

**TESTIMONY SUBMITTED
FOR RECORD
BY
NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**

**BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON BENEFITS**

APRIL 18, 2002

New Jersey Department of Labor respectfully submits to the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee of Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Benefits, our testimony on H.R. 4015 or the "Jobs for Veterans Act".

We appreciate the opportunity to present our thoughts on this legislation, which generally reflects our view on how the Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veteran Employment Representative (LVER) program should be administered.

In that New Jersey was one of the first states to establish a One-Stop system under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, we recognize the importance of incorporating services to our veteran customer into the One-Stop Career System and are encouraged that H.R. 4015 supports the utilization of the One-Stop delivery system.

It is our pleasure to comment on the following topics.

Eligibility for Funds

Although the bill makes each LVER administratively responsible to the manager of the employment service delivery system, it does not specifically provide that those funds be awarded to the employment service delivery system. The State of New Jersey recommends a clarification in the bill to ensure that the funds available to each State by grant or contract to support the DVOP and LVER programs be awarded directly to the employment service delivery system.

Priority of Service for Veterans in the Department of Labor Job Training Programs

The State of New Jersey fully supports broadening the mandate to provide "priority of service to veterans" in all DOL Job Training programs, in addition to the separate Section 168 programs under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. We attempt to do this now for all of our programs and are encouraged that this provision would be enacted into law.

Performance Incentive Awards for Quality Veteran Employment Training and Placement Services

We welcome the initiative of an incentive program that would reward us for performance excellence. New Jersey has continually met and exceeded established standards of performance, which have always been above the baseline set by the U.S. Department of Labor. The receipt of a monetary award would enable us to further expand our services to veterans and would allow for recognition of these services in a concrete way.

Refinement of Job Training and Placement Function of the Department

This bill eliminates the existing staffing formula for the veterans' job training assistance program. It provides for the Assistant Secretary to make funds available in each State, as may be necessary to support the program. New

Jersey recommends that a baseline or minimum level of funding be established in order to provide continuity of services to veterans from one year to the next.

Duties of DVOP and LVERs to Our Veteran Customers

We believe that the Secretary of Labor should seek State input when developing the duties of DVOPs and LVERs. Because of the uniqueness of each State's One-Stop system, States must be allowed some flexibility in integrating DVOP/LVER staff into their One-Stop operations.

We note that the bill does not require that DVOPs and LVERs have veteran status. We would request that the bill mandates a provision of veteran status for incumbents of these positions and a further requirement that DVOPs also be disabled veterans.

National Veterans Employment Training Services Institute (NVTI)

We are pleased that NVTI is retained as a training source to provide professional staff development to DVOPs, LVERs and other staff. This training source is necessary to provide uniform training among all staff involved with veterans employment programs.

NVTI training has been an invaluable service in enhancing the performance level of the local veterans' representatives. In changing times it is of extreme importance to have highly trained and competent individuals assisting the veteran customer at the One-Stop Career Centers. Due to world situations we will soon see an increase in veterans entering the workforce. These new veterans will have a number of unique barriers to employment that the DVOPs and the LVERs should be trained to recognize and address.

The New Jersey Department of Labor supports H.R. 4015 in concept. It is our belief that this bill will enhance the services to our veteran customer. We thank the Committee for this opportunity to address this important piece of legislation.