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COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

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Thousands Sign Up for VRAP

WASHINGTON, D.C. —Today, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs held an oversight hearing entitled "Reviewing the Implementation of Major Provisions of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011." [The VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011](#) is the signature veterans' legislation of the 112th Congress. Officials from the departments of Labor (DoL) and Veterans Affairs (VA) testified on the implementation of the law to date.

The [Veterans Retraining Assistance Program \(VRAP\)](#) was the main focus of the hearing. The cornerstone of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act, VRAP will provide up to one-year of Montgomery GI Bill benefits to unemployed veterans, ages 35-60, for in-demand jobs and careers. The Committee applauded efforts by the departments at the program staff-level, but cautioned that more needed to be done to promote VRAP.

"I am pleased to see that over 11,000 applications have been received so far, meaning that we are well on our way to filling all of the 45,000 slots paid for in the VOW Act for the remainder of this fiscal year," stated Rep. Jeff Miller, Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. "But I am concerned that not enough is being done by either department, or the President himself, to promote this benefit. Getting the message out about this opportunity is critically important to putting unemployed veterans on a path to a job in a high-demand field."

In addition, Committee Members also expressed concern that DoL and VA were not taking the appropriate steps to ensure that veterans were aware VRAP existed. Allison Hickey, Under Secretary for Benefits at VA, noted some of the challenges facing the two departments to effectively reach out to veterans about VRAP were that "a centralized system to identify eligible veterans does not exist."

Few Members had seen any outreach in their local communities, leading the Committee to ask if a plan was in place to reach unemployed veterans in non-metropolitan areas, specifically through TV advertising.

"Despite having had ample time to come forth with one, VA has failed to deliver an advertising budget," Miller said. "Advertising is a quick, effective way to control the message in order to reach a large number of veterans in a very short period of time. That is the level of promotion for VRAP that our unemployed veterans deserve. We cannot afford to let even one training slot go unfilled. I encourage all eligible veterans to sign up for this opportunity at their local one stop career center or [online](#)."

The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs will host a live chat on VRAP with [Military.com](#), tomorrow, June 1, 2012, at 1 P.M.

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