

**Oral Testimony of Andres Alcantar, Chairman, Texas Workforce Commission  
U.S. House Veterans Affairs Committee Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity  
“Texas' Innovative Approaches to Jobs and Employment for Veterans”  
November 6, 2013**

Good morning Chairman Flores, Ranking Member Takano and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. I am Andres Alcantar, Chairman of the Texas Workforce Commission. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony and appear before this committee.

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) partners with 28 Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) and fellow state agencies such as the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) to provide a broad range of employment, job training and related services to our veterans. All veterans walking through the doors at our workforce solutions offices across the state receive priority of service across employment and support service programs. These programs include Employment Services, Workforce Investment Act, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program (SNAP), Child Care and other support services. This priority of service extends to TWC's WorkInTexas.com, the state's largest database for matching job seekers with employers, with a two day veteran hold on all postings to ensure veterans receive first viewing and the opportunity for applying. We are also a partner in Texas' dedicated website, *Texas Veterans Portal*, where veterans, families, and survivors can find helpful information from across a number of government agencies.

To further demonstrate our commitment to assisting veterans, let me take a few minutes to highlight a handful of programs at TWC. First and happening next week, TWC in partnership with our Boards and TVC will host in 27 cities across the state “Hiring Red, White and You!” veteran job fairs on November 14<sup>th</sup>. Last year's event attracted more than 12,000 veterans and 1,400 employers statewide, and resulted in approximately 2,800 hires by participating employers. We hope to exceed those numbers this year.

Military veterans possess the skills, discipline and leadership experience that are ideally suited to employers in need of a ready and available workforce. The “Hiring Red, White & You!” effort connects veterans with employers in order to help these individuals successfully transition to civilian life through employment.

Another exciting program we have developed in Texas is College Credit for Heroes. Established by the 82<sup>nd</sup> Texas Legislature, the College Credit for Heroes initiative aims to maximize the amount of college credit that our heroes receive for their military training and occupational experience, reducing the amount of time a veteran spends in the classroom.

In July 2011, TWC and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) began working on this initiative with seven colleges. Central Texas College developed an integral part of the effort - [www.collegecreditforheroes.org](http://www.collegecreditforheroes.org) - a web-based application for veterans and service members to receive college credit hours for prior military education and training via an official transcript. Veterans utilizing this application are receiving an average of 25 college credits per evaluation, equivalent to almost one year of college. As of October 1, 2013, the website has received over 30,000 visits and has 17,000 veteran and service member account holders who have requested almost 2,000 evaluations for college credit.

Recently, the program expanded to include 6 new partner schools. In addition, four of the originating institutions were awarded additional funding to expand their offerings to veteran students. Just last month, the Texas A&M System and all universities operating under the System joined the program and signed agreements committing to review all the transcript evaluations used to award college credit to veterans and service members for their military training. We now have 30 colleges and universities participating in the initiative.

Texas has a high concentration of veterans in our state, an estimated 1.7 million and was one of four states selected to develop a national model for partnerships between the Army and the workforce system, including Unemployment Compensation. The State of Texas Soldier Employment Initiative was developed to find new ways to outreach and provide access to jobs and reemployment services to recipients of Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Service Members (UCX) and, where possible, to reduce the duration of the receipt of UCX benefits. In June 2012, the Texas Workforce Commission was awarded the grant.

The focus of the grant is to provide enhanced outreach and employment services that lead to employment before or shortly after soldiers separate from active duty. A major part of the overall strategy is to build and enhance partnerships between participating entities, improve data sharing, and develop innovative outreach and reemployment strategies for the Veteran

population. The overriding goal of the pilot program is to provide meaningful employment that gives the financial freedom that former service members need to provide for themselves and their families.

In closing, I want to recognize the commitment of our 28 local Boards to serve our veterans, and highlight the efforts of two local boards with military bases in their territory. First, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas has a Business Resource Center jointly supported through a unique partnership of Central Texas College, Greater Killeen Chamber of Commerce, and Workforce Solutions of Central Texas. The Business Resource Center provides small and start-up business development guidance, services, and workshops. Veterans benefit from counseling and training for entrepreneurship and small business ownership. Two of the initiatives include the Fort Hood Veterans Entrepreneur Bootcamp and the Fort Hood Region Government Vendor Conference & Exposition.

Another example is underway by our Upper Rio Grande Workforce Board. In September, Board staff met with the Transition Manager at Fort Bliss to discuss how to work better together in matching employers with soldiers and family members. On October 16<sup>th</sup>, the Board provided its mobile unit and staff to assist soldiers and family members at the Fort Bliss job fair.

The Texas Workforce Commission recognizes that the State of Texas can lead the way for the nation in assisting veterans. This is an ongoing effort that requires many partners working together to ensure that veterans' needs are being fully addressed. These men and women have served their country, and we are proud of them and recognize the sacrifice they and their families have made. Our veterans have real world experience, leadership skills, and education. Their military contributions kept our nation secure, and now their contributions and talents as veterans will continue to make Texas the best place to live, work and do business. Thank you for allowing me to testify and I look forward to answering any questions.