

**Statement of
Michael McCoy, Head of Military Affairs, Verizon
before the
House Committee on Veterans Affairs**

**“Veterans Serving Veterans: The Impact of America’s Businesses on Veteran
Employment and Opportunity”**

November 7, 2023

Opening

Chairman Bost, Ranking Member Takano and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Verizon and the over 8,200 U.S. Veterans and over 500 military spouses we are privileged to employ. I am honored to be here today and deeply appreciate the Committee’s focus on Veteran employment and opportunity.

My name is Michael McCoy, and I am Head of Military Affairs at Verizon. I am a proud third-generation service member. I have served as an Officer in the Army National Guard since 2011 and continue to serve today. At Verizon, I lead a team of other Veterans to recruit and support former military professionals. Serving our Veterans is not just a job for me. It is my passion, part of my heritage, and my life’s work.

Military service is an honor. But I know that it also presents unique challenges. For example, I was deployed when my wife, Nikki, was six months pregnant and returned home when my son Owen was 8-months-old. Military service, by its nature, is all-encompassing and becomes part of your identity. For much of a service member’s career, your life proudly revolves around being a part of the cohesive unit that shares in the critical mission of defending the country. Like a separate ecosystem, service members work within the military and move up its ranks as they excel. They receive health care at military hospitals, often live in military housing, buy groceries and other necessities from the base commissary and base exchange, and socialize with other military families. As a result, the military has its own culture, values, uniforms, systems, and even its own language, which is notorious for its acronyms. But military service can’t last forever, and the person you are after transition is different than the one who enlisted.

Few understand the magnitude of the transition from military to civilian life. Even though military service requires frequent moves and continual change, leaving a life and mission that you know and value and stepping into the civilian world is challenging - professionally,

financially and emotionally. My colleagues and I at Verizon understand the immense sacrifices military families make, the stress associated with the transition to civilian life, and the tremendous value they bring to the workforce. Today, I would like to share how we recruit and support Veterans.

Verizon Values Veterans

At Verizon, we believe that Veterans make our company better. Our industry has a long history with the military, dating back to the Bell Telephone system and World War I U.S. Signal Corps, and continues a symbiotic relationship today. In addition to providing for our national defense, the U.S. military is perhaps the greatest job training program in the world. It cultivates individuals who are disciplined, skilled, and performance-oriented. Former military personnel are seasoned leaders, problem solvers and team players with a strong work ethic who thrive under pressure, making them ideal employees in the hyper-competitive communications workplace.

Military service imparts both hard and soft skills that are highly valuable. Those skills include engineering, communications, intelligence, cybersecurity, supply chain management, finance and flying experience. At Verizon such knowledge translates into a variety of critical jobs. For example, we recruit pilots to fly drones for disaster response. We seek military-trained engineers to build our best-in-class networks and protect them from cybersecurity attacks. We also find that Veterans generally excel as project managers, particularly in the coordination of supply chains and logistics.

In addition to technical expertise, Veterans bring important interpersonal skills to the table. The military is a melting pot of highly qualified candidates from across the country, and requires individuals with different backgrounds, cultures and experiences to work alongside each other. During their tenure, service members also learn situational awareness and understanding of the geopolitical and cultural dynamics around the world. This exposure to a wide variety of environments trains service members to adapt rapidly to changing circumstances. Today, more than ever, these qualities are invaluable in the business world. For all of these reasons, we enthusiastically recruit, retain, and engage the military community.

I'm proud to share that Verizon's success in hiring and retaining military talent has been repeatedly recognized. We have been a #1 Military-Friendly company three times and ranked in the top 3 of military-friendly companies over the past five years. Verizon has also ranked #1 by Best For Vets twice and has received almost every Employer Support of the Guard and Reserves award multiple times. In addition, we are a two-time recipient of the Vets Index 5 Star employer and two-time recipient of the US DOL GOLD Hire Vets Medallion Award. To achieve this success, Verizon relies on a three-pronged approach: recruiting, retention and support.

Recruiting

While Veterans are exceptional assets in the workplace, it can be challenging to find transitioning service members who are interested in working at Verizon and have an applicable skill set. To attract separating service members, we established a dedicated web page for Veterans and military spouses. *See: [verizon.com/military-careers](https://www.verizon.com/military-careers)*. This page provides information on the skills we seek and the jobs that are currently available, along with opportunities to connect at job fairs and information sessions. We also invite service members to stay in touch as part of our talent network should a job match open in the future.

To further facilitate recruitment of those ready to separate from active duty, Verizon works with two programs under the Department of Defense (DoD): SkillBridge and Transition Assistance Program (TAP). Through SkillBridge, we provide separating military personnel with civilian work experience through internships and training during their last 180 days of service. To the greatest extent possible, we give service members direct training at Verizon that prepares them for open positions in the company. Veterans appreciate this path because it helps them acclimate to civilian life, relieves them of the job searching stress, and allows them to focus on training and development.

Regarding TAP, we are working to expand our relationship with all TAP centers. As you are aware, military personnel separating from service engage with TAP officials, who provide civilian career counseling. Through TAP, Verizon markets its programs, such as apprenticeships and internships. But based on our experience as an employer, we believe that TAP may be under-resourced, and there is an opportunity to expand its reach and accessibility. For example, providing virtual classes on career opportunities in addition to current in-person classes would allow potential employers such as Verizon to share information more broadly with separating service members. It would also be helpful if employers were provided with TAP points of contact to enable more timely communication.

Another valuable recruitment program for Verizon is “The Hiring our Heroes Fellowship”, offered through the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation. This fellowship gives Verizon access to a broad talent pool that includes transitioning service members, military spouses and Veterans.

Through our partnerships with the DoD and the U.S. Chamber, we have provided skills training to over 215 service members to make them successful in the communications industry areas of expertise since 2018. From that group, we have been able to hire 183 SkillBridge or Hiring our Heroes Fellows into a wide variety of jobs throughout Verizon. I am pleased to report that ninety

percent of these participants are still with Verizon today, and many have been promoted into roles with greater responsibilities.

We also have strong partnerships with many other Veteran serving organizations. For example, we have had success with 50strong, a national, industry-led effort supporting employers and military-affiliated job seekers. This partnership has been extremely productive because 50strong digitally aggregates Veterans and the broader military community into weekly events via teleconference, which allows employers to present to a broad group, and then host their own breakout rooms. FourBlock, also, has been a terrific partner and one we invest in. This organization works to bridge the divide between transitioning Veterans and businesses through career readiness programs. Lastly, we support No Greater Sacrifice (NGS). NGS is dedicated to the children of our nation's fallen and wounded service members. It delivers scholarships and resources to improve the quality of life for these children through the pursuit of higher education and allows them to graduate from college debt-free.

In addition to these programs and partnerships, Verizon seeks out former military talent from a variety of other sources. Our recruitment team hosts monthly coaching and information sessions for the military community to help them better prepare for job searching, resume writing and interviewing. We publicize these events on our dedicated military career website and through regular emails to our nation-wide and global partners. Since 2013, we have hosted or attended over 1,750 virtual and in-person events to recruit Veterans.

Finally, it's important to note that there are also over 100 VA-recognized, Veteran service organizations across the United States. As transitioning service members begin their research, they can become inundated by information from organizations trying to help. As employers, it can be difficult to effectively break through to these organizations to provide service members with information about jobs, career fairs, and other opportunities. Having the Veterans Administration provide guidance and coordination between organizations could help ensure that only the most relevant information is presented to job seekers. This effort, in turn, could reduce decision fatigue as Veterans pursue opportunities that best match their needs and talents.

Retention and Support

At Verizon, we believe that retaining our Veteran employees is just as important as recruiting them. We do everything we can to ensure service members are valued and supported. Verizon's dedicated military recruitment team has personally lived through transitioning back to civilian life and strives to create an environment conducive to helping new hires adjust to a civilian work environment. Verizon never stops mentoring and developing former service members so they can thrive and advance in their new careers. New hires receive a welcome email to the Veteran or the spouse, which provides an explanation of corporate resources, a connection to other

Veterans, and Employee Resource Group information. They also can agree to have a Military Service badge placed on their internal profile.

Service members, like me, are driven by teamwork and achieving a collective mission. Verizon's core values of respect, integrity, performance excellence and accountability align with military values. Veterans also want a continued sense of camaraderie, the opportunity to serve others, and to live their values. That is why we established an Employee Resource Group within the company called "VALOR", which stands for "Veterans and Advocates Leading the Organization Responsibly".

Verizon VALOR is open to all Verizon employees. It gives Veterans and their supporters a forum to connect and build a network of friends and colleagues. This group is designed to provide emotional support and guidance on career development and advancement. It also encourages volunteer projects that provide thousands of hours of Veterans-focused community service every year. The projects include supporting homeless shelters for Veterans, career coaching for transitioning Special Forces service members, sponsoring and participating annually in Veterans Day parades, and writing letters to deployed service members. We even have Verizon-branded military apparel for employees provided by Call For Fire, a Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business that donates a percentage of its profits to U.S. Veteran-serving nonprofits.

Verizon and VALOR also coordinate to provide pro bono assistance to U.S. military Veterans across the country. Our volunteer attorneys provide a myriad of legal support to Veterans. Additionally, we partner with law firms and nonprofits to maximize our community impact.

Benefits and Flexibility

A special aspect of our retention efforts is ensuring that Veterans avail themselves of the benefits they have earned. In addition to helping service members fully understand and register for their existing VA benefits, we diligently track and alert our employees to any changes in law or policies that might impact them. For example, this year, we partnered with the Veteran Affairs communications team to inform all of our Veterans about the PACT (Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022) Act's passage, which was successful in increasing the number of "intent to file."

Finally, we give special dispensation for our employees who still serve in the National Guard or the Reserves by providing a generous military leave policy, including gap pay for up to 36 months, in which Verizon pays the difference between an employee's Verizon salary and their military pay if the Verizon pay is higher.

Closing

In closing, I would like to thank you again for holding this hearing and for your ongoing support for military Veterans and their families. The demands of military life shape a person's character, values and worldview. At Verizon, we believe that military experience prepares an individual for success and that military talent helps drive our company's productivity, innovation and growth. And while we utilize and appreciate the existing government programs that connect companies like ours with retiring military personnel, there are always ways to fine-tune and improve these initiatives. As you consider how to advance employment and opportunities for America's Veterans, Verizon stands ready to work with you to support the men and women who have bravely served our country.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.