

**TESTIMONY OF
RAYMOND M. JEFFERSON
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR
VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**

BEFORE THE

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

JUNE 1, 2011

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Filner, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear as a witness before the Committee and speak to you on Putting America's Veterans Back to Work.

The Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) proudly serves Veterans and transitioning Service Members by providing resources and expertise to assist and prepare them to obtain meaningful careers, maximize their employment opportunities and protect their employment rights. We do that through programs that are an integral part of Secretary Solis's vision of "*Good Jobs for Everyone.*"

For the purposes of this hearing today, I would like to elaborate on our programs and initiatives that assist America's Veterans in getting to or back to work.

Putting Veterans Back to Work – the Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program

The first program that I would like to highlight for you is the Department's Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) Program. Under this grant program, the Department offers

employment and training services to eligible Veterans by allocating funds to State Workforce Agencies in direct proportion to the number of Veterans seeking employment within their state. The grants support two distinct JVSG programs: (1) the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and (2) the Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) program.

I am pleased to see that the National Association of State Workforce Agencies is testifying today. Their members are core partners in the public workforce system that operates the One-Stop Career Centers where the DVOPs and LVERs provide services to Veterans.

In the Department's first JVSG program, DVOP specialists provide intensive employment services and assistance to meet the employment needs of eligible Veterans. DVOPs do this primarily at the nation's One-Stop Career Centers funded through the Workforce Investment Act. Our specialists also provide recovery and employment assistance to wounded and injured Service Members receiving care at Department of Defense military treatment facilities, the Army's Warrior Transition Units, the Navy Safe Harbor Program, the Air Force Wounded Warrior Program and the Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiments through the Recovery & Employment Assistance Lifelines (REALifelines) program.

In the Department's second JVSG program, LVER staff reach out to employers and engage in advocacy efforts with hiring executives to increase employment opportunities for Veterans, encourage the hiring of disabled Veterans, and generally assist Veterans to gain and retain employment. They are often members of One-Stop Career Center business development teams. LVERs also conduct seminars for employers and job search workshops for Veterans seeking employment, and facilitate the provision of employment, training, and placement services to Veterans by all staff of the employment service delivery system.

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

Putting Disabled Veterans to Work – Vocational Rehabilitation

VETS also collaborates with the Department of Veterans Affairs to support disabled Veterans in the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program. DVOPs are outstationed at VR&E offices to provide employment information to VR&E participants during their rehabilitation program, and refer them at the end of the program to DVOPs at One-Stop Career Centers. The DVOPs at One-Stop Career Centers then provide intensive services to referred participants to assist them in obtaining employment.

Besides working with job-ready Veterans, the outstationed DVOP is involved at the front end of the VR&E process to help Veterans determine local labor market information. This interaction facilitates the rehabilitation planning process by providing the Veteran and the VR&E counselor with current data on salary and job outlook as well as increasing understanding of working conditions for specific occupations.

There is currently either a DVOP specialist or LVER outstationed at least half-time in 48 of the VA Regional Offices and in 19 satellite offices. In FY 2010, 4,989 disabled Veterans who completed VR&E were referred to the State Workforce Agencies for intensive employment services. Of these, 1,764 were placed into employment.

Putting Homeless Veterans Back to Work – the Homeless Veterans’ Reintegration Program

The Homeless Veterans’ Reintegration Program (HVRP) is another initiative to assist America’s Veterans in getting back to work. Through HRVP, the Department provides competitive grants to state and local workforce investment boards, state agencies, local public agencies, and private non-profit organizations, including faith-based organizations and neighborhood partnerships. HVRP grantees provide an array of services utilizing a holistic case management approach that directly assists homeless Veterans and provides training services to help them to successfully transition into the labor force.

In Program Year (PY) 2009, over 14,000 homeless Veterans participated in this program through 96 grants, and 8,470 were placed into employment.

Putting Veterans Back to Work – Training with the Job Corps

In June of 2010, VETS and the Employment and Training Administration's (ETA) Job Corps program developed a demonstration project to help younger Veterans get back to work. Through this demonstration project, VETS and Job Corps offer additional educational and career technical training at one of three specific Job Corps centers to eligible Veterans and transitioning Service Members who are 24 years old or younger. Participants will receive free transportation to and from the Job Corps center, housing, meals, basic medical services, and academic and career technical training. When Veterans are ready to start looking for a job, staff will work with them to find job openings and submit resumes. Job Corps will help graduates for up to 21 months after graduation to connect with housing, transportation, and other support services.

We have worked with Job Corps to streamline the program so that it recognizes the maturity and life experience that our Veterans have gained from their military experience. Job Corps employs a comprehensive career development training approach that teaches academic, career technical, employability skills, and social competencies in an integrated manner through a combination of classroom, practical and work-based learning experiences to prepare participants for stable, long-term employment in high-demand jobs. Job Corps graduates have the opportunity to earn an industry-recognized certification or credential that supports the skills and knowledge gained through career training.

Putting Veterans Back to Work – the Veterans' Workforce Investment Program

Yet another way the Department is working to help Veterans get back to work is through the Veterans' Workforce Investment Program (VWIP). Through VWIP, the Department awards competitive grants geared toward focused training, re-training and employment opportunities for recently separated Veterans, Veterans with service-connected disabilities,

Veterans with significant barriers to employment and Veterans who served on active duty during expeditions or campaigns for which specific badges were awarded. These grants are awarded to meet the needs of employers for qualified workers in high demand industries, particularly those occupations requiring a license or certification.

In FY 2009, VWIP was refocused to provide training and employment services in green energy occupations as envisioned in the Green Jobs Act of 2007. There are currently 22 grants serving 4,600 Veterans.

Putting Transitioning Service Members to Work – the Transition Assistance Program

Our primary program for assisting individuals with their transition from the military to the civilian workforce is the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). TAP is an interagency program delivered via a partnership involving the Department of Defense, DOL VETS, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Department of Homeland Security. VETS provides an employment workshop that is a comprehensive two and a half day program during which participants are provided relevant skills and information, such as job search techniques, career decision-making processes, and current labor market conditions.

Currently, VETS uses a mix of contractors, VETS Federal staff, Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program specialists, and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives as TAP facilitators. In the future, however, VETS will transition to all skilled contract facilitators with DVOPs continuing their involvement in the workshops as subject matter advisors.

VETS is taking the unprecedented step of completely redesigning and transforming the TAP employment workshop. We are creating experiential, effective, and enduring solutions for a successful transition from military to civilian life and employment. The new TAP will be based on established best practices in career transition. The request for proposals was issued on April 15, 2011. Our goal is to have the new workshop implemented by Veterans' Day 2011.

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

Putting Veterans Back to Work – Employer Partnerships

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

The Chamber is working to identify 100 hiring fairs exclusively for Veterans, transitioning Service Members and their spouses. In the partnership, the U.S. Chamber and its affiliates focus primarily on securing the participation of employers while the VETS team focuses on obtaining participation by Veterans, transitioning Service Members and their spouses. The larger hiring fairs are titled “Mega-Hiring Fairs.” An example was the hiring fair in Chicago on March 24, 2011 that connected over 100 employers with over 1,000 Veterans, transitioning Service Members, and spouses.

VETS is working with SHRM to identify opportunities for VETS state managers to meet with local SHRM chapters to connect Veterans seeking employment with companies who are hiring. For VETS this is an effective and efficient way to connect employers and Veterans. We are also working with SHRM in the development of an HR Toolkit that will provide employers with the methods and procedures to establish a Veteran hiring program and to hire Veterans.

Demographics of Veterans Placed into Employment by VETS Programs

In your letter of invitation, you requested specific demographic information. Unfortunately, our reporting systems do not provide much of the information that you requested. However, I am able to provide the following:

In FY2010, for the VETS' JVSG program, 13% of all participants were recently separated Veterans, meaning they had left the service within three years.

In PY2009 in the HVRP program, 6.1% of the Veterans had been out of the service 3 years or less, 6.0% had been out 4-7 years, 4.9% were out of the service 8-11 years, 5.6% had been out of the service 12-15 years, 11.3% were out 16-19 years, and 66.1% were out 20 or more years.

In PY2009 under the VWIP program, 22.4% of the participants had been out of the service 3 years or less, 9.4% had been out 4-7 years, 5.6% were out of the service 8-11 years, 6.0% had been out of the service 12-15 years, 9.3% were out 16-19 years, and 47.3% were out 20 or more years.

The average salary six months after placement for Veterans in the JVSG program (FY2010) was \$30,804. We do not collect information at other periods of time in the JVSG program.

In the HVRP and VWIP programs we collect salary data at three intervals. All salaries provided are for PY2009.

The average initial salary for Veterans in the HVRP program was \$21,133 and the average initial salary for Veterans in the VWIP program was \$31,533.

The average salary between six months and a year after placement for those Veterans in the HVRP program was \$22,818 and in the VWIP program it was \$33,446.

You also asked for the status of the contract for the National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI). The request for proposals closed on April 21, 2011, and we are currently evaluating the submitted proposals. We plan to make an award by mid-June 2011.

This concludes my statement and I would be happy to respond to any questions.