

**STATEMENT OF
MS. MARGARITA DEVLIN
PRINCIPAL DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY,
PERFORMING THE DELEGABLE DUTIES OF THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR
BENEFITS,
VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION,
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA),
BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
April 16, 2026**

Good afternoon, Chairman Van Orden, Ranking Member Pappas, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me to discuss the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) program. I am accompanied by Ms. Chantile Stovall, Acting VR&E Service Director.

Program Overview

The purpose of the VR&E program is to provide temporary, targeted intervention for Service members and Veterans with service-connected disabilities affecting their ability to obtain or maintain suitable employment or live independently. It provides individualized counseling and rehabilitation services through five service tracks – rapid access to employment, re-employment, employment through long-term services, self-employment and independent living. Once entitlement is established, program participants receive tailored support directed specifically toward their vocational or independent living goals and limited solely to those essential services pertinent to their approved rehabilitation plans. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs) work with participants to set goals, develop tailored rehabilitation plans and guide progress through structured case management.

VR&E provides services nationwide through 56 regional offices, the National Capital Region Benefits Office, approximately 142 out-based locations, 70 military installations supporting the Integrated Disability Evaluation System, and 104 VetSuccess on Campus sites. In FY 2025, more than 1,500 employees delivered over \$2.8B in services to more than 199,600 Veterans.

VRCs and Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists (VRS) operate within defined VR&E policies, established cost thresholds, and approval protocols. While rehabilitation plans are developed collaboratively with Veterans, every requested service, supply, or piece of equipment must directly support the approved goal and be fully documented.

Staff follow standardized procedures to verify need, justify each item, and obtain supervisory or higher-level approval for requests that exceed delegated authority. These controls ensure VR&E provides only resources essential for training, employment preparation, self-employment, or Independent Living while upholding responsible stewardship of program funds

Program Oversight

Before a rehabilitation plan is finalized, all services and equipment must be approved according to statutory, regulatory and VR&E policy thresholds. VR&E enforces internal controls that include supervisory review, fiscal oversight, and required justification when a plan exceeds a counselor's authority. The Invoice Payment Processing System (IPPS) further safeguards approvals by routing requests to the correct official and preventing actions beyond delegated authority.

Higher cost or complex procurements may require approval from regional or national VR&E leadership. These controls ensure all procurements are justified,

compliant, and aligned with program goals. VR&E maintains a robust oversight structure across its regional operations. VR&E Officers conduct local quality reviews to ensure compliance with policy, documentation standards, and fiscal controls, while Support Services Divisions audit purchase card transactions for adherence to financial and acquisition regulations.

Nationally, VR&E Service reinforces consistency through targeted quality reviews, onsite visits, and assessments conducted via the Systematic Oversight and Analysis Review (SOAR). Together, these strengthen internal controls, mitigate risk, and support disciplined fiscal stewardship. As a result, VR&E maintains a 97 percent fiscal accuracy score, which is a measure of the accuracy of fiscal activity in Chapter 31 cases, including subsistence allowance, and payments such as tuition, fees, books, and supplies.

Modernization Efforts

VA is strengthening VR&E oversight through the new Readiness & Employment System (RES), designed to consolidate case management and financial controls into one modern platform. RES has been deployed across all 56 regional offices and will replace the legacy Corporate WINRS¹ system. RES standardizes workflows, automates manual processes, and ensures entitlement decisions, plans and authorizations are consistently documented and auditable. Role based workflows and electronic audit trails enhance accountability. Advanced capabilities - such as expanded automation and

¹ Corporate Winston-Salem, Indianapolis, Newark, Roanoke, and Seattle System. The name is derived from the first letter of the names of the five pilot test stations that tested the original program. It is an automated case management system supporting the VR&E program (legacy).

near-real time financial monitoring - are currently under development and are expected to be completed by the end of Q2 FY 2027.

These transformation efforts embed internal controls into daily operations, strengthen compliance with VA and Federal standards, and improves the quality, timeliness of information available for management, reporting and oversight. Collectively, RES will enhance VR&Es ability to deliver efficient, transparent, and accountable services to Veterans.

Program Metrics

Program participation has grown significantly since passage of the PACT Act, which expanded eligibility for VR&E services. Since August 2022, participation has increased 74 percent—from 120,000 to 210,000 as of March 2026, demonstrating sustained demand for rehabilitation and employment support.

In FY 2025, VR&E delivered record-setting performance across every major measure. The program completed 126,960 entitlement determinations, 55,301 Veterans began new rehabilitation programs, and 83,188 Veterans continued in their previously established programs. During the same period, VR&E supported 21,773 Veterans in becoming job-ready; and achieved 19,372 successful program completions—the highest in program history. This included a record 10,527 Veterans who secured employment. These outcomes reflect significant progress in preparing Veterans for long-term career success, stability, and economic independence.

Conclusion

In closing, VA remains deeply committed to advancing and strengthening the VR&E program, particularly in its financial oversight, internal controls and transformation

efforts. To optimally serve Veterans, I am committed to regularly evaluating and refining program parameters in alignment with evolving demands and best practices.

Implementing explicit expectations and comprehensive accountability frameworks for participating Veterans is essential. By establishing transparent evaluation metrics and systematically tracking progress, the program can enhance its effectiveness in facilitating meaningful and sustainable outcomes for Veterans. Chairman Van Orden and Ranking Member Pappas, this concludes my statement. My colleague and I welcome any questions you or other Members of the Subcommittee may have.