

Truth in Testimony Disclosure Form

In accordance with Rule XI, clause 2(g)(5)* of the *Rules of the House of Representatives*, witnesses are asked to disclose the following information. Please complete this form electronically by filling in the provided blanks.

Committee: Veterans' Affairs

Subcommittee: Economic Opportunity

Hearing Date: 08/23/2024

Hearing Title :

Examining Transitioning Servicemembers Experience

Witness Name: Dustin Schultz

Position/Title: Veteran Specialist

Witness Type: Governmental Non-governmental

Are you representing yourself or an organization? Self Organization

If you are representing an organization, please list what entity or entities you are representing:

Western Technical College

FOR WITNESSES APPEARING IN A NON-GOVERNMENTAL CAPACITY

Please complete the following fields. If necessary, attach additional sheet(s) to provide more information.

Are you a fiduciary—including, but not limited to, a director, officer, advisor, or resident agent—of any organization or entity that has an interest in the subject matter of the hearing? If so, please list the name of the organization(s) or entities.

N/A

Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) related to the hearing's subject matter that you, the organization(s) you represent, or entities for which you serve as a fiduciary have received in the past thirty-six months from the date of the hearing. Include the source and amount of each grant or contract.

N/A

Please list any contracts, grants, or payments originating with a foreign government and related to the hearing's subject that you, the organization(s) you represent, or entities for which you serve as a fiduciary have received in the past thirty-six months from the date of the hearing. Include the amount and country of origin of each contract or payment.

N/A

Please complete the following fields. If necessary, attach additional sheet(s) to provide more information.

- I have attached a written statement of proposed testimony.
- I have attached my curriculum vitae or biography.

*Rule XI, clause 2(g)(5), of the U.S. House of Representatives provides:

(5)(A) Each committee shall, to the greatest extent practicable, require witnesses who appear before it to submit in advance written statements of proposed testimony and to limit their initial presentations to the committee to brief summaries thereof.

(B) In the case of a witness appearing in a non-governmental capacity, a written statement of proposed testimony shall include— (i) a curriculum vitae; (ii) a disclosure of any Federal grants or contracts, or contracts, grants, or payments originating with a foreign government, received during the past 36 months by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness and related to the subject matter of the hearing; and (iii) a disclosure of whether the witness is a fiduciary (including, but not limited to, a director, officer, advisor, or resident agent) of any organization or entity that has an interest in the subject matter of the hearing.

(C) The disclosure referred to in subdivision (B)(ii) shall include— (i) the amount and source of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) related to the subject matter of the hearing; and (ii) the amount and country of origin of any payment or contract related to the subject matter of the hearing originating with a foreign government.

(D) Such statements, with appropriate redactions to protect the privacy or security of the witness, shall be made publicly available in electronic form 24 hours before the witness appears to the extent practicable, but not later than one day after the witness appears.

False Statements Certification

Knowingly providing material false information to this committee/subcommittee, or knowingly concealing material information from this committee/subcommittee, is a crime (18 U.S.C. § 1001). This form will be made part of the hearing record.



Witness signature

8/21/24 _____

Date

Dustin Schultz

VETERAN SPECIALIST

WESTERN TECHNICAL COLLEGE, LA CROSSE, WI

Military	2006-2012	U.S. Army National Guard – 384 th Military Police, Bloomington, Indiana
	2009-2010	U.S. Army – Deployed with Sixth Squadron, Ninth United States Cavalry, Operation Iraqi Freedom Order of the Combat Spur // Combat Action Badge
Education	2017-2018	Western Technical College Associate of Applied Science Criminal Justice
	2019-2020	Viterbo University Bachelor of Science Criminal and Community Justice Minor in Substance Abuse Counseling
Professional affiliations	2018-Present	Thomas Rooney VFW Post 1530 La Crosse, WI Adjutant

My name is Dustin Schultz, I am a Veteran Specialist for Western Technical College and have been in this position for 3 years. Prior to this role, I was a Veteran Service Officer and a nonprofit Director for a Veteran Mentorship Program where we worked with our local Veterans Treatment Court and justice involved veterans. Lastly, I am also an honorably discharged US Army Veteran and served overseas during Operation Iraqi Freedom. I will be providing remarks on the struggles I've witnessed as service members transition from the military.

Current programs like Transition Assistance Program and the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (TAP / YRRP) are great tools for helping service members transition into education or employment.

- However, senior leadership are often beyond this stage in their life. Officers already have a college degree, and senior noncommissioned officers often elect to transfer their education benefits to their dependents. Retiring senior leadership may choose not to return to the workforce at all.
 - This is a disconnect between those providing these preventative services and the lower enlisted service members who do not share the same circumstances.
 - From my experience, lower enlisted service members struggle to transition the most.
- Veterans report that timing is a problem for current transitional services. They see these programs as a series of “check boxes” positioned between them and their release from the military.
 - This causes participation to be rushed, service members are not honest about what issues they may have to deal with upon their return, or do not foresee the challenges ahead of them.
 - Veterans report that these programs are provided at the end of the service members' time in the military and don't allow for much time to consider what challenges may arise in transitioning.
 - I believe there should be efforts to start transitional services much earlier in the service member's career.
- Service members are returning to a home where parents, a spouse, or other loved ones have taken on some of their responsibilities in their absence.
 - They may struggle to find their role in the home leading to relationship issues like divorce and thus compounding emotional, financial, and social hardship.
 - Services could include families who are critical to successful transition and help prevent compounding issues.
- Current services and programs seem to lack follow-up after leaving the military.
 - This can leave the veteran feeling discarded or devalued.
- Coordination with other services or programs
 - Thousands of nonprofit organizations that can help.
 - Services or support that is not specific to veterans are overlooked. I have had veterans that are not aware that they can apply for FAFSA.

I believe we need more of a case management approach that is proactively assessing the service members and their families as they transition back into civilian life.

- Incorporate all effective forms of support such as faith-based programs, peer support and other options that are personalized to the individual.
 - Exit services could be provided by a “reintegration counselor” similar to the Veteran Readiness & Employment program (Chapter 31) who can assist the service member or connect them to appropriate resources.
- Veteran suicides each day are alarming figures, but do not include those that die of accidental death due to other things like poor decision making, recklessness or unintentional drug overdose.
 - The service member doesn’t know how they will handle the freedoms of civilian life until they experience it.
 - I feel there should be additional emphasis on making good decisions and minimizing risky behavior.
- Lastly, education benefits are a major reason many decide to join the military and often the first endeavor for service members after transition. A common issue people report is financial instability due to pro-rated housing payments.
 - For instance, if a student begins a Spring term on January 8th, the VA will prorate their monthly housing stipend and reduce the housing payment. When the term ends, the payment is again pro-rated to exclude any days of the month the student is not enrolled.
 - I believe these inconsistent payments cause undue hardship on student veterans and their families.

Thank you.