

Niskanen Center

January 21, 2026

The Honorable Derrick Van Orden, Chairman
The Honorable Chris Pappas, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
360 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Legislative Hearing on H.R. 4105, the Veterans Energy Transition Act of 2025 (VET Act)

Dear Chairman Van Orden, Ranking Member Pappas, and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of the Niskanen Center, I am pleased to submit this statement for the record in support of H.R. 4105, the Veterans Energy Transition Act of 2025. The Niskanen Center is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy think tank that advocates for the rule of law, responsive governance, and well-functioning markets, all of which work together to protect both individual liberty and societal well-being. The Niskanen Center develops practical, empirically grounded solutions to some of the country's most complex public policy challenges, including those arising in the energy and electricity sectors. The center draws its name from economist William (Bill) Niskanen, a member of President Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers who also served as the long-time chairman of the Cato Institute. We welcome this opportunity to express our strong support for the VET Act.

The VET Act addresses national energy priorities

America faces a shortage of skilled workers to support our energy infrastructure and our manufacturing capacity. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, approximately 10,000 electricians leave the workforce annually while only 7,000 enter.¹ This structural deficit reverberates through the broader energy sector at a critical moment, as electricity demand is projected to increase substantially over the next several years due to data center growth, long-overdue grid modernization, and industrial expansion.

At the same time, more than 200,000 service members transition out of the military each year, many with technical expertise and leadership experience directly applicable to energy and manufacturing careers.² The VET Act addresses these related challenges by creating a pathway from military service to civilian employment in sectors key to our economic and national security.

Key provisions of the VET Act

The proposed legislation takes a market-driven approach. It does so by aligning the career resources of the Department of Defense's SkillBridge Program and the Department of Labor's Transition Assistance Program with career opportunities in energy generation, transmission and distribution, and in advanced manufacturing and energy-critical supply chains. It would provide up to \$10,000 per participant for costs related to training, certification, relocation, and onboarding as well as dedicated support for vulnerable veteran populations. Overall, the VET Act would authorize \$60 million in annual funding from FY26 through FY31.

The Niskanen Center is a 501(c)3 issue advocacy organization that works to change public policy through direct engagement in the policymaking process.

NISKANEN CENTER | 1201 New York Ave., NW STE 200B | WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005
www.niskanencenter.org | For inquiries, please contact ltavlas@niskanencenter.org

Niskanen Center

The VET Act is built on Niskanen Center research expertise

The Niskanen Center has published extensively on America's transmission-infrastructure needs. Our research demonstrates that components necessary to modernize the power grid are prone to supply chain shortages, in part due to a lack of trained engineering professionals in the U.S. workforce. None of the world's top seven High Voltage Direct Current, or HVDC, cable manufacturers are headquartered here, and transformer wait times can extend to four years.³ Helping veterans acquire the skills and knowledge to manufacture core grid components in America would fill important gaps in our workforce, address our supply chain vulnerabilities, and serve those who served our nation.

The Niskanen Center's work on grid reliability highlights the stakes involved. Given that nearly all Department of Defense installations in the U.S. rely on the commercial electricity grid for power,⁴ a resilient grid is essential to national security, and requires a robust, highly skilled workforce to build and maintain it. The VET Act would directly contribute to this objective.

Veterans bring mission-critical skills to the energy workforce

Military training emphasizes precision, safety protocols, teamwork, and the ability to perform under pressure. Many military occupational specialties reflect these traits and translate directly to energy sector positions. The VET Act would create a formal pathway to connect these talented individuals with employers who need them.

Conclusion

The Niskanen Center urges Congress to advance this timely legislation. As the United States works to modernize its grid, reshore manufacturing, and secure our energy independence, the VET Act would provide a practical, bipartisan solution to strengthen both our workforce and national security. We commend your leadership on this issue.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record.

Sincerely,



Liza Reed, PhD
Director, Climate and Energy
Niskanen Center

Notes

1. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, Electricians (47-2111). See also Phillips, Debra and Daryoush Larizadeh, "Veterans are ready to power America's energy future, if we give them the chance," Stars and Stripes, November 13, 2025.
2. Department of Defense, Transition Assistance Program statistics.
3. Allen, Robin and Rachel Levine, "Unlocking HVDC: How Congress Can Enable a More Resilient Grid," Niskanen Center, July 2025. See also Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory, "Enabling Large-Scale Adoption of HVDC Technology," 2024.
4. Converge Strategies LLC, "Transmission Expansion for National Defense," 2024.