A REVIEW OF LICENSING AND CREDENTIALING STANDARDS FOR SERVICEMEMBERS AND VETERANS: DO BARRIERS STILL REMAIN?

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A REVIEW OF LICENSING AND CREDENTIALING STANDARDS FOR SERVICEMEMBERS AND VETERANS: DO BARRIERS STILL REMAIN?

Thursday, September 10, 2015

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY,
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:20 p.m., in Room 224, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Brad Wenstrup [chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Wenstrup, Costello, Radewagen, Bost, Takano, and Rice.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN BRAD WENSTRUP

Dr. WENSTRUP. Good afternoon, and welcome to the Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity's hearing today entitled, "A Review of Licensing and Credentialing Standards for Servicemembers and Veterans: Do Barriers Still Remain?"

For several years, many have tried to do what on face value should be a fairly easy task, ensuring that the training and knowledge that servicemembers gain from their time in the military seamlessly translates to civilian licenses and credentials when they return home.

The translation of skills is critical. As we know, so many positions in our economy could remain unfilled due to the ever-growing skills gap of our workforce. We simply should not continue to spend millions of dollars training servicemembers to do a job in the military and then require them to turn around and retake unnecessary courses or exams for the same job in the civilian workforce.

After many years of great work done by many of our witnesses here today as well as others, I think we can safely say that their hard work is finally paying off. Last week, the Bureau of Labor Statistics announced that the unemployment rate for veterans in August was 4.2 percent, the lowest it was been in many years.

So news like this is very encouraging, but I still remain concerned about the number of younger veterans who remain either unemployed, underemployed at their current job, or have left the workforce altogether. These are the types of veterans that can benefit from redoubling our efforts to improving licensing and credentialing standards and programs for our veterans.

Before I recognize the ranking member, I want to recognize the efforts of members of our first panel. Veterans groups like the American Legion and nonprofits like the Lumina Foundation are the ones who are on the front line making huge strides in addressing this issue. It is groups like these, not the Federal Government, that are turning the tide.

I also want to thank the National Governors Association for their work and attendance here today. Congress can create all of the new Federal programs we want, but if the States don't participate and step up and change their laws and regulations to recognize the skills and knowledge that our servicemembers gain through military service, then the programs are doomed to fail.

So, with that, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about how Congress can help facilitate improvements in this area, and I now recognize the ranking member, Mr. Takano, for his opening comments.

OPENING STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER MARK TAKANO

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I am very happy to join in today's examination of the challenges veterans face as they translate skills and training they have received in the military to their best advantage in the civilian workforce.

I appreciate the witnesses appearing here today from the various sectors most involved in this process. The chairman and I are both committed to eliminating unnecessary barriers to veterans' employment, and I look forward to learning how we can improve current policies to ensure that veterans' military experience and training effectively translates into meaningful civilian employment.

In examining this issue, it is crucial that civilian industries recognize and need the certifications that our veterans are pursuing. I am concerned about the lack of legitimate third-party accreditation of most licenses and credentials, and I worry that, without clear standards, veterans may be pursuing certifications that don't lead to jobs.

In particular, I am extremely troubled by the fact that many veterans are chipping away at their valuable post-9/11 GI Bill entitlement, a month at a time, in order to pay for licensing or credentialing tests, especially if those certifications don't lead to meaningful careers.

I look forward to your testimony about how we can improve our current policy of charging veterans 1 month of post-9/11 GI Bill entitlement per licensing or credentialing test. Surely, there is a better way to pay for these tests than to remove 1 full month per test from the veteran's 36-month entitlement. I am looking into a legislative solution, and I hope Chairman Wenstrup will also be interested in considering ways to fix this particular problem.

We have got a lot to get through here today, and so I just want to say welcome. Welcome back, everybody. And thank you again for being here and answering our questions. And I look forward to the testimony from all of you here today.

I yield back.

Dr. WENSTRUP. I thank the ranking member and now welcome our first panel of witnesses to the table.

With us today we have Mr. Steve Gonzalez—welcome back—Assistant Director of the National Veterans Employment and Education Division for the American Legion; Dr. Roy Swift, Executive Director of Workcred, which is an affiliate of the American National Standards Institute; Mr. Jamie Merisotis, president of the Lumina Foundation; and Ms. Denise Roosendaal, Executive Director of the Institute for Credentialing Excellence.

Thank you for all being here today.

Mr. Gonzalez, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF STEVE GONZALEZ

Mr. GONZALEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good afternoon, Chairman Wenstrup, Ranking Member Takano, and distinguished members of the subcommittee. On behalf of National Commander Dale Barnett and over 2 million members of the American Legion, we thank you and your colleagues for the work you do in support of our servicemembers, veterans, and their families. The American Legion commends you for holding this hearing.

In early 1996, the American Legion launched the first groundbreaking credentialing study to report on those skills for which the armed services provided training and for which a license or certification is required in the civilian workforce.

The education, training, and experience obtained during an individual's military service not only provides tangible benefits for the Nation's defense but can also contribute significantly to a highly skilled civilian workforce. The military invests millions of dollars training its uniform personnel, providing a broad base of knowledge and experiences that can carry over to civilian occupations.

However, transitioning from military occupations to civilian jobs can present significant challenges for servicemembers. Postsecondary education credentials are arguably even more important today than ever before. Those individuals who hold the credential generally have lower unemployment rates and greater earning power. Since 2008, jobs in the workforce that require some postsecondary education or a degree have increased by 3.6 million, while jobs for people with a high school diploma or less have declined, leading to higher unemployment rates.

However, when civilian credentialing boards, States, and employers fail to fully recognize military education, training, and experience, both the servicemember and the Nation are impaired. The veteran faces reduced chances of obtaining a job on par with his or her skills, and the civilian workforce cannot take full advantage of the extensive skills training in which our Nation has invested.

Still, the process for a veteran to get licensed is not as easy as showing up to an office with a DD 214 providing relevant military training. Conflicts between Federal and State requirements for credentials complicate the issue, which remains far from resolved around the country.

Earlier this year, the American Legion hosted its second national credentialing summit in Washington, DC, to identify best practices for implementing State laws and for lobbying new ones. Policymakers and other key stakeholders were part of the collaborative discussion. The American Legion is in the process of issuing a post-summit report in the next several months.

In the past several years, a variety of Federal and State legislation, administrative initiatives, and new Department of Defense and Department of Labor programs have been developed to reduce barriers to credentialing for servicemembers and veterans. We applaud these efforts but remain concerned about how to ensure the quality of the credentials that are paid for by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Currently, the VA does not require periodic reapproval of certification programs. Certification tests and organizations at present are only approved once, and there are no requirements for reapproval. However, certification requirements are adapted, and changes to exams are made by the certifying agency on a regular basis. The American Legion recommends a reapproval process to ensure that the tests and organizations continue to meet the statutory requirement for payment.

Another barrier is the difference between post-9/11 and the government GI Bill payment system. The American Legion encourages this committee to eliminate the requirement that post-9/11 GI Bill recipients use an entire month's worth of entitlement for a licensing or certification test fee even when the fee amounts to far less than the full month's entitlement.

Under Title 38, U.S.C. Section 3315, license and certification tests, post-9/11 GI Bill recipients are charged 1 full month of entitlement, which may amount to over $1,000, even if the licensing or certification fee is significantly less than that. One of our recommendations is to reduce proportional to the cost of the licensing and exam fees.

While I have only highlighted two barriers and solutions within my oral remarks, my written testimony further explains barriers and Legion recommendations to Congress.

This concludes my testimony. The American Legion appreciates the opportunity to address this topic as well as identify ways to continue to break down barriers that would not only benefit those who have served but benefit our economy and workforce. I will be happy to answer any questions you might have.

And thank you, Chairman.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF STEVE GONZALEZ APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

Dr. WENSTRUP. Thank you very much.

Dr. Swift, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF ROY SWIFT

Mr. SWIFT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My name is Roy Swift, and I am the Executive Director of Workcred, an affiliate of the American National Standards Institute. ANSI is the coordinator of the U.S. standardization system, and Workcred is a separate affiliate whose mission is to strengthen workforce quality by improving workforce credentials and the credentialing system.

Before launching Workcred, I spent the previous 10 years building ANSI's internationally recognized accreditation programs for educational certificates and certifications.

It is important to note that Workcred is separate from and respects the impartiality of ANSI's accreditation services. Nonethe-

less, both organizations share an ongoing commitment to fostering a more robust and qualified American workforce and enhancing the quality of credentials.

As a retired United States Army colonel who served a 28-year career in the U.S. Army Medical Department, I am deeply honored to testify today on the credentialing of servicemembers and veterans.

U.S. military personnel gain valuable training, skills, and, at times, do earn civilian credentials during their service, particularly in the medical arena. Credentials can contribute to career development and enhance the potential for promotion for servicemembers. After military service, credentials can help demonstrate to civilian employers that training and skills attained in the military are on par with those gained through traditional civilian pathways.

Unfortunately, many servicemembers that have earned a military occupational specialty are often not licensed or certified to perform a comparable job in the civilian workforce. This situation creates an artificial barrier to employment.

With an estimated 250,000 military personnel expected to leave the service every year, the need to translate military skills into civilian careers is as important as ever. But we face a tremendous challenge. There are more than 4,000 certifications in the U.S., and less than 10 percent of these are accredited or reviewed by a third-party accreditation body. This lack of third-party review creates a buyer-beware environment because most certifications would not meet a national or international standard.

Accreditation is an independent third-party assessment of a certification body's competence, and it plays an important role in increasing the credibility and continuous quality improvement of certifications.

ANSI's accreditation process is designed to increase the integrity and mobility of certified professionals and provide confidence to the market that they have the required competencies as advertised. Millions of professionals currently hold certifications from ANSI-accredited certification bodies.

In ANSI's view, the global nature of personnel certification demands accreditation to international standards. That is why ANSI's accreditation program is based on a national standard and international standard, ISO 17024. And that is why ANSI was the first U.S. accreditation body to deliver this accreditation in accordance with the requirements of 17011.

17011 is the basis for mutual recognition of accreditation bodies in countries around the world. This assures that credentials are seen as equivalent and are transportable across borders, broadening the global labor market and opportunities for employers and employees.

With respect to veterans' employability, ANSI has long been an active leader in working with the government on private credentialing solutions. For example, the military Credentialing Opportunities Online, COOL, program and the Department of Labor highlight ANSI accreditation.

With a broader vision, Workcred is focused on building a competency-driven credentialing economic system. We want to create alignment between industry, training, and credentialing organiza-

tions. This will advance the quality workforce credentials that have validity and are market-valued and will promote an open, transparent exchange of information.

ANSI and Workcred, in collaboration with the American Legion, were instrumental in working with the Army's TRADOC to identify high-quality, industry-recognized credentials relevant to Army soldiers as candidates for Army credentialing pilot programs.

Together with partners from George Washington University and Southern Illinois University, Workcred has just launched the Credentialing Transparency Initiative Pilot Program to create clarity in the U.S. credentialing marketplace. Funded by Lumina, the initiative will create a voluntary registry that we think has great potential for use by the Department of Defense.

All Americans have a stake in a strong and effective credentialing system. Both ANSI and Workcred are committed to supporting the employability and successful transition of military servicemembers into the workforce.

Thank you, sir.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF ROY SWIFT APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

Dr. WENSTRUP. Thank you very much, Dr. Swift.

And, Mr. Merisotis, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF JAMIE P. MERISOTIS

Mr. MERISOTIS. Thank you very much for the chance to be here today. I am Jamie Merisotis, president of Lumina Foundation.

You know, the issues being discussed here today are vital not just to the millions of individuals who are directly affected but to the growing demand for talent that will impact our entire Nation and its future. At Lumina Foundation, which is the Nation's largest private foundation focused specifically on increasing student access to and success in postsecondary education, we are working to improve the Nation's talent profile by focusing all of our efforts on one specific goal, what we call "Goal 2025."

That goal is this: By the year 2025, we want 60 percent of Americans to hold a high-quality postsecondary degree, certificate, or other postsecondary credential. We are convinced that this level of educational attainment is a national necessity that is the only way to ensure our country can thrive in the global economy.

Unfortunately, today, only about 45 percent of Americans now hold any kind of postsecondary credential at all. So, clearly, we are a long way from having the workforce that we need for the 21st century.

Certainly, servicemembers and military veterans can help close this gap. In fact, they represent a huge asset, a rich source of talent that this Nation sorely needs. Unfortunately, as you have already heard, their vast potential is not being fully realized, in part because of barriers imposed by issues related to education credentialing.

Lumina is involved in many different areas of work related to credentialing. When we embraced this idea of Goal 2025, we realized very quickly that things must change significantly when it comes to credentialing if we have any hope of reaching that 60-percent rate. Simply put, our Nation's postsecondary system needs to

be revamped so that it can serve students better and serve far more of them than it ever has before, including the millions of our military veterans.

In short, we need a student-centered system, one that recognizes and rewards not just time spent in the classroom but actual learning, no matter where or how that learning was obtained. This is critical for servicemembers and veterans. If there is one barrier to postsecondary success facing our returning veterans, that is it: being recognized for what they learned while in service. Any workable redesign of higher education must address this barrier, which results from the complexity and confusion of our current approach to credentialing.

Today's credentialing marketplace is highly fragmented, with a vast array of credentials that don't always connect—to each other, to other educational opportunities, or to careers. We need a credentialing system that does connect, one that actually functions as a system, not as a collection of disparate parts.

A great deal of our recent work has been focused on reimagining this type of interconnected system. In fact, as Dr. Swift mentioned, we are part of a partnership of more than 80 national organizations—business, education, workforce, labor, and other organizations—that have begun a national dialogue on this topic.

A reimagined credentialing system would be competency-based, interconnected, and continually updated. It would ensure quality, and it would enable users—students, education providers, and employers—to compare the value of various credentials. Clearly, a system with these attributes would be of enormous benefit to veterans as they make their transition to civilian life.

Of course, the effort to create this type of interconnected system is one that will require concerted action by a range of stakeholders, including the Federal Government, which has supported credentialing reform through its leadership, through funding, and through participation and research.

The Departments of Labor and Education, among others, are already testing approaches to a more inclusive system of credentialing for all students. The Federal Government should work to link those efforts to the many others underway to build a credential system that works for all learners.

Frankly, there are few issues far more urgent than meeting our Nation's growing need for talent. Assuring that the talent of our veterans is recognized, that they obtain appropriate credentials for what they know and what they can do, and that they have opportunities to develop their talent has great import for the veterans themselves, for their families, their communities, and for our Nation.

I am very pleased that this committee and others are considering approaches to breaking down barriers and finding ways to recognize learning and skills however and wherever they are achieved. I am happy to answer your questions about the steps that the Federal Government might take in this effort or to provide further information on the work that we are doing in this area.

Thank you very much for the chance to testify.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF MR. MERISOTIS APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

STATEMENT OF DENISE ROOSENDAAL

Dr. WENSTRUP. Thank you, Mr. Merisotis.

Ms. Roosendaal, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROOSENDAAL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My name is Denise Roosendaal. I am the Executive Director of the Institute for Credentialing Excellence. It is a 501(c)(3) membership organization representing credentialing bodies across the country. The National Commission for Certifying Agencies, NCCA, is our accrediting arm and has accredited over 300 personnel certification programs to its standards since its inception in 1977.

I would like to thank you for the invitation to speak with you today on such an important topic. ICE has been involved in this topic for several years, supporting the establishment of the Army-Navy COOL Web sites back in 2003 as well as the two credentialing summits held by the American Legion in 2012 and 2015.

In my written testimony, I outlined anecdotal evidence of some of the success stories that we have heard about from several credentialing organizations, such as the American Culinary Federation and the Human Resources Certification Institute. These organizations connected with the military in a meaningful way to create a smooth pathway for Active Duty military servicemembers and veterans to access the private-sector certifications.

I have also outlined in my written testimony six areas that I think still need some attention. These are somewhat technical in nature, but I do believe that in order for us to move forward in connecting private-sector credentials with the important experience and knowledge that military servicemembers and veterans bring to the marketplace they should be addressed.

Very quickly, these areas are: the alignment of required knowledge, skills, and competencies between military experience and the civilian certification; some of the challenges in understanding and communicating certification and military nomenclature and classifications; the eligibility requirements, where there are no alternative pathways outlined to help identify equivalents in military experience; the lack of awareness of some of the best practices, such as governance structures, the separation of education from certification practices; the need to educate employers on the value of certifications for veterans; as well as inadequate resources for necessary activities that would help resolve some of these technical areas.

So the first one that I mentioned, the alignment of required knowledge, to many of our organizations has become clear as one of the most important to address. The alignment of acquired knowledge is sometimes—the misalignment is sometimes fueled by that misunderstanding of the military nomenclature, and it is probably the most significant obstacle.

Some private-sector credentialing organizations have found great success in their military programs by conducting an extensive and often expensive gap analysis mapping the military knowledge and skills back to the certification's own job analysis of required skills.

Other programs, like the Human Resources Certification Institute, overcame this obstacle by creating a direct connection to the military through the Army's Training with Industry, TWI, pro-

gram. This is where they place a liaison in the office of HRCI, and for at least a year they understood and began to communicate the differences between the military HR requirements and the private-sector certification.

Without that direct personal connection, however, the gaps have to be analyzed on paper. And sometimes those gaps are easily identified; sometimes they are identified and filled with just specific training. Such as the Culinary Institute, they identified certain skills that were lacking in the military experience, and they were able to fill that gap with employer-based and employer-funded training.

But, more often, the gaps are not easily or accurately identified, especially around eligibility requirements. We are seeing that there is some misunderstanding of, when private-sector certification requires a certain number of years of experience—say, 5 years of relevant experience, it is not clear whether or not the military 5 years experience is equivalent.

The COOL site has helped immensely in connecting certifications with specific MOSs, but I think helping the private sector understand that connection a little bit better would be very helpful.

In ICE's research, 89 percent of certification bodies are nonprofit, 501(c)(3) or (c)(6), with a median staff size of about six individuals. So it does make it difficult to find the resources to help fill these gaps and address these issues.

I would be remiss if I concluded without expressing ICE and NCCA's commitment to identifying quality credentialing programs. The NCCA standards were originally created through a federally funded grant to create standards for quality personnel certification programs. The third-party accreditation is the best means for assessing quality programs, and our military servicemembers deserve that quality.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you today. I do hope that ICE and NCCA can continue to be a resource for this committee.

Thank you.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF DENISE ROOSENDAAL APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

Dr. WENSTRUP. Well, thank you very much.

I thank you all for your testimony.

I am going to now yield myself 5 minutes for questions.

Mr. Gonzalez, in your written statement, you address the concern of the services informing servicemembers of the opportunities that may exist with credentialing and licensing after their service.

One of my thoughts is, maybe, yeah, you can do it throughout their service career, but I also think it can be a recruiting tool and be brought up from the very beginning, depending upon what someone's MOS is going to be, obviously, what those opportunities are, just like the GI Bill is a recruiting tool.

I just wanted to get your thoughts on that or other methods that you think might be helpful.

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Chairman, I believe that you are absolutely right, so I agree with you that it should be done in a process and it should be done as the military now transitions—and you, Mr.

Chairman, who sits on the Armed Services Committee—it is a lifecycle.

So it is making sure that that individual understands in their particular profession within the military what else they can be doing, not just to better themselves, but also it helps the readiness of the military. A better workforce for the military is a better ready military.

But, also, it helps those individuals that when they do transition out, one, it decreases unemployment for the military, what they pay out, but also it helps retain those individuals, whether it is in the Reserves or National Guard, for the total military force.

And then, of course, how do we figure out how to leverage technology, Mr. Chairman. How do we use technology to still get information, not just individuals within the continental United States but also overseas regardless of where they are stationed at, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. WENSTRUP. You mean technology for continued training in certain skills? Is that what you are——

Mr. GONZALEZ. Technology as far as how we deliver those types of material—study material, information. And, in some cases, and I know there are other organizations like a Princeton Review, and how do we deliver those types of exams. Can we deliver those exams through new technology platforms that, regardless of where you are at, you can still be able to take that test and be prepared while you are overseas. And then, of course, when you get back, you are still prepared, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Yeah. Just like when you deploy and you may want to continue your military education classes online or whatever, depending upon where you are, you can do that.

Mr. GONZALEZ. Yes, sir.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Okay. I appreciate that input.

Now, this might seem like a very obvious question, but I would ask all of you: What is the number-one thing that this subcommittee and Congress could do today or quickly to improve licensing and credentialing opportunities for veterans, in your opinion?

And we can go down the line.

Mr. SWIFT. Well, the word "certification" is pretty meaningless these days. You can say that you are certified when you pay $50 to get it, or it could be one in which it is fully accredited by a legitimate accreditation agency. So, often, it is a buyer-beware market, and it is very confusing to soldiers and the Department of Defense.

And that is why, in our pilot program where we are looking at using an electronic means via to look at the transparency of credential of the National Transparency Credentialing Initiative. We think that this sort of national registry would be dynamic, because it has a platform where it spiders down and obtains the most recent information, and that registry would allow applications, such as the Department of Defense to put an application on the registry about the requirements of particular military occupational specialties, and match it to competencies related to specific credentials that meet certain criteria that have been developed by the Department of Defense.

Naturally, we think that if we are going to say that we will only reimburse for higher education that is accredited, institutionally or programmatically accredited, and we think certification is important—which we believe it is—to moving people to obtain jobs, then the Department of Defense should not be accepting any certifications unless they are accredited or have had some sort of third party review in that regard.

Dr. WENSTRUP. I think it is probably also important for the servicemember to have some understanding of what States recognize a certain credentialing. Like you said, you can get a credential, but if no one recognizes it parlays into a legitimate job, then you have been had.

Mr. SWIFT. Right.

Dr. WENSTRUP. I think that is important information to get out. Am I understanding you correctly there?

Mr. SWIFT. Yes, absolutely.

And this national registry which was funded by Lumina Foundation is designed to have descriptors that would establish a profile, not just what are the terminal competencies so there could be a match between military occupational specialty and the competencies, but what is the transfer value of that credential it is related to state regulation and who recognizes it, if anybody. There are about 18 descriptors, sir, that at another time and another place could be discussed.

It is in the pilot stage, but we do think that this could be one of the answers to begin increasing this communication. Because we found, even with the meeting that we had with the American Legion—we brought about 20 certification bodies to meet with TRADOC. The difficulty of communication between higher education, the credentialing organization, and industry seems to be very difficult without some sort of facilitation.

I talked enough. I will be quiet.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Well, and my time has expired, and I see people nodding, so, at this time, I will recognize Mr. Takano for 5 minutes.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you.

I recognize that need for that coordination among the three entities you just mentioned.

Do any of you see a potential in the area of licensing and credentialing for the kind of predatory marketing that has often gone on in the for-profit sector in higher education? If so, what can we as Federal policymakers do now to protect veterans and the integrity of Federal programs designed to help them transition into meaningful civilian employment?

Mr. MERISOTIS. It is an enormously difficult question. As you know, as a member of the Education and Workforce Committee, these issues are cutting across Federal programs in so many different ways.

And I think, ultimately, this issue of protecting the interests of students, the learners themselves, comes down to the fact that we have to change the paradigm of what we are actually getting at in these programs.

We have talked about it; whether it is in the GI Bill benefit programs, whether it is in education programs or others, these are all time-based programs, right? So you accumulate college credits,

your benefits expire after 36 months. All of these are rooted in these concepts of time instead of concepts of learning.

And we should be increasingly pushing these concepts that all of us, I think, have talked about today, which is competency in these programs and then driving the consumer protection element around whether or not students, whether they are veterans or other students, have actually learned in these programs. What have they gotten academically? What do they know? What are they able to do out of these programs?

Then we would worry less, frankly, about whether it is a for-profit or a not-for-profit. We would focus more on what are the learning outcomes. Frankly, we have some abuses in not-for-profit educational providers, as well, that we have to address.

So I think these issues that you are talking about, which I think are real and serious, ultimately we have to get at that root cause of the fact that competency should be what we should be focusing on in all of our postsecondary learning programs.

Mr. TAKANO. Dr. Swift.

Mr. SWIFT. And around that competency, I would like to talk about the triad, that you can't just talk about competencies. First of all, are they validated competencies?

Mr. TAKANO. Right.

Mr. SWIFT. Have they been validated by industry or the appropriate organization that is looking into this?

And, thirdly, what is the quality of the assessment? Because we may get the competencies right, but, as Mr. Merisotis was saying, if we don't have the correct assessments, we will never know whether learning took place or not.

So one of the weak links—and this is true of certifications too; if the exam doesn't discriminate—we don't know whether learning takes place if our assessment instruments aren't strong enough to discriminate between those who know and those who don't know.

Mr. TAKANO. Well, thank you.

Mr. Gonzalez, as I understand it, the post-9/11 GI Bill recipients use an entire month's worth of entitlement for a certification or licensing fee, whether or not that—excuse me, I am looking at the—they use an entire—or licensing fee does not apply to Montgomery GI Bill recipients. Their entitlement is reduced proportionally.

Why do we take so much more away from post-9/11 GI Bill recipients? I am comparing the two different programs. Is it just easier for the VA to do recordkeeping?

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Takano, when the post-9/11 was first introduced, I was still in college. So, to be honest, behind the scenes and what was the formula that was used to calculate post-9/11, I am not aware of.

However, Montgomery GI Bill does pretty much prorate in what the cost is, thus saving you entitlements for the longer education process. And I know this is something that I would definitely love to talk more in detail with the committee itself on how can we kind of revert certain sections of post-9/11 to what Montgomery had in place to ensure that that particular individual is not exhausting its entitlement and, of course, keeping in mind within fiscal constraints and making sure that CBO can score it properly and it is

something that is amenable with Members of Congress too, Mr. Takano.

Mr. TAKANO. Great.

Well, since the VA is not here, can you describe for us the supposedly stringent criteria VA uses to approve credentials for the GI Bill?

Mr. GONZALEZ. There is no standard, Mr. Takano. If you want the honest truth, there is no standard. It is whatever the checklist is from the State approving agency gets stamped, and once that program is stamped as approved, it is a done deal.

Mr. TAKANO. So the American taxpayer could indeed be paying for these tests and credentials, which really don't result in anything.

Mr. GONZALEZ. Yes. There is no reapproval process by the VA. So there is no incentive for the VA to come back and say, we are going to do an audit, we are going to reexamine your certification program in general.

And I can give you an example of us, ourselves, and the American National Standards Institute meeting with the VA about a year and a half ago to bring this particular subject up to their knowledge and make them aware of it, and their response was, who are we hurting?

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you.

And, Mr. Chairman, I really thank you for the time and the subject matter you have brought before us. We have a lot of work I plan to do and work with your office on this in the days to come.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Thank you.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Costello, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. COSTELLO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thanks to all of you for being here and for what you do every day.

Obviously, the name of this subcommittee is the Economic Opportunity Subcommittee, and so the focus is on creating more economic opportunity for veterans and making sure that we carry through legislatively and from an implementation perspective to provide that economic opportunity.

With the hearing title being "Do Barriers Still Remain?", I think the answer is, yes, barriers do remain. I think the added question is, well, what can we do about those barriers? It seems to me, given the principle of federalism, that States certainly have some—well, they do have flexibility and discretion in terms of what their particular occupational licensing standards are. Fine. It also seems to me that that, in and of itself, can create a barrier.

And so what can we do, either from a preemption perspective federally or from just a best-practices perspective, to align them better so that a veteran who wants to return to my State, Pennsylvania, or maybe to Miss Rice's State, New York, doesn't decide—and Miss Rice is terrific—to go to Miss Rice's State because the occupational licensing standards there are more favorable to what that veteran has acquired from a skills and experience perspective but yet Pennsylvania—and I am using it as not an example but for purposes of hypothetical—Pennsylvania's may be more difficult?

And so we want to align that so that that doesn't occur for a veteran wanting to choose where they may live.

So my question is twofold. One, what can we do on the Federal level to diminish the possibility that the 50 State occupational licensing jurisdiction doesn't create a barrier from a legislative perspective on a preemption basis? And, number two, what can we do from a best-practices perspective in order to reduce that?

If that question is too much in the land of hypothetical, I believe it was Mr. Gonzalez or Mr. Merisotis who said, you know, there are a lot of things we could talk about in terms of what Congress could do. So that would be sort of the catch-all question, if you will. And I would open it up to all four of you.

And, again, thank you for being here and testifying.

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Costello, I will make it quick for the purpose of time.

One of the things our recommendation would be is, how do we create a clearinghouse on where States themselves who have passed legislation can acquire information so programs of instruction by the military, whether it is through the ONET process at Department of Labor, whether it is through the VA. And I know it is going to be a daunting task for the DoD, but how do we make the Federal agencies be able to provide a platform where States, private entities can actually go and acquire these programs and instructions? Of course, keep in mind where we are not compromising national security, so we are not going to put the programming instructions when we are dealing with cybersecurity, for instance.

However, there are many other occupations within the military that will be very, very helpful for those individual entities to be able to access and be able to compare what have you actually acquired in the military, regardless of what that is, to be able to say we are going to recognize and accept or we are not going to recognize and accept and this is why we can't recognize and accept, whatever that might be.

Right now, currently, it is very scattered, and how do you get this information or where do you get this information. And maybe that is a question also for the next panel, Mr. Costello.

Mr. SWIFT. I just want to add a couple of sentences to that.

Being 28 years in the Army, I understand that when somebody gets their training initially and when they go out of the service after 3 or 4 years, the competencies are quite different. And I think licensure and some certifications often evaluate them on what the competencies were when they took their initial training. And the military maybe should do a better job of identifying the customized competencies that one has achieved over that 4-year experience, because the experience has changed to a very different individual than the one that they said, this describes a medic or this describes a mechanic. There is a big gap difference in the two scenarios that.

And then the credentialing world needs to do a better job of learning how to quantify experience. We don't have the good, sophisticated tools that we need to do that, to make that match. And, of course, communication is always the issue.

But I think that if we were clear—I remember when I was in the Army we had something called job books. And those job books were competencies at every level that we were to achieve, which allowed

us to be able to demonstrate that we had certain competencies if we were a lieutenant or an E-5 or a sergeant or whatever, and that is very different than when we were a PFC and this sort of thing.

So I think those are some of the things that we can do on the military side that you would have some jurisdiction over in trying to facilitate that to happen, where we could do a better job in that regard.

Dr. WENSTRUP. The gentleman's time has expired.

Ms Rice, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms RICE. Thank you.

Mr. Gonzalez, I just want to go back to that meeting that you talked about a year and a half ago at the VA. Can you just expound on that more? What precipitated the meeting, who was there, and what was discussed?

Mr. GONZALEZ. And, again, Mrs. Rice, just due to time, very quickly, it was—we identified certain certifications that were being approved by VA, that individuals, of course, can go and go to the course, go to the school or institution itself and acquire that particular credential, per se. We had identified a couple of them, and we brought it up to the economic section of the Department of Veterans Affairs, brought it to their attention.

And the conversation went from bad to worse very quickly. And the conversation pretty much ended as, "Who are we hurting?", from their end. And our response was, you are hurting the veteran, you are hurting the taxpayers because we are paying for it. And it just kind of ended like that, and we just left it alone.

And, ever since then, we have just been pushing in other ways to push to ensure that VA kind of overhauls how they are doing things—how they are approving these programs, how they are evaluating the programs, are they doing reapproval, whether they are doing surveys, whatever it is that they need to do to ensure that these programs are actually meeting some standard and some quality assurance.

Ms RICE. So you got the sense that there was no rhyme or reason as to——

Mr. GONZALEZ. I got the sense that, because it is not their money, it is not coming out of their pocket, they can care less.

Ms RICE. So what about their process made you go to—I am trying to figure out exactly what they are doing. They are saying that these programs are okay when they are not?

Mr. GONZALEZ. Yes. So the programs—and I don't know if you want to chime in.

Because Dr. Swift was also at the meeting, and he can chime in on more of the technical side.

If you care to.

Mr. SWIFT. Sure.

One of the things—the reason that we were concerned is that a lot of the agencies that had been approved talked about training. And certification needs to be a third-party assessment that is firewalled away from training, that is a judgment that competencies have been achieved.

So we are saying—and they do have a self-attestation questionnaire that the State approving agencies use. But it looks like—is from our brief meeting—that VA probably needs to have—there

needs to be more resources for the people who are trying to use that attestation questionnaire to determine if they are a legitimate certification body.

Because it appears that maybe we have allowed some through that weren't really certifications, but what we would call certificate programs that has education and training and measures learning outcomes, where certification is to be an agency that does an analysis of what the skills are to be successful on the job.

Ms RICE. So what would you suggest that the VA do?

Mr. SWIFT. I would think that we need to relook at the criteria they are using, the questionnaire. And I think we need more resources to do training of the people in the States that have the responsibility of determining whether this is a legitimate certification body or not. One of the ways to achieve this would be to re-authorize the old Professional Certification & Licensure Advisory Committee to the Secretary of the VA.

Ms RICE. Great. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Mrs. Radewagen, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. RADEWAGEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My question is for Mr. Gonzalez.

And, yes, I welcome you, as well. Thank you very much, all of you, panel, for appearing today.

You mentioned in your written statement that all 50 States have now passed some form of new licensing and credentialing laws. Does this include the United States territories?

And, also, could you please go into more detail as to what these new laws are and how they will increase consistency across the States and territories for servicemembers and veterans trying to obtain certain credentials?

Mr. GONZALEZ. I cannot talk to the U.S. territories. I am not aware of the laws, if they have been changed, or the statutes in any U.S. territories. But within the 50 States, some type of credentialing current statutes have been changed.

And it varies from State to State. So you might have something as simple as how an electrician gets their licensure, and, of course, in the State of Georgia versus the State of Washington, who might just have complete control and says, we are just going to make one massive overhaul, versus some States who want to do it in increment processes or increment progression to ensure that they are not compromising the public safety in some capacity.

I know in one of the States that we have been doing it very slowly, and it is my home State of New York. It has been very much a slow process, whereas, again, you have some Midwestern States like Indiana, like Washington, Ohio, who has just done one massive overhaul. Of course, Iowa, as well, is another State.

So it depends. But as far as U.S. territories, I am not aware of—I can go back and come back with the actual information for you, ma'am.

Ms. RADEWAGEN. I appreciate that.

You also discussed how only certain occupational licenses are reached by Federal law, but many, including nursing, paramedics, et cetera, are regulated at the State level. For these certain occupa-

tional licenses, what can we do in Congress to ensure consistency of protocols all across the States and—of course I am going to say—the U.S. territories?

Mr. GONZALEZ. I would think——

Ms. RADEWAGEN. We are part of the family.

Mr. GONZALEZ. If it is okay with you, ma'am, I think my colleagues who might be a little better versed on some of that and better answer that question. I would—I don't know if they want to answer, since I have two of the biggest accreditation bodies here who can actually also give you that understanding.

And, of course, some of those particular topics are very much a hybrid in nature, where the Federal Government does have a role but then, of course, the States also have their own role.

Ms. RADEWAGEN. Okay. If we could go to the—I am running out of time. Thank you.

Mr. SWIFT. Well, licensure is a difficult issue because it is a State function, and, frankly, scopes of practice are done by the legislature, and it is a political process about who can lobby the best. And that is why you have differences among States in regard to scope, and some people can administer medication, and some can't. And this is true for a lot of—and then some States may license a dental hygienist and some not. And it is the whole range of how you interpret what public protection is all about, because licensure is supposed to be strictly about public protection.

And there are several issues associated with this. First of all, licensure is based on the whole idea that scope of practice is mutually exclusive from anybody else. So if you say "wound healing" in one scope, God help you if you are another professional who says, "Well, we look at wounds, too," you know. And, of course, the workforce is not going that way of having these boundaries of scopes. And so that is why I think it is very difficult for the Federal Government, because it is very State-controlled.

Now, the federations, like the State boards of nursing and physical therapy, psychologists, they try to bring some standardization, but even the nurses, who are very, very active in trying to create a compact of mutual recognition across borders, I think—don't quote me on this, but I think there are around 30, but you would think they would have all 50 States, you know, in looking at this sort of thing.

So it is difficult. I think that a recent initiative by the Department of Labor to look at giving grants in relationship to how we can decrease these barriers with licensure is a good start, to force the States to begin looking at, do we really need to license this profession or is this just a barrier that we put up that is really not necessary?

Ms. RADEWAGEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Bost, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BOST. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think I would kind of like to continue down that because of my experience in the State. And I am trying to figure out—first off, this would be a pretty broad step towards removing States' rights and their abilities. Would you agree with that?

Mr. SWIFT. Yes. That's why I say it is very difficult, because it is considered a State responsibility.

Mr. BOST. And I don't know other States, but I can give you Illinois. Illinois, though we might have the department of professional regulation that handles one area, we also have other boards and other groups that handle other licensing. So how would we work to combine them in a positive way so that we could have one standard, I guess? Do you have any suggestions on that?

Mr. SWIFT. I actually don't.

Mr. BOST. Yeah. That is my——

Mr. SWIFT. I just think that there may be financial incentives for States to begin looking at streamlining, to help mobility of people in the workforce and multinational corporations, and to try to be encouraged to move away from these mutually exclusive scopes.

Because let's just take healthcare for a sample. As we move from hospital-based care to community-based care, we have to have people who can multitask and are working in the home and in the community. And so, to say that you can only do one little thing by the license is going to be an impediment to deliver good healthcare in this regard.

So I guess I would approach it from that. But I don't think I have a good answer for you.

Mr. BOST. But this particular proposal is not just on healthcare licensing; it is on all licensing.

Mr. SWIFT. No, no. I was just giving healthcare as an example.

Mr. BOST. I know, for example, for cosmetology, the level of training required and for licensing in the State of Illinois is so much different than States around them. And so where do we set the standard? Do we set it at the Illinois standard, or do we set it at one of the other—the lower State standard?

Mr. SWIFT. This is probably something for the National Governors, who is up in the next panel, to talk about, because I think it is very difficult, because it is a legislative process. Scopes of practice are determined by the legislature.

And so how to deal with that difficulty with these differences, you know—I mean, the differences are some State says, well, we have to protect the public with this profession, and another State will say, oh, no, we don't need to protect the public with this profession. And so the differences are extreme at times as to who supposedly is protecting the public. Whether it is protecting the profession or protecting the public is sometimes debatable.

Mr. MERISOTIS. I want to just add quickly here on this point.

Mr. BOST. Please.

Mr. MERISOTIS. This is one of the reasons I mentioned in my testimony this idea of having this national dialogue on credentialing. Because this cacophony that you are talking about, I think, is precisely the problem. From the consumer perspective, whether it is veterans or any other group seeking postsecondary learning, that complexity inherent in the system is a big barrier to their eventual success. And so a lot of people get ripped off by the system, they never complete the programs, they never get appropriately credentialed. So it is a real mess out there.

I am loathe to seek a Federal solution to this, I confess. And so, I think, go with your gut on that, because I am not sure——

Mr. BOST. Yes, because I have a tendency to believe that it, like, jumps all over States' rights.

Mr. MERISOTIS. Yes. Yeah. On the other hand, I think the Federal Government could set the tone——

Mr. BOST. The base standard.

Mr. MERISOTIS. That is right—set the tone for what the expectation should be and give States the opportunity to differentially regulate based on what they want to accomplish.

I do think, though, that this issue of we really have to have a higher bar within and across States is very different. You know in your State that you have a real cacophony, a real mix, a sort of mess of different programs and different boards. Other States have different models. And I think we need some sort of basic framework, some sort of overall approach that everyone could agree to—national, not Federal.

Mr. BOST. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Well, thank you.

A very interesting conversation, obviously, and not a simple fix. But, you know, what goes through my mind is focusing on what we may be able to do to allow States to make a decision. Because that is where it is going to have to come from. And I think we will hear from the National Governors Association and see what they have to say, but they are not going to want to give up those authorities, and probably rightfully so. But, at the same time, what can we do to provide each and every State or territory with information they need about the level of education and training that this person received that could help them make a decision in their credentialing process. And maybe that is where we need to focus.

If there are no other questions, I want to thank you all for answering our questions, and you are now excused. Thank you for joining us today.

I now want to welcome our second and final panel to the witness table.

We welcome back Ms. Teresa Gerton, Acting Assistant Secretary for the U.S. Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service. We also have Mr. Frank DiGiovanni, who is the Director of Force Readiness and Training at the U.S. Department of Defense. And, also, we have Mr. David Quam, deputy director of policy for the National Governors Association.

I want to thank you all for being here today.

Ms. Gerton, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF TERESA W. GERTON

Ms. GERTON. Chairman Wenstrup, Ranking Member Takano, members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Department's efforts on licensing and credentialing for veterans and servicemembers at today's hearing.

Mr. Chairman, as you mentioned, last week the Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics released the August unemployment report. And the unemployment rate for veterans over the age of 18 is 4.2 percent, compared to 5.6 percent 1 year ago.

Ms. GERTON. The total number of unemployed veterans in August 2015 was 449,000, down from 501,000 the previous month, and down 25 percent over the last year.

We believe our collective interventions contribute to these recent positive employment trends for our veterans. And, overall, August was the 66th consecutive month of private sector job growth.

As the economy improves, Secretary Perez and I remain committed to ensuring our workforce meets the needs of our businesses and workers. I know you share our belief that veterans are critical to building our economy. The Department prioritizes efforts to facilitate veteran attainment of licenses and credentials. At the American Legion's National credentialing summit earlier this year, Secretary Perez said, "we owe to our veterans to break down the barriers to employment that they too often face as they reintegrate into civilian life". Breaking down these barriers requires the cooperation of Federal agencies, State licensing boards, educational institutions and the private sector.

VETS worked closely with our colleagues in the Department's Employment and Training Administration over the last year to implement landmark workforce legislation, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, or WIOA, emphasizing job-driven training that leads to industry-recognized post secondary credentials, and promotes the use of career pathways and sector partnerships to increase employment in in-demand jobs.

WIOA reflects our shared understanding that training leading to credentials demonstrates skills in a way employers understand, a way to get workers, including veterans, jobs. That is why Congress added a new performance measure to WIOA to track and encourage credential attainment. In 2010, the Department set a high priority goal for credential attainment in our training programs. We have met or exceeded that goal ever since.

With the new WIOA measures, we are confident we will continue to see success. And, of course, under WIOA, veterans and eligible spouses continue to receive priority for all services, as is true with all DOL-funded workforce programs.

Another key department investment is the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grants program. Over 4 years, we have awarded over $2 billion to community colleges nationwide to help them develop skills training programs leading to industry-recognized credentials and good jobs. The TAACCCT program has enrolled more than 11,500 veterans through September 30th, 2014. And the last round of TAACCCT grants was awarded last year, but the Department hopes to continue the important momentum and innovation built through these investments.

Our investments have worked, and the latest employment numbers show that, but we recognize and appreciate the value of knowing more. The VOW Act of 2011 required DOL to carry out a demonstration project on credentialing "for the purpose of facilitating the seamless transition of members of the Armed Forces from service on active duty to civilian employment."

DOL funded the project with a contract with the National Governors Association to both engage governors in accelerating credentialing and licensing for veterans, and to move veterans into civilian employment by reducing or eliminating barriers to credentials, certifications or licenses. NGA designed and implemented the demonstration project in six participating States and explored ac-

celerated career pathways for servicemembers and veterans in selected, high-demand civilian occupations.

Also, under the VOW Act, the Department entered into a contract to study equivalencies between the skills of various military occupational specialties and the qualifications required for related civilian jobs. We studied 68 military occupations that covered 57 percent of all enlisted servicemembers, and created a more robust military-to-civilian crosswalk for those 68 military occupations.

The Department remains committed to licensing and credentialing efforts, but as we discussed, the authority for credentialing most professions lies ultimately with the States. Many States are identifying and addressing licensing barriers. The President's budget proposes $15 million to encourage more State action to increase interstate portability of licenses, remove other barriers and provide easier access.

Participants in the Department's registered apprenticeship receive an industry-issued, nationally recognized credential that certifies occupational proficiency. Yesterday, President Obama announced that the Department of Labor is awarding $175 million in American apprenticeship grants to 46 winning consortia to train and hire more than 43,000 new apprentices. Some of these programs have specific veteran components, and I am happy to discuss those.

Chairman Wenstrup, Ranking Member Takano, thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to your questions.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF MS. GERTON APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

Dr. WENSTRUP. Thank you. Mr. DiGiovanni, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF FRANK DIGIOVANNI

Mr. DIGIOVANNI. Chairman Wenstrup, Ranking Member Takano, distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. As a 26-year veteran of the United States Air Force, this is an issue near and dear to my heart.

In June of 2012 the Department stood up a licensing and credentialing task force. It was stood up for two purposes: First, to give meaning to the profession of arms. It is not only just about military courtesy, but it is also about a professional course that is both licensed and credentialed.

We also believe that licensing and credentialing is pointing to military transition, so that is the ability to translate what one learned both from training, education, and experience, and how that translates into the private sector.

The program of licensing and credentialing in the Department falls along three lines of action: The first is when you finish your initial qualification training, if you are qualified at that time, then there is an opportunity to secure a license or a credential. The second time is mid career when you have sufficient experience. And the third is as you begin to transition from military services.

In October of 2013, per the direction of Congress, we did a set of pilots, we submitted a report to you all in 2013. And in that report, we looked at areas such as truck driving, logistics, healthcare,

manufacturing, IT and other areas which have direct portability from the military into the civil sector.

For example, on the one line of action that I spoke of, the Army has been very aggressive in their 91 Echo Allied Trade Specialist schoolhouse. Since 2012, over 2,000 initial graduates of that course have been awarded American Welding Society certification, and 2,350 members have been awarded certification from the National Institute of Metalworking Skills.

Also, with DoD assistance, there have been 79 bills enacted in each of the 50 States, 40 of which have made changes which encourage colleges and community colleges to give military members credit for their training, education and experience.

What we are working on now is that by fiscal year 2016, all four services will pay for credential. The latest was the Marine Corps which started their program this month, the other three, two of which actually started paying in 2015, and the Navy have been paying for credentials since 2008.

We are also working on a DoD instruction to consolidate the policies that come from this body and other places. And we also have a DoD credentialing working group where we are looking to get the four services together to look at best practices and standardization.

There is also a standup of AWS, the DoD COOL Web site, Credentialing Opportunity Online, that will now not only be able to get that from each of the four services, but there will be a central place for them now to go where you can get access to all four service sites. And the task force that I spoke of that was set up in 2012 has been extended to the end of 2017.

For the way ahead, certainly what you have done has been fantastic. It certainly helped our military members. There have been great laws that have been passed; in particular, one which authorized our military members to receive initial skills job training up to 6 months before they get out. So that becomes their place of employment for up to 6 months before they leave military service. That program, or that authority, is called SkillBridge.

We are also starting to shift the center of gravity to the States. We think that when you look at the States, the licensing issue certainly, as was discussed earlier, is a State issue. The other center of gravity is the professional associations themselves.

We also think there is an opportunity to partner with community colleges. For example, in our study, only four of 395 accredited paramedic colleges actually have a pipeline course. And what a pipeline course is is where they look at a military member's training, education and experience. You get credit for that time, you also get a competency-based exam, and then they custom design a set of coursework that only fills the gaps in what you need.

What we have seen for the paramedic, that cuts between 6 to 7 months of school time for transition. It is interesting that only 4 of the 395 institutions have that capability.

The last area that we are looking at is in combat arms, and we are looking at soft skills in helping those folks transition. I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today and I will stand by for questions.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF MR. DIGIOVANNI APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

Dr. WENSTRUP. Thank you, Mr. DiGiovanni, for your input and feedback in your testimony. Mr. Quam, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF DAVID QUAM

Mr. QUAM. Chairman Wenstrup and members of the subcommittee, good afternoon. It is good to see you all, and it is a real privilege to be here on behalf of the National Governors Association. Governors have been very focused for years on veterans, the military and the National Guard. As commanders in chief of the National Guard, the last decade has seen governors very much focused on not only the protection of our troops when they go abroad, but their protection when they come home. I think this has been a really great example of what governors can do to help when these military men and women, including the Guard and our active military are coming back to the States. So it was a real privilege to be able to work with the Department of Labor to start to find those best practices.

I think you heard a lot today that every single State, and I will say some of the territories as well, have taken steps to really help the veterans returning with regard to licensing and credentialing and trying to accelerate those pathways. Well, what we found during this 18-month, really intensive process, was that implementation is key. There aren't a lot of Federal solutions that need to be imposed, licensing and credentialing is a State issue for a reason. It has to do with public safety, it has to do with geography, it has to do with the economy. All those licensing boards and credentialing criteria were put in place for a reason.

And State and local government has control over that because it is important for this to remain local. That being said, governors have found that there are barriers to trade and there are things that have to be done and the governors play a key role.

As we work through this demonstration process, there were five key recommendations that came across for what can be done to really implement these programs. There was a blueprint put in place for all States to follow. The first recommendation: Assemble a team. It is remarkable only the governor has the authority across all the agencies to bring everybody together to get the level of coordination and collaboration that you need to get this done. The effort in the State of Ohio for instance, the governor called a task force together, gave it to the governor's workforce task force, they identified 33 different State agencies that were involved in the hiring of vets, the credentialing and licensing, 33 just in the State of Ohio. Every State has that level of complexity, the governor as convener is key.

Second, you have to do your homework. What is the information? How many veterans are coming back? What were they trained in? What does your economy need? Where are the jobs? What institutions do you have that can provide that training? And can you match it all up? Without all that information, you can't make really strong decisions.

You need then data, this is where working with some of the national credentialing bodies, national licensing bodies is critical. The nurses were able to do a nationwide gap analysis comparing what

the military did with what some of the States do. That type of data allows the State to start to really focus on what do we need to make sure that our veterans are ready for that civilian workforce.

It is interesting, if you think of a medic who is trained to help soldiers who are injured in combat, there is a different level of training to handle that versus handling, say, infants, who you might have to service as a nurse or a practitioner, or the elderly. And so you have to make sure that the licensing and credentialing is there for a reason to make sure that that quality control is servicing the civilian sector by taking into account the training and experience to be gained in the military.

Next one, don't reinvent the wheel. This is a big one. Best practices, the States have started to really share across State lines. You had six different States involved in this demonstration process—demonstration program, and probably the best thing that came out of it is them talking to each other. What did you do that worked? How did you work with your legislature? How did your State licensing board set up? What other bodies are you concerned with? What other are the politics that are involved there? How did you fund it? States talking to States is a key to making this work in the end.

The last one: Share information. If I have one role for the Federal Government to play, it is to help with the sharing of information from the Federal Government and from the agencies to the States. A true partnership will require the flow of information so you don't have to go looking. One of the interesting findings as I was talking to some of the people who put together this report, they had to do workarounds just to get the basic information of what vets were coming back to their States and what have they been trained in. Those are keys to bring the policy decisions together to really make this work. Happy to take questions and it has been a pleasure to be here.

[THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF MR. QUAM APPEARS IN THE APPENDIX]

Dr. WENSTRUP. Well, thank you, Mr. Quam. I appreciate all of your testimonies. I will now allow myself 5 minutes for questioning.

I will just continue with you, Mr. Quam, if I can. I appreciate what you said about governors taking the lead on some of these issues within the States, and best practices. I have always contended that one of the advantages of having States and territories is you have the opportunity to find best practices. You have over 50 labs to try different things to see what works, but it takes the communication and the knowledge of what is working and see if it works in your own State. And, of course, some of the differences between States are sometimes based upon—the protocols can be based upon the need of a State, right? Some States need different professions more than others, and so they may change their needs, their rules based on their needs.

So, again, going back to the question I asked before in the previous situation is, what is it that you think that we can do here for the States to make the process easier? I ask that from the VA side, or DoD side, really.

Mr. QUAM. I am going to go back to what some of the previous speakers mentioned and one of the recommendations I was making, it is a flow of information. There is information that is held at the Federal level that needs to be communicated to the States in order for the States to make really good decisions.

I will tell a story that I was just told yesterday about how this works, and it really brought it to light for me, and that is, one the States who was trying to figure out whether to put a paramedics training session together needed to know A, how many paramedics do we need in the State? They had that information. But B, how many folks do we have coming into the State who have that training and may be looking for that type of job? They asked the Federal Government, and part of this lies with several different Federal agencies.

At the end of the day, the only way they could get that information was to send a FOIA request to the Federal Government to get it out. They couldn't get it any other way. Even the National Governors Association, we did this demonstration project, we had to also put in a FOIA request to get the information we were looking for.

So there was some talk about a clearinghouse to have some of this information in better flow between the Federal silos amongst themselves, but then the Federal partnership with the State and local partnership—if we can just get the information going back and forth, that alone is going to streamline this process and you get some better policymaking. We would love your help with that.

Dr. WENSTRUP. My first question is, can you compile a list of the type of information that you need from the Federal Government that we can help try to expedite so that you can have this stuff available to you that is appropriate and so you do not have to go through that.

Mr. QUAM. And certainly, from the demonstration project, I think we have got some very specific information we can look for, work with you, have your help. Happy to bring that to you, yes.

Dr. WENSTRUP. If you could please forward that to us, we would be glad to take that information and try and take that ball and run with it.

Mr. DiGiovanni, there is a sharing of information that we are talking about. Where do you think the DoD is right now as far as sharing information that may be necessary, or what barriers are in your way in the process of sharing information about the skills of our servicemembers?

Mr. DIGIOVANNI. Sir, from my several years of working this issue, the biggest problem for us has been access. So as military members begin to transition, a lot of people in industry are looking, so how do we talk to these 250,000 servicemembers that are getting out every year? And I think it was alluded to in the earlier testimony, but I think the technical means, the use of social networking capabilities, Twitter and other types of communication devices allow it to scale. It is too hard to try to find out individually what 250,000 people, where they are going to go. And a lot of it is up to the servicemember, do they really want to release that information, do they know—do they even know where they want to

go yet? So there is a lot of devil in the details when it comes to that question.

But I think the biggest thing I have seen is just how do we use maybe technology that allows people to scale and reach out to them in a way that is voluntary? So if they want to be contacted, they can opt in and then provide that communication.

Dr. WENSTRUP. So you are talking about really the outside access to these skilled people?

Mr. QUAM. Yes, sir. And I think once you do that, then you do have a database that kind of says those are the people that are opted in, this is where they want to go and this is the kind of job they are looking for, which is what we are trying to do as part of the SkillBridge authority. We are trying to use that authority to help advertise back and forth. Servicemembers looking for job field training opportunities and companies looking for people to train.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Connecting the dots.

Mr. DIGIOVANNI. Yes, sir.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Thank you. Mr. Takano, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. DiGiovanni, in your testimony, you talk about how partnerships with community colleges can help student veterans bridge their military experience to obtain civilian licenses and credentials. How can community colleges improve outcomes for new student veterans? And is there any way we can better incentivize the best practices in this particular area?

Mr. DIGIOVANNI. Sir, great question. I—one of the things that we did as we saw the law started to get changed which opened up that kind of licensing board and flexibility to take advantage of military training, education and experience, because we went out and contracted something that I call the technical data package. What that did is we went and did a deep dive at those four places, for example, that we are doing paramedic pipelining. In that technical data package, we captured how they translated military training and education to college credit. And we also captured the competency-based exams they were giving these folks.

So one of the things that we need to do is just, as you said, get the information out. I mean, it is sitting there. The States just need to just say, look, does the Federal Government have anything that has best practices? So that is one thing, it is really getting the best practice out. I think the second thing is incentivizing these community colleges in some way to build these kinds of programs that not only in the healthcare, but in other areas where we see our military veterans migrating to.

Mr. TAKANO. You cite paramedics as an example, but have they tried other lines of vocations at all?

Mr. DIGIOVANNI. We haven't, sir. The first study really took a hard look at healthcare because it was such—there was this great alignment between what the military is doing and the private sector, so that was really the first look.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Quam, what are States doing to conduct meaningful gap analysis of their credentialing requirements against military training requirements? I think you mentioned nursing as one example.

Mr. QUAM. Nursing was one where the national body does some licensing, they did it on their own. The States went to them and they actually partnered together. Some States then went beyond that, they took what the gap analysis from the National Association, and then they did their own at the State level. But the work with some of the those national licensing bodies—we talk about some of the groups who are trying to create some more uniformity without a Federal law, it is important to work with them because they have got the experts to do that initial gap analysis, and then for the States to come in and apply this specifically.

I will say this, that with regard to gap analysis and with regard to all of this, specificity is a key. We tried to do this for all occupations and all licenses, we tried to take on everybody and streamline everything. We have found that that does not work. You have got to really focus on some of the key industries, the key places where the military training and most people are coming to get the most bang for the buck and have the most success.

Mr. TAKANO. I would agree that you have to look at the key occupations. Nursing is one of those areas where there is an independent third-party validation, setting the credential at least, right?

Mr. QUAM. Correct.

Mr. TAKANO. But, let me ask you this question: I mean, you talk about the State's role. I respect the State-Federal distinction. I come from local government as well. But say you have a strong credentialing body, such as nursing, or physician assistants, do the States really retain the autonomy to be able to talk about scope and also set the number of years, say, it takes to be an RN? Or is it really the National Association that is doing that?

Mr. QUAM. I think for—the National Association has a huge role to play. This is still legislative and it is law. So at the end of the day, the States have a very, very strong say. What you are seeing, though, is that for some of these professions is, I think it was well-put, finding national solutions to national problems, not necessarily Federal solutions to those problems, but national. I think that is an important distinction. This is one of the reasons, though, why we are saying the collaboration and cooperation between those national bodies and the States, that is critical, because there are some expertise there where States can build off of the work that has already been done.

Mr. TAKANO. I would love to be able to engage with you off-line. I have some further questions about how all this works, especially with nursing, physicians' assistants. The military may require less, but some reason they go into the civilian world they have to do more. Is it really necessary or are there other factors going on here. My time is up. But it's a topic that I would like to explore further with you.

Mr. QUAM. I would like to have that discussion.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Costello, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. COSTELLO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DiGiovanni, I have heard—elsewhere, I've heard through testimony elsewhere about the TAACCCT program and the need to improve coordination between DoD and the VA. Could you identify

for me where you think maybe the—I don't want to say problems, let's say challenges—where the challenges are and what you are doing to make it more seamless and what, if there is anything Congress can do, I'll keep it open-ended for you.

Mr. DIGIOVANNI. Sir, unfortunately I am not the expert on the TAACCCT program. Most of the areas that I engage in are in the licensing and credentialing piece. I will take that question for the record, sir, and I will get an answer back. But that office is run by Dr. Susan Kelly. And so I really need to defer to her expertise here, sir.

Mr. COSTELLO. Okay, appreciate that. I yield back.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Ms. Rice, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms RICE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question is for Ms. Gerton, can you—you talk about working with the private sector in your role to find out—actually, I want to ask you how closely you work with the private sector to identify what the workforce needs are, and then how you integrate those needs into your credentialing program.

Ms. GERTON. Sure. Let me speak generally about the Department of Labor, and then talk a little bit about what VETS does specifically. The grants that the Department of Labor offers through the State workforce system require a very close integration of local businesses and employers with the workforce boards, and then the State workforce agency or the grantees so that the training programs that we allow States to fund are actually totally integrated in building job pathways, career pathways for that local economy.

It is very much a sort of a centrally-funded but locally-executed program, so the local businesses are required members of the workforce investment boards, and they then drive the training programs that are offered in those regions so that the training programs are consistent with the job opportunities in that area.

One of the powerful ways that the Department of Labor helps veterans particularly that is the VETS organization works directly with employers who want to employ veterans, and we help them take advantage of the public workforce system to build those job pathways so that they can bring veterans in. So we teach them how to use job training programs, apprenticeships, a variety of different workforce-funded options, to create a career pathway that closes skill gaps for veterans. That is the first.

The second is that the Department of Labor, through its network of job centers, can actually work, especially with transitioning servicemembers, to help them navigate from where they are separating from the service to where they want to be. And we have a dislocated worker program. It is a fabulous program, and definitely not as well-known as it could be for which transitioning servicemembers qualify for 6 months prior to separation, and a year afterwards where they can get direct counseling on the skills that they currently have, how they might apply to jobs where they want to be, and then be counseled through the process of filling those skill gaps. Oftentimes with DOL-funded training DOL, through the dislocated worker program, may be able to fund the credentialing test that is required to port that skill to the new State.

There is a great deal of resources here that will link employer needs, in general, in communities and then specifically for veterans so that training programs can be designed through the public workforce system and that transitioning servicemembers and veterans can take advantage of.

Ms RICE. Okay. Mr. Quam, my home State of New York has launched an initiative in 2011 called Experience Counts, which expanded our State's licensing, and higher education credentials to better integrate military skills and training. Now, it is my understanding that over a dozen licenses and certifications covered under this initiative, and that the entire State University of New York and City University of New York system, which was one of the largest State university systems in the country are participating.

So I know that you were talking about how you don't need to reinvent the wheel, I think it was number 4 in your list of five things.

Mr. QUAM. Right.

Ms RICE. I had to say, I had to profess ignorance as to whether we got that idea from someone else, or if it is something that came from us and should be exported. Are there other examples like that around the country? How is it that you facilitate the sharing of information so they don't have to recreate the wheel?

Mr. QUAM. That is a great question. And part of the demonstration project, I have to compliment the Department of Labor for all their help with this, is designed to take the best practices and help us disseminate them. And so an interim came out just this year, the final report will come out later this year with the Department of Labor, both the National Governors Association and the Department will be disseminating this to all States to share.

As a matter of fact, one possibility is even though we did six States, it is to fund—if there are funds available, to do another cohort, to share with another set of States. But we will be sharing all this information with the governors, with the State workforce agencies, parts with the veterans—the folks who handle veterans affairs in each of the States.

It is remarkable how many agencies touch on this issue, education, workforce, licensing and credentialing, all can be separate boards. It will be our job to take the information we find, disseminate it to everybody, and then continue this discussion, both among the governors and among those folks who are chiefly responsible for it. DOL will be a critical partner in getting that done.

Ms RICE. Great, thank you very much.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Ms. Radewagen, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. RADEWAGEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank the panel for appearing today.

Mr. DiGiovanni, what do you see as the biggest impediment to achieving better cohesion between military training and civilian licenses and credentials? It seems to me that it might be easier for the States and territories to try to conform to one similar standard for popular licenses and credentials than to have DoD try to adjust training and procedure for a variety of different State standards.

Mr. DIGIOVANNI. So our approach has been primarily market-driven. So one of the things that we have asked anyone who has

asked, or anyone we talked to from industry is, what is the goal in certification? What is the goal in licensure? So that we can advise military members that if you are seeking a career in, say, metalworking or truck driving, which is pretty simple, you obviously need a CDL, but one of these kind of manufacturing or logistics, what are the certifications that if a military member walked into your H.R. office and you lay that on the table, that would be exactly the certification they are looking for.

So from our perspective, we are looking for, again, this information, but this time, toward the Department, to help better inform our military members, what certifications and licensures matter, particularly in the kinds of jobs that they are looking for.

I think we also not really trying to, the military to date, has not taken on the task of trying to do the gap training themselves. They do have a military requirement, and then they train and educate those military servicemembers to the specific requirements of the Department. And then what we have done is then provide them with information mechanisms to find out what the gaps are and then help them locate where they can get those gaps filled. And so that is—it has kind of been that process and also that demand-driven process, what is the marketplace looking for as far as licensing and credentialing?

Ms. RADEWAGEN. Thank you. Ms. Gerton, it is nice it see you again. Understanding the results of the NGA study on credentialing are not final, but what are other steps that you think we should take to incentivize States and the territories to pass laws and regulations that account for skills and training that servicemembers already have when looking at licensing and credentialing standards?

Ms. GERTON. I think there are a number of initiatives already on the table. The interim report is out there, and it does lay out in draft form the blueprint that Mr. Quam talked about. We would certainly encourage those on the committee to take the report back to your home States and share those results, as we have already posted it out to the State workforce agencies, so they can begin working on it.

And career pathways and job-driven training are a huge focus of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. I think that there is an opportunity here for us to continue the type of grants that TAACCCT and Ready To Work and some of the other labor grants represent that encourage innovation in this space, and encourage the development of innovation, particularly course curricula as a result of the TAACCCT grant that is shared in the public domain, so that other folks who wanted to pick that curriculum up already have that written. That is a prerequisite of the TAACCCT grant.

I think there is that. And I think another key piece is increasing the capacity in the workforce system to do this kind of counseling and training because to answer one of Representative Takano's earlier questions about the cost of credentialing, some of those costs are already covered in the public workforce system. We don't need to replicate those costs, we can, by referring folks through the public workforce system, have some training paid for, some of their costs and credentialing paid for, and have individual counseling for them that helps them leverage the variety of these different kinds

of tools. This is especially critical for veterans as we approach this issue.

Ms. RADEWAGEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back the balance of my time.

Dr. WENSTRUP. If there are no other questions, I want to thank you all for answering our questions today, and you are now excused. And I think we have a lot of valuable information out of this hearing today. I thank you all for your presence.

I want to thank everyone for joining us today. It is important that our servicemembers and veterans have a seamless transition into civilian jobs, and especially ones that they are qualified for due to their military service. A major part of this is getting a licensing and credentialing process right. So I thank you for your input.

I look forward to all of us continuing to work together on this as we move forward. Again, I thank the members and all of you here today for participating.

And finally, I ask unanimous consent that all members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material. Without objection, so ordered. This hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:59 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

STATEMENT OF
STEVE GONZALEZ, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
NATIONAL VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION DIVISION
THE AMERICAN LEGION
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ON
A REVIEW OF LICENSING AND CREDENTIALING STANDARDS FOR SERVICEMEMBERS AND VETERANS: DO BARRIERS STILL REMAIN?

SEPTEMBER10, 2015

Chairman Wenstrup, Ranking Member Takano and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, on behalf of National Commander Dale Barnett and the over 2 million members of The American Legion, we thank you and your colleagues for the work you do in support of our service members and veterans as well as their families. The American Legion commends you for holding this hearing.

In early 1996, The American Legion launched the first groundbreaking credentialing study to report on those vocational skills for which the Armed Forces provide training and for which a license or certificate is required to work in this field in the civilian economy. The education, training and experience obtained during an individual's military service not only provides tangible benefits for the nation's defense, but can also contribute significantly to a highly skilled civilian workforce. The military invests millions of dollars training its uniformed personnel, providing a broad base of knowledge and experiences that can carry over to civilian occupations. However, transitioning from military occupations to civilian jobs can present significant challenges for service members.

These service members and veterans have attended some of the finest technical and professional training schools in the world. These military men and women are graduates with experience in health care, electronics, computers, engineering, drafting, air traffic control, nuclear power plant operations, mechanics, carpentry, transportation, and many other fields. Many of their skills require some type of license or certification to find a career in the civilian workforce. In many cases, these credentials require schooling which has already been completed by attendance at an Armed Forces training institution. Unfortunately, the institution(s) which issue the license or certification do not always recognize the competency, training and/or experience obtained through their military service.

Post-secondary education credentials are arguably even more important today than ever before. Those individuals who hold a credential generally have lower unemployment rates and greater earning power.[1] Since 2008, jobs in the workforce that require some postsecondary education or

[1] Credentials as defined here span a wide range in scope and cover the following, but not limited to this list: 2 and 4 year degrees, licensures, certifications, and certificates.

a degree have increased by 3.6 million, while jobs for people with a high school diploma or less have declined leading to higher unemployment rates. However, when civilian credentialing boards, states, and employers fail to fully recognize military education, training and experience, both the service member and the nation are impaired. The veteran faces reduced chances of obtaining a job on par with his/her skills, and the civilian workforce cannot take full advantage of the extensive skills training in which our nation has invested.

Still, the process for a veteran to get licensed is not as easy as showing up in an office with a DD-214 proving relevant military training. Conflicts between federal and state requirements for licenses and credentials complicate the issue, which remains far from resolved around the country.

Earlier this year, The American Legion hosted its second National Credentialing Summit in Washington to identify best practices for implementing state laws and lobbying for new ones. The Teamsters, policymakers and other key stakeholders were part of the collaborative discussion.

Fighting it out in the States

The battle for licensing and credentialing laws is now being waged in state general assemblies and legislatures. Federal law can only reach occupational licenses in certain regulated fields, such as aerospace, agriculture, maritime transportation and communications. The licensing of most professionals – including nurses, paramedics, truck drivers and teachers – belongs to state law. And the licensing protocol is often left to a state's individual agencies, which can be problematic.

The Department of Defense (DOD) has instructed state licensing offices to allow equivalent military experience to fulfill requirements to receive state licenses, but vague wording – and the non-binding effect of a federal mandate on a state agency – has left implementation up to local offices. This results in inconsistencies in licensing protocol, even among offices in the same state.

For example, if a veteran has a military commercial driver's license equivalent and has separated within 90 days, they can walk into the Secretary of State's office in Illinois, and they will waive the driving test, but that does not mean they are going to waive the permit test. That process is something that each office and each administrating office for certifications and credentials identifies a protocol for.

Legionnaires at the state and post levels have responded by lobbying their legislatures and general assemblies to pass new licensing and credentialing laws in their states. All 50 states have now passed some form of legislation in this area, thanks in part to strong Legion advocacy.

Ensuring the Quality of Credentials for Service Members and Veterans

The American Legion strongly supports the recent credentialing initiatives that have been developed and implemented by a variety of local, state, and federal government agencies, as well

as industry stakeholders. In the past several years, a variety of federal and state legislation, administration initiatives, and new DOD programs have been developed to reduce barriers to credentialing for service members and veterans. We applaud these efforts, but remain concerned about how to ensure the quality of the credentials that are paid for by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Unlike in higher education where accreditation is used as a means of ensuring quality, credentialing is a relatively new form of establishing workplace competency. Accreditation of credential programs is only recently being recognized by industry as important for ensuring credential quality. Thus, accreditation of credentialing programs is not as pervasive as in higher education and cannot currently be relied upon as a means of ensuring the quality of all credentials.

Since 2000, when the payment of certification and licensure exam fees was approved for payment under the GI Bill education section, the VA has been charged with monitoring the quality of approved certifications and licenses. As DOD responds to Congressional requirements to pay for credentials for service members, DOD is looking to the VA as a means of vetting credentials that meet quality standards. Consequently, The American Legion is concerned that the vetting mechanisms used by the VA are not always effective.

Public Law 106-419, the *Veterans Benefits and Health Care Improvement Act of 2000*, mandates that VA ensure that the credentials approved for the GI Bill meet specific criteria specified by Congressional legislation. These criteria were developed to ensure that the credentials approved are quality credentials that attest to the competency of the individual and therefore have value in the civilian workplace. These criteria are very different than the criteria that might be applied to a training or education program. Yet, a review of the credentials approved by the VA suggests that some may not meet these stringent requirements. As a result, eligible service members and veterans may be led to believe that a credential approved by the VA has value when in fact it does not.

The American Legion recommends that VA's credential program approval process be reviewed by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to ensure that the credentials approved meet legislative and other standards for legitimate credentialing programs. GAO should also assess whether additional criteria should be added either by legislation or regulation to improve the review process. For example, the VA currently does not require periodic re-approval of certification programs. Certification tests and organizations at present are only approved once, and there are no requirements for re-approval. However, certification requirements are adapted and changes to exams are made by the certifying agencies on a regular basis. A re-approval process would ensure that the tests and organizations continue to meet the legislative criteria for payment.

Entitlement Payments vs. Cost of Credential

In addition, The American Legion encourages this committee to eliminate the requirement that Post-9/11 GI Bill recipients use an entire month's worth of entitlement for a certification or licensing test fee - even when the fee amounts to far less than the full month's entitlement. Under

38 USC § 3315 - Licensure and certification tests, Post-9/11 GI Bill recipients are charged one full month's of entitlement, which may amount to over $1,000 even if the licensing or certification test fee is significantly less than that. Since the average licensing and certification test fee is approximately $200, this can result in a loss of a significant amount of entitlement per recipient. The Montgomery GI Bill does not have this requirement. For the Montgomery GI Bill, the monthly entitlement is reduced proportionate to the cost of the license or exam fee.

The American Legion is recommending that Congress change 38 U.S. Code Chapter 33, subchapter II – Educational Assistance (§§ 3311 – 3319), section § 3315 (c) that states the following:

> *The charge against an individual's entitlement under this chapter for payment for a licensing or certification test shall be determined at the rate of one month (rounded to the nearest whole month) for each amount paid that equals.*

The change to Chapter 33 should mirror previous Public Law 106-419: *Veteran Benefits and Health Care Improvement Act of 2000*, section 122 that outlined licensing and certification, and read as follows:

> *The number of months of entitlement charged in the case of any individual for such licensing or certification test is equal to the number (including any fraction) determined by dividing the total amount of educational assistance paid such individual for such test by the full time monthly institutional rate of educational assistance which, except for paragraph (1), such individual would otherwise be paid under subsection (a)(1), (b)(1), (d), or (e)(1) of section 3015 of this title, as the case may be.*

The American Legion proposes that a scale be created based on the cost of the exams and that the veteran is charged their entitlement at a pro-rated number of days or the actual cost of the exam and materials. This is a fair solution for our nation's heroes.

Distribution of Material and Information:

For a long time, service members and veterans were not aware of credentialing requirements associated with their current or past military occupations; credentialing boards were unaware of comparability military education, training and experience to the civilian sector or did not recognize military specific education, training and experience. Working alongside Senator's Tim Kaine (VA) and Jim Inhofe (OK), section 542: Enhancement of Mechanisms to Correlate Skills and Training for Military Occupational Specialties with Skills and Training Required for Civilian Certifications and Licenses, was introduced as an amendment and passed through the *National Defense Authorization Act of 2014*.

Two key elements of the amendment were as follows:

1. **Information Dissemination** – DOD and the Services should disseminate information to service members throughout their careers on civilian licenses and certifications that match

their military occupations, skills, and experience and this information should be consistent with Transition GPS.[2]

The information dissemination requirements were met based on a November 15, 2012, guidance memorandum to the Services issued by the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (Readiness and Force Management). The Army and Navy have been meeting these requirements for years through the Army and Navy Credentialing Opportunity On Line (COOL) programs. The Air Force has instituted its own COOL program that was expected to be online by October 1, 2014; whereas, the Marine Corps is in the process of initiating its COOL program. The Military Occupation Codes (MOC) Crosswalk portion of the Transition GPS curriculum specifically directs participants to the COOL websites for credentialing information.

Since the passage of this amendment, capturing how often the information is provided to service members, transitioning service members, or veterans is nonexistent nor are we aware if this information is included into the Transition GPS program.

2. **Access to Military Training Materials** – DOD and the Services should provide credentialing agencies with access to military training materials to improve their ability to assess the equivalency of military training.

   DOD is currently working with a number of state licensing agencies and related entities to share training materials so that they can better assess the equivalency of military training. As these initiatives further progress, it will become clearer what types of training materials are helpful for the purposes of assessing equivalency. Currently, it is unclear whether individual state licensing agencies and national certification agencies have the resources to successfully conduct detailed gap analyses of their credential requirements against military training requirements.

Too many Licenses?

Finally, a new White House report on occupational licensing was released in July of this year which calls into question the proliferation of occupational licensing requirements.[3]

"Over the past several decades, the share of U.S. workers holding an occupational license has grown sharply," the report begins. "When designed and implemented carefully, licensing can offer important health and safety protections to consumers, as well as benefits to workers. However, the current licensing regime in the United States also creates substantial costs, and often the requirements for obtaining a license are not in sync with the skills needed for the job. There is evidence that licensing requirements raise the price of goods and services, restrict employment opportunities, and make it more difficult for workers to take their skills across state lines," the report continues. "Too often, policymakers do not carefully weigh these costs and benefits when making decisions about whether or how to regulate a profession through licensing."

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[2] Note: legislation specifically cites COOL web sites as a means of disseminating information.
[3] Occupational Licensing: A Framework For Policymakers, July 2015

Burdens placed by too often arbitrary regulations on military families were a primary motivating factor in the White House's report. First Lady Michelle Obama has recognized that onerous licensing schemes affect the ability of service members and their spouses to find employment. Military spouses are 10 times more likely to have moved across state lines in the past year than their civilian counterparts and "have a difficult time obtaining a new license each time they move," the report said. Eliminating arduous requirements for military spouses – 35 percent of whom work in professions requiring state credentials – would have a positive impact on states with high numbers of active-duty military personnel stationed within their borders.

Conclusion

As always, The American Legion thanks this committee for the opportunity to offer testimony on the position of the over 2 million members of this organization. Questions concerning this testimony can be directed to Jeff Steele, Assistant Director in The American Legion's Legislative Division at (202) 861-2700, or jsteele@legion.org

STATEMENT OF ROY SWIFT

Workcred, an affiliate of the American National Standards Institute *rswift@workcred.org;* 202.331.3617

My name is Roy Swift and I am executive director of Workcred, an affiliate of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

ANSI is the coordinator of the U.S. standards and conformity assessment system, and Workcred is a separate 501(c)(3) affiliate organization whose mission is to strengthen workforce quality by improving workforce credentials and the credentialing system. Before launching Workcred, I spent the previous ten years building ANSI's internationally recognized accreditation programs for personnel certificate and certification programs.

It is important to note that Workcred maintains a separation from and respects the impartiality of ANSI's accreditation services. Nevertheless, both organizations share an ongoing commitment to fostering a more robust and qualified American workforce, and enhancing the quality of credentials for both military and civilian personnel.

As a retired United States Army colonel who served a 28-year career in the U.S. Army Medical Department, I am deeply honored to testify today on the credentialing of servicemembers and veterans.

U.S. military personnel gain valuable training, skills, and at times do earn civilian credentials during their service. Credentials can contribute to personal and professional career development and enhance the potential for promotion for servicemembers on active duty. After military service, credentials can help demonstrate to civilian employers that training and skills attained in the military are on par with those gained through traditional civilian pathways.

Unfortunately, many servicemembers that have earned a military occupational specialty are often not licensed or certified to perform a comparable job in the civilian workforce. This situation creates an artificial barrier to employment for veterans. With an estimated 250,000 military personnel expected to leave service every year, the need to translate military skills into civilian careers is as important as ever.

But we face a tremendous challenge. There are more than 4,000 certifications in the U.S., and less than ten percent of these are accredited or reviewed by a third-party accreditation body. This lack of third-party review creates a "buyer beware" environment because most certifications would not meet a national or international standard. In fact, many self-identified "certifications" are actually educational programs with a test to measure learning outcomes and are not competency-based assessments of the individual's ability to perform in the workplace. Certification must be firewalled away from education to be a third-party judgment that competencies have been acquired. Certification must be time limited and have the ability to take away the certification for unethical behavior or incompetence.

Accreditation is an independent, third-party assessment of a certification body's competency to perform the functions as I have just stated, and it plays an important role in increasing the credibility and continuous quality improvement of certifications.

ANSI's accreditation process is designed to increase the integrity and mobility of certified professionals, and provide confidence to the marketplace that they are competent. Millions of professionals currently hold certifications from ANSI-accredited certification bodies. In ANSI's view, the global nature of personnel certification demands accreditation to international standards. That's why ANSI's accreditation program is based on the American National Standard (ANS) and international standard ANSI/ISO/IEC 17024. And that's why ANSI was the first U.S. accreditation body to deliver this accreditation in accordance with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17011, another international standard that represents the highest globally accepted practices for accreditation bodies.

This 17011 standard is also the basis for mutual recognition of accreditation bodies in countries around the world. This assures that credentials—just like products and quality management systems—are seen as equivalent and are transportable across borders, broadening the global labor market and opportunities for both employers and employees.

With respect to veterans' employability, ANSI has long been an active leader in working with the government on private-sector credentialing solutions. For example, the military's Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) programs and the Department of Labor highlight ANSI accreditation.

With a broader vision, Workcred is focused on building a competency-driven workforce credentialing ecosystem. We want to create alignment between industry, training, and credentialing organizations. This will advance quality workforce credentials that have validity and are market valued, and will promote an open, transparent exchange of information. And an associated benefit to society should be to reduce unemployment by narrowing the "Skills Gap." ANSI and Workcred, in collaboration with the American Legion, were instrumental in working with the Army's Training and Doctrine Command to identify high quality, industry-recognized credentials relevant to Army Soldiers as candidates for Army credentialing pilot programs.

Together with partners from George Washington University and Southern Illinois University, Workcred has just launched the Credential Transparency Initiative to create greater clarity in the U.S. credentialing marketplace. Funded by Lumina Foundation, the initiative will develop common terms for describing key features of credentials. It will create a voluntary, web-based registry for sharing the resulting information. And it will test practical software applications for employers, students, educators, and other major credential stakeholders like the U.S. Department of Defense. The registry holds great promise to make civilian credentials more transparent. For example: DoD, in cooperation with partners such as the American Council on Education (ACE), could use an "app" to more efficiently connect Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) competencies to credentials in the civilian job market.

All Americans have a stake in a strong and effective labor market credentialing system—especially our nation's military servicemembers. Both ANSI and Workcred are committed to supporting the employability and successful transition of military servicemembers into the workforce. We look forward to continuing

to partner with the military, government agencies, and groups like the American Legion to advance this effort.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

About Workcred

Formed in 2014 as an affiliate of the American National Standards Institute, Workcred is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to strengthen workforce quality by improving the credentialing system, ensuring its ongoing relevance, and preparing employers, workers, educators, and governments to use it effectively. *www.workcred.org*.

About ANSI

ANSI is a private, non-profit organization that administers and coordinates the U.S. voluntary standards and conformity assessment system. In this role, the Institute oversees the development and use of voluntary consensus standards by accrediting the procedures used by standards developing organizations, and approving their finished documents as American National Standards.

Internationally, the Institute is the official U.S. representative to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and, via the U.S. National Committee, the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC). ANSI's membership is comprised of businesses, government agencies, professional societies and trade associations, standards developing organizations (SDOs), and consumer and labor organizations.

The Institute represents the diverse interests of more than 125,000 companies and organizations and 3.5 million professionals worldwide. ANSI works closely with stakeholders from both industry and government to identify consensus-based solutions to national and global priorities—an inclusive, collaborative partnership between the public and private sectors. *www.ansi.org*.

Statement on Federal Grants and Contracts

Dr. Roy Swift is presenting this testimony on behalf of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and the ANSI affiliate organization, Workcred.

While ANSI has not directly received any Federal grants and contracts within the previous two fiscal years that are relevant to the subject matter of this testimony, we have partnered on some projects that are supported by grant money, and we have relationships with agencies that we wish to disclose as relevant. These include:

- The Department of Energy (DOE) working with the National Institute of Building Sciences (NIBS) and industry stakeholders developed the Better Buildings Workforce Guidelines, voluntary national guidelines to improve the quality and consistency of commercial building workforce credentials for four key energy-related jobs: Building Energy Auditor, Building Commissioning Professional, Building Operations Professional, Energy Manager. ANSI is designated as an accreditation body for these schemes by DOE. ANSI is a subcontractor to NIBS for this initiative, which did receive funding from DOE; however, this funding was not provided directly to ANSI by DOE. The certifications are part of a coordinated effort under DOE's Guidelines for Home Energy Professionals project, which also

developed Standard Work Specifications (SWS) for Home Energy Upgrades, available at *sws.nrel.gov*.

• ANSI and the Interstate Renewable Energy Council (IREC) developed a joint accreditation program for energy efficiency or renewable energy related certificate programs. This initiative was funded by DOE grant money; however, this funding was not provided directly to ANSI by DOE.

• ANSI's Certificate Accreditation Program (CAP) has accredited three federal agencies: the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the FBI Academy, and the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center. These agencies paid accreditation fees but did not enter into grants or contracts with ANSI.

Workcred does not have any Federal grants or contracts to disclose.

STATEMENT OF JAMIE P. MERISOTIS

Chairman Wenstrup, Ranking Member Takano, members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify this afternoon. I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak with you about licensing and credentialing issues and how they relate to members of the armed services and military veterans. These issues are vital, not just to the millions of individuals who are directly affected, but to the growing demand for talent that will impact our entire nation and its future.

I am Jamie Merisotis, President and CEO of Lumina Foundation, a private foundation based in Indianapolis. Lumina is the nation's largest private foundation focused specifically on increasing students' access to and success in postsecondary education. I've been at Lumina since 2008, and throughout my tenure, we've been working toward one specific, clearly focused goal. We call it Goal 2025.

The goal, simply stated, is this: By the year 2025, we want 60 percent of Americans to hold a college degree, certificate or other high-quality postsecondary credential. We are convinced that this level of educational attainment is a national necessity—that it's the only way to ensure that our nation can thrive in today's dynamic, global economy. And we are not alone in this view. Labor economists and other experts tell us that the overwhelming majority of new jobs require some form of postsecondary credential—as will two-thirds of ALL jobs in this country by the end of this decade.

Unfortunately, only about 40 percent of Americans now hold at least a two-year degree, with perhaps another 5 percent holding a quality credential at the sub-associate-degree level. That's a long way from the 60 percent goal that we're working toward, which means we're a long way from having the strong, flexible, well-prepared workforce this nation needs to succeed in the 21st century.

Certainly, servicemembers and military veterans are a growing and increasingly vital part of the dynamic workforce that this country so desperately needs. They are now returning from service and entering postsecondary programs in large numbers—and that represents a tremendous opportunity for our nation's future. Our servicemembers and veterans are a huge economic and social

asset—a rich source of talent that can move America forward by great strides. Unfortunately, the vast potential of these dedicated individuals is not being fully realized, in part because of barriers imposed by the issues this subcommittee is here today to explore: issues related to education credentialing.

At Lumina, we've done a lot of work in the credentialing area in recent years—work that stems directly from our commitment to the Goal 2025 effort I just mentioned. When we committed to that goal, we realized very quickly that things would have to change significantly for the nation's attainment rate to reach 60 percent. Simply put, we realized that our nation's postsecondary system would have to be redesigned so it could serve far more students than ever before—including millions of military veterans and active duty servicemembers—and serve them better.

In short, our higher education needs to change because our students have changed—dramatically.

Today, there are more than 20 million people enrolled in the nation's two- and four-year institutions, including over 1 million military veterans. A sizable majority of these 20 million Americans—including all of the veterans and servicemembers—are students who do not fit the profile of a traditional college student. About 40 percent are 25 years old or older. More than one-third attend part time, and nearly 20 percent are holding down full-time jobs as they attend college. About 40 percent of today's students attend community colleges or for-profit schools—and this is true of a much higher percentage of first-generation students, and those who are African American or Latino, and those who come from low-income families. If traditional students are those that go to college directly from high school and attend full-time, that's less than a third of today's students. Those who are also identified as a dependent on their parent's tax return and live on campus are an even smaller percentage. I would argue that federal policy has been overwhelmingly focused on students who are a small and shrinking share of all the students and potential students we should be considering. When more than three out of four students are considered "non-traditional," it's time to rethink some of our assumptions.

Today's veterans are a window into who today's students really are. They are older. They have significant work and life experiences. Many of today's students, including most veterans, are working adults, with responsibilities and commitments that extend far beyond the classroom.

In other words, today's "typical" student, if such a thing even exists, is nothing like the student that higher education was originally designed to serve and that federal policy is based on. That means it's time—past time, really—for a redesign. What we need is a system that is structured specifically to meet the varied needs of today's students—a system that is flexible, affordable and committed to quality.

Fundamentally, a commitment to quality boils down to one thing: assuring that educational programs result in genuine learning—that they give students the knowledge, skills and abilities they need to succeed in the modern workplace and in life. Unfortunately, most postsecondary programs aren't set up to assure genuine learning. Students earn their degrees and credentials, not by

demonstrating actual knowledge or skills, but by earning a specified number of credits by spending a certain number of hours in classrooms or labs.

Again, the approach here is institution-centric; it's not designed around the needs of students. That has to change. We need a student-centered system—one in which credits and credentials are awarded, not when a certain amount of time is served, but when the proper knowledge and skills are demonstrated.

In short, we need a system that recognizes and rewards actual learning—and it shouldn't matter where or how that learning is obtained. The knowledge, skills and abilities that individuals develop in non-academic settings—on the job, in volunteer roles, and certainly during military service—all of this learning matters. And that means it all needs to count. Students should be credited for that learning, be able to apply it toward a postsecondary credential, and be assured that that credential will be recognized when they seek employment or further education.

If there's one barrier to postsecondary success facing our returning veterans, that's it: being recognized for what they've learned while in service. Any workable redesign of higher education must address this barrier. It starts with embracing what educators often call students' "prior learning." Institutions and states must find better ways to assess this learning, grant academic credit for it, and include it in the record that qualifies a student for a credential.

Awarding credit for prior learning is critically important, but our work has shown it is not enough. Like you, we have concluded that we must find ways to better integrate and organize the often-bewildering array of education credentials being offered.

There are myriad credentials in today's postsecondary landscape, including degrees, educational certificates, occupational licenses and industry certifications. New types of credentials, such as digital badges and enhanced transcripts, are also emerging. However, there's little clarity about what these various credentials actually mean—their value, their quality and how they connect.

The confusion isn't really surprising; it merely reflects the unstructured development of the U.S. credentialing marketplace over many decades. That marketplace is now a complex, loosely connected collection of education and training providers, personnel certification bodies, accreditation organizations and federal/state regulatory agencies and boards. The result: a highly fragmented, multi-layered system that presents major challenges for anyone attempting to obtain a credential to get a better job or advance their career, as well as employers and education providers who need to compare and evaluate different credentials. In short, we have an ever-growing group of providers offering a vast array of credentials that don't always connect—to each other, to other educational opportunities, or to careers.

We need a credentialing system that does connect—one that actually functions as a system, not as a group of disparate parts. We need a system with common definitions—one that engenders trust and facilitates student movement and progress, much like a currency exchange enables international financial transactions.

At Lumina, a great deal of our recent work has been focused on reimagining and helping to build this type of interconnected system. In fact, we have helped forge a growing partnership of national organizations—more than 80 so far—that have begun a national dialogue on this important topic.

Some of our thinking about how to improve the system is presented in a brief report that is included with your copies of this testimony—a report titled Connecting Credentials: Making the Case for Reforming the U.S. Credentialing System.

I won't go into too much detail here about that report, but I do want to highlight one important section. It's a list of the five key attributes that the reshaped American credentialing system should have.

- First, it should be easily understandable. All postsecondary credentials—from badges to degrees and beyond—should be based on competencies, making them easier to understand and use by students, employers, educators and workforce agencies.
- Second, it should assure quality. Users must be able to rely on the quality of credentials, including their accuracy in representing the competencies possessed by a credential holder.
- Third, the revamped credentialing system should be up to date. Credentials should be continually updated and validated to ensure they stay relevant to employer needs.
- Fourth, it should be interconnected. All students should understand how credentials connect and be able to see several pathways to increase career and economic mobility. Users also must be able to combine credentials to fit their needs and inform their education-career planning, including job transitions.
- Finally, it should enable comparisons. Stakeholders must be able to compare the value of various credentials and determine which credential best fits their needs.

Clearly, a system with these five attributes would be of enormous benefit to military veterans as they make the transition to civilian life. It would make their educational and career pathways much more clear—thus saving time and helping to ensure the best return on the investment of public dollars for education benefits.

Such a system would convey other benefits as well; these are detailed in the Connecting Credentials report, which I commend to your attention. I also urge you to visit a website that we've established to provide a platform for the national dialogue that I mentioned earlier. The website is called connectingcredentials.org.

I want to make it clear that neither our current credentials system nor the stronger, revamped system I am describing is a federal system in any way, shape, or form. However, the effort to improve postsecondary credentialing is one that will require concerted action by a range of stakeholders—including the federal government.

The federal government has supported credentials reform through its leadership, funding and participation in research. There is more to be learned and there are already discussions underway to test approaches to supporting and funding a more inclusive system of credentialing for all students. As I noted above, while the need for the reforms is clear for all students, it is especially so for veterans and servicemembers. I am glad to see that

you, too, are considering approaches to break down these barriers and find ways to recognize already-achieved learning and skills.

I have thought a lot about these issues in recent years, particularly the need to recognize skills and knowledge whenever, wherever, and however they have been obtained. In fact, in my new book America Needs Talent, published this month by RosettaBooks, I endeavor to show how the national need to develop and recognize talent is driven by more than meeting the growing demand for educational and economic opportunity, as vitally important as that is. I argue that our economic and social future as a nation will in large measure be determined by our ability to build a system that expands talent. There is no better place to start than by assuring that the talent of our veterans is recognized, that they obtain appropriate credentials for what they know and can do, and that they have opportunities to develop their talent for the benefit of themselves, their families, their communities, and the nation.

I needn't tell you that these men and women deserve our very best efforts—and that we as a nation can gain immeasurably by giving them every opportunity to succeed. I stand ready to answer any questions and would be happy to provide further information on the work we are pursuing in this area.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony to the Subcommittee this afternoon.

Thank you.

Statement for the Record

Submitted by
Denise Roosendaal, CAE
Executive Director,
Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE)

To the
Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity of the
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC
Regarding its Hearing
A Review of Licensing and Credentialing Standards for Servicemembers and Veterans: Do Barrier Still Remains?

September 10, 2015

Good afternoon. My name is Denise Roosendaal. I am the Executive Director of the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE), a 501(c) (3) professional association dedicated to certification excellence and best practices for the credentialing community. We appreciate the importance of the issue of credentialing for active-duty military and veterans who have served our country so honorably. Improving the linkage between credentials for active-duty military personnel and veterans with those in the private sector will help address the unemployment challenges facing veterans, create a smoother transition process and enable more veterans to be workforce ready.

ICE's accrediting body, the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), evaluates certification organizations for compliance with the NCCA *Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs*. NCCA's Standards exceed the requirements set forth by the American Psychological Association and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. ICE also accredits assessment-based certificate programs for compliance with the ICE 1100 Standard. ICE is accredited by the American National Standards Institute as a Standards Developer.

NCCA's predecessor, the National Commission for Health Certifying Agencies (NCHCA), was chartered by Congress in 1977 and federally funded by a grant from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (now the Department of Health and Human Services). The purpose of NCHCA was to develop standards for quality certification programs in the allied health fields and to accredit organizations that met those standards. In the late 1980's, the NCHCA was expanded to include accreditation of certifications for all professions, becoming the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) and forming the National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA) as a membership association for certification organizations to provide technical and educational services concerning certification practices. In 2009, NOCA became the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE).

The NCCA Standards were the first national personnel certification accreditation standards. Since 1977, the NCCA has granted accreditation to 317 national and international certification programs representing over 50 industries, including occupational therapists, senior financial advisors, surgical nurses, crane operators, executive chefs, athletic trainers, and more.

- The NCCA's accreditation process uses peer review to evaluate an organization's compliance with these standards, recognizes programs which demonstrate compliance, and serves as a resource on quality certification. The latest revisions to the Standards will be effective January 1, 2016 and updates to the NCCA policies and procedures now allow for the Commission to conduct onsite visits of the credentialing organizations if deemed necessary to ensure compliance with the Standards by the applicant certification program.
- NCCA Standards address the structure and governance of the certifying agency, the characteristics of the certification program, the information required to be available to applicants, certificants, and the public, and the recertification initiatives of the certifying agency.
- The *NCCA's Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs* use as a foundation the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*, promulgated by the American Psychological Association, American Educational Research Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education, as well as the guidelines of the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. These standards and guidelines are recognized in the certification industry as benchmark practices.

While the issue of transportability of military personnel credentials is an important one, ICE and NCCA are grounded in the concepts around leading practices for ensuring the availability of *quality* credentials. Our military service members and veterans deserve access to *quality* credentialing programs. The means to assessing quality is through third party accreditation such as NCCA, ANSI or other occupational specific accrediting programs. Accreditation is the voluntary process by which a nongovernmental agency grants a time-limited recognition to a

certification program after verifying that it has met predetermined and standardized criteria. During a review, the NCCA commissioners assess administrative elements (governance structure, policies and procedures, candidate handbook, financial and human resources, record retention practices, etc.) psychometric elements (job analysis, exam development and specifications, score reporting, reliability measures, etc.), and elements related to public protection, fairness, and transparency. By examining these aspects and determining compliance or non-compliance with the NCCA Standards, the accreditation process is able to assess the level of quality of a certification program and its sponsoring organization.

Over the years, ICE has participated in discussions and efforts to increase the transportability of military credentials into the private sector as well as identifying ways to smooth and enhance the transition of veterans into their private sector occupations. In 2002, ICE contributed to the development of the Army/Navy Cool websites which helps to identify the various connections between Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) credentials and private sector ones. The Army/Navy COOL sites maintain an accurate list of NCCA accredited programs and add new NCCA programs when approved. ICE has also participated in the 2012 and 2015 credentialing summits held by the American Legion. The 2015 summit highlighted the fact that much progress has been made while many opportunities for improvement still remain.

Successes and Continued Obstacles

Many certification bodies have been successful in connecting their certification with military personnel. However, based on their experience, a few obstacles are still impeding widespread progress. These include:

1) Alignment of the required knowledge, skills and competencies between military experience and the civilian certification
2) Challenges in understanding and communicating certification and military nomenclature and classifications

3) Eligibility requirements with no alternative pathways outlined to identify equivalence in military experience and training in place of traditional academic pathways and work experience
4) Lack of awareness of best practices such as governance structures, separation of education and certification or program intent
5) The need to educate employers on the value of certifications for veterans
6) Inadequate resources for necessary activities (e.g., job analysis mapping, communication activities for outreach to military audience, etc.)

1) **Alignment of the required knowledge, skills and competencies:** In conversations with the leaders of our ICE member organizations, we have discovered many success stories that demonstrate a willingness and desire to connect civilian certifications programs with military service men and women. For some certification programs, the links between Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) and private sector equivalent occupations are easily identified and the skills and competencies quickly mapped. In those cases, accommodations might have been made to various policies to address military-specific issues. For example, some organizations allow a time extension for an application deadline or certification renewal deadline in order to accommodate an individual's military deployment schedule. Other certification programs identified accessibility of the exam location as an obstacle. For example, the Board of Pharmacy Specialties Certification Board began offering its exams through the military's Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) system for training and examination for licensed pharmacists as a means to increase exam accessibility.

However, the largest obstacle remains in the area of connecting the military requirements to those of the private sector certification. A job analysis identifies the required knowledge, skills, and competencies for a specific certification. Identifying the gaps between the private sector certification's scope and that those of a specific MOS or occupation in the military is challenging. Ideally, Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) are brought in during the original job

analysis to create a scope broad enough to incorporate the military-stated competencies. A job analysis is completed prior to the establishment of a specific certification and then validated every few years or as changes in the profession dictate. The job analysis then drives the development of the certification exam blueprint. Inclusion of SMEs to identify the gaps between a MOS and the private sector certification requirement during the initial job analysis is the most time efficient and cost effective means of closing the gap. Otherwise, a gap analysis is time consuming and expensive.

Once those gaps are identified, the service member can seek additional training in order to attain the knowledge or skills necessary to successfully pass a private sector certification exam. One successful example of closing the gap is where the American Culinary Federation identified a gap (butchery skills) in one of its certifications and successfully asked the private sector employers to offer the needed training to the interested military personnel.

2) **Understanding and communicating certification and military nomenclature**: Often, the military nomenclature (or the description of military-based competencies) can be an obstacle that prevents the private sector credentialing body from clearly understanding what knowledge, skills and abilities are required for a particular occupation. In particular this confusion is evident when trying to match the eligibility requirements outlined by the private sector credential with military requirements. Often these requirements speak to either a formal degree requirement or a minimum number of years of experience operating in that field. Unfortunately, credentialing programs often do not have a full understanding of what military experience is acceptable to meet the private sector program's eligibility requirements. For example, the International Hazardous Materials Management organization offers the Certified Hazardous Materials Practitioner (CHMP). Its work eligibility requirements state:

1. *You must have at least 5 years of relevant experience with responsibilities directly related to the handling of hazardous materials and/or waste in the workplace;*[1]

[1] Candidate Handbook, Eligibility Requirements for Certified Hazardous Materials Practitioner, *Institute of Hazardous Materials Management*. http://www.ihmm.org/applicants/eligibility-requirements-chmp

However, it is not entirely clear which MOSs pertain to hazardous material storage, movement, packaging, and transport or whether five years of civilian experience is equivalent to five years of military experience.

One successful example of how an organization addressed this obstacle is with the Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI) which connected with the Army Adjutant General's office through the Training with Industry (TWI) program to create an ongoing liaison position to enhance common understanding of terminology, eligibility requirements and alignment between private sector Human Resource positions and military ones. HRCI and the TWI program created a robust alignment and translation between the Army classifications and the HRCI certification requirements.

3) **Eligibility requirements:** Creating alternative pathways for reviewing and connecting the civilian credential eligibility requirements is a critical step to assure active duty personnel and veterans know that their military experience will be eligible to meet civilian credential requirements. For example, some organizations have created alternative pathways for the education level component of their certification's eligibility requirement. So if a four-year degree had been the exclusive requirement, as an alternative the certification body might allow for an associate degree with a certain number of years of experience in lieu of the bachelor degree requirement. The appropriateness of this action would depend upon the profession. The last round of revisions of the NCCA Standards (2003) allows for alternate pathways for eligibility requirements with a stated rationale for such changes.

4) **Lack of awareness of best practices:** Another obstacle with some military-based certification programs is lack of awareness of private sector best practices. One specific best practice is the establishment of an appropriate governance structure with adequate representation and autonomy. NCCA Standards require separation between education and certification activities with appropriate firewalls to protect the integrity of the exam. In some

cases the traditional military or government agency is not structured appropriately to accommodate this important requirement, or training cannot be obtained elsewhere.

In the case of a certification established within the military structure, the job analysis may not have been broad enough to include the identified private sector knowledge, skills, or abilities. If the intent of a specific military certification is to open up the certification to a more broad-based, civilian audience, then the job analysis should be conducted in a way that envisions those private sector knowledge, skills and abilities. NCCA standards require a job analysis to be broad enough to incorporate the intended certificant population (military and non-military.)

In some cases, the solution may be in identifying what kind of credential is necessary to accomplish the intent or outcome of the program. For programs that need to assess various competencies through a conformity assessment system (regardless of the origin of the training, education or experience), a certification is appropriate. But other programs need only recognize that a learning event was completed with an evaluation of the mastery of the intended learning outcomes. In these cases, a certificate program is a suitable alternative. Assessment-based certificate programs are intended to build capacity and train participants specifically for certain professions or roles and may be internal or narrower in scope. There are external standards that accredit assessment-based certificate programs, including the ICE 1100 standard to demonstrate that these programs can also have sufficient rigor and quality.

5) **Value of certifications for veterans to employers:** Another obstacle is the difficulty in articulating the value of a certification to a potential employer. The employers need quantifiable information to be able to understand the value of certification. The Executive Director of the American Culinary Federation recently explained that employers in the culinary industry understand that hiring a veteran with a certification reduces training and recruiting costs, increases recruiting responses, and increases the level of proficiency of their workforce. Sadly, awareness of these advantages is not the case in all industries or professions.

6) **Inadequate resources for necessary activities:** Non-profit organizations do not always having the resources to conduct the job analysis activities needed to align the military and private sector job analysis. Likewise many organizations lack the means to reach the military audience. The Army/Navy COOL sites are thorough and are carefully maintained. In fact, 192 NCCA accredited certifications are listed on the site. However, the individual certification organization may not have the resources to promote its certification beyond its traditional candidate audience. The American Culinary Federation is an example of a program that has achieved critical mass in the number of its certificants coming from the military. Success can often be maintained over the longer term when enough employers are either veterans or understand the value of the certification/program.

However, this is not the experience of every program. Investing in a military outreach program can be expensive and confusing since the typical marketing outreach practices are not as effective. Furthermore, confusion exists among the certification organizations and the candidate population around what expenses the military will or will not cover: exam fees, recertification fees, exam prep-training, or other required education. Clarity around this point is important for potential military certificants.

Another resource challenge is finding adequate funding for tracking credentialing outcomes (how many certificants in a particular program are identified as active-duty military or veterans). The RAND Corporation recently released a study addressing outcomes of credentialing programs, mapping the data on what credentials tie to employment. But individual certification organizations do not typically have the resources to conduct such research on their own certificant population.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. ICE continues to support this important initiative and welcomes the opportunity for even more dialogue with our member

organizations on this topic so that we can serve as a resource for you. In fact, we are in the beginning stages of designing a research instrument to gather data on what certifying bodies are currently doing to connect active duty military personnel and veterans to these credentials so that we can understand more fully and more reliably on what obstacles still remain. We hope to have the results of that study within twelve months and will be happy to share the final report with you. ICE remains committed to this important conversation, and we look forward to being a partner in its solution.

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Denise Roosendaal has been Executive Director of the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE) since October 2011. ICE is a 501c3 professional association dedicated to certification excellence and best practices for the credentialing community. ICE has not received federal funding in any form in the past two years. ICE's accrediting body, the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), evaluates certification organizations for compliance with the NCCA *Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs.*

STATEMENT OF TERESA W. GERTON

Introduction

Good afternoon, Chairman Wenstrup, Ranking Member Takano, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's hearing. As Acting Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training at the Department of Labor's (DOL or Department) Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS), I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the Department's efforts on licensing and credentialing for veterans and servicemembers.

Facilitating veteran attainment of licensing and credentialing is one of the Department's most important and challenging objectives. Addressing this requires joint efforts between Federal agencies, state licensing boards and educational institutions, and the private sector to eliminate the barriers between military and civilian occupations. Ultimately, authority for regulating entry into most professions lies with state governments. Although federal agencies and national professional associations can propose standards and guidelines, state licensing boards make final decisions about whether alternative pathways, such as military training and experience, are adequate to uphold public safety standards, based on professional norms and state laws and regulations. Governors and states are addressing this through Executive Orders and legislation directing licensing boards to recognize and award credit for veterans' military training and experience. Since 2010, all 50 states and Puerto Rico have enacted some form of legislation assisting active duty servicemembers and veterans in transferring and obtaining occupational licenses and certifications.

In April of this year, Secretary Perez attended the American Legion's National Credentialing Summit to address a crowd of credentialing experts and advocates for veterans and military spouses. The group had gathered to explore connections between military experience and civilian credentials. At this meeting, Secretary Perez said, "We owe it to our veterans to break down the barriers to employment that they too often face as they reintegrate into civilian life." The Department is following through on that commitment.

Servicemembers are trained in hundreds of occupations with relevance to employment opportunities in the civilian workforce and veterans should easily be able to turn that training and work experience into civilian jobs. However, many civilian occupations have highly formalized pathways for entry, requiring licenses or certifications that present barriers to employment for those trained outside of those pathways. Despite the highly relevant skills and experience veterans possess, state- or locally-established requirements often require re-training outside of the military.

VETS, in close collaboration with our colleagues in the Department's Employment and Training Administration has been, and will continue to be, actively working to eliminate these barriers and connect military training and experience with civilian credentials and licenses. The Department is currently engaged in a number of efforts and programs to address this important issue, including: initiatives conducted in partnership with other Federal agencies; ac-

tivities authorized under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA); a Licensing and Credentialing Demonstration; and the President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 Budget.

Cross-Agency Federal Initiatives

Since 2011, the Department has been an active participant in a number of initiatives to enhance the civilian career prospects of servicemembers and veterans. These include the First Lady's Joining Forces Initiative, the Veterans' Employment Initiative Task Force implemented by the Departments of Defense (DoD) and Veterans Affairs (VA), the DoD Credentialing and Licensing Task Force, a joint effort between the Department and VA to streamline access to GI Bill benefits for veterans in registered apprenticeships, the Pilot Program on Civilian Credentialing for Military Occupational Specialties implemented by DoD and the military services, and the Military to Mariner Transition initiative of DOL with the Departments of Defense, Transportation, and Homeland Security. It is through federal partnerships such as these that we have been able to begin addressing gaps in licensing and credentialing for servicemembers and veterans at the federal level. Additionally, the Military to Mariner Transition initiative seeks to identify and remove the barriers that prevent servicemembers from attaining the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)—National Maritime Center (NMC) credentials necessary to qualify for employment as merchant mariners.

Initiatives such as these show how, through inter-agency partnerships, we can identify needed licenses and credentials in the civilian sector, link them to related military occupations, and bridge the gaps in training and licensing requirements for transitioning servicemembers and veterans.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

The Department offers veterans, transitioning servicemembers, and eligible military spouses the opportunity to receive a range of career and training services through the nationwide network of local American Job Centers that are part of the public workforce system authorized under WIOA. WIOA emphasizes engaging employers across the public workforce system to align training with needed skills and match employers with qualified workers. The law also emphasizes training that leads to industry recognized post-secondary credentials and promotes the use of career pathways and sector partnerships to increase employment in in-demand industries and occupations. American Job Centers, also known as One-Stop Career Centers, bring together various Federal, state, and local programs to assist veterans in obtaining credentials and entering into or advancing within in-demand occupations. Veterans and eligible spouses receive priority of service. Available career services under WIOA include job-search and job-placement assistance, access to useful labor market information, career counseling, comprehensive assessment of an individual's employability, and the development of an individual employment plan. Veterans, transitioning servicemembers, and eligible spouses may also be eligible for DOL-funded training services, which include occupational training, work-based training (including Registered Apprenticeship and on-the-job training), and supportive services including assist-

ance with child care and transportation. Areas with a higher than average demand for employment and training activities for dislocated military servicemembers and eligible spouses are eligible for National Dislocated Worker Grants.

Community colleges are a key partner of the public workforce system: they are eligible providers in Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth program formula grants under WIOA and part of the partnerships eligible for grant under a number of strategic DOL investments because of their unique ability to address specific community workforce needs. The Trade Adjustment Assistance Community and Career Training (TAACCT) grants program, an Administration flagship investment of $2 billion over four years, is one example of funds targeted to community colleges nationwide to help them enhance their capacity to develop skills training programs in in-demand occupations and industries that will result in industry-recognized credentials and employment. The TAACCT program has enrolled more than 11,500 veterans through September 30, 2014.

DOL Licensing and Credentialing Demo

Section 237 of the Veterans' Opportunity to Work to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (VOW Act) required DOL to carry out a demonstration project on credentialing "for the purpose of facilitating the seamless transition of members of the Armed Forces from service on active duty to civilian employment." Recognizing that the authority to regulate entry into most professions lies with the states, DOL funded the demonstration project with the intent to both engage governors in an effort to accelerate credentialing and licensing pathways for veterans and to move veterans into civilian employment by reducing or eliminating barriers to credentials, certifications, or licenses requiring similar skills, training, or experience within a select number of military occupations. A cost study will also examine savings to federal programs, which may be achieved when a veteran completes an accelerated pathway towards licensure instead of a duplicative training under a full-length pathway.

Through a contract with the National Governors' Association (NGA), the Department explored accelerated career pathways for servicemembers and veterans in selected high-demand civilian occupations, (i.e. truck driving, law enforcement, and healthcare support). Working with a panel of experts, NGA designed and implemented a demonstration project in six participating states: Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Nevada, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

During this demonstration NGA identified the following challenges regarding state efforts to design, establish, and improve strategies for accelerated pathways:

- Veterans with equivalent training and experience as licensed civilians may have difficulty providing documentation recognized by civilian licensing boards.
- Veterans that experience gaps between their military training and experience and civilian requirements may have to participate in duplicative training to attain relevant civilian licensure and/or certification.
- Administrative rules and processes within civilian licensing and credentialing systems may create hurdles for veterans to

obtain licensure and/or certification unrelated to their ability to competently provide professional services to the public.

In turn, the demonstration identified several strategies that states may utilize to streamline the licensing and certification of veterans, including:

- To address documentation challenges, states can license veterans by endorsement, or permit veterans with relevant training to sit for civilian licensure examinations.
- To address training gaps, states can work with educational institutions to set up new accelerated programs for veterans that bridge gaps, or provide veterans advanced standing in existing programs.
- To address administrative or procedural challenges, states can assess any non-skill related requirements that may disadvantage veterans such as fees or length of experience, or take steps to make civilian employment pathways friendlier to veterans through concerted outreach to both veterans and prospective employers.

DOL, with the support of NGA, will share the best practices identified through the demonstration project in a final report that includes a blueprint for other states to follow as well as the results of the cost study.

Raising Awareness of Translating Military Skills to Civilian Employment

Under Section 222 of the VOW Act, the Department also entered into a contract for a study to identify equivalences between the skills developed by members of the Armed Forces through various military occupational specialties (MOS) and the qualifications required for related positions in the civilian workforce.

The project studied 68 military occupations that engage a significant portion of each service's overall population, and which represent the occupations of 57 percent of all enlisted servicemembers. The study resulted in the creation of a more robust military to civilian crosswalk for those 68 MOSs, and identified additional information on the nature of the matches with regard to rank attained and length of military service. The enhanced crosswalk provides numerous additional career options for military servicemembers and veterans to consider, is integrated in DOL and VA online job search tools for veterans, and is available to other web developers. These tools also link to information on related civilian certification and licensing requirements. The study report was transmitted to Congress in September 2014.

In addition, the Department, together with the Department of the Treasury and the Council of Economic Advisers, recently released a report which highlights the growth in occupational licensing, its effects on the labor market and on servicemembers, veterans, and military families in particular, and suggests several best practices to improve licensing policies.

FY 2016 President's Budget

The President's FY2016 Budget proposes a number of investments that would help veterans overcome transition and employment challenges. Among those is a $400 million increase to the Wagner-Peyser State Grants to expand the availability of intensive,

staff-assisted counseling and other reemployment services to displaced workers, including veterans. These staff-assisted services will include the use of workforce and labor market information to guide participants in their job search and training decisions, as well as other assessment tools and resources to assist individuals identify occupations in in-demand industries.

The President's Budget also includes a $100 million increase for Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) for Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants. This $181 million program would build on the successes of the evidence-based RESEA initiative. RESEA pairs UI eligibility assessments with reemployment services. Under the Budget proposal, RESEA would be made available to all transitioning veterans receiving Unemployment Compensation for ex-servicemembers in addition to the top one-third of UI recipients profiled as most likely to exhaust their benefits.

Additionally, a number of states have taken action in recent years to identify and address unnecessary licensing barriers. Such steps are critical to ensuring economic opportunity and geographic mobility for servicemembers, veterans and their families. To encourage even more states to follow suit, the President's Budget proposes $15 million to support states in these efforts. This would serve to increase interstate portability of licenses, reduce or remove other unnecessary barriers to employment, and provide easier access to high-quality jobs.

Conclusion

The Department of Labor remains committed to our servicemembers and veterans and looks forward to working with the Committee to ensure the continued success of our efforts to properly recognize the value of military training and experience. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.

WRITTEN STATEMENT

OF

FRANK DIGIOVANNI
DIRECTOR
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OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

REGARDING

"A REVIEW OF LICENSING AND CREDENTIALING STANDARDS FOR SERVICEMEMBERS AND VETERANS"

BEFORE THE

HOUSE VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

SEPTEMBER 10, 2015

Chairman Wenstrup, Ranking Member Takano, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this afternoon to discuss licensing and credentialing standards for Service members and veterans. My testimony will discuss these standards from the perspective of the Department of Defense (DoD), including summarizing the progress we have made; the current status of our activities; and our future planned efforts.

DoD recognizes and acts upon the firm belief that attainment of civilian licenses and credentials during military service is critical to the ability of transitioning Service members and veterans to translate their profession of arms, military training, and experience to civilian jobs. The Department has undertaken numerous initiatives to connect military training and experience with civilian credentials and licenses, several of which are described here.

DoD Credentialing and Licensing Task Force and Accomplishments

In June 2012, DoD created the Credentialing and Licensing Task Force to collaborate with other federal agencies, the Services, and outside stakeholders to reduce credentialing barriers and increase opportunities for transitioning Service members. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness (OASD(R)) has been leading this effort.

Accomplishments under the Task Force include:

- DoD and the Services implemented pilot credentialing programs in seven major areas, including truck driving, healthcare support, logistics, automotive mechanics, aircraft mechanics, information technology (IT), and manufacturing. Active-duty Service members representing more than 50 occupational specialties have participated in these programs.

- As an example, significant progress has been made in the high-demand manufacturing trades, such as welders and machinists. Graduates of the Army Ordnance School's 91E Advanced Individual Training can now earn welding certifications from the American Welding Society (AWS) as well as machinist certifications from the National Institute for Metalworking Skills (NIMS). Since FY 2013, more than 2,000 Soldiers have earned AWS welding certifications, while more than 2,350 Soldiers have earned NIMS machinist certifications.
- All four military Services now offer "Credentialing Opportunities–On Line" (COOL) websites that disseminate detailed information on civilian credentials that map to military occupations, information on potential gaps between military training and civilian credentialing requirements, and resources available to fill gaps and attain credentials.
- Since 2012, State legislatures, with the assistance of the DoD-State Liaison Office and other mechanisms, enacted 79 bills designed to remove barriers to Service member and veteran licensing. These bills covered health-related and commercial occupations and included bills to specifically address Emergency Medical Technician/Paramedic, Licensed Practical Nurse, and Commercial Driver's License. Currently all 50 states have made accommodations in one or more occupations to support Service members to use their training towards obtaining occupational licenses. Additionally, 40 have made statutory changes to allow Service members to receive credit towards academic degrees, which can support their ability to obtain employment in credentialed occupations.

In addition, to promote civilian job skills training and future employment for transitioning Service members, DoD works closely with other federal agencies and with private organizations. For example, in early 2014, DoD launched the new SkillBridge initiative. This initiative implements an innovative authority enacted by Congress, 10 U.S.C. Section 1143(e), for which Congress deserves tremendous credit. This authority allows eligible Service members to participate in civilian training, apprenticeships, and internship programs, beginning up to six months before their service obligation is complete. A leading SkillBridge provider is the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry, whose program for welding and pipefitting is already at seven installations and has graduated some 800 Service members; virtually all of the graduates have received jobs.

Additionally, as part of the interagency Transition Assistance Program (TAP), the Department of Veterans Affairs provides an optional Career Technical Training Track (CTTT). This workshop assists transitioning Service Members in identifying and pursuing credentialing and licensing options that lead to meaningful civilians occupations that match their interests and skills in high demand industries. CTTT also provides information on funding methods for these credentialing and licensing opportunities, such as the GI Bill® or no-cost public-private partnerships.

As a result of all these efforts over the past three years, tens of thousands of Service members have earned valuable civilian credentials.

Current Credentialing and Licensing Initiatives

Building on its accomplishments, DoD is currently undertaking an array of credentialing and licensing initiatives to further institutionalize our efforts. To this end, the Department is

developing a draft DoD Instruction that will consolidate and codify in a comprehensive manner all Congressional legislation pertaining to credentialing since the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2012. This Instruction also defines the high-level parameters for Service credentialing programs consistent with the FY 2015 NDAA (Section 551) requirements to include payment for Service member credentialing, as well as establishment of criteria to ensure the quality of the credentials and the associated resources to help the Service member prepare for attaining the credential.

By the beginning of FY 2016, all Services will have a program in place to pay for Service member credentialing; and will either have completed or are in the final stages of drafting policy guidance for their credentialing programs. Once DoD publishes its Instruction, we will work to continue to institutionalize our efforts by monitoring newly implemented Service credential payment programs and policies and adapting as necessary. We will also work to expand all Service members' credentialing opportunities by identifying credentials that are related to Service members' collateral duties, such as fitness and managerial certifications.

DoD is also further institutionalizing its Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) programs. The Office of the Secretary, with the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps, have established a Joint Services Credentialing Work Group that meets regularly to share information and collaborate on ongoing enhancements to the Services' COOL programs. The Department also continues to screen credentials to ensure they meet recognized standards of quality. DoD is finalizing preparations for launching a DoD COOL web site that will serve as a single entry point to each of the Service's COOL web sites and will emphasize steps that credentialing organizations and employers can take to help facilitate credentialing of service members.

Lastly, organizationally, DoD leadership recently extended the DoD Credentialing Task Force through December 31, 2017, allowing for continued top level coordination among the Services on credentialing issues. DoD also continues to implement its SkillBridge initiative, including taking steps to ensure that any new SkillBridge opportunities implemented for transitioning Service members include appropriate licensing and credentialing aspects where applicable.

Future Planned Licensing and Credentialing Efforts

We thank Congress for all of the supportive tools provided to date to help the Department in reducing credentialing barriers for our Service members and veterans. Due to the success of these efforts at the Federal level, we have reached a point where the key remaining obstacles to connecting military training and experience with civilian credentials and licenses now mostly stand at the state level. We plan to continue to work with states to reduce these barriers, including refining state regulations, promoting greater recognition of military training and experience by state licensing boards, raising awareness about military trained applicants' eligibility for licensure, and strengthening education partnerships with community colleges. In the end, we have discovered that the clearest path to giving Service Members credentials for their training is through mechanisms like community colleges.

Community colleges offer a particular opportunity for facilitating licensing and credentialing of Service members and Veterans. We seek to improve partnering between states, community colleges, and the military. Community colleges can play a critical role in preparing transitioning and separated Service members for a smooth transition to skilled careers, and in providing valuable bridge training. For example, some community colleges have divided the

courses included in their programs that prepare students for certifications and licenses into modules, awarding veterans partial credit for the modules that they test out of, and awarding them the remaining credit for the modules that they complete. More community colleges need to implement this and other more veteran-friendly approaches to training.

As we seek to strengthen community colleges in this area, we also plan to focus more on building partnerships with industry groups. A particular promising area for such partnering is the development of "pipeline courses" at community colleges that could provide custom-driven curricula that would provide "gap training" in certain high-demand sectors, particularly the skilled trades. Along these lines, we hope to focus on developing programs to grant experiential credit. For example, our research has found that only four of 395 accredited paramedic training programs offered competency based testing and awarded academic credit for military experience. Training for military medics can be more "task-focused" and custom-designed to address additional needs, also allowing civilian academic training to be reduced from 18 to less than 12 months.

DoD is working to provide particular focus on assisting transitioning Service members in the combat arms (such as infantry, armor, etc.). Although combat arms skill sets may not directly translate into civilian occupations, these veterans have acquired well-recognized "soft skills" (such as leadership, responsibility, adaptability, willingness for training, etc.) that are universally applicable to the civilian work world. These skills are in particular high demand in the broad range of industries where there are already "skills gaps." We plan to continue working with credentialing agencies and other stakeholders, including employers and the Department of Labor, to boost the opportunity for these veterans to fill these occupations where skill gaps exist. We will further research these gaps as well as effective practices for filling them, and recommend

potential next steps to be taken by DoD, the Services, public, and private partners to increase employment opportunities.

At the same time, DoD will explore the potential use of civilian credentialing for the type of soft skills possessed by combat arms specialties. In addition, as part of the further implementation of SkillBridge, DoD will continue to explore the applicability of industry-based and employer-based standards that can ease the ability of Service members to enter the civilian workforce, especially for transitioning combat arms members.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. On behalf of the men and women in the Armed Forces and their families, I want to thank you and the members of this Subcommittee for your steadfast support.

Testimony by
David Quam
Deputy Director, Policy
National Governors Association

Submitted to the
Committee on Veterans Affairs
Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity
United States House of Representatives

"A Review of Licensing and Credentialing Standards for Servicemembers and Veterans: Do Barriers Still Remain"

September 10, 2015

On behalf of the nation's governors, thank you for the opportunity to update the Subcommittee on state efforts to accelerate pathways for servicemembers and veterans to receive civilian occupational licenses and credentials.

Supporting Servicemembers, Veterans and their Families

Thousands of men and women have returned from overseas deployments and are making the transition back to civilian life. Military servicemembers bring valuable and unique experience to the civilian workforce, but many of them continue to experience difficulty accessing the benefits and services they deserve. Despite a multitude of programs to assist former members of the military with their post-service transition, they continue to face difficulties with federal red-tape, poor records management and insufficient coordination between government agencies.

To facilitate servicemembers' transition to civilian life, governors have undertaken a variety of initiatives to help veterans navigate the myriad programs and resources available to them, remove barriers and improve program efficiency. NGA is supporting these efforts by providing technical assistance, sharing state best practices and helping lead national efforts to identify solutions to veterans' employment challenges.

As discussed below, one major area of focus for the National Governors Association (NGA) has been a partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to conduct a demonstration project to engage governors in streamlining veterans' licensing and credentialing.

In addition to this ongoing work, NGA last year conducted a comprehensive survey of state and territorial initiatives to support members of the military, veterans and their families. The survey covers areas such as education, employment, family support, tax and financial benefits, transition support services and licensing and certification. The results were published this past February as a compendium of state programs and is attached to my testimony.

Overview of the NGA Veterans Licensing and Certification Demonstration

Members of the United States' military are trained in hundreds of occupations with relevance in the civilian workforce. However, receiving a civilian license or certification in many of those occupations can require completing formal state administrative processes and meeting training and education standards. Despite highly relevant skills and experience, some veterans find that they must go through a lengthy process to obtain the formal documentation, training or education required to enter their occupation of choice. Those requirements impose additional costs on veterans and on taxpayers, who pay both for the initial military training and for re-training outside of the military through veterans' education benefits.

Recognizing states' regulatory authority in the licensure of several high-demand civilian occupations, Section 237 of the *Veterans' Opportunity to Work to Hire Heroes Act of 2011* (The VOW Act) authorized DOL to conduct a demonstration project to engage governors in streamlining veterans' licensing and credentialing, with the ultimate goal of identifying the most efficient process for moving veterans into civilian employment.[1]

In response, DOL contracted with the NGA Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) to carry out that 18-month demonstration project. As part of the project launch, the NGA Center developed a competitive process to select six states to participate in the 18-month demonstration: Illinois, Iowa, Nevada, Minnesota, Virginia and Wisconsin.

Each participating state selected up to three high-demand occupations to focus their licensing and credentialing strategies that corresponded with one of the three pre-selected military occupational specialties. The selected occupations included: Emergency Medical Technician/Paramedic, Licensed Practical Nurse, registered nurse, physical therapy assistant, bus and truck driver and police patrol officer.

The effort, launched in May 2013, included 12 months of intensive technical assistance from the NGA Center to help state teams develop and implement accelerated pathways to licensure for veterans in each state's selected occupations. Under the demonstration, states took steps to identify the skills veterans earned in the military, translate them in a way that civilian licensure boards will accept and help veterans take advantage of streamlined pathways for civilian licenses. Those streamlined pathways included waiving required tests and training requirements and creating new courses to fill in skills gaps without requiring veterans to undergo duplicative training.

While state strategies over the course of the demonstration were diverse, at the close of the demonstration in December 2014, the NGA Center was able to identify a common process based on state experience – a state "blueprint" – to guide states interested in undertaking similar efforts to connect transitioning servicemembers and veterans with civilian employment opportunities. A preview of the state blueprint is featured in the recently released Project Interim Report.[2]

The interim report further describes an additional component of the project - a cost study to inform Congress about the potential federal cost savings of removing licensing barriers at the state level. The study will estimate cost savings to federal programs administered by the

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[1] P.L. 112-56, Title II

[2] Veterans' Licensing and Certification Demonstration Interim Report (2015).

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and DOL when a veteran completes an accelerated pathway towards licensure versus duplicative training under a full length pathway. The results of the cost study will be available in the Final Project Report to be completed this fall. Initial findings suggest substantive savings to federal programs given the potential of accelerated pathways to avoid duplicative training and reduce time towards meeting the requirements for a credential. The cost savings are found through programs such as GI Bill tuition and VA housing benefits.

Both the interim and final project reports will offer substantive insights and ways forward for the federal government and states to help veterans transition to the civilian workforce by addressing licensing and certification barriers. The following is intended to provide a high level summary of some of the key lessons learned from the demonstration to date that can inform thinking on how the federal government and states can work together to help address licensing barriers at scale.

Key Findings from the Veterans Licensing and Certification Demonstration

States are working to reduce licensing and certification barriers for veterans. Between 2013 and 2015, 39 states issued executive orders or passed legislation to assist veterans in transferring skills gained in military service to civilian employment. NGA's review of this work suggests that successful implementation of accelerated pathways requires both active coordination and the open flow of information across federal and state agencies, regulatory authorities, and education institutions. Specifically, NGA uncovered five general lessons learned that will inform future state efforts.

➢ **Governor-Led Coordination**

The commitment and ongoing involvement of the governor's office is critical to successfully mobilize and coordinate executive action by diverse state agencies and to shepherd any necessary statutory changes with the state legislature to address barriers for veterans to licensing and certification.

Demonstration experience indicates that, in addition to the governor's office, five other state agencies are positioned to play a central role in successfully implementing accelerated civilian pathways:

- *State departments of veterans affairs* – The state department of veterans affairs can play a central role, on behalf of the governor's office, in coordinating the operational activities of the other agencies involved;

- *State licensing boards* – State licensing boards have the responsibility for approving the accelerated pathways leading to civilian certification or licensure;

- *Postsecondary educational institutions* – Postsecondary educational institutions have the responsibility for developing the curricula underlying the accelerated pathways;

- *State workforce agencies* – State workforce agencies interface directly with veterans and employers based on their responsibility to deliver unemployment compensation benefits and employment services; and

- *State approving agencies* – State approving agencies are responsible for approving and monitoring the quality of the education programs for veterans that qualify for payment of GI Bill education benefits.

In addition to orchestrating the participation of this diverse group of state agencies over the course of the demonstration, some governors issued executive orders applicable to the development and implementation of accelerated pathways. Governors also engaged their legislatures to remove statutory barriers to accelerated pathways or to establish statutory incentives or benefits supportive of accelerated pathways, such as tuition-free enrollment for veterans at state postsecondary schools.

➢ **Strong Partnerships Between State Educational Organizations and Licensing Boards**

Constructive partnerships between postsecondary schools and their governing state agencies, on the one hand, and state licensing boards, on the other hand, make a key contribution to successfully negotiating the operational details of accelerated pathways to civilian licensure.

State educational organizations and state licensing boards have existing relationships that relate to their complementary responsibilities for developing and approving education and training programs that lead to licensure for civilian workers who follow traditional career preparation pathways. For example, before investing in any new education program leading to licensure, educational organizations seek some assurance that the program will receive a favorable hearing from the state licensing board as an approved pathway to licensure. As a result, if both constituencies agree that accelerated pathways for veterans have value and both are willing to support that effort, accelerated pathways can become a reality. However, if either body has serious reservations about the value of this course of action, successful implementation is unlikely because neither has the authority to implement an accelerated pathway on its own.

➢ **Collaboration with National Associations of State Licensing Boards**

National associations of state licensing boards can expedite state level efforts by providing a foundation for designing occupation-specific curricula that support the implementation of accelerated pathways.

A key example from the demonstration is the gap analysis by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN). That organization compared a standard civilian curriculum for the Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) occupation with the training curricula for four different categories of Army, Navy and Air Force medics, identifying for each civilian curriculum element the extent to which the four military curricula met the civilian standard. All six demonstration states targeted the development of accelerated pathways to LPN. One of the six had conducted its own gap analysis before becoming aware of the NCSBN gap analysis. The other five states relied on the NCSBN gap analysis in various ways in pursuing accelerated pathways to LPN. Given NCSBN's clear contribution to the success of the demonstration, collaboration with other national associations to develop occupational gap analyses is a key step to accelerating pathways in other occupations.

➢ **State-to-State Communication and Collaboration**

Cross-state communication and collaboration play a key role in confirming the feasibility of developing accelerated pathways and in identifying strategies to facilitate their implementation.

Demonstration states learned extensively from each other, relied heavily on each other for examples of successful practices and even benefitted from the efforts of a state outside the demonstration as a source of information and as an example of a model accelerated pathway to LPN. Specifically, at the time the demonstration was getting underway, GateWay Community College in Phoenix, Arizona, had just completed the process of developing and gaining state licensing board approval for an accelerated LPN pathway for veterans, based on the NCSBN gap analysis. Four demonstration states consulted directly with the director of the GateWay program, who travelled to one demonstration state to provide an in-person briefing to interested state staff. In the end, two demonstration states adopted the GateWay model as the model for their accelerated LPN programs. Avenues for future interaction and sharing of best practices across states can offer other states valuable insights to carry out similar efforts.

➢ **Effective Information Sharing**

Demonstration states continue to struggle with the limited availability of state-level information on the military occupational specialties of transitioning servicemembers and recently separated veterans. This lack of core information makes it difficult to estimate the level of demand for accelerated pathways for the different civilian occupations and to prioritize the occupations to be targeted for pathways.

Accelerated pathways to civilian licensure for former military personnel assume that the candidates have prior military training, education and occupational experience that relate to

the licensed civilian occupation. Educational institutions considering the development of accelerated pathways seek a measure of assurance that there will be a sufficient number of appropriate candidates, so that the programs can be self-sustaining.

To document the demand for accelerated pathways, the information on transitioning servicemembers and recently separated veterans should have three characteristics:

- It needs to include the military occupational specialties of the candidates;
- It needs to relate to candidates who already reside in the state or who plan to reside in the state upon separation from the military; and
- It needs to be available at the time shortly before or shortly after separation from the military, because transitioning servicemembers and recently separated veterans are the most likely candidates for accelerated pathways.

While the demonstration states devised unique and creative approaches to respond to critical information challenges, in general information on potential candidates that has all three characteristics is not readily available and cannot easily be developed. That reality not only complicates state efforts to assess the demand for accelerated pathways in particular occupations, but also complicates state efforts to conduct outreach to potential pathway candidates. For accelerated pathway programs to succeed, information on soon-to-be separating servicemembers and veterans eligible for and currently receiving employment benefits must be more widely and readily available.

The demonstration states' collective experience provided valuable learning opportunities for other states looking to streamline pathways to licensure for veterans and begin the process of designing and implementing state strategies. While there is no one-size-fits-all solution for states to create accelerated pathways, the demonstration clearly shows that when state, federal and private sector partners support the formation of a cross-agency team equip them with good information and examples to build from such efforts can improve employment opportunities for transitioning servicemembers and veterans.

Addressing barriers to better information sharing on candidates for civilian licensure is a key area where federal and state partnership could be strengthened. This was a key challenge identified during the NGA licensing and credentialing demonstration project. Budget and bureaucratic challenges at all levels of government continue to affect the efficiency and speed with which veterans can access benefits and services. Records management and information sharing would benefit from improved coordination among federal, state and local authorities and have a demonstrable effect on the quality of services provided to military servicemembers.

NGA appreciates the Subcommittee's attention to this important issue and looks forward to continuing to work with Congress and federal agencies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of transition and employment programs for veterans.

FOR THE RECORD

Chairman Wenstrup and Ranking Member Takano:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony for your subcommittee's hearing entitled, "A Review of Licensing and Credentialing Standards for Servicemembers and Veterans: Do Barriers Still Remain?"

The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) is an independent, non-profit association comprising 59 boards of nursing (BONs) from across the U.S., the District of Columbia and four U.S. territories. BONs are responsible for protecting the public through regulation of licensure, nursing practice and discipline of the 5.2 million registered nurses (RNs), licensed practical/vocational (LPN/VNs) and advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) in the U.S. with active licenses, in addition to the approval of prelicensure nursing education programs in the U.S. NCSBN was created by these boards of nursing to act and counsel with one another and to lessen the burden of government. The mission of NCSBN is to provide education, service and research through collaborative leadership to promote evidence-based regulatory excellence for patient safety and public protection. Through NCSBN, BONs can work together on policy matters that will affect the future of nursing and healthcare.

The 2013 White House report, "The Fast Track to Civilian Employment: Streamlining Credentialing and Licensing for Servicemembers, Veterans and Their Spouses", encourages states to support legislative efforts that will transition veterans into the civilian workplace. NCSBN wholeheartedly joins these efforts valuing the contributions veterans have made in the military by acknowledging their training and experience. NCSBN supports federal and state legislation that will help veterans safely and competently enter civilian careers in nursing.

Recently, there has been an emphasis placed on transitioning military medics, corpsmen and airmen to civilian roles as LPN/VNs. NCSBN staff, with consultation from leading experts in the areas of nursing and military education, conducted an in-depth analysis of the healthcare specialist (medic), corpsman and airman curricula, and compared these with a standard LPN/VN curriculum. The following are key findings and recommendations that will be helpful for policymakers introducing legislation related to this topic.

LPN/VN education is different than the training received by healthcare specialists (medics), corpsmen or airmen. NCSBN encourages legislation that supports the development of LPN/VN bridge programs allowing healthcare specialists (medics), corpsmen and airmen to receive credit for the knowledge, skills, and abilities they acquired in the military, and recommends focusing content on gaps in knowledge, the nursing process, and differences between the military and LPN/VN roles and scope of practice.

NCSBN and BONs are working with many groups to address different aspects of this project and should be involved in any discussions regarding this endeavor so that it can assist in assuring that veterans have a safe and smooth transition into a career in nursing.

Additionally, NCSBN has supported the continued inclusion of the NCLEX–RN® and NCLEX–PN® (National Council Licensure Examination) to the qualified list of non-federal government licensure/certification examinations by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The NCLEX® is the nationally recognized exam taken by RN and LP/VN graduates to ensure every licensed nurse has met state education requirements and is competent to practice nursing safely. The inclusion of the NCLEX® allows for eligible veterans and their dependents (as defined by the Department of Veterans Affairs) to be reimbursed for the cost of test(s) given to qualify an individual for a vocational license or certificate. Currently, qualifying veteran candidates have no limit as to the number of times the exam can be taken.

NCSBN also strives to offer providers the opportunity to practice safely and competently across state lines without undue licensure burdens. One way that we have worked to facilitate interstate mobility of nurses is through our Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC), an interstate compact that allows a nurse to have one multistate license (in his or her state of residency) that grants the privilege to practice in other NLC participating states (both physically and electronically), subject to each state's practice laws and regulations. NCSBN launched the NLC in 2000 in an effort to expand the mobility of nurses as part of our nation's healthcare delivery system. Currently, 25 U.S. states have adopted the NLC. That number is expected to grow in the coming years as the states begin to adopt a newly enhanced version that addresses concerns raised by states that have not yet joined.

In addition to the NLC, we have also developed a compact that would facilitate interstate license portability for APRNs, who are increasingly delivering primary care and helping with chronic disease management via telehealth. The APRN Compact maintains most of the same principles as the NLC, including a mutual recognition licensing model that would allow an APRN to practice in any participating state with just one license.

BONs under the NLC facilitate interstate cooperation and coordination through participation in NCSBN's Nursys® program, the only national database currently available for verification of nurse licensure and discipline for RNs, LPN/VNs and APRNs. Nursys® allows access to the status of a nurse's license and provides information about any history of discipline.

Ultimately, the NLC and the APRN Compact create the necessary legal structure that requires BONs to report and share license and discipline information with one another, a key component to ensuring nurse competency and patient safety across the country.

NCSBN looks forward to continuing to work with the Committee, veterans, and other stakeholders to address issues involving veterans and their efforts to become a civilian licensed nurse. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on this important

issue. If you have any questions or need any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us. Elliot Vice, NCSBN's Director of Government Affairs, can be reached at *evice@ncsbn.org* and 202–530–4830. We look forward to continuing the dialogue with you on this very important issue.

Sincerely,

Kathy Apple, MS, RN, FAAN,

Chief Executive Officer

Reserve Officers Association of the United States

United States House Hearing

House Veterans' Affairs Committee

A Review of Licensing and Credentialing Standards for Service Members and Veterans: Do Barriers Still Remain?

September 10, 2015

"Serving Citizen Warriors through Advocacy and Education since 1922."™

Reserve Officers Association
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The Reserve Officers Association of the United States (ROA) is a professional association of commissioned, non-commissioned and warrant officers of our nation's seven uniformed services. ROA was founded in 1922 during the drawdown years following the end of World War I. It was formed as a permanent institution dedicated to national defense, with a goal to teach America about the dangers of unpreparedness. Under ROA's 1950 congressional charter, our purpose is to promote the development and execution of policies that will provide adequate national defense. We do so by developing and offering expertise on the use and resourcing of America's reserve components.

The association's members include Reserve and Guard Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Airmen, and Coast Guardsmen who frequently serve on active duty to meet critical needs of the uniformed services. ROA's membership also includes commissioned officers from the United States Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration who often are first responders during national disasters and help prepare for homeland security.

President:
Colonel James R. Sweeney, USMC (Ret.) 202-646-7706

Executive Director:
Jeffrey Phillips 202-646-7726

Legislative Director:
Lieutenant Colonel Susan Lukas, U. S. Air Force Reserve (Ret.) 202-646-7713

DISCLOSURE OF FEDERAL GRANTS OR CONTRACTS

The Reserve Officers and is a member-supported organization. ROA has not received grants, contracts, or subcontracts from the federal government in the past three years. All other activities and services of the associations are accomplished free of any direct federal funding.

On behalf of our members, the Reserve Officers Association thanks the committee for the opportunity to submit a statement on the issues of licensing and credentialing

LICENSING

Approximately 5% of all workers in the 1950s were required to be licensed by the government. The number is now up to 30-35% according to *The Fast Track to Civilian Employment: Streamlining Credentialing and Licensing For Service Members, Veterans, and their Spouses, Executive Office of the President* (2013). Most of these licenses require annual fees, paperwork, and continuing education. Many Guard and Reserve members are unable to complete these renewal requirements while deployed, and are forced to let their licenses expire. The requirements for obtaining a license are usually more stringent than those for renewing one before it expires. This creates an additional hurdle for troops returning home, especially for Reservists and Guardsmen immediately returning to civilian employment.

Extensions on Active Duty

States have begun passing legislation granting automatic extensions for service members unable to complete licensing renewal requirements in a timely manner, because of the unique demands of active duty. Kentucky enacted such a law in 2011, granting active duty service members extensions on state regulated occupational licensing renewal requirements when "circumstances associated with military duty" prevent service members from completing said requirements. This includes dues or fees, obtaining education credits, and "any other act typically required for the renewal of the license or certificate."

The attached list shows that many states do not allow for automatic extension of driver's licenses but will process requests for extensions. The lack of an automatic extension can cause problems for service members who are performing duty away from station: they do not have access to all of the information or documents required for extension requests. ***ROA urges states to grant automatic extensions.***

Other states have enacted similar laws, but Kentucky's remains one of the best. Notable features of Kentucky's law are:

- Kentucky's law allows extensions for active duty military personnel who are prevented from completing licensing renewal requirements due to "circumstances associated with military duty."

Some state laws only allow extensions for service members who are called to active duty for the purpose of serving in an emergency or war. This could be problematic for military personnel who cannot complete license renewal requirements due to training or other such obligations. A

Marine Corps officer, for example, must complete ten weeks of Officer Candidate School, six months of Basic School, and at least two months of Military Occupational Specialty School, usually one right after the other. This long period of training would not be covered under a law granting extensions to service members called to serve in an emergency or time of war, but would be covered under the broad language of the Kentucky law. By allowing extensions for all "circumstances associated with military duty," the law covers any conceivable scenario.

Continuing Education Requirements

- Kentucky's law grants extensions for continuing education requirements, fees, and *any other act typically required for the renewal of the license or certificate* (emphasis added).

Some states have provisions granting extensions for fees and continuing education requirements, but fail to add catchalls, like the one in the Kentucky law, for irregular licensing requirements. Many licenses only require fees and continuing education for renewal, but some require additional requirements. For example, some licenses carry annual pro bono requirements, which a service member would not be able to meet while on deployment. Such a requirement falls outside the normal fees and continuing education hours necessary to keep licenses in good standing with the state.

For that reason, it is necessary to have catch-all clauses, like the one in the Kentucky law or specific provisions like Missouri, whose statute, Section 41.946.1, provides exemption from requirements for members of the reserve component who were ordered to active duty.

> **Missouri: Licensure or certification by state, continuing education--exemption from requirements for active military service.**
>
> 41.946. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any person licensed or certified to practice a trade or profession by the state of Missouri or any branch or agency thereof which requires an annual period of continuing education or training as a condition of continued or renewed licensing or certification, and who is or becomes a member of the National Guard or of any reserve component of the Armed Forces of the United States who is called to full-time active duty in the service of the United States under competent orders shall, during the period of full-time active duty, be exempted from any such requirement for continuing education or training without his status, license, certification or right to practice his trade or profession being affected and shall not be required, upon returning from full-time active duty, to make up or retake any training or education for which he was exempt under the provisions of this section.

Since more than 900,000 Guard and Reserve members have been activated for Operation Noble Eagle and Operation Enduring Freedom, it is essential for all states to have similar statutes. ***ROA urges states to adopt statutes that extend or exempt continuing education requirements.***

Extensions after Discharge

- The Kentucky law allows the extension to continue for "a period of at least six (6) months after discharge from active duty."

Having such a prevision is essential to any legislation granting extensions for licensing renewing requirements. Returning service members need adequate time, upon returning to civilian life, to fulfill the licensing renewal requirements they were unable to fulfill while on active duty. Without such a provision, this law would be ineffective. Service members' licenses would lapse as soon as they returned home, placing them in the same position as if their licenses had lapsed while they were on active duty.

New Jersey directs that extensions be accomplished within two weeks of demobilization, but that does not adequately accommodate service members who do not immediately return to their residence. From the state's Motor Vehicle Commission website:

New Jersey License Extensions

If you are on active military duty, including New Jersey National Guard and Reserve, you are entitled to automatic extensions for your driver license, registration and inspection requirements.

- Your license, registration and inspection documents will remain valid for as long as you are actively serving in the US Military
- If you are demobilized, you will need to renew your expired documents within two weeks of your demobilization date
- Law enforcement officials are aware of this extension. Please carry the extension letter [pdf] along with your active duty military credentials at all times when operating a vehicle

Additionally, some Guard and Reserve members put household goods in storage and are waiting to have them delivered. This is not always timely depending on whether or not it is during peak periods of "change of station" orders, which take priority. ***ROA urges states to provide "a period of at least six (6) months after discharge from active duty."***

CREDENTIALING

Another problem ROA has identified is how military members can meet licensing and credentialing requirements as they leave active duty. Service members can encounter delays in seeking employment after discharge even though they have experience and education however; it is not recognized for licensing and credentialing. Each year approximately 250,000 service

members leave the service. The military's ability to meet the professional standards for certification would be a great enabler of reservists who want to work in these fields.

> ***In 2014 alone, the Army paid more than $320 million in unemployment compensation, according to data from the Army. During that same period, 61,000 former soldiers applied for unemployment compensation.***
> http://www.armytimes.com/story/military/careers/army/enlisted/2015/03/23/army-credentialing-every-mos/25049105/

In the past few years, the Department of Defense Military Credentialing Pilot made progress in identifying weaknesses in training. For example, the Automotive Mechanics pilot had 35 service members in it, but only 3 of 30 (10%) successfully passed a Medium-Heavy Truck Certification T-Series exam and 3 of 5 (60%) successfully passed the Automobile Service Consultant Certification C1 exam. It was disheartening to see that military training could not meet The National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) standards. This is just one example of many in DoD's report to Congress.

The Army's Training and Doctrine Command has embraced the opportunity to provide credentialing by working to link credentialing to Army military occupational specialties. The Navy has been working on credentialing since 2006 and the Air Force has been working with the Federal Aviation Administration to meet airframe and powerplant (A&P) mechanic certification. Budgetary pressures could easily stunt credentialing, but ensuring that training standards include credentialing can result in a better trained force as well as the success of service members as they transition into the civilian sector. The Department of Defense will continue to rely on a force mix of military, civilians, and contractors. Credentialing service members will ensure they are equipped to successfully contribute within this force model. ***ROA encourages Congress to continue funding for licensing and credentialing of military members.***

CLOSING

ROA appreciates the opportunity to discuss the importance of licensing and credentialing; we look forward to working with Congress to offer our support and perspective on the Reserve Components and this important area of policy and legislation.

Changes to Drivers License

STATE	POLICY
Alabama	No automatic extension. 60 day grace period. Renewal by mail. Applications are available online.
Alaska	Automatic extension for military personnel and dependents; valid 90 days after return to Alaska **or** 90 days after date of discharge, whether you have returned to Alaska or not.
Arizona	Automatic extension valid for up to 6 months, with **notification of active duty status** to MVD.
Arkansas	No automatic extension. Renewal by phone (501) 682-7059
California	No automatic extension. Must call DMV at (800) 777-0133 to update your record, and will be issued DL 236 card to carry with your California driver's license.
Colorado	No automatic extension. Must request a military extension. Fax signed request with copy of ID or Orders to 303-205-5990.
Connecticut	No automatic extension.
Delaware	No automatic extension. Renewal by mail.
Florida	No automatic extension. Must request extension. Free military extension card for active-duty, and dependents for 90 days after discharge. Renewal online (GoRenew), by mail, or Fax..
Georgia	No automatic extension. 6 month grace period. Renewal by mail.
Hawaii	Automatic extension for military personnel and dependents; valid 90 days after return to Hawaii **or** 90 days after date of discharge, whether you have returned to Hawaii or not.
Idaho	No automatic extension. Must request a military extension
Illinois	No automatic extension. Must obtain a Military Deferral Certificate (217-782-2720)
Indiana	Automatic extension for military personnel and dependents; valid 90 days after discharge,
Iowa	No automatic extension. Must request for an Extension for Military Service – Form 430081
Kansas	No automatic extension. Renewal by mail. Applications are available online.
Kentucky	No automatic extension. Renewal by mail.
Louisiana	Automatic extension for military personnel and dependents; valid 60 days after discharge, must send written request to have license flagged as military.
Maine	Automatic extension for military personnel and dependents; valid 30 days after discharge,
Maryland	Automatic extension for military personnel and dependents; valid 30 days after discharge, or return to state.
Massachusetts	No automatic extension. Renewal by mail.
Michigan	No automatic extension. Renewal by mail. (517) 322-1473)
Minnesota	Automatic extension for military personnel and dependents; valid 90 days after discharge, must send written request to have license flagged as military.
Mississippi	Automatic extension for military personnel and dependents; valid 90 days after discharge,
Missouri	No automatic extension. Renewal by mail. (573) 751-2730)
Montana	Automatic extension for military personnel and dependents; valid 30 days after discharge, to obtain a military exemption or to renew call (866) 450-8034 or e-mail mvd@mt.gov.
Nebraska	Automatic extension for military personnel and dependents; valid 60 days following discharge or return to Nebraska, whichever is later.
Nevada	No automatic extension. Renewal by mail.
New Hampshire	No automatic extension. Renewal by mail. Applications (DSMV-450, DSMV-76) are available online.
New Jersey	Automatic extension for military personnel and dependents; valid two weeks after discharge, must carry the extension letter, available online.

New Mexico	Automatic extension for military personnel and dependents; valid 30 days following discharge or return to New Mexico.
New York	Automatic extension for military personnel and dependents; valid six months after discharge, must File Form MV-75. (Notification of Military Service)
North Carolina	No automatic extension. Renewal by mail.
North Dakota	Automatic extension for military personnel, valid 30 days following discharge or return to North Dakota. Contact DMV every four years to ensure record remains on file.
Ohio	Extension for military personnel and dependents; valid 6 months following discharge or return to Ohio record will read "Expired". Renewal by mail available.
Oklahoma	Automatic extension for military personnel and dependents; valid 60 days following discharge or return to Oklahoma.
Oregon	No automatic extension. Renewal by mail. Request a "Valid without Photo" driver license packet by calling the DMV at (503) 945-5400.
Pennsylvania	Automatic extension for military personnel and dependents; valid for 45 days after discharge, must File Form DL-176 (Military Status Endorsement Card) to ensure record remains on file.
Rhode Island	No automatic extension. May apply for a special armed forces operator's license, valid for 30 days after discharge. This special license carries no specific time frame for renewal.
South Carolina	No automatic extension. Renewal by online.
South Dakota	No automatic extension. Renewal by mail by following the state's instructions.
Tennessee	Automatic extension for Military personnel, valid for 60 days after discharge or return to Tennessee. Military personnel may have a "Code 30" placed on their license (which will indicate the license does not expire).
Texas	Automatic extension for Military personnel, valid for 90 days after discharge or return to Texas.
Utah	Automatic extension for Military personnel, valid for 90 days after discharge or return to Utah.
Vermont	Automatic extension for Military personnel validates existing license for up to four years from the date it expires. Must renew within 30 days of discharge.
Virginia	No automatic extension. Military extension via online or by mail. Must carry Card .Extension good for 3 years only
Washington	Automatic extension for Military personnel, valid for 90 days after discharge. State issues a license to military service members and their families with the word "military" in the place of the expiration date.
West Virginia	Automatic extension for Military personnel, valid for 6 months after discharge.
Wisconsin	Automatic extension for Military personnel, valid 30 days after return to Wisconsin or 90 days after discharge, whichever is earlier.
Wyoming	No automatic extension. Renewal by mail.

Source:

http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=7&ved=0CEYQFjAGahUKEwiSpvW73ufHAhXPJI4KHfeMBjw&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.public.navy.mil%2Fairfor%2Fcvw7%2FLists%2FAnnouncements%2FAttachments%2F20%2FChanges%2520to%2520Drivers%2520License_Military.doc&usg=AFQjCNEKSrqNwSGA6K-iNRZS-DGqG3Ky6g