

BEST PRACTICES IN VETERAN HIRING

FIELD HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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BEST PRACTICES IN VETERAN HIRING

Friday, February 19, 2016

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

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:05 a.m., at the Anderson Township Civic Center, 7850 Five Mile Road, Cincinnati, Ohio, Hon. Brad Wenstrup [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Wenstrup and Takano.

Also present: Representatives Chabot, Johnson, and Messer.

OPENING STATEMENT OF BRAD WENSTRUP, CHAIRMAN

Mr. WENSTRUP. Well, good morning, everyone, and the Subcommittee will come to order. I thank everyone for joining us for today's field hearing of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity of the House Committee of Veterans' Affairs entitled "Best Practices in Veteran Hiring." As many of you know, I am Congressman Brad Wenstrup, and I am proud to serve the 2nd District of Ohio, and I am also honored to serve as Chairman of this Subcommittee.

Before we begin the important business that we are all here for today, I do want to comment on another issue within the Department of Veterans Affairs that is currently affecting our community, and something I am sure many of you have heard about following the VA's vague announcement last Friday before the long weekend about allegations of misconduct at our local VA medical center.

Although the announcement was ambiguous and the Department continues to try to downplay the allegations, news reports have stated that the situation involves misconduct within higher leadership at the Cincinnati Medical Center and regional VA leadership. There are also reports of substandard patient care, which, if true, should not go unpunished.

The Committee will continue to pursue investigations into this hospital, and VA's Office of the Medical Inspector and the independent VA Office of Inspector General have recently also launched investigations. While at this time I cannot comment on the investigation, I can promise you that the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs will remain vigilant. This investigation and its outcomes will not be swept under the rug, and at the same time, we will seek to ensure that the whistleblowers are protected.

We are committed to working diligently in a transparent manner in ensuring that if wrongdoing occurred, that every individual involved is held fully accountable. Our veterans and taxpayers deserve no less.

Before I proceed, I want to thank my colleague and Ranking Member of this Subcommittee, Mr. Mark Takano of California, for his help this year as our Subcommittee worked to move important legislation that will assist our veterans and their families as well as his partnership as our Subcommittee provided meaningful oversight of programs at VA and the Department of Labor so that our veterans and their families are better served.

It is a pleasure to have him here today, and I want to thank him again for his hospitality when we held a field hearing in his district last month to examine veteran homelessness. Thank you for making the trip and being here in Cincinnati with us today, Mr. Takano.

I also want to extend a special thanks to the Anderson Township Civic Center who has graciously provided the facilities for our use today. It is certainly a great location for our hearing and today's job fair.

We are here this morning to focus on one of the most important goals of our Subcommittee, helping veterans find meaningful and gainful employment following their military careers. While this Subcommittee does focus on this back in Washington, I want to give our Buckeye State employers the opportunity to provide their input as to why they employ and retain veterans.

While veteran unemployment continues to go down and is now at 4.7 percent nationwide, I feel that more can be done to inform quality employers of the advantages of bringing veterans into their workforce. Furthermore, we need to continue to work both at the Federal and State level to connect veterans to the jobs that will benefit both the veteran and their families, and allow them to fully succeed in the civilian sector, as well as providing employers with quality employees.

As Members of Congress, each of us can introduce bill after bill and provide as much oversight as we want over Federal job programs, but I think we can all agree that it is our country's strong support for our military and the value that our servicemembers continue to have in their civilian lives that encourages the strong desire of employers to bring veterans onto their payrolls.

Every single witness sitting here today has a story to tell and concrete reasons why hiring veterans is not just beneficial to the success of a company, but is a commonsense practice. As a veteran, and Army reservist myself, I look forward to hearing from each of our witnesses as to how we can better spread the word not only within the local area, but nationally as to why employers should always want to bring the men and women who have sacrificed for our country into their workforce. It is companies like the ones sitting before us here today that exhibit the positive reality of recruiting and retaining servicemembers in our civilian labor force. We all have much to learn from them.

A few housekeeping items before I recognize the Ranking Member. I want to remind our audience that today's hearing is not a town hall, and we will be hearing only from Members and invited panelists. My staff and I would be happy to speak with members of the public following the hearing.

Finally, I want to thank my colleagues and good friends, Representative Steve Chabot from Ohio's 1st District, Representative

Bill Johnson from Ohio's 6th District, and joining us in just a little bit will be Representative Luke Messer of Indiana's 6th District.

At this time, I ask unanimous consent that our three colleagues be allowed to sit at the dais and ask questions.

[No response.]

Mr. WENSTRUP. Hearing no objection, so ordered. I now recognize Mr. Takano for any opening remarks he may have.

OPENING STATEMENT OF MARK TAKANO, RANKING MEMBER

Mr. TAKANO. Good morning. I want to start off by saying how happy I am to be in Cincinnati this morning, even though it is much colder than it is in California. I thank you for inviting me, Mr. Chairman, and I thank you for the wonderful hospitality you are extending to me and the staff who have accompanied me here. We had a delicious slab at Montgomery's last night.

[Laughter.]

Mr. TAKANO. I thought about wearing the bib on the dais, but I decided to leave it with my staff.

I have to say you have a beautiful downtown, wonderful old buildings. And we have a magnificent country, a beautiful country, and one of the great things about being a Member of Congress is you get to see a lot of it. And I am delighted to be able to visit the district of my colleague, with whom we have done so much work on congressional oversight, demanding more accountability for the VA, and, most importantly, we have worked together in a bipartisan way to pass some important legislation.

You hear a lot about the division in Congress, but the Veterans' Committee is one of the most bipartisan Committees, if not the most bipartisan Committee, in the Congress. And we have worked together to accomplish things for our veterans and the American people. And so, I am very proud to be here, and I am pleased to have you as a colleague.

I look forward to the testimony of your constituents who made hiring veterans a top priority, the corporate good citizens, the public sector employees, recruiters, and others. We want to know what works so we can grow the ideas we hear today that have brought success to veterans here in Cincinnati, and help expand into other parts of the country. So I thank you for being here and for answering our questions, and I look forward to your testimony.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Well, thank you. On our first panel we have Sergeant Dominic Gulliford with the Cincinnati Police Department, Mr. John Sapp with GE Aviation, Ms. Stephanie Huff with HELP Heating and Air Conditioning, and Mr. Jeff Carper with Total Quality Logistics. And I thank you all for being here.

Before we turn to you, I would like to ask the other Members if they have any brief comments they would like to make. Mr. Johnson.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HONORABLE BILL JOHNSON

Mr. JOHNSON. Absolutely, and I thank, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing. I am Bill Johnson, and I represent Ohio's 6th Congressional District. And if you are not familiar with it [inaudible] it sits along the Ohio River about an hour outside of Cleveland

at the top, and an hour outside of Cincinnati, home to somewhere around 50,000 veterans [inaudible]. We feel that we are part of [inaudible].

I am also a 26-and-a-half-year veteran of the United States Air Force [inaudible] veterans is one of my very top priorities. As I have said many times before, I am grateful, extremely grateful, to the men and woman who have served our country and still serve today. And I strongly believe that veterans are the segment of our society that most deserve our gratitude and assistance because of the sacrifices that they make. They put family on hold. They put careers on hold. They put their lives on hold to support and defend the Constitution, and to provide security for our way of life. To the veterans who have joined us today, I would like to thank each of you for your service to our great country as well.

The role of the Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration is to ensure that our returning veterans are made aware of services and the benefits that they are entitled to. I further believe that we as a Nation have a responsibility to assist our veterans in transitioning back into the workforce when they are finished their tours of duty.

I am looking forward to hearing from our witnesses today on their success in veteran hiring [inaudible]. What you are doing is commendable, and as I am sure you will agree, by hiring veterans you are [inaudible] that you are hiring highly skilled, highly motivated, trained professionals, some of the best workers that our Nation has to offer.

I would also like to hear from you on what suggestions you might have to improve the hiring process for both employers and for veterans, and how Congress, what we can do to assist in that effort. It is my hope that I can take some of these suggestions back and share them with [inaudible] Ohio to ensure that all veterans across my State and our Nation are afforded opportunities to gain full employment.

So I am looking forward to hearing from our panelists today, Mr. Chairman. Thanks again for the opportunity and for holding this hearing, and I yield back.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you, Mr. Johnson. I appreciate you being here. Mr. Chabot.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HONORABLE STEVE CHABOT

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank Brad Wenstrup for inviting me to participate in this hearing today. I am not actually on the Veterans' Committee. I am the Chairman of the House Small Business Committee, and I am on the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Judiciary Committee. But he invited me to participate, and I did not want to miss this opportunity. He also told me to keep it real brief, so I will.

[Laughter.]

Mr. CHABOT. I also want to thank our colleague from California, Mr. Takano. I am glad he got an opportunity to savor some Montgomery Inn Ribs last night, and while he is in town, I would encourage him to also partake in some of the other delicacies like Skyline, and Gold Star Chili, and Graeter's Ice Cream, and I am

sure we could all name so many other things that we probably far too much. But it is great stuff.

In all seriousness, I want to thank Brad for mentioning the concerns that have been raised recently about the VA hospital, and I agree with everything he said. And it is absolutely our responsibility to make sure that our veterans are getting the highest quality care possible, and we should leave no stone unturned in finding that out.

So thank you for inviting me to participate, and I will be quiet so we can listen to our distinguished panel here.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you. Thank you. So back to the panel. Each of you will be recognized for 5 minutes for your opening statement, and we will begin with Sergeant Gulliford.

STATEMENT OF DOMINIC F. GULLIFORD

Mr. GULLIFORD. Thanks for having me, everyone. I just wanted to touch base for the Cincinnati Police Department. Oh, okay.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you.

Mr. GULLIFORD. I guess you guys need to hear me. I'm here on behalf of Chief Isaacs, and he's off doing something else right now or he would be here himself.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Understand.

Mr. GULLIFORD. Let me start by saying that the Cincinnati Police Department believes it to be an honor and a privilege to employ and have as part of its team veterans from the United States military. We feel that there is no higher reverence to show towards one's country than to serve in the military with honor, pride, and dignity. To employ individuals that embody the spirit of respect for the country and themselves, allows us to maintain a high level of excellence as a standard in the honorable calling of policing.

The Department and the city have used several different approaches—excuse me—to attract veterans to apply. For example, qualified veterans are awarded 5 bonus points on the initial exam. If the veteran is disabled, they receive 10 additional points on the initial exam. Our exam is so competitive that 5 or 10 points may vary significantly and can propel you from probably 250th to in the top five. Currently you must be an Ohio resident to receive the additional points at the time of application.

The department has aggressively looked for any career fair opportunities on military posts or job fairs anywhere around that cater to veterans either on a military base or those hosted off base by military. We have constructed a group of adjunct recruiters as well to go along with our recruiting unit, which is six people, who are veterans to assure we always have enough personnel to attend as many veteran recruiting functions as possible.

We recognize that the area natives who are in the military and are returning to this area will be seeking employment beyond the ETS date. We also realize that there are many veterans who will be relocating to this area for the first time after they get out of the military. Knowing that honorable discharged veterans make for excellent police candidates, the distance of travel to recruit at a military facility is not an issue.

Military Guard and reservists are also highly sought after candidates for our department. Our department and the city attempts

to accommodate Members of the Guard and Reserve as much as possible through their careers with the department. Once you are selected to the police academy, the military provisions start. They will be in accordance of how far along you are within the academy.

We have had recruits called up for active duty while in the academy. Upon being released for active duty, if they have completed a significant portion of the academy training, we will have assembled the necessary steps to get them started or reinstated and certified as soon as possible. If they have not attended the academy for long, they may have to wait until the next academy class sits, but we will hold their positions available for them. When called for active duty after the academy graduation, your position and seniority will stand no matter how long of a deployment.

As a part of our local recruitment efforts, we have developed postcard size fliers announcing our application and recruitment which we distribute throughout normal recruitment career fairs and place in local businesses and other facilities with a high volume of pedestrian traffic. A list of local veterans' addresses within the areas of Hamilton County, Butler County, Warren County, and Clermont County and also the City of Dayton was secured through a private company. Those same fliers were turned into email mailers—I am sorry, not email mailers—just regular mailers. There we go. And sent to their post service—let me see if I can get this correct—postal service addresses. There we go. The list totaled about 5,000 addresses. Approximately 30 percent, hovering around 30 percent, of the Cincinnati Police Department sworn personnel, are veterans.

We take great pride in hiring veterans. Again, we recognize that veterans make great candidates due to their commitment to duty and their want to serve and assist others. As a part of the 30 percent, I am actually a veteran of the Marine Corps, and our chief is a veteran of the National Guard.

We take personal pride in helping veterans establish themselves in the City of Cincinnati police ranks. We advocate giving back to well-deserving individuals who have given to our country. We can also be at peace knowing that we are helping to keep a high level of professionalism by hiring veterans within our department that not only helps us stand out as one of the best departments, but ultimately gives the citizens of Cincinnati the type of service they deserve, require, and want.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF DOMINIC F. GULLIFORD APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you, Sergeant. I appreciate that. I also appreciate what I have seen the police department do, which is allow you to wear your branch of service, whether it is current or previous, on your uniform. And I think it is nice to have that recognized.

Mr. Sapp, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF JOHN SAPP

Mr. SAPP. Thank you very much. It is a true pleasure to be here and have the opportunity to speak on behalf of GE Aviation. My name is John Sapp, and I am the executive director of sales, oper-

ations, and offset at GE Aviation. In addition to this role and more applicable to this gathering, I also lead GE Aviation's Veteran Network. GE is honored to have over 10,000 U.S. military veterans continue their career with us.

And building on our strong commitment to military veteran recruitment and development, we launched GE's Veteran Network across all of our businesses in November of 2009. The network is organized within three pillars. Those are to support, hire, and grow veterans, the local community of veterans, and veterans that have joined our ranks. Both our own employees who are veterans and veterans in the local communities we feel benefit as a result of the Veteran Network itself.

First, let me thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. As an 11-year veteran of the U.S. Air Force, it's a real pleasure to be a part of this testimony, and I look forward to learning more about the great initiatives that are underway to support veterans here and their transitions.

GE is passionate about hiring veterans. At GE, we value the leadership, loyalty, integrity, and commitment to excellence instilled through the participation in military service. We believe strongly that this service helps make great leaders that are disciplined, strategic thinkers with a level of loyalty that is, frankly, unmatched. This appreciation of veteran talent as well as GE's desire to give back to those that have made incredible sacrifices for the betterment of others, were the primary reasons for the 2012 launching of GE's initiative to hire 5,000 veterans over a 5-year period.

As of February 12th, just entering our 4th year, we have already hired 4,889 veterans. Within GE Aviation, we've hired 1,137 veterans in that 4-year period and 2 months, and by year end, we'll have by far exceeded our overall commitment with a significant margin.

GE's hiring and transition practices have been successful in attracting and hiring a wide range of veteran talent from junior enlisted to general officer. For example, GE's transition assistance workshops and one-on-one mentoring sessions are executed in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce's Hiring our Heroes initiative by our own GEV Membership. GE's veteran employees coach with a focus on resume building as well as interviewing techniques and job search strategies. These seminars are designed to help military personnel successfully communicate the skills they have learned in the military to the corporate world.

Furthermore, GE is also a founding Member of the American Corporate Partners, a national mentoring program dedicated to helping veterans transition from the armed forces to private enterprise through career counseling and networking with professionals. Internally, the GE Veteran Network and human resources have worked together to create a much deeper understanding of veteran talent through our Value of a Vet campaign, messaging the unique attributes of military talent that will help GE hiring managers to better understand veteran backgrounds.

Within GE Aviation, HR has also created a special team solely focused on connecting veteran talent with job postings. That team is actually represented here today. That team further impacts our

efficiency in making sure that we align veteran applicants with the right roles here at GE Aviation.

For mid-career transition, GE offers the Experienced Leadership Program designed specifically for military officers. The program is a unique opportunity to work in three 8-month rotations within a GE business. Qualified candidates with exceptional military service are selected to start their careers with GE in this 2-year cross-functional program, including both on-the-job training and formal classroom training. I was fortunate enough to have entered the company through this program just 8 years ago.

Once on board, GE works hard to make sure the veteran has an effective transition into the company. Our GEV Network's growth pillar is focused on supporting the development of veterans, including career development, mentorship, and coaching, coupled with networking and veteran connection activities that are just a natural part of the Vet Network itself. Our military employees find a supportive environment for growing a great career at GE.

Overall, we're passionate about hiring, supporting, and growing veterans. We've made strong progress towards our goals to date, but obviously look forward to continuing to improve our support of veterans going forward, as well as learning from the other businesses and government practices in forums such as this.

Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to participate.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOHN SAPP APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you very much.

Ms. Huff, you are not recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF STEPHANIE HUFF

Ms. HUFF. And thank you again for allowing us to participate as well.

At HELP Plumbing, Heating, Cooling, and Electric, we pride ourselves on our commitment to activities supporting veterans. Our support spans many different programs throughout the year.

We are most known for our donation program where we give a portion of our profits every year to a local veterans support program. In the last several years, we have donated to the DAV program. In addition, we have donated free services and equipment to local wounded veterans as well as widows and the children of fallen soldiers. We announce our donations at our annual Veterans Day Appreciation Breakfast, which we host on site every year on Veterans Day.

We also strongly support hiring veterans. There are several different ways we focus our efforts on connecting with veterans for hiring opportunities throughout the year. We actively participate in sponsored events, including recruit military hiring fairs and other veteran-targeted career fairs.

In addition, in the spring of 2015, we hosted our own veterans hiring event on site at our headquarters where we brought in other military friendly employers with hiring needs, as well as nonprofit organizations that support veterans for a daylong event. During this event, we offer on-site interviews, free lunch, and other vet-

eran-specific support programs and services. We look forward to bringing this program back again this May.

Outside of career fairs, we also focus on posting jobs on our local OhioMeansJobs.com Web site, and reach out to the partners with their veteran support system, and have them assist us in finding qualified talent. We also reach out through trade-specific sites and take advantage of programs and marketing materials provided through organizations, such as TroopStoTrades.org through the Nexstar Legacy Foundation to find individuals with a specific interest in learning a skilled trade.

There are many industries that have the potential to participate and register apprenticeship programs throughout the State. Both businesses and job seekers benefit from apprentice opportunities. Participating and qualifying apprenticeship programs are offered in health care, construction, utilities, and many other industries.

While HELP Plumbing, Heating, Cooling, and Electric doesn't currently participate in State-recognized apprenticeships, HELP does pay a hundred percent of training expenses for all training for new hires. This includes anyone with or without any specific skilled trade experience.

Our program consists of 3 to 5 months of intense training, including classroom and field training experience, as well as ongoing training throughout the year to consist of over 200 hours a year to keep our team members on top of all the necessary industry-specific training needs. We also pay for all training and certification exams to receive State recognition, license, and certifications within each trade that we offer. This is a great opportunity for veterans transitioning to full-time work where they want to learn a trade from the ground up.

In 2013, HELP Plumbing, Heating, Cooling, and Electric was present at the DAV National Commanders Award for Outstanding Small Employer of the Year for Auspicious and Meritorious Effort in providing employment opportunities for ill and injured workers.

And thank you again for allowing us to participate today.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF STEPHANIE HUFF APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you.

Mr. Carper, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF JEFF CARPER

Mr. CARPER. Hello, and thank you, Representative Wenstrup, for inviting us. I'm honored to represent Total Quality Logistics at today's hearing and talk about some of the company's best practices when it comes to attracting and retaining military employees.

My name is Jeff Carper. I was a 7-year Army vet myself. Now I am the executive sales director at TQL. I have three main points that I want to discuss today. First, how we hire military employees. TQL is a recruiter exclusively dedicated to finding military talent for our company. LeeAnn Ryan is with me today. She's a senior airman in the United States Air Force Reserve whose own military experience and understanding of what it takes to transition into the civilian world makes her well suited for the role.

LeAnn recruits for both sales and non-sales positions at TQL. Her familiarity with the military jargon and terms that often appear on military resumes gives her a good idea of where an applicant might be best suited. Among other things, LeeAnn attends career fairs on military bases and will be focusing on TAP and ACAP, the transition assistance program events for military leaving the services or going into the Reserves. She works with the TVCA, who are here today, Hiring our Heroes, Recruit Military, and other organizations to actively recruit from all branches of the service with postings on military-specific Web sites and job boards.

Second, why TQL is a good fit for military servicemembers. TQL is a freight brokerage firm. We connect shippers who have freight that needs delivered with carriers who can haul it. We specialize in truckload transportation although we don't own any of our own trucks. This isn't a job most people coming out of school or the military have trained for. The trucking industry has unique rules, regulations, and a language all its own.

We train our experts through a 5-month long training program similar to what servicemembers experience in military. We hire for the job based on soft skills, the soft skills that make one successful in brokering freight are similar to those taught in the military: the ability to learn new skills and concepts quickly, adopt a mission-driven philosophy, and put forth core values to exceed expectations.

Some of the comments we've heard from our military employees as to why they succeeded at TQL, one, "I work for a large company, but my team is like a small squad or fire team. We work well together." Another one: "Being in the military gives you a base structure. Self-motivation and self-discipline are expectations here." Third: "The culture and energy we have here are very similar to the Army. You always have a new goal in front of you, a new challenge to meet, an opportunity to be a leader."

As we continue to grow and expand into new cities around the country, we need employees with strong leadership capabilities. More than 90 percent of our sales leadership and management positions are filled from within the company. And, again, teaching leadership skills is an area where military excels.

Third, the TQL culture. TQL is and always has been committed to being a military friendly company. Multiple managers at TQL have been recognized with Patriot Awards for their exemplary support of employees in the National Guard and Reserve. The company received the Above and Beyond Award from the ESGR, the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, and we recently received our third military friendly employer recognition from Victory Media and GI Jobs magazine.

The tone is set from the top. One of our core focus areas for our company's charitable efforts is military causes. The company and our employees actively work to raise money and support military causes. In 2015, we worked with 13 military or veteran organizations contributing nearly \$70,000 in charitable giving. And it's more than just dollars. It's personal support, too. This is an excerpt from a letter sent directly to all of our military employees from CEO Ken Oaks on the day TQL signed its national statement of support with the ESGR.

“Members of the military are some of the strongest team members at TQL. What you have learned through your military service, discipline, hard work, leadership is important. What you choose to serve reflects integrity, self-sacrifice, and love for your countrymen is invaluable. Thank you for choosing to join the TQL team, but, even more importantly, thank you for your service to our country.” Thank you.

[THE STATEMENT OF JEFF CARPER APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you very much. I want to thank you all for your testimonies here today. And now we will go into questioning, and I now recognize myself for 5 minutes for questions.

You know, we are always trying, on this Subcommittee especially and throughout the VA Committee, to do more to prepare our military members for that transition out of the military and into the private sector, trying to do more on the front end, if you will, before they transition from actually being in uniform and going to the VA side of the equation.

And so, what are some of the challenges that each of you see for that transition for the employees? There has got to be some, right? They are going from a different way of life, a different way of employment. So what kind of challenges do you face, and how do you deal with those? And we can start with you, Mr. Carper.

Mr. CARPER. Sure. You know, I remember back to 2001 when I, leaving the military, and how difficult a transition it was. I knew what my skill level was. At least I felt like I knew what it was. I knew what my experience was, and I also thought that I knew how that would transition into the civilian world. What I found was, is that a lot of the companies that I was interviewing with did not understand, because they did not have a background in the military, how easily to take my experience and transition it over to something that would correlate with what they were doing inside their company.

So I think the more education that we can get to employers, you know. A lot of us here on the panel have military folks that can spend time reviewing resumes and making sure that we are involved with veterans that are interviewing so we can help explain some of the subtle intricacies that go along with somebody's resume and background. But for companies that do not have that inside their organization, it is, you know, maybe partnering up with the local veterans organization or, you know, one of the organizations like we have represented here to be able to explain those things to the individuals that are doing the hiring. I think that is real important.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you. We also try to encourage the education of our troops as they are coming out that, as they are filling out resumes and someone asks their qualifications, they do not just put “sniper.”

[Laughter.]

Mr. WENSTRUP. They put, I show up for work on time, I am disciplined, I pay attention to detail, those type of things that I think parlay well into employment. Ms. Huff?

Ms. HUFF. Very similar to what Mr. Carper said, I do not come from a military background myself, so having some individuals

within the organization that I support and that support me when we are doing the interview process. We will have them actually participate in the interview process so that veterans that are coming in feel comfortable as part of the interview process and interviewing with somebody that maybe they can connect with.

When they come on board, we have quite a few veterans that work for us, so we try to make sure that we, you know, can gear them toward the individuals maybe within the military so that they can feel that connection and help them go through that process.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Sapp.

Mr. SAPP. Yeah, I would definitely echo how the veterans describe their experience as being a challenge that I think I certainly faced and other veterans that we continue to see, you know, applying for roles directly within GE. That was really the energy behind us launching our Value of a Vet campaign, which was primarily initially started internally in terms of raising awareness of what veteran experiences meant and being able to, you know, translate veteran resumes. But that can be done externally as well, so as to support the veterans as they draft their resumes.

The other part that I talk to also is, you know, a lot of veteran transitions are actually happening in a two-step process, which is, they go to further their education before they then make the jump into the corporate world. This is an area that within southwest Ohio we have been very focused on, and not just GE Aviation, but also a number of the other companies represented here. Partners with schools, like Xavier and University of Cincinnati, to try and make sure that we support them, you know, the veterans in their transition. And we do things like mentorship programs.

So at GE Aviation, we have 29 mentor pairings that are being set up at Xavier as an example to help support them making decisions in terms of majors and, you know, job interviews, internships, and things to that effect. We think that is a critical part of supporting that transition, and I think a message that should make its way into those folks that are making the transition.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you. Sergeant?

Mr. GULLIFORD. Yes, sir. Fortunately, in the field of law enforcement, there is always a lot of people existing the military, that would like to be police officers. Most dream of being police officers, but I do not know of anywhere where you can be one until you reach 21 years of age.

So we do not have a lot of the same issues as some of the corporate companies. Our main issue is being able to reach out to the veterans and let them know that we are actually hiring. And then our police department as an individual department, we are in competition with all the other ones because the process is so long. Right now, we are in the throes of trying to scale down some of our processes, but we obviously need to vet our people very well.

But we are always looking for honorably discharged veterans, and we do not necessarily have a problem with getting them if we get to them to let them know that we are available and we are hiring.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Well, thank you for being here today, and hopefully you will get one or two of them if not more, so I appreciate that.

Mr. Takano, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You know, I understand that a lot of corporations use technology to review resumes, and they often search for key words in that resume. Is that a practice that you employ, and does it help to train the veterans to be aware of that so not only do they not put "sniper" down on the resume, but they actually are attuned to tailoring a resume very specifically toward an objective and using key words on the resume. It could be any one of you who could answer that question.

Ms. HUFF. Yes, I would say I do a lot of resume database searching, so I am always looking for very specific words, whether it be specific skills, you know, looking for customer service, or looking for sales, or looking for anything that could help them in their job. So definitely listing their skills specifically could definitely help them tailor employers to be able to find them more successfully on the internet.

Mr. TAKANO. So having people very specifically trained on how to teach the veteran, how to tailor their resumes to really think about their military service, and how it transfers, what skills they have, and to do the research on how to match with the employer is really an important part of them being able to make a successful match in application.

Ms. HUFF. Yeah, absolutely, and if they are wanting to go towards a specific industry, making sure that anything that they received from the military or any experience that they have had, make sure that they are listing those things that could cater towards specifically.

Mr. TAKANO. Now, you know, I believe that our military has America's finest. They step forward to serve their country. But a lot of them, you know, the transition is not so smooth from the military into the workforce. Some of them get into trouble in that process, and some have actually go afoul of the law. Do you have something like a veterans court here that allows a veteran to be assigned sort of an alternative track to the justice system? Mr. Gulliford, do you know anything about that?

Mr. GULLIFORD. We do not have an alternative practice inside the court system, but what we do have is, we have a group of veterans that are police officers that become involved with a veteran through a call, a law breakage, or whatever it might be, that those individuals can be called and moved into other services to help them out.

Mr. TAKANO. Where I am going with this line of questioning is that one of the areas of bipartisan interest is criminal justice reform. And I think, especially that our veterans deserve that second chance when they make a mistake, because their military service history might be a contributing factor to the troubles they are having.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Will the gentleman yield for a second?

Mr. TAKANO. Sure.

Mr. WENSTRUP. In Hamilton County, we do have a veterans court, and that does not specifically involve the police department.

It's as they get into the court system, we have a court for them. And it has been very successful, and a lot of our veterans who have found themselves in trouble get a mentor. They have to go through a rigorous course and they graduate, and then they get back on their path to success.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Sure.

Mr. TAKANO. I appreciate that. Do your business organizations have any way to take account of someone who might have been incarcerated in the hiring process so that they are summarily excluded? That we especially reach out to our veterans who might have gone through the veterans court, find ways to get them employed and in an appropriate situation. But, I think if we make this investment in our veterans, it could have an impact on how we think about criminal justice issues.

Mr. SAPP. For GE Aviation, I am not sure of the policy. I would have to speak with HR relative to what they do with background checks and, you know, impact of an incarceration in a veteran applicant.

Ms. HUFF. We do not have anything as of today specifically that targets that.

Mr. TAKANO. And I do not bring it as a criticism. We are struggling with this in my area, and as well as a whole big issue of that transitioning of former incarcerated people back into civilian life. I am specifically interested in how we look at our veterans, especially looking at it from the homeless point of view or also just ways in which we can fully welcome them back. You know, when we say "welcome home," I think we have got to really mean that.

And some of our veterans, you know, are coming back with a lot of issues. Most of them are just incredible assets to any organization. We have got to get them ways to match up. Anyway, I will have more questions for the second panel. I yield back.

Mr. WENSTRUP. In that vein, if I may interject, we also have an agency here called Cincinnati Works, and it works with not only veterans, but anyone who has had a record that wants to turn to their life around. We have certain employers that are willing to engage, and it has been a great opportunity for people to get a second chance.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Chairman, I want to learn more about that because I think this is an issue all around the country.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chabot, you are now recognized for 5 minutes. And I would like to welcome my colleague, Mr. Messer from Indiana. Thank you for joining us here today as well. Mr. Chabot.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Carper, I will start with you if I can. I had a nephew that worked at TQL for a number of years, and you are discussing family things, and how is work, and that. And he discussed it as a very challenge, very competitive environment, very invigorating, but tough. And you already note some of the qualities that are necessary to be successful at TQL. Could you expound upon that a little bit, the relationship between the experiences that one has in the military and then in the private sector, especially at a company like TQL that has been very successful?

Mr. CARPER. Absolutely. You know, first, I will start off by saying it was a nice experience to be able to hire for a company like TQL

because I was not put in a box. I was not told that I had to hire somebody with a college degree. I was not told that I had to bring somebody in with a specific, you know, background or skill set.

So much of the job is, you know, and I hate to make civilian comparisons to military jumps. But when you are in the military, there are so many last-minute decisions that you have to make, so many changes, so many late night, you know, job assignments that you have. And that translates well into what TQL does because our reps are 24/7, 365 a year.

The very first Thanksgiving I worked for TQL, I spent 3 hours in the afternoon upstairs on the computer with my cell phone attached to my ear because we had a truck in the middle of the country, you know, that broke down, and the refrigerated unit had stopped running. And those kind of things are not unique. Those are the kind of things that happen on a daily basis with our reps.

So the ability to be able to think quickly, to deal with really stressful situations. Being a third party logistics company puts in an interesting spot in the fact that we do not own the trucks. The drivers are not employees of ours. So we are stuck in the middle of, you know, a challenging situation where it might not have anything to do with what we did. The customer does not care, and, you know, in a lot of cases they rain down a lot of stress on the individuals.

And, you know, the ability to compartmentalize that, you know, and come back in the next day reinvigorated with the ability to, you know, to try and pick up new clients and new freight is real important.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you. Speaking of trucks and trucking, we have had recently some representatives of the trucking industry in our office, and we are talking about them. One of the things that they mentioned is that now and into the foreseeable future, they mentioned about 100,000 positions are either available now or will be available for truck drivers all across the country. And with the economy that is to some degree coming back, we would like to see it be much stronger, but it is coming back to some degree.

So you need to haul freight all over the country, and we have a lot of young men and women that served in Iraq and Afghanistan that were driving, you know, huge rigs under very stressful and challenging circumstances. And it seems like a pretty good fit. I am not suggesting everybody that comes back should become truck drivers, but the jobs are there. Are you hearing that? Could you—

Mr. CARPER. We are hearing that, yeah. We have thousands of carrier relationships, carriers that run for each and every week. And we are hearing consistently from them that they are keeping the doors wide open for new drivers. They have equipment that is sitting in their yard not being used because they do not have drivers to fill them right now. So, yes, we are hearing that.

Mr. CHABOT. We had heard one of the problems that they mentioned was that, you know, to get the license that you need to drive a big rig, you need to be 21 years old, and some of our folks coming out of the service are not 21 yet.

Mr. CARPER. Correct.

Mr. CHABOT. And so, perhaps we need to legislatively at the State level or whatever to work on it. Have you heard that as an issue?

Mr. CARPER. Not as much that. You know, my own opinion is, I think it is a bit of a generational thing. It does not seem like a whole lot of the younger generation is looking forward to being a long haul truck driver, which is not an easy life. You spend days on the road. You are sleeping in your cab. You are eating at truck stops. It is not the most glamorous job in the world. So I think that is probably a bigger problem.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you. I have only got a little time left. Sergeant, I will turn to you if I can, and thanks for your service to all the veterans, and, in fact, the veterans that are here today. We appreciate what you have done for us.

I had the pleasure of having our new FOP president, Dan Hill, in my office just yesterday, and when Chief Isaacs took over, we met with him. I am on the Crime Subcommittee in Judiciary, so we have been involved in a lot of the crime issues at the Federal level, but we work locally with the local police department.

And you already touched on it, and I have only got a short time. But could you briefly talk about the experience that one has in the military and to be a successful police officer, what is the overlap there?

Mr. GULLIFORD. Well, to be successful as a police officer, you have to be a leader and a follower. We look for those traits, those characteristics in individuals. And when people come out of the military, when they are discharged honorably, they usually embody everything we are looking for in an individual as far as [inaudible] and being able to make the right decisions as far as correction services. So it is a very easy transition.

And as far as their success in the police department, it depends on the individual and what they mean as success. If they want to go up the ranks or if they are looking for a certain job assignment inside the police department. Some just love being patrol officers, and that is all they want to do is to be out there with the individuals and serving at that level. So they do not look to go further, which is fine. That is absolutely fine.

So all we need is people who are willing to lead when necessary and follow when necessary.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Johnson, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JOHNSON. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I wanted to comment just briefly on, you know, the comments about resumes that might have "sniper" listed in skills. If I were an employer I would not totally discount that.

[Laughter.]

Mr. JOHNSON. I mean, if you have got a job that requires a lot of poise and calm under pressure, you might want to consider that. And look at manufacturing, a material manager or handler, because a sniper is very skilled at putting the exact right product in the exact right spot every time.

[Laughter.]

Mr. JOHNSON. So there are some advantages to that. Mr. Sapp, you know, I retired in 1999 and went into the private sector, and worked in corporate America as well. One of the things that I experienced, and I would just like your perspective on it, oftentimes I think, especially in leadership positions within corporate America, there tends to be a little bit of intimidation with military officers that come out and get into leadership or get on the leadership track, because corporate America is not always efficient, not always effective. And things move kind of slow.

But you take a young platoon captain or a pilot out of the Air Force or whatever, they are used to getting the job done. They are mission focused. So there is some intimidation because they tend to make people around them either perform better or fall by the wayside. Do you see that at all in big companies like GE that there might be some reluctance on the part of not the hiring folks, but part of the executive team?

Mr. SAPP. So this is a real area of focus for us at GE right now. Actually, just 2 days ago, we spent the better of a day talking about how we are growing military careers. And actually, this included David Joyce as part of the discussion. He is the CEO for GE Aviation.

And so, what you are touching on right there is, I think, a very important issue that we recognize that hiring veteran talent, because of their leadership and management dealing with crisis management, how they can work through difficult situations is, you know, clearly exceptional, but it is different. And a large part of our discussion is how do we help folks make that transition because, you know, those skills that you talked about as being a must-have within the police department are a must-have at GE, but they take a different style and approach typically. And I would expect it is similar to other corporations here where it can be more collaborative in terms of how the leadership and, you know, skill works.

My feeling as a veteran is collaboration is a very active part of what I did in my career, you know, as a Member of the Air Force. But how we went about it in the community, it is something that was a bit different. Personally, what we look at in terms of the numbers, they suggest that, you know, within GE, that we see very strong representation of military leaders continuing to go up the ranks. And so, I feel people are making that adjustment, but it takes good, you know, coaching, you know, to get there.

Clearly our senior leadership recognizes, you know, the need to bring those folks up. In fact, we just hired our first 3-star in GE Aviation, and I think it is a direct reflection of that.

Mr. JOHNSON. Okay. Well, thanks. Have any of you across the panel, have any of you had any experience working with the VA's Veteran Employment Center or the VEC? And if so, what is your opinion of the tool, and how can it be improved? Sergeant Gulliford?

Mr. SAPP. I just sat down with Lisa a couple of days ago from the VEC. I think the tool has a potential to be outstanding in the fact that it can be a repository for veteran applicants. So if we want to hire 250 veterans within aviation this year, I am not sure what the exact number is going to be. This is a great place for us

to go in and start the matching process to find veterans applicants and where we have openings. So that part of it alone, I think, is a big value.

Mr. JOHNSON. Anybody else use the VEC?

Mr. CARPER. I have not personally, no.

Mr. JOHNSON. Okay. One final question with the little remaining time that I have. One of the biggest issues that we have in our military today is the number of deployments. And a lot of our Guard and Reserve folks are going on multiple deployments over and over and over again. How does your company support members of the Guard or the Reserve both during and after deployment? And we will start with Sergeant Guilford?

Mr. GULLIFORD. Right now, it is in our contract that just for being in there, we make sure they have enough time with the weekend deployments, just a regular deployment being in the National Guard or whatever Reserves that they are. And then when they get deployed, all they have to do is provide us with the orders that they received, and they can stay gone as long as they need to. The individual even gets to make the decision if they want their military paycheck or their city paycheck, and they usually pick whichever one is higher.

So they get that, and then once they come back they have, I believe, it is 90 days to reclaim their position with the police department before they voluntarily vacate.

Mr. SAPP. We currently have 57 GE employees across the company that are deployed right now. We have a similar process in terms of making sure that pay, et cetera, is squared away. And we have a team of folks within the Vet Network that reach out to their families as well as them, send care packages, help with the lawn, things like that, while they are deployed.

Mr. JOHNSON. I do not want to abuse my time, but Ms. Huff, Mr. Carper, do either of you have a comment?

Mr. CARPER. Yeah. On top of the things that have been said, the pay differential, 12 weeks, and all that, each individual at QTL has a book of business, a customer base that they talk to every day. When they deploy, that is handed off to team members on their team to take care of the business like it is their own. So when they come back off of deployment, they are able to get debriefed about what is going on with those accounts and resume the activities like they were never gone.

Mr. JOHNSON. Okay. Well, thank you. Mr. Chairman, thanks for indulging my time. I yield time.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Ms. Huff, did you want to comment as well on what you are doing?

Ms. HUFF. I was just going to say we are a smaller business, so we do not have any physical policies. But we do have one that is getting ready to deploy, so we are working with him to make sure that we ensure he works up until he leaves. And then another one that is looking to come back that is in Kuwait that we are helping to make sure we prepare to have his job ready for him when he comes back.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Well, thank you all very much. Mr. Messer, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MESSER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank all the veterans in this room for your service, all the employers for your service in trying to make sure we take care of our veterans. Thank the rest of the Members of the panel. Mr. Takano came all the way from California. It is great to have him here. I am sorry I was late. I came from the far distant land of Indiana on my trip over.

[Laughter.]

Mr. MESSER. I actually started the morning over in Dearborn County. This is an important hearing, and obviously the job fair today is important as well. I think we have to rethink as a country are we doing everything we can to serve our veterans. You know, in the world of veteran benefits, it is now coming to light that as many as 25 percent of our veterans are not aware of the benefits that they are entitled to. And I think we have to think about as a Nation what can we do to make sure that at least every one who served knows the benefits that they can obtain.

And I think there is a lesson in that really, in the conversation today about jobs for veterans as well. I can tell you that at least in my district, I talk to employers, and this is not so much a question of demand. I mean, I think employers by and large understand the benefits that our veterans bring to the table. They have got training and skills that add value in the marketplace. They understand values of discipline and teamwork. As Mr. Carper was mentioning, these are folks that are decision-makers. You know, if you are a young person out serving in the military, you are making decisions every day. And so, they have the skills that employers are looking for.

But I talk to my employers in my district that when they want to go out and hire veterans, they frankly struggle to make that connection, to find folks with the skills that they are looking for and find them in the marketplace to bring. And I guess I really have sort of, and I would just open it up to the panel, a question on sort of both halves of that.

Is that an experience that you share, that you struggle to connect with the veterans you are seeking? And then secondly, what can we do systemically? Bill mentioned the VEC. What we can do systematically to try to deal with that? How could we better help you connect with veterans is what I am trying to say?

Ms. HUFF. I think for our industry, it is a little bit more beneficial just because we have the ability to teach them from the ground up. So they can come to us with having the teamwork, having the discipline, and those are the major things that we are looking for. We can teach them the skill. They just have to have the will. So we are very fortunate that we have the ability to start them in a program where they just take it and run with it, and they are actually very successful and the hardest workers that we have in the trades.

Mr. MESSER. Yeah.

Mr. SAPP. I would say a few things. First, you have to be able to reach and connect to the population that is transitioning, which is, you know, events like today from noon to 2:00.

Mr. MESSER. Yeah.

Mr. SAPP. How do we find those applicants? The next, really is around best practice sharing. Frankly, I think from the corpora-

tions, I mean, what Dan Knowles and his team is doing here to connect all the corporations within southwest Ohio is a great example so that we can share best practices. GE has been focused on this hire piece for, you know, many years, but really over the last 3 to 4, what is the process to get them on board. And anything we can do to share that is going to help, you know, southwest Ohio and the rest, you know, if that goes outside our region obviously to help them as well.

Mr. MESSER. Yeah. Go ahead.

Mr. CARPER. Not every organization is of the size that they can have one individual or multiple individuals that work on this full-time. But even if you are not of that size, you can still be deliberate in your hiring practices of veterans, partnering up with the companies, like a lot of them that are represented here today, to assist with, you know, sending candidate flow in your direction.

In my experience, you know, when dealing with companies that are responsible for helping veterans to find employment, they are overly excited when an employer comes to them and says "I need help." In most cases, I think all you have to do is ask.

Mr. MESSER. Yeah. Sergeant.

Mr. GULLIFORD. Well, it is nice for us because a lot of the things we have been doing so far, going to different military bases and veterans career fairs. I get phone calls. I am in charge of our recruiting unit right now, so I get phone calls and emails on a regular basis asking us to advertise in military magazines. I am dealing with one right now. I was dealing with it today before I got here actually.

And I get emails from different bases asking us to come to their career fairs, and so we do that. We have four right now scheduled for this year alone that were scheduled 8 months ago, so we try to reach out. And because we have done that, other military bases hear about it, so they actually reach out to us. So we do that.

We have actually received a Best for Vets Award, which not a lot of police departments receive at all throughout the country. So we do pretty well in that regard. It is just a matter of selling us to them.

Mr. MESSER. Well, thank you all again for your service. I mean, to me, this is the ultimate win-win. I mean, not only are we doing right by our veterans, but these business entities get people with the skills and values they need to be successful, too. Thanks.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Well, I want to thank this first panel for your testimony and answering all our questions, and your willingness to serve. You are now excused, and I now invite the second and final panel to the witness table.

On our second panel, we have Mr. Matt Disher with Cintas, Mr. Dan Knowles with Veterans Community Alliance, and Mr. Chris Newsome with RecruitMilitary.

I want to thank each of you for being here today, and if we can get right into it. Mr. Disher, you are recognized first for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF MATT DISHER

Mr. DISHER. Thank you. Good morning, Dr. Wenstrup, Representative Takano, Members of the Subcommittee, panel Mem-

bers, and guests. Thank you all for your time and dedication to this important topic.

I'm humbled and honored by my invitation to testify at this hearing discussing best practices surrounding engagement and employment of military veterans in the workforce. I am confident that some of my shared strategies within Cintas will act as guidelines and best practices for any organization with the same desire of successfully employing veterans.

My name is Matt Disher, and I lead the 26-year-old national military recruiting program at the Cintas Corporation headquartered here in Cincinnati, Ohio. I'm also a veteran of the Marine Corps, having obtained the rank of sergeant upon my honorable discharge.

The Cintas Corporation is a national leader in uniform rental, uniform sales, facility services, first aid and safety, and fire protection. We service over 1 million businesses from our approximately 400 locations nationwide. At Cintas, we pride ourselves on ethics, professionalism, and positive discontent, all traits that we commonly share with the ranks of the U.S. military. Cintas has been proudly recognized for over a decade and by numerous sources as a top employer of armed forces servicemembers.

I would like to start with a few anecdotal statements to address what Cintas values in military experience. Today's U.S. armed forces are feasibly the most advanced and best educated in history. The relative education level is higher in the military compared to the public that they serve. Virtually all servicemembers endure countless condensed hours of valuable training in leadership, communication, history, planning, and skill specific or technical trades. This training is frequently put to use in practical application and real world scenarios, and often without traditional college education.

It is not uncommon in all generations of military service to find a 20- to 25-year-old leading a number of troops in complex tasks or dynamic missions, sometimes with little guidance, oversight, or situational information. To add these young men and women who are regularly operating some of the most advanced technologies in a no-frill setting, making them literally the topic of which books are written, movies filmed, and legends made.

Because of their scope of duty, servicemembers become well traveled, exposed to various cultures, and physically and emotionally equipped to handle virtually any situation placed before them. These are commonly misinterpreted traits in corporate America, but arguably desired by all. At Cintas, these traits are necessary, needed, and expressly sought.

Within Cintas and likely in other organizations that successfully operate such military programs, one element is generally agreed upon as a starting point and launch pad for success. That is executive support and sponsorship. These blueprints must be presented and supported from the top tier of an organization, written into policy or practice, and correlated with performance goals and participation; thus, becoming a fixture in a company's culture. Without the appropriate culture-based orientation, the organization will wholly struggle to find value, and the public, particularly the military population, will have trouble recognizing it.

The proven supplement for this corporate cultural implementation and a long practice staple at Cintas is an internal resource that consists of a dedicated team, budget, and resources meant to engage the current servicemembers, veterans-related entities, and service organizations. At Cintas, my team is well versed on military backgrounds, common struggles, and frequent pain points for the job seeker and hiring manager alike.

We also stay connected through current military-related events, political compliance happenings, and charitable organizations to aid us with future processes and involvement. Concurrently, the military and veteran population, respectively, consists of complex and well-connected associations, and should be regarded as the fraternal institutions they are, which is particularly useful in terms of outreach.

Most importantly, this team acts as a direct conduit between the military veteran applicant and the career opportunity's hiring managers and leadership within Cintas. This minimizes the chance of the applicant being overlooked in a misinterpretation of military experience, and from the candidate becoming lost in an application process that may involve hundreds of thousands of other traditional applicants.

At Cintas, we have an established medium of communication which allows the military applicant to directly contact the military recruiting team during their application process via email or professional media, by which method we are able to track application and interview progress and advocate for the applicant via screening.

Following the recruitment or application process, we also implement educational collateral for managers and prospective leaders of military staff. Our team is the primary facilitator of such education and acts as the champion for these dedicated efforts. The education familiarization of leaders to military experience is imperative to the hiring, onboarding, and long-term success of the current or former servicemember. Similarly, setting expectations and creating mentorship opportunities among the veteran staff is inherently valuable. It is also our intention to continue to cultivate and improve these efforts which will lead to greater improvement in hiring and retention numbers among veterans.

To summarize, much of our success in this topic comes from the true embodiment, adoption, and education of these efforts on a national level. Similar to a military unit, in the absence of ongoing guidance from the military program at Cintas, local managers will carry out these effort autonomously. It is this type of self-initiation and execution that Cintas exemplifies and that a successful program should strive for.

We proudly share best practices, solid resources, and even talent with other organizations should they wish to establish their own similar efforts. And I am happy to answer any questions. Thank you.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF MATT DISHER APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

Mr. WENSTRUP. Well, thank you very much.

Mr. Knowles, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF DAN KNOWLES

Mr. KNOWLES. Mr. Chairman and distinguished gentlemen of the panel, thank you for inviting me to be here today on behalf of the Tristate Veterans Community Alliance and the veterans, and the families that we seek to serve in our region. As a 7-year Army veteran and the son of a career and Vietnam veteran, I am honored and humbled by the opportunity to offer some perspective on some of the employment issues that veterans face, issues important to them and to the strength and the health of our community.

I would like to start by recognizing the extraordinary strength and resiliency of the young men and women who are serving today or have served our country in the military. We also must recognize the sacrifice of the families: the parents who have raised and seen their sons and daughters, and the spouses who are asked to follow their loved ones to bases and posts throughout the world. In many cases they have put their education and careers on hold and simply find what work they can after each move. They have raised young children along for long periods of time when their servicemember is deployed. And these families deserve our respect as well and our help.

Many of our soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen have returned from duty, put down their weapons, and turned in their uniforms for the opportunity to benefit from the freedoms for which they fought. But they find that the fight, a different fight for sure, but a fight nevertheless, must still be fought. And that is the struggle to transition and successfully compete for jobs, for jobs, for education, for the health care benefits that they deserve.

Why do they struggle? How can we honor them for the service that they have so faithfully given us? They do not want a handout. They simply want to have their knowledge, their skills, their maturity, their willingness to work hard and achieve worthy goals acknowledged and be considered as qualifications for the chance to serve again in the workforce.

Why do they struggle? They struggle not for lack of empathy, respect, or support of the communities, but because many of the systems that have been created to help them have become nightmares of bureaucracy and inefficiency. Organizations and programs that have been created specifically to serve them have become bloated and are often redundant, managed by civil servants from afar.

The services they offer shout for and compete with other services of other organizations equally as inefficient and distant from the actual needs of those they try to serve. And this is not just the large Federal- and State-run service agencies. This extends to the plethora of often well-meaning, but poorly informed and scarcely resourced local agencies, programs, and initiatives that each community offers. This is the well-named sea of good will that is gratifying from a distance, but confusing and overwhelming when you are actually trying to wade through it.

How can we best help them? I would suggest that it is not in trying to do more, but perhaps in doing less, but more effectively. There is no shortage of resources available to help our veterans. As any battlefield strategist will tell you, success comes from being able to apply overwhelming force and firepower at the decisive place and point in time to break through the enemy's defenses and

achieve the given objective. This must also apply to the battle we face in getting veterans hired, trained, and retained in the civilian workforce.

This Nation has the resources. That is, it has the will and it has the money to succeed. But it is failing in application of those resources. By trying to channel them through Federal and State bureaucracies instead of getting them into the communities, the communities that, let's face it, have the most to gain by successfully employing the veterans, and the most to lose in having to manage the consequences of veteran unemployment through local health care, homelessness, substance abuse, law enforcement, and emergency service agencies. It's the communities that are bearing that burden to a large extent.

Today's system of employment support, through the government and military services, is confusing for veterans, it is frustrating for employers, and it is confounding for the service providers on the ground between the two trying to facilitate and support those connections. Our system must be streamlined to get it to work. There must be less programming and oversight from the top, more quality communication and interaction with employers directly, and better coordination between the service providers within a given community.

This will be helpful in four critical areas. Number one, better preparation of those leaving the military via more effective training conducted in collaboration with those from the community that have the current real world experience to know what is important. Better preparation of employers who have to find, hire, onboard, and retain those veteran employees. More realistic expectations of servicemembers who will be competing for jobs, and of companies who want to offer them jobs, and the HR professionals who have to match those two. And finally, more effective interaction and support from the community agencies to keep veterans gainfully and happily employed and contributing to the broader health of their communities.

This is possible. It can be done. And it must be done if we are going to get more of our veterans and their skills to work, and increase our collective competitiveness.

Thank you for your continued service to our country and this community, and in being here to listen and hopefully act on what you've learned.

[Applause.]

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF DAN KNOWLES APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you, and I could not agree with you more when you talk about the bureaucracy that ends up being involved and making it more and more challenging. And we will talk more about that when we go to the questions.

Mr. Newsome, you are now recognized.

STATEMENT OF CHRIS NEWSOME

Mr. NEWSOME. Thank you, Congressman Wenstrup. Members of the Committee, Representatives, and respective guests, first of all, I thank you for bringing this panel and this collective group to-

gether to address an issue that is of the utmost importance on a national scale.

Best practices in veteran hiring not only affects the veteran and their family, but also the bottom-line success of any organization that's engaged in such an endeavor. Beyond being an inherently good thing to incorporate in any HR process, veteran hiring simply makes good business sense. Those who recognize this and are equally willing to invest dedicated efforts, personnel, and resources to this initiative, stand to great augment, and enhance their workforce while naturally strengthening their company.

I'm here today as a veteran myself. I served with the 82nd Airborne as an infantry paratrooper, serving multiple tour of duty. I've been that job-seeking military veteran. I'm here today representing RecruitMilitary. We are a veteran-owned and operated full-service military to civilian recruiting firm that has been championing the veteran community and helping to bridge the gap between transitioning personnel, the veteran population, and corporate American since 1998.

We're headquartered right here in Loveland, Ohio. We offer companies the ability and the associated resources necessary to effectively connect with the veteran population. We've conducted over 800 veteran career fairs across the country since 2006, connecting over 430,000 job-seeking military men and women with over 24,000 organizations.

Beyond the scope of our career fairs, we offer our corporate partners the ability to access the Nation's largest sole-purpose job-seeking veteran database just shy of a million candidates, as well as capturing the attention of transitioning population through our on-based magazine available to our partners who wish to augment their branding efforts. While working with a majority of the Fortune 500 and thousands of organizations throughout the country, we have a unique perspective on what works best for companies, and the needed tools to build these strategies from the ground up.

Success is driven by acknowledging and effectively leveraging the immense talent and value stemming from our armed services. However, to understand best practices in veteran hiring within the veteran community, it's imperative that we understand what the veteran is. We are yesterday's, today's, and tomorrow's leaders. The Department of Defense has invested millions of dollars into each of us to ensure that we are experts within the realm of which we serve. We are proud, hardworking patriots who seek to take the bountiful skills and virtues taught to us in the service, and apply them in the civilian sector to enhance ourselves and the organizations that we represent. We are the top tier candidate pool outperforming our peers.

Each organization must engage in this effort in their own meaningful way. There is no one-size-fits-all, no all-encompassing solution to attaining a successful veteran hiring initiative. However, there are general guidelines that can be universally applied to ensure a successful starting point is established.

Each organization brings unique appeal to the job seeker, and each organization has a unique personnel need. In some cases, understanding certain military occupational specialties and MOS code, a servicemember's job is an appropriate fit due to the synony-

mous job descriptions. In other cases, their leadership experience and intangible strengths are going to be more important.

A majority of the veteran population also has comprehensive civilian work experience and many have obtained a formal education upon departing the service. It's a very fluid dynamic that requires non-passive techniques that put a company's name and brand on the forefront of the veteran hiring discussion.

An organization has to ask a series of questions. Why do I value the veteran population? Why is my company a good company to work for? Why do I consider my company to be a great place for a veteran to explore a career path? What are my company's greatest needs? What are a veteran's greatest strengths? And where do I have an immediate need for self-driven leadership oriented employees? Once these answers are clear, a dedicated veteran hiring initiative can be incorporated into the overall organizational talent and acquisition process. One may require a branding strategy on top of a proactive engagement to include career fairs, social media, and community outreach to ensure that a company is synonymous with veteran hiring.

It's important to conduct an inventory of your existing veteran workforce, take a special interest in their experience and their notion as to why your company is a great fit for he or she personally, use this information in your language and overall approach to the job-seeking veteran population.

The organizations who tend to have a higher success rate are those who can speak to this and even incorporate current veteran employees into their recruiting process. Having a veteran on your recruiting team is essentially a veteran endorsement. It's one veteran telling another veteran that this is a good company to work for.

Proactive engagement is key. Tapping into the veteran population is not as easy as saying we're veteran friendly. We see that far too often. You can never be passive. And the days of checking off the blocks and strictly relying on job postings is past. It's too passive. Understanding this population's true value and potential will drive a company's ability to express their desire to hire them.

This topic requires more time and words than I'm allotted for this particular segment, so I hope my statement will generate a meaningful dialogue.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHRIS NEWSOME APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

Mr. WENSTRUP. Well, thank you very much, and I want to thank each of you not only for your service, but for the tremendous insight that you brought forward just in your brief testimonies today. And I now recognize myself for 5 minutes.

You know, I think you touched on some things we find too often in the system, that when you get out of the military, there is lack of access and lack of choice, and it is frustrating and very difficult. And I know there are people in this room here, I know firsthand that they have had to endure some of those challenges that come with that.

There are many changes that will take place within the VA. There is a culture that needs to be changed because we are there,

they are there, to serve the veteran. And while there are many good people in that system that want to do all that they can on behalf of the veteran, I am afraid that we find, too often, that we have people there that are self-serving, which goes directly against the life of those that serve in the military who are there to serve for others.

You mentioned something, and I want to talk about transition and preparedness when you leave the military. For example, when I finished my surgical residency, nobody told me how to run a business and start a practice, you know. You knew how to do your medicine. You knew how to do that, but you did not know really what you had to do next, and it took some education on that.

We have the Transition Assistance Program out there, and we have tried to make it better. You guys know what it is like when you are getting out. You often just want to get out. So how do you successfully really reach people and say, this is what you can do? It is an open book test because you want to make sure they have the information. And that is one of the things that we are trying desperately to do to make that transition, not just, hey, here is your service record, your DD-214, good luck, see you later. We have got to make that transition meaningful.

So my question to each of you is, what is the one thing that you might suggest that our troops do or have before leaving military service to ensure that they have an increased chance of success in the civilian sector?

Mr. NEWSOME. I will go ahead and start. Thank you for the question. I would say one of the biggest shortcomings could be, and this is biased because it is from my own personal experience having gone through ACAP not more than 10 years ago.

When an individual, especially somebody in their early to mid-20s, is going through the transition having gotten off of active duty, possibly getting home from multiple deployments, you are not in the proper mindset to actually focus and drink in the information that is being provided to you. I know it is very easy to blame the TAP and ACAP classes as, you know, having nothing but shortcomings as far as the information that they are disseminating. There is work that needs to be done in that regard because while there are SOPs, it is not united.

So what I went through with the ACAP process at Fort Bragg, North Carolina is going to be different from what one of my counterparts went through at Fort Irwin, California. The classes and the resources are not always the same, so bringing that together under one umbrella and making it more unanimous and congruent is going to be incredibly helpful.

The military has started allowing servicemen and women to start the transition process a lot earlier now so they can start to go to ACAP classes as far out as a year in advance in some cases. And being able to start that process that early, can help to start winding down the mind, if you will.

Again, myself, I was interested in just coming home. I was 23 years old. I had gotten back from my 3rd deployment. I could not focus. So while I was being given nothing but valuable information, I could not hear it. So I would say we need to focus a little bit more

on making sure that dissemination of information is being listened to by the individual.

Mr. WENSTRUP. And maybe start it sooner when you are not thinking about—

Mr. NEWSOME. Absolutely, as soon as possible.

Mr. WENSTRUP [continued].—I want to get on that plane and get home.

Mr. NEWSOME. Exactly.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Knowles?

Mr. KNOWLES. Thank you. I totally agree with most everything Chris has said. The one thing that I add to that is that I think there needs to be an injection of realism, what the real world outside the military culture looks like as they transition. What we are finding is, many veterans come out of the military with either very inflated expectations about the type of job and position they are going to have or a lot of hesitancy because they do not know how in the world they are going to translate the things they have been asked to do for the last 4 or 5, 10 years into something that is going to be meaningful to an employer.

And I think connecting them with somebody who has recently transitioned and been through that success in finding a job and finding a new career in the military is going to be one of the most important things that they can listen to and gain a more realistic expectation of what has to happen.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you. Mr. Disher?

Mr. DISHER. All good information. I think that we are all on the same plane here. The three of us talk quite frequently about best practices as well. Something I might like to add, and I will use myself as an example of this. I was a combat engineer in the Marines. We were talking about the sniper before. Mr. Johnson made his comments as well about how that would be excellent for the employer to engage that person if they would understand what that sniper has been through.

In my experience, I left the Marine Corps at 23 years old, give or take. I was a combat engineer. My job was to blow things up and shoot guns. And so, naturally I figured I would come out and put my application in somewhere, and somebody would hire me. Well apparently, nobody wants a person that can blow things up and shoot guns out here in corporate America.

So one of the things I lacked, but this is probably happening with today's generation of young professionals leaving the military, is the network. Our college-aged peers during their college time, for example, are educated. They are brought up to speed on how to have these conversations and may be what to expect when they leave college.

In the military, you are taught for 4 years how to be in the military, and then there is maybe a 1-week process, a couple of weeks of a process that teaches you how to get out of the military, and not much of that process is really based around how to have these conversations, and how I can with you, or you, or anybody else outside of the military.

I equate it to kind of being in a box with all of your friends for a number of years. You are in that box, and you can see people on the outside, but you largely do not communicate with them. And

then, one day they open that box and say go ahead and figure out the rest of your life.

So I think the biggest thing is engaging that network or teaching or educating servicemembers on how to engage that network, how to connect with the outside world prior to getting out instead of waiting until they get home as I think some of us do quite frequently.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Well, thank you very much. I now recognize Mr. Takano for 5 minutes.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you, and I appreciate the Chairman's interest in starting this process earlier in a soldier's life cycle. I, too, agree that that is a focus we should have. But it often comes in conflict with the Department of Defense's emphasis on the mission, and the commander's readiness to take on another aspect of that command. And we are kind of separated from the Veterans Department and DoD in trying to align, I think, this interest.

Actually, TAP is a huge improvement from what there used to be. There used to be no TAP at all. And so, now that we are having discussions about how we make TAP effective, that we need to go beyond that. I think this is a very interesting conversation, a very interesting line of inquiry.

I want to ask a quick question. Mr. Newsome, Mr. Knowledges, Mr. Disher, what percentage would you say of our military servicemembers when they transition out have issues with, say, remediation, where they want to seek more education when they have to go back and bone up on their math, or bone up on their English skills or writing skills. Is this a significant issues, do you think?

Mr. NEWSOME. I think that is going to be very dependent on the individual and what their background is. Are they getting—

Mr. TAKANO. I realize that, but in general, do our transitioning soldiers, especially our younger ones, do they encounter this as maybe a barrier in terms of being able to get more training or, say, be able to get a higher education? We market our volunteer forces with educational benefits. That is one of our prime recruiting tools. Would you agree with me on that? And that I am just wondering how many of them are actually coming out of the military ready to engage higher ed.

Mr. NEWSOME. A good portion. The education benefits that are available to your everyday serviceman and woman are as good as they have been since World War II. You know, having personally used it, I did have to brush up. I had been out of the classroom environment for over 4 years, so I started at Cincinnati State, worked my way up to the curriculum at UC, and then transferred over to UC. So I would not necessarily call it a barrier, though, but it is something that we have to endure.

Mr. TAKANO. Some of our former military servicemen may be from lower income backgrounds, many from foster care. My understanding is that military benefits are not available for those who want to get remediation, of the housing benefits, for example. You have got to be enrolled in full-time credits. So I am wondering, I mean, it might not have been your issue, but I am just trying to get a handle on how many this is an issue for.

Mr. DISHER. I cannot reference an exact percentage, but to talk about the transitioning population in the military, the vast majority are enlisted. And I would also say that the vast majority of those people getting out on an annual basis are without higher education in many cases. Traditional higher education, I might note. They have the military education.

I think one of the hardest parts of the transition, and I do not know if this is going to answer your question. I hope that it alludes to it, is that we typically come out of the military, let us say, after 4, 6, 8, 10 years, and we have families in some cases. We have to put our lives back together, and we are trying to go to school while trying to raise a family and pay the bills. And for anybody trying to attend school full-time, the GI bill, the post-9/11 GI bill is exceptional compared to what it used to be, but it still does not cover all the aspects of—

Mr. TAKANO. So the flexibility involved. I mean, many of our soldiers and many of our servicemembers as consumers of higher ed may not be as discerning as they ought to be, and are marketed to based on convenience. And traditional higher ed is not necessarily adapted them, but they are often getting themselves into programs which may not truly have advantageous for them. They are using up their benefits, and then find out that they cannot really get employment with the certificate they thought would help. I just recently authored a bill that unanimously went through that would require that programs lead to a certification, a State certification.

But there has been, you know, concern on my part that we have generous benefits, but often not wisely used. And the issue of people not even knowing about it, but if you know about it, the issue of trying to use them, well I think is an issue.

Mr. DISHER. I think just to add to your point there that the educational process in higher education, it does cater to largely the traditional student. And so, then the person who has other priorities who has a family or has a full-time job because they have to pay said bills.

Mr. TAKANO. So we have got to look at higher education, especially the State schools, as looking at adjusting as well, becoming more flexible.

Mr. DISHER. Absolutely.

Mr. TAKANO. Not just looking at just higher ed, traditional higher ed. I also believe in training and entrepreneurship, and that is a whole other topic.

But my time has run out, and I yield back.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you. Mr. Johnson, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You talked a little bit about, you know, the perception of veterans within a company. Mr. Disher, can you expand a little bit on how you believe hiring veterans and understanding members of the military better, how they are trained, the discipline, the commitment, how that must be ingrained in a company's culture? And how did Cintas achieve that?

Mr. DISHER. I would say to start, I will kind of work backwards on your question here. Cintas achieved this long before I was in my current seat. So our founder, Richard Farmer, was actually a Ma-

rine officer as well. The culture of our company and the actual operations of our company require people at the highest levels even to jump in and get their hands dirty. And I think that we could argue, especially those of us who have a military background, we know that that is exactly what the military embodies, is that, when something needs to be done, when a decision needs to be made, or, you know, in battle if somebody needs to jump into the fight, everybody becomes a combatant.

I would say at Cintas and the other companies that fully embrace this, it goes beyond the feel good measure of hiring military because it is the right thing to do, and it moves into the process of having the right people on the line to do the job, which becomes profitable. Again, to use those clichés, we have people that show up to work on time, who understand how to handle tough situations, who understand how to manage people.

And so, I think that we fully embody that. I think any company that would like to engage, that fully understands the value of somebody who has a military background would like to engage them, they are going to have to embody these traits as well, and fully understand what the veteran has done in order to make those different traits profitable within their organizations.

Mr. JOHNSON. When your founder is a marine, that is pretty easy to get to.

Mr. DISHER. It is. It makes things a lot easier.

Mr. JOHNSON. Absolutely. Absolutely. Was he a sniper?

[Laughter.]

Mr. DISHER. Not that I am aware of, sir.

Mr. JOHNSON. I bet he could shoot.

Mr. DISHER. Probably.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. Knowles, can you go a little bit more into detail about the training you provide to HR supervisors and first line recruiters about hiring veterans?

Mr. KNOWLES. Certainly. Thank you for asking. We have a program—we call it our Veteran Employment Transition Assistance Program—that we have developed specifically to address what we saw as a gap in the hiring process. There are many, many opportunities and initiatives to train veterans on how to write resumes, and interview, and go through that process. There are relatively few, if any, community-based training programs for people and the employers.

The struggle that we find when we talk to employers is that, first of all, I do not understand the darn resume. There are way too many acronyms. There is a lot of jargon. And, you know, I do not really know what to do with that. What questions do I ask? So we talk about that. We train them on that. We talk about how to conduct an interview in a way that asks questions that they need to have answered for their interview process, but using the right terminology and the understanding of what the veteran has been through.

For example, rather than the standard question of asking, tell me about a time when you helped your department improve a difficult goal, we say change that word “department” to “unit,” change that word “goal” to “mission.” And you are going to get the same information you need, but in a more contextually relevant way. So

those are two of the things that we do, and we actually practice that and train that.

Mr. JOHNSON. Thank you. Mr. Newsome, what is the number one thing you tell employers to do when they come to you and want to set up a veterans hiring program? And before you answer, let me encourage you to put close to the top of your list, do not discount snipers.

[Laughter.]

Mr. NEWSOME. It is very important to have an open mind when you are looking at a military servicemember. When you are looking at a resume, as Dan mentioned, there is a lot of jargon out there. Corporate America has a tendency to get tunnel vision and stigmatize what a veteran is or what a veteran is capable of, and essentially pigeonholing or limiting that individual to, you know, to having to access to a whole slew of job categories.

So a company really has to break down and understand that the veteran community is just as fluid, flexible, and dynamic as their civilian counterparts, and are just as capable of anything else. There are thousands of MOSs, so literally any job that exists within the civilian sector, there is a counterpart to that within the military.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. Chairman, I would submit that, too, and something I think all of our employers could go to school on. You know, military members are experts in multitasking, you know. You might have an MOS of this, but you do a lot of different things especially as you work your way up into leadership roles within the military. So pigeonholing a veteran and saying, well, you know, all you knew how to do was drive a truck, that is totally inaccurate.

Mr. WENSTRUP. I agree.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you. And for those who do not know, "MOS" is your military occupational specialty, and that is what we are referring to. And I would agree—

Mr. JOHNSON. Sniper is an "MOA."

Mr. WENSTRUP. That is right. That is right.

[Laughter.]

Mr. WENSTRUP. And I want to apologize to my most senior colleague here as I inadvertently broke rank and went to Mr. Jonson first. So I now recognize Mr. Chabot.

Mr. JOHNSON. Air Force has its privileges, Mr. Chairman.

[Laughter.]

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much. Well, I realize I had not used the term "sniper" yet, so there, "sniper."

[Laughter.]

Mr. CHABOT. I feel a little left out, so it does not have anything to do with what I am going to talk about, but I thought I should at least mention it.

Most of the emphasis thus far has been, and I think appropriately so, linking up our veterans with a good company, a good job, at some point and how do we do that. As Chairman of the House Small Business Committee, there is one other area that I probably should mention here. Some folks I think coming out want to create their own job, and they are entrepreneurs, and they want to start up their own company.

For example, Cintas, I think the current CEO, Scott Farmer's great grandfather started the company literally going from factory to factory and collecting old rags, soiled rags, taking them home, washing them, and then turned that into a company, and hire a lot of folks. And then it was towels, and then it was uniforms. And they are one of our most prominent companies not only in this area, but nationally now. And Apple, for example, literally started in Steve Jobs' parents' garage, you know. And until I think recently, they were the largest profit-making company I think in the world. I think they are number two after Exxon maybe. But nonetheless, they started out as entrepreneurs.

And so, for those veterans that might like to start their own company, and probably, Mr. Newsome and Mr. Knowles, you could probably be the best ones about this, what should we be thinking about? Do you hear this from folks that you associate with who perhaps rather than want to work for somebody else, want to start up their own company? Is there more we ought to be doing? Is there more we can do? Either one of you or both.

Mr. KNOWLES. Sure, I will go. That is a great question, and unfortunately I do not have the specific statistics on how many veterans as they get out want to start their own business. But I would say that they have some significant advantages and some disadvantages. Having started up my own business and run it, I can speak to that from that perspective.

The advantage they is, just as Mr. Johnson recognized, they are tremendous multitaskers. They are willing to jump in and get what needs to be done regardless of the task. They do not niche themselves and I am the strategist, or I am the, you know, the product expert. And that is a huge advantage. They also are willing to put as much time as it takes to get the mission done. That is what they are trained to do. That is part of their culture.

The disadvantage is there are specific skills when it comes to financial acumen and business skills that they most likely have not been exposed to in the military. And I think that is the area where we can provide help to them by linking them up with perhaps other veteran entrepreneurs who have been down that path, and find a way within the community to give them a mentor group or perhaps an advisory board that helps them move forward with their dream, and make sure that they are actually working on something that is not big on passion, but short on generating a living, but can do both.

And there are several great organizations within the Cincinnati community specifically that helps entrepreneurs validate their ideas, and set up, and get the initial funding they need on that. I am not aware of any that specifically focus that effort on veterans trying to make that transition, so perhaps that is—

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you. Mr. Newsome, would you want to comment?

Mr. NEWSOME. I think Dan is on point, and just to echo some of the things that he said. Some of these resources do exist. As with many things related to resources and military veterans, it is a matter of making sure that that information is being disseminated to them, and they are taking that information and processing it. So

making that readily available for them is going to be key in that regard.

We need to identify what form of entrepreneurial mindset does this individual have? Do they have an idea that they want to start from scratch, like a Cintas, or do they want to look into a franchise? RecruitMilitary works with a handful of franchises that finds immense value in the entrepreneurial mindset that the military is naturally producing. These are self-driven leaders, so they are entrepreneurial by nature. Some of them just do not know it.

Having local business mentors, business leader mentors, I think would be key in that regard because that is firsthand experience, handholding that can be conducted. As far as how to implement that on a governmental level, I do not know. I do not even know that we even necessarily have to cross that bridge. If we can just encourage local organizations, you know, corporate America throughout the Nation to buy into something like that, I think that would be a pretty easy solution to that issue.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, if I could just mention one final thing. We did pass some legislation that I have introduced in the Small Business Committee recently. It is called the Veterans Entrepreneurship Act. And what it does if you are trying to get a loan through the SBA, the Small Business Administration, to start up a company or to expand a company and create jobs and that sort of thing, there is a filing fee. It is generally around \$1,500 to try to get the loan. We waived it for veterans, and it was bipartisan, so we had both Republicans and Democrats working together. It passed, and the President signed it into law last year. So veterans get a break if they want to start up a business. And they can contact our offices about that, and we could get you the information if you are interested.

And then finally, "snipers." Thank you.

[Laughter.]

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Messer, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MESSER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank you all again for your service to your country, and I want to thank you for your service now, which is equally important to the veterans that you help transition into the workplace.

You know, as we think about the conversation today, it strikes me that our challenges that we face are less challenges of intention and more challenges of results. As Mr. Knowles mentioned, we have a sea of goodwill demonstrating our intentions, and yet when you talk to employers, they feel they cannot connect with the veterans that they seek. When you talk to veterans, they feel like they cannot find the opportunities that they know if they could just find it, they would be a great fit for.

I was very struck, Mr. Knowles, by your comment about we have got to try to focus and figure out how we do less better, how we do less and get potentially better results. I think we have got to think outside the box. I appreciated Mr. Takano's comments earlier about one of the things we can do is provide better flexibility to veterans in the education benefits they receive. I think, by the way, that is a challenge we face throughout our Federal education policies. How can we better match those programs to real opportunities in the workplace? And for everybody, that is not, you know, going

to four homecomings, carrying a backpack around for 4 years and going to a college. I think that is one approach hopefully we can work on.

But I want to start with Mr. Knowles. You sort of challenged us with the point that we need to rethink these programs. And you have suggested a couple, but I just want to give you a little time to talk about what is one or two things that we can do, take the resources we have, and better utilize them to match employees with those veterans out in the workforce?

Mr. KNOWLES. Well, thank you for the opportunity and for asking that question. There are many, many more opportunities than we certainly have the time to discuss at this hearing. But I think that several of them stem from everybody trying to do good, but not really knowing how to do it. And it is incredibly difficult, as I am sure you can attest to much more easily than I can, to sit up on the mountain and look down in the valley and say, I want to help that person, I want to help this group, and try to get that help channeled to the right person at the right time to make a difference to matters in their lives.

And, you know, I think because that is difficult to do, it leads many organizations to try and say, well, you know, I do not know if that specific program is going to work the way I want it to, but I am going to bracket it with these other programs that, you know, if the collective impact of all these different four, five, or six different initiatives can help, then, gosh, I have got to be doing something right, and understand that logic.

The problem is, you have got all these other people down in the mountain and down in the valley that are trying to work on the ground with the people that are struggling through that effort. And every time they turn around, the person they are trying to help is starting to say, oh, wait a minute, I got this shiny thing over here that somebody just told me about, or I got this new program over here that somebody said they could give me the money to make my rent payment this month, so I will go running over there.

And what happens is sometimes it works, sometimes it does not. But you are disenfranchising a lot of those people that are really in a much better position to help, you know. I mean, I have heard several comments this morning about the VA, and I know they are struggling. I have to say personally, I know many people in our local VA who are just unbelievably passionate and focused, and they are trying to do the right thing every single time. It is not all of them unfortunately.

But I think that is an organization that perhaps suffers a little bit from this in trying to deviate or wrap the things that they need to do in their three core missions around providing great medical support and providing benefits. And instead, they are bracketing those into education and different programs.

Mr. MESSER. Yes. Well, I appreciate that. I would just make the observation, it seems to me one of the challenges is when we try to create a one-size-fits-all program, I think providing more flexibility to the veteran, and using existing resources in a way that they see best meets their needs, and then, frankly, trying to provide appropriate incentives for employers so that it is in their best interest to try to seek these folks out and let the market in the

middle meet the two between, seems to be an approach that makes the most sense to me.

It is important that we get it right. I think we have a moral obligation to stand by our veterans, and not only appreciate them while they are serving, but help them transition into civilian life. And I appreciate the opportunity to work on those issues today. Thank you.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you. I want to thank you, and I want to thank all the panel Members today for your testimony, and taking the questions, and sharing your insights. And I also want to thank those here at Anderson Township Civic Center for their hospitality and hosting us today. Thank you for taking time from your busy schedules not only to be here today, but what you are doing each and every day. And I thank all of you in the gallery as well for taking the time to be here, to be part of this process.

I think that we do it best at the local level when people like these gentlemen are face to face with a veteran trying to help them proceed in life, and to advance, and get themselves going in so many ways because they bring so much to the table. But I do thank all of you for being here.

Directly following this hearing, we will be holding a medal ceremony where I have the honor to present Mr. Harry Fryer, a World War II veteran, with several medals that he earned from his service to our Nation. So if anyone would like to stay for that ceremony and thank him for his service, you are more than welcome.

And as you all know very well, a job fair will be conducted once we adjourned where over 40 employers will be present. And I encourage you all to go and meet with the employers following this hearing as it is a great opportunity to interact.

Finally, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include any extraneous material on today's hearing.

Hearing no objection, so ordered.

Mr. WENSTRUP. This hearing is adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 11:56 a.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

Prepared Statement of Sergeant Dominic F. Gulliford

To the honorable Congressman Brad Wenstrup and Congressman Mark Takano

Let me start by saying the Cincinnati Police Department believes it to be an honor and a privilege to employ, and have as a part of its team, veterans from the United States Military. We feel there is no higher reverence to show towards ones country than to serve in the military with honor, pride and dignity. To employ individuals that embody the spirit of respect for the Country and themselves, allows us to maintain a high level of excellence as the standard in the honorable calling of policing.

The Department and the City have used several different approaches to attract veterans to apply. For example, qualified veterans are awarded five bonus points on the initial exam. If the veteran is disabled they receive ten additional points on the exam. Our exam is so competitive that five or ten points are very significant and can propel you from a very average score to the top of the list. Currently, you must be an Ohio resident at the time of application to receive the bonus points.

The department has aggressively looked for any career fairs or post military job fairs that cater to veterans either on a military base or those hosted off base by the military. We have constructed a group of Adjunct Recruiters who are veterans to assure we always have enough personnel to attend as many veteran recruiting functions as possible. We recognize that area natives who are in the military and are returning to this area and will be seeking employment beyond the ETS date. We also realize that there are many veterans who will be relocating to this area for the first time after exiting the military. Knowing that honorably discharged veterans make for excellent police candidates, the distance of travel to recruit at military facilities is not an issue.

Military Guard and Reservists are also highly sought after candidates for our Department. Our Department and the City, attempts to accommodate Members of the Guard and Reserves as much possible, throughout their career with the Department. Once you are selected to the Police academy, the military provisions start. They will be in accordance of how far along you are within the Academy. We have had recruits called up for active duty while in the Academy. Upon being released from active duty, if they have completed a significant portion of Academy training we have assembled the necessary steps to get them State certified as soon as possible. If they have not attended the Academy for long, they may have to wait until the next class sits, but their position will still be available to them. When called for active duty after the Academy graduation your position and seniority will stand no matter how long the deployment.

As a part of our local recruitment efforts we have developed postcard size flyers, announcing our application and recruitment, which are distributed through normal recruitment career fairs and placed in local businesses and other facilities with a high volume of pedestrian traffic. A list of local veteran's home addresses within the areas of Hamilton, Butler, Warren and Clermont counties and also the City of Dayton was secured through a private company. Those same flyers were turned into mailers and sent through the postal service to each listed address. The list totaled about five thousand addresses.

Approximately thirty percent of the Cincinnati Police Department's sworn personnel are veterans. We take great pride in hiring veterans. We recognize that veterans make great candidates due to their commitment to duty and their want to serve and assist others. As a part of the thirty percent (I am a veteran of the Marine Corps and the previous Recruiting and Background Supervisor as well as Chief of Police, Colonel Eliot Isaac, being veterans of the Army National Guard) we take personal pride in helping veterans establish themselves as Cincinnati Police Officers. We advocate giving back to well deserving individuals who have given to our country. We can also be at peace knowing that we are helping to keep a high level of professionalism within our Department that not only helps us stand out as one

of the best Departments, but ultimately gives the citizens of Cincinnati the type of service they deserve, require and want.

Sergeant Dominic F. Gulliford
Cincinnati Police Department
Recruiting & Background
513-352-2971

Prepared Statement of John Sapp

My name is John Sapp and I am the Executive Director of Sales Operations and Offset at General Electric (GE) Aviation. In addition to this role, and more applicable to this gathering, I also lead GE Aviation's Veteran's Network (GEVN). GE is honored to have over 10,000 U.S. military veterans continue their career with us. Building on our strong commitment to military veteran recruitment and development, we launched the GE Veterans Network across all our businesses in November 2009. The Network is organized around 3 pillars- Support, Hire, and Grow. Both our own employees who are veterans and the veterans in our local communities

First let me thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. As an 11-year veteran of the US Air Force it is a true pleasure to be a part of this testimony, and I look forward to learning more about all of the other great initiatives underway to support Veteran transitions.

GE is passionate about hiring Veterans. At GE, we value the leadership, loyalty, integrity, and commitment to excellence instilled through participation in military service. We believe strongly that this service helps make great leaders that are disciplined, strategic thinkers with a level of loyalty that is unmatched. This appreciation for Veteran talent, as well as GE's desire to "give-back" to those that have made incredible sacrifices for the betterment of others, were the primary reasons for the 2012 launching of GE's initiative to hire 5000 Veterans in 5 years. As of Feb 12, 2016 we have already hired 4,889 Veterans (1,137 within Aviation), and by year-end we will have exceeded our commitment by a significant margin.

GE's hiring and transition practices have been successful in attracting and hiring a wide-range of Veteran talent from junior enlisted to General Officer. For example, GE's transition assistance workshops and one-on-one mentoring sessions are executed in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce's Hiring our Heroes initiative, by our own GEVN Membership. GE's veteran employees coach with a focus on resume building, as well as interviewing techniques and job search strategies. These seminars are designed to help military personnel successfully communicate the skills they learned in the military to the corporate world. Furthermore, GE is also a founding Member of American Corporate Partners (ACP), a national mentoring program dedicated to helping veterans transition from the armed services to private enterprise through career counseling and networking with professionals. Internally, the GEVN and Human Resources have worked together to create a much deeper understanding of Veteran Talent through our "value of a vet" campaign, messaging the unique attributes of military talent that will help GE hiring managers to better understand Veteran backgrounds. Within GE Aviation, HR has also created a special team solely focused on connecting Veteran talent with open job postings, further impacting our efficiency in adding Veteran talent.

For mid-career transitions, GE offers an experienced leadership program, designed specifically for military officers. The program is a unique opportunity to work in three 8-month rotations within a GE business. Qualified candidates, with exceptional military service, are selected to start their careers with GE in this two-year cross-functional program, including both on-the-job and formal classroom training. I was fortunate enough to have entered the company through this program 8-years ago.

Once on board, GE works hard to make sure the Veteran has an effective transition into the company. Our GEVN Grow pillar is focused on supporting the development of Veterans, including career development, mentorship and coaching. Coupled with the networking and Veteran connection activities that are a natural part of the GEVN, our former military employees find a supportive environment for growing a great career.

Overall, GE is passionate about hiring, supporting and growing Veterans. We've made strong progress towards our goals to-date, but look forward to improving our support of Veterans going forward, as well as learning from other business and government practices at forums such as this. Thank you again for allowing us to participate.

Prepared Statement of Stephanie Huff

At HELP Plumbing, Heating, Cooling and Electric, we pride ourselves on our commitment to activities supporting veterans. Our support spans many different programs throughout the year. We are most known for our donation program where we give a portion of our profits every year to a local Veteran Support Program. The past several years we have donated to DAV. In addition, we have donated free services and equipment to local wounded veterans as well as widows and the children of fallen soldiers. We announce our donations at our annual Veterans Day appreciation breakfast which we host onsite at our office every year on Veteran's Day.

We also strongly support hiring veterans. There are several different ways we focus our efforts on connecting with veterans for hiring opportunities throughout the year. We actively participate in sponsored events including Recruit Military Hiring Fairs, and other veteran targeted career fairs. In addition, in the spring of 2015 we hosted our own veterans hiring event on site at our headquarters where we brought in other military friendly employers with hiring needs, as well as non-profit organizations that support veterans for a daylong event. During this event we offered on site interviews, free lunch and other veteran specific support programs and services. We look forward to bringing this event back again this May.

Outside of career fairs, we also focus on posting jobs on our local OhioMeansJobs.com website and reach out to partner with their Veterans Support team to have them assist us in finding qualified talent. We also reach out through trade specific sites and take advantage of programs and marketing materials provided through organizations such as www.troopstotrades.org through the Nexstar Legacy Foundation, to find individuals with specific interest in learning a skilled trade.

There are many industries that have the potential to participate in registered apprenticeship programs through the state. Both businesses and job seekers benefit from apprenticeship opportunities. Participating and qualifying apprenticeship programs are offered in healthcare, construction, utilities and other industries.

While HELP Plumbing, Heating and Cooling does not currently participate in the state recognized apprenticeship programs, HELP does pay for 100% of all training expenses for all new hires, this includes those with or without any industry specific skills or experience. Our program consists of 3-5 months of intense training to include classroom and field training experience as well as ongoing training throughout the year to consist of over 200 hours a year to keep our team Members on top of all necessary industry specific training needs. We also pay for all training and certification exams to receive state recognized license and certifications within each trade. This is a great opportunity for veterans transitioning to full time work where they want to learn a trade from the ground up.

In 2013 HELP Plumbing, Heating, Cooling & Electric was presented the DAV National Commanders Award for Outstanding Small Employer of the Year for conspicuous and meritorious effort in providing employment opportunities for ill and injured veterans.

Prepared Statement of Jeff Carper

Total Quality Logistics / Best Practices in Veteran Hiring

Hello, and thank you Representative Wenstrup for inviting us. We are honored to represent Total Quality Logistics at today's hearing and talk about some of our company's best practices when it comes to attracting and retaining military employees.

Representative Takano, welcome to Cincinnati; we hope you enjoy your visit and can take some good ideas for military hiring back to your home district in California and to the House Veterans Affairs Committee in D.C.

My name is Jeff Carper and I am a veteran who attained the rank of Sergeant in the U.S. Army, having served seven years from 1994 to 2001. Now I am an executive sales director at TQL. I have three main points I'd like to present today.

First: how we hire military employees.

TQL has a recruiter exclusively dedicated to finding military talent for our company. LeeAnn Ryan is with me today. She's a Senior Airman in the United States Air Force Reserve whose own military experience and understanding of what it takes to transition into the civilian world makes her well suited for the role.

LeeAnn recruits for both sales and non-sales positions at TQL. Her familiarity with the military jargon and terms that often appear on military resumes gives her a good idea of where an applicant might be best suited.

Among other things, LeeAnn attends career fairs on military bases, and will be focusing on TAP/ACAP (transitioning assistance programs) events for military leaving the service or going into the reserve. She works with the TVCA - who are here today - Hiring Our Heroes, Recruit Military and other organizations to actively recruit from all branches of the service with postings on military-specific websites and job boards.

Second: why TQL is a good fit for military service Members.

TQL is a freight brokerage firm. We connect shippers who have freight that needs delivered with carriers who can haul it. We specialize in truckload transportation although we don't own any trucks ourselves.

This isn't a job most people coming out of school or the military have trained for. The trucking industry has unique rules, regulations and a language all its own. We train our own experts through a five-month long training program, similar to what service Members experience in the military.

We hire for the job based on soft skills. The soft skills that make one successful in brokering freight are similar to those taught in the military—the ability to learn new skills and concepts quickly, adopt a mission-driven philosophy and put forth core values to exceed expectations.

Some of the comments we have heard from our military employees as to why they have succeeded at TQL:

"I work for a large company, but my team is like a small squad or fire team. We work well together."

"Being in the military gives you a base structure. Self-motivation and self-discipline are expectations."

"The culture and energy we have here is very similar to the Army. You always have a new goal in front of you, a new challenge to meet, an opportunity to be a leader."

As we continue to grow and expand into new cities around the country, we need employees with strong leadership capabilities. More than 90 percent of our sales leadership and management positions are filled from within the company. And again, teaching leadership skills is an area where the military excels.

Third: the TQL culture

TQL is and has always been committed to being a military friendly company. Multiple managers at TQL have been recognized with Patriot Awards for their exemplary support of employees in the National Guard and Reserve. The company received the Above & Beyond Award from the ESGR (Employer Support of the Guard and Reserves) and we recently received our third Military Friendly Employerr recognition from Victory Media and G.I. Jobs magazine.

The tone is set from the top. One of our core focus areas for our company's charitable efforts is military causes. The company and our employees actively work to raise money and support military causes. In 2015, we worked with 13 military/veteran organizations contributing nearly \$70,000 in charitable giving. And it's more than just dollars. It's personal support too. This is an excerpt from a letter sent directly to all of our military employees from CEO Ken Oaks on the day TQL signed its national statement of support with the ESGR.

"Members of the military are some of our strongest team Members at TQL. What you have learned through your military service - discipline, hard work, leadership - is important. What your choice to serve reflects - integrity, self-sacrifice, and love for your countrymen - is invaluable."

"Thank you for choosing to join the TQL team, but even more importantly, thank you for your service to our country."

Prepared Statement of Matt Disher

Good morning. Dr. Wenstrup, Representative Takano, Members of the sub-committee, panel Members and guests, thank you all for your time and dedication to this important topic.

I am humbled and honored by my invitation to testify at this hearing, discussing best practices surrounding engagement and employment of military veterans in the workforce. I am confident that some of my shared strategies within Cintas will act

as guidelines and best practices for any organization with the same desire of successfully employing veterans.

My name is Matt Disher and I lead the 26 year old national military recruitment program at Cintas Corporation, headquartered here in the Cincinnati, Ohio area. I am also a veteran of the Marine Corps, having attained the rank of Sergeant upon my honorable discharge.

The Cintas Corporation is a national leader in uniform rental, uniform sales, facility services, first aid and safety and fire protection. We service over 1 Million businesses from our approximately 400 locations nationwide. At Cintas we pride ourselves on our ethics, professionalism, and positive discontent; all traits that we commonly share with the ranks of the US military. Cintas has been proudly recognized for over a decade and by numerous sources as a top employer of armed forces service Members.

I'd like to start with a few anecdotal statements to address what Cintas values in military experience. Today's US armed forces are feasibly the most advanced and best-educated in history. The relative education level is higher in the military compared to the public they serve. Virtually all service Members endure countless condensed hours of valuable training in leadership, communication, history, planning and skill-specific or technical trades. This training is frequently put to use in practical application and real-world scenarios, and often without a traditional college education. It is not uncommon, in all generations of military service, to find a 20 to 25 year old leading a number of troops in complex tasks or dynamic missions sometimes with little guidance, oversight or situational information. To add, these young men and women are regularly operating some of the most advanced technologies in the world, in a no-fail setting; making them literally the topic of which books are written, movies filmed, and legends made.

Because of their scope of duties, service Members become well-traveled, exposed to various cultures, and physically and emotionally equipped to handle virtually any situation placed before them. These are commonly overlooked or misinterpreted traits in Corporate America, but arguably desired by all. At Cintas, these traits are necessary, needed and expressly sought.

Within Cintas, and likely in other organizations that successfully operate such military programs, one element is generally agreed upon as a starting point and launch pad for success - executive support and sponsorship. The blueprints must be presented and supported from the top tier of an organization, written into policy or practice, and correlated with performance goals and participation; thus becoming a fixture in the company's culture. Without the appropriate culture-based orientation, the organization will wholly struggle to find value and the public -particularly the military population- will have trouble recognizing it.

A proven supplement to this corporate cultural implementation, and a long-practiced staple at Cintas, is an internal resource that consists of a dedicated team, budget and resources meant to engage current service Members, veterans, related entities and service organizations. At Cintas, my team is well-versed on military backgrounds, common struggles and frequent pain points for the job seeker and the hiring manager alike. We also stay connected through current military-related events, political and compliance happenings, and charitable organizations, to aid us with future processes and involvement. Concurrently, the military and veteran population respectively consists of complex and well-connected associations, and should be regarded as the fraternal institutions they are, which is particularly useful in terms of outreach.

Most importantly, this team acts as a direct conduit between the military/veteran applicant and the career opportunities, hiring managers and leadership within Cintas. This minimizes the chance of the applicant being overlooked in a mis-interpretation of military experience; and from the candidate becoming lost in an application process that may involve hundreds or thousands of other traditional applicants. At Cintas, we have an established medium of communication which allows the military applicant to directly contact the military recruiting team during their application process via email or professional media; by which method we are able to track application and interview progress and advocate for the applicant via screening.

Following the recruitment or application process, we also implement educational collateral for managers or prospective leaders of military staff. Our team is the primary facilitator of such education, and acts as the champion for these dedicated efforts. The education and familiarization of leaders to military-experience is imperative to the hiring, onboarding and long term success of the current or former service Member. Similarly, setting expectations and creating mentorship opportunities among veteran-staff is inherently valuable.

Finally, it is also our intention to continue to cultivate and improve these efforts which will lead to greater improvement in hiring and retention numbers among veterans.

To summarize, much of our success on this topic comes from the true embodiment, adoption and education of these efforts on a national level. Similar to a military unit, in the absence of ongoing guidance from the military program at Cintas, local managers will carry out these efforts autonomously. It is this type of self-initiation and execution that Cintas exemplifies, and that a successful program should strive for.

We proudly share best-practices, solid resources and even talent with other organizations should they wish to establish their own similar efforts. I am happy to answer any questions. Thank you.

Prepared Statement of Dan Knowles

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for inviting the TVCA (Tristate Veterans Community Alliance) to testify today at this important hearing of the Committee of Veteran Affairs, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity. As an independent, veteran-led, non-profit organization focused on improving the access to, and the quality of, services offered to veterans and their families in the local community, we appreciate the opportunity to share our perspective and provide recommendations to address the challenges we see to successfully employing and retaining veterans in our region.

As a new and somewhat unique organization, let me start by explaining why we exist and what we do.

TVCA Purpose

The purpose of the TVCA is to make the Greater Cincinnati region a preferred destination for veterans and their families. We do this by emphasizing strong veteran employment opportunities in the region and by ensuring an aligned and collaborative environment among tristate employers, service agencies, and educational institutions - our partners in serving those veterans.

We work closely with existing backbone organizations, such as the United Way, the Regional Chamber of Commerce and Interact for Change, to operate efficiently and to extend our efforts broadly within the community. We work transparently with community influencers in the for-profit, non-profit, public and private sectors to achieve our goals. With our partner organizations, we are improving access to the services most needed by veterans and families while improving both the quality and efficiency of the service framework within the community.

Where there are gaps in service, we seek to fill them directly or work with our service agency partners to do so. We believe that by doing this, we will be able to better attract and retain veterans that bring the strong leadership, discipline, personal accountability and advanced problem-solving skills required to fuel the continued growth of our community in the decades to come.

Brief TVCA History

The TVCA was founded in July of 2014 in response to a community-based assessment to document the size and nature of problems facing our region's veterans and to begin to evaluate the state of community readiness to welcome and support returning veterans and military families. This effort was coordinated by the Easter Seals Tristate organization, who published their findings in May 2014, in the Tristate Veteran Community Report: Needs Assessment and Initial Recommendations. The first recommendation in the report summary was to "create a tristate (sic) Veteran Community Alliance . to coordinate, educate and align the veteran support systems.." across the region to better support transitioning veterans and families.

The TVCA began planning and organizing activities as an unincorporated association on July 9, 2014, when its organizers met formally for the first time for that purpose. It was incorporated on November 14, 2014. Until the TVCA received its 501(c)(3) confirmation from the IRS on June 19, 2015, the programs and activities of the Organization were funded through donations made for that purpose to Interact for Change (an exempt public charity) that had agreed to act as "Sponsor".

Initial funding was provided by several local, private foundations and supplemented in January 2015 by a grant from Major League Baseball (MLB) to create a Veteran In-Processing (VIP) & Welcome Center. In March 2015, construction began on the VIP Center and the TVCA held its first public meeting to formalize partner relationships with over 40 community service organizations supporting vet-

erans. In late-May 2015, the TVCA began reaching out to veterans and families and, in July, the TVCA launched a self-guided Veteran & Family Resource Portal and officially opened the VIP Center. The TVCA has since served over 170 veterans at the VIP Center and estimates that at least twice that number have been served through the resource portal. The TVCA now works with over 80 community partner organizations, including major employers, colleges, and service agencies.

TVCA Operations

The TVCA operates exclusively to support veterans and families residing in the 15-county Greater Cincinnati area, in SW Ohio, N Kentucky and SE Indiana. It does this largely by working through its network of partner organizations.

The TVCA operates with a small paid staff and has a volunteer board comprised of Executive Committee Members and Members-at-large. The board meets each month and is chaired by US Air Force Major General (retired) Leonard Randolph, Jr. MD., former USAF Deputy Surgeon General and Chief Medical Officer of Mercy Health. Other Executive Committee Members include retired military leaders, business and service organization executives from Interact for Health, the law firm KMK, the United Way, the local Veterans Administration, and the USO.

Members-at-large include the chairpersons from 5 community-based workgroups in the areas of Employment, Education, Health/Wellness and Family Services, Collaborative Impact, and Peer Mentorship. These workgroups meet independently every 4–6 weeks with recognized partner organizations in those sectors to share best practices. They work collaboratively to address common sector issues, all for the betterment of veterans and their families.

One of the well-documented challenges that service Members face as they leave the service is the overwhelming 'sea of goodwill' that exists in many communities - including ours. This refers to the plethora of mostly well-meaning organizations that reach out to help veterans. While the intent is genuine, the lack of coordination, service fragmentation and the siloed nature of the service sectors often results in confusion, frustration and disengagement. This, in turn, often leads many veterans to seek emergency services for chronic debt, depression, substance abuse, and / or homelessness.

The TVCA's veteran leadership, staff and peer mentor network allows us to provide a knowledgeable and culturally familiar environment to intercept and assist veterans earlier in their transition. Two-thirds of board Members and staff are veterans or spouses of veterans. This experience and empathy allows the TVCA to gain the trust of veterans, enabling them build and follow a reintegration path personalized for their goals and needs, and avoid the requirement for costly emergency services paid for by individual taxpayers and the community.

TVCA Support of Veteran Employment

The TVCA provides employment support to veterans and family Members, primarily in the low-moderate income range, within the Greater Cincinnati tristate region. It does this by more efficiently connecting transitioning veterans who are either unemployed or underemployed with the job readiness services, counseling, and educational support that exists in the community. It also ensures that employers in the community understand the significant benefits that those who have served in the military can contribute and helps them identify, hire, on-board and retain those veterans that best fit their job requirements. The TVCA does this by

- bringing employers and employment service providers together to share best practices and collaborate in veteran hiring initiatives;
- conducting training programs for employer leaders, first-line supervisors and HR recruiters;
- ensuring that current and soon-to-be veterans have the resume, networking and interviewing skills required; and
- facilitating direct connections between veterans and employers or via support of partner job fairs.

Additionally, the TVCA works directly, and through our local service partners, with veterans requiring affordable housing, financial and debt management, and medical and disability assistance to help them achieve a more self-sustainable lifestyle that permits stable employment. The TVCA's goal is to ensure these highly trained and capable former military service Members and their families find the right career path and become contributing Members of our community.

Key Veteran Employment Challenges

Of the 99,000 veterans in our 15-county tristate area, approximately 25,000 have transitioned out of the military since 1990 and are thus more likely to be either em-

ployed or seeking employment. Over 9,000 of these veterans have left the military since 2001. Unemployment is higher in this group than in older veteran cohorts and among non-veterans of the same age. The size of this younger, higher risk group is projected to double within 5 years.

There are a number of challenges that contribute to the difficulty that veterans experience as they transition to civilian employment. Described below are 10 key challenges that tend to impede the hiring and retention of veteran talent prior to, and during, the first 2 years of employment. Each challenge is followed by best practices and recommendations based on input of TVCA partners.

Challenge 1: Misaligned Expectations in the Hiring Process

Many veterans don't know what to expect when it comes to finding employment after they leave the service. The military may have been their first real job after high school and that 'hiring' experience was very different than that of their non-military peers. For many veterans in transition it is their first time having to create a resume, research potential employers, submit on-line applications, network to gain access / referrals, and to go through job interviews. Compounding this lack of experience in the hiring process are the unique cultural norms of military service which, for example, eschew taking personal credit for accomplishments, emphasize communicating only what is essential to answer the question, and downplaying challenges in achieving difficult objectives.

Not recognizing these drawbacks beforehand, many new veterans have heard and believe that civilian organizations are both anxious to hire and willing to pay a premium, for those with military experience. They are thus less motivated to take advantage of transition training required by the military prior to out-processing and often approach their initial job search with an inflated sense of confidence that it won't take them long to land a high-paying and respected position. The reality of how difficult the job search is can become a source of frustration, anger and depression for many.

Best Practices and Recommendations:

1. Provide a more realistic perspective of the job search process and challenges when service Members are preparing to leave the military. This can best be done by those local organizations that provide workforce development services (e.g. United Way's Partners for a Competitive Workforce) and by recently transitioned veterans.

2. Provide departing service Members a list of local contacts for organizations that can help transitioning veterans build a transition plan and connect them with local employers and service agencies.

Challenge 2: Attracting Veterans for Employment

From an employer standpoint, many in leadership positions believe that 1) veterans should be hired for all the positive attributes they bring to an organization, and 2) there are lots of veterans to choose from due to the well-publicized reductions in force. They support posting jobs on military and veteran job boards and encourage company representation at military career fairs and events. They will often promote their company or organization as being 'military- or veteran-friendly' places to work. Leadership expectations are therefore quite high.

However, for the employees that actually have to attend the career fairs, screen the applications, interpret the resumes, and conduct the interviews, they are frequently not familiar with military descriptions / experience, and don't understand how to elicit the information needed from their interviews with veteran applicants. Many HR recruiters, as well as hiring managers, don't understand the scope of responsibility and training that veterans may have already mastered and frequently don't even know what questions about their service are okay to ask and which are not. Many of the attributes promoted as evidence of being a 'veteran-friendly' employer, can seem very shallow to the very prospects they are trying to attract. Clearly there is a need for additional employer education.

Veterans typically look at on-line job postings on dozens of websites and portals. They will often see positions described in terms of what the ideal candidate would bring and will 'self-select' out of applying because they either don't understand the language used to describe the position requirements or don't feel they have the specific experience the organization is looking for. They underestimate the value to employers of the strong, basic employability ('soft') skills they do have.

At the career and job fairs they attend, most of the employers will have HR representatives there - many of which lack military experience - to provide an overview of the company, collect the resumes, and perhaps do a very preliminary screening interview. To the veteran unfamiliar with the job search and selection process, they

often expect to leave the job fair with a job offer, or at least confidence that one is quickly forthcoming. That is often not the way employment organizations work. Veterans get frustrated when they don't hear back promptly. Employers will often take weeks or months before they are prepared to make a decision and are thus often frustrated when the veterans they wished to offer or bring in for additional interviews are either no longer available or interested. At each level of the attraction and hiring process, there are misaligned expectations.

Best Practices and Recommendations:

1. Educate and provide consulting to employers on what benefits and programs are truly 'friendly' to the military / veterans they seek to hire. Provide both oversight and positive incentives to ensure authenticity in promoting this to veterans.
2. Make military background and culture training available to the hiring managers, HR recruiters and supervisors of employers that seek to hire veterans. Consider financial incentives to companies who routinely provide this training to their HR employers.
3. Provide on-site peer mentors at career and job fairs to help coach veterans seeking employment and set appropriate expectations regarding follow-up with exhibiting employers and prospects.

Challenge 3: Resume Preparation

Although DoD now mandates training on how to prepare a resume during out-processing, most veterans beginning transition have only a perfunctory understanding of how to translate in writing their goals, experience, training and skills in a compelling way. Most initial resumes are poorly formatted, full of military acronyms and jargon, packed with training courses completed, certificates received and awards presented. The military work experience is primarily described in terms of scope of responsibility and is very short on measurable accomplishments.

From an employer standpoint, veteran resumes are difficult for non-veterans to understand, take longer to process and are 'intimidating' to many HR professionals. Unless HR recruiters or managers are trained on how to interpret military resumes, or there is a separate process in place to have them screened by someone familiar with the military, the resumes are often bypassed or rejected.

Best Practices and Recommendations:

1. Upgrade the resume preparation training in DoD transition programs. Provide examples of well written resumes for specific industries as models for departing service Members to follow.
2. Establish within employer HR departments a separate military / veteran track for resume review and follow-up. Include current veteran employees - either in HR or as volunteers - in this process.

Challenge 4: Networking

A key part of the job search process is meeting others in the community that might be able to provide an introduction or forward your resume to an influential person at a prospective employer. Being able to plan and take full advantage of networking opportunities is one of the most effective ways to find employment. Unfortunately, this is one of the least understood strategies for veterans looking for work. There are certain skills and specific preparation required to network effectively that veterans in transition must take advantage of. It requires being willing to ask new acquaintances for specific help and being willing to follow-up with networking contacts. Education of veterans on the importance of networking in the job search process and the skills required is not yet widely available.

Best Practices and Recommendations:

1. Include training on the importance of networking as part of the job search process. Include skill development workshops as appropriate.
2. Leverage networking training as a topic for connecting student veterans with local employers.

Challenge 5: Interviewing

Once through the application and screening process, the job interview is next hurdle. Veterans often have great difficulty presenting themselves and their experience in the most compelling way to the interviewers. The interviewers generally aren't familiar with military experience and training and frequently misinterpret or fail to explore responses beyond the standard questions and templates that are used for

all job interviews. The wording and context of those questions may seem 'basic' to civilian job applicants but are often confusing or seem irrelevant to new veterans. For example, questions about 'working in a diverse environment' or 'describing a time when you personally had to accomplish something under stress' seem out of context to those with military experience (e.g. what is meant by 'diversity') or are antithetical to the values of military leaders (e.g. taking personal credit for a team accomplishment). Training of both veteran applicants and civilian interviewers can help.

Best Practices and Recommendations:

1. Include veteran employees in the interview panel for all veteran applicants. Knowledge of military training and experience will allow adaptation of questions and further development of responses that indicate lack of contextual understanding by the applicant.

2. Adapt behavioral interview templates to enable those with military experience to respond in a way that highlights the skills or traits that the employer seeks to identify.

Understanding Cultural Differences

Many difficulties originate with the differences in culture between military and civilian organizations. These differences are not only reflected in the hiring process, but in retaining veteran talent once hired. Awareness of the differences and small interventions during on-boarding and early career discussions can easily address many of these. There are 4 key areas that tend to be problematic - Organizational Dynamics, Interpersonal Skills, Management & Leadership Norms, and Giving and Receiving Feedback.

Challenge 6: Adjusting to the Organizational Dynamics

While the type of work may be similar, the alignment between mission, structure and motivation is one of the most problematic differences that can lead to veteran dissatisfaction and loss.

Mission First vs. Mission .huh? In the military, there is a near constant reinforcement of knowing, training for, and accomplishing specific and tangible missions. In civilian employment, the organization's mission, if known at all, is likely to be stated in very general or vague terms - often posted somewhere on a wall in the hallway, but infrequently referred to. Its lack of prominence by itself is, at best, confusing and, at worst, the source of blame and frustration when things go awry.

When mission statements are found or referred to in management meetings, it is often strikingly complex to the point of being meaningless. A company's mission statement that refers to, "serving customers", "generating favorable returns", and / or "meeting stakeholder expectations", can feel very bureaucratic and somewhat less than inspiring. This is particularly true when compared to the specificity of a unit or branch mission, e.g. the Marine infantryman's mission is "to close with and destroy the enemy in close combat".

Even among employers that prominently express their mission, there is often a lack of alignment between the mission, how the organization operates and how its employees behave. In the military, the unit mission generally is reflected in the organizational structure and drives individual behaviors. A combat unit will often be built to accomplish a specific mission, with sub-units attached or detached as required, and a clear chain-of-command established to govern the whole for the duration of that mission. The role of each organic unit or attached sub-unit is clearly defined everyone is briefed and often rehearsed on their role in the accomplishment of a given task.

In the civilian workplace, group reorganization and shifts in leadership responsibilities around specific missions are seldom seen. More often found is the usually confusing reference to operating within a 'matrixed' organizational structure with 'solid-line' or 'dotted-line' reporting expectations to functional leaders. For a veteran, this can be disorienting and creates situation in which they question the authentic motivation of the people they are working with on specific projects or teams.

Employee motivation in general is a source of frustration for many veterans. In the military, where accomplishing the mission or task at hand comes first in personal priorities, it is often difficult to understand how civilian employees can leave when their shift or normal work day is complete and the mission or task is not.

Equally or perhaps more frustrating is the difference in drivers of motivation. People willingly join the military and conduct extraordinary difficult, often dangerous, tasks for little pay and less recognition. The motivation drivers for most of those joining the military include a sense of service, patriotism, and a belief in pro-

tecting our freedoms. The more prevalent motivation for civilian peers in the workforce are personal compensation, benefits, and career progression. This abrupt juxtaposition of personal, largely extrinsic, motivation vs. the shared, largely, intrinsic motivation more prevalent in the military can be very demotivating to veterans early in their careers.

Best Practices and Recommendations:

1. More clearly spell out the company and / or hiring organization mission in terms that are concise, meaningful and measurable. Be prepared to discuss why profit is important - this is not a generally understood concept in the military lexicon.

2. Explain how the organizational structure supports that mission and how it has adapted in the past in response to new threats or opportunities. This makes it seem more flexible and familiar.

3. Clarify expectations of a typical work day. Discuss behavior expectations, to include the concept of work / life balance and the need to maintain motivation in an 'at will' employment environment.

4. Assign a veteran mentor who has been with the company as a resource for questions.

Challenge 7: Developing New Interpersonal Skills

In the military, accomplishing difficult missions requires working closely in situations of great stress with others from diverse backgrounds and experience. Individually, service Members must be able to recall and communicate specific details rapidly and succinctly to others. There is great value attached to being concise, precise, and 'on task'. To facilitate this, one quickly learn short cuts in how to communicate and try to strip out nuance or emotion not seen as critical to transmitting what is required for the mission. In training to be a military leader, you frequently hear the adage 'they don't need to like you, they only need to respect you'. When working in the civilian sector, these same practices and traits are frequently cited as evidence of below average interpersonal skills.

This is aggravating to many veterans who believe they are communicating what is required and feel their co-workers are being too sensitive. They must pay attention to being less abrupt and concise in providing direction and must consider the tone of what is said - something that was much less important in the military. These skills, by themselves, seldom rise to the level of frustration that cause a veteran to seek other employment, but they are a daily reminder of big gap that exists between their success in the military and what is considered important in the civilian employment.

Best Practices and Recommendations:

1. Explain communication norms: How to address others - leaders especially; Need to solicit input and ask questions to gain alignment vs. being directive.

2. Make veteran new hires aware of tonality and non-verbal behavior in communicating with others.

3. Provide training and / or examples of effective written communication.

Challenge 8: Understanding that 'Teamwork' Means Something Different

In the military, you are taught to work in teams, ensuring everyone on the team is aligned on what the mission is and understands their role. Collaboration with, and support of, your teammates is the highest priority because - as reinforced from the first day of training - you succeed or fail as a team. When assigned to teams in the civilian workplace, the team is frequently comprised of representatives of different departments, each with different objectives relating to their function. For example, someone from legal is assigned to ensure the team doesn't increase company liability, someone from finance is there to make sure the team considers profitability as well as revenue, marketing is there to make sure brand standards are upheld, project management participates to hold the team accountable for meeting process deadlines, etc. Each is responsible for representing the interests of their functions first and the team mission is frequently of secondary concern.

There also tends to be less formality in how teams work in the civilian workplace than in the military. In the latter, there is generally a recognized protocol in terms of who speaks and when. This is not always the case in civilian team meetings. Newly hired veterans will refrain from participating in discussions and become frustrated when talked over or interrupted by others with less experience and knowledge. In civilian workplace meetings, the individual who speaks at will is recognized

for 'adding value' - in the military, the same behavior might be criticized as 'insubordination'.

Best Practices and Recommendations:

1. Discuss veteran expectations about teamwork and clarify specific roles of team Members upfront. Encourage flexibility. Offer training on conflict resolution and alternative team-building techniques.

2. Reinforce the role and importance of informal meetings to making things happen.

Challenge 9: Learning a Different Leadership Style

Another area of frequent frustration and disillusionment that leads to retention issues is how management and leadership are practiced outside the military. In the military, the principles and practice of leading others is reinforced in nearly every aspect of the job. There is a consistent, authoritative style that emphasizes top-down decision-making. While seeking input from those with more experience is encouraged, the concept of 'consensus' leadership is seldom, if ever, discussed. Consequently, service Members become extremely comfortable and skilled in one particular style of leading and responding to others - a style very appropriate given their mission. Once out of the military however, an authoritative style of leadership is seldom the best choice. Without a discussion about leadership norms in the civilian workplace, veterans quickly become cynical about what they perceive as a 'lack of leadership' in their organization or frustrated when they are cautioned about being too hard-nosed and directive with their subordinates. This can lead them to either begin searching for other employment on their own or being asked to do so by the employer.

One aspect of this new leadership environment that is particularly confusing for young veterans is simply understanding who the leader of the group is and why. In the military, a person's experience and position are obvious - they wear their name, rank, unit designation, training accomplishments and commendations on their uniform. Additionally, progression in rank and responsibility is fairly uniform within the different branches and so leadership in a given situation can be quickly determined. Not so in the non-military environment. There are seldom uniform designations on display and leaders may be of any age and level based on a number of individual accomplishments. Coming from an environment in which one is expected to defer to leaders based on rank and obvious experience, it can be difficult for a new veteran employee to identify how to respond and to whom.

Two other aspects of leadership that can create retention issues are how tightly defined the scope of responsibility is and the flexibility of operation allowed. In the military, leaders are trained to understand how their particular role or mission fits within the context of the 'big picture' or higher level strategy. They are also expected to be able to think through the detailed management of how to execute the operational plan they or their unit are required to perform, as well as plan for contingencies if the parameters of the plan change. This requires a much broader level of strategic thinking and higher attention to detail than most positions in the civilian workplace expect, particularly in entry level positions. While it seems like these would be skills that an employer would value, it frequently causes supervisors and mid-level managers problems of constantly having to answer questions they aren't prepared to address or 'reign in' young veterans who seem to lack focus on the specific tasks they've been assigned. Frustration for both the veteran employee and veteran's managers can result in dissatisfaction and loss of employment.

The role of flexibility and authority can also be a point of contention. In the military, one is taught to 'adapt and overcome', whether it is lack of administrative resources in a headquarters or an unexpected barrier on the battlefield. Initiative is recognized and rewarded as long as the mission is accomplished and others are not unnecessarily put in harm's way. Outside the military however, there are rules and protocols that are not always well understood and initiative is permitted inside certain boundaries that are not always well defined. Veteran employees will often chafe at seeing organizational inefficiency or work with colleagues who seem resistant to step outside a defined process to get things done - choosing to dismiss it as 'not my job' or 'too risky' to them personally.

Best Practices and Recommendations:

1. Provide backgrounds and photos of key leaders in the organization. Emphasize their diversity of experience and clarify how to best interact with them.

2.Explain leadership norms within the company. Recognize the veteran's leadership experience and explain the opportunity for them to expand their leadership proficiency with different styles.

3.Explain company decision-making process and discuss value of taking initiative vs. needing permission.

Challenge 10: Giving and Receiving Feedback

This area can also be a major adjustment for those transitioning from military to civilian employment. In the military, feedback is continuous, concise and deliberate. It tends to focus less on what went well and more on the shortfalls vs. specific standards, responsibility for who should have done what, when, and expectations for improvement. The intent is less personal than it is to ensure individuals are clear on what went wrong and can learn how to improve as quickly as possible. It is thus expected and valued by those in the military. Veterans in a civilian workplace often find that there is relatively little feedback compared to what they are used to. Additionally, what feedback they get often feels 'sanitized' and less than direct which leads to a lack of trust in those they are working for. Particularly important is understanding the organization's 'code words' for types of feedback - e.g. does 'good' mean well-done or barely passing? Is 'excellent' the same as 'outstanding' - or not quite?

When it comes to giving feedback, veterans understand the value of direct and detailed feedback but have predominantly been trained on only one way to provide it, regardless of the situation. That feedback style, instead of being seen as helpful, is often felt to be abrupt and lacking 'balance' in recognizing all the positives before highlighting specific areas for improvement. Those not used to being critiqued in this fashion may feel it as a personal attack and complain about the veteran leader's insensitivity to the situation.

Best Practices and Recommendations:

1.Recognize the importance of providing feedback to show consistency with value in military.

2.Explain how feedback is normally provided, both informally and formally; Explain what 'code words' are common and what they mean

3.May need to coach veterans on how to provide feedback to subordinates and peers.

Summary

Hiring and retaining today's veterans is important - not only in recognition of their valor and their service to our country, but more pragmatically to help ensure the competitiveness and disciplined leadership that our companies and organizations will need in the coming decades. Collectively, the Department of Defense, Congress and our State governments need to support the initiatives in local communities within which our veterans and their families will be hired and supported. It is the local community who has the most at stake - and the most to gain - by ensuring the welfare and continued success of today's and tomorrow's veterans.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Tristate Veterans Community Alliance - February 19, 2016.

Prepared Statement of Chris Newsome

Members of the committee, representatives, and respective guests,

I thank you for bringing this panel, and this collective group together to address and discuss an issue that is of the utmost importance on a national scale. Best practices in veteran hiring not only affects the veteran and their family, but also the bottom line success of any organization engaged in such an endeavor. Beyond being an inherently good thing to incorporate in HR processes, veteran hiring simply makes good business sense. Those who recognize this, and are equally willing to invest dedicated efforts, personnel, and resources to this initiative, stand to greatly augment and enhance their workforce, while naturally strengthening their company.

I am here today, representing RecruitMilitary. We are a Veteran Owned and Operated, full service military-to-civilian recruiting firm that has been championing the veteran community, and helping to bridge the gap between transitioning personnel, the veteran population, and Corporate America since 1998. We are Headquartered out of Loveland, OH. We offer companies the ability (and associated re-

sources needed) to effectively connect with the veteran population. We have conducted over 800 veteran career fairs across the country since 2006, connecting over 430,000 job-seeking veterans with over 24,000 organizations. Beyond the scope of our career fairs, we offer our corporate partners the ability to access the nation's largest sole-purpose job-seeking veteran database (820,000 veteran profiles), as well as capturing the attention of the transitioning population through our on-base magazine available to our partners who wish to augment their branding efforts. While working with a majority of the Fortune 500, and thousands of organizations throughout the country, we have a unique perspective on what works best for companies, and the needed tools to build these strategies from the ground up.

Success is driven by acknowledging and effectively leveraging the immense talent and value stemming from our armed services. However, to understand best practices in hiring from the veteran community, it is imperative that we understand what a veteran is. We are yesterday's, today's, and tomorrow's leaders. The Department of Defense has invested millions of dollars into each of us, to ensure we are experts within the realm of which we serve. We are proud, hardworking, patriots who seek to take the bountiful skills and virtues taught to us in the service, and apply them in the civilian sector to enhance ourselves and the organizations we represent. We are the top tier candidate pool, outperforming our peers.

Each organization must engage in this effort in their own meaningful way. There is no one-all-encompassing solution to attaining a successful veteran hiring initiative. However, there are general guidelines that can universally be applied to ensure a successful starting point is established.

Each organization brings unique appeal to the job seeker, and each organization has a unique personnel need. In some cases, understanding certain military occupational specialties (a service Member's job) is an appropriate fit, due to the synonymous job descriptions. In other cases,

their leadership experience and intangible strengths are going to be more important. A majority of the veteran population also has comprehensive civilian work experience and many have obtained a formal education upon departing the service. It is a fluid dynamic, that requires non-passive techniques that put a company's name/brand at the forefront of the veteran hiring discussion.

An organization must ask: "Why do I value the veteran population?", "Why is my company a good company to work for?", "Why do I consider my company to be a great place for a veteran to explore a career path?", "What are my company's greatest needs?", "What are a veteran's greatest strengths?", "Where do I have an immediate need for self-driven/leadership-oriented employees?". Once these answers are clear, a dedicated veteran hiring initiative can be incorporated into the overall organizational Talent Acquisition process. One may require a branding strategy, on top of a proactive engagement (career fairs, social media, and community outreach) to ensure their company is synonymous with veteran hiring.

It is important to conduct an inventory on your existing veteran-workforce. Take a special interest in their experience and their notion of why your company is a great fit for he or she personally. Use this information in your language and overall approach to the job-seeking veteran population. The organizations who tend to have a higher success rate are those who can speak to this, and even incorporate current veteran employees in the recruiting process. Having veterans on your recruiting team essentially stands as a veteran endorsement.

Proactive engagement is key. Tapping into the veteran population is not as easy as saying "we're veteran friendly". Never be passive. And, the days of checking off the blocks and relying strictly on job postings has passed. Understanding this population's true value and potential, will drive a company's ability to express their desire to hire them.

This topic requires more time and words than I am allotted in this particular segment, so I hope my statement will generate further dialog and questions from you all.

Again, thank you for your time and for asking me to speak on this panel.

Statements For The Record

James R. O'Flaherty,
JDOG JUNK REMOVAL AND HAULING HEADQUARTERS

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for inviting JDog Junk Removal and Hauling to submit written testimony for the record at this hearing focused on best practices associated with hiring military veterans. JDog was established by Jerry Flanagan, a US Army veteran, and is our Nation's only brand that franchises exclusively to military veterans and their families. I will focus this statement on the important lessons we have learned during this process at both the franchisor and franchisee levels, and the resulting best practices we have adopted. JDog currently has expanded to over 50 territories in 16 states, and our rapid growth has not been without valuable lessons learned in the process. Our mission's ultimate goal is to put veterans to work and ensure their ongoing success as they pursue the American Dream.

In 2011, Jerry and Tracy Flanagan started JDog Junk Removal and Hauling in Berwyn, PA. They ran the company on the principles of respect, integrity, and trust, which quickly became the slogan of JDog. In 2013, Jerry began to franchise this business model, requiring potential franchisees to be military veterans or immediate family Members. We established this barrier to entry to ensure exclusivity and bolster the initiative of creating as many veteran small business owners as possible since military veterans are twice as likely to own a business as the general population¹. Additionally, we encourage these franchisees to hire other veterans in their respective territories with the goal of helping reduce the veteran unemployment rate as a whole.

We have noticed that a best practice for attracting, hiring, and retaining Members of the veteran community is to establish an environment that fosters growth, camaraderie, and mutual support. The structure of our business model inherently sets the franchisee up for success and promotes continued growth. We have established a scaled flat-rate royalty system to ensure the franchisee retains more of their hard-earned money, and currently waive fees commonly found in a franchise system such as technology, marketing, and call center fees. This has directly translated to the franchisee having the means to expand and hire more veterans to their team. Since we have the only brand exclusively for veterans and their family Members, we have a sustainable competitive advantage that not only sets our franchisees apart from the competition, but also promotes the "ethos of brotherhood" that our military veteran community desires.

Hudson, M. (2014, November 5). Startup Success: Veteran-Owned Businesses Are Gaining Traction With Investors. Forbes. Retrieved February 17, 2016, from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/mariannehudson/2014/11/05/the-right-stuff-veterans-are-building-great-companies/#5a3ce61ce772>

As a franchisor, JDog has instituted a vetting process to ensure the potential franchisee is a good match for us, and more importantly that JDog is the right match for them. We evaluate the candidate based on the "Whole Soldier Concept". The desired personality traits are someone who is motivated, outgoing, resourceful, detail oriented, and persistent. Additionally, support entities such as family, business associates, and professional networks are key to the success of the franchisee's effort. During the development of this vetting process, we've noticed that those who possess the aforementioned qualities and support bring invaluable skills, interests, and experience to the table - leading to success both personally and for the franchise. As a result, we at the franchisor level have enjoyed the benefit of constant feedback and "bottom-up refinement" from our franchisees. Also, this vetting process increases the likelihood of success for the veteran operating the franchise.

Another best practice for hiring veterans resides in fostering an environment that encourages groupthink and sharing of ideas. We understand the value of individual input, regardless of position, billet, or location. Many employers underestimate the value a Member of the military veteran community brings to their team, and we have realized that one of the most appealing aspects of our company is our standard of encouraging feedback and critiques. This not only benefits the franchisor immensely, but also helps the brand grow as a collective.

To further bolster the franchisor/franchisee relationship at JDog, we've put several ongoing support mechanisms in place. Once we award a franchise to a veteran or family Member, the franchisee attends a four day training session at our headquarters to learn the details of how the system works. The training includes daily operating procedures, marketing and advertising strategies, scheduling, instruction on several available revenue streams, and practical application. After training, our Quality Assurance, Marketing and Operations sections provide ongoing support. This support includes, but is not limited to, establishing relationships with compa-

¹Hudson, M. (2014, November 5). Startup Success: Veteran-Owned Businesses Are Gaining Traction With Investors. Forbes. Retrieved February 17, 2016, from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/mariannehudson/2014/11/05/the-right-stuff-veterans-are-building-great-companies/#5a3ce61ce772>

nies contracting our junk removal and hauling services, ongoing advertising assistance and training, developing both web-based and tangible marketing strategies, and providing crucial one-on-one mentoring and advising on any issues associated with establishing and growing a small business. In many ways, these support mechanisms and training mirrors what the vet experienced while serving in the military, thus easing the transition for them to be successful operators of a franchise.

In addition to the franchisor establishing several mechanisms to attract Members of the military veteran community, the individual franchisees have taken the standard of hiring veterans to another level. For example, our franchisee in Brunswick, OH utilized the Department of Veterans Affairs' Compensated Work Therapy Program (VA CWT) to fulfill his requirement for daily hired help. As a result of his efforts and the open lines of communication with the JDog franchisor, our company is in the process of establishing a national Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the VA CWT that will enable all franchisees to leverage this program. Additionally, JDog is looking to work with veteran organizations at both the franchisee and franchisor levels such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, Marine Corps League, etc. in order to expand our outreach and have lasting partnerships. This approach developed as a result of arguably the most important best practice in hiring veterans: create an atmosphere where the veterans can take care of each other.

The underlying spirit of JDog lies not in junk removal and hauling. It lies in the commitment veterans and their families have to each other. This sense of brotherhood that was imbued in all veterans and their families lay dormant for many. We at JDog have revived the sense of responsibility to each other and have all grown, both personally and professionally, as a result. The veteran community has the willingness and capability to excel on a personal and team level, and if one fosters an environment that encourages growth, brotherhood, mutual support, groupthink, and critiques, military veterans will not only gravitate toward the concept, but they will also take the business model much further than expected.

**Emily Turner,
OHIO ASSOCIATION OF GOODWILL INDUSTRIES**

Members of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs:

My name is Emily Turner and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Association of Goodwill Industries. When people think of Goodwill Industries, they usually think of our retail stores. Our retail stores are very important as the revenue generated by those stores support our mission.

Our mission, however, is to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities and other barriers through the power of work.

Our association's 16 autonomous Goodwill organizations provide employment services throughout Ohio's 88 Counties. Last year, Goodwills in Ohio helped over 4200 people secure employment and provided almost 200,000 instances of employment related services. Many of the individuals we work with have served in the military and we are proud to be able to assist veterans as they seek and secure jobs.

Several of the Goodwills in Ohio have specific services tailored for veterans. I would like to give you a brief overview of one of those.

Goodwill Easter Seals Miami Valley serves 23 counties in western Ohio, including Wright Patterson Air Force Base. In 2014, Goodwill Easter Seals Miami Valley led a network of 14 employers, community agencies, and service agencies to create the Veterans & Employers Connection. The goal of the Connection is to reduce veteran unemployment in the state of Ohio. Goodwill's goal is to help 5,000 veterans secure employment by 2020.

By working with veterans from all branches of the service, active duty, Guard and Reserves, they capitalized on the talents and unique skills forged by service. Western Ohio is a magnet for veterans to settle and work, and Goodwill Industries has a commitment to help them find success. The Connection's holistic approach to working with veterans and assisting them to overcome a variety of barriers has already had an impact on the reduction of veteran unemployment in the 23-county greater Miami Valley region. Since the program went live two years ago:

- 649 veterans have found employment which includes 176 placed through Goodwill Easter Seals Miami Valley's placement specialists
- 72 organizations have joined the Connection including 64 employers committed to hiring veterans

The director of Veterans Employment Services for Goodwill Easter Seals was unable to attend today's hearing, so thank you for allowing me to tell you a little bit about their success and about the mission of Goodwill Industries.

My contact information is:
 Emily Turner, Executive Director
 Ohio Association of Goodwill Industries
 1331 Edgehill Road
 Columbus, Ohio 43212
 (614) 583-0319
 EmilyTurner@GoodwillOhio.org

Question: What is the Veterans & Employers Connection?

Answer: The Veterans and Employers Connection ("the Connection") is a community alliance led by Goodwill Easter Seals Miami Valley dedicated to the meaningful, long-term employment of veterans. The Connection was created to address three primary issues:

- High unemployment and under-employment among veterans, especially for those from the post 9/11 era and women veterans
- The lack of a single, streamlined support system that ties in the large number of support services available for veterans to obtain and maintain employment and
- The high percentage of employers who want to employ veterans, but don't know how to either reach or successfully employ them

Question: What types of organizations participate in the Connection?

Answer: The Connection Membership consists of employers and a wide variety of service providers including government entities, community associations, academia and non-profit organizations. See the "Members" page on the Connection's website for the Member list and information about each company.

Question: Is there a cost to join the Connection?

Answer: There is no cost for employers and support organizations to join the Connection. Employers and other organization can voluntarily contribute financially or in-kind to the Connection which is operated under the auspices of Goodwill Easter Seals Miami Valley, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization with headquarters in Dayton, Ohio.

Question: How does my company find out more about becoming a Member?

Answer: Please let us know about your interest to find out more about becoming a Member of the Connection by completing and submitting the Membership information form under the "Contact Us" section of this website. This action starts the dialogue but doesn't commit your company or the Connection to Membership.

Question: What is the Connection's definition of a "veteran"?

Answer: Our definition of a veteran is anyone who has worn the uniform of the United States military including current or former Reservists or Guard Members, or who is currently transitioning or preparing to transition from service.

Question: How can the Connection help me if I am a veteran or am preparing to transition from active military service?

Answer: You are the reason the Connection exists so everything we do is geared to support you in your efforts to find and keep a job that interests you. We realize that each person's situation is unique, so we've developed programs and established relationships in the community that allow us to support a broad range of needs in a coordinated, holistic manner.

Since the Veterans & Employers Connection is a Member-based entity, you have access to information about employers who are committed to employing veterans - they are "veteran friendly". There is information about each of our Members on the website, including links to the Members' websites. You also have the opportunity to upload your resume and to provide pertinent information about you that Connection Members will be able to review. Connection staff will also work with you and Connection employers to "connect the dots" to make the process for everyone involved as effective and efficient as possible.

Question: If I am a veteran and would like more information about the Connection, what do I do?

Answer: You have two options to start the process. You can submit your contact information on the Veterans page of this website to let us know you would like to contact you. The second option is to submit your resume and related information through this website. This will give us more information than the first option and will allow us to have a more informed initial conversation with you. Our commitment to you is to get in touch with you within two work days regardless of the option you choose.

Question: Does the Veterans & Employers Connection website collect information from me when I visit the site, and if so, how is it used?

Answer: The Veterans & Employers Connection understands the importance of protecting the privacy of visitors to its Website. Since there are a number of factors related to this issue, we have created a Privacy Policy to provide helpful information to you about our policies and procedures regarding the collection, use and disclosure of personal information we receive when you visit and use the Website. Please see the link to the Privacy Policy at the bottom of this and other pages on the website.

