



Statement before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity
Legislative Hearing on H.R. 2409; H.R. 5452; H.R. 5538; H.R.5644; H.R. 5649; and a
draft bill, titled "To amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to provide for the
termination by a spouse of a lessee of certain leases when the lessee dies while in military
service."

Empowering Veterans in Civilianhood

Reshaping the Veteran Narrative Through the VET OPP Act

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Chairman Arrington, Ranking Member O'Rourke, and distinguished members of this subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear in this role today, as you consider tangible measures for Congress to take to uplift all our nation's veterans—both present and future—in their transition from war to work and to successful civilian lives. It is an honor.

Veterans are the unacknowledged permanent ambassadors of military and even national service. How we publicly portray veterans directly relates to how society conceptualizes military service and what happens to an individual during that service. In an all-volunteer force, reputation is key to the attractiveness of joining a profession in which death and permanent disability are distinct possibilities. To encourage young men and women to join its ranks, since 1973 the Department of Defense (DOD) has necessarily relied on programs and benefits provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Those who have chosen to wear the nation's uniform, as well as those who have chosen not to wear it, just as much have been influenced by how Congress and the VA have cared for veterans' reputations as their physical bodies. The types of legislation surrounding veterans that Congress passes, and the types of programs and benefits that the VA prioritizes, powerfully shape the national narrative about veterans and influence veterans' own perception of their identity in the post-service context. The tenor of veteran legislation is a crucial factor for the post-service growth of all veterans and for their healthy and successful transition to civilianhood.

A VA for Veterans: Flexible Methods, Inflexible Goal

Well before the then Veterans Administration in 1959 took as its motto words from the final paragraph of President Abraham Lincoln's resonant Second Inaugural Address—

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations¹

—the American nation recognized that it has had a duty to provide some measure of honor and care to those who have fought on its behalf.²

Before we had the United States of America, we had legislation providing modest pensions to those veterans disabled in the defense of their colony.³ The early practice of granting only disability pensions to war veterans grew to include professional or vocational training after World War I and college tuition assistance and low-interest home loans after World War II. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the changing face of industrialized society,

technologies of war, and beliefs about the role of government have expanded each generation's understanding of its debt to soldiers. At the same time, Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal and Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society programs expanded the paradigm of the government's obligations to all citizens. With the GI Bill of 1966, the card deck of veterans' benefits was made available to all who have served in uniform, whether during war or peacetime.⁴

Unfortunately, scandal plagued nearly all iterations of the expanding federal programs and benefits for veterans. Fraud, overspending, and waste nearly ended the relatively modest veterans' pension program in 1820. The same trio of ills showed up in post-Civil War veterans programs. This influenced Congress to establish the Veterans Bureau in 1921, to consolidate existing veterans programs managed by the Bureau of War Risk Insurance, Public Health Service, and the Federal Board of Vocational Education. President Warren Harding nominated Colonel Charles Forbes to lead the bureau, and Congress tasked him with building hospitals. Forbes promptly squandered the bureau's budget, was relieved of his duties, and found himself serving time at Leavenworth Penitentiary.⁵

Brigadier General Frank T. Hines stepped into the breach and attempted reform, reorganizing the Veterans' Bureau into six services—medical and rehabilitation, claims and insurance, finance, supply, planning, and control. By 1930, in the midst of the Great Depression and feeling political heat from the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars, President Herbert Hoover decided that more was necessary to “coordinate Government activities affecting war veterans.” He created the Veterans Administration as an independent federal administration, consolidating all veterans programs under its purview and maintaining its distinction from the Department of Defense. The Bonus March still happened, two years later.⁶

Hoover's reorganization initiated the VA's current three major administrations and made the Veterans Health Administration the face of the VA. Under his administration, the VA overshot the veteran demand for hospital beds. The glut fueled the VA practice of expanding health care benefits to veterans without service-connected injuries, in part so as not to lose congressional appropriations. That often-overlooked decision still fuels the contemporary debate about whether there should be parameters set, and where, to what “providing care” for veterans means for the now Cabinet-level VA and the federal government.⁷ This applies as much to the Veterans Health Administration as it does to its Benefits Administration (VBA), which I shall expand on momentarily.

The point of this historical sketch is to highlight how the VA has frequently altered its formal shape or structure and has recalibrated its scope and programmatic offerings in its required quest to care for those “who shall have born the battle.” But it has not often done so with a clear purpose or vision.

No one piece of legislation created the VA, rather it has morphed into its present form through a series of reactive measures and personality-driven initiatives and in response to directives issued by successive Congresses and White House administrations, not to mention its own scandals. Without a conscious and strategic focus, perhaps it is inevitable

then that the VA has remained mired in a 20th-century model that gages workforce participation through a manufacturing economy lens and that the VBA in particular continues to operate under a 1917-based disability model. That it has remained so mired undercuts the VA's mission to care for veterans.

A somnolent 20th-century VA cannot energize 21st-century veterans who must and who want to participate in the information and knowledge economy. H.R. 5644, the Veterans' Education, Transition, and Opportunity Prioritization Plan Act of 2018, or VET OPP Act, is a rare opportunity for policymakers to assess the capabilities of the VA's existing programs and structure and strategically align both with current veterans' needs in light of the contemporary economy and society. In focusing on restructuring the VBA to prioritize already existing educational and economic opportunity programs in their own Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration (VEOTA), and under the leadership of a specially designated undersecretary, policymakers send a powerful signal to veterans and society that veterans are national assets who continue to deserve investment in after their military service. In turn, this positive legislative narrative has the power to combat the harmful and inaccurate "broken veteran" narrative.⁸

How the VET OPP Act Answers 21st-Century Veterans' Needs

Twenty-first-century realities demand a reassessment of how the VA enacts measures to assist veterans in their transition from war to work. While the VA already recognizes that their approach, based on the whole-health model, must "empowe[r] and equi[p] people to take charge of their health and well-being, and to live their life to the fullest,"⁹ it also acknowledges that VA facilities are "a system designed around points of medical care primarily focused on disease management" but that "just piling more into clinical care is not the answer—not for clinicians and not for veterans."¹⁰ The VA encourages looking at "the big picture."¹¹

Appointing an under secretary for veterans economic opportunity is looking at the big picture of veterans post-service. Efforts to expand and maintain access to mental health services for veterans should never be denigrated, but for the 19 out of 20 veterans who successfully transition out of military service, it is the tangible benefits of education and vocational training, home loans, and small business loans that provide them the hand up to take charge of their lives.¹² Research anchored in US census data has consistently shown that veterans who avail themselves of their post-service education benefits and earn degrees have increased wages (even relative to their civilian peers), which improves health, wellness, financial stability, and overall family stability.¹³ Additional research establishes the links between these outcomes; reduced rates of dependence, disability, and criminality; and increased rates of civic participation.¹⁴

However, the VA seems disinterested in this good news, even though post-9/11 veterans believe education is key to future success and the chronicled success of the VA's educational and other readjustment benefit programs. This is reflected in the VA's nearly century-old structural design, which is impeding its own ability to help veterans achieve post-service success. A majority of veterans also consistently report that navigating the

VA's administrations and benefits is their top challenge in transitioning to civilian life.¹⁵

This has particular bearing on the VA's economic opportunity programs, which have been lumped together with the VA's much more visible disability and pension benefit programs under the purview of the Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA). The VBA is struggling with a well-publicized backlog of nearly half a million disability claims.¹⁶ Overwhelmingly, the VBA's institutional resources are concentrated on the disability system to the unsurprising neglect of its education and economic programs.

Among other things, the VBA is tasked with delivering the Forever GI Bill to veterans. As the latest iteration of the GI Bill, the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017, or the Forever GI Bill, perpetuates one of the most recognizably successful transition assistance and social assistance government programs in American history.¹⁷ Despite such proven success, the government has not demonstrated much interest in harnessing the power of the Forever GI Bill to provide transition assistance for veterans. Nor is it harnessing its own institutional power to implement the Forever GI Bill: In a December 2017 congressional hearing on the bill's implementation, numerous testimonies revealed that it was a bungled mess because of both limited information technology capabilities and institutional sclerosis.¹⁸

The VA's high-potential economic opportunity programs are being smothered by the disability programs in the VBA. Established in 1917, the disability system the VA uses is an industrial age-focused model that is 60-plus years behind the information age. It views a service-connected condition only through the terms of a permanent earnings loss and works as a perverse incentive against veterans entering the workforce. This automatically undercuts the economic opportunity programs. Consequently, the very VA programs veterans stand most to profit by are operating with the proverbial millstone around their necks.

Given the current atmosphere of concern about veterans' successful reintegration into civil society, juxtaposed against the VA's acknowledged need to modernize, sound public policy requires some VA reorganization of its benefits programs currently within VBA. As it currently stands, at the structural bottom of the VBA totem pole, obstructed from the VBA under secretary's view, reside the economic opportunity and transition assisting programs.

Given the demonstrated need and desires of veterans, and the VA's own stated priorities, this is an ideal moment to place the VA's economic opportunity programs under the authority of an under secretary for veterans economic opportunity and transition assistance, as outlined in the VET OPP Act. In creating the position, Congress and the president would enable the VA to instigate a minor structural reorganization that would yield major positive outcomes.

The VEOTA would be charged with administering all the VA programs that provide assistance related to economic opportunity to veterans, their dependents, and survivors. This would include the existing educational assistance programs, vocational rehabilitation and employment programs, education and career counseling programs, veterans' housing

loan and related programs, veterans' business loan programs, the database of veteran-owned businesses, and the broadly defined transition assistance program, which the VA shares responsibility for with the Departments of Labor, Defense, and Homeland Security.¹⁹

A collection of these programs already falls under the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) in the VBA. Created in 2011, the OEO was established to oversee Education Service, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service, Loan Guaranty Service, and the Office of Employment and Economic Impact. According to the current *Functional Organizational Manual*, this office is one of seven reporting to the under secretary of benefits leading the VBA. Even a quick perusal of the manual reveals a Forbidden Forest of bureaucratic layers—both within the VA and the VBA—that is preventing the OEO from much progress in meeting its stated goal to “coordinat[e] initiatives, projects, and procedural changes” within the VA and across government by “promot[ing] economic opportunities for Veterans.”²⁰

Establishing the VEOTA would streamline and energize existing VA programs with a documented history of successful outcomes. It is not an excuse to grow government bureaucracy. It is a practical solution to the VA's structural difficulties in delivering promised benefits to veterans. It emphasizes how positive growth for the veteran can occur through the post-service transition. It provides a concrete way for the VA to meet its own stated goals of providing a whole-health model of care for veterans. And it caters to veterans' demonstrated needs for economic opportunity, to enable post-service growth and well-being in the 21st century.

Transition Assistance in the Whole-Health Model of Care

More than 20 years ago, the 1996 Congressional Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance conducted the most comprehensive review of veterans' benefits since the Bradley Commission in 1956. Since many of the benefits and services were established in the waning days of World War II, Congress tasked the commission to examine everything meant to help service members transition to civilian life. The commission was then to propose modernizing measures and improvements, including consolidating and eliminating the administering organizations.²¹

The commission acknowledged the success of the original GI Bill's education and employment provisions. These included traditional education assistance and vocational training for nondisabled veterans; rehabilitation training; home, business, and farm loans; job counseling and employment placement services; and an unemployment benefit. But the commission bridged the post-Industrial Revolution time span between 1944 and 1996 with a declaration: “If employment is the door to a successful transition to civilian life, education will be the key to employment in the information age.”²² Still in a pre-9/11, pre-War on Terror atmosphere, the commission was concerned that the 20th-century structural system of benefits the VA oversaw was outmatched by the actual needs of veterans in the 21st century.

The commission found “in some cases, benefits and services have become so outdated, and program management so ineffective that they break faith with those who served, and currently serve, their Nation in uniform.”²³ The commission therefore distinguished between benefits and services that directly help service members readjust to civilian life and those that offered mitigated or delayed compensation “for the hardships of military duty,”²⁴ opportunities lost or deferred by performing military service, or treatment or rehabilitation for injuries incurred while on active duty.

The nation and its veterans historically have shifted emphasis between these types of programs according to the concerns of the moment. After World War I, the 1918 Smith-Sears Veterans Rehabilitation Act, also known as the Soldiers Rehabilitation Act, recognized the demands that a rapidly growing manufacturing economy placed on individuals’ commercial abilities. It emphasized vocational rehabilitation courses for injured soldiers, so that they could return to their old jobs or enter new occupations and “carry on a gainful occupation.”²⁵ This was bookended by compensation legislation specifically addressing financial and personal opportunities perceived to be lost by performing military service.²⁶

As already described, the post-World War II GI Bill further shifted post-service benefits toward education in general. In fact, the Congressional Research Service dates the VA’s education assistance benefits as beginning with the 1944 bill.²⁷ The Congressional Research Service notes that a consistent theme of all GI Bill-type programs since 1944 is to “promote development of work-related skills to facilitate entry or re-entry into the civilian workforce.”²⁸ It is this theme that the 1996 Transition Commission stresses.

“Returning to private life after serving in the military is a very complex undertaking,” former Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Military Community and Family Policy) Leslye Arsht observed in response to the Transition Commission recommendations. “To assist them in doing so, we must empower servicemembers with the tools and information they need to fashion individual solutions to the challenges they will face in civilian life.”²⁹ Anthony Principi, the former chairman of the Transition Commission and former VA secretary, added: “The ultimate measure of successful transition from military to civilian life is long-term, sustained employment.”³⁰

Ten years after the Transition Commission was formed, both Arsht and Principi were concerned that the VA’s suite of resources was still tailored to “the needs of a century gone by.”³¹ Rather than helping veterans reenter an economy based on manufacturing and agriculture, the VA needed to orient its programs toward a services- and information-dominated economy. Furthermore, the VA needed to be taking into account the fault line that seemed to have developed between those who volunteered to serve and decision makers in government, business, labor, academia, and the media, as the Gulf War and post-9/11 conflicts reinforced America’s reliance on a professional all-volunteer force and avoidance of conscription. Echoing the Transition Commission, Arsht and Principi emphasized that, with this in mind, Congress, the DOD, and the VA needed to especially rethink education assistance as a benefit of service to potential recruits.³²

Beyond anecdotal evidence that this remains true in 2018, a wealth of scholarship and

empirical data gathered from diverse surveys reinforces how pivotal the framing of the VA's education benefits is for the VA's message of 21st-century economic opportunity for veterans.³³ It is equally pivotal for civilian employers and the taxpayer community at large to see veterans as a unique national resource in order for the nation to capitalize on its investment in its soldiers' training and development. It is illuminating in this regard to examine veteran employment through the lens of the military-civilian divide. This reveals how education is the crossroads for both veterans and employers.

Two decades of veteran employment research show that both individual- and group-level factors, involving psychological elements for the person and cultural elements tied to group functioning, work to "ease or impede" veterans' successful transition from the military to civilian workforce.³⁴ This is bidirectional, reflecting both the veteran employee's and the civilian employer's perspectives. The veteran perceives his or her transition as having to negotiate military-civilian identities while navigating a civilian society and integrating into a civilian workforce.³⁵ The employer may or may not know how to translate the veterans' military skills and experience to the workplace (generally the employer does not feel adequate to do this), but he or she does believe that the veteran lacks communication skills.³⁶ A majority of potential employers express openness to hiring veterans yet also some concern about veterans as employees, often linked to their perceived lack of translatable skills but sometimes linked to the "broken veteran" narrative.³⁷

In summary, the majority of potential employers believe veterans need more training or additional education, particularly in "soft skills" such as communication, before they are ready for careers in the civilian sector. Veterans tend to agree with this assessment, while 50 percent of current service members believe their military experience and skills are easily transferable to the private sector. Regardless, both veterans and employers nearly unanimously agree on the benefit of internship or apprenticeship programs for veterans as they seek to reenter the civilian workforce—both traditional employment learning paths.³⁸ And, as already noted, post-9/11 veterans especially see education as crucial to their continued success.³⁹

Truly, as the Transition Commission noted, education is the key to employment in the 21st century, and employment is the door to a successful transition to civilian life. Given this reality, it behooves the nation to "provide transitioning service members with the means and opportunity to succeed in their civilian lives and to invest their talent and ability in the American economy."⁴⁰ Existing VA programs already have the infrastructure to do this. All that is lacking is a structural reorientation of these programs in alignment with 21st-century realities.

The national discussion surrounding veterans does not need to cling to outdated and inaccurate portrayals of their abilities and their service experience. But so long as national institutions and legislation imply that veterans are broken, through a monotone emphasis on clinical mental health resources being the only resources to safely transition veterans to civilian status, such an impression will persist. And it will persist in damaging the very population those resources are designed to help.

Conclusion: Reorienting the Veteran Narrative

Public office holders, military and civilian observers, and veterans agree that the transition to being a civilian is fraught with difficulties in our contemporary society. Legislators have responded primarily by passing legislation that emphasizes mental health, despite the supermajority of veterans suffering from transition stress rather than adverse mental health issues. President Trump has also responded by issuing an executive order that calls for expanding access to mental health resources for veterans but opens the door to numerous additional approaches to support veterans in their transition to civil society.

While mental health resources for veterans are essential, they represent only one element of a whole-health model of care. Economic opportunity programs represent the counterweight to clinical mental health resources. Naturally clustered around education benefits, economic opportunity programs signal post-service personal growth and economic and social wellness. Both veterans and employers believe that education is key to successful civilian employment, and empirical data shore up that belief by showing how veterans with increased levels of education are wealthier, healthier, and more civically engaged than even their civilian peers over the life course.

This is the veteran narrative that should dominate in our society. Legislation that emphasizes the possibility—likelihood even—of post-service growth through its focus on educational and economic opportunity programs has the trendsetting power to shift the veteran narrative toward a positive veteran image. Congress can initiate this shift by legislating a structural reorganization within the VA that establishes an under secretary for veterans economic opportunity, with the authority to guide already existing VA educational and economic opportunity programs toward 21st-century needs and desired outcomes.

In a 24/7 media-driven culture that accosts us every day in every way, how we publicly portray veterans is directly related to the image of military service and what happens to an individual during that service. Ultimately, Congress has the responsibility to consider this and address it seriously. They have the constitutional responsibility to ensure that the nation is defended adequately, as much as the responsibility to care for the reputations and physical bodies of those “who have borne the battle.”⁴¹

Thank you again for the honor of this opportunity. I look forward to answering any questions from the committee.

¹ Abraham Lincoln, “Second Inaugural Address,” March 4, 1865, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/lincoln2.asp.

² US Department of Veterans Affairs, “The Origin of the VA Motto: Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address,” <https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/celebrate/vamotto.pdf>.

³ In 1636, Plymouth was the first colony in America to pass veteran pension legislation. The

Continental Congress in 1776 passed a pension law that was supposed to provide half pay for life in cases of loss of limb or other serious disability, but it was up to the individual states to pay it and the Continental Congress had no enforcement mechanism to ensure that the states did so. After the ratification of the US Constitution, the first Congress continued the pension law passed by the Continental Congress by passing the first federal pension legislation. President James Monroe expanded veteran pension legislation to include pensions for the “aged poor” with the Revolutionary War Pension Act in 1818. This laid the groundwork for how the military service-related benefits system would evolve. For more in-depth treatments of this topic, see US Department of Veterans Affairs, “VA History in Brief,”

https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/archives/docs/history_in_brief.pdf. See also Rebecca Burgess, “After Johnny’s Marched Home: Military Veterans and the Shaping of American Politics,” *American Interest*, <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2015/11/11/after-johnnys-marched-home/>; Rebecca Burgess, “Beyond the ‘Broken Veteran’: A History of America’s Relationship with its Ex-Soldiers,” *War on the Rocks*, March 7, 2018, <https://warontherocks.com/2018/03/beyond-the-broken-veteran-a-history-of-americas-relationship-with-its-ex-soldiers/>; and Rebecca Burgess, “Our Veterans Deserve Better,” *InsideSources*, November 10, 2017.

<http://www.insidesources.com/veterans-deserve-better/>.

⁴ There are still restrictions in place preventing veterans who have an “Other Than Honorable Discharge” from accessing the whole panoply of VA programs and benefits, as well as certain former members of the National Guard and Reserves. For further discussion of the GI Bill of 1966, see Burgess, “After Johnny’s Marched Home.”

⁵ US Department of Veterans Affairs, “VA History in Brief,”

https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/archives/docs/history_in_brief.pdf.

⁶ US Department of Veterans Affairs, “VA History in Brief.”

⁷ See Jessica Adler, “Burdens of War: Creating the United States Veterans’ Health System” (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017), <https://jhupbooks.press.jhu.edu/content/burdens-war>.

⁸ Rebecca Burgess, “Economic Opportunity, Transition Assistance, and the 21st Century Veteran: The Case for a Fourth VA Administration,” AEI, March 2018,

<http://www.aei.org/publication/economic-opportunity-transition-assistance-and-the-21st-century-veteran-the-case-for-a-fourth-va-administration/>.

⁹ US Department of Veterans Affairs, “A Whole Health System Serving Veterans,” March 23, 2017,

https://www.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/features/A_Whole_Health_System_Serving_Veterans.asp.

¹⁰ US Department of Veterans Affairs, “A Whole Health System Serving Veterans.”

¹¹ US Department of Veterans Affairs, “About Whole Health,”

<https://www.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/explore/about-whole-health.asp>.

¹² Lewis, testimony before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity.

¹³ Institute for Veterans and Military Families and Student Veterans of America, “Student Veterans: A Valuable Asset to Higher Education,” June 2017, https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Student-Veterans_Valuable_9.8.17_NEW.pdf. See also Paul Taylor and Rick Fry, *The Rising Cost of Not Going to College*, Pew Research Center, February 11, 2014,

<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2014/02/SDT-higher-ed-FINAL-02-11-2014.pdf>; Laura W. Perna, “The Private Benefits of Higher Education: An Examination of the Earnings Premium,”

Research in Higher Education 44, no. 4 (2003): 451–72; Sandy Baum, Jennifer Ma, and Kathleen Payea, *Education Pays: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society*, College Board Advocacy & Policy Center, 2010, <https://trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/education-pays-2010-full-report.pdf>; and AEI/Brookings Working Group on Poverty and Opportunity, *Opportunity, Responsibility, and Security: A Consensus Plan for Reducing Poverty and Restoring the American Dream*, American Enterprise Institute and Brookings Institution, December 3, 2015,

<https://www.aei.org/publication/opportunity-responsibility-and-security/>.

¹⁴ See Nicholas Eberstadt, *Men Without Work: America's Invisible Crisis* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2016).

¹⁵ Corri Zoli, Rosalinda Maury, and Daniel Fay, *Missing Perspectives: Servicemembers' Transition from Service to Civilian Life*, Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University, November 2015, <https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/article/missing-perspectives-service-members-transition-from-service-to-civilian-life-forward/>.

¹⁶ Nicole Ogrysko, "Congress Takes Another Shot at Fixing Outdated, Lengthy Veterans Appeals Process," Federal News Radio, May 2, 2017, <https://federalnewsradio.com/veterans-affairs/2017/05/congress-takes-another-shot-at-fixing-outdated-lengthy-veterans-appeals-process/>.

¹⁷ US Department of Veterans Affairs, "History and Timeline," <https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/history.asp>; Congressional Research Service, *GI Bills Enacted Prior to 2008 and Related Veterans' Education Assistance Programs: A Primer*, October 6, 2017, https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20171006_R42785_0725bac1b4aa2ba9114163d90e28a8f569e9a7d9.pdf; and Melissa Murray, "When War Is Work: The G.I. Bill, Citizenship, and the Civic Generation," *California Law Review* 96, no. 967 (2008), <http://scholarship.law.berkeley.edu/californialawreview/vol96/iss4/3>.

¹⁸ Robert M. Worley II, William Hubbard, and Kathleen Moakler, "An Update on the Implementation of the Forever GI Bill, the Harry W. Colmery Educational Assistance Act of 2017," testimony before Committee on Veterans' Affairs, US House of Representatives, December 12, 2017, <https://veterans.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=2006>.

¹⁹ See 10 USC § 1144, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/10/1144>.

²⁰ US Department of Veterans Affairs, *Functional Organization Manual v4.0: Description of Organization Structure, Missions, Functions, Activities and Authorities*, 2017, https://www.va.gov/VA_Functional_Organization_Manual_Version_4.pdf.

²¹ Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act of 1996, Pub. L. 104-275 (1996), <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-104publ275/content-detail.html>.

²² Congressional Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance, "Congressional Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance Final Report," January 14, 1999, 3, <https://ntrl.ntis.gov/NTRL/dashboard/searchResults/titleDetail/PB2006113212.xhtml>.

²³ Congressional Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance, "Congressional Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance Final Report," 1.

²⁴ Congressional Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance, "Congressional Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance Final Report," 1.

²⁵ Smith-Sears Veterans Rehabilitation Act, Pub. L. 65-178 (1918).

²⁶ US Department of Veterans Affairs, *VA History in Brief*, https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/archives/docs/history_in_brief.pdf. Jennifer D. Keene offers a more detailed discussion of the link between World War I veterans and government-sponsored compensation for perceived wages and opportunities lost by military service that has much to do with the conscripted nature of much of the American Expeditionary Forces. "By 1920, veterans increasingly agreed, as one told Theodore Roosevelt Jr., that during the war 'they were in the country's employ at the request of the country.' To those who asked, Roosevelt did his best to explain their reasoning. 'To begin with in considering this problem you must take as a premise the draft,' he noted. During the war, the federal government had decided who worked in civilian society and who entered the military. Civilian workers had received the highest wages in American history while citizen-soldiers labored for thirty dollars a month. . . . In veterans' eyes, the government now had the postwar responsibility of compensating soldiers fairly. 'All we seek is justice,' explained one

veteran, 'and justice likewise demands that some of these [war] profits be now conscripted to pay this debt to the returned soldier.'" Jennifer D. Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 161–78.

²⁷ Congressional Research Service, "GI Bills Enacted Prior to 2008 and Related Veterans' Educational Assistance Programs."

²⁸ Congressional Research Service, "GI Bills Enacted Prior to 2008 and Related Veterans' Educational Assistance Programs," 1.

²⁹ Leslye A. Arsht, testimony before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity Oversight, Committee on Veterans' Affairs, US House of Representatives, December 7, 2006, <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-109hhrg31325/html/CHRG-109hhrg31325.htm>.

³⁰ Anthony J. Principi, testimony before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity Oversight, Committee on Veterans' Affairs, US House of Representatives, December 7, 2006, 6, <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-109hhrg31325/pdf/CHRG-109hhrg31325.pdf>.

³¹ Congressional Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance, "Congressional Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance Final Report."

³² Congressional Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance, "Congressional Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance Final Report."

³³ Hazel R. Atuel et al., "Veteran Employment in the 21st Century," in *The Civilian Lives of U.S. Veterans: Issues and Identities*, vol. 1, eds. Louis Hicks, Eugenia L. Weiss, and Jose E. Coll (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2017), 161–79.

³⁴ Atuel et al., "Veteran Employment in the 21st Century."

³⁵ Forces in Mind Trust, "The Transition Mapping Study: Understanding the Transition Process for Service Personnel Returning to Civilian Life," August 2013, <http://www.fim-trust.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/20130810-TMS-Report.pdf>.

³⁶ Martin Berman-Gorvine, "'Skills Translation' Crucial for Hiring Veterans," Berkshire Associates, October 2, 2017, <https://www.berkshireassociates.com/balanceview/skills-translation-crucial-for-hiring-veterans>.

See also Nicholas J. Armstrong et al., *Implementation Assessment of Executive Order 13518—The Veterans Employment Initiative*, Syracuse University, Institute for Veterans and Military Families, 2017, https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/OPM-REPORT_Veterans-Employment-InitiativeFINAL-DIGITAL12.13.17-4.pdf; and P. Wesley Routon, "The Effect of 21st Century Military Service on Civilian Labor and Educational Outcomes," *Journal of Labor Research* 35, no. 15 (2014): 15–38, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12122-013-9170-4>.

³⁷ Sara Kintzle et al., *Exploring the Economic & Employment Challenges Facing U.S. Veterans: A Qualitative Study of Volunteers of America Service Providers & Veteran Clients*, University of Southern California Center for Innovation and Research on Veterans & Military Families, 2015, https://www.voa.org/pdf_files/a-study-of-volunteers-of-america-service-providers-and-veteran-clients.

³⁸ Edelman Insights, "2017 Veterans' Well-Being Survey: Focus on Employment, Education and Health," October 2017, <https://www.slideshare.net/EdelmanInsights/2017-veterans-wellbeing-survey>.

³⁹ Zoli, Maury, and Fay, *Missing Perspectives*.

⁴⁰ Congressional Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance, "Congressional Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance Final Report," 2.

⁴¹ Abraham Lincoln, "Second Inaugural Address," March 4, 1865, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/lincoln2.asp.