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Statement for the record for The “Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017”

By: David B. McKinley, P.E., (WV-01)

After many years of effort and turns in the road, we are pleased the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017 will eventually become a reality for our Veterans. I want to thank this committee and its staff for all your hard work and diligence to get us to this point today.

The genesis for the new Edith Nourse Rogers Scholarship provided in the overall bill, was a result of listening to our Veterans. Since 2011, we held over 75 meetings with veteran’s groups in West Virginia. At one such meeting, we heard how difficult it was for a veteran to make the shift from the military to the academic world. We also heard this was especially true when it came to STEM degrees. The rigor of the coursework along with simply finding lab time are all contributing factors to why it takes longer to achieve a STEM degree. By listening to our veteran constituents, we were able to take their idea and turn it into a piece of legislation that will help all veterans.

American businesses are looking for skilled employees who possess the scientific and math skills necessary to grow our economy. What better way to fill a high-tech job than by helping a qualified veteran obtain the education they need to compete for these high paying positions

In today’s economic environment, the high paying STEM majors will earn graduates an average mid-career salary of \$136,000. The tax revenue from STEM professionals will be greater than many other majors provide; this program will pay for itself in many aspects. Furthermore, STEM majors lead to careers considered “recession-proof” due to the high demand for STEM professionals in the marketplace. Filling great paying American jobs with veterans is a wonderful solution.

By continuing their education, and strengthening their skills, our veterans are investing in American’s future. Military technical career training in areas such as, technicians, medics and corpsmen, engineers, logistics, operations, chemicals, nursing - all these and much more can translate into civilian jobs with training. There is no reason to waste the valuable training received in the military. This legislation will make it even easier.

Mr. Chairman, thank you once again for all your hard work.