



Hearing on

Veterans in Tech: Innovative Careers for All Generations of Veterans

Before the

Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
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Testimony of

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Thank you, Chairman Wenstrup and Ranking Member Takano. My name is Brian Huseman, and I am Amazon's Vice President of Public Policy. Amazon's mission is to be Earth's most customer-centric company. To accomplish this, we're constantly looking for leaders who can invent, think big, have bias for action, and deliver results on behalf of our customers. These principles look very familiar to the men and women who have served our country in the armed forces – and also to their spouses.

Amazon actively recruits U.S. military veterans to join Amazon to fill roles across our company, from our corporate offices to our fulfillment network. Since 2011, we've hired more than 10,000 veterans, and we recently announced a major commitment to hire veterans and military spouses over the next five years. In addition, Amazon is committed to providing technical training to service members, veterans, and military spouses, paving the way for them to secure the certifications necessary to pursue careers in cloud computing, where open positions outpace hiring. We believe this is the smart thing to do for our veterans and military spouses, for Amazon, and for our hundreds of millions of customers – and we're excited to keep hiring and training these incredible leaders.

Thank you for your attention to this important topic, for calling this hearing, and for inviting me to testify.

I. Amazon's Commitment to Hiring Veterans and Military Spouses

As part of the 5th Anniversary of the Joining Forces initiative earlier this month, Amazon announced that we are pledging to hire 25,000 additional veterans and military spouses over the next five years, the largest pledge announced by any technology company. These new hires will join Amazon's growing community of veterans and military spouses, also known as our Amazon Warriors.

At Amazon, we're guided by our [Leadership Principles](https://www.amazon.jobs/principles).¹ They're ingrained in our work – we use them when we're talking through a new project, interviewing a prospective hire, or solving a customer's problem. What we've found in our years of hiring veterans and military spouses is that many of our Leadership Principles closely align with what makes people successful in the military.

While our pledge is stepping up our commitment to hiring veterans and military spouses, Amazon has a well-established history of actively recruiting and developing candidates from the military. Amazon's Military Talent Partnership is a team of military recruiters that includes veterans from all branches of the armed forces. Our team assists applicants in translating their skills and experience to the requirements of job openings at Amazon and provides them guidance for how to successfully interview. Amazon recruiters attended more than 70 veterans job fairs in the last year to help veterans and military spouses find job opportunities at Amazon. Our team works hard to provide veterans and military spouses with opportunities and the tools to pursue successful careers at Amazon.

We are also fortunate to have a strong and growing group of military spouses on our team. We've found that military spouses' calm under regular change – paired with their ability to handle ambiguity – make them well-suited for the fast-paced, ever-changing work at Amazon. Military spouses face the significant challenge of finding careers that can move with them through frequent relocations with their spouses. For example, our Virtual Contact Centers offer a unique customer service work

¹ See <https://www.amazon.jobs/principles>.

experience that enables our associates to work remotely. This provides consistent, meaningful work for military spouses, and allows Amazon to employ highly capable customer service representatives across the country.

This is the promise of the growing tech industry, after all – creating the flexibility of position portability, and empowering military spouses to pursue careers, not just jobs. We're proud of our military spouses, such as Gen Harrison-Doss, whose husband is stationed at Dyess Air Force Base. Gen leads a team of recruiters in Seattle from her home in Abilene, Texas, and has not only moved during her tenure, she has been promoted and continues to advance her career at Amazon.

II. Training and Mentorship of our Veteran Employees

Our commitment to the military does not end once candidates are hired. Once employed at Amazon, we offer veterans several programs that help them transition more easily into the civilian workforce. We connect them with our significant internal network of veterans to provide mentoring and support. Our Amazon Warriors employee affinity group provides a community for veterans and military families to share experiences, gain exposure to career and development opportunities, and participate in community and recruiting events.

A. Amazon Web Services Certification Training

As part of our recent Joining Forces announcement, we also pledged to train 10,000 service members, veterans, and military spouses in cloud computing – offering a path to Amazon Web Services (AWS) Certification and providing a gateway into this high-demand field. AWS Certifications recognize IT professionals with the technical skills and expertise to design, deploy, and operate applications and infrastructure on AWS.

Successfully passing AWS Certification requires hands-on experience with the AWS Platform. So through our pledge, we are offering these 10,000 transitioning military service members and spouses free membership to AWS Educate, a critical resource to accelerate cloud-related learning endeavors. AWS Educate provides training courses, a wide library of cloud content, and access to our collaboration

portal. We will also offer free access to labs that are part of the examination preparation programs. Finally, AWS Certification exam fees are eligible for reimbursement from the Department of Veterans Administration under the GI Bill's education provision.

B. Career Choice Program

Veterans and military spouses in eligible Amazon roles can enroll in the Amazon Career Choice Program, where we'll pre-pay 95% of tuition and fees for courses related to in-demand fields, regardless of whether the skills are relevant to a career at Amazon. Through this program, we exclusively fund education in high-demand fields, as defined by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Last year, we expanded the initiative to include purpose-built classrooms onsite at eight of our U.S. fulfillment centers. We found that offering courses onsite helped associates be more successful in achieving their aspirations at Amazon or beyond. With this in mind, our new fulfillment centers will be built with onsite classrooms as part of the standard blueprint, and we're bringing dedicated onsite Career Choice Classrooms to more than a dozen existing sites.

So far, thousands of employees worldwide have participated in Amazon's Career Choice program, and our first Career Choice graduate is now a registered nurse in Kentucky. We are proud of this innovative program and the fact that our current and future eligible veteran and military spouse employees will have the opportunity to earn certificates and associate degrees in such fields as aircraft mechanics, computer-aided design, machine tool technologies, medical lab technologies, and many others.

III. Recommendations for Increasing Veterans in Tech

Because of our extensive experience in hiring veterans and military spouses, we would like to offer two principal recommendations for increasing the number of veterans in the tech sector and better preparing them for a transition to the industry.

First, we recommend that the military offer active duty service members the ability to partake in technical training in fields like cloud computing before they depart from service. Although the U.S. has

the most technically advanced military in the world, our service members may not be working with the latest software and systems that are being used by the private sector. We also believe many separating service members are excellent candidates for careers in high-tech, even though their backgrounds might not be technical. Without any technical training, they may never explore jobs in this high-demand field. When veterans transition, many don't have the flexibility to invest in education and training that will lead to a better career. Often, the first job they're offered is the one they will accept. We believe technical training programs during their military service will mean our veterans can enter the job market fully qualified to be hired at tech companies like Amazon.

Initiatives such as the Department of Defense (DoD) SkillBridge Program provide an opportunity for service members to pursue critical training prior to separation from service. Under this program, some service members can participate in civilian job and employment training - including apprenticeships and internships at tech companies - up to six months prior to service separation. Use of this program is not widespread due to the operational demands of the military. Amazon recommends that the Subcommittee explore the program's utilization rates and identify whether this program could be expanded without negative effects on staffing availability and unit readiness.

Second, we also recommend expansion of partnerships between the military and the private sector that can prepare our service members for jobs in the technology sector. Specifically, we recommend expanding the Department of Defense (DoD) Training/Education with Industry (TWI/EWI) and Secretary of Defense Corporate Fellows Programs (SDCFP). Since 2013, Amazon has partnered with DoD in sponsoring select military personnel to spend a year in the TWI/EWI program. And for the first time, we'll also be participating in SDCFP. Amazon offers our TWI/EWI students and SDCFP Fellows an exceptional, world-class experience by providing exposure across our many business segments and activities. This year, eight commissioned officers and one senior non-commissioned officer (two Air Force, four Army, and three Navy) were assigned across Amazon business units – including our fulfillment centers, operations, Prime Air, and Amazon Web Services. These service members – as well

as those placed at other companies – are exposed to new processes and innovative business cultures during their time at tech companies. They're able to bring back new ideas and try different processes when they return to service. And in return, companies like Amazon have top-tier military talent offering new perspectives on our business and how to connect with customers. We recommend that other technology companies make the investment to partner with the DoD on this successful program, which has proven its value to both Amazon and the DoD.

We also recommend more programs like the Camo2Commerce program. Camo2Commerce is a career development initiative that assists transitioning service members from Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Amazon's home state of Washington. The goal of this program is to enable transitioning service members to move into the civilian workforce, and specifically into high-demand, well-paying career opportunities, such as cloud computing, through one-on-one career coaching, job placement services, short-term training, and hiring fairs. We have found that the service members from Camo2Commerce are more likely to have the skills required for Amazon's technical positions. And our AWS hiring managers seek out service members who have completed Camo2Commerce. We hope programs like Camo2Commerce will be expanded and replicated to other bases.

Conclusion

Amazon looks forward to working with you and our tech industry colleagues to increase the number of veterans in the tech space and to ensure they have the right skills when they are ready to transition out of the military. Our veteran and military spouse employees are a tremendous asset for our company and our customers, and we are excited to see what the next 25,000 who join Amazon will build and innovate over the next several years.

Thank you again for inviting me to testify. I look forward to your questions.