talents. President Obama and Secretary Solis are committed to serving our military families as well as they've served us by pro-

viding them with the services and support they need and deserve to successfully transition to the civilian workforce and find and secure meaningful careers.

My name is John Moran, and as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) at the Department of Labor, I am proud of the work the Department is doing to support our Service Members, Veterans, and spouses. We provide these American heroes with the critical resources and expertise they need and deserve to help prepare them to obtain meaningful careers, maximize their employment opportunities, and protect their employment rights.

Prepare, Provide and Protect:

In all our efforts, the Department is guided by the **three P's: Prepare, Provide and Protect**. We *Prepare* our Veterans, separating Service Members and their spouses to transition from the military to the civilian workforce through a variety of programs, the most important and extensive of which is the Transition Assistance Program, which I will discuss in more detail later in my testimony.

We *Provide* them with the critical resources, expertise, and training to assist them in locating and obtaining meaningful careers. We do so through services provided at the more than 2,800 American Job Centers (AJC) (formerly known as Career One-Stops) that serve as the cornerstone for the Nation's workforce investment system, as well as at other locations. The Department ensures that Veterans, eligible spouses, and transitioning Service Members receive priority of service at the AJCs with respect to all Department of Labor (DOL)-funded employment and training programs.

As you know, the Department has decades of experience working with states, local areas, Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs), non-profits, employers, and many others to advance the recruitment, training and employment of Veterans and transitioning Service Members. Through the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program, for example, the Department provides grants to states to support Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) staff that provide outreach services and intensive employment assistance to meet the needs of eligible Veterans and transitioning Service Members.

We *Protect* the employment rights of the men and women that serve this Nation and ensure they are provided every opportunity they have earned in the workplace. Among the important worker protection laws enforced by DOL is the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA), which prohibits discrimination against Members of the Armed Services, Guard and Reserve because of their past, present, or future military obligations and provides for prompt reemployment and full restoration of benefits upon completion of protected service.

The Department also works diligently to investigate and resolve Veterans' Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA) complaints and to ensure that Veterans receive their due preference in Federal employment. In addition, we enforce the Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974 (VEVRAA), which prohibits Federal contractors and subcontractors from discriminating against protected Veterans and transitioning Service Members, and requires them to ensure equal opportunity in all aspects of employment.

These three P's guide all our efforts, day in and day out, to serve these brave men and women with a broad array of coordinated programs and initiatives that lead to the Secretary's vision of "Good Jobs for Everyone."

Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Employment Workshops:

The U.S. military transitions approximately 160,000 active duty Service Members and demobilizes 95,000 Reservists and National Guard members annually. Given these figures, it is imperative that we *Prepare* our men and women to reintegrate into the civilian workforce by providing transition assistance and employment services. This is especially true now that the Iraq war has officially ended and we are drawing down our presence in Afghanistan which we expect to result in an increased number of troops transitioning out of the military in the coming months.

As I mentioned earlier in my testimony, an important program, designed to prepare separating Service Members and their spouses' for transition from the military to civilian employment, is TAP, an interagency effort led by the Departments of Labor, Veterans Affairs (VA), Defense (DoD), and Homeland Security (DHS). Through TAP, the DOL brings to bear its extensive expertise in employment services to provide a comprehensive three-day TAP Employment Workshop, now known as the DOL Employment Workshop, at U.S. military installations around the world.

The Department began providing the DOL Employment Workshops over 20 years ago when Congress passed the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1991 (P.L. 101-510). Since then, the number of workshops, participants and locations has continued to increase. For instance, in 2003 we expanded TAP to overseas

military installations, pursuant to section 309 of the Veterans Benefits Act of 2003. Two years later, in FY 2005, DOL began offering Employment Workshops to returning members of the Reserve and National Guard and committed to providing requested modules at the 30, 60, and 90-day Yellow Ribbon Reintegration programs.

To date, the Department has provided training and services through Employment Workshops to over 2.5 million separating or retiring Service Members and their spouses at 272 locations worldwide. Last year alone, DOL provided more than 4,200 Employment Workshops to nearly 145,000 participants at domestic and overseas locations.

Since its inception, the DOL Employment Workshop has been a valuable tool for Service Members transitioning into the civilian workforce. However, while the needs of transitioning Service Members have changed over the past 20 years, the Transition Assistance Program had remained largely unchanged.

Last year, the Department initiated a major effort aimed at revamping and updating the Employment Workshop curriculum to bring it up to date and current with emerging best practices in career development and adult learning. DOL worked with its partner agencies to significantly redesign the DOL Employment Workshop to make it more engaging and relevant in light of the unique challenges facing returning Service Members, as they look to transition into meaningful civilian careers during the current economic recession. Aside from a new curriculum, delivery methods, and student hand-out materials, the redesign of the Employment Workshop also includes tools to help Service Members match their military experience to jobs that require similar training, experience, and skills.

VEI Task Force for a Career-Ready Military and the VOW to Hire Heroes Act:

Around the same time that DOL began the redesign effort, the President created a Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI) Task Force for a Career-Ready Military to develop proposals to maximize the career readiness of all Service Members. This effort was aimed at building on the existing TAP program to give separating Service Members a clear path: to civilian employment; to success in an academic or technical training program; or to the successful start-up of an independent business entity or non-profit organization. The Task Force was created in August of 2011, and included representatives from the Departments of Defense Veterans Affairs, Labor, Education, the Small Business Administration (SBA), and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Together, we worked to develop a new transition program to meet the President's mandate for a career ready military.

The Task Force also worked to incorporate the requirements of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (VOW), which the President signed into law in November 2011. The VOW Act mandates several reforms to the interagency TAP, such as mandatory participation, with some exceptions to be determined by DoD and DHS, in consultation with DOL and VA. The VOW Act also requires that by November 21, 2013, DOL use contract instructors or facilitators in delivering its Employment Workshop.

DOL Employment Workshop Redesign—Phase I:

The Department worked with our partner agencies on the VEI Task Force throughout the redesign process. In August 2011 we initiated the process by awarding a contract to redesign the DOL Employment Workshop curriculum. The first redesign of the employment workshop curriculum was completed in November 2011, with the publication of a TAP workshop participant manual, entitled "*It's Your Future! DOL Employment Workshop: Participant Guide*" and companion "*Leader Guide*" for workshop facilitators. In addition, facilitators were provided with CDs containing various videos and PowerPoint slides that could be used during their presentations. The new TAP curriculum was divided into 17 individual modules, 12 of which were intended to be taught in the classroom over three days. There are also three web-based modules and one to be included as a reference to be used after the workshop.

Prototype workshops using the new curriculum were then tested at four active duty military installations including, Andrews Air Force Base, Naval Station Norfolk, Marine Corp Base Camp Lejune, and the Army base at Fort Bragg. DOL then revised the curriculum based on observations and feedback from the four pilot sites.

DOL Employment Workshop Redesign—Phase II:

Beginning in December 2011, the current TAP workshop instructors, comprised of DVOPS and LVERs, were trained on how to facilitate the redesigned curriculum. In February 2012, this cadre of instructors began to deliver the workshop under a 3-month pilot program at 11 active duty installations across the services, including the following sites: Army (Ft. Bragg, Ft. Knox, Ft. Belvoir and Ft. Drum), Navy (NAS Jacksonville and Naval Base San Diego), Air Force (Travis AFB and JB

McGuire), Marine Corps (MCB Quantico and MCAS Miramar), and Coast Guard (Cape May).

Beginning in February of 2012, the Department conducted a third-party formal evaluation of the workshop's effectiveness. In this evaluation, the aim was to determine if the redesigned TAP curriculum provided exiting Service Members with the skills, tools, and resources needed to transition back into civilian employment. Additionally, this evaluation effort was designed to capture direct feedback from TAP facilitators and workshop participants to assess levels of satisfaction, explore workshop effectiveness for participants, and identify potential areas in which the new curriculum could be revised and enhanced.

The main study findings and recommendations were based on over 5,200 comments derived from: (1) observational visits to 11 military bases piloting the new TAP curriculum; (2) in-person interviews with facilitators involved in conducting the pilot-tests of the new curriculum at these bases; (3) a survey of participants attending workshops at the pilot sites; and (4) a survey of facilitators conducting the workshops at the 11 military bases. Based on the preliminary results of this evaluation, along with feedback from the piloting sites and other commentators, a team of Subject Matter Experts began revising the curriculum in April of 2012.

Proposed revisions included:

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

DOL Employment Workshop Redesign—Phase III:

In early May 2012, the revised DOL Employment Workshop curriculum was completed and sent out for review and comment to representatives from over 100 different organizations including Federal and state governmental entities, Members of Congress and their staff, Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), experts in adult learning and training techniques, Veterans, transitioning Service Members, State Workforce Agencies, Army, Air Force (USAF), Air Force Reserve (AFR), Air Force National Guard (AFNG), Coast Guard (USCG), Navy (USN), Marine Corps (USMC) and others.

Based on the feedback received from the pilot, along with the formal evaluation report, DOL fine-tuned the Employment Workshop curriculum. In June 2012, the revised curriculum and training were approved.

Redesigned 3-Day DOL Employment Workshop:

The redesigned DOL Employment Workshop focuses on experiential learning and best practices, with an increased emphasis on networking and communicating the Veteran's skill value to the employer. This new three-day curriculum relies heavily on interaction and adult learning principles. It is specifically geared toward the mechanics of getting a good job, exploring career interests, searching the labor market, building resumes, preparing for interviews, and negotiating a job offer.

On Day 1, for example, participants learn how to develop a "Change Management Plan" to identify an overall strategy for transitioning into the workforce, explore new careers that complement the skills and expertise learned through their military service, develop a master job application from which targeted resumes can be built, and learn how to research the job market using the latest search tools. On Day 2 participants learn how to analyze the job market, understand the difference between applications and resumes, how to use social media in job searches and networking, and practice targeted resume development. During the final session on Day 3, participants learn how searching for a Federal job differs from the private sector, and they hone their interview skills through a mock interview exercise.

Transition Goals, Plan, Success (GPS) Program:

The Department has collaborated with VEI Task Force members to undertake an additional pilot of the DOL Employment Workshop, along with the other components of the new redesigned TAP, collectively known as *Transition GPS* at seven military installations. This new model will meet the President's call for a career-ready military, and is designed to be implemented over the entire course of a Service Member's military career.

One aspect of *Transition GPS* consists of a five-day series of training sessions and workshops that make up the core curriculum Service Members will be required to attend. During these five days, DoD will provide an overview of the program and

available services, conduct a financial planning seminar and lead Service Members through a Military Occupational Code Crosswalk to translate their military skills, training, and experience into civilian occupations, credentials, and employment. The VA will conduct a workshop on available Veterans' benefits and services, and DOL will deliver the redesigned Employment Workshop previously described above. In addition, transitioning Service Members will have the option of participating in tailored tracks in addition to the Core GPS Curriculum including: (1) an education track; (2) a technical and skills training track; and (3) an entrepreneurship track.

The *Transition GPS* pilot was primarily focused on how well each agency's component pieces complement each other in order to ensure a logical flow of information and alleviate duplication. Feedback has been positive and indicates that the new DOL Employment Workshop is meeting the needs of transitioning Service Members and their spouses. Therefore, DOL does not anticipate any significant revisions to the curriculum, and we are moving forward with our phased rollout plan.

As mandated by the VOW Act, DOL awarded a contract in compliance with the 100 percent contractor facilitation requirement. We are now ahead of schedule to transition to full contract facilitation and implementation of the new DOL Employment Workshop curriculum at all military installations worldwide by January 2013.

The result has been a well-received, well-tested curriculum that was developed to be responsive to customer input, and inclusive of training best practices for adult learners. Preparing separating Service Members and their spouses for the transition to the civilian job market is central to our mission and we take that mission seriously.

Conclusion

In the next five years, one million Service Members men and women will be transitioning from active duty to civilian life. We owe them the best services and benefits our Nation can provide. The Department, along with the rest of the Administration, is firmly committed to fulfilling that sacred obligation. We strive daily to do so through programs and services designed to **Prepare, Provide and Protect** our Veterans, transitioning Service Members and their spouses.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Braley, Members of the Subcommittee, this concludes my statement. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

ATTACHMENT 1

DOL TAP EMPLOYMENT WORKSHOP (DOLEW) REDESIGN TIMELINE

Action	Date:
Redesign TAP contract Awarded	8/2011
New DOLEW curriculum developed	10/2011
Began new DOLEW tested at 4 military installations	10/2011
DVOP/LVER facilitators were trained on new curriculum	12/2011
3-month Pilot program began at 11 sites	2/2012
DOLEW curriculum & training revisions	5/2012
DOLEW curriculum & training finalized and approved	6/2012
New DOLEW curriculum & training rollout	7/2012
DOLEW Facilitation Contract Awarded	8/2012
Contractor Phase-In Period to Recruit, Train and obtain SOFA Agreements for OCONUS Sites	10-12/2012
100% Contract Facilitation at all DOLEW sites	1/2013

Prepared Statement of Mr. Rhett Jeppson

Chairman Marlin A. Stutzman (IN), Ranking Member Bruce L. Braley (IA) and members of the Subcommittee—thank you for inviting me to testify.

My name is Rhett Jeppson. I currently serve as the Associate Administrator for Veterans Small Business Development at the U.S. Small Business Administration and am also a veteran. I am a Lieutenant Colonel in the United States Marines Corps Reserve, with recent service in U.S. European Command, U.S. Forces Afghanistan, and U.S. Special Operations. After my first tour in the Marine Corps, I left the service to operate a small family business while my father underwent a bone marrow transplant. Additionally, in the late nineties I served as the Director of State Purchasing in Florida.

Two of America's greatest assets are the service of our returning veterans and the economic dynamism of our small businesses. Our Nation's 28 million small businesses employ half of the private sector workforce and are responsible for creating 2 out of 3 net new private sector jobs across the country.¹

As small business owners, veterans continue to serve our country and create jobs in our communities. According to the most recent U.S. Census data, nearly 1 in 10 small businesses are veteran-owned. These businesses generate about \$1.2 trillion in receipts and employ nearly 5.8 million Americans.²

Research also demonstrates that veterans over index in entrepreneurship. In the private sector workforce, veterans are at least 45 percent more likely than those with no active-duty military experience to be self-employed.³

Today, there are over 200,000 servicemembers each year transitioning from active service. Boots to Business, the entrepreneurial track of the new Transition Assistance Program (TAP), is focused on providing these servicemembers with the training, tools and resources they need to make the transition from military servicemembers to successful business leaders.

SBA's Role Supporting Veteran-Owned Businesses

At SBA we are focused on making sure our Nation's veterans have the **capital**, the **counseling** and the access to **contracting** opportunities they need to start, build and grow successful business. This is what we refer to as our 3 Cs: capital, counseling, and contracting.

The first 'C' is capital. In FY 2011, SBA supported more than 4,300 loans to veteran business owners, totaling more than \$1.5 billion.

In addition, our Patriot Express Loan program has supported more than \$460 million in lending to veteran entrepreneurs and small business owners over the last three years. The program, which has been extended through 2013, offers low-interest loans to members of the veteran and military community.

Our second 'C' is counseling. Our data show that small business owners who have a long-term counselor are more likely to hire, grow, and increase revenues.

Not many people know just how extensive SBA's counseling network is. We call it the SBA bone structure. The backbone is our SBA employees on the ground in 68 field offices around the country. If the field office is our bone structure, our muscle is our Resource Partner network comprised of over 900 Small Business Development Centers, most at local colleges and universities, more than 100 Women's Business Centers, our Veteran Business Outreach Centers, and more than 370 chapters of a mentoring program called SCORE.

In sum, there are about 14,000 SBA-affiliated counselors who serve about 1 million people each year, and the best part is it's free for participants. We estimate that there is an SBA counselor within about an hour of every small business in America.

Last year our Small Business Development Centers, Women's Development Centers and SCORE network trained more than 68,000 veteran entrepreneurs. And, an additional 86,000 veterans received training and business counseling through our Veteran Business Outreach Centers last year.

The third 'C' is contracting. At SBA, we work across Federal agencies to ensure that the statutory goal of 23 percent of Federal contracts are awarded to small businesses. This is a win-win. Contracts are the oxygen that small businesses need to

¹Headd, Brian. "An Analysis of Small Business and Jobs," U.S. Small Business Administration, March 2010.

²"Survey of Business Owners - Veteran-Owned Firms, 2007," U.S. Census Bureau, Department of Commerce, May 2011.

³"Factors Affecting Entrepreneurship among Veterans," Office of Advocacy, U.S. Small Business Administration, March 2011.

build their top line. At the same time, the government gets to work with some of the most innovative, nimble and responsive companies—often with a direct line to the CEO.

The Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business Concern Procurement Program allows Federal agencies to set acquisitions aside for exclusive competition among service disabled veteran-owned small business concerns. SBA works with service disabled veteran-owned small businesses to build awareness of Federal contracting opportunities and to ensure they have the resources they need to bid for Federal contracts.

Last year we helped service disabled veteran-owned small businesses access more than \$11.2 billion in Federal prime contracting dollars. This is the fifth consecutive year that we have increased the amount of Federal contracting going to these businesses.

Operation Boots to Business: From Service to Startup

In the fall of 2010 and 2011, President Obama called for the creation of two joint task forces: the Department of Defense-Department of Veterans Affairs (DoD-VA) Veterans Employment Initiative Task Force and the Interagency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development led by SBA. The goals of the task forces are to:

- 1) develop proposals to maximize the career readiness of all servicemembers; and
- 2) create proposals to better support veteran-owned small business owners.

Both task forces identified the need to create a nationwide entrepreneurship training program for transitioning servicemembers. As an outcome of these task forces, SBA is working with DoD and VA to include entrepreneurship training as a part of the overall, service-wide changes to the Transition Assistance Program (TAP).

The overall goal of the “new TAP” is to strengthen the transition of all of our servicemembers from military to civilian life and to prepare them for success in the next phase of their life. In the “new TAP,” each servicemember will receive “core” education in post-service veterans’ benefits. In addition, the goal is for each veteran to choose from three “optional” tracks for further, targeted training: 1) Higher Education; 2) Technical Training; and 3) Entrepreneurship. When fully implemented, the SBA and its partner network would deliver the entrepreneurship track to those transitioning servicemembers who opt-in to receive entrepreneurship training.

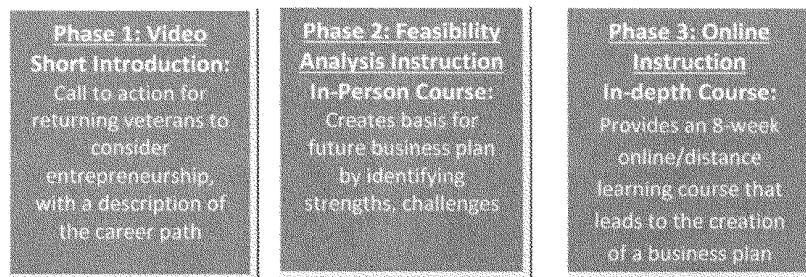
The Operation Boots to Business program will build on SBA’s role as a national leader in entrepreneurship training. SBA will leverage its ongoing collaboration with Syracuse University’s Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) to provide comprehensive training materials specifically geared toward transitioning servicemembers.

Through the Boots to Business initiative, SBA Resource Partners will build on these efforts by deploying this expertise at military bases around the country to collaboratively deliver face-to-face introductory entrepreneurship training as a network. Our Resource Partners, not a group of contractors, will also introduce transitioning servicemembers to the essentials of entrepreneurship and lifetime business support available to them in our Resource Partner network.

A transitioning servicemember upon completion of the introductory course may enroll in an intensive, 8-week *online* business planning training course delivered by Syracuse and other affiliated University partners. As always, counselors and mentors from SBA’s Resource Partner network will be there to work with servicemembers throughout the eight-week online course, and thereafter as these servicemembers start their businesses.

There is great work that is already going on around the country by our Resource Partners to provide transitioning servicemembers and veterans with entrepreneurship training. At the same time, SBA, DoD and the Services realize the need to have a standardized curriculum to ensure that every servicemember has the opportunity to receive entrepreneurship training. The national curriculum, enhanced by the tailored approach and expertise of our Resource Partner network, helps us ensure that every transitioning servicemember has this opportunity. This national, Resource Partner-delivered model is dependent on FY2013 funding and statutory authority to help support the training that will occur on bases across the country.

The national initiative consists of three progressive phases that will deliver exposure/introduction, feasibility assessment, and in-depth training for servicemembers interested in business ownership:



Phase 1: Short Introduction on Entrepreneurship (< 10 minute video)

Phase 1 of the program will introduce all 200,000 plus transitioning servicemembers to entrepreneurship as a career path. The introductory video is packaged and delivered for online streaming or DVD distribution. Participation is mandatory as part of the TAP curriculum.

Phase 2: Feasibility Analysis Instruction (2 days)

Phase 2 guides participants through a 2-day classroom instruction focused on creating a feasibility analysis for a business plan. This training will be delivered face-to-face by our Resource Partners on-base. The Feasibility Analysis Deliverable will represent the outcome of the 2-day intensive seminar. The document will serve as the basis for future business planning efforts, and is designed to assist the servicemember in developing an 'actionable' plan for subsequent effort focused on launching a new venture. A pre-formatted template will be used to facilitate the completion of the analysis during the 2-day training and participants will 'walk away' from the training with a completed feasibility study of their own business concept.

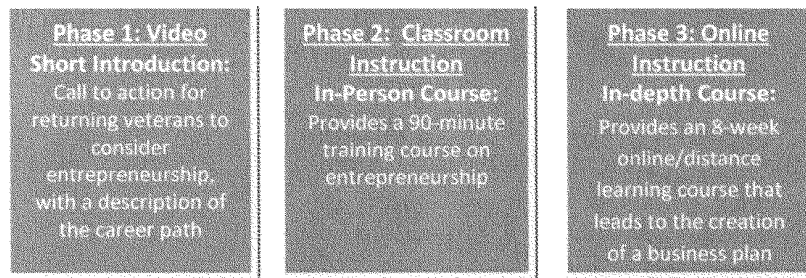
Phase 3: In-depth Online Entrepreneurship Course (8-week ONLINE course)

Phase 3 offers participants an in-depth, 8-week online training program to further explore the fundamentals of small business ownership. This online course will be offered by Syracuse and its affiliated University instructors/partners. Curriculum topics include understanding customers, marketing, accounting and finance, and operations. This online course will be offered on a rolling basis, to be completed within 60 days from the start date. Participation is optional, but participants must sign up in advance.

Getting Started: Pilot with the USMC

To test the initiative prior to national rollout, in June 2012 SBA partnered with the U.S. Marine Corps to deliver a streamlined version of the Boots to Business entrepreneurship training to approximately 20,000 transitioning Marines in four pilot locations: Quantico (VA), Cherry Point (NC), Camp Pendleton (CA), and Twenty-Nine Palms (CA).

The pilot with the Marines consists of three progressive phases to deliver exposure, introduction, and in-depth training for servicemembers interested in business ownership. The pilot does not include the 2-day feasibility assessment but uses a 90 minute course at the pilot locations due to time and cost constraints.



Phase 1: Short Introduction on Entrepreneurship (10 minute video)

- **Estimated Number of Participants: ALL 20,000 transitioning Marines** at the four bases participating in the pilot.

Phase 2 (Initial USMC pilot only): In-Person Classroom Training Course on Entrepreneurship (90-minute training)

- **Estimated Number of Participants: 4,000 Marines**, representing 20% of population at the four bases in the pilot.
- **Delivery:** Face-to-face, by SBA Resource Partners on-base.

Phase 3: In-depth Online Entrepreneurship Course (8-week course)

- **Estimated Number of Participants: 1,600 Marines**, representing 8% of population at 4 pilot sites; 40% of initial participation due to attrition.
- **Registration Information:** Registration information for the 8-week course is provided in the 90-minute curriculum slide deck so that participants can learn about their opportunity to sign up for the 8-week online course. Additional information is also provided in the 90-minute course's teaching notes. Interested Marines can register for the 8-week online course by going to <http://boots2business.org> and hitting the 'register' tab, filling out the registration form, and entering the following code: USMC2012. The original version of the 8-week online course will be managed by professors in Syracuse University's network. The SBA is also exploring self-paced curriculums for future uses.
- **Delivery:** By Syracuse and its affiliated University instructors/partners

Supplemental Demonstration of 2-Day Curriculum at VA Conference on June 24–25, 2012

- **Overview:** SBA partnered with Department of Defense (DoD), Veterans Affairs (VA), Syracuse, and SBA Resource Partners to present a 2-day feasibility analysis curriculum at the National Veterans Procurement Conference June 24–25th. The purpose was to demonstrate the additional phase of the Program which will be integrated into the nationwide rollout but which is not part of the streamlined Marine Pilot.

Estimated Number of Participants: 50 servicemembers, representing all branches of the military.

In August 2012 three Navy locations were added to the pilot: Anacostia-Bolling, Washington, DC, Bethesda, MD and King's Bay, GA. In October 2012, the U.S. Army plans to host a pilot in Ft. Sill, OK.

Following our assessment of the pilot we plan to roll the program out nationally to all branches of the military in FY 2013 subject to funding.

We know that our Nation's veterans helped reshape the American economy following World War II. They helped to build one of the longest periods of economic growth in our country's history.

And, we know they can do it again if they are encouraged and supported with the right tools and the right opportunities. That's what Boots to Business is all about.

And, it's why we are committed to ensuring that these amazing men and women have the access and opportunity they need to fully realize their potential as entrepreneurs and small business owners.

Thank you for your time today and for allowing me to appear before this Committee.

Prepared Statement of Dr. Susan Kelly

Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the views of the Department of Defense (DoD) on the redesign of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). TAP, the cornerstone of the Department's transition efforts, is a collaborative partnership between DoD, the Department of Labor (DOL), and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). It is the primary platform used to deliver an extensive array of services and benefits information to all eligible separating, retiring and demobilizing/deactivating Service members.

Our overall goal at the Department of Defense is to ensure those who are leaving Service are prepared for their next step—whether that step is pursuing additional education, finding a job in the public or private sector, or starting their own business. Particularly in this economic climate, we are concerned about the number of unemployed veterans, especially our 18–24 year old population. Finding ways to

help veterans to successfully transition to civilian life is a priority for the President and the Department.

Redesigned TAP

Under the leadership of President Obama, and with strong bipartisan support in Congress, we have fundamentally redesigned TAP. This redesign effort involves a strong interagency partnership that will make the needs of today's Service members and their families the top priority.

In his "Call to Action" on August 5, 2011, the President mandated the creation of a joint DoD and VA task force to work with the White House economic and domestic policy staff and other agencies to develop proposals to maximize the career readiness of all Service members. As a result, the DoD/VA Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI) Task Force was established in September 2011, with representatives from the Departments of Labor and Education, the Small Business Administration, the Office of Personnel Management, and the President's economic and domestic policy teams.

The President also emphasized the need to develop reforms to ensure that every Service member receives training, education, and credentials needed to transition to the civilian workforce, pursue higher education, and be "career ready" upon separation from the military. In the TAP redesign, a new career readiness standard for Service members seeking employment requires a quality resume (public or private sector), professional personal references and/or a job application or an acceptance letter from a potential employer. Service members pursuing degrees or career technical training will meet the career readiness standard for education or career technical training by completing an application package for submission to an education or training institution, providing confirmed appointments with an institution's academic counselor and connection with student veteran organizations, or an acceptance letter to an academic or training institution. Student veteran organizations benefit veterans by providing an opportunity to interact socially with other student veterans who have similar experiences and challenges. Other examples of career readiness standards include registration in eBenefits, a completed Individual Transition Plan (ITP), and a 12 month post military budget reflecting personal goals. These are several examples of our new "career readiness standards" Service members will meet before they are separated from military service.

In July 2012, President Obama announced the launch of the "Transition GPS (Goals, Plans, Success)", the culmination of the TAP redesign efforts that will establish the career readiness standards, extend the transition preparation through the entire span of a Service member's career, and provide counseling to facilitate the development of an individual transition plan. The Department anticipates approximately 307,000 Service members will separate annually over the next 4 years. Our goal is to prepare and equip them to be career ready and apply their valuable military experience however and wherever they choose in the civilian workforce.

Transition GPS improvements recognize the Military Services' cultural differences and the unique circumstance of Reservists and National Guard members. The Services have the flexibility to modify the program to reflect unique Service culture while maintaining the program's standardized curriculum and mandatory learning objectives. This flexibility provides Services opportunity to adjust for their Service members' individual transition goals and Service mission requirements. The end state for each Service member is to meet the Career Readiness Standards for the career plan they have chosen, regardless of branch of Service.

The building blocks of the new Transition GPS consist of Pre-separation counseling, CORE Curriculum, optional tracks and CAPSTONE.

- Pre-separation Assessment and Counseling: Each transitioning Service member must go through mandatory pre-separation counseling to introduce them to the full range of programs and services available to them during their transition. While some pre-separation needs are common, other needs are identified for individual Service members resulting in immediate referral to installation resources to address such needs. The needs and referrals are documented in an official form that becomes part of the Service member's permanent file.
- The CORE Curriculum, includes the following:
 - > Financial Planning: A workshop on financial planning provides Service members with the information and tools needed to identify financial responsibilities, obligations, and goals after separation from the military. Upon completing the financial planning seminar, Service members will be prepared to build an integrated 12 month budget that reflects post-military employment, education, or training goals, ultimately helping to ensure their personal and family security. Instructors and financial planning staff will be available for follow-up counseling as requested by the Service member or as identified by the subject matter expert.

- **Military Occupational Code (MOC) Crosswalk:** The MOC Crosswalk is a module on translating military skills, training, and experience into credentialing appropriate for civilian jobs. Upon completing this module, Service members will have a file recording their military career experience and skills; translation of their military occupation experience to civilian sector skills; and identification of gaps in their training and/or experience that need to be filled to meet their personal goals. Members will be able to develop a clear line of sight between their military skills and training and career fields of their choice. This will permit a targeted job search and self-development by each Service member. Instructors and education and employment experts are available for further personal assistance.
- **VA Benefits Briefings:** Workshops on VA benefits that inform transitioning Service members of their Veterans benefits options. The VA modules include the VA Education Briefing (Post 9/11 and Montgomery GI Bills, Pell Grants, and other Federal student aid), the VA Benefits briefing including the Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) information and information about Veterans health, education, home loan guarantee, insurance, and other benefits for which they may be eligible. Service members will have face-to-face access to VA staff, facilitating personalized attention and service.
- **Individual Transition Plan:** Each Service member is required to develop an ITP which, step- by-step, helps the Service member determine the actions they must take to achieve their career goals. Each plan will be tailored, and the documents required by the plan reviewed by the Commanders or their appointed representatives. Service members will deliver products to serve as evidence that they are indeed, prepared for their transition and postured to meet their post-separation goals.
- **Optional Tracks consisting of:**
 - > **Education Track:** Service members pursuing college education will receive guidance to prepare for the college application process. The Education Track addresses such topics as identifying one's educational goals, education funding, and researching and comparing institutions. Upon completion of the education track, Service members will be prepared to submit an application to an academic institution, schedule a session with a counselor from the institution, and connect with a Student Veterans Organization on campus. Service members will be able to meet with installation education counselors for individualized preparation, as desired.
 - > **Career Technical Training Track:** Service members pursuing further technical training and job-ready skills will receive individualized guidance and help in selecting a training institute/college/program and technical fields. The Technical Training Track addresses such topics as selection of a reputable career and technical training program or college, the application process to a school from start to finish, and how to use certification finder Web tools and other Internet resources that identify licensed occupations, and a military occupational code translator. Similar to the Education Track, upon completing the Technical Training track, Service members will be prepared to submit an application to a technical training institute/college/program, schedule a session with a program counselor, and connect with a veteran student organization at the facility or in the vicinity, as available. Technical training experts and VA vocational education counselors will be available to meet individually with Service members, as needed.
- **Entrepreneurship Track:** Service members pursuing self-employment in the private or non- profit sector will learn about the challenges faced by entrepreneurs, the benefits and realities of entrepreneurship, and the steps toward business ownership. Upon completing the Entrepreneurship Track, Service members will have developed the initial components of their business plan. After completing an optional eight-week online course, Service members and Veterans will be connected with a small business owner to mentor and guide them through their business start-up. This is a tremendous effort by SBA and we are grateful for their commitment to our Service members.
- **CAPSTONE:** A singular event which verifies the Service member meets the relevant Career Readiness Standards to posture him or her for success after military service. For example, the Service members must provide evidence that they are, indeed, financially ready by preparing a budget for the first 12-months post-separation; they must show a resume or application to enter college or technical training institute; and the member must have a completed ITP. The CAPSTONE Event remains in development by the Military Services. We anticipate they will have CAPSTONE in place, piloted, and ready for implementation by the end of fiscal year 2013.

In November 2011, President Obama signed into law the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, and we are on track to implement TAP-related provisions by November 21, 2012:

In accordance with the VOW Act, the new DOL Employment Workshop will be mandatory for nearly all Service members, including the Reserve and National Guard leaving active duty. However the law does allow for exemptions. The VOW Act states that the Secretaries of Defense and Homeland Security, in consultation with the Secretaries of Labor and Veterans Affairs, may grant exemptions to the mandatory participation requirement for Service members unlikely to face major readjustment, healthcare, employment, or other challenges associated with the transition to civilian life. The exemptions policy is in development and clearly states no Service member is exempt from receiving Pre-separation Counseling and the VA Benefits Briefing.

The VOW Act very wisely mandates services for demobilizing Reservists and National Guard members as they face unique circumstances. Reservists and National Guard members in demobilizing units frequently return to dispersed geographic locations. Many return immediately to previous employment, but others are returning to homes hit by economic downturn; and still others return to college endeavors. The challenge of the Department and its partners is to meet these Service members' needs while they are spread across the Nation, separated from a military support network.

The VOW Act does not mandate participation in optional tracks. These are additional requirements to the VOW Act established by the Department, in collaboration with our interagency partners.

The primary delivery method for the components of the program will be in person, in a traditional "brick and mortar" classroom setting. Nonetheless, because of the geographic disbursement of some Service members, the nature of the Reserve Component, and the requirement for mandatory participation by all Service members in TAP, the Task Force will develop virtual delivery methods for Transition GPS. Such delivery methods will need to meet quality standards to help ensure equivalent outcomes to brick and mortar instruction.

To implement the Transition GPS, the Department conducted seven pilots of the CORE Curriculum and the revised DOL Employment Workshop this summer. The locations were:

- Randolph Air Force Base
- Jacksonville Naval Air Station
- New York Army National Guard, Utica, NY
- Fort Sill, OK
- Norfolk Naval Station
- Miramar Marine Corps Air Station
- Fort Hood Army Reserve

On August 21–22, 2012, the Department piloted the Education Track at Randolph Air Force Base and the Entrepreneurship Track was piloted at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling. The Department and VA anticipate piloting the Career Technical Track at Quantico Marine Corps Station this fall and a CAPSTONE proof of concept at Jacksonville Naval Air Station in December of this year.

Preliminary results indicate the piloted curriculums are hitting the mark. There has been incredible support by the Military Services, Commanders, The State Adjutant General, NY, installation staffs, and our interagency partners. The revised DOL Employment Workshop, financial planning seminar, and VA Benefits Briefing have received positive feedback. However preliminary feedback indicates that we must align the curriculum across all partner modules to ensure seamless learning experience for Service members. We will take a hard look at this to ensure the best use of Service members' time.

The pilots have also shown us that Service members value the information, Web sites, skills building, and practical work they must accomplish. For example, the Financial Planning Seminar exercise of developing a 12-month post-military budget illustrated the importance of financial planning and preparedness post military life. Service members have to calculate and document how they will financially meet the first 12 months of post-separation costs for expenditures such as healthcare, changes in the geographic cost of living, dependent care, taxes, and life insurance. In the pilots, Service members become very engaged in deliberate personal planning and preparation of their post military budget.

Additional lessons learned include:

- Service members are learning to translate their military skills into civilian language and to navigate the DOL Labor Market Information (LMI) Web site to what employment opportunities exist in their geographical relocation areas.

- Commanders and installation leadership “hands-on” involvement are critical to the success of the pilots.
- Limiting the class to 50 participants is a definite improvement and having classrooms equipped with audio-visual equipment and access to the internet enhances the learning environment.

To help us garner grassroots feedback, we developed on-line assessment tools for Service members, facilitators, and the team of observers who attended each pilot. The Department also set up a “TAP Auditor Sensing Session” as part of our pilot evaluation. We asked for volunteers who already completed the legacy TAP, but are still on Active Duty, to go through the redesigned TAP and give us feedback. Overall, the Transition GPS scored high marks for improved information and skills building.

The Department will complete the analysis of all pilot assessments by the end of September and will assemble a group of subject matter and functional experts to make adjustments to the curriculums by October. The modified Transition GPS Core curriculum will be in place by November 21.

Military LifeCycle Transition Model

The measure of a successful transition does not reside solely on a Service member’s participation in the new Transition GPS. Rather it is a shared responsibility with military leadership at every level within the command structure that ensures that Service members receive opportunities to prepare for or meet career goals. In tandem there must be strong personal involvement by the Service member and his or her family. We will continue to find new ways to not only reach our Service members and provide useful information to them, but also strive to provide them with skills for the job search and other challenges they will encounter as they transition to civilian life. A virtual delivery model offers great potential to allow Service members to both learn and refresh skills. The Department and our partners are exploring this capability.

We learned that we cannot wait until the end of a Service member’s military career to help him or her succeed after separation. We have to start early and give our members the tools they need to develop personal goals, and reach milestones throughout their careers.

Therefore, starting in fiscal year 2014, the Department will migrate from our current TAP program, which occurs toward the end of a military career, to an innovative Military LifeCycle Transition Model that will start at the beginning of a Service members’ military career. The objective of the model is for transition to become a well-planned, organized progression that empowers Service members to make informed career decisions and take responsibility for advancing their personal goals. Service members will be made aware of the career readiness standards they must meet long before their separation. They will be engaged throughout their military careers in mapping and refining their Individual Development Plans to achieve their military goals and their post-military goals for employment, education, career technical training, or starting their own business.

Throughout the Military Lifecycle, Service members will have various “touch points” that will be mapped into their military lifecycle. For example, at their first permanent duty station or first drilling weekend, they will initiate their Individual Transition Plan (ITP) – a document they will update throughout their military lifecycle. Also during their first 12 – 24 months, they will be able to complete the Transition GPS curriculums (MOC Crosswalk, Personal Financial Seminar, Education, Career Technical Training, or Entrepreneurship) at various stages of their military lifecycle— well in advance of separation. Deployments provide yet another “touch point” in the Military LifeCycle when we can provide Service members and their families with budgeting and personal financial planning skills that are necessary to help them improve and maintain their financial footing during such a challenging time in their military lives.

When it is time for the member to separate, the ITP will migrate into the Individual Transition Plan—a roadmap that will assist the Service member with their transition process.

The Military LifeCycle Model requires Service members to meet the same Career Readiness Standards (CRS) mentioned earlier and the CRS will be verified at a CAPSTONE Event prior to separation.

Credentialing and Licensing Task Force

The Department is leading a new Credentialing and Licensing Task Force that was directed by President Obama this May in order to address gaps between military occupational specialties and civilian licensing requirements. The Task Force will do the following:

- Identify military specialties that readily transfer to high-demand jobs, such as aircraft maintenance, automotive mechanics, healthcare specialists, truck drivers, information technology professionals, and logisticians;
- Engage civilian, state, and local credentialing and licensing entities to close gaps between military training programs and credentialing and licensing requirements;
- Seek ways to partner with VA to help certain groups of veterans develop new skills in order to better compete in the private sector. For example, some infantry veterans – who have expertise that may not transfer readily to the business world – are acquiring information technology skills through a digital tutoring program developed by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency.

Our goal is to help private sector employers appreciate veterans' valuable skills and experience, and to simplify the process for translating military skills and experience into private sector credentials. For our communities, there is an enormous return on our investment in these veterans. We began this effort with a focus on the manufacturing sector, and partnered with leading manufacturing credentialing agencies to enable up to 126,000 Service members to gain industry-recognized certifications for high-demand manufacturing jobs.

Conclusion

In summary, the end-state for the redesigned TAP will be manifested by a population of Service members who have the tools and resources to empower themselves to make informed career decisions, be competitive in the workforce, and continue to be positive contributors to their community as they transition to civilian life.

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

Prepared Statement of Brigadier General Robert F. Hedelund

Executive Summary

As our Nation's force in readiness, Marines always stand combat ready. The Commandant is committed to ensuring they also stand transition ready. The Marine Corps is transforming its approach to transition assistance to one that engages Marines throughout the military lifecycle. We will help our Marines develop long-term education and career goals and will equip them with the skills needed to successfully reintegrate into civilian life. Our first phase was to revolutionize our end of cycle transition readiness course, which now contains both core and track content that tailors a Marine's transition experience to his or her goals. We are confident in our approach and are working hard to ensure Marines and families are ready for the demands of their post-active duty lives.

Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley, and distinguished Members of this Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to describe the steps we are taking to transform our Transition Assistance Program (TAP). As our Nation's force in readiness, Marines always stand combat ready. The Commandant is committed to ensuring they also stand transition ready. Partnering with the Office of the Secretary of Defense and our sister services, the Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA), Labor (DOL), and other federal agencies, we are transforming our program from a single event toward the end of a Marine's service to one that engages Marines throughout their military lifecycle. From their entry into the Corps, we will help Marines establish long-term education and career goals and will equip them with skills to ensure they are career ready to successfully reintegrate into civilian life in communities throughout our country. Along the way, we will provide counseling and advisement services plus critical resources such as tuition assistance and credentialing for selected military skills. This is important work; we are determined to get it right.

Revolutionizing Our Approach to Transition Assistance

We have been at this for some time. In keeping faith with our Marines and families, the 2010 Commandant's Planning Guidance directed a review and improvement of the transition assistance we were providing. The Commandant personally reviewed results of three Transition Assistance Operational Planning Teams and approved plans to correct deficiencies with legacy programs through a conceptual framework to improve services and integrate personal and professional development services.

Effective transition assistance is not achieved simply by completing a training course at the end of one's service, thus simply checking a block. It requires continuous deliberation and planning of one's future goals, quality advisement, and a thorough understanding of available resources and tools. Because 75 percent of our Marines transition from active service after their first enlistment, we must ensure these Marines have the tools needed to return to civilian life and be productive citizens. Our Marine Lifecycle Model will engage our Marines at designated touch points during their service and will focus on the knowledge, skills and abilities they will need to effectively translate their Marine Corps experience into meaningful careers or transition to new pursuits. This model positions us to better support both the advancement of a Marine's military career and the eventual reintegration into civilian life upon leaving active duty service. Transition will no longer be a culminating event to a Marine's career; it will rather become a vital part of a Marine's continuous personal and professional development from recruit to veteran.

Our Revised Transition Readiness Course

In migrating to a Marine Lifecycle Model, we directed our first plan of action at revolutionizing our TAP course. As our overall intent is readiness of the individual Marine, our redesign began with our transition readiness course. Initially piloted in the Marine Corps in January 2012, our five-day course incorporates the learning objectives and standards required by the Transition Goals Plans Success program, which requires Marines to reach certain milestones in order to be fully transition ready. Our incorporation of these objectives ensures we will comply with the requirements of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act and the President's Veteran's Employment Initiative (VEI).

One of the essential elements of our course is track choice. Via their feedback, our Marines have been most supportive of these tracks. Therefore, our overall goal is to balance core and track content to allow Marines to individually tailor their training experience to meet their personal goals. Following completion by all attendees of mandatory core curricula including the DOL's Employment Workshop and the VA's benefits brief during the first three days of the program, Marines choose the track that is most aligned with their post-service goals and objectives: Education; Skills and Technical Training; Employment; or Entrepreneurship. During the remaining time of the course, Marines further explore their chosen pathway.

The Education track, for example, gives more detailed information on the college admissions process, determining the right college or university, and important considerations in standardized testing and accreditation. The Entrepreneurship track gives advice on developing an effective business plan and finding sources of capital. The Skills and Technical Training track distinguishes certification, licensure and apprenticeship and assists with online resources. The Employment track expands upon the mandatory DOL Employment Workshop and explores in greater detail best practices in finding jobs including opportunities and hiring practices with the Federal Government. Because all tracks require Marines to interact in professional settings whether seeking work, applying for small business loans, or discussing education goals with school administrators, all tracks train Marines in effective interview skills. Marines may participate in the transition training curriculum more than once, must complete pre-work requirements to enhance the transition experience, and are encouraged to bring spouses.

In August 2012, the Marine Corps piloted its revised course at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar and generated important lessons learned. These insights will form the basis of our revised transition program that will be implemented at other Marine Corps installations beginning in September 2012. The core elements of training will include pre-separation counseling, a crosswalk of military occupational specialty skills to civilian jobs, a re-designed DOL employment workshop, and a VA benefits brief. Our tracks will remain relatively unchanged. In partnership with the DOL and VA, transition training will be introduced at Marine Corps installations throughout Fiscal Year 2013.

Making Marines Transition Ready

We are confident that our Marine Lifecycle Model and our revised transition program will make our Marines transition ready. We are working hard to ensure they are prepared for the demands of the post-active duty phase of their lives. Whether they choose to be reservists, students, business owners, or employees, our Marines will return as quality citizens with a plan for success. Thank you again for your sincere concern in our transition efforts, concern which was most recently demonstrated by the presence of two of your professional staff members, Mr. Jon Clark and Ms. Orfa Angelica Torres-Jaen, at our August Miramar pilot. Their insight and presence were helpful to both the pilot staff and the training participants. Coopera-

tion in this effort is key because only by working together will we be able to provide our servicemembers and their families with the transition support they need after giving so much in dedicated service to our Nation.

Prepared Statement of Brigadier General Jason T. Evans

Chairman Stutzman, Representative Braley, members of the Committee, I would like to express my appreciation for this opportunity to appear before you to discuss the Army's Transition Assistance Program or TAP. This program was established by the enactment of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1991. The program prescribed that the services would be required to provide Preseparation Counseling and Employment Assistance Training to all retiring and separating Soldiers and their Family members.

Redesigning Transitional Assistance Program for the Army

The Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP) is the Army's Transition Assistance Program (TAP) integrated and coordinated with The Department of Labor (DOL) and Veterans Affairs (VA). The overall goal of the TAP is to provide separating and/or retiring servicemembers and their families the information, skill set, and resources needed for a successful transition to the civilian sector. The TAP also provides civilian career development, personal and financial wellness plans, and life transition preparation to all separating and/or retiring Airmen. ACAP recently celebrated its twentieth year of providing transition services. Looking back at two decades of helping Soldiers to transition from the Army back into civilian life shows us how far we've come.

In response to Public Law and in the face of increased reductions in the size of the military, ACAP began as a one-year pilot program in 1990 to prepare Soldiers, Department of the Army (DA) Civilians, and their families for separation from the Army. ACAP started with six pilot sites, and quickly grew to eight, fielding 55 sites by the end of the pilot.

As with all of American society, the events of September 11, 2001 had a significant impact on ACAP and the provision of transition services. Most significantly, Reserve Component Soldiers—the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve — were beginning to play a much greater role in the Global War on Terror. As Guardsmen and Reservists grew to provide as much as 28% of the forces in the field, they would also need greater access to transition services. Just as they had mobilized for war, they would also need to demobilize and transition back to their civilian lives. Following 9/11, the Army's strategic and policy priorities were shifting and changing in response to world events. Flexibility continued to be a vital component of ACAP as it worked to ensure that Soldiers' transition needs were anticipated and met.

The next major step along the road for ACAP was the 2010 United States Military Academy (USMA) study. The study resulted in a recommendation to the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army to place greater emphasis on providing a lifecycle of decision-based services to Soldiers through a program that unit commanders would be responsible for overseeing.

As ACAP moves forward following the USMA Study, it has become a much more robust and rich program. ACAP began offering its services through a secure web portal so that Soldiers, DA Civilians, and their families could take advantage of on-line transition services safely from any location, worldwide. ACAP is now a commanders' program as unit commanders will have oversight of and track their Soldiers' progress through transition services. Commanders begin transition preparation by discussing military and long term goals during the Soldier's first unit of assignment. Commanders will identify a focal point/advisor for synchronizing the unit's transition program with the ACAP program. Additionally, ACAP is providing services that will be driven by a Soldier's life choices. So whether a Soldier chooses to seek private employment, pursue higher education or start his or her own business, ACAP offers tailored transition counseling and training for each path.

Core Curriculum and Career Readiness Mandatory Services

In order to implement the re-design of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to meet the requirements of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (VOW), and Transition Goals, Planning, and Success (GPS) as directed by the Presidential Veterans Employment Initiative Task Force (VEI TF), the Core Curriculum and Career Readiness Standards have been created, redesigned and improved to represent a lifecycle model to better assist our transitioning Soldiers:

—No later than 12 months prior to planned separation, the Soldier will begin his or her pre-separation counseling with an ACAP advisor. During this time, Soldiers are informed about transition services and benefits available to them. Each attendee will then begin the development of the GPS for employment and at the end of the first day; attendees will have built their GPS for their financial futures. They are also guided in developing an Individual Transition Plan (ITP) from a highly qualified counselor. We are also pleased that our Army Spouses can participate in the TAP GPS classes. Spouses receive the same transition and employment services as the military member. As we continue to move forward with this program, we will market the opportunity for spouses to attend via the Military Spouse Employment Program.

—The Department of Labor Employment Workshop is a three-day workshop facilitated by trained subject matter experts. It is to be completed no later than ten months prior to the Soldier's separation date. The workshop provides attendees with the knowledge and skills to execute a successful job search. Guidance includes: resume and cover letter preparation, networking, identification of job opportunities, interviewing, and even salary/benefit negotiations. In order to enhance the participants' experience from this class, ACAP counselors provide various employment assistance seminars on private and Federal employment opportunities.

—The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Education Benefits Briefing is a one-hour class regarding VA education benefits such as the Post 9/11 and Montgomery G.I. Bills. These briefings must be completed no later than six months prior to transition. The briefings are administered by the VA staff. The VA Benefits Briefing is a three-hour workshop conducted by VA counselors for all separating and retiring Soldiers. These briefings cover all VA services and benefits available to Veterans, including information regarding the Disability Transition Assistance Program.

—A six-hour long Financial Planning Seminar is conducted by Army Community Service Financial Counselors, and should be completed no later than ten months prior to transition. Topics and activities include financial planning, credit ratings, home ownership, healthcare and insurance planning, as well as estate and tax planning. The Financial Planning Seminars prepare participants' for financial independence following their military separation and provide the fundamental tools to build an integrated budget.

—The Military Occupation Code (MOC) Crosswalk (a two-hour module) begins the process of identifying the skills, experience, credentials, and education obtained while in the military, and transitions them to civilian opportunities. Service members will learn about the different types of job-seekers and how to conduct a MOC crosswalk. Participants will conduct a partnering activity and will crosswalk their individual MOC to civilian career opportunities identifying the gaps needed to be explored in order to be more employable and marketable in the civilian sector. This newly designed program was created to meet the requirements of the VEI TF and is currently being tested during the pilots.

—Value of a Mentor/Special Issues', a new program currently being tested at the pilot locations, is a 30-minute overview that discusses the mentor support structures and interpersonal relationships that occur during and after transition. This overview also connects the Service members with installation and community resources. This briefing must be completed no later than ten months prior to transition.

—Finally, the Career Readiness Standard is the choice based CAPSTONE Event. A new program developed, and currently being tested at the pilots, to align with the VEI TF requirements. This assessment is completed by the Soldier no later than 90 days prior to transition. At the beginning of CAPSTONE, Soldiers complete a Transition-focused assessment to identify their confidence and preparedness levels for transition. Counselors review the assessment with Soldiers to identify any shortcomings regarding training and/or confidence level, thus allowing the Soldier to seek assistance. The CAPSTONE requirements serve to mitigate risks for possible negative outcomes after separation—such as unemployment, financial issues, social services issues and homelessness. Three CAPSTONE options will be available to Soldiers and Commanders: 1) a face-to-face/virtual counseling with an ACAP counselor; 2) a face-to-face with the commander; or 3) participation in a four-hour large event with guest speakers.

The Military Life Cycle for Transition will be implemented no later than 2014. The initial concept for Military Life Cycle centers on paralleling career readiness with career progression by synchronizing Army Career Tracker (ACT) with Transition training and interfacing ACT to Transition counselors. Following the completion of the Day five of the training, the attendees select (based on career goals) one of the following as applicable: Technical Employment track (in development), Entrepreneurial track (for those going into business on their own), or the two-day Education track (should their immediate plans include attending school).

Implementing the Army Transition Plan

The Army is implementing the Transition plan to incorporate the requirements set by the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (VOW), the Presidential Veterans Employment Initiative Task Force (VEI TF) recommendations, and the DA execute order (EXORD) to provide robust and timely transition.

The Army will execute three Choice-based transition efforts to align the new TAP with the EXORD, VOW, and VEI TF requirements: 1) reinforcing existing virtual capabilities; 2) reinforcing existing Army Career and Alumni Program Centers; and 3) establishing Forward Transition Support Teams and Mobile Transition Support Teams.

By reinforcing and updating virtual ACAP capabilities, this remote outreach provides Soldiers a 24/7 opportunity to begin their separation with a highly qualified ACAP counselor.

Testing the pilots

The Army developed a Transition pilot in preparation for the changes necessitated by transition EXORD, VOW, and VEI TF, etc. The pilot program is being tested at one Active Component (AC) location (Fort Sill, OK), five Reserve Component (RC) locations: Demobilization sites at Utica, NY; North Fort Hood, TX; and Camp Shelby, MS and three additional locations (called HOOAH locations) focusing on Virtual Career Fairs. The Army Transition pilot at Fort Sill reached completion on August 30, 2012 and two RC pilots are complete (107th MP CO, ARNG and 436TH TC BN, USAR). Three other RC locations will be completed in September 2012, and HOOAH locations will host seven Virtual Career Fairs from September 2012 through January 2013.

There are four main Transition pilot objectives: 1) Evaluate the ability to manage and sustain increased transition assistance throughput; 2) Evaluate curriculum quality and presentation; 3) Evaluate Soldier feedback and tracking system; 4) Evaluate a connection mechanism to link Soldiers and potential employers.

There are also several notable success stories as a result of the Transition pilot. For example, the workloads and throughputs have remained manageable (which bodes well for Army-wide implementation); timing and delivery of material has improved with every week of the pilot; and pilot attendance tracking at local levels has also become more efficient.

As the Transition pilot is ongoing, the objectives are still being measured and assessed. Among many other considerations, the Army is examining exemptions for Active Component and Active Guard Reserve Soldiers, how to eliminate redundancies and improve relevance in curricula among stakeholders, proper sequencing/presentation of information, time requirements, attendance tracking, and facilitator preparedness.

One of the most valuable lessons learned from the pilots is that segregating Soldiers into cohorts by age/rank increases interaction among Soldiers and counselors/facilitators. The discussion of these issues is not exhaustive, and the Army is continuously re-evaluating the pilots until completion. Currently, ACAP surveys are being used for Soldier metrics collection and to capture and review Soldier comments. The Office of the Secretary of Defense will release its survey results upon conclusion of the pilot period.

Conclusion

We have a sacred commitment to ensure that the Soldiers that have sacrificed so much in service to America's defense are taken care of as they begin the next chapter of their lives. To conclude, I wish to thank all of you for your continued support. The Army is committed to being the leader of the Department of Defense transition efforts by finding the right solution for our Soldiers and our Veterans. Chairman Stutzman, and members of the sub-committee, I thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you, and I look forward to your questions.

Prepared Statement of Mr. Edward Cannon

Chairman Stutzman, Congressman Braley, and distinguished members of this Subcommittee, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to testify about the Navy Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and our efforts to successfully transition Sailors to civilian life and employment.

The Navy separates or retires over 39,000 Sailors each year from an overall force strength of approximately 322,000. The average age of our Sailors is 29 years, and over half are married. Our Sailors are in diverse career fields including the Navy

SEALs, air traffic controllers, healthcare, electronics technicians, and nuclear engineers. The Navy is an expeditionary force that routinely deploys. Many Sailors are sought after by civilian employers because of the training and skills they obtain in the Navy, and we have extensive retention programs in place to man the Fleet with Sailors who possess these critical skills. Over 29,000 Sailors possess post-secondary degrees, with 47,000 using Tuition assistance. Our Reserve Component Sailor is also more senior with an average age of 37, 88% are above the pay grade of E-3, and 30% have bachelor degrees. Ninety percent of our Reserve Sailors are employed or attending school and two-thirds have prior active service.

Current Navy Transition Assistance Program

Under the current Navy transition process model, Sailors may begin the transition process 24 months (retirees) or 12 months (separating) prior to separation; however, they are required to begin preparation for their transition to civilian life no later than 90 days before separation. During this period, each transitioning Sailor must go through mandatory (by law, Title 10 (§ 1142)) pre-separation counseling to introduce them to the programs and services available to assist them. Sailors currently complete a checklist that documents the counseling received as well as the additional services and briefings to which Sailors are referred based upon their individual needs.

The Navy currently provides a 4–5 day Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Workshop at installations world-wide via Fleet and Family Support Programs. In FY-11, the Navy had 33,000 attendees (85% of separating Sailors) voluntarily attend TAP Workshops. Depending upon the installation size and population, TAP Workshops may be tailored for separation, involuntary separation, retirement, or seniority. Frequency of classes is dependent upon installation population size. The current Navy TAP workshops consist of the Department of Labor (DOL) Employment Workshop, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Benefits briefing, Disabled Transition Assistance Program briefing, and Navy specific topics. Additionally, Fleet and Family Support counselors also provide individual transition counseling and resume and other transition-related workshops as requested.

The Navy Fleet and Family Support Centers also conduct First Term and Mid-Career Workshops (CONSEP—Career Options and Navy Skills Evaluation Program). These four day courses are designed to assist active duty servicemembers in achieving Navy and future civilian career goals. The training topics provide vital information on career-making decisions, upward mobility, college and certification opportunities, apprenticeships, as well as financial management and investment strategies which enhance the ability to achieve personal and professional success. In addition, the Navy is working with the Military Credentialing and Licensing Task Force to identify opportunities for more than 400,000 Active and Reserve Sailors to earn civilian occupational credentials and licenses prior to separation.

For our recent force shaping initiative, the Navy supplemented existing transition services by contracting with a civilian outplacement service company to provide personalized career coaching and job search assistance to these Sailors that were involuntarily separated.

Re-Designed Transition GPS (Goals, Plan, Succeed) Program

In collaboration with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, VA, DOL, Department of Education, and the Small Business Administration, the Navy is conducting pilot programs for the five-day curriculum of the redesigned *Transition GPS (Goals—Plan—Succeed)* and the *CAPSTONE event*. The elements of the re-designed Transition Assistance program are:

- 1) Career Readiness Standards (CRS)—A set of common, discreet and measurable transition “readiness” standards that Service members must meet prior to separation from active or reserve duty.

- 2) Transition Goals, Plan, Succeed (GPS) Program—A series of training that includes Pre-Separation Counseling, three-day Department of Labor Employment Workshop (DOLEW), and two-day workshop comprised of VA Benefits Briefings, Financial Education, Military Occupational Code Crosswalk, Family/Special Issues, and an Individual Transition Plan (ITP) review. Additionally, participants may select from optional two-day training tracks in Education, Entrepreneurship, or Technical training.

- 3) Military Life Cycle—Incorporate preparation for Service members’ career transition throughout their military service – from accession through transition from service and reintegration back into civilian life.

- 4) CAPSTONE Event—A forum provided for Service members to validate Career Readiness Standards are met, and to refer members as needed for additional training prior to separation or retirement.

Navy Transition Assistance Core Workshop Curriculum

The mandatory Navy *Transition GPS* Core Workshop is a five day curriculum. On Day One, Navy transition staffs cover the following topics:

1. *Transition Assistance Overview*: includes a Welcome Address / Workshop Schedule of Activities, Topics for Family Considerations/Special Issues, the Value of a Mentor, and a review of available Fleet and Family Support services.

2. *Military Occupational Crosswalk*: The Military Occupational Code (MOC) Crosswalk is a module on translating military training and experience into skills appropriate for civilian jobs. Upon completing this module, Sailors will have a document recording their military career experience and skills; translation of their military occupation experience to civilian sector skills; and identification of gaps in their training and/or experience that need to be filled to meet their personal career goal. The crosswalk will allow Sailors the ability to develop a clear line of sight between their military skills and training and career fields of their choice.

3. *Financial Planning*: Upon completing the financial planning seminar, Sailors will be prepared to build an integrated 12-month budget that reflects post-military employment, education, or training goals. Instructors and financial planning staff will be available for follow-up counseling as requested by the Service member.

The DOL delivers the approved Employment Workshop Days Two thru Four. On Day Five, the VA conducts the approved VA Benefits and Applications briefing and Sailors review progress on their Individual Transition Plan.

Optional Education, Technical Training and Entrepreneur Workshops

In addition to completing the Transition GPS Core Curriculum, transitioning Sailors will also have the option of participating in a series of two day tailored tracks within the Transition GPS curriculum: (1) an Education track, for those pursuing a higher education degree; (2) a Technical and Skills Training track, for those seeking job-ready skills and industry-recognized credentials in shorter-term training programs; and (3) an Entrepreneurship track, for those wanting to start a business.

The Navy CAPSTONE Seminar

The Navy will host a pilot on our CAPSTONE Event to validate the process. Nine-ty days before their separation from military service, Sailors will participate in this CAPSTONE seminar, which will verify that transitioning Sailors completed the Transition GPS curriculum and achieved Career Readiness Standards. Staff will also review potential challenges Veterans may face, and review the tools and resources available to them that they learned about in the *Transition GPS* Workshops. Sailors who require additional assistance will be referred to supplemental training opportunities. In addition, through the CAPSTONE event, all Sailors will be offered a 'warm handoff' to appropriate government agencies and organizations that will provide them continued benefits, services, and support as veterans.

Military Life Cycle Transition Model:

The new transition program will incorporate career readiness and transition preparation into the entire span of a servicemember's career. In the past, transition and preparation for the civilian workforce occurred late in a servicemember's time in the military – near the point of separation. Under this new program, these concepts will be incorporated earlier to ensure that the counseling, assessments, and access to resources to build skills or credentials occur at earlier stages of a servicemember's military tenure.

The Navy will incorporate aspects of transition assistance in the Navy Retention and Career Development program. The current career development program is designed to improve the ability of our Sailors to achieve their professional goals. Individual Career Development Plans are developed based upon Career Roadmaps for each enlisted Rating. The Rating Roadmap includes information on Skill Training, Job Description, Personal and Professional Development, Career Development Boards, the Navy Qualifications and Certifications, Civilian Occupations and the Navy Credentialing Opportunities On Line, US Military Apprenticeship Program, Professional Military Education, and Voluntary Education.

The Navy will incorporate aspects of the transition assistance program into our Career Development Boards, which are routinely held during key points in a Sailor's career. For example, we will ensure that Sailors: (1) are registered for and know about eBenefits;(2) while on active duty, are informed about the VA benefits they are eligible for during active duty as well as after they become Veterans; and (3) understand the importance of maintaining their own personnel records and obtaining credentials and certifications for the skills obtained in the Navy. Essentially, a Sailor's Individual Career Development plan should become their Individual Transition Plan. The Career Development Program is a key component of transition—

qualified, successful Sailors are sought after as potential qualified, successful employees after separation

Summary

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Navy's Transition Assistance Program with you. We are improving the Transition Assistance Program with our Agency partners. The Navy wants and needs to retain trained, qualified Sailors to continue to protect and serve the country. For those who choose to separate or retire, we are committed to ensuring that they leave the Navy with tools to be successful in their career transition

Prepared Statement of Brigadier General Eden J. Murrie

The Air Force Transition Assistance Program (TAP) is a continuous partnership with the Department of Defense (DoD), Department of Labor (DOL), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Department of Education (DoE), the Small Business Administration (SBA) and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The overall goal of the TAP is to provide separating and/or retiring servicemembers and their families the information, skill set, and resources needed for a successful transition to the civilian sector. The TAP also provides civilian career development, personal and financial wellness plans, and life transition preparation to all separating and/or retiring Airmen.

Historically, our program has been successful. In FY11, the TAP participation rate for retiring and/or separating members exceeded 90 percent. This success was due in part to our partnerships with DOL, VA, DoE, SBA and OPM. We also have a long and successful partnership with our Veterans Service Organizations (VSO). The VSOs have provided multiple forms of transition services (transportation to medical appointments, assistance with completing VA claims, hospital visitation, and so forth) for our Service members for years and continue to be a great partner to the men and women of the Air Force.

Our partnerships are critical as we embrace the re-directed TAP initiatives outlined by the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (VOW) and Veteran Employment Initiative (VEI). While our leadership has collaborated with other Agencies in detailing implementation plans and requirements, our Airman and Family Readiness and Education Center professionals are focused on the operational aspects of addressing the VOW and VEI. Additionally, we will build on our current successes as we expand our TAP with the re-directed VOW/VEI. In our new and improved TAP, all attendees will have accomplished their pre-separation counseling prior to attending the DOL Employment Workshop. Day one of the TAP is for the Airman and Family Readiness Center (A&FRC) representatives to provide an overview for the week. They also present topics for discussion and consideration (family consensus, changes in life skills, role perception and changes, special issues—suicide prevention, alcohol and drug abuse, thrill seeking behavior following deployments, children with special needs, disability issues—and the value of a mentor) to assist our members. A&FRC representatives will have the attendees begin to think about how their skills and experiences will translate into civilian life. Each attendee will then begin the development of the Goals, Plans and Success (GPS) for employment and at the end of day one, attendees will have built their GPS for their financial futures. Attendees then incorporate knowledge gained and decisions made on Day one into their Individual Transition Plan (ITP). Day two thru day four is the DOL employment workshop. Over the course of three days, attendees prepare their change management plan, begin developing their job search plan, as well as engage in career exploration and validation, build a resume, navigate the Federal hiring process, practice interview skills and receive a post-interview analysis. Day five is the VA benefits brief on VA education and benefits. Following the completion of day five of the training, the attendees select (based on career goals) one of the following as applicable: Technical Employment track (in development), Entrepreneurial track (for those going into business on their own) or the two-day Education track (should their immediate plans include attending school).

VOW TO HIRE HEROES ACT OF 2011

We are on target to be fully compliant with the VOW Act by the 21 November 2012 implementation date. Transition Assistance program support and services will be completed and verified via a CAPSTONE event (still in development) optimally occurring no later than 90 days prior to separation.

With the new requirements from the VOW Act, we have leaned forward and trained all of our active duty A&FRC and Education staffs along with the staffs for

the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve to execute the requirements. This training includes the re-designation of the DOL Employment Workshop, completion of the ITP and transition process for Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve personnel. We have authorized our major commands to advance hire in Fiscal Year 2013 to ensure we are fully staffed by Fiscal Year 2014.

We held the first TAP Pilot at Joint Base San Antonio - Randolph in July 2012. The Pilot program consisted of a new Employment Workshop and VA curriculum. We had thirty-two attendees from the active duty, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserves completing all blocks of this program. The blocks of instruction included the Transition Overview, Military Occupation to Civilian Crosswalk, Financial Planning Seminar, Topics for Family Considerations, VA Education Benefits Briefing, VA Benefits Briefing, Value of a Mentor and VA Benefits Sign-Up. We also hosted members of the OSD, DOL, SBA, VA, and Air National Guard and Reserves as observers during the Pilot. This Pilot program was evaluated in six dimensions: (a) curriculum, (b) facilitators, (c) facilities, (d) logistics, (e) compliance and OSD integrated guidelines, and (f) local MOU with partner agencies. At the end of each day, the team met and discussed the modules covered that day and summarized comments to help ensure every effort was captured to render the best support for our total force members. Overall, the Pilot program was a tremendous success, with detailed lessons learned and critical recommendations provided to OSD. The OSD staff compiled, assessed data from the Pilot and provided feedback to our sister Services to help ensure consistent, quality support for our members at every installation as we roll out VOW/VEI.

We are also pleased that our Air Force Spouses can participate in the TAP Goals, Plans and Successes (GPS) classes. Spouses receive the same transition and employment services as the military member. As we continue to move forward with this program, we will market the opportunity for spouses to attend via the Spouse Employment Program.

While we maintain our efforts to meet all requirements for the VOW Act, we also continue to press forward to meet the White House VEI, which requires the implementation of four overarching recommendations to improve the career readiness of members leaving the military. As of today, we are on-track to meet all the VEI requirements by 1 October 2013 implementation date. These requirements include developing Career Readiness Standards, GPS Program, Military Life Cycle, and a CAPSTONE Event.

TOTAL FORCE

The Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard and active duty are in lock step and focused on ensuring we are all compliant with the VOW act. The Air Force Reserve Wings, co-located on active duty bases, are collaborating with the active duty A&FRC's as an equal partner under the Total Force concept. Those Air Force Reserve members not located at an active duty bases may participate at other service installations (Army, Navy, etc.) or the Reserve hub at Robins AFB Georgia. Air Force Reserve members will be provided pre-separation counseling, mandatory VA briefings, Military Occupation to Civilian briefings and further TAP briefings and applicable VEI employment, education, or entrepreneurial tracks.

The Air National Guard estimates 6,000 Guardsmen will qualify for the TAP each Fiscal Year after serving on Title 10 (T10) orders for at least 180 consecutive days or more. The majority of the Guardsmen will meet exemption requirements (e.g., they already have confirmed employment, education plans or previously attended TAP) and may opt out of the TAP. The primary requirement for these individuals will be pre-separation counseling prior to T10 orders. The remainder of the Airmen will complete pre-separation counseling prior to beginning T10 orders and will attend TAP upon completion of T10 orders. The Airmen located at active duty bases will continue to collaborate as an equal partner under the Total Force concept. Airmen at stand-alone Air National Guard wings will attend TAP at an active duty base (of any service) closest to them or at one of two Air National Guard wings, Fort Worth, Texas or Phoenix, Arizona; whichever best meets the citizen Airman's schedule. Further, once CAPSTONE events are on line, the Air National Guard plans to hold these events within the Airman's state; preferably as close as possible to their duty location, to ensure each Airman gets the chance to meet and have a "warm handoff" with local representatives (e.g., DOL, VA, etc.).

Again, we are committed to Total Force collaboration (active duty, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard) for TAP. This collaboration includes a keen focus on credentialing programs that assist separating Service members in their transition to civilian life and successful reentry into the Nation's workforce. Our enlisted Airmen begin to earn college credit from the moment they complete basic training, progressing through advanced technical training, to include professional military

education and off-duty education pursuits. The Community College of the AF, Technical School Training, Voluntary Education, and On-The-Job training supports credentialing that transfers to the civilian sector as the Airman begins their military to civilian transition. To improve outcomes in the transition to civilian work, DOD is using a military crosswalk, which is essential in detailing how a member's military specialty/duties translate to civilian job requirements. DOD and the Armed Services, are partnered with multiple private sector credentialing bodies that are working together to ensure that civilian industry benefits immensely by receiving highly trained, qualified, experienced, and disciplined employees while supporting the successful transition of the Airman and their family.

CONCLUSION

We remain focused on providing our Total Force personnel, who are separating or retiring, with the information, skills, and resources needed for a successful transition to the civilian sector. We are also committed to providing this support in new and innovative ways. Our Airmen and families who have sacrificed much for this Nation deserve no less. Again, we thank the Subcommittee for the opportunity to share information of Air Force's approach to implementing the re-directed Transition Assistance Program under the VOW and VEI initiatives.

Prepared Statement of Rear Admiral Daniel Neptun

Good morning Chairman Stutzman, Ranking Member Braley and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. It is a pleasure to appear before you today to discuss the Coast Guard's Transition Assistance Program.

Transition assistance was established for Coast Guard military personnel in October 1994 to comply with the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1995 (Public Law 103-337). This law requires that all separating and retiring servicemembers have access to transition assistance services and that members who are involuntarily separated receive specific benefits. Military personnel from all of the Armed Forces share similar needs when transitioning from active duty to civilian life. As such, many features of the Coast Guard's Transition Assistance Program are similar to what the Department of Defense (DoD) provides its transitioning members. There are, however, some important differences between the needs of transitioning Coast Guard personnel and their DoD counterparts that should be highlighted.

When compared to the other Armed Forces, the Coast Guard is relatively small in size and has broad geographic dispersion. As discussed below, this has an impact on the manner in which our Transition Assistance Program is implemented and delivered. In addition, many of the skills and experience our Coast Guard personnel acquire over the course of their careers, ranging from administrative, acquisition, and human resource, to law enforcement, maritime safety and security, and environmental response, are often considered readily transferrable to the civilian workforce. Finally, although some Coast Guard members have served overseas in war zones, the Coast Guard does not have the same proportion of combat veterans as the other Armed Forces. All of these factors are considered in developing and delivering a Transition Assistance Program that best serves Coast Guard members.

The Coast Guard understands that irrespective of the differences between the other Armed Forces and the Coast Guard, providing a robust Transition Assistance Program to our members is critical. As such, we have taken steps to ensure our men and women are receiving the support they need to make their transition successful. Currently, the Coast Guard provides mandatory, pre-separation counseling for our transitioning members, and we strongly encourage attendance at a Transition Assistance Program seminar for each member within a two year window prior to separation or retirement.

The Transition Assistance Program begins with pre-separation counseling at the unit level. Each unit Commanding Officer is required to ensure separating and retiring members, and their families, receive the transition benefits and services to which they are entitled. A Command representative is required to meet with all members separating, retiring, or entering the Disability Evaluation System approximately 180 days before separation and not later than 15 days after official notification of separation. As directed under Coast Guard policy, pre-separation counseling must occur at least 90 days prior to separation. During pre-separation counseling, the command representative assists members in achieving educational, training, and employment objectives, as well as those of the spouse, if applicable. Depending on the desires expressed by the member during pre-separation counseling, the Com-

mand either directs the member to the appropriate office for delivery of services, or provides additional counseling on specific benefits and programs as requested.

Formal Coast Guard Transition Assistance Program seminars are delivered at each of our 13 Health, Safety and Work-Life Regional Practices across the United States. Each of these designated transition sites features a Regional Manager who is responsible for managing overall individual and family support programs, and one Transition and Relocation Manager who coordinates the Transition Assistance Program for their area of responsibility (AOR). The Coast Guard typical AOR encompasses several states. Each Transition and Relocation Manager is a certified International Job and Career Coach and is generally responsible for the Transition Assistance Program, Relocation Assistance Program, and the Spouse Employment Assistance Program.

Coast Guard Transition Assistance Program seminars have been developed in coordination with DoD, Department of Labor (DOL), and Department of Veterans Affairs. These seminars provide instruction on skills identification, résumé preparation, interview techniques, and veteran entitlements, and are typically five days in length. The first three days include the core curriculum focused on the job search process, which is provided by DOL, or is based on the DOL curriculum. The other two days feature presentations on Veterans' benefits including healthcare services and enrollment and educational opportunities. The Coast Guard transitions approximately 3,000 active duty and reserve members annually. Over the past several years, about 1,600 – or just over half of these members – have elected to attend a transition seminar to obtain information on resources for employment, educational and Veterans' benefits.

To comply with the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 by the required date of November 21, 2012, the Coast Guard is developing plans to increase the number of scheduled seminars we offer. Currently, the number of participants who attend Coast Guard seminars can range from 50 participants in some locations to as few as 15. Moving forward, it will be critical for us to ensure all transitioning members have access to the information presented at these seminars. However, the dispersed location of Coast Guard units presents unique challenges for the Coast Guard. To address these challenges, the Coast Guard is exploring alternative delivery methods for members that cannot physically attend a seminar. These options will ensure that the information from Transition Assistance Program seminars can be provided using other methods, such as members receiving direct counseling with the Transition and Relocation Manager through a “virtual” environment, or through other electronic media. The Coast Guard is currently working with DoD, DOL and the Department of Veterans Affairs to develop a comprehensive virtual solution for members who, for whatever reason, cannot attend an actual seminar in person.

The goal of the Coast Guard's Transition Assistance Program is to assist servicemembers and their families in making an informed and effective transition from military service to civilian life. An integral aspect in this vital effort is to ensure separating members are made aware of, and have access to, the numerous programs and services available to assist them in the transition process. In an effort to continually improve our Transition Assistance Program and meet the needs of our transitioning members, we look forward to continuing the positive working relationship with DoD, DOL and the Department of Veterans Affairs in sharing new ideas and tools.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Questions For The Record

Inquiry from Honorable Marlin A. Stutzman, Chairman, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity to VA Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs

Question: Can VA provide a report on how it monitors the contracting process, most notably with CBOCs, for example, are bids vetted against VAOIG findings in an effort to weed out bad actors?

Response from VA Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs

Response: Prior to award of any lease contract, including Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) or Outpatient Clinic (OPC) leases, the proposed awardee is vetted by the contracting officer through a variety of pre-award clearances, including a search of the government-wide System for Award Management (SAM). SAM requires all contractors doing business with the government to be registered and maintain information about their company in the database, to include their online

representations and certifications (ie. are they a small business concern, etc). All contractors who are debarred from doing business with the government are also listed on the system, which ensures that VA does business only with vendors who have not been debarred. In addition to SAM, VA verifies the financial capability of the proposed awardee in two ways. First, as part of the solicitation for offers, VA requests detailed information about and points of contact for the proposed lending institution that will finance the project. VA reaches out and verifies the accuracy of the information provided. Also, VA obtains a report from Dun and Bradstreet Inc. to review the financial viability of the proposed awardee. If this report highlights any concerns, additional due diligence is undertaken to ensure that the proposed awardee will be able to perform following award. Lastly, for contracts over a certain dollar threshold, VA formally contacts the Department of Labor to ensure the contractor has operated in compliance with all Equal Opportunity Employment laws and regulations.

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