

STATEMENT OF  
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NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT POLICY  
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON BENEFITS  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WITH RESPECT TO

H.R. 4015  
THE "JOBS FOR VETERANS ACT"

WASHINGTON, D.C.

APRIL 18, 2002

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

On behalf of the 2.7 million members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) and our Ladies Auxiliary, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in today's legislative hearing on H.R. 4015, the "Jobs for Veterans Act" which was introduced by the Chairman of this Subcommittee; both the Chairman and Ranking Democrat of the full committee; as well as Representatives Reyes; Quinn; and Shows. This bill would revise and improve the employment, training and placement services provided to veterans.

The relationship between veterans, disabled veterans, and employment is vital to public policy and today's economic environment. Veterans, and particularly disabled veterans, often encounter barriers to their entry into the workforce. Many have difficulty obtaining appropriate training, education and job skills. These in turn contribute to low-income levels, low labor force participation rates and high levels of reliance on public benefits.

The stated mission of the Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) is to help veterans, reservists, and National Guard members in securing employment, training, and the rights and benefits associated with their military service. The key elements of VETS' mission are enforcement, veterans' preference, employment and training assistance; public information service; inter-agency liaison, and training.

What must be paramount within VETS is ensuring that veterans get the maximum employment and training opportunities within the workforce and the service provided be held accountable. This effort should extend beyond the priority of services provided by the federal public employment service system and the efforts of the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans Employment Representative staffs (LVERs). Efforts to identify federal contractors and subcontractors, the Transition Assistance Program, marketing to employers, ensuring that veterans preference is given for federal jobs, and facilitating use of knowledge, skills and abilities of separating service member in the civilian labor market do not show in traditional departmental information collections. Thus VETS must initiate interventions that incorporate set objectives that match the interventions planned.

H.R. 4015 contains several provisions, which are intended to improve the employment and training services to veterans. Section II of the bill defines priority of service to veterans who have a service-connected disability; have received a campaign badge; or certain spouses of veterans.

Section II also provides that in the case of federal contracts and subcontracts in the amount of \$100,000 or more, the contractor shall take affirmative action to employ and advance qualified veterans, to include the listing of employment opening through the appropriate employment delivery systems and priority of referral for those openings.

The VFW supports the provisions of Section II. As previously stated though, the VFW strongly believes enforcement is the key to success. Businesses must be required to comply with the law if they are to continue to be awarded federal contracts.

Section III would establish performance standards and outcome measures beginning in fiscal year 2004. Such standards, to provide a level of accountability, shall be consistent as mandated under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. In order to assist states in the delivery of employment services, the Secretary shall make grants to states utilizing a pre-described formula. In addition to these “base grants”, the Secretary shall make “incentive grants” to state that the Secretary determines has met a predetermined minimum, standards.

Section III also provides for the creation of a “virtual” one-stop veterans’ job services “office” worldwide in order to furnish assistance electronically via the Internet.

The VFW supports section III

Section IV of H.R. 4015 refines the job training and placement functions within the Department. Along with the establishment of an Assistant and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Veterans’ Employment and Training, Section IV provides for a performance based accountability system designed to ensure veterans receive the job placement assistance they have earned and deserve. A set of standards and measurements would be implemented in order to assess the effectiveness of veterans’ employment and training staff. These standards and measurements would be consistent with State performance measures applicable with the “Workforce Investment Act of 1998” and be appropriately weighted to provide special consideration for the placement of veterans requiring intensive services as well as those who enroll in readjustment counseling. The VFW has long called for those who provide employment assistance to our nation’s veteran to be held accountable and we support the implementation of standards and measurements to accomplish this.

The VFW also supports the provision in Section IV, which maintains the National Veterans Employment and Training Services Institute (NVETSI). We view NVETSI as a crucial element in providing veterans with an effective employment system.

It is also noted that States shall, “to the extent practicable”, appoint qualified veterans in the positions of DVOPs and LVERs. The VFW urges the bill be amended to require that veterans

fill these positions. We firmly believe there are enough qualified veterans available that the language “to the extent practicable” can be struck.

Section V makes additional improvements in Veterans Employment and Training Services by including “intensive services” such as local involvement as provided in the “Workforce Investment Act of 1998.” The section also directs VETS to implement efforts to assist veterans in transitioning military career skills to the private sector; modernize employment services delivery systems; and increase the accuracy of reporting services provided to veterans.

The VFW supports the provision of Section V.

Section VI addresses the issue of raising employer awareness of the skills veterans’ possess and the benefits of hiring veterans. The bill creates the “President’s National Hire Veterans Committee” to market the employment attributes of veterans to employer.

The VFW supports section VI.

Section VII encourages military service organizations to provide job placement assistance to veterans by making personal computers available at local posts. The VFW is currently promoting this activity and therefore supports this section of H.R. 4015.

Section VIII requires a study to quantify the economic benefits related to the long-term, sustained employment of veterans.

The VFW supports section VIII.

This concludes my statement. I will be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

James N. Magill, Director  
National Veterans Employment Policy  
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States

James N. Magill, a native of the Chicago suburb Aurora, Illinois has been a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Washington Office staff since 1981 and is currently the Director of National Veterans Employment Policy.

Prior to being honorably discharged from the U.S. Navy in 1971 as a Hospital corpsman 2<sup>nd</sup> class, Jim served in Vietnam as a Rifle Platoon Corpsman and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Marines, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division. Upon his discharge, he joined the staff of U.S. House of Representatives as a Legislative Analyst responsible for legislation relating to veterans affairs. While working of the House of Representatives, he attended evening classes at George Washington University under the GI Bill where he earned his degree in Business Administration.

Jim resigned his position with the U.S. House of Representatives to join the Washington Legislative Staff as a Special Assistant Director and then later became the Director of National Legislative Service.

Currently as the Director for Veterans Employment Policy, Mr. Magill maintains liaison with federal officials. He works to ensure that policies and procedures for assisting veterans in obtaining and retaining federal employment are carried out in accordance with the spirit and intent of established laws.

He and his family reside in Gaithersburg, Maryland.

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