

DRAFT: THE ACVETEO REPORT TO CONGRESS: 2007-2008

Statutory Requirements

This report summarizes the activities of the Advisory Committee on Veteran's Employment, Training and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO) established pursuant to Title II of the Veterans' Housing Opportunity and Benefits Improvement Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-233) and Title VI of the Veterans Benefits, Health Care and Information Technology Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-461). The law was amended to reflect new outreach duties assigned to the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Employment and Training and changes to the make-up of the Advisory Committee on Veterans Employment and Training (ACVET).

Committee Responsibilities

The ACVETEO is responsible for assessing employment and training needs of veterans and their integration into the workforce; determining the extent to which programs and activities of the Department of Labor are meeting such needs; assisting the Assistant Secretary of Veterans' Employment and Training Services (ASVET) in carrying out outreach activities to employers regarding the training and skills of veterans and advantages afforded employers by hiring veterans; making recommendations to the Secretary of Labor through the ASVET, for outreach activities and the employment and training of veterans; and such other activities necessary to making required reports and recommendations. The statute requires the ACVETEO to meet quarterly and to submit an annual report to the Secretary and the committees on Veterans Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

The Membership of the Advisory Committee on Veterans', Employment, Training & Employer Outreach (ACVETEO)

The ACVETEO must consist of at least 12, but no more than 16, individuals appointed by the Secretary of Labor. Included are: Seven individuals, one each from among representatives nominated by each of the following service organizations: the Society of Human Resource Managers, the Business Roundtable, the National Association of State Workforce Agencies, the United States Chamber of Commerce, the National Federation of Independent Business, a nationally recognized labor union or organization and the National Governors Association. Not more than five individuals from among representatives nominated by veterans' service organizations that have a national employment program and no more than five individuals who are recognized authorities in the fields of business, employment, training, rehabilitation, or labor and who are not employees of the Department of Labor (DOL).

The following, or their representatives, are ex-officio, non-voting members of the ACVETEO; Secretaries of Veterans Affairs and Defense, Director of the Office of Personnel Management; Assistant Secretary for Veterans Employment and Training; the Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

Secretary of Labor, Elaine L. Chao, appointed the committee members effective March 28, 2007. Of the 15 individuals serving, ten previously served as appointed members of the Advisory Committee for Veterans' Employment & Training (ACVET) or the President's National Hire Veterans Committee (PNHVC) which sunset in 2006. Twelve members are veterans themselves. All share a passion for the well being of our veteran population. A list of committee members is provided. (Attachment 1)

Meetings of the Advisory Committee on Veterans' Employment, Training & Employer Outreach (ACVETEO)

The Committee held three meetings in 2007 and four meetings in 2008

2007

The first meeting of the committee was held on May 14-15, 2007 at the Department of Labor in Washington, DC. The committee was welcomed by Secretary Chao and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs James Nicholson prior to their orientation. The focus of this meeting was an overview of the transition assistance programs (TAP) operated by the Department of Labor for transitioning service members including the Department of Defense (DoD's) new transition initiative—Turbo TAP.

During a working lunch, the committee heard from four transitioning service members who had completed the Department of Labor VETS' employment workshop as part of their transition process. The committee questioned the service members about the value of the transition assistance programs. All panelists reported positive experiences with their transition programs. Committee members used the time between the first and second meetings to individually attend TAP Programs in their geographic area.

The committee next convened on July 30-31, 2007 in Washington, DC. The meeting's theme was to review VETS' programs, their interface with the state workforce systems and the roles of the Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) and the Disabled Veterans Outplace Program Specialists (DVOPs). Representative Stephanie Herseth-Sandlin, Chairwoman of the Economic Opportunity Subcommittee, House Veterans Affairs Committee attended the beginning of the second meeting. The members reported on their experiences attending a TAP class and Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Policy and Planning, RAdmiral (ret.) Patrick Dunne, briefed the committee on the findings of the Global War on Terror Taskforce. The committee members were divided into the following subcommittees: Employer Outreach & Spouse Employment, Transition Assistance, and Special Populations. A brochure to assist employers in welcoming returning service members was discussed. Again, transitioning service members met with the committee during lunch to discuss their experiences preparing to enter the private sector.

The third and final meeting of 2007 convened on November 14-15 in Tampa, Florida. The meeting's focus was a review of VETS' role regarding the reemployment rights of veterans as directed by the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA).

VETS' Staff briefed the committee on VETS' investigative and education role and Philip Pope, Deputy Executive Director of the Employer Support of the Guard & Reserve (ESGR) spoke to the committee about ESGR's Programs. The committee attended the Recruit Military and Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) Job Fair on the afternoon of November 14th. The Wounded Warrior Project briefed the committee about their activities in assisting wounded and injured service members and their families and transitioning service members briefed the committee during lunch about their transition plans and experiences.

2008

The first meeting of 2008 was held at the National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI) in Denver, CO from February 10-12th. The focus of the quarterly meeting was to review the work of NVTI who train the state workforce veterans' employment representatives and all the TAP employment workshop facilitators. The committee received a presentation from VETS' contractor who handles overseas TAP classes. They first learned of VETS TBI/PTSD initiative and the employment programs of the ACVETEO veteran service organizations as well as the Employment and Training Administration's spousal initiative with DOD.

The spring quarterly meeting was held in Washington, DC on May 20-21st. Here the full committee was briefed on the results of the Transition Assistance subcommittee workshop that was conducted after the Denver meeting on its efforts to update the TAP employment program. Also, the US DOL Assistant Secretary for the Office of Disability Employment (ODEP) discussed their collaborative efforts with VETS to highlight improving workforce opportunities for veterans with TBI/PTSD. Additionally, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reviewed the results of the Biannual Veterans Current Population Survey.

The summer quarterly meeting took place in San Diego, CA, July, 24-25. The first day the committee toured three military installations to observe different transition employment programs at each. At the San Diego Naval Hospital, they participated in the graduation ceremony for a Transition Training Academy for the wounded and injured service members receiving medical treatment their. Next, at the Miramar Marine Corps Air Station, they attended a Hire Our Heroes job fair coordinated by DOD for the wounded and injured. Finally, at Camp Pendleton, they divided up among four separate TAP employment workshops as the employer panel for each. The next day they received an update on the VETS TAP strategic plan as well as the first draft of an employer outreach presentation. Additionally, they were briefed on the impact of social networking.

The final meeting for 2008 was hosted by Home Depot at their corporate headquarters in Atlanta, GA October 21-22. In wrapping up the year, the Assistant Secretary for VETS summarized the agencies accomplishments over the last eight years. Additionally, the employer outreach presentation was approved by the committee and VA briefed on the progress of implementing the recommendations of the Dole-Shalala report. Several Atlanta based companies also described their efforts to place and hire transitioning service members.

Strategic Partnerships

The enabling legislation charges the ACVETEO with facilitating employment through the national labor exchange and other means. While vigorously emphasizing the One-Stop Career Center and the public workforce system, the committee sought out partnership opportunities particularly with private sector companies to enhance support of the committee's mission and goals. During each quarterly meeting, the Committee was briefed by representatives of the private sector employment community regarding their initiatives for veterans. The following companies made presentations to the committee about their employment initiatives for veterans in 2007: (May 14-25) Mercedes Benz and Home Depot; (July 30-31) General Electric and Starbucks; (November 14-15,) Recruit Military—Job Fairs and Lockheed Martin. In 2008 more companies discussed their programs including: (Feb 10-12) BNSF Transportation and military.com; (May 20-21) Landmark Destiny Group; (July 22-23) Applied Materials and (Oct 21-22) USPS, Bradley-Morris and Southern Companies. It is the philosophy of the committee that veterans bring value to business and hiring veterans' results in increased business productivity and a strengthening of the economy.

The committee has been charged by the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Employment and Training to oversee the Hire Vets First Campaign started by The President's National Hire Veterans Committee. Its message is to raise employer awareness of the value of hiring men and women who have served in the armed forces. One of its purposes is to provide a post-TAP safety net by incorporating within one website many of the resources and tools discussed during the TAP employment workshop. The goal of the campaign is to assist employers in understanding the training and skills that veterans possess and of the value these men and women bring to the workforce. This coordinated campaign carries the message to employers and media markets all across America that veterans are an asset to any business or organization and represent a talented and trained labor pool. The Campaign includes outreach and co-branded job fairs and is the culmination of VETS' strategy for the promotion of a valuable resource.

Among other accomplishments, the Hire Vets First campaign coordinated, through the state workforce system, a national HireVetsFirst Job Fair Blitz at 117 sites to commemorate Veterans' Day in a three week period surrounding November 11th. The events attracted over 31,000 veterans, 4,300 companies and service providers in 50 states and resulted in media articles in numerous newspapers around the country as well as over 6 million viewers in local news broadcasts. Additionally, several committee members' companies participated in a first ever Fortune magazine special editorial supplement in the July 11th cover edition highlighting the interest of veterans' employment issues.

The committee also elected to continue the Hire Vets First Website, the cornerstone of this campaign, and geared toward employer outreach. The web site, www.hirevetsfirst.gov, includes a guide for employers, a translator that provides the civilian application of military skills, links to career one-stop centers, and a video explaining how to use the veteran's employment representative at each location..

The site also features a section of resources for job seekers who are veterans, including an online resume writer developed exclusively for people with military experience, and links to public and private job websites. The site has averaged nearly 30,000 unique visitors each month over the last two years.

Accomplishments of the Advisory Committee on Veterans' Employment, Training and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO)

The high level of representation from DOD, the VA, OPM, SBA and DOL has provided an unprecedented degree of cooperation by developing a strong appreciation of VETS' role in the Global War on Terror. These ex officio members combined with the expertise from the private-sector employer community and veteran service organizations have created an effective committee. Attendance at the three meetings has been over 90%.

The ACVETEO was appointed on March 28, 2007. The first orientation meeting was held in May of 2007. In a short time, the Committee has met on three occasions in 2007 and held four quarterly meetings in 2008. It formed subcommittees, personally listened to the stories of transitioning service members, attended a Hire Vets First Job Fair, visited employment workshops at TAP sites in 11 locations to include: Ft. Monmouth, MacDill AFB, Pensacola NAS, Henderson Hall, Ft. Myers, Ft. Dix, Bangor Naval Station, Camp Pendleton, Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Norfolk Naval Stations, Ft. Belvoir, and has regularly been briefed by employers with successful veteran outreach programs. Further, Cisco Systems has assisted in implementing a Transition Training Academy at the San Diego Naval Hospital, Brooke Army Medical and Eisenhower Medical Center which enabled wounded and injured veterans to obtain information technology skills which either assisted them for a good transition to the civilian sector or provided skills that permitted them the opportunity to stay in the military. Other programs for training veterans in the information technology (IT) field are being explored.

The Transition Assistance Subcommittee continues to explore the VETS role in the service members' transition process and programs. The subcommittee met for a special two-day action session following a thorough review of the VETS TAP program following the February, 2008, meeting at the National Veterans Training Institute in Denver. The subcommittee actions led to a two year phased-in program to strengthen and refocus the TAP employment workshops

The Special Populations Subcommittee identified the following groups and subgroups with specific characteristics and needs: veterans with substance abuse, homelessness, minorities, Vietnam era veterans, the spouses and family members of those serving in the current conflicts, non-citizen veterans, service members suffering from Traumatic Brain Injury and/or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (TBI/PTSD) and the caregivers for wounded/disabled veterans. The potential list is enormous with each group having its specific needs, often addressed by specific programs/benefits, rights and a need for education in each of these areas.

The Employer Outreach & Spouse Employment Subcommittee identified successful hiring strategies being used by companies with active outreach programs both external in terms of identifying hiring pools for veterans with desirable skills and experience and internal identifying existing veteran employees with those characteristics for advancement.

The committee is producing two brochures: (1) to help employers find veterans and separating service members and (2) to assist employers in reintegrating returning service members specifically the guard and reservists into the workforce.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The committee noted in the Dole Shalala report that, “Employment is the dominant concern of most service members reentering civilian life.” They believed that these words ring true for all transitioning troops not just those wounded and injured. We note as of this report that the unemployment rate for veterans in 2009 has raised to the current rate of 11.2%.

1. Transition Assistance.

In 2008 the subcommittee on transition assistance held an intensive review session between the winter and spring quarterly meetings, of the overall Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Employment Workshop. This included a review of the substance of what was being taught, how it was being taught, how the material was being delivered and the quality of instruction. Most importantly, the committee strongly recommended that all instructors should be professionally certified.

Encourage more technology in the TAP classrooms.

The members were distressed that the best technical tools were not available to the facilitators to prepare the separating service members for the 21st Century workforce. In particular, the use of computers was not observed in any classrooms thus denying the service members the opportunity to see real time how to use the internet in the accomplishment of their job search. We have since learned that two of the services offer computers in some of their larger sites, but all should be accorded the same opportunities. We encourage VETS to seek the assistance of DoD and the services to provide technology outlets for all VETS’ facilitators. Private business is more virtual in today’s 24/7 environment and the TAP program needs to find ways to encompass the latest learning techniques available through technology.

Assure the Availability of an Electronic Copy of the Resume

The committee observed the recent transition of the TAP curriculum to be more resume oriented thus adding more accountability to the employment workshop. This was an extremely important move. Still the resume needs to be placed where employers can find separating service members. There are many private websites that electronically accept resumes including veterans and some highlight the veterans resume on their websites. However, there is not one site that has only separating service members’ resumes.

Therefore, the committee encourages VETS to explore establishing a veterans' only resume data bank where only transitioning and recently separated veterans can submit their resume; it is especially important they have a free no fee venue for employer community to find available veterans. Employers have demonstrated a strong desire to hire veterans; but the transition process is too Balkanized for them and especially for small businesses. So a resume data bank would provide a cyberspace one-stop service to employers and help create more job opportunities for the veteran community. This data bank would address: Where do veterans seeking work go? Where do employers seeking veterans go? How do we convey this information to veterans and employers?

Upgrade the presentation skills and knowledge of the course facilitators

The members did observe a wide variety in the quality and types of presentations used for TAP and also in the quality and presentation skills of the facilitators." It is very important to ensure that separating service members have access to the highest quality consistent training materials and qualified certified facilitators. It is also very important to have the ability to share best practices among all facilitators and additionally, encourage partners to ensure professional preparation of instructors and facilitators in the transition process.

Seek better avenues to give the Guard and Reservists workforce system assistance prior to leaving active duty.

The committee was briefed of efforts by VETS and DoD to take future corrective action to reach the demobilized members of the guard and reserve when they are ready to receive employment information. Modular parts to the TAP course have been prepared by VETS, and DoD is considering mobile "strike" forces to offer assistance when asked. The Department of Labor's TAP Employment Workshop is not mandatory for Guard and Reserve members, as it is for some of the active services. This fact may hinder those in the Guard and Reserve who deploy from making a more meaningful transition back to the civilian sector.

The committee also believes that the Department of Defense's new online TurboTAP program will have long term benefits for assisting the guard and reservists in their transition back to civilian status.

Minnesota's National Guard's Operation Yellow Ribbon is a good example of what can happen when forward thinking is employed to the needs of our citizen soldiers. The committee understands that efforts have been taken to copy this program across all guard and reserve populations returning to their communities in 2008. We encourage VETS to have good coordination with the local workforce efforts at these events. The committee also learned of the large number of mobilization and demobilization briefings for these service members carried out by the VETS' staff but noted that large states, such as California, were not as nimble as others.

In recognition of its outreach responsibilities, the committee, as a whole, launched an effort to organize a brochure for distribution in 2008 to employers of guard members and reservists to assist them in preparing for their return to communities, companies and jobs.

Utilize Better Employer Connectivity Methods

The service members attending TAP have limited exposure to real world hiring scenarios. Most TAP classes have an employer panel to offer a glimpse at what the employers look for in potential candidates, but these visitors only represent a small segment of the potential employer population. VETS should seek out novel ways, electronically, to bring more exposure to high growth industries with the potential for strong career paths to utilize a service member's military specialty to a private sector industry.

The committee learned of the success of more private vendor job fairs in 2007. These events more than doubled in 2008 with the prospect of even a greater number in 2009. However, the transition cycle of a service member may not meet with the schedule of job fairs. Most large transition locations such as Jacksonville, San Antonio and Ft. Hood, have two major job fairs in a year's time usually spaced six months apart, but most service members do not focus on transition until their last 90 days in uniform; therefore, miss the opportunity for greater contact with employers.

Also, several committee members developed a presentation for the VETS staff and VETS' state partners in the workforce system that outlines how to recruit transitioning service members and veterans for companies interested in establishing or upgrading their talent acquisition programs. These points were developed from the numerous presentations given to the committee from active military recruiters. The presentation represents a "best practices" scenario for recruiting veterans and transitioning service members

Make TAP Employment Workshop Participation a Pre-Separation requirement

The committee believes that the Labor Department's TAP Employment Workshop is the best tool available for all service members contemplating separation. They learned that one service had a higher retention rate among its service members who attended a TAP class. TAP can be a means for the military to keep many of their desired skilled members by open assessment of their military experience compared to a career in the private sector. Also, the committee would like to encourage VETS to discuss with DoD and the services how to establish an optimal time when all separating service members should start the transition process. The Committee would recommend a minimum of 90 days especially for those whose time in uniform is limited to one or two tours.

The committee reviewed a study which empirically noted that TAP participants found civilian work sooner than non TAP participants. Therefore, the committee was pleased to learn that the Global War on Terror (GWOT) task force has recommended a minimum 85% of all service members attend TAP with the Department of Defense approval.

This should be particularly helpful to those service members who complete just one term of duty to their country.

Overall, the members of the ACVETEO were pleased to learn that a revised TAP employment workshop curriculum, placing more emphasis on resume preparation and creating a resume prior to leaving the class, had been implemented. In addition, bringing active duty transitioning service members before the whole committee to be mentored by the members and to hear about their positive experiences from the employment workshops provided the committee with real time feedback on the effectiveness of the TAP employment workshops.

USERRA: Encourage more face to face meetings with employers

The committee spent a significant period of time keeping abreast of the USERRA progress made by VETS since the December, 2006 release of the new USERRA regulations. The regulations clarified some of the more complicated issues concerning the private sector in light to the continued extensive call-ups of the Guard and Reserves. One area that caught the committee's attention was that VETS' investigators lacked the resources necessary to facilitate face to face interviews with employers who were being investigated for possible USERRA violations. Realizing that a generous portion of VETS' federal management budget is already devoted to USERRA enforcement, the committee would encourage more face to face meetings with employers to assure the reemployment rights of veterans are not being violated. This may require a redistribution of funds necessary to support a significant increase in travel required to implement such a recommendation.

2. Special Populations

The committee found much to commend in the efforts of VETS with several special veterans populations. However, they would like VETS to catalog all programs within the government. This could provide a resource list to veterans and assist local DVOP's in there efforts to find meaningful employment for veterans with employment barriers.. The DVOP program is especially unique in its global abilito reach into all states to meet the homecoming needs of those wounded or injured. The Transition Training Academy established at the San Diego Naval Hospital with outside assistance from Cisco Systems and the Wounded Warrior Project is a model program of immense portions.

In particular, the forward stationing of DVOPs at military medical treatment facilities (MTFs) to assist the wounded and injured while they are in rehabilitation to prepare for the civilian workforce has brought great comfort to many. These DVOPS working through the VETS' organization highlights one of the unique characteristics of VETS. Plus, there is a senior VETS' employee in every state to assist wounded or injured service members. However, not all of the military's major MTFs have a full time assigned DVOP.

At first, co-ordination was successful through the Defense Department's Military Severely Injured Center, but the services started pulling back from total centralized support causing adjustments in VETS' deploying its resources working through its state workforce partners. When the emphasis shifted to the MTFs, VETS was prepared at Walter Reed, Bethesda Naval Hospital and Brooke Army Medical Center. Soon thereafter, excellent liaisons were established in Madigan at Fort Lewis and the San Diego Naval Hospital and part time DVOPS now cover most of the locations. Still these part-time DVOPS at a minimum should be assigned full-time.

VETS was able to offer some of these DVOPS temporary federal employment through the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) in order to provide continuity at the various sites. Unfortunately, a state employee is only able to work for four years before being required to be returned to their state position. Several experienced DVOPS have been lost because they were timed out. Also, the DVOP will often return at a lower salary than offered under the IPA program.

The Jobs for Veterans Act grant money was flat lined for several years prior to an increase in the last fiscal year, but this was not significant enough to give relief from inflationary pressures and changing state workforce needs. VETS has done an admirable job to meet the states' veterans employment workforce needs while highlighting the OIF/OEF wounded and injured rejoining the workforce in their choice of civilian locations. The committee recognizes that the services wish to be the primary sponsor of their separating service member's successful transition, but lacked the resources to handle all of their service members' employment needs. The committee applauds the Marine Corps successful change from Marines for Life to the Wounded Warrior Regiment and their request to have full time DVOPS stationed at their headquarters and major commands to provide employment services.

Therefore, it is the committee's recommendation that these DVOPS assigned to MTFs should become full time VETS employees. This would require an additional authorization of 12 more full time employees (FTEs) to VETS head count to cover major MTFs. This would give the VETS state director with an MTF an on site REALifelines coordinator for the wounded and injured with more accountability for a seamless transition of those leaving a MTF returning to their home state. It is estimated that an additional minimum appropriation of \$1.5 million would be needed to accomplish this recommendation.

Recent actions by the Congress have created similar positions. First, was the Federal Recovery Coordinator which was recommended by the Dole-Shalala Commission to provide long term guidance for the wounded and injured even after they left active duty. Last year, The Department of the Army was requested to establish Recovery Care Coordinators to oversee the needs of the patients at their MTFs. So having a full time VETS employment coordinator at the 12 major MTFs would provide strong continuity for transitioning wounded service members.

Continue funding increases and strengthen homeless veterans' employment programs.

The number of homeless veterans has been declining. The committee was impressed with VETS' successful efforts working with grantees to give homeless veterans meaningful employment opportunities. The Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) funded by VETS, is the only federal program wholly dedicated to providing employment assistance to homeless veterans. HVRP programs fill a special need because they serve veterans who may be shunned by other programs and services because of problems such as severe post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), long histories of substance abuse, serious psychosocial problems, legal issues and those who are HIV-positive. These veterans require more time-consuming, specialized, intensive assessment, referrals and counseling than is possible in other programs that work with veterans seeking employment.

The increased funding levels over the last several years, with strong measurable results, have made a difference in numerous veterans' lives. VETS estimates over 15,000 homeless veterans were served in FY 2008 with an appropriation of \$23.62 million. This figure, however, represents less than four percent of the overall homeless veterans' population, estimated at 400,000 over the course of the year. Based on the program's success in terms of employment outcomes for one of the most difficult populations to serve and its cost effectiveness as compared to other employment programs, the committee believes that funding should continue to increase to reach its authorized level at the earliest possible time.

So despite an overall decrease in homeless veterans the word of caution would be to assure that OIF/OEF veterans are not missed as the aging population of Vietnam veterans' moves forward. The economy is waning and veterans unemployment is increasing. The committee is aware of anecdotal evidence that some returning veterans may be experiencing difficulty finding employment. In particular; assistance to female veterans will be a bigger factor with the newest generation of veterans. Therefore funding at the congressionally authorized level is necessary.

Continue supporting and expanding The Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program

The committee similarly was pleased to learn of the success in helping rehabilitated veterans make a good transition to meaningful employment.

VETS managed the Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program (IVTP), a component of HVRP and previously authorized by Congress to assist ex-offender veterans at risk of homelessness re-enter the workforce. The IVTP added a strong dimension to HVRP and its success warrants Congress' further consideration. The two year pilot program had a 54% entered employment rate. Its success warrants reauthorization by the Congress and is recommended by the committee.

3. Employer Outreach and Spouse Employment

“Hiring and training veterans are not only the right things for businesses to do, but they are good for our nation...Companies that make a special effort to hire these talented individuals invariably tell us they are great, hardworking, and smart employees.”

Tom Donohue, Chairman and CEO, US Chamber of Commerce. December, 2007.

Develop strong coordinated employer outreach and training.

The committee was heartened by Tom Donohue’s statement at the end of 2007. As noted earlier, several members of the ACVETEO were previously members of the President’s National Hire Veterans Committee which started the HireVetsFirst marketing/outreach program in 2004. Its theme was echoed in Mr. Donohue’s words that hiring veterans makes good business sense.

The committee finds that its outreach assistance to the Assistant Secretary has been good. It is especially impressed with the more than 30,000 veterans who attended one of 117 job fairs staged around Veterans Day, 2007 and the 24,000 veterans who participated in 124 job fairs at the same time in 2008. These were mostly planned and executed by veteran’s employment representatives within the state workforce system. The committee was briefed on the significant media attention focused within numerous local labor markets communicating the value of veterans in the workforce. It recommends continued review of seeking similar opportunities to deliver a nationally coordinated message to local markets.

In an effort to develop greater communication, the committee developed a brochure outlining the best practices of companies who briefed the committee on their efforts to recruit veterans through their local workforce system or at the transitioning site for separating service members. The committee also encourages VETS to continue to reach out to the greater human resource community through professional organizations such as the Society for Human Resource Management. VETS should continue its outreach through trade associations to contact as many companies as possible with its message. As the Tom Donohue statement noted there is a synergistic effect to keep the message fresh in the market. The committee noted with interest the spike in traffic at the HireVetsFirst.gov website when a major communication effort was undertaken.

The committee recommends stronger focus and resources toward coordinated employer outreach. Our efforts must be focused on just on large business but all small businesses.

Develop more employment, training opportunities and awareness for military spouses, caregivers and survivors.

The committee recognizes that military spouse employment is critical to our national security and the impact it has in an all volunteer force. More than 50% of the members of

the military have a spouse. Issues surrounding spouse employment has recently come the forefront as a potential retention tool for the Department of Defense.

The committee was introduced to The Employment and Training Administration's Career Advancement Accounts pilot program launched in coordination with DOD at its November, 2007, meeting and received first hand accounts of its success during its August, 2008, San Diego meeting. It is also aware of several large retailers who make accommodations for employees who have a military spouse. Although not a direct mandate of VETS, the committee encourages VETS to assist where possible to help the military services with issues surrounding spouse, caregiver, and survivor employment, including but not limited to portable jobs, and self-employment.

COMMITTEE GOALS FOR 2009

The committee will carry on the HireVets First campaign and outreach activities inspired by the Presidents National Hire Veteran's Committee (PNHVC) throughout 2009.

The committee will:

Veteran's Employment and Employer Outreach

- complete an employer outreach packet and ongoing marketing/delivery plan to increase awareness and commitment from employers to hire veterans
- review and identify the best employment services for wounded and injured service members with special focus on recommendations affecting this population and their spouse/caregiver.
- continue investigating improved methods of Veteran's certifications for job skills that match those required in the public sector
- continue reviewing employers that have successful Veteran's hiring programs and transition programs
- review and make recommendations (if needed) for the timely investigation of all USERRA cases

Training

- monitor the progress on revisions to the TAP employment workshop programs
- review and make recommendations (if needed) for Guard and Reserve transition programs
- attend new and revised TAP workshops to provide additional improvements (if necessary)
- TBI/PTSD
- Spouse, caregivers, and survivors

Traumatic Brain Injury and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (TBI/PTSD)

TBI and PTSD are the signature injuries of the OEF/OIF. The committee was regularly briefed on efforts to assure a good transition for those veterans who suffered from these injuries. Therefore, it was extremely pleased by the efforts of VETS and Labor's Office of Disability Employment in 2008 to launch the America's Heroes at Work website to explain to employers and the private sector the successful efforts being undertaken to understand these injuries and how to assist a veteran with TBI/PTSD succeed in the workforce.

Additionally, the committee is concerned that veterans who receive a dishonorable discharge from the military are not identified and therefore, are not eligible for the services of a veterans' employment representative. The committee would like to explore this issue in the future.

The committee is eager to assist our Veterans in achieving a smooth transition from their military service to the civilian workforce and look forward to the challenges ahead.

The committee's ultimate goal, of improving employment opportunities and training for Veterans, will bring a better tomorrow for the many who have served and those who, in the future, will wish to serve their country by wearing its uniform.