

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF CREATING A DISABLED VETERAN PROGRAM AT THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR'S VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE

The undersigned organizations that serve and advocate for veterans join **in support of the proposal to establish a Disabled Veteran Program within the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS)**. The purpose of the Disabled Veteran Program is to help address the ongoing employment struggles of veterans with disabilities, many of whom are Gulf War-era II veterans who recently served our nation on active duty.

Identifying unemployment and underemployment among veterans, including veterans with disabilities, as a "national responsibility," Congress created job counseling, training, and placement services for veterans at DOL (Title 38, Chapter 41 U.S.C.).ⁱ Through its Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) Program, Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP), Transition Assistance Program, and other initiatives, DOL VETS directly assists more than 186,000 veterans and about 185,000 transitioning service members and spouses each year.ⁱⁱ The agency has been effective in preparing America's veterans, transitioning service members, and their spouses for meaningful careers and protecting their employment rights. Through these efforts, the overall jobless rate for all veterans declined from 4.3 percent in 2016 to 3.7 percent in 2017.ⁱⁱⁱ

However, many veterans with a service-connected disability struggle to find jobs or are no longer participating in the labor force. In every age category, veterans with a service-connected disability were less likely to participate in the labor force than veterans without a service connected disability.^{iv} For example, only seven in ten veterans, ages 35 to 44, with a service-connected disability were in the labor force compared to more than nine in ten veterans, ages 35 to 44, without a service-connected disability. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Employment Situation of Veterans report also found that labor force participation decreased based on disability rating. For example, 91.6 percent of Gulf War II-era veterans with a service-connected disability of less than 30 percent participated in the labor force compared to only 61.7 percent for Gulf War II-era veterans with a service-connected disability of 60 percent or higher. Unemployment rate disparities based on disability status were greatest for veterans ages 25 to 34 and 45 to 54.

Veterans, ages 25 and 34, with a service-connected disability experienced unemployment rates that were 80 percent higher (9.5 percent versus 5.3 percent) than for veterans without a service-connected disability from the same age range. Similarly, older veterans, ages 45 to 54, with a service-connected disability faced unemployment rates that were 133 percent higher (6.3 percent) than the unemployment rate for veterans of the same age without a service-connected disability (2.7 percent).

The national data concludes that more can and must be done to help veterans with disabilities to find and retain meaningful employment.

We urge Congress to establish a Disabled Veteran Program, with a full-time director, at DOL VETS to help monitor and highlight the employment struggles and job opportunities for veterans with disabilities and to coordinate and promote federal data, research, and services aimed at addressing this ongoing challenge. Our joint request was influenced by DOL VETS' effective model for addressing the employment challenges of women veterans. DOL established the Women Veteran Program (WVP) to monitor and promote the employment situation of women veterans to ensure DOL VETS programs serve women veterans and male veterans equitably. Supported only by a full-time director, WVP has been successful in raising awareness, monitoring and highlighting targeted employment data, and promoting federal programs and resources through fact sheets, webinars, and other public engagements^v.

A similar effort is now needed to tackle the growing employment challenge of veterans with disabilities. **Our organizations fully support the establishment of a Disabled Veteran Program within DOL VETS' existing authorization by appropriating new funds for a full-time Director for the Disabled Veteran Program and for associated operational costs.**

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

ACCSES

Air Force Sergeants Association

American Music Therapy Association

American Therapeutic Recreation Association

AMVETS

Easterseals

Military Order of the Purple Heart

National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities

National Disability Rights Network

National Military Family Association

Paralyzed Veterans of America

The Retired Enlisted Association

Veterans Education Success

VetsFirst

ⁱ [Title 38, Chapter 41 United States Code](#)

ⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Service [FY 2019 Congressional Budget Justification](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics [Employment Situation of Veterans, 2017](#)

^{iv} U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics [Employment Situation of Veterans, 2017](#)

^v U.S. Department of Labor, [Women Veteran Program](#)