

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
OF
DR. JOSEPH W. WESCOTT
NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE LIAISON
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE APPROVING AGENCIES
FOR THE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
WITH RESPECT TO
Strengthening the Workforce of Veterans in America

December 2, 2025

Introduction

Chairman Van Orden, Ranking Member Pappas and members of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, on behalf of the fifty-three-member State agencies of the National Association of State Approving Agencies (NASAA) and their over 220 staff members, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on strengthening the workforce of American veterans.

State approving agencies are State approving agencies responsible for approving standard college degrees, preparatory courses, residency courses, license and certification exams, non-college degree (NCD), apprenticeship (APP), and on-the-job training (OJT) programs for the GI Bill®. As such, we review programs to ensure they align with our mission and provide high-quality instruction and training that prepares veterans and their beneficiaries for lucrative careers as they make their transition from the military to civilian life. As pointed out by Chairman Van Orden, we are concerned that APP and OJT programs now account for less than one percent of the veterans using the GI Bill, a continual decline over the last decade due to a lack of awareness and little incentive to utilize this benefit to pursue workforce training. For example, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reports that during FY 2025, only 2,219 Post-9/11 GI Bill beneficiaries began an OJT or apprenticeship program. During the same period, 78,382 individuals began receiving the same benefit while enrolled in undergraduate or graduate degree programs. We believe that the underutilization of this important benefit is partially due to lack of veteran awareness. Furthermore, VA admits that this benefit has been inadequately promoted and more should be done to ensure veterans are informed of all the potential uses of their GI Bill entitlement. It is important that the value of an apprenticeship and how it can equip individuals with the skills needed to quickly enter the workforce be properly explained.

Veterans that enroll in an APP or OJT can effectively use their benefit to transition more quickly into the civilian workforce while for themselves and their families. For this reason, we strongly support H.R.982, *the Warriors to Workforce Act of 2025*, introduced by Chairman Derrick Van Orden in February of this year. This important legislation would increase the benefits that veterans receive during their first year of an apprenticeship by changing the law so that after 6 months of training, the amount of benefit veterans receive will increase to 90 percent as opposed to the current 80 percent prescribed by law. This increase will provide a needed incentive for veterans to use this program, while enhancing the likelihood that they will persist in their training, enter the workforce, and support their families. The sooner veterans identify a career path and training program that aligns with their goals, their chance for successful transition to civilian life increases significantly.

Over the past several decades, Congress has greatly increased the financial incentives for veterans to seek a college degree, but little has been done for veterans who seek practical on-the-job training rather than a college degree. While in the military, many servicemembers work in occupations that are more hands-on and can utilize these transferable skills that are greatly needed in the civilian workforce. With this increase in their APP/OJT benefit, veterans could be better incentivized to join the workforce immediately, thereby securing gainful employment, becoming a tax paying citizen and contributing to their local communities and families.

NASAA also strongly supports H.R. 1458, the *Veterans Education and Technical Skills (VETS) Opportunity Act*, which expands access to high-quality, high-demand skilled trade and technical training programs for those who served. Introduced by Rep. Juan Ciscomani earlier this year, this legislation ensures that GI Bill benefits can be used for in-person and hybrid skilled-trade programs offered at accredited institutions approved by State Approving Agencies. By requiring regular, substantive interaction between students and instructors, this bill protects the integrity of VA education benefits as students are prepared for employment in high-skill technical fields. As Rep. Ciscomani noted, this commonsense reform will expand the benefits that veterans earned to cover the costs of high-skilled training programs and allow veterans to receive training to address nationwide shortages in trades like welding, pipe fitting, HVAC, and advanced manufacturing fields. Similarly to H.R. 982, this bill can help to encourage more veterans to seek training in high demand occupations and provide pathways to successful careers in today's workforce. These bills better align training and education with employer demand while upholding quality standards and allowing veterans to use their transferable skills to pursue vocational and technical careers and contribute to the rebuilding of our nation's infrastructure.

Finally, NASAA is concerned with some provisions of H.R. 2954, *the Veterans' Transition to Trucking Act of 2025*. While we agree with the noble intention of this legislation to address a shortage of drivers in our nation, we have reservations about the fact that this legislation removes State Approving Agency (SAA) oversight of trucking programs, an important protection for veterans and their families. Legislation currently exists that provides for the approval of national apprenticeship programs without removing SAA protections such as ensuring only high-quality programs are approved. SAAs have dedicated staff in each state to provide compliance oversight and training to approved truck driving schools, whereas the VA may face challenges conducting thorough inspections at these institutions. NASAA welcomes the opportunity to work with the sponsors of this legislation to address these concerns and ensure that veterans can more quickly and efficiently use their earned education benefits to enter high-quality training programs—no

matter where they live or relocate to, without the loss of the protections which SAA approval and oversight can provide for them.

Information Required by Rule XI2(g)(4) of the House of Representatives

Pursuant to Rule XI2(g)(4) of the House of Representatives, NASAA has not received any federal grants in Fiscal Year 2025, nor has it received any federal grants in the two previous Fiscal Years.

NASAA has not received payments or contracts from any foreign governments in the current year or preceding two calendar years.