

**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
OF
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VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**

**BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

June 23, 2016

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Brown, and other Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide the views of the Department of Labor (DOL) on pending legislation aimed at helping veterans succeed in the civilian workforce.

DOL looks forward to working with the Committee to ensure that the men and women who serve this country have the employment support, assistance and opportunities they deserve to succeed in the civilian workforce.

While this hearing is focused on numerous bills pending before the Committee, I will limit my statement to H.R. 5407, legislation that has a direct impact on the programs administered by DOL, and H.R. 5047, the "Protecting Veterans' Educational Choice Act of 2016," which includes an implementation responsibility for the Secretary of Labor. DOL respectfully defers to the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA), Department of Education, Department of Defense, Department of Justice, Department of Homeland Security and Department of Interior on the other bills to be considered by the Committee today.

H.R. 5407 – A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Labor to prioritize the provision of services to homeless veterans with dependent children in carrying out homeless veterans reintegration programs, and for other purposes.

DOL is committed to the Administration's goal of ending homelessness among veterans. Our Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) addresses unemployment among one of the most vulnerable veteran populations, those who are homeless. The Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) administers the HVRP to provide job training, counseling, and placement services to homeless veterans so that they can be reintegrated into the labor force. The HVRP is the only nationwide federal program focusing exclusively on helping homeless veterans to reintegrate into the workforce.

In the last full program year, VETS' HVRP grantees placed 69% of the veterans they served into employment. The President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 Budget includes a nearly \$12 million increase for HVRP and related programs, from \$38.1M to \$50M. If Congress

increases the HVRP appropriation to \$50 million, VETS estimates the number of homeless veterans served could increase from about 17,000 to approximately 22,000.

Beginning in Program Year 2016 (July 1, 2016), VETS is requiring all grantees serving homeless veterans to enroll participants in the public workforce system through the local American Job Center (AJC) while they are receiving services through VETS' homeless veterans' program grantees. The expectation is to create a sustainable partnership in which participants' full range of employment needs are met. The heart of the public workforce system is the AJC, the access point for employers to find qualified workers and the access point for veterans to acquire the employment and related services they need to find meaningful employment.

H.R. 5407 would require DOL to prioritize homeless veterans with dependent children for HVRP services. The bill also would impose new biennial reporting requirements on DOL. Specifically, in addition to the HVRP information currently required to be provided to the Congress, H.R. 5407 would require DOL to analyze and report on "any gaps in access to shelter, safety, and services for homeless veterans with dependent children," as well as recommendations for improving any such gaps.

We absolutely agree that we must be doing everything we can to support homeless veterans with dependent children, and we take very seriously any concerns that homeless veterans with dependent children may not be receiving the services they deserve. DOL would welcome the opportunity to discuss H.R. 5407 further with the Committee and work together to jointly identify any gaps in service that this legislation is meant to address. Of importance, an Impact Evaluation of the HVRP is scheduled to begin in 2016 that will further help inform our efforts. The purpose of the evaluation is three-fold: To document the types of services and support offered by the grantees; to identify potentially promising practices or models; and to conduct a statistical analysis of administrative data collected by the grantees and other data on job placement and other outcomes of interest.

Regarding the additional reporting requirements established under section 1(b) of the bill, VETS' mission is to prepare America's veterans, Service members and their spouses for meaningful careers, provide them with employment resources and expertise, protect their employment rights and promote their employment opportunities. As this Committee is aware, VETS administers the HVRP to provide employment and training services to homeless veterans. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss further with the Committee along with our VA and Department of Housing and Urban Development colleagues how best to appropriately measure gaps in shelter access for homeless veterans with dependent children, or their safety, or to make recommendations on how best to address such gaps. There are a number of Federal, state and local entities that provide services in this area and the Department may not solely be the best entity to do this reporting. Additionally, any new reporting requirements will mean increased costs for the Department and the bill does not authorize any additional funding for the collection and evaluation of this additional data.

H.R. 5047, the “Protecting Veterans’ Educational Choice Act of 2016”

H.R. 5047 would "direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Labor to provide information to veterans and members of the Armed Forces about articulation agreements between institutions of higher learning." The bill is intended to assist veterans in making informed decisions regarding the use of their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. To that end, the bill would require VA counselors who provide educational or vocational counseling services to give eligible veterans who seek such counseling information about articulation agreements, governing the transfer of credits, which are in place between schools in which the veteran is interested.

DOL is proud to have a record of closely coordinating with our interagency partners, most notably on the Transition Assistance Program. DOL also works closely with VA on vocational rehabilitation programs through a Memorandum of Understanding.

Like VA, DOL supports the intent of this bill. However, we are concerned that DOL's responsibilities under H.R. 5047 are unclear. Although the Secretary of Labor is mentioned in the bill titles, the substantive provisions only address VA's responsibilities. Consequently, it is difficult for DOL to analyze what implementation issues, if any, may exist. If the intent of the bill is to require DOL to assist VA in establishing a comprehensive database of articulation agreements, we have concerns about the cost of this endeavor. Nonetheless, should H.R. 5047 become law, we will work with VA, as directed, to help ensure that veterans have the information they need to make educational decisions that will put them on a path toward meaningful civilian employment.

I thank the Committee for your commitment to our nation's veterans and for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record.