

**STATEMENT OF**  
**ROBERT M. WORLEY II**  
**DIRECTOR, EDUCATION SERVICE**  
**VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION**  
**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
**BEFORE THE**  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**

**September 27, 2017**

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member O'Rourke, and Members of the Subcommittee. I am pleased to be here today to discuss the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) education benefits programs. My testimony will focus on VA's administration of apprenticeship training under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33) was enacted with the passage of Public Law (P.L.) 110-252, effective August 1, 2009. Chapter 33 provides eligible Veterans, Servicemembers, dependents, and survivors with educational assistance, generally in the form of tuition and fees, monthly housing allowance, and a stipend for books-and-supplies – all to assist these men and women in reaching their educational or vocational goals. P.L. 111-377, signed into law on January 4, 2011, amended the Post-9/11 GI Bill and expanded the benefits and access to programs available to eligible participants. The Post-9/11 GI Bill is the most utilized of VA's educational assistance programs.

## **Background on VA Apprenticeship Programs**

Apprenticeship programs are available for Veterans using their VA education benefits, including the Post-9/11 GI Bill. These programs allow Veterans to learn a trade or skill through training, while simultaneously earning a paycheck. A Veteran generally enters into a training contract for a specific period with an employer, and at the end of the training period the Veteran typically earns an apprenticeship program completion certificate and job certifications, in addition to “journeyworker” status.

Veterans pursuing apprenticeship training under the Post-9/11 GI Bill may also receive a monthly housing allowance in addition to their apprenticeship wages. The housing allowance is based on a percentage of the Department of Defense (DoD) Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) for an E-5 with dependents (based on the location of the employer), payable at the rate of 100 percent during the first six months; 80 percent during the second six months; 60 percent during the third six months; 40 percent during the fourth six months; and 20 percent during any remaining months of training. Participants may also receive up to \$83 per month for books and supplies.

## **Approval and Participation in VA Apprenticeship Programs**

The law provides that VA may pay educational assistance to eligible Veterans and other individuals participating in approved training programs. Department of Labor (DOL) Registered Apprenticeships are “deemed approved,” as are those approved by DOL or State Apprenticeship Agencies recognized by DOL, subject to the requirements in Section 3672(b)(2)(A)(iii) of Title 38 U.S.C., and unregistered apprenticeship programs may be approved as long as the criteria in section 3687 of title 38 U.S.C. are met. State Approving Agencies (SAAs) overseeing education

and training programs for Veterans are responsible for approving most non-Federal apprenticeship programs in their respective states. Similarly, VA has authority to approve apprenticeship programs offered by Federal agencies, including DOL registered programs offered in multiple states by carriers directly engaged in interstate commerce.

## **Partnerships**

VA works with SAAs to streamline and standardize the approval process for DOL Registered Apprenticeship programs. SAAs must utilize VA's standard application process for employers seeking GI Bill approval of DOL Registered Apprenticeship programs. VA also works closely with DOL staff to ensure Registered Apprenticeship sponsors understand the approval process for GI Bill benefits. This includes participating in teleconferences with employers, providing information as necessary, and sharing SAA contact information. In November 2015, VA developed and published an informational guide for employers offering, or considering offering, On-the-Job (OJT) or Apprenticeship training to Veterans and their beneficiaries. The guide can be found at [https://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/docs/job\\_aids/OJT\\_APPInfoGuide.pdf](https://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/docs/job_aids/OJT_APPInfoGuide.pdf). A second edition was published in July 2017.

VA continues to work with the National Association of State Approving Agencies (NASAA) to ensure SAAs are aware of participating employers that have received national approval as well as any pending approval concerns. There are some challenges in the approval process for employers because training, at times, is taking place in numerous states, and VA's regulations require that the State Approving Agency where the training takes place may approve the course for VA training.

To promote outreach to employers that had received registration and approval of their apprenticeship programs from DOL, VA requested that SAAs contact those employers in their states to ensure that the employers are aware of the advantages of GI Bill program approval for Veterans.

## **Outreach**

VA promotes available apprenticeship opportunities through the use of various platforms and strategies. For example, VA leverages the Community Veteran Engagement Boards, and Office of Economic Opportunity personnel to engage in nation-wide awareness of the economic impact of apprenticeships. In addition to traditional approaches, VA is utilizing social media outlets to provide greater visibility and enhance the awareness of these programs.

## **Conclusion**

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be pleased to respond to any questions that you or the other Members of the Subcommittee may have.