



S
ERVING
WITH
PRIDE

TESTIMONY

of

Richard Jones
AMVETS National Legislative Director

before the

Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity
U.S. House of Representatives

on

The U.S. Department of Labor's Veterans Employment and
Training Service (VETS)



Thursday, May 12, 2005
334 Cannon House Office Building

A M V E T S

NATIONAL
HEADQUARTERS
4647 Forbes Boulevard
Lanham, Maryland
20706-4380
TELEPHONE: 301-459-9600
FAX: 301-459-7924
E-MAIL: amvets@amvets.org

Chairman Boozman, Ranking Member Herseth, and members of the Subcommittee:

AMVETS is honored to join fellow veterans service organizations at this hearing on the U.S. Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS). My name is Richard A. Jones, AMVETS National Legislative Director, and I am pleased to provide you with our views on VETS programs and the resources necessary to carry out their mission.

I would like to first start off by thanking you, Mr. Chairman, for inviting us here today, and I commend you and all members of this newly formed subcommittee for your review of veterans employment programs. I look forward to working with you all.

With thousand of veterans returning home from the Global War on Terrorism each and every day, it is clear that alleviating unemployment and underemployment among veterans is a national priority. Although the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is responsible for providing most services to our Nation's veterans, the Department of Labor (DOL) is specially tasked with designing and administering programs to help veterans obtain employment and training assistance.

VETS administers national programs intended to ensure that veterans receive priority in employment and training opportunities – a preference provided them under current law. VETS two primary programs that provide employment and training assistance to veterans are the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and the Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) program. Through the implementation of the DVOP and LVER program, VETS assists not only veterans, but also helps Reservists and Guard Members in securing employment and protecting their employment rights and benefits.

AMVETS is committed to seeing that our veterans receive all the employment benefits that they earned and deserve. In a time of war, we must remain committed to ensure returning veterans continue to receive the special job training services DVOPs and LVERs provide.

For decades, DVOPs and LVERs have been the cornerstone of employment services for veterans. We believe that it is important for States to continue to be required to hire veterans for these positions. Part of this reason is that these individuals are veterans advocating for veterans. After all, DVOP and LVER staff are the front-line providers for services to veterans. They are the individuals who provide a smooth transition of servicemembers from the military to the civilian workforce. In our view, these people should be veterans.

A practical example of just how important it is for veterans to advocate for veterans can be found within our own organization. The AMVETS Department of Ohio developed and fully operate a 501(c) 3 career center designed to assist veterans in their career needs. The AMVETS Career Center provides a range of services to help veterans find employment in a substantial career, or assists them in refreshing and/or upgrading their skills. For example, the Center can help a veteran learn more about computers, business math, business grammar, business management, word processing, database management and so on.

The AMVETS Career Center provides these services to veterans who are homeless, unemployed or underemployed, those who want to prepare for a new career or better job, and to recently separated veterans who are making the transition to the civilian workforce. The Center also provides services to non-veterans from the community for a small fee of \$50.00. There is no cost to the veteran.

Mr. Chairman, this is just one example of the fine work veterans do for their fellow veteran. They have a natural attachment to the veteran and play a pivotal role in making sure veterans who come back to their hometown have every advantage to excel and be a part of the local workforce.

Through VETS programs, veterans have access to skills assessment, individual job counseling, labor market information, classroom or on-the-job training, skills upgrading and retraining, and placement services. Congress must carry out its national policy that veterans must receive priority employment and training opportunities, and hold accountable those entities that do not follow the law.

We were very troubled to learn of an amendment that was intended to be offered to the recently House-passed *Job Training Improvement Act of 2005*, H.R. 27. The amendment would have allowed Governors to consolidate and block grant the DVOP and LVER program. We remain firmly committed to the belief that this type of veteran oriented program should remain separate and distinct to ensure that these brave men and women are given the assistance their country owes them for their military service. As the Senate now considers H.R. 27, we ask for your assistance in getting the word out to members in the other body that this consolidation effort should not be entertained. It would be a grave error to downgrade employment services that specifically help troops returning to the country they fought to defend.

On a related point, AMVETS is particularly disappointed that a proposal to transfer VETS from the Department of Labor to VA is still being discussed. We have testified in opposition to such a shift and we remain strongly opposed.

Shifting VETS to VA from DOL will not improve the employment and training needs of veterans. DOL knows the job market and skills required to fill jobs beyond any other executive department. While we do see the need for DOL to review its structure and process for the delivery of employment services to veterans, we do not see how VA would effectively run a program that so naturally suits DOL. VA has its own challenges with resource needs to address veterans health care and backlogs in claims processing. We fear that forcing VA to integrate VETS programs would only compromise the main mission of VA. Therefore, we do not believe that moving VETS to VA is a wise solution to improving veterans employment services or improving job placement for veterans.

We are encouraged by the Administration's recommended increase in VETS resources for fiscal year 2006. The President's Budget calls for a \$1.5 million increase from the \$222.8 million allotted in FY2005, despite a 4.4 percent cut in total DOL funding. About \$162 million of the proposed VETS budget would go to state grants through the *Jobs For Veterans Act*. We ask for your strong commitment in supporting the Administration's request for these funds in the congressional budget and final appropriations for the new year. It is our hope that Congress will

recognize their special obligation to those who have served, especially to those who are just recently veterans, and provide VETS with the adequate funding and increases they need to carry out their important mission.

We as a Nation must keep the promises made to those who served in our Armed Forces. Just one of these promises is to help veterans overcome employment barriers and ease their transition into gainful employment. I think we all would agree that there is a need to improve outreach efforts to potential employers. And it is likely that we would also agree that we can do a better job introducing veterans to employers. It is my hope that through the efforts and cooperation from the subcommittee and the VSOs, we can accomplish this goal and fulfill our promise.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. AMEVTS looks forward to working with you and the entire subcommittee to ensure we help meet the needs of America's veterans and their families. We have much to do, but we are encouraged in knowing our work will help determine the future of our Nation.

I thank you again for the privilege to present our views, and I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.

Richard "Rick" Jones
National Legislative Director

Richard "Rick" Jones joined AMVETS as the National Legislative Director on January 4, 2001. As legislative director, he is the primary individual responsible for promoting AMVETS legislative, national security, and foreign affairs goals before the Departments of State, Defense, and Veterans Affairs, and the Congress of the United States.

Rick is an Army veteran who served as a medical specialist during the Vietnam War era. His assignments included duty at Brooke General Hospital in San Antonio, Texas; Fitzsimmons General Hospital in Denver, Colorado; and Moncrief Community Hospital in Columbia, South Carolina. At Moncrief Hospital, Rick was selected to assist in processing the first members of the all-volunteer Army.

Rick completed undergraduate work at Brown University prior to his Army draft and earned a Master Degree in Public Administration from East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina, following military service.

Prior to assuming his current position, Rick worked nearly twenty years as a legislative staff aide in the offices of Senator Paul Coverdell, Senator Lauch Faircloth, and Senator John P. East. He also worked in the House of Representatives as committee staff for Representative Larry J. Hopkins and Representative Bob Stump.

In working for Rep. Stump on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, he served two years as Republican minority staff director for the subcommittee on housing and memorial affairs and two years as Republican majority professional staff on funding issues related to veterans affairs' budget and appropriations.

Rick and his wife Nancy have three children, Sarah, Katherine, and David, and reside in Springfield, Virginia.

AMVETS National Headquarters
4647 Forbes Blvd., Lanham, MD 20706
Telephone: 301-459-9600 ext. 3016
Fax: 301-459-7924
Email: rjones@amvets.org



**SERVING
WITH
PRIDE**

May 12, 2005

The Honorable John Boozman, Chairman
Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity
House Veterans' Affairs Committee
Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Boozman:

Neither AMVETS nor I have received any federal grants or contracts, during this year or in the last two years, from any agency or program relevant to the May 12, 2005, Subcommittee hearing on the U.S. Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS).

Sincerely,

Richard Jones
National Legislative Director



A M V E T S

NATIONAL
HEADQUARTERS
4647 Forbes Boulevard
Lanham, Maryland
20706-4380
TELEPHONE: 301-459-9600
FAX: 301-459-7924
E-MAIL: amvets@amvets.org