



**STATEMENT OF  
CHRISTOPHER R. JONES  
DEPARTMENT JUDGE ADVOCATE  
DAV DEPARTMENT OF ALABAMA  
BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
FIELD HEARING  
OCTOBER 29, 2021**

Chairman Levin, Ranking Member Moore and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for inviting DAV (Disabled American Veterans) to testify at today's field hearing of the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity entitled "Ensuring a Successful Military to Civilian Transition for Servicemembers in Southern Alabama." I have been asked to convey my personal experience as a disabled veteran and to discuss ways to help transitioning veterans and VA's Veteran Readiness and Education (VR&E) program.

My name is Chris Jones, and I am a disabled veteran and a volunteer with the DAV Department of Alabama in the Enterprise area. I attended the Transition Assistance Program commonly referred to as "TAP" prior to separating from the military. The information that they gave me was inadequate, although well intentioned. I discovered after separating that my active-duty job did not have a direct equivalent in the civilian world. Many of today's veterans are experiencing the same issue. Although my main duty responsibilities did not transfer, a lot of my training as a Forward Observer did.

With the help of the VR&E program, I was able to complete a bachelor's degree in criminal justice, which utilized many of the basic skills I had acquired in the military. Unfortunately, the injuries that I received in service have begun to worsen and I am no longer able to qualify or complete any of the duties required for jobs related to my bachelor's degree. I once again turned to VA's VR&E program and worked closely with my counselor to find another and higher degree that I am not only interested in but that I can use my military training and skills, as well as my understanding of the issues that face today's veterans.

VR&E is a program that works closely with wounded and disabled veterans to allow them to transition from their active-duty work to a civilian job, which allows them the

opportunity to gain productive employment, taking into consideration any injuries or disabilities they have. The VR&E program assists veterans and service members with service-connected disabilities that are an employment barrier to prepare for, obtain, and maintain suitable employment. Veterans with at least a 20% disability rating or a 10% rating with a serious employment handicap meet the eligibility criteria. VR&E provides comprehensive services to include vocational assessment, rehabilitation planning, and employment services. For veterans with service-connected disabilities so severe that they cannot immediately consider work, the VR&E program offers services to improve their ability to live as independently as possible within their families and communities.

My work with veterans in helping them to not only file claims but to begin to understand how the VA works, allows me the unique opportunity to see the challenges that they face. As a fellow veteran, I understand the frustrations that they are going through as they make that transition difficult, especially if the veteran spent a significant amount of time in service, the transition can be overwhelming and confusing. With the help of programs such as VR&E and with the free assistance offered by veterans service organizations such as DAV, veterans have a greater opportunity for success as they move from active-duty service to civilian service. Every veteran should know that they are not alone during and after that transition.

Again, thank you for inviting me to participate in this field hearing.