

**Testimony**

**Of**

**William J. Behrendt  
Assistant Vice President – Human Resources  
Union Pacific Railroad**

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**Before the**

**House of Representative  
Committee on Veterans' Affairs**

Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Bill Behrendt, and I am an Assistant Vice President for Human Resources at Union Pacific Railroad. I have been with the company since 1979, and my current responsibilities include direction of Union Pacific's hiring efforts on a system-wide basis.

However, before I talk about our hiring efforts, I thought a little background about my company would be appropriate. Union Pacific Railroad is one of the leading transportation companies in America. The railroad's 32,400 miles of track links together 23 states in the western two-thirds of the country and serves the fastest growing U.S. population centers. Union Pacific's diversified business mix includes agriculture products, automobiles and auto parts, chemicals, energy, industrial products, and intermodal traffic. We offer competitive long-haul routes from all major West Coast and Gulf Coast ports to eastern gateways where we connect with the eastern railroads. We also connect with Canada's rail systems, and we are the only railroad serving all six major gateways to Mexico, making us North America's premier rail franchise.

Geographically, our company covers a lot of ground, and the thing that makes it all work is our 50,000 employees. Working for a railroad takes a special kind of person. We are a 24 hour a day, 7 day a week operation. Our factory is often outdoors so our people are required to work in all kinds of weather. The work is strenuous, and because we are a 24 by 7 operation, hours on duty may often vary. Our employees have to work

with large, heavy machinery, and because we want to ensure a safe place to work, safety rules are a very important part of our culture. The operation I just described should sound a lot like our Armed Forces, which is also why we recruit so heavily from the military for our employees.

We actively recruit and hire former military people because their skills and lifestyles are a great fit for the railroad. Many of the railroad's technical jobs – such as diesel locomotive mechanics, electricians, and railcar mechanics – are well suited for military members who have developed similar skills working with large equipment in the Armed Forces. In addition, lifestyles and working conditions are also similar, military personnel tend to be flexible when it comes to relocation, and are typically safety conscious and rules oriented.

All these attributes make military personnel great hires for the railroad, and we have five recruiters who spend about 50 percent of their time on military recruiting. Our recruiters attend military job fairs and transitional assistance programs, and regularly visit major military installations. Twelve percent of our company's advertising budget is spent on advertising in military publications. We continuously advertise in GI Jobs, TAONLINE, Military Times, and the Army Career and Alumni Program web site. In addition, Union Pacific fully intends to partner with the new "Army Partnership for Youth Success" – the Army PAYS program<sup>1</sup>.

We are keeping our recruiters very busy these days as we have an aggressive hiring program. Changes to the Railroad Retirement System that were enacted at the end of 2001 that allow people with 30 years of service to retire at age 60, along with a strong surge in business that started in 2003, have caused us to hire roughly 16,000 people over the last three years. Depending on the economy, we are anticipating the need to hire an additional 3,000 to 5,000 new employees each year for the next five years.

Once hired, we believe we provide an excellent environment for former military personnel. We have an Operations Management Training Program that provides an opportunity to do truly meaningful work with an established industry leader while building a career. At Union Pacific, these managers are given real leadership responsibilities along with many opportunities for rapid advancement. Military applicants with college degrees also have the opportunity to be hired directly into this program.

We also provide a solid home for those in the military who stay in the Reserve or National Guard. If called upon for active duty, Union Pacific provides the difference in pay between what the employee receives while serving and what they would have received at Union Pacific. In addition, our medical plan continues to cover the reservist as well as any dependent family members during their period of active duty.

Union Pacific's history of hiring military personnel dates back to its very beginning. At the end of the Civil War, many soldiers were hired by Union Pacific to help build the first transcontinental railroad. We still continue that tradition today, and we are very pleased to be named by G.I Jobs magazine as the nation's top Military Friendly Employer for 2005.

To the best of my knowledge Union Pacific does not receive any Federal grant or contract related to our efforts in recruiting military personnel for employment at Union Pacific Railroad.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my remarks and I would be please to answer any questions.

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<sup>1</sup> The Army PAYS program allows the recruit to select a career and join the military and receive technical training required by that career. Upon completion of their military duty, that person would then be encouraged to interview with the industry selected during the recruiting process.

**William J. Behrendt**

Mr. Behrendt currently serves as Assistant Vice President – Human Resources for Union Pacific Railroad. He has been with Union Pacific since 1979 and has worked in all areas of human resources. Bill has been responsible for hiring since 1999.

Mr. Behrendt was born on September 13, 1952. He received a degree in psychology from Creighton University in 1974. Bill is married with three children.