

## **THE ACVETEO REPORT TO CONGRESS: 2009**

### **Statutory Requirements**

The ACVETEO was established pursuant to Title II of the Veterans' Housing Opportunity and Benefits Improvement Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-233). The law was amended to reflect new outreach duties assigned to the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training, and changes to the make-up of the Advisory Committee on Veterans' Employment and Training and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO). The ACVETEO is required to meet quarterly and to submit an annual report to the Secretary and the Committees on Veterans Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

### **Committee Responsibilities**

The ACVETEO is responsible for:

- assessing employment and training needs of Veterans and their integration into the workforce;
- determining the extent to which programs and activities of the Department of Labor are meeting such needs;
- assisting the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training (ASVET) in carrying out outreach activities to employers regarding the training and skills of Veterans and advantages afforded employers by hiring Veterans;
- making recommendations to the Secretary of Labor through the ASVET, for outreach activities and the employment and training of Veterans; and
- such other activities necessary to making required reports and recommendations.

### **The Membership of the Advisory Committee on Veterans Employment and Training and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO)**

The ACVETEO must consist of at least 12, but no more than 16, individuals appointed by the Secretary of Labor. Included are:

Seven individuals nominated by each of the following seven service organizations:

- the Society for Human Resource Management
- the Business Roundtable
- the National Association of State Workforce Agencies
- the United States Chamber of Commerce
- the National Federation of Independent Business
- a nationally recognized labor union or organization
- the National Governors Association

No more than five individuals nominated by Veterans' service organizations that have a national employment program; and

No more than five individuals who are recognized authorities in the fields of business, employment, training, rehabilitation, or labor and who are not employees of the Department of Labor (DOL)

The following, or their representatives, are ex-officio, non-voting members of the ACVETEO:

- Secretary of Veterans Affairs
- Secretary of Defense
- Director of the Office of Personnel Management
- DOL Assistant Secretary for Veterans Employment and Training
- DOL Assistant Secretary for Employment and Training Administration
- Administrator of the Small Business Administration

Current ACVETEO members were appointed in March 2007. Of the 15 individuals serving, ten previously served as appointed members of the Advisory Committee for Veterans' Employment and Training (ACVET) or the President's National Hire Veterans Committee (PNHVC) which sunset in 2006. Twelve members are Veterans themselves.

#### **Meetings of the Advisory Committee on Veterans' Employment and Training and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO)**

In 2009, the new Secretary of Labor, Hilda L. Solis, expressed strong interest in and support for Veterans' programs. In the Secretary's early public events she focused particular attention on three categories of Veteran issues: women Veterans, homeless Veterans and dependent families of Veterans. The Secretary also directed increased efforts on Veterans' employment by improving links between military occupations and experience with green jobs and other emerging occupations, as well as improving links with many traditional employment sectors, such as construction trades. In terms of funding, the VETS' 2010 appropriation received an increase of \$17 million and remained level at 234 full-time equivalent federal positions authorized.

The first quarterly meeting was cancelled as scheduling conflicts resulted in a delay in the Federal Register notice to the public.

The next quarterly meeting was held May 28, 2009. Recently appointed Acting Chair, F. Paul Briggs, a career federal employee, welcomed the meeting attendees and explained that, as the Designated Federal Official (DFO) and Chair, he expected to serve in an acting capacity until relieved through appropriate action following confirmation of new ASVET. Mr. Briggs introduced one new Committee member, Ms. Dawn Halfaker, a retired Army Captain who represents the Wounded Warrior Project. Also introduced was a new ex-officio member, Department of Defense Undersecretary for Wounded Warrior Care and Transition Policy, Mr. Noel Koch.

During member reports, the Committee extensively discussed identifying and enhancing motivation for enlistment in the military. Beyond patriotism, several motivating factors (along with associated challenges) were identified. One is the opportunity for enlistees to choose a Military Occupation Specialty (MOS). Led by member Jim Herdt, the Committee discussed a

company participating in a Defense Advanced Research Project Activity (DARPA) project aimed at improving training instructional methods and outcomes by incorporating technology-driven concepts and practices, such as gaming, and developing special one-on-one tutoring software. The Navy is currently using such methods for training information technology specialists; the project's motivation-to-learn scale measures increases in student learning that may herald a major change in instructional methods throughout the United States.

Presentations were given by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) on the Operation Yellow Ribbon for transitioning National Guard and Reserve members returning from deployment in current operations. OSD also provided a detailed "Military Training and Education" presentation. A presentation by VETS on homeless Veteran programs was included, and the Office of Personnel Management presented a concept for a Federal Government Hiring Initiative for Veterans that was in the initial planning stage.

The third meeting convened on August 5, 2009. Ex-officio member and Under Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Rear Admiral (Ret.) Patrick Dunne, briefed the Committee on implementation of the new GI Bill. Joseph Sharpe, Committee member representing the American Legion, made a presentation regarding the merits of an American Legion proposal for federalizing Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialist (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Specialist (LVER) Programs. It was agreed that a future meeting would more fully explore this proposal from two perspectives: that of the American Legion and that of the National Association of State Workforce Agencies. Under current law, the Jobs for Veterans State Grants provide formula funding for DVOP/LVER staffing in State Workforce Agencies.

Program leads in the Veterans' Employment and Training Service provided updates on Agency programs, including the DVOP/LVER Program, Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Employment Workshops, the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP), the Veterans' Workforce Investment Program (VWIP), enforcement of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), Veterans Preference (VP) in federal hiring, and collaboration with the America's Heroes at Work (AHaW) Program.

The last meeting of 2009 convened on December 2. Member reports included implementation of the new GI Bill from ex-officio member Under Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Rear Admiral (Ret.) Patrick Dunne. He stated that to date approximately 125,000 personnel have enrolled in the new GI Bill program. An estimated 150,000 are enrolled in the previous Montgomery GI Bill. A report by ex-officio member Bill Elmore covered the Small Business Administration's "Entrepreneur Boot Camps" at six campuses.

This meeting was ASVET Raymond M. Jefferson's first since his confirmation. He acknowledged Rear Admiral (Ret.) Dunne's upcoming retirement from the VA and for his many decades of federal service with the Navy and the VA. Mr. Jefferson also introduced Ms. Jane Oates, the new Assistant Secretary of the Employment and Training Administration, an ex-officio member.

A presentation of great significance by Office of Personnel Management's ex-officio member Joseph Kennedy discussed the recently signed Executive Order on a new federal government hiring initiative for Veterans.

Mr. Jefferson offered remarks and discussion about VETS' vision and future plans under his leadership. The presentation was organized around the ASVET's five "aspirations" for the future of the Veterans' Employment and Training Service:

1. Serve as the national focal point for Veterans and transitioning Service Members' employment and training.
2. Increase involvement with the private sector.
3. Help Service Members transition seamlessly into meaningful employment and careers.
4. Boost USERRA impact by increasing awareness and commitment to it.
5. Invest in VETS' team members to further develop potential and better serve clients.

Susan Pareigis, member and former Chair, presented the Committee's ideas and four recommendations for improving employer outreach in the future, as outlined below:

1. Develop a national Veterans' employment campaign with the First Lady, the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs as national spokespersons.
2. Continue development of an "Employer's Toolkit" showing employers how to hire Veterans.
3. Determine the central web site for employers and Veterans regarding the transition of Service Members to employment and employing Veterans.
4. Determine the key partners and organizations with which to partner in this campaign.

The consensus of the fourth quarter meeting was that the ASVET's five aspirations and the ACVETEO's employer outreach ideas and four recommendations share a great deal of common ground. The agenda and meeting proceedings under the ASVET's facilitation set a positive tone for the future direction of the Veterans' Employment and Training Service and the associated advisory work of the Committee.

Presentations and comments from the public included:

Lisa Rosser from "The Value of a Veteran" Company - a company that prepares employers for employing Veterans in their workforce.

Grant Lieber from Warrior Training Command - Mr. Lieber recommended changing the outreach focus to "hiring Veterans is good for business."

Tom Hecht from "Military Stars" Company discussed how young Veterans (20-24 years old) are poorly prepared for employment search and interviewing (improperly attired, missing interviews, etc.) - - they are consequently viewed as poor candidates for jobs. He also discussed virtual job fairs that are particularly useful for Veterans in rural areas.

Eric Greitens and Dan Connell from “The Mission Continues Center for Leadership” discussed their organization’s approach to transitioning severely wounded Service Members to civilian occupations.

Member Bob Simoneau’s presentation “Federalizing DVOP/LVER: The State Workforce Agencies’ View,” was deferred to a future meeting.

### **Strategic Partnerships**

The Committee continues to build on its efforts at strategic partnering. While emphasizing the One-Stop Career Center and the public workforce system, the Committee has sought out partnership opportunities particularly with private sector companies to enhance support of the Committee’s mission and goals. At quarterly meetings, the Committee has been briefed by a wide range of large and small private sector employers regarding their initiatives for Veterans.

The Committee was charged by the Assistant Secretary for Veterans’ Employment and Training to stay involved in the Hire Vets First Campaign. Its message is to raise employer awareness of the value of hiring men and women who have served in the armed forces. One of its purposes is to provide a post-TAP safety net by incorporating within one web site many of the resources and tools discussed during the TAP employment workshop. The goal of the campaign is to assist employers in understanding the training and skills that Veterans possess and of the value these men and women bring to the workforce. This coordinated campaign carries the message to employers and media markets all across America that Veterans are an asset to any business or organization and represent a talented and trained labor pool. The Campaign includes outreach and co-branded job fairs and is the culmination of VETS’ strategy for the promotion of a valuable resource.

Among other accomplishments, the Hire Vets First campaign coordinated, through the state workforce system, a national HireVetsFirst Job Fair Blitz at 117 sites to commemorate Veterans’ Day in a three week period surrounding November 11<sup>th</sup>. The events attracted over 31,000 Veterans, 4,300 companies and service providers in 50 states and resulted in media articles in numerous newspapers around the country as well as over 6 million viewers in local news broadcasts. Additionally, several Committee members’ companies participated in a first ever Fortune magazine special editorial supplement in the July 11<sup>th</sup> cover edition highlighting the interest of Veterans’ employment issues.

The Committee also elected to continue the Hire Vets First website, the cornerstone of this campaign, and geared toward employer outreach. The website, [www.hirevetsfirst.dol.gov](http://www.hirevetsfirst.dol.gov), includes a guide for employers, a translator that provides the civilian application of military skills, links to Career One-Stop Centers, and a video explaining how to use the Veteran’s employment representative at each location.

The site also features a section of resources for job seekers who are Veterans, including an online resume writer developed exclusively for people with military experience, and links to public and private job web sites. The site has averaged nearly 30,000 unique visitors each month over the last two years.

## **Activities of the Advisory Committee on Veterans' Employment and Training and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO)**

There are several ongoing Work Groups within ACVETEO which focus on specific Veterans issues. The Transition Assistance Work Group explores the VETS role in the Service Members' transition process and programs, their work led to a two year phased-in program to strengthen and refocus the TAP employment workshops. The Special Populations Work Group has identified the following groups and subgroups with specific characteristics and needs: Veterans with substance abuse, homelessness, minorities, Vietnam era Veterans, the spouses and family members of those serving in the current conflicts, non-citizen Veterans, Service Members suffering from Traumatic Brain Injury and/or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (TBI/PTSD) and the caregivers for wounded/disabled Veterans.

The potential list is enormous with each group having its specific needs, often addressed by specific programs/benefits, rights and a need for education in each of these areas. The Employer Outreach & Spouse Employment work group has identified successful hiring strategies being used by companies with active outreach programs both external in terms of identifying hiring pools for Veterans with desirable skills and experience and internal identifying existing Veteran employees with those characteristics for advancement.

During the transition to the new administration, the Committee continued operation under a career federal employee appointed as acting Designated Federal Official and Chair. It utilized its quarterly meetings to build knowledge and perspective on the many issues surrounding Veterans' employment and training, and the best ways to reach out and positively influence hiring by potential employers of Veterans. This information gathering culminated in an August meeting followed by confirmation of a new Assistant Secretary, Raymond M. Jefferson. The meeting focused on the exposition of five ASVET aspirations for the future and the presentation of the complementary employer outreach ideas for the future by former Chair Susan Pareigis on behalf of the Committee. The ASVET's aspirations synergized with the Committee's ideas towards a positive shared vision that can translate to discrete and achievable recommendations for consideration by the Secretary of Labor and the Veterans' Employment and Training Service.

### **COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2009**

The Committee noted in the Dole Shalala report that employment is the dominant concern of most Service Members reentering civilian life, applying to all transitioning troops not just those wounded and injured. We note that the unemployment rate for Veterans in 2009 rose to the current rate of 11.2%.

#### **1. Transition Assistance**

The Committee built on the research and evidence base provided by the Transition Assistance Working Group – their work included a review of the substance of what was being taught, how it was being taught, how the material was being delivered and the quality of instruction. Among its most important findings, the Committee strongly recommended that all instructors should be professionally certified.

- **Encourage more technology in the TAP classrooms.**

The Committee found that the best technical tools were not available to the facilitators to prepare the separating Service Members for the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. In particular, the use of computers was not observed in any classrooms thus denying the Service Members the opportunity to learn how to use the Internet in the accomplishment of their job search. We have since learned that two of the services offer computers in some of their larger sites, but all should be accorded the same opportunities. The Committee encourages VETS to seek the assistance of DoD and the services to provide technology outlets for all VETS' facilitators. Private business is more virtual in today's 24/7 environment and the TAP program needs to find ways to encompass the latest learning techniques available through technology.

- **Assure the Availability of an Electronic Copy of the Resume**

The Committee observed the recent transition of the TAP curriculum to be more resume oriented, thus adding more accountability to the employment workshop. This was an extremely important improvement, however the resume needs to be placed where employers can find separating Service Members. There are many private websites that electronically accept resumes and some highlight the Veterans' resume on their websites.

However, there is not one site that has only separating Service Members' resumes. Therefore, the Committee encourages VETS to explore establishing a Veterans only resume data bank where only transitioning and recently separated Veterans can submit their resume; it is especially important they have a free no fee venue for the employer community to find available Veterans.

Employers have demonstrated a strong desire to hire Veterans; but the transition process is too fragmented for them and especially for small businesses. So a resume data bank would provide a cyberspace one-stop service to employers and help create more job opportunities for the Veteran community. This data bank would address: Where do Veterans seeking work go? Where do employers seeking Veterans go? How do we convey this information to Veterans and employers?

- **Upgrade the presentation skills and knowledge of the course facilitators**

The Committee observed a wide variety in the quality and types of presentations used for TAP and also in the quality and presentation skills of the facilitators. It is very important to ensure that separating Service Members have access to the highest quality consistent training materials and qualified certified facilitators. It is also very important to have the ability to share best practices among all facilitators and additionally, encourage partners to ensure professional preparation of instructors and facilitators in the transition process.

- **Seek better avenues to give the Guard and Reservists workforce system assistance prior to leaving active duty.**

The Committee was briefed of efforts by VETS and DoD to take future corrective action to reach the demobilized members of the Guard and Reserve when they are ready to receive employment information. Modular parts to the TAP course have been prepared by VETS, and DoD is considering mobile "strike" forces to offer assistance when asked. The Department of Labor's TAP Employment Workshop is not mandatory for Guard and Reserve members, as it is for some of the active services. This fact may hinder those in the Guard and Reserve who deploy, from making a more meaningful transition back to the civilian sector.

The Committee also believes that the Department of Defense's new online TurboTAP program will have long term benefits for assisting the Guard and Reservists in their transition back to civilian status.

Minnesota's National Guard's Operation Yellow Ribbon is a good example of what can happen when forward thinking is employed to the needs of our citizen soldiers. The Committee understands that efforts have been taken to copy this program across all Guard and Reserve populations returning to their communities. We encourage VETS to have good coordination with the local workforce efforts at these events. The Committee also learned of the large number of mobilization and demobilization briefings for these Service Members carried out by the VETS' staff but noted that large states, such as California, were not as nimble as others.

In recognition of its outreach responsibilities, the Committee, as a whole, launched an effort to organize a brochure for distribution to employers of Guard members and Reservists to assist them in preparing for their return to communities, companies and jobs.

- **Utilize Better Employer Connectivity Methods**

The Service Members attending TAP have limited exposure to real world hiring scenarios. Most TAP classes have an employer panel to offer a glimpse at what the employers look for in potential candidates, but these visitors only represent a small segment of the potential employer population. VETS should seek out novel ways, electronically, to bring more exposure to high growth industries with the potential for strong career paths to utilize a Service Member's military specialty to a private sector industry.

The number of private vendor job fairs has more than doubled in recent years; however, the transition cycle of a Service Member may not meet with the schedule of job fairs. Most large transition locations such as Jacksonville, San Antonio and Ft. Hood, have two major job fairs per year usually spaced six months apart, but most Service Members do not focus on transition until their last 90 days in uniform; therefore, missing the opportunity for greater contact with employers.

Several Committee members developed a presentation for the VETS staff and VETS' state partners in the workforce system that outlines how to recruit transitioning Service Members and Veterans for companies interested in establishing or upgrading their talent acquisition programs. These points were developed from the numerous presentations given to the Committee from active military recruiters. The presentation represents a "best practices" scenario for recruiting Veterans and transitioning Service Members.

- **Make TAP Employment Workshop Participation a Pre-Separation Requirement**

The Committee believes that the Labor Department's TAP Employment Workshop is the best tool available for all Service Members contemplating separation. They learned that one service had a higher retention rate among its Service Members who attended a TAP class. TAP can be a means for the military to keep many of their desired skilled members by open assessment of their military experience compared to a career in the private sector.

Also, the Committee would like to encourage VETS to discuss with DoD and the services how to establish an optimal time when all separating Service Members should start the transition process. The Committee would recommend a minimum of 90 days especially for those whose time in uniform is limited to one or two tours.

The Committee reviewed a study which empirically noted that TAP participants found civilian work sooner than non TAP participants. Therefore, the Committee was pleased to learn that the Global War on Terror (GWOT) task force has recommended a minimum 85% of all Service Members attend TAP with the Department of Defense approval. This should be particularly helpful to those Service Members who complete just one tour of duty in the uniformed services.

Overall, the members of the ACVETEO were pleased to learn that a revised TAP employment workshop curriculum, placing more emphasis on resume preparation and creating a resume prior to leaving the class, had been implemented. In addition, bringing active duty transitioning Service Members before the whole Committee to be mentored by the members and to hear about their positive experiences from the employment workshops provided the Committee with real time feedback on the effectiveness of the TAP employment workshops.

- **USERRA: Encourage more face to face meetings with employers**

The Committee spent a significant period of time keeping abreast of the USERRA progress made by VETS since the December, 2005 release of the new USERRA regulations. The regulations clarified some of the more complicated issues concerning the private sector in light to the continued extensive call-ups of the Guard and Reserves. One area that caught the Committee's attention was that VETS' investigators lacked the resources necessary to facilitate face to face interviews with employers who were being investigated for possible USERRA violations. Realizing that a generous portion of

VETS' federal management budget is already devoted to USERRA enforcement, the Committee would encourage more face to face meetings with employers to assure the reemployment rights of Veterans are not being violated. This may require a redistribution of funds necessary to support a significant increase in travel required to implement such a recommendation.

## 2. Special Populations

The Committee found much to commend in the efforts of VETS with several special Veterans populations. However, they would like VETS to catalog all programs within the government. This could provide a resource list to Veterans and assist local DVOPs in their efforts to find meaningful employment for Veterans with employment barriers. The DVOP program is especially unique in its global ability to reach into all states to meet the homecoming needs of those wounded or injured. The Transition Training Academy established at the San Diego Naval Hospital with outside assistance from Cisco Systems and the Wounded Warrior Project is a model program of immense proportions.

In particular, the forward stationing of DVOPs at military medical treatment facilities (MTFs) to assist the wounded and injured while they are in rehabilitation to prepare for the civilian workforce has brought great comfort to many.

These DVOPs, working through the VETS' organization, highlight one of the unique characteristics of VETS. There is a senior VETS' employee in every state to assist wounded or injured Service Members. However, not all of the military's major MTFs have a full-time assigned DVOP.

At first, coordination was successful through the Defense Department's Military Severely Injured Center, but the services started pulling back from total centralized support causing adjustments in VETS' deploying its resources working through its state workforce partners. When the emphasis shifted to the MTFs, VETS was prepared at Walter Reed, Bethesda Naval Hospital and Brooke Army Medical Center. Soon thereafter, excellent liaisons were established at Madigan Army Medical Center at Fort Lewis and the San Diego Naval Hospital and part-time DVOPs now cover most of the locations. Still these part-time DVOPs at a minimum should be assigned full-time.

VETS was able to offer some of these DVOPs temporary federal employment through the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) in order to provide continuity at the various sites. Unfortunately, a state employee is only able to work for four years before being required to be returned to their state position. Several experienced DVOPs have been lost because they were timed out. Also, the DVOP will often return at a lower salary than offered under the IPA program.

The Jobs for Veterans Act grant money remained at the same level for several years prior to an increase in FY 2008, but this was not significant enough to give relief from inflationary pressures and changing state workforce needs. VETS has done an admirable job to meet the states' Veterans employment workforce needs while highlighting the

OIF/OEF wounded and injured rejoining the workforce in their choice of civilian locations. The Committee recognizes that the services wish to be the primary sponsor of their separating Service Members' successful transition, but lacked the resources to handle all of their Service Members' employment needs. The Committee applauds the Marine Corps successful change from Marines for Life to the Wounded Warrior Regiment and their request to have full-time DVOPs stationed at their headquarters and major commands to provide employment services.

Therefore, it is the Committee's recommendation that these DVOPs assigned to MTFs should become full-time VETS employees. This would require an additional authorization of 12 full-time equivalents (FTEs) to VETS head count to cover major MTFs. This would give the VETS state director with a Military Treatment Facility (MTF) an onsite REALifelines coordinator for the wounded and injured providing more accountability for a seamless transition of those leaving a MTF and returning to their home state. It is estimated that an additional minimum appropriation of \$1.5 million would be needed to accomplish this recommendation.

Recent actions by the Congress have created similar positions. First was the creation of a Federal Recovery Coordinator, which was recommended by the Dole-Shalala Commission to provide long term guidance for the wounded and injured even after they left active duty. Last year, The Department of the Army was requested to establish Recovery Care Coordinators to oversee the needs of the patients at their MTFs. Therefore, having a full-time VETS employment coordinator at the 12 major MTFs would provide strong continuity for transitioning wounded Service Members.

- **Continue funding increases and strengthen homeless Veterans' employment programs.**

The number of homeless Veterans is declining. The Committee was impressed with VETS' successful efforts working with grantees to give homeless Veterans meaningful employment opportunities. The Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) funded by VETS, is the only federal program wholly dedicated to providing employment assistance to homeless Veterans. HVRP programs fill a special need because they serve Veterans who may be shunned by other programs and services because of problems such as severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), long histories of substance abuse, serious psychosocial problems, legal issues and those who are HIV positive. These Veterans require more time consuming, specialized, intensive assessment, referrals and counseling than is possible in other programs that work with Veterans seeking employment.

The increased funding levels over the last several years, with strong measurable results, have made a difference in numerous Veterans' lives. VETS estimates over 15,000 homeless Veterans were served in FY 2008 with an appropriation of \$23.62 million. This figure, however, represents less than four percent of the overall homeless Veterans' population, estimated at 400,000 over the course of the year. Based on the program's success in terms of employment outcomes for one of the most difficult populations to

serve and its cost effectiveness as compared to other employment programs, the Committee believes that funding should continue to increase to reach its authorized level at the earliest possible time.

So despite an overall decrease in homeless Veterans the word of caution would be to assure that OIF/OEF Veterans are not missed as the aging population of Vietnam Veterans' moves forward. The economy is waning and Veterans' unemployment is increasing. The Committee is aware of anecdotal evidence that some returning Veterans may be experiencing difficulty finding employment. In particular; assistance to female Veterans will be a bigger factor with the newest generation of Veterans. Therefore funding at the Congressionally authorized level is necessary.

- **Continue supporting and expanding The Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program**

The Committee similarly was pleased to learn of the success in helping rehabilitated Veterans make a good transition to meaningful employment. VETS managed the Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program (IVTP), a component of HVRP and previously authorized by Congress to assist ex-offender Veterans at risk of homelessness re-enter the workforce.

The IVTP added a strong dimension to HVRP and its success warrants Congress' further consideration. The two year pilot program had a 54% entered employment rate. Its success warrants reauthorization by the Congress and is recommended by the Committee.

- **Traumatic Brain Injury and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (TBI/PTSD)**

TBI and PTSD are the signature injuries of the OEF/OIF. The Committee was regularly briefed on efforts to assure a good transition for those Veterans who suffered from these injuries. Therefore, it was extremely pleased by the efforts of VETS and Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy in 2008 to launch the America's Heroes at Work web site to explain to employers and the private sector the successful efforts being undertaken to understand these injuries and how to assist a Veteran with TBI/PTSD succeed in the workforce.

Additionally, the Committee is concerned that Veterans who receive a dishonorable discharge from the military are not identified and therefore, are not eligible for the services of a Veterans' employment representative. The Committee would like to explore this issue in the future.

The Committee is eager to assist our Veterans in achieving a smooth transition from their military service to the civilian workforce and look forward to the challenges ahead. The Committee's ultimate goal, of improving employment opportunities and training for Veterans, will bring a better tomorrow for the many who have served and those who, in the future, will wish to serve their country by wearing its uniform

### 3. Employer Outreach and Spouse Employment

“Hiring and training Veterans are not only the right things for businesses to do, but they are good for our nation...Companies that make a special effort to hire these talented individuals invariably tell us they are great, hardworking, and smart employees.”

-- Tom Donohue, Chairman and CEO, US Chamber of Commerce

- **Develop strong coordinated employer outreach and training.**

The Committee finds that its outreach assistance to the Assistant Secretary has been good. It is especially impressed with the more than 120 job fairs held annually around Veterans Day, and the attendance of tens of thousands of Veterans. The Committee was briefed on the significant media attention focused within numerous local labor markets communicating the value of Veterans in the workforce. It recommends continued review of seeking similar opportunities to deliver a nationally coordinated message to local markets.

In an effort to develop greater communication, the Committee developed a brochure outlining the best practices of companies who briefed the Committee on their efforts to recruit Veterans through their local workforce system or at the transitioning site for separating Service Members. The Committee also encourages VETS to continue to reach out to the greater human resource community through professional organizations such as the Society for Human Resource Management.

VETS should continue its outreach through trade associations to contact as many companies as possible with its message. As the Tom Donohue statement noted there is a synergistic effect to keep the message fresh in the market. The Committee noted with interest the spike in traffic at the HireVetsFirst.gov website when a major communication effort was undertaken. The Committee recommends stronger focus and resources toward coordinated employer outreach. Efforts must be focused not just on large businesses but also all small businesses.

- **Develop more employment, training opportunities and awareness for military spouses, caregivers and survivors.**

The Committee recognizes that military spouse employment is critical to our national security and the impact it has on an all volunteer force. More than 50% of the members of the military have a spouse. Issues surrounding spouse employment have recently come to the forefront as a potential retention tool for the Department of Defense.

DOL's Employment and Training Administration's Career Advancement Accounts pilot program was launched in coordination with DoD in 2007 and successfully assisted spouses of military personnel. The Committee is also aware of several large retailers who make accommodations for employees who have a military spouse.

Although not a direct mandate of VETS, the Committee encourages VETS to assist where possible to help the military services with issues surrounding spouse, caregiver, and survivor employment, including but not limited to portable jobs, and self-employment.

#### **4. VETS Internal Strategic Plan**

- **Affirm the five aspirations and future vision contained in the internal strategy plan of Assistant Secretary Jefferson:**

Assistant Secretary Jefferson's five aspirations include: serve as the national focal point for Veterans and transitioning Service Members' employment and training; increase involvement with the private sector; help Service Members transition seamlessly into meaningful employment and careers; boost USERRA impact by increasing awareness and commitment to it; and invest in VETS' team members to further develop potential and better serve clients

The Committee supports this framework and believes it has potential for success under Assistant Secretary Jefferson's leadership.

#### **5. Employer Outreach**

- **Affirm the recommendations of the ACVETEO regarding employer outreach**

The Committee recommends that VETS develop a national Veterans' employment campaign with the First Lady, the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs as national spokespersons, and continue development of an "Employer's Toolkit" showing employers how to hire Veterans.

Additionally, the Committee recommends that VETS determine the need for a central website for employers and Veterans regarding the transition of Service Members to employment and employing Veterans.

Finally, the Committee recommends that VETS determine the key partners and organizations with which to partner in this campaign.

#### **6. State Government Hiring Initiative**

- **Orchestrate a hiring initiative for Veterans in the State governments, similar to the federal government's Veterans' hiring initiative**

The Committee recommends that Department of Labor grants awarded by the Employment and Training Administration and the Veterans' Employment and Training Service be used to influence State governments' hiring of Veterans through targets established in grant application plans.

## 7. Convening Events

- **Encourage “convening events” for hiring Veterans – take the Veterans to the employer and tap into the “military alumni system” to get Veterans jobs**

The Committee recommends that the engagement of Veteran-friendly employers, especially businesses run by Veterans, is probably more effective than standard job fairs. This is an approach proven by other professional communities and groups.

## 8. Small Business Employment

- **Focus on Veterans’ employment and training in small businesses**

The Committee notes that 80% of job creation in the U.S. is in small businesses. This is particularly relevant in rural areas. The Committee recommends that more emphasis be placed on finding Veteran employment opportunities in small businesses as this should increase Veterans’ employment nationwide, particularly in rural areas.

## 9. Transition Assistance Program Curriculum

- **Develop the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) workshop curriculum to ensure TAP is more focused towards retention in employment**

The Committee notes that keeping a job is as important as finding one. In the Committee’s view, the current TAP curriculum does not sufficiently address this simple axiom.

## COMMITTEE GOALS GOING FORWARD

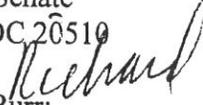
The ACVETEO looks forward to the Secretary of Labor’s appointment of a permanent Committee Chair. Once long-term leadership of the Committee is established, the Committee believes the strategic thinking of the Secretary and the ASVET can steer a positive course for the Advisory Committee on Veterans’ Employment and Training and Employer Outreach. The Committee intends to continue its vital role advising on the best plans, proposals and initiatives to realize the expansive vision set forth.

The Committee will also revisit and monitor the progress made towards improving TAP employment workshops; reviewing and identifying the best employment services for wounded Service Members and their caregivers and families; and identifying potential legislative changes the Committee deems advisable.

SECRETARY OF LABOR  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

MAY - 6 2010

The Honorable Richard Burr  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

  
Dear Senator Burr:

As required by Title 38 U.S. Code, Section 4110, I am transmitting a copy of the 2009 annual report of the Advisory Committee on Veterans' Employment and Training and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO). The report was forwarded previously as required under the letter of Acting Chair, F. Paul Briggs.

The law requires that I provide any comments on the report that I consider appropriate. I consider the recommendations in the report to be consistent and supportive of initiatives for Veterans employment being undertaken within the Department, and therefore am in general agreement with those recommendations. I am pleased to report that action is underway on the recommendations regarding Transition Assistance, USERRA enforcement, employer outreach and Veterans' spouse employment. Additionally, I fully support the five aspirations and future vision of Assistant Secretary Raymond M. Jefferson regarding the focus of the Department's Veterans' Employment and Training Service.

If you have questions or require additional information, please have your staff contact our Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs at 202-693-4600 or Assistant Secretary Jefferson at 202-693-4700.

Sincerely,

  
HILDA L. SOLIS  
Secretary of Labor

Enclosure

**SECRETARY OF LABOR**  
**WASHINGTON, D.C.**

**MAY - 6 2010**

The Honorable Daniel K. Akaka  
Chairman  
Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Akaka: *Daniel*

As required by Title 38 U.S. Code, Section 4110, I am transmitting a copy of the 2009 annual report of the Advisory Committee on Veterans' Employment and Training and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO). The report was forwarded previously as required under the letter of Acting Chair, F. Paul Briggs.

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Sincerely,



HILDA L. SOLIS  
Secretary of Labor

Enclosure

SECRETARY OF LABOR  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

MAY - 6 2010

The Honorable Steve Buyer  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman  Buyer:

As required by Title 38 U.S. Code, Section 4110, I am transmitting a copy of the 2009 annual report of the Advisory Committee on Veterans' Employment and Training and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO). The report was forwarded previously as required under the letter of Acting Chair, F. Paul Briggs.

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Sincerely,



HILDA L. SOLIS  
Secretary of Labor

Enclosure

SECRETARY OF LABOR  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

MAY - 6 2010

The Honorable Bob Filner  
Chairman  
Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Filner:

As required by Title 38 U.S. Code, Section 4110, I am transmitting a copy of the 2009 annual report of the Advisory Committee on Veterans' Employment and Training and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO). The report was forwarded previously as required under the letter of Acting Chair, F. Paul Briggs.

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Sincerely,



HILDA L. SOLIS  
Secretary of Labor

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