

**STATEMENT OF  
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VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**

**BEFORE THE**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**JUNE 19, 2006  
ELLSWORTH AFB, SOUTH DAKOTA**

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before this Subcommittee to discuss the collaboration of the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) and our state and Federal partners in providing transition assistance to our returning veterans in South Dakota, especially our National Guard members and reservists.

The mission of the Veterans' Employment and Training Service is to provide veterans, transitioning service members, and eligible spouses with the resources and services to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workforce. One of the ways that we meet that mission is by providing employment workshops to separating active, Guard, and Reserve service members as part of their transition to civilian life.

As part of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), VETS conducts a comprehensive two and one-half day employment workshop where participants learn about job searches, career decision-making, current occupational and labor market conditions, resume and cover letter preparation, and interviewing techniques. Participants are also provided an evaluation of their employability relative to the job market and receive information on the most current veterans' benefits.

Ellsworth Air Force Base (AFB) was the home of the minuteman missiles during the Cold War. With the end of the Cold War, these missile sites were destroyed and the support units were deactivated. This led to many early-outs for the members of the Air Force stationed at the base and therefore, a very active Transition Assistance Program. The downsizing at Ellsworth AFB in the early 1990s not only involved the active duty Air Force personnel who operated the missile sites, but a large military security force that protected the sites from sabotage as well.

At that time, the Family Support Center was running as many as two or three employment workshops per month to keep up with the downsizing demands. The Transition Assistance Manager (TAM) at the Air Force Family Support Center was Betty Schuster, who as a former state employee (South Dakota Department of Labor, Job Service Division), worked very effectively with the Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists, who were presenters and facilitators at the employment workshops. The TAP employment program at Ellsworth worked so well during the downsizing that the U.S. Department of Labor named it one of the Department's most exemplary programs in the Nation.

The current Transition Assistance Manager is Ms. Karen Moore. Ms. Moore has worked tirelessly to improve the TAP program and expand its outreach. As part of her many efforts, she has also developed a Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) for South Dakota, to meet the needs of disabled service members who are transitioning out of the military.

A local Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed when TAP first started at Ellsworth which is still being followed today. The MOU was signed by the Base Commander, local Job Service Manager, the VA Regional Office Director and myself. An advisory council meets on a quarterly basis to discuss transition issues and to seek ways to improve the transition services. These meetings are chaired by the Transition Assistance Manager. This quarterly meeting usually consists of the local Job Service Manager, the VA representative, the Base Commander's representative, and federal transition staff from the Family Support Center. Presenters are also invited such as LVERs, DVOPs, and State Career Learning staff. Based on my schedule, I attend as many of these meetings as possible. I

receive the quarterly minutes from the Transition Assistance Manager and review and consider all advice from the council.

Since the Global War on Terror has required the greatest mobilization of National Guard and Reserve members since World War II, VETS recognizes the need to provide employment transition assistance and has taken the initiative to provide employment based briefings at demobilization sites for National Guard and Reserve Units. These briefings are held along with our other Federal and state partners. The two major demobilization locations in the Dallas Region, which South Dakota is part of, are Fort Sill in Lawton, Oklahoma and Fort Carson in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

My VETS counter-parts in Texas and Colorado conduct these briefings and make sure each and every returning service member from South Dakota has my name and office telephone number so we can schedule demobilization briefings and discuss other employment transition assistance needs.

In fiscal year 2005 we conducted 12 workshops in South Dakota that included 388 total participants, 12 of whom were spouses. In fiscal year 2006, through March 31, 2006, we conducted 7 workshops that included 169 total participants 9 of whom were National Guard and Reserve members. We did not track National Guard and Reserve members during FY 2005. There were no spouses reported as participating in the FY 2006 workshops.

Approximately one year ago, Lt. Col. Marshall Michaels of South Dakota National Guard visited the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) employment workshop classes here at Ellsworth AFB. With his support, we have been able to reach-out across South Dakota to National Guard members in need of this assistance and enroll them in the program here at Ellsworth AFB. With the correspondence, you will find a letter from the State National Guard headquarters thanking the TAP program for assisting members of the South Dakota National Guard.

In closing, I again thank you for allowing me to address you today on this very important issue and program. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.