

HIRING AND RETAINING VETERANS FOR THE MODERN DAY WORKFORCE

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

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HIRING AND RETAINING VETERANS FOR THE MODERN DAY WORKFORCE

Tuesday, June 26, 2018

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
Washington, D.C.

The Subcommittees met, pursuant to notice, at 2:02 p.m., in Room 334, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Jodey Arrington [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Arrington, Bilirakis, Banks, Mast, O'Rourke, Takano, Rice, and Correa.

Also Present: Representatives Roe.

OPENING STATEMENT OF JODEY ARRINGTON, CHAIRMAN

Mr. ARRINGTON. Good afternoon, everybody. The Subcommittee will come to order. I want to thank you all for being here with us today for the hearing entitled "Hiring and Retaining Veterans for the Modern Day Workforce."

But before I give any formal introductory remarks, I would like to ask my friend from Texas to introduce his special guest, and you can imagine who they might be. They are the cutest of people in this room. So—

Mr. TAKANO. Oh, don't talk about me.

[Laughter.]

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Takano. Mr. O'Rourke, please introduce your special guest, and then I will say a few words about Takano.

[Laughter.]

Mr. O'ROURKE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And in exchange for this privilege, I will waive my opening comments. But my son Ulysses, who is 11, and his brother Henry, who is 7, and his sister Molly, who just turned 10, are with us on a visit to the Capitol, their first in a long time.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Do you want to stand up?

Mr. O'ROURKE. Do you guys want to stand up, so everyone can see who you are?

[Applause.]

Mr. O'ROURKE. So, anyhow, I am very lucky that they are here with us and thanks for introducing them.

Mr. ARRINGTON. You bet.

Mr. O'ROURKE. I really appreciate it, thank you.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Molly, right?

Mr. O'ROURKE. And thanks to our panel. I am looking forward to your testimony and having a very productive conversation today. I am grateful that you are here. Thank you.

Mr. ARRINGTON. You all aren't nearly as cool as those kids, but I will try to do my best when we introduce you. But we are honored that you are here and what you have done to support our veterans, and the recruiting and the hiring and the retaining of these heroes. And giving sort of special consideration to the assets that they are, but also to the unique challenges of serving this country in the armed services and coming back as a civilian. And I think they are an incredible asset, if we are intentional about it.

And companies like the ones you represent have been intentional and we want to understand what you are doing and how it is going and why it is working, and we want to increase the things that you are doing exponentially. We want to highlight them and brag on them, and we want others to follow your lead. But, you know, we have an economy and I don't want to be partisan about it, but I think the pro-growth policies that we have put in place, we are starting to see some growth. And I think to have millions of surplus jobs and low unemployment rates is great for everybody, not just our veterans, but certainly this is a season that is welcomed in the life of this country and this country's economy.

And we have got a lot of returning servicemen and women who are transitioning as veterans, again, who have some unique skills and unique experiences. We need to work, and we are, on a program called the Transition Assistance Program. I hope to get your thoughts on that today, but so that we can improve that process by which we engage our Active duty men and women before they leave, and assess their health challenges and their skills and the gaps on the education and workforce training, and make sure we empower and equip them to maximize their full potential as civilians.

So we, again, are appreciative of what you are doing for our veterans and we are anxious to jump right in to hear from you all, and that is why I am going to depart from my traditional, sort of formal introductory remarks.

Beto, why don't you say a word or two just about them being here. I know you said you would waive it, but say a couple words to these guys.

OPENING STATEMENT OF BETO O'ROURKE, RANKING MEMBER

Mr. O'ROURKE. Well, again, I am grateful for what you do. I know in the case of Prudential and other large employers in El Paso, you haven't waited for the Government to give direction, you have taken the lead yourselves in making sure that that transition is a successful one.

And one of the things that I love about the approach that each of you represent to meeting this opportunity with our veterans is that they represent this opportunity given their experience, their expertise, their service to do something phenomenal for your organizations or the organizations that you represent, for the communities in which they live, and for our country. And so often we talk here about our failure to meet the challenge for health care or

housing or the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and where there are deficiencies we have got to ensure that we are responsive to that, but I love the idea behind today's hearing, which is how do we make the most out of what those veterans are ready to give back.

And so for all those who are here today, for Prudential, for your work in El Paso, we are really grateful for the lead that you have already taken. I am looking forward to any direction you can give us, any guidance that we can follow and implement in that Transition Assistance Program that the Chairman has been working on, or anything else that we can do in our capacity as Members of Congress.

So, thank you for being here, I am looking forward to the conversation. And, Mr. Chairman, again, thanks for pulling this together.

Mr. ARRINGTON. You bet. Well said.

Now let's recognize our panel. With us today we have Ms. Elizabeth O'Brien, Senior Director of Military Spouse Programs for Hiring Our Heroes at the United States Chamber of Commerce. Glad that you are here with us. Brigadier General Gary M Profit, Senior Director for Military Programs at Walmart; Mr. Matt Kress, Manager for Veterans and Military Affairs at Starbucks; Mr. Charles Sevola, Vice President and Head of Veterans Initiatives at Prudential Financial; and, Robert Douthit, the Senior Director of Americas Customer Solutions Center at Dell.

Again, thank you guys for being here with us. We will now recognize each of you for 5 minutes for your opening statement and, Ms. O'Brien, we will start with you from the Chamber of Commerce.

STATEMENT OF ELIZABETH O'BRIEN

Ms. O'BRIEN. Good afternoon, Chairman Arrington, Ranking Member O'Rourke, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. I am Elizabeth O'Brien, our Senior Director of Military Spouse Programs at U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Hiring Our Heroes. I am a military spouse of 12 years and at one point sustained six moves in 8 years. So our background on employment is fast and knowledgeable.

Hiring Our Heroes was founded in 2011 as a nationwide initiative of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation in response to the crisis situation facing our veteran population struggling to find employment opportunities. Hiring Our Heroes assists military veterans, transitioning servicemembers, and military spouses in finding meaningful employment opportunities in a 21st century workforce.

Our program accomplishes this goal in a myriad of ways, including hiring fairs, on-installation transition summits, career development, and networking events; focused research, best practice development, and communication campaigns, in partnership with many of our sponsorship companies here today. To date, we have hosted over 1100 hiring events around the United States of America and on U.S. military installations around the world.

Incredible transformation has occurred in the space of military hiring since 2011. Currently, our veteran unemployment is at 3.7 percent, and as the employment landscape for veterans and military spouses has changed, we have evolved our operations. Why?

We have to remain effective in serving our veteran and military families. We are looking to connect them with not just a job, but the right job.

Innovative programming has allowed us to move left of transition; it is a process, one that requires preparation. Over the last 2 years, our summits have doubled at military installations around the country and around the world. We have expanded to dozens of new installations and this year we were able to host our first transition summits on Coast Guard bases, having an opportunity to serve a population we had not been engaged with before.

One of the most innovative programs that we have created is our Corporate Fellowship Program, which we stood up in 2015. Developed under the guidelines of the Department of Defense's Skill Bridge Job Training Initiative, it is a 12-week fellowship program. We take Active duty servicemembers in their last 90 days of transition, place them with corporate partners around the country, and often cases leveraging the permissive TDY option through the Army. So we can take a fellow or servicemember from Hawaii and they want to retire to Atlanta and place them with a company in Atlanta.

To date, 13 locations in the United States, a thousand fellows have graduated. We have a 90-percent job offer rate; 180 companies have hosted fellows with a starting salary of \$88,000. The success of the program has led to the development of pilot programs for veterans and military spouses with the Military Corps Career Connect.

But we as a country have to understand that veterans are part of a military family, we have to understand the needs of 21st century military families. We have over 700,000 Active duty military spouses around the world, 92 percent of them are female. This does not include our veterans' spouses that have returned home to many of your communities away from military installations. We define a military spouse as any individual who identifies as having their career impacted by a military member's service to the Nation.

Our military spouses are unemployed at a rate of four times the national average of their civilian counterparts, four times the national average. We want and need opportunities to have dual-income households, as is the norm for married Americans across the country with children, over 60 percent. We are not at that rate.

Seventy one percent of employed military spouses agree that having two incomes is vitally important to their family, and yet we stand to lose over \$12,000 a year in income for spouses that do work, and over a course of a 20-year military career, over \$189,000 in lost wages.

We are younger and more highly educated than the average American adult of working age. The lack of employment opportunities creates stress and influences a military family's desire and want to stay in our all-volunteer force.

Our program has responded appropriately. We have launched and created over 50 networks around the world to serve military spouses, that is our Military Spouse Professional Network, with 15,000 members. We have created economic empowerment zones, grassroots, localized efforts that create connections and collaboration between regional and national employers, launching in San

Antonio, Tampa, Colorado, and the great State of Washington, with another six roll-outs anticipated by the end of the year.

On Thursday, we will host our Military Spouse Employment Summit at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, where we will address many of these issues and launch Part 2 of our study.

In conclusion, we are proud at Hiring Our Heroes to serve our veterans, servicemembers, and a wide array of private and public sector members. We are committed to the mission of connecting veterans and military spouses around the world, and we will continue to unite our partners across the Nation in our common mission as we work together to continue to achieve fundamental change. And I call upon everybody in this room to help us get military spouses out of the fine print as we move forward across this country to serve our families.

Chairman Arrington, Ranking Member O'Rourke, and Members of the Subcommittee, I thank you again for the opportunity to testify and look forward to answering your questions.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF ELIZABETH O'BRIEN APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

Mr. ARRINGTON. My only question is I thought that the Great State was reserved for only one state, Ms. O'Brien.

[Laughter.]

Mr. ARRINGTON. But I will reserve—

Ms. O'BRIEN. It appears everywhere we go, everybody is the Great State.

Mr. ARRINGTON. You have got to be proud of your state. Ms. O'Brien, thanks for your comments.

General Profit, we recognize you now for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF BRIGADIER GENERAL GARY M. PROFIT (RET.)

General PROFIT. Chairman Arrington, Ranking Member O'Rourke, and Members of the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, on behalf of Walmart, Incorporated, I want to thank you for the opportunity to rejoin you today to talk about hiring and retaining veterans for the modern day workforce.

I had the privilege of testifying before the Full Committee in 2014 and, as I stated then, I am grateful for your leadership and partnership in honoring our Nation's veterans' service and sacrifice, and for all you do to aid in their transition to civilian life.

Walmart has a rich history with veterans, those who serve on Active duty and in the Reserve and the Guard, and veteran and military families. Arguably, it began with Captain, U.S. Army, Sam Walton, who founded Walmart over 50 years ago. His legacy has been enriched by countless veteran associates over the years and has recently been enhanced by our Veterans Welcome Home Commitment, established in 2013 and expanded in 2015, when we pledged to hire 250,000 veterans by 2020.

I am proud to say that since 2013 we have added more than 200,000 veterans to our workforce, and promoted more than 28,000 to roles with higher pay and greater responsibility.

When we announced our commitment in 2013, our goal was put returning post-9/11 U.S. veterans back to work. At that time, their

rate of unemployment was disturbingly high. Now, it is the lowest it has been in decades and we'd like to think we have played a small part in helping bring that number down. Rather than taking a victory lap, however, we must remain vigilant and know that more work remains.

Through my interactions with veterans over the years, I have learned that we have a much better chance of retaining our veteran hires if they have an understanding of the company's mission, if they are able to make a positive impact to their team or business quickly, and if they feel supported. Furthermore, we found that a clear vision of a new veteran associate's career path within the organization is one of the more crucial pieces to veteran recruitment and retention.

To realize those ends, our recruiting and hiring process combines technology and personal consultation to achieve scale without sacrificing the human touch. And perhaps one of our most successful practices is our approach to on-boarding where we place new hires with seasoned associates who are veterans, military spouses, currently serving members of the Guard and Reserve, or associates who just have an affinity for those who have served.

In a world in which new skills are required to meet the rapidly changing demands of our customers, Walmart is investing in training and talent development for our front-line associates, aimed at building foundational and advanced skills through our Pathways Program and Academies.

An additional business initiative that I feel holds tremendous value is our Military Family Promise. It guarantees a job at a nearby store or Club for all military personnel and military spouses employed by the company who move to a different part of the country because they or their spouse have been transferred by the U.S. military. The Military Family Promise allows military spouses in particular to remain in the same personnel and pay systems, and turn jobs into careers.

Outside of what we do for our associates, Walmart actively seeks products from veteran-owned businesses to add to our stores and online assortment. Two weeks ago, we held our fifth annual Open Call where we invited suppliers to our home office to pitch products made in the U.S. Out of more than 450 companies that attended, 22 self-identified as veteran-owned businesses. And as a founding member of the Coalition for Veteran-Owned Business, Walmart is committed to help grow and support veteran-owned businesses in communities throughout the U.S.

In 2011, Walmart and the Walmart Foundation committed \$20 million through 2015 to support veterans and their families with assistance programs that provide job training, transition help, and education. With the early completion of the commitment in May of 2014, Walmart and the Walmart Foundation renewed the commitment, announcing an additional \$20 million through 2019.

We are supporting many organizations doing great work through these commitments and I would like to call out just three of them: The Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University, the Henry M. Jackson Foundation, and, as the number of women joining our U.S. Armed Forces and the number of female

veterans reintegrating into civilian life have grown, Boston University School of Medicine's Women Veterans Network.

As we look to the future, we see great potential to address the remaining barriers to a successful transition from military service to civilian life, but only through collaboration and a shared vision will we realize it.

Our goal is to synchronize efforts and empower every veteran and his or her family to lead a full and meaningful life by achieving optimal health and wellbeing, leveraging education and workforce readiness, and fostering employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. With clearer data, a unifying vision, and leading strategy we can better serve our veterans and their families; enhance our national security by contributing to the preservation of the All-Volunteer Force; ensure our global competitiveness and civic leadership; bring our military, veteran and civilian populations closer together; and meet our moral and social obligations to our veterans.

We salute America's heroes. We are honored to have the opportunity to employ them, to learn from them, and to support them and their families in every way we can.

Thanks again to the Subcommittee for its leadership and partnership, and for holding this hearing. I appreciate the invitation to appear and look forward to answering your questions.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF GARY M. PROFIT APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

Mr. ARRINGTON. Thank you, General.

Now Mr. Kress, you recognize you for 5 minutes, representing Starbucks.

STATEMENT OF MATT KRESS

Mr. KRESS. Good afternoon, Chairman Arrington, Ranking Member O'Rourke, and Members of the Subcommittee. As a post-9/11 combat veteran, it is an honor to share with you how Starbucks Coffee Company is continuing to support Active duty military spouses and veterans as they transition into Starbucks partners, as we refer to our employees.

To give some personal context to my remarks, I spent 22 years in the Marine Corps between active and reserve service, as both a commissioned officer and enlisted Marine. After deploying to Iraq in 2004 with Marine Corps Special Operations Command, I left Active duty to become a firefighter in Southern California. During my time in public safety, I took advantage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, turn a Master's degree to an MBA, which took me to Starbucks.

In November 2013, Starbucks made a groundbreaking commitment to hire at least 10,000 veterans and military spouses in 5 years. I am proud to say we achieved that goal early and in March 2017 set a new goal of hiring 25,000 by 2025, which we are quickly working towards.

Throughout this process, we have recognized that serving our veterans and military spouses is about much more than simply providing jobs. Starbucks understands that the unique skills, experiences, and knowledge that they bring through their service are tremendously valuable. Our goal, therefore, is not only to hire 25,000,

but also to create a work environment and corporate culture that fosters their personal and professional growth.

A steady paycheck is important when shifting jobs, but veterans and their families are not just shifting jobs when they leave the service. They are leaving an environment where they had a clear sense of purpose and worked closely with others towards goals that were much bigger than themselves. I am proud to say that Starbucks provides that environment.

Moving to the topic of innovations, one of our early recognitions was the need to evaluate this population through a different lens based on their training and life experience. To this end, we shifted from a skills-based hiring model to a competency model when evaluating job candidates.

While the job-specific training received in the military might not be a direct match for our environment, we know that the leadership, teamwork, and other intangible skills are a great fit for Starbucks.

We also know that the enthusiasm and dedication that military spouses bring to our stores creates a welcoming environment for our customers.

Parallel to this, Starbucks has focused on preparing our field leaders to effectively lead veterans and military spouses through an understanding of their unique differences in culture, leadership expectations, and even language. One of the best ways we have found to achieve this are through immersions on military bases where our field leaders and partners get to see firsthand the natural teamwork that translates so well to our stores.

We have also listened to our partners and developed or improved several programs or policies that are unique to our veteran and military populations. For current Reservists, we provide 80 hours of flexible leave to facilitate military participation. If Guard or Reserve partners are called to Active duty, we pay the difference between their Starbucks and military wages for up to 78 weeks. Finally, our veteran partners can now gift their college achievement plan, which is a fully-funded, remote bachelor's degree at Arizona State University, to their spouse or child.

We also recognize the need to build an internal veteran cultural competency that not only understands and values veterans, but is improved by infusing their values into the company's culture. For Starbucks, this started with the recognition that much of what has made the company incredibly successful parallels military values: a commitment to excellence, a strong sense of ethical and moral principles, comradery, and empowerment of our partners are among the values that makes Starbucks a special place to work and parallels what drives our military.

Another internal cultural piece is the growth of our veteran affinity group, the Armed Forces Network, which has 16 chapters throughout the country. The AFN provides a source of mentorship, comradery, and connection for our veterans and spouses; it also provides a forum and focal point for building our military cultural competency. In return, our veteran partners pay it forward by engaging in community volunteer activities and represent the best of Starbucks.

Continuing on the broader question on innovations in the space, we are currently focused on meeting the employment challenges faced by military spouses. With an unemployment rate that is four times the veteran population, we are partnering with Hiring Our Heroes, USAA, MOAA, and others to find lasting solutions. On our side, we have specifically designed processes that assist our military spouses to transfer their jobs to new Starbucks locations when the inevitable change-of-duty-station orders arrive. We also have flexible leave policies for spouses that take into account the reality of deployments, moving, and homecoming.

Starbucks is increasing the opportunities for local communities to use our stores to engage with military members and their families, expand partnerships with Veterans Service Organization, to relevant programming, and using our scale to create connections to bridge the military-civilian divide. Utilizing our 44 military family stores, which are situated in communities near military installations, we are working with a range of our partners such as the USO, Blue Star Families, and Team RWB to provide needed transition programming and services.

Our stores are also a hub for organizing partner-driven community service projects in conjunction with veterans groups The Mission Continues and Team Rubicon. These organizations provide veterans and spouses with opportunities to make connections in their new communities, as well as leverage their considerable skills for the greater good.

Moving forward, our ambition is to change what it means to support their troops. While being thanked for their service is appreciated, military members and their spouses wanted to be given the opportunity to demonstrate their incredible leadership, experience, and talent that they bring to the workplace. We will continue driving and refining this effort through our policy, storytelling, and partnerships.

As our dedicated hiring program and veteran cultural competency matures, we are increasingly sharing our models and lessons learned with others.

In closing my remarks, I would like to raise opportunities for Congress to enable the success of our veterans and military spouses.

First is recognizing and supporting the unique employment challenges of our military spouses. A second request is related to your 2018 Mulder Transition Improvement Act, Mr. Chairman. Giving the transition process greater structure and adding counseling and wraparound services are truly important changes that will increase the value and impact.

Thank you for inviting me to speak with you today. After serving our country, it is my honor to discuss the Starbucks Veterans and Military Spouses Program, and the difference it is making in the lives of our military members and their families.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF MATT KRESS APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

Mr. ARRINGTON. Thank you, Mr. Kress.

We now recognize Mr. Sevola from Prudential for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF CHARLES J. SEVOLA, JR.

Mr. SEVOLA. Thank you. Chairman Arrington, Ranking Member O'Rourke, and Members of the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, my name is Chuck Sevola. I am an Army veteran and I head Prudential's Office of Veterans Initiatives.

Thank you for having me here today and the opportunity to speak with you about Prudential's veterans programs.

The mission statement of our Veterans Initiative Office is to establish sustainable programs and activities that have a positive impact on the lives of veterans and their families, helping them to achieve professional success, financial prosperity, and peace of mind.

Our dedicated Office of Veterans Initiatives was formed in 2010 at the direction of our Chairman, John Strangfeld. Prudential strives to be a preferred employer for veterans and military spouses, a community leader in supporting Veterans Service Organizations, and a national leader in developing and sharing best practices for corporate veteran programs.

We have established a five-pillar strategy to achieve our goals. The first pillar, and our primary focus, is education and employment. This covers our programs in recruiting, training, and retaining veterans and military spouses not just for jobs, but for fruitful careers in our firm. Our flagship program with this pillar is our VETalent collaboration with Workforce Opportunity Services.

Our second pillar of employee engagement focuses on harnessing the passion that exists in our workforce to help veterans and their families through volunteerism.

The third pillar, Thought Leadership, covers our work to understand the issues that veterans and their families face, and establishing and sharing best practice programs to address these issues.

The fourth pillar is corporate giving. Here we provide financial resources through philanthropy and sponsorship to Veterans Service Organizations and other like-minded organizations to extend our reach beyond what we can do on our own.

Finally, our fifth pillar, Veterans and Military Business Support, seeks to find the intersection between the work we do with veterans through our corporate social responsibility and the work we do as a financial services firm. Our primary focus here is bringing Prudential's expertise in financial wellness education to the issues that veterans and their families face as they transition to civilian life.

Our multi-faceted approach to our veteran program is robust and mutually supporting among the five pillars. Elements of our WOS program mentioned previously can be found within each of these pillars.

Founded in 2005, Workforce Opportunity Services is a leading nonprofit committed to developing untapped talent from underserved and veteran communities through partnerships with organizations dedicated to diversifying their workforce. The WOS model has its roots in a program developed by Dr. Arthur Langer of Columbia University. This program has been adapted and branded VETalent at Prudential in 2010 to serve as the basis of our veteran training and hiring activities for post-9/11 veterans.

One of the key attributes of the Prudential VETalent program is its adaptability to a variety of roles. The multi-phased approach to this program allows a sponsoring company to see the progress of candidates in the program and to assess their readiness at various checkpoints for eventual hire. This program has been used with success in many of our offices around the country, but most recently in our newly established Business and Technology Center in El Paso, Texas. Of the Prudential staff in the El Paso office, more than 50 percent are veterans or military spouses, the majority of which were sourced using this WOS model.

Consistent with our desire to be a national leader in establishing and sharing best practice programs, we tested and refined this WOS Prudential model with the intent of sharing it with other like-minded companies to expand its impact beyond what Prudential could do on its own. As a result, in close cooperation with WOS, this program model has been adopted by over 60 other companies around the country.

In support of our efforts to hire and retain veterans and military spouses, Prudential has found it helpful to educate hiring managers on the military in general and the value that veterans and military spouses bring to the workplace.

With a very small percentage of our Nation's population having a direct connection to military service, there is a lack of knowledge and misconceptions that must be overcome by hiring managers before they will routinely consider them as a viable source for talent. Prudential has developed an in-house training curriculum specifically designed to close this gap in understanding.

Private sector programs can effectively be built on governmental initiatives to help advance veterans and military spouse employment. An excellent example of a successful program is the Corporate Fellowship Program of the Hiring Our Heroes organization. Not only does this intern program allow the fellow to begin the acclimation process into corporate America much earlier, but also gives the prospective employer an extended period to judge fit into company culture. These factors play a positive role in job satisfaction and retention.

Prudential has created an integrated five-pillar strategy to focus our efforts in education and employment of veterans and military spouses. By adapting an effective model created by Workforce Opportunity Services, Prudential and WOS have created a program that not only has been a key enabler in our own staffing activities, but also in the staffing activities of other companies interested in tapping into this valuable talent pool.

Hiring manager training, as well as participation in select government programs, have been a significant factor in the overall success in achieving our mission.

Prudential would like to thank the Committee for its invitation to speak with you and share our experiences. We stand ready to work with others to help further expand the WOS program or any other that will be beneficial to servicemembers, veterans, and their families.

I am happy to answer any questions that you may have. Thank you for having me.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHARLES J. SEVOLA APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

Mr. ARRINGTON. Thank you, Mr. Sevola.

Mr. Douthit with Dell, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF ROBERT DOUTHIT

Mr. DOUTHIT. Good afternoon, Chairman Arrington, Ranking Member O'Rourke, Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me today to testify on "Hiring and Retaining Veterans in the Modern Day Workforce."

My name is Robert Douthit, I am the Senior Director for Dell's Customer Solutions Centers for the Americas, and a 20-year Army veteran, serving from 1986 to 2006. I come from the perspective of five deployments, two combat deployments to Iraq in '90 and '91, Somalia in 1993, peace-keeping deployments to Bosnia in the summer of 1998, peace-keeping deployments in Kosovo in 1999, and commanding an Air Cavalry squadron in the Anbar Province of Iraq from 2003 to 2004. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today.

I would like to start by noting that the U.S. Department of Defense was one of Dell's first customers and, accordingly, we have a long tradition of identifying with and working for United States military. And we greatly appreciate, as I expect you do, the skills that veterans bring to our workforce and our business.

My testimony today has three objectives: to explain why Dell is a vigorous recruiter of veterans and their spouses; explain how we recruit veterans and their spouses; and, finally, offer a few suggestions on how the Federal Government's Military Transition Assistance Program, or TAP, would enhance veteran hiring.

Dell recruits veterans and their spouses because we believe, as we expect again you do, the military provides a rich source of talent, especially in key areas of worker under-representation, and we believe that a diverse workforce is an economically and dynamically effective workforce.

A recent study found that when compared to their peer's student veterans using the Post-9/11 GI Bill represent the single best source of potential and current achievers in higher education with nearly 100,000 graduating annually.

In 2001, Dell established its Veterans and Supporters Employee Resource Group, or ERG, as a means for veterans within the business to connect, support, and mentor each other. The success of the Veterans ERG is due in large part to the dedicated commitment of our Chairman, Michael Dell himself, his senior leadership management throughout the company, and, most importantly, those veterans actively engaged in the ERG.

In terms of how we recruit veterans and spouses, we participate in a number of on-base military transition fairs, where veterans begin to look for employment outside their military service. Specifically, our Dell Talent Acquisition Team participates in monthly partner calls with the Texas Veterans Commission to identify talent opportunities for businesses seeking workers with those skills that military service and training provides.

Additionally, Dell works with a variety of programs and partners, many of which you have heard previously mentioned here

today. We also use these organizations as a source of well-trained future Dell team members. My written testimony lists many of those veteran activities and programs that we work with and from which we recruit.

At Dell, we also have a social media strategy known as Heroes Among Us. This campaign has reached 6.2 million potential readers. Additionally, on our military jobs page, we have seen an over 100-percent increase in veterans actually tabbing the “Apply” click for a job in the last year.

In terms of suggestions for how the Government might improve the member’s transition experience, as you know, some employers may not understand the many skills that the military service provides or that veterans acquire during their service and, accordingly, those businesses may not understand the value that veterans bring to their specific businesses. Again, my written extended testimony offers suggestions to improve that transition experience. Most of these do not require additional funding.

Most notable among those suggestions are invigorating the existing military TAP program with a curriculum aligned more to career exploration rather than applying for a role and writing a resume; initiating programs that train the civilian, the business HR and talent acquisition teams on what the military provides, and allowing that talent to actually participate in the TAP program on base to learn firsthand as that transition occurs prior to the military member’s separation; explore the opportunity to permit government TAPs professionals to visit on site with the myriad businesses seeking veterans for their businesses, so that those TAPs professionals might learn the inner workings of the businesses looking to hire veterans.

Again, it is my honor to appear before you today and I would like to thank the Committee for your efforts in exploring how we might improve veteran hiring opportunities, and I am happy to answer any questions you have.

Thank you.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF ROBERT DOUTHIT APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

Mr. ARRINGTON. Thank you, Mr. Douthit. And, again, we appreciate you and your service to our country in the military and now in service to your brothers and sisters who are veterans, and through your positions in corporate America and at the U.S. Chamber.

I am going to ask that our Chairman, we are honored in the Subcommittee to be joined by the Chairman of the VA Committee, Dr. Phil Roe, from the great state of Tennessee.

Dr. Roe, Chairman Roe, we yield as much time as you would like.

Mr. ROE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And just to point out, we have two Texans in the seat, and there wouldn’t be a Texas if it weren’t for Tennessee. I just want to point that out as we get started.

[Laughter.]

Mr. ROE. We had to bail them out a number of years ago.

I think I first of all want to thank all of you all. And I remember very specifically a 2014 hearing we had where Walmart came in

here and said we will offer any honorably discharged veteran a job. I remember that like it was yesterday and I appreciate very much you're doing that. That meant a lot to I think veterans around. And we got on the airplanes, we do three or four times a week get on an airplane, and it didn't happen during my generation, but now those military young people in uniform can get on the airplane first. I sit in a lot of airports, unfortunately, and it makes me proud as an American to see our country treating this generation of veterans different than other generations, Vietnam specifically had been treated.

So I want to thank all of your companies for what you are doing, stepping up.

You know, one of the things that—there are a couple things that have been brought up, one was the GI Bill, Post-9/11 GI Bill. I used the GI Bill when I got out of the Army in 1975 and I still appreciate my country investing \$300 a month in me for 2 years, to this day I appreciate that.

I know that right now the Student Veterans of America have come in and met with us a number of times, and it is over a 70-percent completion rate for those. It is an amazing statistic. So that is an investment that is paying off big time that you all can leverage.

One of the things that Secretary, then Secretary Shulkin wanted to do is reduce veteran suicide. And General Haston, who is our Guard Commander in Tennessee, when he took over in 2011, he had four suicides the first 40 days he commanded the Guard in Tennessee. He said we had to do something. And he started a program called Guard Your Buddy, but what he found was relationships and money, finances were a big part of the problem. If you have a job, a good, steady job that takes care of the finances part, and that is part of the issue I think these young people leaving the military and separating.

And that is why I was going to ask Mr. Douthit, the TAPs program—the TAP program, I should say, is a good program, but what I found in talking to employers in my district is they don't know how—because we don't have a military base, I grew up in Clarksville, Tennessee where there was a huge base there, but where they are, they want veterans, they can't find them. And so I think we need to find a way to make it easier for businesses.

I had a friend of mine in Nashville who is a CEO of a large health care company, he said, look, I want to find out how I can hire these young company commanders and bring them into my system. They have already got the leadership skills, they have got all that, the things that I want to help eventually run my hospitals. They didn't know how to connect it to and I think that is a key problem that we have is finding that connection. And where we are, we can't find enough veterans. We looked for them and when they get out, they can get hired in no time at all, because they do bring those great skills.

So would you have any suggestions, you mentioned a couple, which I thought were very important in your testimony about how we line up our people, what can we do to the TAP program to make it better? Like you pointed out a couple things, instead of just

learning how to fill out a resume, and how can we line up those great people with employers out there that want to hire them.

Mr. DOUTHIT. Yes, I think a couple things. First, we all recognize it is important that the mission of the military is to deter aggression and fight and win our Nation's wars, and that is what we are paying these young—

Mr. ROE. I thought they told me was to blow up things and kill people, that is what—

Mr. DOUTHIT. A win-win, and we understand that is what the young servicemembers and older servicemembers are paid for. That critical time in TAP, towards the very end of their career, is essential that when you bring the businesses together—and, again, hopefully the best of the best represented here today who recognize that talent, but that understanding what that transition process is for particularly the younger military members.

So that if you can bring business on base into the TAP program, so that again the HR and the talent acquisition members from business understands exactly how that process works, I think you would find a real fight for talent. Right? That they would come in and they understand in one-on-one dialogue with the TAP professionals around who exactly is coming through the process, not necessarily by name, but by capability and training levels.

To your point, those company commanders who can go out and run a store today or lead a sales team. And so that sort of osmosis that occurs between business getting on base or access to the TAP program, and then conversely allowing TAP, I will use Central Texas as an example, to move from a joint base in San Antonio or from Fort Hood into businesses in the region, or El Paso, even in those areas, to understand exactly how do things work at Dell EMC, how do things work at those other businesses around the region. And so that sort of permeation during the TAP program is important.

Mr. ROE. I think one of the other things you all are doing for the spouse program is that you—I was just counting up today in my head, in 2 years I moved seven times. Most of the tours were unaccompanied, but during my 2 years in the military that is a lot of moving and it is very disruptive on families. And the spouse programs that you all are putting in are equally important, because I do think that affects relationships and finances.

And so, you know, including those spouses in your program I think is as important as including the veteran themselves or the Active duty person at that point. It makes a lot of sense, because you allow that family economically to be stable and I want to commend you for that. I think that is a huge thing you are doing.

I remember in 2009 during the height of the recession, we had unemployment in veterans, I mean, it was maybe north of 15 percent, it was horrible. And now I think the unemployment rate for veterans is around 3.4 percent in the country. So it is very, very low. And part of that were the companies like you all that set out and said we are going to hire veterans. Those companies made it a goal for their company to hire these great people, and I am sitting here today as the Chairman thanking you for doing that and this effort you are continuing to do to hire veterans.

With that, I yield back.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For the record, I have not been able to get Mr. Correa or Mr. Takano to say that the low unemployment rate has anything to do with tax reform, but I am going to work on them through this Committee.

[Laughter.]

Mr. ARRINGTON. In case you leave early, I just want you to know I am going to work on them.

With that, I yield 5 minutes to my colleague Mr. O'Rourke.

Mr. O'ROURKE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I really like that the Chairman of the Full Committee, Dr. Roe, reference the crisis we have in veteran suicide right now and the conservative estimate, and we don't know the real number, but it is 20 a day, every day are taking their lives. And the Chairman mentioned that finances are part of that, but also we have heard some very powerful testimony from veterans talking about function and purpose. You know, you cannot be more essential or useful than being a member of that military unit. Everything that you do will determine not just your fate, but the fate of those other servicemembers in your unit. And to come back and sometimes not have purpose or function in your life can be very hard to survive, honestly.

And so the programs that we are hearing about today I think help to satisfy both of these challenges, both the financial and the challenge in function, and I am very, very pleased by the example that these organizations have set. And, you know, you all have a responsibility to your shareholders, and so you wouldn't just do this because it is the right thing to do, though it is, it has got to be right for you and your bottom line, and it sounds like it is as well. And to any degree you can help us measure or articulate what those measurements are, because your good example and then the example in terms of how it has been profitable for your companies is one that we need other businesses to see and to follow.

I really liked the suggestions, Mr. Douthit that you provided for how we can improve the Transition Assistance Program. Just having the literacy amongst employers about what it means to serve when fewer than one percent of America has served post-9/11. It was far more common in World War II, in the Korea era, even in Vietnam, and now it is really the exception. And so I love this idea of bringing the employer into the TAP program, so that they can meet those transitioning servicemembers or just gain some competence in the skills and experience and expertise that they can provide to those employers, I liked that idea a lot.

Also, not lost on me, General Profit, you know, your comment that perhaps to some degree what you and other employers have done has helped to reduce the unemployment rate among veterans. And I love the example Walmart is setting for how you treat military spouses. You know, any man or any woman who is in conjunction with their husband or wife serving by helping that family move and survive and thrive in the midst of some challenges that most of us don't experience or know, that is really important. And I would love to see the same kind of return for those military spouses.

Ms. O'Brien, you mentioned the unemployment rate is four times as high. What are some—to the degree that you from personal ex-

perience or as a representative of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, what are some specific programs, perhaps in line with what Mr. Douthit has suggested, that we can implement for military spouses going forward?

Ms. O'BRIEN. So it four times, we are unemployed at four times the rate of the national average of our civilian counterparts.

One glaring omission that exists on the TAP side is that military spouses are not able—they are only able to attend on a space-available basis. And so oftentimes military spouses don't have access to the programming and knowledge that is being shared during the TAP process. I think if there is an opportunity to integrate military spouses into the TAP process, it would be unbelievably impactful.

Another great opportunity that we are seeing now at Hiring Our Heroes is that states are actually putting delegations together to travel to our transition summit. So as we are convening, you know, several thousand transitioning servicemembers, states, the State of Wisconsin, the State of Indiana, they are sending businesses to Fort Bliss, Texas to try and find folks that want to return home, and capture them and bring them back and let them know that there is opportunity. So I think exploring opportunities for states to integrate businesses into these larger-scaled summits is a wonderful opportunity, and also they are going to have the opportunity to interact with military spouses.

Starbucks is doing a fantastic job, really one of the leading employers across the country right now. And on Thursday we are going to make a fantastic initiative announcement at the spouse summit where Starbucks, in conjunction with Hiring Our Heroes, and a fantastic coalition of companies is going to work over the next 3 years to hire 100,000 military spouses, and that is going to be I think a call to action that our country needs from an employer perspective.

Mr. O'ROURKE. And I will just say, and I am sure my colleagues have similar experiences, as we have hired both veterans, military retirees, and military spouses, we have always found that to be extraordinary value for our office. As a Representative of Fort Bliss with 32,000 Active duty servicemembers, there are a number of military spouses, and the single largest challenge for us to do our part in holding up our end of the bargain is to make sure that those spouses have opportunity in our community. And it can be accreditation, it can be certifications across border, it can be all number of challenges that they face, but when we the employer find a way to make use of their value, we always get the best end of the deal.

And so just from personal experience, I want to be sure that I share that and that we facilitate the really good news that you just announced with other employers and for all military spouses. So thank you for the suggestion and thank you each for what you do within your organizations, both for retirees, veterans, and spouses as well. I am grateful.

Mr. Chairman, thanks.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Thank you, Ranking Member. I am going to yield myself 5 minutes.

Someone mentioned that employers don't always recognize or understand the unique skills and experiences that become an asset

for their organization. In your experience, could you highlight, you know, two or three unique skills based on the experience and training as an Active duty military person transitioning as a veteran? Highlight two or three of those that have become now an asset at Starbucks or Walmart.

Mr. KRESS. Yes, sir. We know at Starbucks that if we looked at a direct skills translation, particularly with our business model, we would not be employing as many veterans outside of some narrow areas, say finance or technology. But since we have broadened and looked at a competency-based model, we have been very successful, and I have one great example.

We recently hired a retiring Marine Corps special operator to manage a group of our stores in Western Montana, he is responsible for about ten stores and several hundred employees. And if you look at his experience, he probably wouldn't fit into the Starbucks model, but his ability to lead people, his ability to overcome challenges, his ability to accomplish goals is absolutely fantastic and he is doing a great job for us.

So that is just one example. And I will turn it over to General Profit to talk about what Walmart has done.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Excellent. General Profit?

General PROFIT. Mr. Chairman, I guess I would say three things. The first thing is the Nation makes a huge investment in the knowledge, skills, and abilities of all who serve, and, further, an equally huge investment in their growth and development as leaders, but I think the greatest things that we find in the people who have served and their families are the values that they bring to our organization.

We find that the idea of service and sacrifice and excellence and respect is something that aligns very well with the culture at Walmart, and the values that we hold dear, in addition to integrity, and those are exactly the Army values that I lived for 31 years. And I think the Marine Corps and the Navy and the Air Force and the Coast Guard are equally imbued with those same values. And it is important to note that their families and their spouses come with that same values base, and that is the most important thing to us.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Well said. I think we can assume that this probably cuts across all companies in terms of the leadership skills that are sort of ready-built into these men and women.

What about the challenges? What are the unique challenges that the veterans come with that you as an employer and others consider and recognize to sort of smooth out any bumps in the transition.

General PROFIT. I guess I will start by saying that— and we have talked around it a little bit here—I think one of the things that I would say about the TAP program that I think could be a huge opportunity is to enhance the opportunity for the private sector and non-profit organizations to network with these great Americans well before they transition, because most of them have no idea about their career aspirations when they separate. And so it is really hard to have a personal brand discussion with someone who doesn't really know what they want to do, and it is very hard to understand where the gaps exist between that portfolio of prepa-

ration and experiences, if you don't even really understand their aspirations.

And I think if we had an earlier conversation with them, Mr. Chairman, I think we would better understand them and I think they would better understand us.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Great. Mr. Sevola?

Mr. SEVOLA. Yes. I think we know that we have to work with hiring managers to make sure that they understand the skills and abilities that veterans bring to the workplace, but we have also found that we have to work with the veterans themselves to understand the skills and abilities they bring to the workplace, because many times they believe because you are an infantryman or you are an artilleryman, that those skills aren't readily transferrable to Prudential. It is true, we don't do a lot of that type of work at Prudential, but certainly the leadership skills and the teamwork and things of that nature are absolutely, critically applicable. And we have to educate the veterans as much, so they have their own confidence in their own skills.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Douthit, yes.

Mr. DOUTHIT. If I could add to that. I think the one word that best describes veterans, given all that you have heard here, is athlete. There isn't a lot of fire and maneuver at Prudential, nor is there at Dell EMC. Whether you are a combat MOS or in the logistics IT world, the leadership that has already been alluded to here and the ability to make decisions under extreme, intense pressure in very short periods of time with grave consequences, I think veterans probably don't quite appreciate how well that is appreciated in the business world with the kind of values that General Profit alluded to, with the kind of diversity that Mr. Sevola mentions as well.

So, I think athlete is the word I would leave you with.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Well, your comments are timely. Mr. O'Rourke and I and my colleagues have been working on a comprehensive reform of TAP, it is still open and the ink isn't dry, and we are going to consider everything that you are saying to make it as impactful and as effective as possible. So, thanks for your comments.

My time is way expired, so I am going to ask my friend from California, Mr. Takano, to take 5 minutes for questions and comments.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

This is a question for everyone, if you would briefly answer it. Do you include servicemembers in the National Guard and Reserve in your veteran training and employment programs, or is it just for veterans?

General PROFIT. No, absolutely. If you have retired, if you have separated as a veteran, if you continue your service in the Guard or the Reserve, or if you are part of a military family, we equally value you at Walmart.

Mr. TAKANO. So Walmart, so you do include servicemembers in the National Guard—

General PROFIT. Yes, absolutely.

Mr. TAKANO [continued]. —in your program? Great.

Mr. SEVOLA. At Prudential, we start from the position of this is a talent play. So we look for great talent wherever it exists, so we

have a very broad definition of veterans when we execute our program. So members of the Reserves, the National Guards, veteran from Active duty are all included, to include military spouses.

Mr. TAKANO. Wonderful.

Mr. KRESS. Similar for Starbucks, that we put them in the same standing as retired military or veterans. And we also facilitate, much like my peers here, their military service by giving them special consideration when they are wearing the uniform.

Mr. DOUTHIT. As well for Dell, yes.

Mr. TAKANO. Wonderful. With the change of the National Guard and Reserves to an operational reserve from a strategic reserve, the Guardsmen and Reservists you employ have been required to attend more training days and increased deployments. Have you noticed an impact from your employees being gone more? I am talking about this Reservist and Guardsmen population.

General PROFIT. I don't think so, Mr. Takano. We just recently enhanced our military leave-of-absence policy actually to include the opportunity for folks who have not served to enlist initially into the military, to remove that final barrier for them. So I think we are just very supportive, and we haven't noticed, I think, any uptick in the move from a strategic reserve to an operational one.

Mr. SEVOLA. At Prudential, there has not been significant impact to our business operations. We stress communication amongst the servicemembers, the Reservists and their management to ensure that as soon as they understand there is going to be a training requirement, that that could be worked into business plans. That has worked well for us, so there has not been appreciable impact that has been detrimental.

Mr. KRESS. For Starbucks, similar to our peers, we haven't noticed an impact. For the servicemembers who do deploy, we hold their job and they go right back into their job. And we also have a policy, knowing that we don't want them coming from 48, 72, or 96 hours of active drill period back to work. So we give them a flexible leave policy if they need to take some time off to get back to us.

Mr. DOUTHIT. Yeah, we understand at Dell EMC that that is the cost of freedom and the cost of doing business.

Mr. TAKANO. Wonderful.

Mr. DOUTHIT. And anecdotally speaking, a Lieutenant Colonel in the United States Army, National Guard will deploy, his job will be waiting for him and we expect he will do fabulous when he gets back.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you. That is so important to our national defense. I have a Reserve base in my district and part of the challenge is finding employers who understand the various needs of our Guardsmen and Reservists.

Do you know if these servicemembers are advancing at the same rate as their peers? Are these servicemembers retained in the company at the same rate as their peers?

General PROFIT. The evidence that we have seen so far is that our veteran associates are more loyal than the average Walmart associate and that they perform at a higher level. And we think that is part of the value that you talk about to the business beyond merely the civic and social responsibility, because once we have a

better handle on that, you can monetize those kinds of things, and at Walmart all those numbers are really big.

Mr. TAKANO. Wonderful.

Mr. KRESS. I would say, sir, that for our field leader positions where we move veterans and military spouses into them, we have had an absolutely fantastic retention and promotion rate for our district managers, which typically lead up to ten stores. We have at this point, I believe, a 96-percent retention rate for the veterans that are in those positions.

Mr. TAKANO. Great.

Mr. SEVOLA. At Prudential, I think our retention is commensurate with our other employees. I will tell you that measurement is an area that we are focusing on, so we can get better at it. It is a challenge given some privacy rules and things of that nature within our company, but that is an area where we are focusing and working very closely with our HR organization so that we can better answer that question in the future.

Mr. TAKANO. Great.

Mr. DOUTHIT. Yeah, I would echo Mr. Sevola's comments around privacy in terms of how we measure it, but I can tell you that veterans are doing very well, but I can't speak to the numbers specifically.

Mr. TAKANO. Well, thank you all for your answers.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Thank you, Mr. Takano.

Now my friend, another distinguished gentleman from California, Mr. Correa, for 5 minutes.

Mr. CORREA. My good friend from Texas, thank you very much for that wonderful introduction, sir.

I just wanted to thank all of you for the good work you do. And we have had this challenge when I was in the State of California dealing with Veterans Affairs, we were always trying to figure out how do we give the private sector incentives to do exactly what you are doing, which is to hire more of our veterans.

Any thoughts how we can fill this room with good employers that are hiring veterans?

Ms. O'BRIEN. At Hiring—

Mr. CORREA. What can we do to make your job more effective?

Ms. O'BRIEN. At Hiring Our Heroes, what we know works successfully is when each of our employer partners shares their stories and puts it out there in front of the country. When we show models of success from Dell, from Prudential, from Starbucks, from Walmart, it leaves a lasting impact, and those stories of success for military spouses. We know that through educating and informing hiring managers and recruiters that it allows us to retain and offer opportunities for military spouses to have career mobility. But really the impact of storytelling we find over and over again is what changes the narrative at companies that aren't at the table yet.

Mr. CORREA. Go ahead.

Mr. SEVOLA. I was just going to say that what is important is that we talked earlier about the fact that there is a big divide between the civilian population and the military population, with less than one percent of our population have a direct military service, that means there is a gap of understanding. And getting the word

out and telling the stories, as Ms. O'Brien states, is very, very important to help bridge that gap. The talent is there, they are very, very effective, and once employers have a taste of that skill set, there is no incentive needed.

It is a talent play that getting them in the door to show what they can do is all you really need to do.

Mr. KRESS. And I would also add to that, Mr. Correa, that the companies at this table and many others around the country are doing a fantastic job of cooperating. The tool kits, the best practices, and coming together on a regular basis to continue to build and refine our practices are happening every day, sir.

Mr. CORREA. Gender, men and women, any thoughts on how to approach women veterans versus male veterans?

General PROFIT. I guess we are learning more every day, and some of what we are learning from the Women's Veterans Network at Boston University is very insightful for us. We know that there are unique challenges, but frankly we are finding—we just showcased a Navy helicopter pilot who works in our technology function at Walmart. There are countless stories, as Liz and others have talked about, of women veterans coming to our organizations and being very successful.

I think we have more to learn about our women veteran associates, as it has more to do with their health and wellbeing than it does with their education and training, or their interest in starting their own business or being a Walmart associate.

Mr. CORREA. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, I would like to work with you and these wonderful folks here on trying to figure out how to approach these men and women in uniform before they separate and, you know, double, you know, quadruple the amount of businesses that are actually reaching out to our veterans before the day of separation.

And, Ms. O'Brien, to all of you here, I like your thoughts about the storytelling, the story. I would invite you to come to Southern California, so we could do some storytelling to some of the locals, local chambers and other folks, to really get, you know, this kind of a process going. As you said, it is really about one-on-one, telling folks the success.

And again, like the Chairman said, I am very interested in helping you help us come up with good public policy to make sure that people understand what value our veterans are to the private sector.

With that, Mr. Chair, I yield the remainder of my time.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Thank you, Mr. Correa.

If you have any other thoughts, I think you and I are the only ones here now. So we will, in case anyone is watching at home, shall we name all of our colleagues? No, I am kidding.

I have got one more follow-up question and then we will close. We talk a lot, Mr. Correa and I, Mr. O'Rourke, as we work through the various programs within the purview of this Subcommittee, and it seems invariably that when we have folks from the VA we will ask the question—well, first we will say we think it is a great program, we think the mission and the objectives are all good, and if those were achieved, we would be a better country, our veterans would be better served, taxpayers, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

And then we ask, how is it going? And I find it frustrating that we don't get very good, definitive, clear data on what is working and what is not.

And all we want to do is find out, if it is working, let's double down; if it is not, let's get rid of it or fix it. How do you all—I mean, you are in the private sector, there may be a greater sense of urgency and accountability, I suspect, we would like to take some of that and transfer it to the VA, how do you measure, how do you report to your superiors that what you are doing is actually working? How do you measure, how do you track, what are your metrics?

Just give me a couple of examples and then we will close out.

General PROFIT. Obviously we report quarterly on a very public commitment. Part of it is just the fact that we have an obligation to deliver on our hiring commitment. But increasingly we are looking at data capture and reporting and analysis on much more quality metrics that are associated with, in our case, how loyal they are to Walmart. And it is beyond traditional retention: It is, whether they stay at Walmart or not, they remain or become productive members of our communities and, hopefully, they remain customers.

So, it is more loyalty than retention, and we are trying to get much, much better at the differences in their performance, whether it be in our academies or our Pathways Program, or whether it is in their traditional performance in their operational roles.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Can you ever imagine a scenario where your superiors would ask you for the outcomes of your programs for veterans where you said that you just don't know, you don't have the data?

General PROFIT. I would try not to have that experience' and I would rather not imagine it.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Yeah, we have that experience like Groundhog Day sometimes.

General PROFIT. I will tell you, Mr. Chairman, I am very encouraged with the participation of the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs at convenings like the Bush Institute Military Service Initiative Stand-To Series, which is coming up on its second session this summer, because I think the exchange between the public sector, the private sector, and the non-profit organizations has been very healthy, and I think we are learning from each other.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Good. Any other final thoughts on just—

Ms. O'BRIEN. Sir?

Mr. ARRINGTON. Yes.

Ms. O'BRIEN. I would like to say the Executive Order that was recently dropped by the President in reference to military spouse employment across the Government, that one of the most important parts that was included in that is that the Government will now have to track how many military spouses were interviewed, how the job was advertised to military spouses, how many spouses were hired, and how many were retained.

I think that sends a very clear signal to the rest of the country that this is important, it is relevant, and data capture really drives what we are doing.

Mr. ARRINGTON. That is great, great point.

Mr. KRESS. Yes, sir, I would add that our best measure of success is how quickly we are exceeding our hiring goals for veterans and military spouses, and continuing to up that bar. But on the qualitative note that my peers talked about, that is the next focus. And we are currently working with that Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse to do a deep dive into military spouse employment and understand the numbers behind that, so we can give more quantitative answers.

Mr. SEVOLA. We certainly count the number of hires that we have as an objective measure, but with our desire to want to be a national leader in terms of programmatic solutions, we report routinely to our Chairman about the work that we are doing to help change the game with some of the macro problems, specifically in the area of military spouses and job portability and things of that nature.

So we measure ourselves in how we are influencing the workplace on these larger problems and putting programs in place that others can emulate.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Let me now yield as much time as the gentleman may consume to Mr. Correa.

Mr. CORREA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I wanted to point out that when I deal with my veterans in my district, I have a lot of town halls with them, a lot of meetings, and I ask them, what is it that I can do to make your life better? How is it that I can honor you for your years of service to our country? And that is really the way I get ideas as to legislation and issues, and what have you.

I would like to pose the same kind of question to all of you, which is what is it that we need to do to make you more effective when it comes to hiring veterans? What is it that we can do to incentivize you, to help you hire our veterans? You are the ones that are doing the hiring, so I would welcome the opportunity to hear from you and to work with you on any suggestions you may have and to implement them.

Whether you want to respond to that now or you want to talk to me later on or the chair, but, you know, let's talk, let's work together.

General PROFIT. First of all, sir, I will tell you that you don't probably have to incentivize anybody at this table—

Mr. CORREA. Right.

General PROFIT [continued].—because this is an enlightened self-interest for us. These people are great members of our teams, and we want them to join us and stay with us, and I think that the public policy that is already in place has done a lot to make that good for everyone.

I will just say one thing that I think is terribly importance once again. I do think that the TAP program is still a little bit too Government-go-alone, and I think the more that you can include the places where these people are going to go to work when they separate, i.e. mostly the private sector and non-profit organizations as a part of the Transition Assistance Program, I think you will give those young men and women a leap ahead.

Mr. CORREA. Those are the kind of suggestions I want to hear as we move forward, sir. Thank you.

Ms. O'BRIEN. Sir?

Mr. CORREA. Yes, Ms. O'Brien.

Ms. O'BRIEN. I think we need—everybody at this table as referenced is highly committed, how do we get the next level employers to the table to emulate and model what is already in place?

And then a big piece that we see over and over again is that companies identify as veteran-friendly. Well, nobody here has ever met a company that is not veteran-friendly.

Mr. CORREA. That is right, that is right.

Ms. O'BRIEN. Right? But how do we get them to move to military family-ready, so that they are truly ready to welcome the family to the table and provide employment opportunities that have traditionally been reserved for veterans moving forward.

So I would love to see a shift from veteran-friendly to military family-ready.

Mr. CORREA. Thank you very much.

Mr. DOUTHIT. I think there is opportunity. We recognize that, I think all these companies do, in terms of particularly when it comes to spouse's remote work, that just because you move doesn't mean you have to lose your job with the company for which you are working. So that if you are able to work remotely and you make businesses aware.

Again to my earlier answer, we recognize having Reservists and spouses as the cost of freedom and the price of doing business, and we think that is good business for America. And so offering those opportunities to say, look, just because you are moving every two years or every three and a half years doesn't mean that you are going to lose the services of that employee or are there things they can do remotely.

Mr. KRESS. And, sir, I would like to add onto that and focus on military spouses, because one of the challenges that our spouses face is that they are very highly educated and they have occupations that require licensure in individual states, and when they receive those PCS orders, they have challenges moving their profession from state to state, and that is what keeps many of them out of the workforce or delays their success and promotion in their given careers. And there are a number of organizations, HOH, MOAA, and several others are looking at this problem, but it is a tough one. I would suggest that that is one thing that could be examined.

Mr. CORREA. That is actually, Mr. Chair, that is a heck of a suggestion that we can have some kind of a temporary license in a vocational area or something of the sort that would permit you to practice what you are practicing in maybe your home state in a different state, as long as you are, you know, for military purposes stationed in that new location.

Mr. KRESS. Yes, sir, and bringing that back—

Mr. CORREA. There are a hundred ways to skin that cat.

Mr. KRESS. There are. And bringing it back to the earlier conversation on mental health, that is one of the biggest needs and there are so many military spouses who have that expertise, and our entire population and veterans could benefit from their experi-

ence and their expertise, but they are having challenges transferring that from state to state.

Mr. CORREA. Thank you, thank you very much.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Thank you, Mr. Correa. And this has been very informative and insightful and encouraging, and you and your companies are to be commended for being leaders in support of our veterans and then just taking advantage of an amazing community of Americans. So, congrats and thanks.

I want to encourage you to sort of memorialize in a more specific way, like Mr. Douthit did, and you are just rattling through a list of recommendations. As I said, we are moving close to a markup, but the ink isn't dry, and I would ask that you look at H.R. 5649, that is our Subcommittee's effort to improve the TAP program, but I suspect, I know I have made a few notes, but if you would look at that and then you would give us very specific ways we could consider improving the service to our veterans and helping better prepare them for you all and your companies, and the marketplace in general, that would be tremendous.

So, again, good feedback, but if you could do that for us, that would be great. And if you need any help, I know the staff would be happy to guide you there, H.R. 5649.

One last moment of personal privilege, because I have a colleague who has worked on this Committee for 6 years, I believe, Ms. Kelsey Baron, it is not like she is—she is not dying, but she is going to the Senate, so it is pretty, you know—anyway, that is a House joke, but in all seriousness, Kelsey has supported me as Chairman. This has been a tremendous honor for me and I am a new member, so there was a lot of hand-holding and a lot of coaching, and she was very patient with me. And she is the consummate professional, she loves our veterans and this country, her parents both served, and she is going to be sorely missed, I will tell you.

I mean, I like you, John, but, you know, you are much better with Kelsey.

[Laughter.]

Mr. ARRINGTON. And so we are going to talk about that later. Kelsey, we love you, we appreciate you, and we are grateful for your service to this Committee and to our country.

With that, let's close this baby with my final words of I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks, and include any extraneous material on today's hearing.

Without objection, so ordered.

We are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:22 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

Prepared Statement of Elizabeth O'Brien

ON: "Veteran and Military Spouse Employment: A National Security Conversation"

The Foundation's mission is to strengthen America's long-term competitiveness by addressing developments that affect our nation, our economy, and the global business environment. USCCF presents a broad range of programs that promote a greater understanding of economic and public affairs issues.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation (USCCF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce dedicated to strengthening America's long-term competitiveness by addressing developments that affect our nation, our economy, and the global business environment. USCCF presents a broad range of programs that promote a greater understanding of economic and public affairs issues.

The Foundation conducts research and produces events on issues facing business now and in the future. Through its initiatives, the Foundation builds skills, drives innovation, and encourages growth.

"VETERAN AND MILITARY SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT: A NATIONAL SECURITY CONVERSATION"

Good afternoon, Chairman Arrington, Ranking Member O'Rourke, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. My name is Elizabeth O'Brien and I am the senior director of military spouse programs for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring Our Heroes.

Founded in 2011, Hiring Our Heroes is a nationwide initiative of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, which assists military veterans, transitioning servicemembers, and military spouses in finding meaningful employment opportunities in a 21st century workforce. The program accomplishes this goal in myriad ways, including hiring fairs, on-installation transition summits, career development and networking events, focused research, best practice development and communication, campaigns in partnership with sponsor companies and nonprofit groups, and a robust suite of online digital resources.

Since 2011, there has been an incredible transformation in the military hiring community as private sector companies have admirably stepped up their hiring efforts for veterans and military spouses. When Hiring Our Heroes first launched, the employment outlook for veterans and military families was bleak. In many ways, the nation was in a crisis situation with regards to the employment struggles faced by so many individuals who had sacrificed so much for our country. However, with the business community meeting the challenge of finding career opportunities for this population, the unemployment rate for veterans has continued to drop precipitously.

In fact, the overall veteran unemployment rate continued its downward trend in 2017, decreasing to just 3.7 percent.¹ However, while the overall veteran employment news is good, we also know there are segments of the military community that continue to struggle. In 2017, for example, post-9/11 veterans under the age of 25 faced an unemployment rate of 7.9 percent. And our most recent veteran employment study, *Veterans in the Workplace*, showed a significant gender disparity in employment outcomes for veterans as well: female veterans were less likely to find their first post-military job within three months of leaving service and were more likely than male veterans to report being financially worse off after leaving military service.

¹"Employment Situation of Veterans Summary." U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 22 Mar. 2018, www.bls.gov/news.release/vet.nr0.htm.

The employment landscape for military and veteran spouses is another important piece of the economic puzzle for our veteran families. Our 2017 study, *Military Spouses in the Workplace*, revealed a 16 percent unemployment rate for military spouses. Among employed military spouses, underemployment is widespread, with roughly 70 percent reporting that their education and experience is underutilized in their current position. And although military spouses are more highly educated than most working Americans, military spouses with degrees face the greatest challenges in nearly every measurable military spouse employment category, including the highest rates of unemployment and the most difficulty finding meaningful work.

In the 21st century economy, dual income households have become the norm—and in many cases, a necessity—for American families, with 60 percent of married civilian couples with children now bringing home two incomes.² Military and veteran families are no exception, so as we consider economic opportunity and long-term success for our veteran families, it is imperative that we address the parallel importance of veteran and military spouse employment. A dual income family structure provides financial stability for our military families during their service and through their transition to veteran status and beyond.

We know that hiring veterans and military spouses is not just the right thing to do for the country; it also makes good business sense. Veterans bring incredible value in both tangible and intangible skills to companies who hire them, from extensive training backgrounds in their military occupational specialties to the less concrete characteristics such as loyalty, discipline, and a work ethic that is unrivaled elsewhere in the economy - all skills crucial to a productive work environment. Similarly, military spouses bring to their career a diverse body of educational, professional, and volunteer experience as well as traits honed through their military community experience, such as resilience, perseverance, and grit.

We also recognize that these employment challenges for veterans and military spouses are not solely an economic issue for our country, but a national security concern. The success of our present-day veterans serves as a beacon for young Americans, enabling the recruitment of high-quality candidates into the next generation of the all-volunteer force. In the same way, the availability of meaningful career paths for military spouses impacts the stability and well-being of military families and thus also impacts the military's ability to both recruit and retain top military talent.

Background on Hiring Our Heroes

When *Hiring Our Heroes* was first created, we had a very simple mission - to carry out traditional hiring events and connect with state and local chambers to find opportunities for military job seekers across the country.

As the employment landscape for veterans and military spouses has changed, we have evolved our operations to maintain our relevance and effectiveness in what we do. Through our experience and ongoing research, we have become more strategic in our approach and programs, and more focused on not only connecting the military community with job opportunities, but ensuring that they are finding the right jobs.

In 2014, *Hiring Our Heroes* pioneered a series of hiring events aimed particularly at connecting veteran, Guard, and Reserve candidates with employment opportunities in major metropolitan areas. Hosted at professional sports venues, these hiring expos have been conducted in dozens of cities around the country in conjunction with Major League baseball, NBA basketball, NFL football, and NHL hockey teams. The high-profile nature of these events has attracted a particularly high volume of veteran job seekers and veteran-seeking employers while simultaneously providing an opportunity for communities to come together and show their support and appreciation for the veterans in their hometown. Community demand for these events is strong, and in 2018 we anticipate holding around 20 of these hiring expos and expanding into new cities and additional sports.

In recognition of the role that early preparation plays in post-military career success, beginning in 2014 *Hiring Our Heroes* also worked with our public, private, and nonprofit partners to launch a series of on-installation transition summits aimed at reaching and empowering servicemembers long before their last day on Active duty. Created as a complement to existing transition education provided by the Department of Defense, these summits provide an intensive opportunity for servicemembers and their spouses to learn what economic opportunity looks like for them in today's workforce through industry-specific workshops presented by leading employers, interactive panel discussions with employment and human resources ex-

² Kent, Lauren. "The Rise in Dual Income Households." Pew Research Center, 18 June 2015, www.pewresearch.org/ft—dual-income-households-1960–2012–2/.

perts, breakout workshops, networking opportunities, and finally, a large-scale hiring fair featuring both regional and national employers.

In the seven years since our program's launch, we have held more than 1,100 hiring events in the United States and on U.S. military installations around the world, and from those hiring events alone we have confirmed more than 31,000 veteran and military spouse hires into the civilian workforce. Beyond those hires, our program has facilitated thousands of additional meaningful connections between job seekers and employers through our networking opportunities, workshops, and training programs.

Beyond hiring events, we have introduced a number of initiatives aimed at improving employment opportunities for veterans. In early 2015, we launched the inaugural cohort of the Hiring Our Heroes Corporate Fellowship Program at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, outside of Tacoma. The program, which aims to connect experienced leaders from the military with management-level corporate positions, was developed under the guidelines of the Department of Defense's SkillBridge job training initiative to provide civilian management training in a classroom setting followed by hands-on experience in the civilian workforce. The program's goal: easing the transition to civilian employment for servicemembers who had both the technical and interpersonal skills employers seek but whose past job titles did not explicitly correlate with their civilian equivalent while simultaneously providing a high-quality talent pipeline for employers seeking experienced management candidates.

Hiring Our Heroes also developed and continues to improve our robust array of digital tools and online resources for both job seekers and employers. With support from our generous sponsors, including Toyota and USAA, we provide tools such as the Resume Engine for veterans and Career Spark for military spouses, VET Roadmap, the Employer Roadmap, Fast Track, and others, free of charge for all users, whether job seekers or employers. These online tools are designed to ensure that our target audiences are equipped with best-in-class tools and resources and best practices as they enter into this unique and often challenging environment.

Moving "Left of Transition"

One of the key lessons we have learned over the last seven years is that many of the challenges that military veterans face when transitioning off Active duty are tied to a lack of preparation. Far too many servicemembers have traditionally viewed transition not as a continuing process but as a single point in time when they simply pick up their DD-214 papers and leave the military. Unsurprisingly, this has left too many veterans without a clear pathway to economic success.

Our 2016 Veterans in the Workplace study showed that 44 percent of veterans left their first post-military job within the first year. The reasons for departure varied, but the most common reason cited was that those veterans accepted that first job in order to make ends meet following their transition from the military and not because it was their career path of choice.

In response, we have renewed our focus on transition education for servicemembers, introducing a modified, scalable transition summit model to provide right-sized, targeted transition education opportunities on installations of all sizes and with a wide range of transitioning populations. As a result, we have doubled the number of transition summits we will host this year over the previous two years, and have expanded summit programming to more than a dozen new installations, including hosting our first transition summits on Coast Guard bases. We have continued to hone our educational and career development offerings, providing in-depth workshops on concrete, in-demand transition topics, such as professional networking in the civilian business world and evaluating civilian pay, benefits, and total compensation.

Since the highly successful launch of the Corporate Fellowship Program in 2015, the program has grown exponentially. Service members report that they value the introduction to the corporate world, hands-on civilian work experience, and networking opportunities the program has provided. Employers benefit from this access to a larger, highly skilled veteran talent pool and appreciate the unique perspective and insight that the fellows brought to their companies, whether they are a small business who hosts a single fellow or an multinational corporation like Amazon, who has hosted more than 145 fellows via the program. Today, the program operates in 15 locations around the country. More than 1,000 fellows have graduated from the program, with an 80 percent job offer rate for graduating fellows. Nationwide, more than 150 companies have hosted fellows.

The resounding success of the Corporate Fellowship Program for transitioning servicemembers has also led to the development of a similarly-structured pilot program for veterans and military spouses. In partnership with Military Corps Career

Connect and with the support of a national Dislocated Worker Grant from the Department of Labor, the pilot program offers 6-week paid fellowships with businesses of all sizes, from a host of industries, to recently separated, honorably discharged veterans as well as current Active duty military spouses.

Military Spouse Employment: A Unique Landscape

Early on, we realized that while the military spouse population faces its own unique set of challenges when searching for employment, these challenges have an important impact on both the long-term economic stability of our veteran and military families and on our military's recruitment and retention efforts. While a servicemember will typically only transition off of Active duty once in his or her career, military spouses make multiple transitions while serving alongside their servicemember, making it all the more challenging to maintain meaningful employment.

Our Military Spouse Program, which has been in place since 2012, provides programming for Active duty, veteran, Guard, Reserve, and Gold Star spouses and has long been a bastion of impact in the military spouse employment space through spouse-specific hiring fairs, networking receptions, roundtable discussions, and professional development opportunities. We convene regularly with employers from around the country to collaborate on and highlight best practices for military spouse recruitment and retention, leading to innovative strategies for hiring military spouses and veterans, such as Comcast NBCUniversal's installation-specific virtual employee training.

Over the past two years, our military spouse program has launched a fresh wave of grassroots programming and initiatives. In 2016, we acquired an established military-spouse focused, chapter-based professional development and networking nonprofit with a standing footprint in more than two dozen military communities around the world—a footprint that, with the support of military spouse-friendly employers like Prudential Financial, has more than doubled in size to 50 locations and which now provides programming in twenty states as well as eleven overseas installations in nine countries. Later that year, we joined the Military Officers Association of America to bring a new series of employment symposiums to installations around the country, providing a forum for spouses to engage with local and national career resources. Additionally, multi-day, personalized career development programming for military spouses was added to the Hiring Our Heroes lineup in 2017 with the introduction of AMPLIFY career intensives.

As we have worked to further build our robust array of programming for military spouses, we recognize that to permanently move the needle on military spouse employment and underemployment, a collaborative effort is an imperative. To that end, we have simultaneously endeavored to elevate the national conversation around what it means to be a dual-income military family in the 21st century. Last June, we hosted the inaugural Military Spouse Employment Summit to engage the public, private, and nonprofit communities on the topic, identifying best practices in talent management for recruiting and retaining military spouses, highlighting standout military spouse professionals and entrepreneurs, and promoting avenues to remove barriers to military spouse employment. Later this week, we will once again host the 2018 Military Spouse Employment, where we will focus on empowering change through innovation in the military spouse employment space.

Key Partnerships: Working with the Public, Private, and Nonprofit Sectors

A central tenet of our strategic approach to veteran and military spouse employment centers on private sector engagement. From our inception, we have been committed to providing the highest quality events, tools, and resources to employers seeking to hire veterans and military spouses—all at no cost to the employer or job seeker. Through our hiring events, digital tools such as the Employer Roadmap, the Corporate Fellowship Program, and more, Hiring Our Heroes has continued to provide touchpoints and opportunities to engage with military community job seekers for businesses of all sizes.

In February, we launched the first Military Spouse Economic Empowerment Zone (MSEEZ), a grassroots effort to combat the economic impact that military spouse unemployment and underemployment have on the 21st century military family. These MSEEZ will bring a localized focus to building connections and collaboration between regional and national employers, educational institutions, and community resources, resulting in a robust employment network for military spouses across the United States. Steered locally by a working group of employers from a diverse cross section of locally significant industries (such as the defense industry's Booz Allen Hamilton) as well as a wide swath of community resource groups (like the USO

Pathfinder), MSEEZ are designed to be responsive to the locality's unique employment outlook.

These localized efforts are balanced by large-scale national campaigns. In 2012, together with Capital One, we launched the Hiring 500,000 Heroes campaign to secure half a million commitments by various employers to hire veterans and military spouses. Once businesses who joined this program committed, we worked with them to translate those commitments into hires. And in June of 2015, we surpassed the 500,000-hire mark for veterans and military spouses who were hired as a result of this initiative.

Building on that highly successful model, on Thursday, Hiring Our Heroes, in collaboration with a coalition of private sector partners led by Starbucks, will announce the launch of a similar campaign to serve as a national call to action for companies of all sizes to make a collective commitment to hire military spouses. For businesses, the campaign will present scalable, actionable pathways for connecting with military spouse talent; at the same time, the campaign will provide real solutions for military spouses seeking meaningful 21st century career opportunities.

In addition to working closely with American employers of all sizes, cultivating strategic partnerships with organizations in the public and nonprofit sectors has been crucial to our success. As an initiative of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, Hiring Our Heroes is in a unique position to leverage influential connections to thousands of state and local chambers, providing us with tremendously effective grassroots teams across the country poised to engage with military job seekers in their communities. The enormous impact that we have seen at every level has been extremely beneficial to our mission.

Our program has also been able to develop key partnerships with the Department of Defense and its many services, the Department of Labor, and the Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as the Small Business Administration. Working with these federal agencies, we have leveraged our events and programs to raise awareness of their employment and transition resources for the military community and foster collaboration between the public and private sectors.

The relationships that we maintain with other nonprofit organizations within the military hiring community have been integral to our success as well. Our work with groups such as the USO, Paralyzed Veterans of America, the George W. Bush Institute's Military Service Initiative, and many others have furthered our reach and strengthened our ability to provide networking and training opportunities for job seekers, and make valuable connections for them with employers who are hiring.

Our combined effort to focus on developing resources to educate job seekers and employers will continue as our program evolves in the months and years ahead.

Conclusion

Over the last seven years, Hiring Our Heroes has been proud to serve our veterans, transitioning servicemembers, and military spouses in local communities throughout the United States and to do so with a wide array of private and public sector partners. And with more than 200,000 servicemembers making the transition off of Active duty annually, there is always more work that needs to be done.

Hiring Our Heroes remains wholly committed to the mission of connecting veterans and military spouses with meaningful career opportunities, and is honored to serve on the front line of this movement. We will continue to unite our partners in our common mission as we work together to continue to achieve fundamental change in the veteran and military spouse employment landscape.

Chairman Arrington, Ranking Member O'Rourke, and members of the Subcommittee, I thank you again for the opportunity to testify and look forward to answering your questions.

BG (Ret) Gary M Profit

Chairman Arrington, Ranking Member O'Rourke and Members of the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity,

On behalf of Walmart Inc., I want to thank you for the opportunity to rejoin you today to talk about hiring and retaining veterans for the modern-day workforce. I had the privilege of testifying before the House Veterans Affairs Committee in 2014, and, as I stated then, I am grateful for your leadership and partnership in honoring our nation's veterans' service and sacrifice and for all you do to aid in their transition to civilian life.

Walmart has a rich history with veterans, those who serve on Active duty and in the Reserve and National Guard, and veteran and military families. Arguably,

it began with Captain, U.S. Army, Sam Walton who founded Walmart over 50 years ago. His legacy has been enriched by countless veteran associates over the years and has been further enhanced by our Veterans Welcome Home Commitment established in 2013 and expanded in 2015 when we pledged to hire 250,000 veterans by 2020.

Since 2013, Walmart has added more than 200,000 veterans to our U.S. workforce and promoted more than 28,000 to roles with higher pay and greater responsibility. Their jobs range from part-time hourly to salaried management; from Walmart Stores and Sam's Clubs; to Distribution Centers and Transportation Offices; and to our Corporate Headquarters.

When we announced our Veterans Welcome Home Commitment in 2013, our goal was to put returning post 9/11 U.S. veterans back to work. At the time, the unemployment rate for these returning veterans was disturbingly high. Now, it is at the lowest it's been in decades, and we'd like to think we've played a small part in helping bring the number down; rather than taking a victory lap, however, we must remain vigilant and know that more work remains.

Veterans bring years of leadership training, problem solving and a host of other strong, transferrable skills to civilian jobs and careers. Hiring veterans should be a top priority for any company that wants to add true leaders, problem solvers and innovators to their workforce.

I've spent the last decade helping veterans find employment. Through my interactions with these men and women, I've listened to their frustrations with navigating the multiple agencies offering job placement services and the struggles they face when applying their military skills to civilian job descriptions. We can and must do better by these men and women who gave so much for our country.

We've learned over the years that we have a much better chance of retaining our veteran hires if they have an early understanding of the company's mission; if they are able to make a positive impact to their team and/or the business quickly; and if they feel supported. Furthermore, we've found that a clear vision of a new veteran associate's future or career path within the organization is one of the more crucial pieces to veteran recruitment and retention.

To realize those ends:

Our evolving, but generally enduring, strategic and programmatic approach includes an integrated, complementary, technology-powered and people-infused process to achieve scale without sacrificing a human touch: determining career aspirations, translating a portfolio of experience, communicating it to talent acquisition professionals, and interviewing can be quite daunting for those transitioning from the military; therefore, Walmart offers an opportunity for veteran candidates to consult with experts.

Perhaps one of our most successful practices is our onboarding process where we place new hires with seasoned associates who are veterans, military spouses, current serving members of the Guard or Reserve or those who have an affinity for those who have served.

At Walmart, we believe that retail can be a powerful engine for economic mobility, and we are committed to helping make it a place of inclusive opportunity where our jobs and purchase orders can help people build a better life for themselves and their families. We recognize that technology is changing how we work, live and shop, and the effects of automation are on everyone's mind. In a world in which new skills are required to meet the rapidly changing demands of customers, we are investing in training for our associates to help meet the increasing expectations of our customers, including the use of technology. For our frontline workers, we're providing training and talent development aimed at building foundational and advanced skills through our Pathways program and Academies.

The Pathways training program helps associates gain vital retail job skills including merchandising, teamwork and communications. Our Academies offer hands-on, immersive learning, using cutting-edge technology in handheld devices and virtual reality and combines both classroom study and training on the sales floor. To date, more than 400,000 associates have been through Pathways, and more than 250,000 have completed the Academy training program. While we don't currently track the number of veterans that are going through Pathways and Academies, we do know that many are utilizing these training programs and some are even instructors at our Academies.

Earlier this month, Walmart unveiled a new associate education benefit designed to remove barriers to college enrollment and graduation. In partnership with Guild Education, Walmart associates will be able to access affordable, high-quality associate's and bachelor's degrees in Business or Supply Chain Management. Under the program, which will be made available to all Walmart U.S. associates, Walmart will

subsidize the cost of higher education, beyond financial aid and an associate contribution equivalent to \$1 a day. In addition, associates can earn college credit for paid training at Walmart Academies. Hundreds of thousands of associates have already undergone skills training equivalent to more than \$210 million in college credits. This will save associates both time and money in completing their degree. We anticipate that our veteran associates will take us up on this offer, and we also believe that it may help in recruiting transitioning servicemembers.

An additional business initiative that I feel holds tremendous value for our veterans and military families is our Military Family Promise. The Military Family Promise guarantees a job at a nearby store or club for all military personnel and military spouses employed by the company who move to a different part of the country because they or their spouse have been transferred by the U.S. military. It allows military spouses, in particular, to remain in the same personnel and pay systems, and gives them the opportunity to turn jobs into careers.

While I've shared with you what Walmart is doing to recruit, hire and retain veteran talent, you should also know that outside of what we do for our employees, we are actively seeking products from veteran-owned businesses to add to our stores and on-line assortment. Two weeks ago, we held our fifth annual Open Call where we invited suppliers to our home office to pitch products made in the U.S. Out of the more than 450 companies that attended, 22 self-identified as veteran-owned. Gaining a purchase order from Walmart can be a powerful thing for a veteran entrepreneur, and we see more opportunity here to cultivate and help grow these businesses. As a founding member of the Coalition of Veteran Owned Business, Walmart is committed to help grow and support veteran owned businesses in communities throughout the U.S. The Coalition provides economic opportunity to veterans, their families and the communities in which they live by offering leadership and a national platform to support military spouse and veteran-owned businesses, entrepreneurs and suppliers.

Whenever possible, Walmart shares what we have learned about veteran employment with others - in this regard, we aim to help others to do the same - accelerating/maximizing impact.

In the spirit of accelerating and maximizing impact, in 2011, Walmart and the Walmart Foundation committed \$20 million through 2015 to support veterans and their families with assistance for programs that provide job training, transition help and education. With the early completion of the commitment in May of 2014, Walmart and the Walmart Foundation renewed the commitment, announcing an additional \$20 million through 2019 to support job training, education and innovative public/private community-based initiatives that address challenges many veterans face when returning to civilian life.

While Walmart and the Walmart Foundation are supporting many organizations doing great work with veteran transition through these commitments, three that I want to callout are Hire Heroes USA, the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse University, and The Henry M. Jackson Foundation .

Hire Heroes USA's singular focus on veteran employment is not only working to place veterans with the right job, but also gaining incredible insights into what the critical needs are for those separating from service.

IVMF's AmericaServes program streamlines and digitally connects veterans to services in their communities. Through our commitment, we are supporting AmericaServes programs in New York, the Carolinas and Texas.

As we seek to learn more about what's working in the field, we look to grantees like the Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine's Center for Public-Private Partnerships. Our investment in The Veterans Metrics Initiative (TVMI): Linking Program Components to Post-Military Well-Being, a five year study, launched in 2015, is following 9,500 veterans 0-90 days post separation from military service to within three years thereafter, documenting and analyzing the components of the transition and reintegration programs veterans report that they use.

Since 2011, we've been very deliberate about our funding efforts to support transitioning veterans and military families, and, in the last few years, we've been intentional about applying a gender lens to these efforts. As the number of women joining our U.S. Armed Forces has grown rapidly over the years, so have the number of female veterans reintegrating to civilian life.

Two organizations that are focusing on the unmet needs of women veterans are the Boston University School of Medicine and Goodwill. Boston University School of Medicine launched the Women Veterans Network (WoVeN) just last year with the help of a grant from the Walmart Foundation. Also in 2017, the Walmart Foundation awarded a grant to support Goodwill's Operation: GoodJobs, which in its next

iteration, will place a special emphasis on resources and job training for female veterans.

As we look to the future, we see great potential to address the remaining barriers to successful transition from military service to civilian life, but only through collaboration and a shared vision will we realize it. When government programs and initiatives, large and small corporations, and non-profit organizations come together much is possible. One prominent example, of which we are a proud partner, is the Stand-To convening, launched last year by the George W. Bush Institute's Military Service Initiative and now in its second year.

Our goal is to synchronize efforts and empower every veteran and his or her family to lead a full and meaningful life by achieving optimal health and wellbeing, leveraging education and workforce readiness, and fostering employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. With clearer data, unified vision, and a leading strategy, we can better serve our veterans and their families; maximize national effort and resourcing; enhance our national security by contributing to the preservation of the all-volunteer force; ensure our global competitiveness and civic leadership; bring our military-veteran and civilian populations closer together; and meet our moral and social obligations to our veterans.

We salute America's heroes. We are honored to have the opportunity to employ them, to learn from them, and to support them and their families in every way we can.

Thanks again to the Subcommittee for its leadership and partnership and for holding this hearing...I appreciate the invitation to appear and look forward to answering your questions.

WALMART

APPENDIX

- I. Walmart Military Fact Sheet
- II. Military Family Promise Impact Story
- III. WoVeN Impact Story

WALMART

Supporting Those Who Serve: Walmart's Commitment to Veterans and Military Families

At Walmart, we are grateful for the sacrifice our nation's veterans, military men and women and their families have made in service to our country. It is our duty and our honor to support our military not only when they are in uniform but also when they transition to civilian life. We are committed to helping them as they face this important period through job opportunities as well as support for programs that provide job training, reintegration support and education.

Veterans Hiring Commitment

On Memorial Day 2013, Walmart introduced our Veterans Welcome Home Commitment, which guaranteed a job offer to any eligible, honorably discharged U.S. veteran who was within 12 months of Active duty. Our initial goal was to hire 100,000 veterans by the end of 2018.

- In May 2015, we announced the expansion of our original projection with a new goal of hiring 250,000 veterans by the end of 2020. We also changed the eligibility from within 12 months of Active duty to any veteran honorably discharged since we announced the commitment in 2013.
- Since Memorial Day 2013, Walmart has hired 200,820 veterans, and 28,839 have been promoted to roles of greater responsibility.
- Veterans can explore career options with the company at www.walmartcareerswithamission.com.

Supporting Veterans

Whether through career fairs, recognition campaigns, entrepreneurial support or company policies, Walmart seeks to demonstrate the value veterans bring to the workforce and to our communities.

- **Hiring Our Heroes** - Walmart, Sam's Club and other employers have recruited tens of thousands of veterans through hundreds of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Hiring Our Heroes' career fairs.
- **Coalition for Veteran Owned Business** - As a founding member of the Coalition for Veteran Owned Business, Walmart is committed to help the organization grow and support veteran owned businesses in communities throughout the

U.S. The Coalition provides economic opportunity to veterans, their families and the communities in which they live by offering leadership and a national platform to support military spouse and veteran-owned businesses, entrepreneurs and suppliers.

- **Greenlight A Vet** - In its third year, GLAV continues to encourage communities to mobilize around a shared purpose of showing appreciation to our nation's veterans through volunteering with veteran organizations, raising awareness on social media and signaling appreciation by changing one light to green in one's home or business.
- **Military Family Promise** - Walmart guarantees a job at a nearby store or club for all military personnel and military spouses employed by the company who move to a different part of the country because they or their spouse have been transferred by the U.S. military.
- **Military Leave of Absence (MLOA)** - Since 2008, Walmart has offered differential pay to associates taking a leave of absence for specific military assignments lasting more than three days and through the duration of leave. If an associate's military salary is less than what they make at their job at Walmart, the company will pay them the difference while they're on MLOA. In May, Walmart announced enhancements to this policy to include any eligible military assignment, including basic training, allowing associates who are considering enlisting in the Armed Forces to do so without fear of losing wages.

Education, Job Training and Reintegration Assistance

In 2011, Walmart and the Walmart Foundation recognized that opportunity sometimes isn't the only challenge facing transitioning military families. The company committed \$20 million by 2015 to support veterans and their families with assistance for programs that provide job training, transition help and education. With the early completion of the commitment in May of 2014, Walmart and the Walmart Foundation renewed the commitment, announcing an additional \$20 million through 2019 to support job training, education and innovative public/private community-based initiatives that address challenges many veterans face when returning to civilian life.

The following are a few of the most recent programs supported with the \$40 million commitment from Walmart and the Walmart Foundation:

Boston University School of Medicine -Launched in 2017 with the help of a \$469k grant from the Walmart Foundation, the Women Veterans Network (WoVeN) at Boston University is a program where BU clinicians and researchers are leading a 5-year initiative to establish a nationwide network of structured, trained peer-facilitated, 10-week support groups for female veterans to enhance wellness, quality of life, family relationships and referrals for additional services.

- In May 2018, the Walmart Foundation granted over \$250,000 to WoVeN building upon the 2017 grant to continue strengthening the initiative. When complete the program projects that it will have served 2,500 female veterans.

The Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine, Inc. - Center for Public-Private Partnerships (CP3): In 2015, the Walmart Foundation awarded a \$500k grant to support The Veterans Metrics Initiative (TVMI): Linking Program Components to Post-Military Well-Being study.

- This five-year study will assess the well-being of 9,500 veterans 0–90 days post separation from military service to within three years thereafter, and document and analyze the components of the transition and reintegration programs the veterans report that they use.

Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse University - IVMF launched the AmericaServes initiative in 2013 to streamline and digitally connect veteran services available in communities and create the nation's first coordinated system of public, private and non-profit organizations.

- Building off of a \$1 million Walmart Foundation grant awarded in 2015, the Foundation granted an additional \$5 million in 2016 to support the ongoing implementation of existing AmericaServes communities and seed planning investments in New York, the Carolinas and Texas.

Goodwill Industries International - Launched in 2012 with a \$1 million grant from the Walmart Foundation, and a subsequent \$5 million grant in 2013, Operation: GoodJobs (OGJ) has helped thousands of veterans and military spouses with job training and placement services.

- With an additional \$5 million grant awarded in 2017, the Walmart Foundation is funding the next iteration of OGJ programming which places a special emphasis on resources and job training for female veterans.

Additional Veteran and Military Family Service Organizations funded through the \$40 million commitment:

- **Operation Homefront** - In response to the 2017 hurricane season, the Walmart Foundation granted \$500,000 to the organization's Critical Financial Assistance program to help meet the urgent needs for military families affected by disaster or deployed to help with relief and recovery.
- **Blue Star Families** - With a mission to strengthen military families every day, Blue Star Families strives to better understand and provide solutions to the challenges facing today's military families through career development, caregiving and leading research on military family life.
- **Hire Heroes USA** - With a singular focus on veteran employment, Hire Heroes USA offers personalized employment training to clients at no cost, delivering a three-phase, high-touch program that helps clients market their skills and secure meaningful employment.



When my wife received her transfer orders, we prepared ourselves for the Army to move us from Wichita, Kansas to Joplin, Missouri.

Once again, we were off to a new-to-us destination. The life of a military family is not for those who don't like change. So much of life is built around constants, yet in a military life, change is one of those constants.

I admire my wife for her devotion to our family and to our country. I get it. I really do. I served from 1992–2006 in the U.S. Marine Corps, and my wife has served in the U.S. Army since 2000. Both of us spent time overseas with Operation Iraqi Freedom. And while I chose to transition to civilian life a few years ago, my wife stayed the course and built a career with the Army.

Most don't think about the toll transfers take on military families; when one serves, we all serve. Being at the military's beck and call is something we are used to. We know what we signed up for. While I'm not complaining about this life of service, trying to quickly find a new job when your spouse is transferred can be challenging and stressful.



But there was something different this time - something that made our family's latest transfer experience better than it has ever been before.

As an asset protection manager at store 3492 in Wichita, Kansas, I wasn't familiar with Walmart's Military Family Promise (MFP) program until I spoke to a friend who worked at the home office. The MFP program guarantees a job at a nearby store or club for all military personnel and military spouses employed at Walmart or Sam's Club who move to a different part of the country because they or their spouse have been transferred by the U.S. military.

I had no idea we had policies in place to support me, a military spouse.

I didn't go into the MFP process with any preconceived notions. I knew I might not get the exact job I wanted unless something opened up. And, while I would've been thankful for any opportunity, I was fortunate enough to land the exact same position I had in Wichita at a Neighborhood Market in Joplin, Missouri, just a few miles away from where my wife is serving.

I knew Walmart cared about veterans and was familiar with our Veterans Welcome Home Commitment. But I had no idea we had policies in place to support me, a military spouse. The MFP allows me to focus on what's most important during this transition - and that's getting my house in order and getting my kids acclimated to their new surroundings.

I'm also taking time to share my story so other military family associates can take advantage of MFP and focus on what's important in their lives during their own moves. Thanks to programs like these, we don't just have jobs at Walmart, we have careers.

A Common Thread Is Woven Between Women Veterans



Last year, I was dealing with some major life issues: transitioning careers as an older adult and stressing about loved ones who were incarcerated. My energy was low, and my self-identity was in question. As a single, divorced mom of two young adults, I was trying to be strong and cope with life all alone.

I realized I hadn't had a great support system since I'd left the Marines over 20 years ago. That was my missing puzzle piece - I needed to find fellow women veterans who understood my experiences and the special bond that military service provides.

I'd tried many times over the years to find such a sounding board, but continually came up short. I knew there were a lot of people with similar experiences out there, but I thought maybe they were like me and hesitant to speak up about their service.

Then suddenly, just when life was hardest and I needed support the most, I found Women Veterans Network (WoVeN), a support group made specifically for women like me.

After attending one of their community focus groups, I eagerly joined WoVeN, and as Marines say, I hit the ground running. I never imagined something so simple could be so life changing, but this organization - and more specifically, the women in it - gave me the spark I needed to push myself to be better and do more.



WoVeN provided me a non-judgmental environment to openly express myself, communicate with and support other women veterans. And when that group came together, it created an atmosphere of energy, respect and understanding that I'd never witnessed in my life. I felt comfortable. The group was motivating and encouraging. I felt a sense of comradeship I hadn't experienced in years. WoVeN accepted me as-is and put me back on the path to improving my quality of life



Since then, I've been inspired to take personal responsibility for my health and wellbeing. From mountain biking and completing a 5K, to developing new skills and better managing my stress, having this network of women has helped me improve not only my life, but also my family's.

Because this was such a valuable experience, I wanted to do more to give back. I've started to reach out to other women veterans and engage with them outside of the WoVeN community. Now, I have an extended family I can call on anytime.

My hope is that WoVeN will continue to grow and reach more women veterans all over this country, so they can have the same experience and support I have.

In 2017, the Walmart Foundation awarded a \$469,000 grant to the Boston University School of Medicine (BU) to support the establishment of the WoVeN initiative. Through WoVeN, BU clinicians and researchers are leading a five-year initiative to establish a nationwide network of structured, trained peer-facilitated, 10-week support groups for women veterans to enhance wellness, quality of life, family relationships and referrals for additional services. Today, the Walmart Foundation is building on the existing grant to BU and is bringing its total commitment to WoVeN to nearly \$720,000 with the announcement of an additional \$250,782 grant. The program is projected to reach approximately 2,500 women veterans by the end of 2022.

Prepared Statement of Matt Kress

Introduction

Good afternoon Chairman Arrington, Ranking Member O'Rourke, and Members of the Subcommittee. As a post 9/11 veteran, it is an honor to share with you how Starbucks Coffee Company is continuing to support Active duty military, military spouses and veterans as they transition into Starbucks partners, the term we use for our employees. In particular, I will be discussing how we are working with a broad group of companies, public agencies, non-profits and veteran/military service organizations to create an effective transition experience and integration into civilian life. I am also pleased to offer some thoughts on continued innovations to our policies and programs that we believe are critical to improving this experience.

To give some personal context to my remarks, I spent 22 years in the Marine Corps between active and reserve service, as both a commissioned officer and an enlisted Marine. After deploying to Iraq in 2004 with Marine Corps Special Operations, I left Active duty to become a firefighter in Southern California. During my time in public safety, I took advantage of the Post 9/11 GI Bill to earn my Master's degree in Strategic Planning from the University of Washington and an MBA from UCLA. Turning to the corporate world as the natural transition from this chapter, I was surprised to learn that, despite my advanced education and years of leadership and management experience in very challenging environments, I had a difficult time translating my value and experience for potential employers. If I had a hard time sparking interest, you can imagine the challenges other servicemembers face when they speak with companies. Through the support and assistance of veterans in corporate America that were generous with their time and opening their networks, I was fortunate to land in a role where I can continue my career serving others in a company that cares tremendously about our military members, has the leadership and humility to incorporate an effective veteran hiring program into its culture, and is pushing others to join the movement.

Background

In November 2013, Starbucks made a groundbreaking commitment to hire at least 10,000 veterans and military spouses in five years. I'm proud to say that we achieved that goal early, and in March 2017 set a new goal of hiring 25,000 by 2025, which we are quickly working towards. Throughout this process we have recognized that serving our veterans and military spouses is about much more than simply providing jobs. Starbucks recognizes that the unique skills, experiences, and knowledge that veterans and military spouses gain through their service are tremendously valuable. Our goal, therefore, is not only to hire 25,000 veterans and military spouses, but also to create a work environment and corporate culture that fosters their personal and professional growth. A steady paycheck is important when shifting jobs, but veterans and their families are not just shifting jobs when they leave the service. They are leaving an environment where they had a clear sense of purpose and worked closely with others toward goals that were much bigger than themselves. I am proud to say that Starbucks provides that environment.

Driven by the passion and dedication that starts with our senior leadership and extends to the rest of our partners, Starbucks is committed to creating a workplace and culture where our military members and their spouses can succeed. In the past five years that we have focused on hiring veterans and military spouses, we have focused very closely on becoming a veteran employer of choice.

Innovations

One of our early recognitions was the need to evaluate this population through a different lens based on their training and life experience. To this end, we shifted from a skills-based hiring model to a competency model when evaluating job candidates. While the job specific training received in the military may not be a direct match for our environment, we know that leadership, teamwork and other intangible skills are a great fit for Starbucks. Similarly, we know that the enthusiasm and dedication that military spouses bring to our stores creates a welcoming environment for our customers. Parallel to this, Starbucks has focused on preparing our field leaders to effectively lead veterans and military spouses through an understanding of the unique differences in culture, leadership expectations, and even language. One of the best ways we have found to achieve this are through immersions on military bases where our field leaders and partners get to see firsthand the natural teamwork that translates so well to our stores.

Benefits

We have also listened to our partners and developed or improved several programs and policies that are unique to our military and veteran populations. For current reservists, we provide 80 hours of flexible leave to facilitate military participation. If Guard or Reserve partners are called to Active duty, we pay the difference between their Starbucks wages and military wages for up to 78 weeks. Finally, our veteran partners can now gift their College Achievement Plan, which is a fully funded remote bachelor's degree at Arizona State University, to their spouse or child.

Culture

We recognized the need to build an internal veteran cultural competence that not only understands and values veterans but is improved by infusing their values into the company's culture. For Starbucks, this started with the recognition that much of what has made the company incredibly successful parallels military values. A commitment to excellence, strong sense of ethical and moral principles, camaraderie, and empowerment of our partners are among the values that make Starbucks a special place to work and parallels what drives our military. The dedication to service that is second nature to our military members has unlocked a passion in all of our partners to be more engaged and involved in volunteer and community programs. Another internal cultural piece is the growth of our military affinity group, Armed Forces Network (AFN), which has 16 chapters throughout the country. The AFN provides a source of mentorship, camaraderie and connection for our veteran partners. It is also a forum and focal point for building our veteran cultural competence. In return, our veteran partners pay it forward by engaging in community volunteer activities and represent the best of Starbucks.

While these efforts have not been flawless, we continue to learn from our mistakes and drive forward to serve those who have so selflessly served our nation. In addressing the broader question about innovations in this space, we are currently focused on meeting the employment challenges faced by military spouses. With an unemployment rate that is currently four times the veteran population, we are partnering with Hiring Our Heroes, USAA and others to find lasting solutions. On our side, we have specifically designed processes that assist our military spouses transfer their jobs to new Starbucks locations when the inevitable change of duty station orders arrive. We also have flexible leave policies for spouses that take into account the realities of deployments, moves and homecomings.

Community Partnerships

Starbucks is increasing the opportunities for local communities to use our stores to engage with military members and their families, expand partnerships with veteran service organizations to offer relevant programming, and using our scale to create connections to bridge the military - civilian divide. Utilizing our 44 Military Family Stores, which are situated in communities near military installations, we are working with a range of our partners such as the USO, Blue Star Families, and Team RWB to provide needed transition programming and services such as resume counseling, interviewing skills and family cohesion counseling. A very successful example of this is Military Mondays, which was developed in conjunction with the William and Mary Law School, to provide free legal counseling to servicemembers at our stores. Military Mondays is now scaling nationally and growing to include other critical services such as financial literacy training and investment counseling. Our stores are also a hub for organizing partner-driven community service projects in conjunction with the veteran groups The Mission Continues and Team Rubicon. Partnering with veteran services groups such as these provide veterans and spouses with opportunities to make connections in their new communities, as well as leverage their considerable skills for the greater good.

Moving forward, our ambition is to change what it means to support our troops. While being thanked for their service is appreciated, military members and their spouses want to be given the opportunity to demonstrate the incredible leadership, experience and talent that they bring to the workplace. We will continue driving and refining this effort through our policies, storytelling and partnerships. As our dedicated hiring program and veteran cultural competency matures, we are increasingly sharing our model and lessons learned with others. In addition, Starbucks is increasing the opportunities for local communities to use our stores to engage with military members and their families, as well as expanding partnerships with veterans service organizations to offer relevant programming.

In closing my remarks, I would like to take the opportunity to raise opportunities for Congress to enable both our efforts and the larger effort to reverse the military-civilian drift.

First, is recognizing and supporting the unique employment challenges of military spouses. With an unemployment rate that is 4 times that of veterans, they need a coordinated focus that is well represented by the Hiring Our Heroes 100,000 Military Spouses Campaign. A larger and more critical request is related to the needs that Chairman Arrington outlined in the 2108 Mulder Transition Improvement Act. Giving the transition process greater structure and adding counseling and wrap-around services are truly important changes that will increase the value and impact of the process.

Thank you for inviting me to speak with you today. After serving our country for 22 years, it is my honor to discuss the Starbucks veterans and military spouses program and the difference it is making in the lives of our military members and their families. Our CEO, Kevin Johnson, and our Starbucks partners look forward to working with the House Veterans' Affairs Committee in the months and years to come.

Prepared Statement of Charles J. Sevola Jr.

Chairman Arrington, Ranking Member O'Rourke, and Members of the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, my name is Chuck Sevola and I head Prudential's Office of Veterans Initiatives. Thank you for having me here today and for the opportunity to speak with you about Prudential's Veterans Programs and specifically our VETalent program.

Prudential has historically had numerous veteran hiring programs. To help address the unemployment crisis with our nation's veterans after the economic downturn of 2008, our dedicated office of Veterans Initiatives was formed in 2010 at the direction of our Chairman, John Strangfeld. The mission statement of our Veterans Initiatives Office is to establish sustainable programs and activities that have a positive impact on the lives of veterans and their families, helping them to achieve professional success, financial prosperity, and peace of mind. This statement reflects our desire to distinguish Prudential as a preferred employer for veterans, a community leader in supporting veteran service organizations and initiatives, and a national leader in developing and sharing best practices for corporate veteran programs. To create a rounded approach, we established a five-pillar strategy to achieve our goals.

The first pillar and our primary focus is Education and Employment. This covers our programs in recruiting, training, and retaining veterans and Military Spouses not just for jobs, but for fruitful careers at our firm. Additionally, we seek to use Prudential as a test bed for programs that once proven and refined, can be exported to other likeminded companies. Our flagship program of this pillar is our VETalent collaboration with Workforce Opportunity Services (WOS) which I will detail later.

Our second pillar of Employee Engagement focuses on harnessing the passion that exists in our workforce to help veterans and their families through volunteerism. Service to the community in which we do business is a part of our corporate DNA and Prudential employees can be found lending their time and expertise to such organizations as the United Service Organization (USO) on a regular basis.

The third pillar, Thought Leadership, covers our work to understand the issues that veterans and their families face, and establishing and sharing best practice programs to address these issues. An excellent example of this work is our sponsorship and collaboration with the Institute for Veterans and Military Families' (IVMF) research on employing Military Spouses.

The fourth pillar is Corporate Giving. Here we provide financial resources through philanthropy and sponsorships to like-minded organizations to extend our reach beyond what we can do on our own. We provide more than \$4 million dollars annually

to many excellent organizations working on activities in line with our mission. Some examples of our partners include Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), U.S. Chamber of Commerce Hiring our Heroes organization, and the United Service Organizations (USO).

Finally, our fifth pillar, Veterans and Military Business Support seeks to find the intersection between the work we do with veterans through our Corporate Social Responsibility and the work we do as a Financial Services firm. Our primary focus is bringing Prudential's expertise in Financial Wellness education to the issues that Veterans and their families face as they transition to civilian life. Through a partnership with the USO, we offer a completely non-solicitous Financial Wellness training program to help transitioning Service Members plan for, and work towards, their financial needs in civilian life.

Our multi-faceted approach to our veteran programs is robust and mutually supporting among the five pillars. While these activities are distinct, there is a common thread in how they support our main focus of veteran employment. Elements of our WOS program mentioned previously can be found within each of these pillars.

Founded in 2005, Workforce Opportunity Services (WOS) is a leading nonprofit committed to developing untapped talent from underserved and veteran communities through partnerships with organizations dedicated to diversifying their workforce. The WOS Program has its roots in a program developed by Dr. Arthur Langer of Columbia University. It started with Dr. Langer's research on solutions to address the effects of poverty, social isolation, and stress in underserved populations who may lack resources and access to higher education and career opportunities. The initial program was a collaboration between Dr. Langer and Prudential's Global Chief Information Officer Barbara Koster to establish a new talent channel for Prudential's technology organization. This program was then adapted in 2010 to serve as the basis our Veteran training and hiring activities for post 9/11 Veterans. This adapted program, branded VETalent at Prudential, was one of the first programs of its kind training veterans for new careers in Corporate America.

The WOS model is unique among U.S. organizations because WOS combines all aspects of the new employee lifecycle to ensure its participants are successful. The hands-on model is a key driver of the programs' success as well as the success of those who've completed the program. The process is holistic as WOS and the sponsoring partner works with participants throughout the recruiting, training, and employment process. The program summary is as follows:

- WOS works with a partner organization to identify its workforce needs. Once the number of roles and individuals requested are agreed upon, WOS conducts a needs assessment to understand the type and length of the training required for the program.
- WOS uses the information gathered during the needs assessment to create a unique program. Each WOS program is unique due to the specificity of the requests of WOS partner organizations. Once the program design and development are complete, WOS identifies academic partners with the technical expertise required. WOS also infuses its own interpersonal skills curriculum into the program. The interpersonal skills training is the common thread throughout all WOS programs. During this stage, WOS builds a program participant profile and creates a unique selection tool for the program.
- WOS casts a wide net to recruit applicants to the program, with the intent of having the largest pool of candidates to put through the selection process. WOS uses numerous online and in-person channels to do so.
- The WOS selection process is rigorous and designed to identify the best qualified candidates. These top candidates are invited to precertification, the final stage of selection where candidates take part in a various assessment to gauge interest in the course material and fit for the identified roles. Once candidates complete the precertification, WOS confers with the sponsoring organization to finalize the program participants.
- WOS manages the entire academic training. WOS has resources in the classroom and works with the participants and training providers to ensure the designed curriculum is being delivered and that the participants are engaged and absorbing the content. The in-class WOS resource facilitates early issue identification and remediation to ensure maximum candidate course completion.
- Once the training is complete, WOS then employs the program participants. After 90 days of employment, program participants receive individual health insurance with a \$0 contribution to the premium, tuition reimbursement for up to three classes per semester, which includes books and fees, at a public higher education institution, paid holidays and vacation, and access to zero interest loans for unexpected financial issues. Finally, the partner company's sponsor-

ship fee helps finance a stipend that is paid by WOS to the candidate during the academic phase prior to employment. This is particularly important given that veterans are often married would likely be less apt to focus on the training if they are worried about supporting a family.

- After the candidates are fully trained by WOS and at the requisite level of expertise for the assigned role, employment is offered by the sponsoring organization and the candidate is fully integrated into the work force.

One of the key attributes of the Prudential VETalent program is its adaptability to a variety of roles. The program has been customized to accommodate a host of technology roles such as Quality Assurance, Database Development, Technology Operations, Security Administration to name a few. Other roles include, customer service and project coordination. The multi-phased approach to the program allows the sponsoring company to see the progress of the candidate in the program and to assess readiness at various checkpoints for eventual hire. This is valuable as it allows hiring managers to provide guidance to WOS for them to provide further training if specific skills are still in development.

This program has been used with success in many of our offices around the country but most recently in our newly established Business and Technology Center in El Paso Texas. The experience we gained in implementing the program elsewhere made it a natural fit for our work in El Paso. There are many types of work done at this office and the adaptability of the WOS model allows its use as an effective talent source for this key location. Since the office opened in 2014, we have hosted 15 cohorts or veterans and military spouses. Of the Prudential staff in the El Paso Office, more than 50% are veterans or military spouses - the majority of which were sourced using the WOS model.

Refinement of the selection and assessment criteria for the program is an ongoing effort to better select candidates with genuine interest and aptitude to learn and flourish in the specified roles. Our focus is providing opportunities for meaningful careers, rather than providing just a job. This is in line with Prudential's vision to help veterans and their families find the long-term prosperity they helped to protect while in service to their nation.

Consistent with our desire to be a national leader in establishing and sharing best practice programs, we tested and refined the WOS Prudential model with the intent of sharing it with other like-minded companies to expand its impact beyond what Prudential could do on its own. As a result, in close cooperation with WOS, the program model has been adopted by over 60 other companies around the country.

In support of our efforts to hire and retain veterans and military spouses, Prudential has found it helpful to educate hiring managers on the military in general and the value that veterans and military spouses bring to the work place. With a very small percentage of our nation's population having a direct connection to military service, there is a lack of knowledge and misconceptions that must be overcome by hiring managers before they will routinely consider them a viable source of talent. Prudential has developed an in-house training curriculum specifically designed to close this gap in understanding. Both the in-class and web based training versions have been well received and effective in increasing veteran and military spouse representation on hiring slates. The efficacy of this training approach is being shared via the Veterans Employment Advisory Council (VEAC) and the Military Spouse Employment Advisory Council (MSEAC) - both sponsored by the U S. Chamber Hiring our Heroes organization. These bodies are excellent forums for sharing of best practices with other public and private organizations.

Private sector programs can effectively be built on governmental initiatives to help advance veteran and military spouse employment. An excellent example of a successful program is the Corporate Fellowship Program of the Hiring our Heroes organization. Implemented on the authority of the Skills Bridge program of the Department of Defense, transitioning servicemembers can intern with a prospective employer before they leave Active duty. Not only does this allow the fellow to begin the acclimation process into corporate America much earlier, but also gives the prospective employer an extended period to judge fit into company culture. These factors play a positive role in job satisfaction and retention. Prudential has piloted this program in two locations and we plan to expand participation based on our success.

Prudential Veterans Initiative Program's mission is to establish sustainable programs and activities that have a positive impact on the lives of veterans and their families. Prudential has created an integrated five pillar strategy to focus our effort in the area of Education and Employment of veterans and military spouses. By adapting an effective model created by Workforce Opportunity Services, Prudential and WOS have created a program that has not only been a key enabler in our own staffing activities, but also in the staffing activities of other companies interested

in tapping into this valuable talent pool. Hiring manager training as well as participation in select governmental hiring programs has been a significant factor in the overall success of achieving our mission. Active participation in bodies such as the VEAC and MSEAC allow Prudential to learn from others and to propagate our lessons learned to other like-minded organizations.

Prudential would like to thank the Committee for its invitation to speak with you and share our experiences. We stand ready to work with others to help further expand the WOS program or any other that will be beneficial to Service Members, Veterans, and their families. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

Prepared Statement of Robert Douthit

Thank you, Chairman Arrington and Ranking Member O'Rourke for inviting me to testify today on "Hiring and Retaining Veterans for the Modern Day Work Force." My name is Robert Douthit. I am the Executive Director of Dell EMC Customer Solution Centers for the Americas and a 20 year United State Army Veteran. I am honored to appear before you today to discuss how more of our former military men and women can be hired, integrated and retained by civilian workforce employers.

The U.S. Department of Defense was one of Dell's first customers and so we have a long tradition of working for and identifying with the United States Military. We appreciate the skills that veterans can bring to our business. At Dell, we help our customers define an objective. We help them identify, develop, and evaluate options to accomplish that objective, and once an option is selected to meet that objective, we focus relentlessly on execution of the option or mission to meet the objective just as every soldier, sailor, airman, Marine or Coast Guardsman is trained to do. So at Dell, veterans are a value-add to our workforce.

My testimony today has three objectives:

- 1) To explain why Dell is a vigorous recruiter of veterans and their spouses;
- 2) To explain how we recruit veterans and their spouses; and
- 3) To offer some suggestions as to how the federal government can strengthen military Transition Assistance Programs (TAP) and sharpen existing programs to enhance veteran hiring.

Dell stands ready to help ensure that America's veterans can seamlessly transition to the civilian workforce and begin serving their country in a different capacity or to immerse themselves in one of our many information and data technology businesses.

Why Dell Recruits Veterans and Their Spouses

- I have already noted that Dell's culture aligns with the competencies of veterans' with a keen focus on execution
- The military provides a rich source of talent, especially in key areas of worker under-representation and we believe that a diverse workforce is a dynamically effective workforce
- Approximately 46% of all Active duty personnel are near our key market locations
- A 2017 Student Veterans Research Brief found that when compared to their peers, student veterans using the Post-9/11 GI Bill represent the single best source of potential and current achievers in higher education, with nearly 100,000 now graduating annually, and that nearly 1.1 million student veterans are in higher education right now; and
- Finally, a 2017 Blue Star Families survey found that 28% of military spouses are unemployed and 55% military spouses state that they are underemployed. Dell would like to lower those statistics.

Dell's Veterans & Supporters Employee Resource Group (ERG) was officially started in 2011, but it was informally started several years before then as a means for veterans within the business to connect and support each other. The success of the Dell Veterans and Supporters ERG is due to the dedicated commitment from Michael Dell to all levels of management throughout the company. To demonstrate that point, our Veterans and Supporters ERG is sponsored by Rory Read, Dell's Chief Operating Officer and our second most senior company official. This senior level management commitment is what encourages and sustains us to recruit veterans and - equally important - to assure veteran retention.

Veteran Jobs Mission is, in our view, the leading private-sector solution addressing U.S. military veteran unemployment. It began in 2011 as a coalition of 11 companies including EMC Corporation, now a part of Dell that was committed to hiring 100,000 veterans by 2020. Since its founding, the coalition has evolved to more than 230 private-sector companies that represent virtually every industry in the U.S. economy. The Veteran Jobs Mission coalition has collectively hired more than 400,000 veterans since it began and, building on this momentum, has raised its goal to hire 1 million veterans among its member companies by 2020.

Beyond their ongoing search for top military talent, Veteran Jobs Mission members are continuing to increase their focus on retention and career development of veterans in the private sector. This includes supporting veterans as they adapt to the workplace by establishing sponsorship and on-boarding training programs, as well as industry-based coalition subgroups to increase collaboration among members.

How Dell Recruits Veterans and Spouses

We utilize a number of different means and methods to recruit veterans and their spouses. We are active participants in career fairs at military bases as transitioning military members begin to look outside of their military careers. Dell's Veterans ERG has developed customized training to suit the needs of transitioning servicemembers on how to 'Build Your Brand.'

Dell's Talent Acquisition Team also participates in monthly partner calls with the Texas Veterans Commission to identify talent opportunities for employers seeking workers with the skills that military training brings. Dell partners with the Microsoft Software & Systems Academy which provides 18-week training for high-demand careers in cloud development, cloud administration, cybersecurity administration, and database and business intelligence administration. Program graduates gain an interview for a full-time job at Microsoft or one of our hiring partners.

Dell is also a participant in the MBA Veteran Conference which is dedicated to connecting military veteran students and alumni of the world's top-ranked universities with employers. The annual conference has veterans from the top 50 MBA programs.

Dell works with a wide variety of programs to provide training to transitioning servicemembers, but we also use these organizations, as I will describe in a moment, as sources of well-trained future Dell Team members. Among the military transition organizations that Dell works with and recruits from are:

Onward to Opportunity-VCTP - O2O VCTP empowers highly qualified transitioning servicemembers and military families with the specific skills, certifications and training required to start successful civilian careers in growing industries. O2O-VCTP connects hiring employers to veteran talent that is prepared to meet current, real time labor market needs. Dell Boomi offers a free technical certification program to veterans in the program and the program serves as a source of candidates for open positions at Dell.

Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP) - The MSEP provides a targeted recruitment and employment solution which creates connections and direct access to military spouses.

- All Dell job opening are posted daily on the site; and
- Dell has quarterly progress calls with the MSEP account manager and provides regular updates on upcoming spouse and veteran hiring opportunities.

FourBlock - Is a Career Readiness Program which equips veterans with professional development, career exploration, and professional networks

- Dell attends sessions at Northeastern University in Boston and presents student veterans with an inside look of Dell
- Dell is also working on expanding the FourBlock partnership to a new location in Austin, Texas where Dell's headquarters is located.

Bunker Labs - Dell partners with Bunker Labs to connect veteran entrepreneurs with the proper resources to grow and expand their businesses. Bunker Labs is a national nonprofit whose mission is to inspire, educate and connect current and retired military members and their families to the resources needed to help them succeed as leaders in innovation and entrepreneurship.

The Honor Foundation - Is a unique transition institute exclusively for Navy SEALs and the US Special Operations community and supporters:

- There are unique roles for former Special Operators within Dell; and

- Dell recently hosted Honor Fellows to spend time with our chief operating officer, Rory Read, and also invited Bunker Labs to discuss veteran entrepreneurship.

Vetted - Is a Veteran Accelerated Management Program, a 5 month distance education and 2-month residence education module that culminates with a Capstone project followed by either placement in industry or small business start-up assistance. The program is hosted at UT Austin, Texas A&M, and Rice University. Dell recently hosted Vetted Fellows for a Harvard Business Case Review where Vetted Fellows worked with Dell executives on the business case of Michael Dell purchasing Dell and taking the company private.

At Dell, we also have a social media strategy known as the 'Heroes Among Us' Campaign, an effort to brand Dell digitally and socially in the veteran community to make sure that all transitioning servicemembers know that their skills are welcome at Dell. Our 'Heroes Among Us Campaign' has reached 6.2 million potential readers, it has a 111% increase year over year in "apply" clicks from our Military Jobs Page and our top post on that page was read by 716,000 readers in the last year.

While these are the just the major veterans' programs that Dell invests in, you can see that that investment is well repaid by providing us with a well-qualified, well-trained pool of military veterans to join our team. The mutual benefits to veterans and to Dell are obvious.

Suggestions for Government to Improve Service Member Transition Experience

As much emphasis as the federal government puts on transitioning servicemembers, those same resources need to be invested in expanding potential employers' knowledge and awareness that there is a highly skilled pool of transitioning servicemembers available. With less than 1% of our population serving in the Armed Forces, many employers simply don't think about veterans and the many skills that they acquire during their military service as being qualified candidates for the jobs that they need to fill. Based on our experience at Dell, we offer the suggestions which follow to improve or expand existing programs or to engage new programs that have low overhead costs, yet significant potential benefit to transitioning veterans and to private industry.

- We encourage invigorating existing military TAP's with a curriculum aligned more to career exploration of veterans competencies and skills vs. just applying for a job
- Consideration should be given to offering pre-TAP career awareness courses
- Consideration should be given encouraging employer immersion days on base with TAPs.
- Consideration should be given programs that train civilian HR / talent acquisition professionals on the value of the veteran and how to work with TAPs
- Consideration should be given allowing civilian HR / talent acquisition professionals to intern on-site with TAP offices
- Consideration should be given to allowing TAP professionals to come on-site to learn more about the inner workings of companies
- A program might be designed to enhance an employer's basic knowledge of the fundamentals of being in the military pay grades, ranks, housing allowance, hazardous duty pay, basic housing allowance, and cost associated with healthcare benefits. These all equate to overall compensation packages in the corporate world
- Just as a Military Skills Translator can be used for comparing military occupational skills to job types, might it be possible for the military to align the amount of training and the professional development that goes into developing a servicemember at a particular level such as comparing the equivalency to a high school diploma, associate degree, bachelor's degree, or an advanced degree? Companies are more in tune with that language; and
- The U.S. Department of Labor should establish an advisory board of HR professionals and talent acquisition professionals to assess, audit, and contribute to the overall TAP curriculum so that it is based on real employer needs, not theory.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Joe M. Naylor, Vice President, Policy, Government and Public Affairs

Statements For The Record**Joe M. Naylor, Vice President, Policy, Government and Public Affairs**

June 23, 2018

The Honorable Jodey Arrington
United States House of Representatives
Committee on Veteran's Affairs
335 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Arrington,

Thank you for your June 13, 2018 letter inviting our Chairman and CEO, Mike Wirth, to discuss with the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity of the House Committee on Veteran's Affairs how business can continue to improve employment opportunities for Veterans. Unfortunately, Mr. Wirth is unable to attend the hearing and has asked me to reply on his behalf.

Chevron's global scope requires a wide range of talents and skills to create new and innovative energy solutions. The experiences and capabilities that our U.S. Veterans bring to the energy industry, and specifically Chevron, are a strong fit with our needs for a diversified, global workforce.

We have a number of programs aimed at improving recruitment and retention of U.S. Veterans, including partnering with several external recruiting sites to attract candidates like Monster.com, Recruitmilitary.com, and organizations like the Wounded Warrior Project and Disabled American Veterans. We leverage our relationship with military.com to highlight job opportunities by matching military codes to open positions: <https://chevron-veterans.jobs/>.

Chevron maintains a U.S. military website to inform both internal employees and external candidates about programs offered to Veterans, see: <http://careers.chevron.com/find-a-job/united-states/united-states-military>. In addition, we have Employee Network with chapters located that often provide on-the-job education, training and support. Finally, we are corporate partner of SVA's Student Veteran Success Corps (SVSC) and have made a commitment to provide enhanced access to employment opportunities for student veterans at select schools.

Thank you for your interest in Chevron.

