



Statement of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation

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Questions from Chairman Gerald E. Connolly
Subcommittee on Government Operations

December 1, 2021, Hearing:
“The Future of Federal Work”

1. Technology management is on the Government Accountability Office’s high-risk list. The pandemic highlighted that information technology (IT) is integral to federal government operations, but the federal government is lacking young IT talent: More than 50% of individuals in the federal government’s mission-critical IT workforce are over 50 years old, while only 2.8% are under 30 years old. How might the members of Hiring Our Heroes help to fill these mission-critical roles?
 - a. Military spouses are an excellent fit for these roles. They seek in-demand career opportunities that will provide them room for growth and portability. Cybersecurity and HR roles often fit into those categories.
 - b. Recent research also tells us that 25% of military spouses are interested in careers in Cyber and IT fields. We also know that 80% of military spouses are willing to, or have, upskilled or reskilled to more durable, growth industries such as Cyber and IT to support their career goals and needs.

- c. Finally, roles within Human Resources are among the top 3 most-requested opportunities by military spouse fellowship program candidates.
2. The Biden Administration has prioritized diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility initiatives in and across the federal workforce. How might members and families of Hiring Our Heroes help the federal government fulfill the Administration's goals?
 - a. Military spouses are a diverse group, with 45% of them identifying as members of minority groups.
 - b. In addition, they are 91% female, which is a population that is grossly under-represented in the current workforce because of COVID-19.
 - c. As a result, military spouses bring diversity of background and diversity of thought to the modern workforce.
 - d. The 2019 DOD Survey of Active Duty Spouses, reports military spouses are:
 - i. 79% White
 - ii. 15% Black or African American
 - iii. 16% Hispanic/Latino
 - iv. 9% Asian
 - v. 3% American Indian, Alaskan Native
 - vi. 2% Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander
3. Could you elaborate on how a flexible schedule benefits military families, including military spouses?
 - a. Many military spouses need flexibility because of the nature and unpredictability of the military lifestyle.
 - b. Access to flexible work schedules allows spouses to manage both their work and home responsibilities in a way that enables them to maintain both career and family
 - c. Covid-19 highlighted that military spouses are not unique in their desire for a more flexible work schedule. Starting in February 2020, the world watched the mass exodus of over 2M women from the workforce. This was because, in part, it is so difficult to manage personal and work responsibilities in a traditional work environment/schedule, and the pandemic exacerbated those difficulties by reducing school and childcare supports.
 - d. The employers who recognize the benefits of a "flexible" work environment and schedule are the ones who will successfully leverage the talent available.
 - e. We work with a multitude of corporate partners who have implemented flexible scheduling. We've also seen the success of this within government agencies like the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), where employees are able to flex their hours to accommodate things like medical appointments without using precious leave time.
4. Do the members and families of Hiring Our Heroes look for internships in the federal government? If so, what kinds of positions do they look for?
 - a. Internships are incredibly successful pathways to employment for military spouses.
 - b. Nearly 3 years ago, Hiring Our Heroes launched the Military Spouse Fellowship Program which now serves approximately 300 military spouses and over 200 corporate partners per year.
 - c. The program also grows at 30% annually with 86% of the spouses who participate in the fellowship securing permanent placement.
 - d. Based on this information, we know there is continued, increasing interest in internship opportunities.
 - e. While we don't know how many military spouses seek internships within the federal government, we do know that internships are an effective recruitment and retention tool.
5. What is the optimal work environment for you and the military spouses you represent at Hiring Our Heroes?

- a. An optimal federal workplace for military spouses is one that provides portable opportunities that allow for professional growth and development, all while contributing to a mission as a member of a professional community.
 - b. This workplace also provides mentorship, equal access to promotions, salaries that allow for short and long-term savings as well as benefits packages that provide adequate leave and retirement options.
 - c. In short, I believe that creating the dream workplace is within our grasp.
- 6. Could you speak to the burden on employees whose spouse or family member is called up for short-notice military deployments? What are some things that require them to take time off from work?
 - a. Short-notice deployments and separations create a myriad of challenges for military spouse and family member employees.
 - b. Those who support our men and women in uniform during a time of deployment or separation face a multitude of pre-departure appointments including attending pre-deployment briefings, various command family functions, legal services appointments like will creation and power of attorney signing, and other pre-separation needs.
 - c. In addition, there are often pre-scheduled doctor's appointments that the spouse or family member must attend as they begin to take over filling the roles of mom and dad, caretaker and spouse, etc.
 - d. These appointments require employees to take leave time that varies from hours to weeks, depending on the length of the separation, the location, and the number of family members at home.
- 7. How does a lack of paid leave for military families make it even harder for a working parent whose spouse or partner has been deployed?
 - a. Lack of paid leave makes it more challenging for military spouses who are experiencing deployments and separations for multiple reasons.
 - b. Military spouses who are experiencing a deployment or separation depend on paid leave to support their children's medical appointments, school needs, emergency situations, and personal leave needs.
 - c. Weathering a separation from a service member means taking on the roles of both parents for an extended, often incredibly stressful length of time.
 - d. As a working Marine Corps spouse and mother, I've personally navigated multiple deployments and separations and once found myself forced to move from full-time employment to part-time employment to support the medical needs of our young daughter due to lack of paid leave.
 - e. My experience is similar to thousands of military spouses who strive to balance family and career needs while standing beside our men and women in uniform.