

ACVETEO - ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT,
TRAINING AND EMPLOYER OUTREACH

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

April 1, 2020

SUMMARY MINUTES

THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON
VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND
EMPLOYER OUTREACH (ACVETEO

Webinar

U.S. Department of Labor
Frances T. Perkins Building
200 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20210

PARTICIPANTS:

Eric Eversole, Chairman

Gregory Green, Assistant DFO, DOL VETS

Gary Harter, Utah Dept. of Vets and Military Affairs

Darrell Roberts, SMART Union

Keith Natrass, Military & Veterans Affairs, GMC

Jim Lorraine, America's Warrior Partnership

Tony Lowe, Veterans of Foreign Wars

James Schmeling, Student Veterans of America

Kayla Williams, Center For a New American Security

Jeff Hall, Disabled American Veterans

Pamela Johnson, ACVETEO

Lori Adams, NASWA

John Lowry, Assistant Secretary of Labor, DOL VETS

Rose Warner, Policy Advisor, ODEP

Carolyn Jones, Senior Policy Advisor, ODEP

Tim Winters, TAPS

Robert Shepard, Chief Senior Investigator, DOL VETS

Jennifer Sheehy, Deputy Assistant Secretary, ODEP

Jonathan Vanderplas, Chief of Staff, DOL

Mark Toal, Director, Office of Strategic Outreach, DOL

Bill Metheny, Director, Office of Field Operations, DOL VETS

Ivan Denton, Director of Programs, VETS

Rhonda McGhee, OASVET

Laurel Define, Communications Director, DOL

Sam Shellenberger, Deputy Assistant Secretary, VETS

Stan Kurtz, Small Business Administration

Patrick Mannix, Chief of Staff, ODEP

PARTICIPANTS: (Cont'd)

Chris Button, ODEP

Mike Miller, Program Director, DoD

Ronald Drach

DaCardo King

Jeovanni Alicea

Daniel Applegate

Eric Brown, OPM

Jamie Lee

Brandown Bowden

William Offutt, Victory

Rebecca Rousey

WELCOME AND REMARKS

AND 2020 VETS VISION/PRIORITIES

The April 1, 2020 meeting of ACVETEO, the Advisory Committee on Veterans Employment, Training, and Employer Outreach, began at 9:08 a.m. via WebEx webinar.

Gregory Green, Assistant DFO, VETS, welcomed the group to the WebEx meeting and introduced **Mr. John Lowry**, Assistant Secretary of Labor, VETS.

Mr. Lowry welcomed everyone to the meeting and spoke of the 2020 Vision/Priorities he sees for VETS over the next couple of years by 1) prioritizing the transition from service to the workplace in enhancing the current TAP program and looking to the future for what a better transition assistance program might look like, and 2) finding and evaluating the right strategic partnerships to ensure Veterans are able to transition successfully into the workplace. An emerging third priority noted is to understand the implications COVID-19 has and will have on current and future Veteran engagement and employment.

Chairman Eric Eversole then welcomed everyone to the meeting and wished everyone and their families good health **in** these unprecedented times. He noted that the work the committee does is critically important for service members and their families and communities and that although the committee can't do much in terms of a health-related impact in regards to the coronavirus, what they can do is impact the curve related economics by ensuring tools and practices are properly in place to expedite recovery once the pandemic is over.

The chairman reminds members as they're looking at previously established priorities that they consider whether those need to be modified in light of the pandemic. Significant unemployment increases are to be expected and members are urged to think of practical recommendations that can be given to hasten recovery.

BLS BRIEFING ON THE 2019 EMPLOYMENT SITUATION OF VETERANS

Luke Murren, a data analyst in the VETS TAP office, shared recent data findings from the BLS briefing on the 2019 Employment Situation of Veterans, an annual study co-sponsored and funded by VETS and VA.

Statistics noted included: a decline in the unemployment rate to 3.0 percent for males, a decline in Gulf War-era II veteran unemployment from 3.5 to 3.1 percent, and unemployment rates of Veterans varied across the country from a low of 0.9 percent in Maryland to a high of 6.1 percent in Montana (though low population sizes may account for monthly fluctuations from the average). **Mr. Murren** noted that although some statistical comparisons may seem high, clarification from BLS may be needed to understand if a discrepancy is considered significant or not. Also noted was of the 284,000 unemployed veterans surveyed in 2019, unemployment was relatively equal across most of the age groups. **Mr. Murren** encouraged members to

contact **Jim Borbely** and **Andrew Blank** at BLS if they have any questions.

Discussion included BLS's process for developing the survey and how categories and groups are defined, and whether entrepreneurship, self-employment, and military spouse data is addressed.

BRIEFING ON TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TAP)

Tim Winters, Director, TAP, gave a briefing on the current state of the TAP program, some of the impacts of COVID-19, and a preview of some projects that are currently being worked on for FY2020.

Expansion has been completed on the program office with the hiring of key leadership positions as well as support individuals from the new vendor (Serco). The FY19 NDAA changes have been implemented including mandatory one-day workshops followed by two of the four two-day elective workshops.

Discussions with the new vendor have led to significant improvements with more to come in the near future. Changes include revising the hiring screening process, implementing co-teaching to facilitate the training of new hires, implementing a quality control management program, and conducting quality control site visits.

The number of workshops conducted in January and February of this year (~1,900) was roughly double the number conducted the previous year; however, with COVID-19 in-person workshops have been cancelled and a movement to virtual centers has been adopted. Virtual options include Army's TAP Virtual Center, serving up to 300 soldiers per week with sessions held throughout the day, and a promising pilot using the Zoom platform has been conducted with the Marine Corps at Parris Island. Distance learning through JKO is still being offered

and there are plans in place to update and move it to DoD's new learning management system.

TAP Projects include a military spouse-specific TAP curriculum to increase engagement, TAP Apprenticeship Demonstration pilot for transitioning service members and their spouses into apprenticeships prior to separation, implementing DOL TAP Employment Navigators: counselors and career service assistants to aid service members outside of the installations and classrooms, continuing the partnership and outreach approach to connect service members, and setting up the NDNH (National Directory of New Hires) data matching to be able to analyze employment outcomes and wage data of transitioning service members.

In light of COVID-19, discussion included course mitigation efforts such as waiving the restriction to complete TAP through JKO and a possible time extension to the apprenticeship pilot. Other discussion included whether workshop attendance drops off after the one mandated course or not (too early to tell), and the reasoning behind dropping the DOL TAP course from service-disabled veteran-owned small business (natural progression of recompeting a contract.)

**BRIEFING ON UNIFORMED SERVICES EMPLOYMENT
AND REEMPLOYMENT RIGHTS ACT**

Robert Shepard, Chief Senior Investigator, VETS, provided a briefing on the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). In general, USERRA prohibits employment discrimination, and protects reemployment rights, prohibits retaliation against anyone who attempts to assert a right under this act and covers Reserve components of all five major military branches, as well as other entities such as the USPHS and NDMS. The rights apply to all public and private employers regardless of size.

Updates include the implementation of the VETS Case Management System that allows for the capability of compressing, encrypting, and securely transmitting case files; the continuation of operations such as providing technical support to the DoD organization Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), continuing of investigations through electronic means, hiring of new investigators, a revision of the operations manual to remain current with proper methods for the carrying out of investigative duties, revising the quality assurance tool to provide a more objective perspective; and lastly, the updating of the brick-and-mortar schoolhouse curriculum to a two week, nine day course that covers investigative interviewing, analyzing and coming to determinations, and techniques for mediating an agreement between parties if necessary.

Mr. Shepard concluded the briefing by speaking of a recent win by the Office of Special Counsel in the case of Patrie v. U.S. Postal Service, held before the MSPB, which ordered the reinstatement of a Guardsman back into his civilian job with the U.S.P.S. following his post-9/11 military service.

Discussion included the topic of rights for employers and **Mr. Dent** and **Mr. Lorraine** agreed that communication should be open and encouraged for employers as well so that no bias against hiring Guardsmen and Reservists will develop. **Mr. Miller** added that as of March 31, 16,000 Guard and Reserve service members had been activated in support of COVID-19.

**BRIEFING ON OFFICE OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT POLICY WORK RELATING
TO VETERANS**

Rose Warner, Policy Advisor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), briefed the committee on ODEP's work related to Veterans, namely the Veterans Return to Integrated Competitive Employment (RICE), and several apprenticeship program pilots that are in development.

RICE is an initiative between ODEP and VHA that utilizes discovery and customized employment in order to increase the number of Veterans with disabilities who obtain competitive integrated employment. Efforts by ODEP have included 1) a two-day in-person training session for work therapy program employment specialists and mentor-trainers on discovery and customized employment using a train-the-trainer approach, 2) six follow-up webinars on discovery and customized employment, 3) one-on-one technical assistance to VISNs, and 4) the creation of two videos and a customized employment works for veterans brief. Continued efforts this year include more one-on-one technical assistance to VISNs, the development of a RICE impact study, creation of a checklist for employment specialists who are using customized employment, and some one-page resources including a FAQ on customized employment.

Ms. Warner detailed efforts by VETS partners, VONE, Office of Apprenticeship and ODEP in the creation of the Veterans Apprenticeships Pilot with the goal of increasing the number of Chapter 31 Veterans in apprenticeship programs. **Ms. Warner** notes that getting information out to VRNE counselors, DVOPs, and RVERs will play a key role in increasing enrollment in these programs.

The project is broken into five working subgroups with interrelated goals, including 1) apprenticeship web sites: looking into improving sites for vocational rehab counselors and

help identify which apprenticeships are GI Bill-approved; 2) policies and acceptability: looking into VA and DOL approved apprenticeships to see where they overlap and differ and look into ways to align them if possible; 3) the pilot state: develop a decision matrix to identify apprenticeship pilot states to help decide which apprenticeship needs a pilot; 4) training materials and resources: to look into what training materials are needed in order to increase apprenticeship for Chapter 31 Veterans; and 5) the assessment and evaluation group which aims to determine what success looks like.

Ms. Warner noted additional resources available such as the monthly Community of Practice webinars and Data & Resources to Inspire a Vision of Employment (DRIVE).

Carolyn Jones, a senior policy advisor with ODEP, then gave an overview of ODEP's Apprenticeship Inclusion Model (AIM) demonstration project which started in 2018. Its goal is to "research, develop, test, and evaluate innovative strategies to expand occupational skills training in existing pre-apprenticeship programs and aims to enhance and expand access to occupational skills training in information technology, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing for working-age youth and adults with disabilities." Partnering with four apprenticeship organizations (Amazon Information Technology, industry manufacturing pilots, Microsoft, and HCAP), pilots have commenced in 17 different diverse localities nationwide and all focus on apprenticeships in information technology. Together their target membership audiences include veterans, all disability groups, and those on the autistic spectrum.

Ms. Jones reminds members that apprenticeship.gov is the official platform of DOL and acts as a portal to connect job seekers, job creators, training providers and others to available apprenticeship programs. **Ms. Jones and Ms. Warner**

welcomed members to contact them if they have any questions or would like to set up a meeting in the future with ODEP.

SUBCOMMITTEE DISCUSSION/ASSIGNMENTS

AND ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Chairman Eversole thanked the presenters and organizers of the webinar. Virtual meetings were encouraged to be set up in the coming weeks for committee groups to reevaluate previously held priorities and areas of focus to see whether they still make sense in light of the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Before opening the meeting to public comment, the minutes from the January ACVETEO meeting were approved by a chorus of ayes from the members.

PUBLIC FORUM

With no members of the public wishing to comment, **Lori Adams** shared that the American Job Center has moved most of their operations to either closed offices or remote operations, and that NASWA has launched a website specific to jobs created due to COVID-19 that are still in heavy recruitment, accessible through needajobnow.usnlx.com

The meeting was adjourned at 11:39 a.m.