



Military Skills for America's Future: Leveraging Military Service and Experience to Put Veterans and Military Spouses Back to Work

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Executive Summary

Military Skills for America's Future: Leveraging Military Service and Experience to Put Veterans and Military Spouses Back to Work

This report analyzes the labor market situation of America's veterans, discusses the problems that returning veterans and military spouses face as they seek to enter or re-enter civilian employment, and outlines the measures the Administration has taken to address these labor market problems.

- **Veterans and military families face unique challenges in the labor market.**
 - Despite having valuable military experience that in many cases is transferrable to high growth civilian jobs, veterans frequently find formal private sector recognition of their military experiences and skill sets difficult to obtain.
 - Frequent moves combined with different requirements for occupational licenses across state lines can make it difficult and costly for veterans and spouses of active duty military to find a job.
- **These regular challenges have been compounded by the recession that began in December of 2007**, causing veterans and military spouses to experience even greater obstacles than they have always faced in transitioning from military to civilian life or finding a new job following a move.
- **The Obama Administration has responded aggressively to the challenges faced by veterans and military spouses in the labor market, developing policies tailored to these challenges.** Since taking office, President Obama has taken key steps to support veterans in developing skills and finding work. These have included:
 - **Expanding opportunities to obtain civilian credentials and licensing required for high-growth, high-demand occupations:** On June 1st the President will announce a *We Can't Wait* initiative that will enable service members to more easily obtain the civilian credentials and licensing required for high-growth, high-demand occupations, starting with certifications in manufacturing. The Department of Defense, at the President's direction, has established a Military Credentialing and Licensing Task Force that will identify opportunities for service members to earn civilian occupational credentials and licenses. The Task Force's first action will offer up to 126,000 service members the opportunity to gain machinist, logistics, welding, and engineering certifications for high-demand manufacturing jobs.
 - **Creating two new veterans' tax credits:** In November 2011, the President signed into law two new tax credits for hiring veterans, both of which had been proposed as part of

the American Jobs Act. The Returning Heroes Tax Credit provides an incentive of up to \$5,600 for firms to hire unemployed veterans and the Wounded Warrior Tax Credit doubles to up to \$9,600 the previous tax credit for long-term unemployed veterans with service-connected disabilities.

- **Challenging the private sector to hire or train 100,000 veterans and their spouses by 2013:** Since the President issued his challenge to the private sector in August 2011, the private sector has made commitments to hire 175,000 veterans and more than 70,000 veterans and their spouses have been hired to date through the leadership of First Lady Michelle Obama, Dr. Jill Biden and their Joining Forces initiative.
- **Ensuring that the federal government is a role model in hiring highly-qualified veterans:** In November 2009, President Obama signed an Executive Order with the goal of expanding the opportunities that veterans have for employment in the Federal government. Since its signing, there have been significant increases in the veteran share of Federal hiring and employment.
- **Improving access to intensive reemployment services:** Post-9/11 veterans are now able to download the Veteran Gold Card, which entitles them to enhanced reemployment services, including six months of personalized case management, assessments and counseling at the roughly 3,000 One-Stop Career Centers located across the country.
- **Developing online tools to help veterans find work:** The Administration launched the Veterans Jobs Bank, an easy-to-use tool to help veterans find job postings from companies looking to hire them. The Jobs Bank already contains over 800,000 job postings and is growing. Additionally, the Department of Labor launched *My Next Move for Veterans*, a new online resource that allows veterans to enter their military occupation code and discover civilian occupations for which they are well qualified.

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Members of the U.S. Armed Forces and their families make great sacrifices in the service of our Nation. Frequent moves and lengthy deployments can take a toll on these dedicated men and women and their loved ones. When their service is concluded, we owe it to our veterans and their families to help them accomplish a successful transition to the civilian labor market. All too often, however, these talented and dedicated individuals face barriers that can make it difficult to find jobs that make use of their skills. Frequent moves and the resulting need to search for new employment can be a significant problem for military spouses, especially when getting a job in a new state requires obtaining a new occupational license. They, too, deserve our help.

Yet even with many Americans, including veterans and their spouses, still looking for work, some industries are having difficulty filling jobs that require specific skills and qualifications. In the coming years, America will need to fill millions of good-paying mid- and high-level skilled positions in high-growth industries from healthcare to advanced manufacturing, clean energy to information technology. Our military spends billions each year to provide veterans with world class training across diverse disciplines, often aligning veterans’ skill sets with the needs of the fastest growing private sector industries. According to a report by the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University, “military experience, on average, exposes individuals to highly advanced technology and technology training at a rate that is accelerated relative to non-military, age group peers” (Institute for Veterans and Military Families, 2012). Leveraging the skills of our military veterans and their families will build a stronger workforce and a more competitive economy.

The Obama Administration is committed to helping our veterans and military spouses who seek employment in the civilian labor market, while also helping to meet the needs of America’s employers for skilled and reliable employees. This report describes the labor market situation of America’s veterans—focusing in particular on the situation of recent veterans who have served during the post-9/11 period of engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan—and America’s military spouses, and discusses the problems that returning veterans and military spouses face as they seek to enter or re-enter civilian employment. The report then outlines the measures the Administration has taken to ensure that these men and women are well positioned to fill civilian jobs that make use of their skills and abilities.

LABOR MARKET CHALLENGES FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

Veterans in the Labor Market

As of 2011, the civilian population included 21.6 million men and women ages 18 and older who have served in our Armed Forces. This figure includes approximately 2.4 million veterans who have served since September 2001, sometimes referred to as post-9/11 veterans or, alternatively, as Iraq and Afghanistan-era veterans.¹ Table 1 provides an overview of the characteristics of the current veteran population generally and the post-9/11 veteran population specifically.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Veterans and Non-Veterans Age 18 and Older, 2011 (percent distribution)

		Post-9/11 Veterans	All Veterans	Non-Veterans
	Total	100%	100%	100%
Sex	Male	83.0%	91.7%	44.0%
	Female	17.0%	8.3%	56.0%
Age	18-24	12.5%	1.4%	13.9%
	25-34	51.0%	7.4%	19.0%
	35-44	17.3%	10.9%	17.7%
	45+	19.2%	80.3%	49.3%
Race/ Ethnicity	White	78.1%	85.4%	80.1%
	Black or African American	16.5%	10.9%	12.2%
	Asian	2.0%	1.2%	5.2%
	Other race	3.4%	2.5%	2.6%
	Hispanic ethnicity (any race)	12.0%	5.8%	15.0%
Education	Less than a high school diploma	1.1%	6.5%	13.1%
	High school graduate, no college	25.1%	32.2%	30.6%
	Some college or associate degree	44.8%	34.2%	25.5%
	Bachelor's degree and higher	29.0%	27.2%	30.8%
Disability Status	Service-connected disability	26.4%	13.7%	n.a.
	No service-connected disability	57.1%	69.6%	n.a.
	Presence of disability not reported	16.4%	16.7%	n.a.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics. Estimates by disability status are available only for August 2011; other entries are 2011 annual averages.

n.a. = not applicable

Although a larger share of recent veterans are female than was the case among veterans of earlier eras, veterans remain disproportionately male. Higher shares of recent veterans are African American or Hispanic. And recent veterans are better educated than those in earlier cohorts—fewer lack a high school diploma and more have completed at least some college. Nearly twice

¹ These and other estimates contained in this report are based on Current Population Survey (CPS) data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

as many recent veterans report having a service-connected disability (26.4 percent) as do veterans overall (13.7 percent). In addition to physical disabilities, since 2002 about 217,000 post-9/11 veterans have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), an anxiety disorder induced by exposure to a traumatic event (Veterans Health Administration 2012).

Re-entry into the civilian labor market can be difficult even in a strong economy. Although many veterans have acquired substantial job skills during their time in the military, job searches take time and military experience does not always appear to translate directly to the civilian labor market (see, for example Goldberg and Warner, 1987; Angrist 1990; Bryant, Samaranayake and Wilhite, 1993; and Hirsch and Mehay, 2003). One specific issue may be that civilian employers simply do not know how to read a military resume. For example, civilian recruiters may be unfamiliar with military occupational titles. In a recent poll conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management, 78 percent of employers responded that a skills map that translates military job skills into civilian jobs skills would help in their companies' efforts to recruit and hire veterans (Minton-Eversole 2012). Veterans also could be better prepared to write in the civilian vernacular about their skills and experience. In other cases, the lack of a formal credential that demonstrates what a veteran knows and satisfies licensing requirements can be a barrier to obtaining civilian employment.

Many recent veterans have come home to a labor market weakened by the Great Recession that began in December of 2007, a recession from which the country is recovering but has not yet fully recovered. Weak labor market conditions have exacerbated the usual frictions that veterans have always faced in making the transition from military to civilian life.

The 2011 unemployment rate for all veterans (8.3 percent) was actually a bit below the overall unemployment rate for those who have never served in the military (8.7 percent) (see Table 2). This is a testament to the skills, determination, and discipline of veterans: Despite any possible initial problems in translating their military experience to the civilian environment, given time, these veterans have been able to demonstrate positive attributes that civilian employers find desirable. In contrast, the unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans—many of whom separated from military service relatively recently—averaged 12.1 percent in 2011. And the unemployment rate for the youngest post-9/11 veterans—those aged 18 to 24—was 30.2 percent, much higher than the 16.1 percent unemployment rate for non-veterans in the same age group. While unemployment rates for groups broken out this finely are imprecisely estimated and should be interpreted with caution, in 2007 the unemployment rate even for veterans aged 18-24 (11.7 percent) was more similar to that for non-veterans the same age (9.5 percent).²

To look more closely at how the unemployment rates of recently-separated veterans have evolved, Figure 1 plots the three-month moving average of unemployment rates for Iraq and Afghanistan-era veterans, beginning in January 2006, together with the overall unemployment rate for non-veterans. From early 2010 through the end of 2011, the moving average

²Savych, Klerman, and Loughran (2008) discuss the sample-size-related limitations of using estimates based on CPS data to identify changes in veteran youth unemployment rates over time.

unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans generally was higher than the unemployment rate for non-veterans, though in most months this difference was not statistically meaningful given the imprecision of the estimates. Because Iraq and Afghanistan-era veterans differ substantially in their other personal characteristics from the typical non-veteran, it could be a misleading to compare post-9/11 veterans to non-veterans overall (McIntosh, Lien, and Griffis, 2012). Accordingly, we have re-weighted the data for non-veterans, so that, after re-weighting, the characteristics of the non-veterans (gender, age, race, ethnicity and education) match those of the post-9/11 veterans (Hainmueller 2012). Re-weighting the data has relatively little effect on the recent estimates. The unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans has declined markedly since December—the three-month moving average unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans has dropped from 12.1 percent in December to 9.9 percent in February and 9.0 percent in both March and April, closer to the three-month average for non-veterans with similar characteristics..

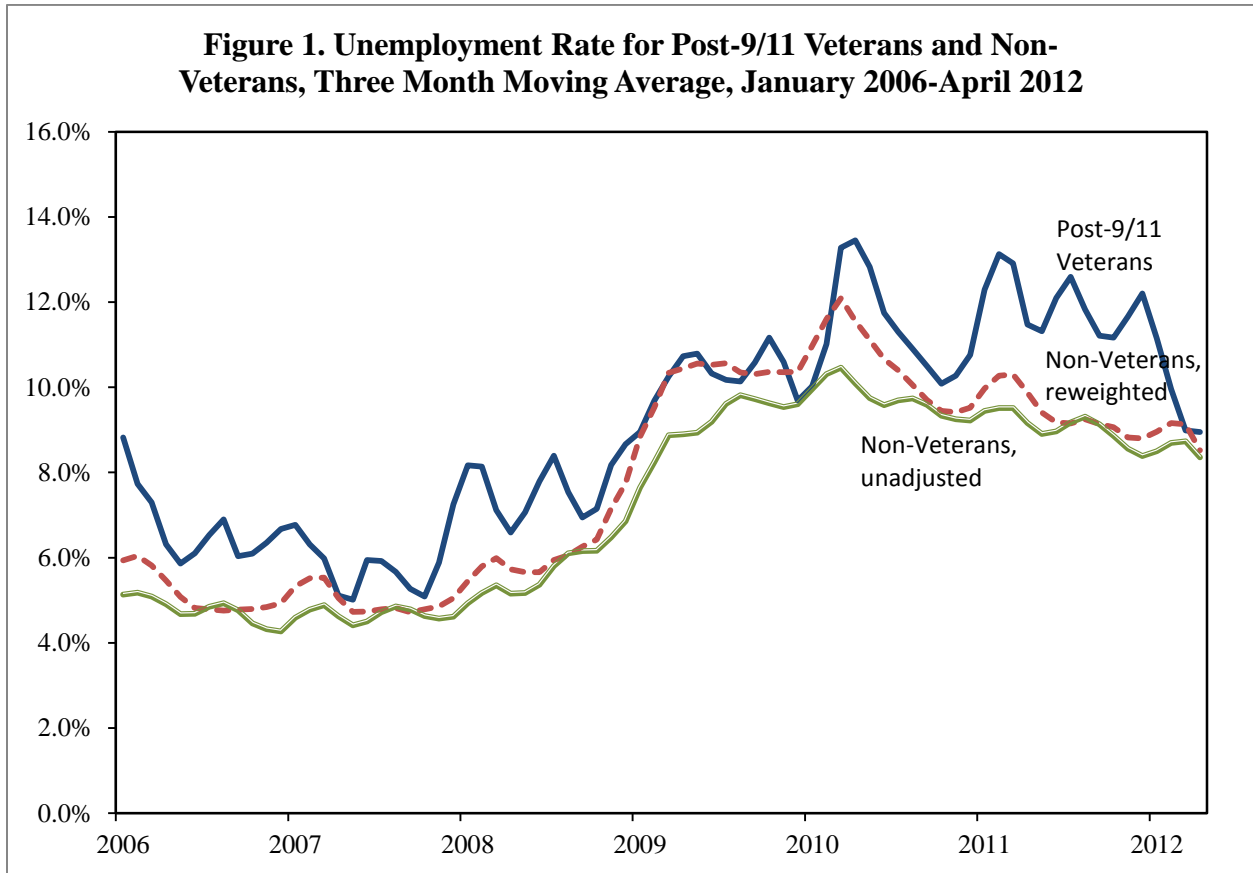
Table 2: Unemployment Rates of Veterans and Non-Veterans Age 18 and Older, 2011 (percent)

		Post-9/11 Veterans	All Veterans	Non-Veterans
	All	12.1%	8.3%	8.7%
Sex	Male	12.0%	8.3%	9.3%
	Female	12.4%	9.1%	8.2%
Age	18-24	30.2%	30.2%	16.1%
	25-34	13.0%	12.0%	9.3%
	35-44	6.0%	7.2%	7.3%
	45+	4.9%	7.4%	6.8%
Race/ Ethnicity	White	11.4%	7.8%	7.7%
	Black or African American	14.3%	11.2%	15.8%
	Asian	7.1%	4.8%	7.0%
	Hispanic ethnicity (any race)	17.0%	9.8%	11.2%
Education	Less than a high school diploma	n.a.	12.7%	14.1%
	High school graduate, no college	12.5%	9.2%	9.4%
	Some college or associate	11.0%	8.8%	7.9%
	Bachelor's degree and higher	6.1%	5.2%	4.3%
Disability Status	Service-connected disability	12.1%	8.5%	n.a.
	No service-connected disability	9.5%	7.9%	n.a.
	Presence of disability not	7.5%	6.3%	n.a.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics. Estimates by disability status are available only for August 2011; other entries are 2011 annual averages. The unemployment rate in August 2011 was 9.8 percent for post-9/11 veterans and 7.7 percent for all veterans, not seasonally adjusted.
n.a. = not available or not applicable

Veterans with service-connected disabilities experience particular difficulty in re-entering the civilian labor market. As has already been noted, the incidence of service-connected disabilities

is higher among post-9/11 veterans than among previous veteran cohorts, and a significant portion of veterans have been diagnosed with mental health conditions.



Source: Council of Economic Advisers tabulations of Current Population Survey data. Estimates are not seasonally adjusted. The reweighted estimates for non-veterans were produced using weights constructed to reproduce the gender, age, race, ethnicity, and education characteristics of post-9/11 veterans in the non-veteran sample.

Monthly data on labor force status by presence of a disability are not available, but this information is collected periodically through a special supplement to the Current Population Survey, last administered in August 2011. In that month, the labor force participation rate among post-9/11 veterans with any service-connected disability (80.0 percent) was modestly lower than the rate for veterans of the same era without a service-connected disability (83.7 percent), but veterans with the most severe service-connected disabilities were much less likely to be in the labor force (57.8 percent). Unemployment was higher for post-9/11 veterans with a service-connected disability (12.1 percent) than for post-9/11 veterans reporting no such disability (9.5 percent), and even higher (14.4 percent) for those in the most-disabled category. In addition to facing higher unemployment rates than veterans overall, veterans with a service-connected disability also have lower earnings, and those veterans whose primary disability is a mental disability have been found to suffer the largest earnings losses (Christensen et al 2007).

Military Spouses in the Labor Market

Military spouses experience a number of unique problems as well as some of the same problems in the civilian labor market as are experienced by returning veterans. Because they move frequently, military spouses who desire to work are more likely to find themselves looking for a job than are similarly-situated civilian spouses. According to a recent report, military spouses are ten times more likely to have moved across state lines in the last year compared to their civilian counterparts: Taking an average for the years 2007 through 2011, 15.2 percent of military spouses moved across state lines each year, compared to just 1.1 percent of civilian spouses (Department of the Treasury and Department of Defense, 2012). For an employed spouse, moving typically will require searching for a new job in a new location. Further, the same report finds that nearly 35 percent of military spouses who are in the labor force work in occupations that commonly require an occupational license. These include spouses who work as teachers, child care workers, registered nurses, accountants and auditors, and dental assistants. Because these licenses are generally state-specific, these military spouses must re-qualify every time their husband or wife is transferred to a new assignment to continue to work in their profession, a process that can be time-consuming and burdensome (see Kleiner 2000, 2006 for discussion of state licensing requirements). Additionally, these frequent relocations provide other setbacks to military spouses in the form of job tenure and advancement opportunities. Employed military spouses who are forced to relocate and find a new job often are forced to forego position tenure and the associated stability, promotions, and financial benefits this can offer in many careers.

Table 3 reports basic information on the characteristics of the spouses of active duty military residing in the United States. The large majority of these active duty military spouses are female. For this reason, before making any comparisons between military spouses and civilian spouses, we have reweighted the data for the civilian spouses to match the gender shares of the military spouses. In addition, as is true of the members of the armed forces, military spouses are considerably younger than the population overall, and we therefore also offer comparisons that look only at civilian spouses between the ages of 18 and 45, again reweighted to match the gender shares of the military spouses. Even within this age group, active duty military spouses tend to be younger than civilian spouses, with the largest share in the 25-34 year age range. Compared to civilian spouses aged 18 to 45 with the same gender distribution, the spouses of active duty military are more likely to have graduated from high school and more likely to have completed at least some college.

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of Active Duty Spouses and Civilian Spouses, 2011
(percent distribution)

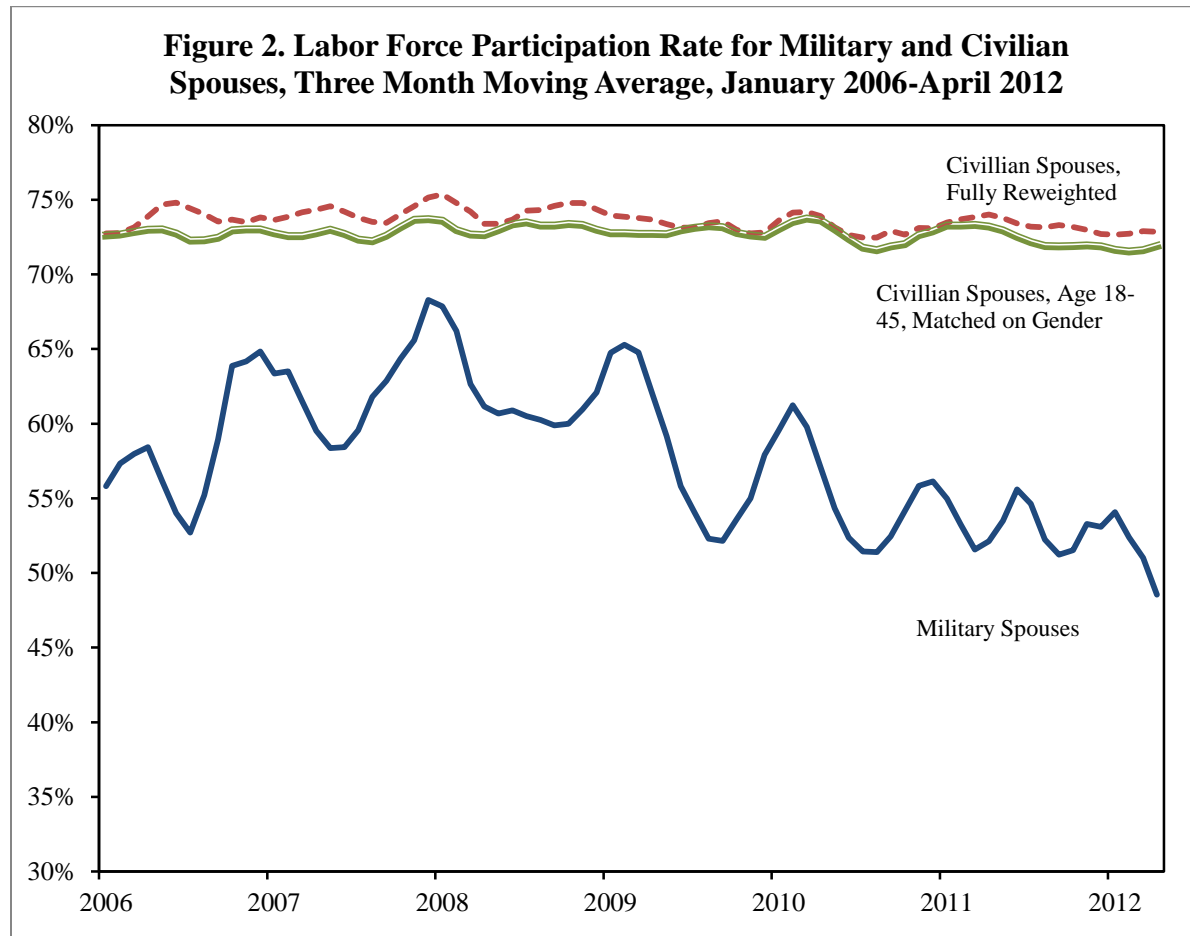
		Military Spouses	Civilian Spouses, Gender Reweighted	Civilian Spouses Age 18-45, Gender Reweighted
Total		100%	100%	100%
Sex	Male	6.7%	6.7%	6.7%
	Female	93.3%	93.3%	93.3%
Age	18-24	17.7%	2.9%	6.6%
	25-34	44.1%	16.6%	37.7%
	35-44	27.1%	22.2%	50.3%
	45+	11.0%	58.3%	5.4%
Race/ Ethnicity	White	79.1%	84.9%	82.7%
	Black or African American	11.8%	7.5%	8.1%
	Asian	4.8%	5.7%	6.9%
	Other race	4.3%	1.9%	2.3%
	Hispanic ethnicity (any race)	10.6%	12.8%	18.3%
Education	Less than a high school diploma	2.9%	10.6%	10.2%
	High school graduates, no college	22.7%	30.5%	25.3%
	Some college or associated	43.0%	26.8%	27.9%
	Bachelor's degree and higher	31.4%	32.1%	36.6%

Source: Council of Economic Advisers tabulations of Current Population Survey data. Estimates are 2011 annual averages and include military spouses residing in the United States who live in the same household as the military service member.

Especially for military spouses who need an occupational license in order to work in their chosen occupation, the frequent moves associated with the military career of a husband or wife can be a significant impediment to employment. Evidence of this can be seen in statistics on the labor force participation rates and unemployment rates of the spouses of active duty military as compared to civilian spouses. Over the five year period from 2007 through 2011, the labor force participation rate for active duty military spouses averaged 58.0 percent; that for civilian spouses in the 18-45 year age range averaged 72.8 percent, after adjusting the data to match the gender distribution of the military spouses. Reweighting the data for civilian spouses to fully match the gender, age, race, ethnicity and education characteristics of active duty spouses produced an estimated civilian spouse labor force participation rate of 73.7 percent. Similarly, military spouses have a notably higher average unemployment rate (10.1 percent) over the years 2007-2011 than do similar civilian spouses (5.2 percent accounting for gender and looking only at civilian spouses aged 18-45; 5.4 percent after fully reweighting the data for the civilian spouses to match the gender, age, race, ethnicity and education characteristics of the military spouses).

Figure 2 displays the three-month moving average labor force participation rate for military spouses from January 2006 through April 2012. Two civilian comparisons are offered—one consisting of data for civilian spouses age 18-45, reweighted to match the gender distribution of

the military spouses, and a second consisting of data for civilian spouses reweighted to match additional characteristics of the military spouses (age, race, ethnicity and education in addition to gender). In all years shown in the figure, the labor force participation rates for active duty spouses have been lower than those of the civilian spouses; since the end of 2008, the start of the very sharp declines in employment in the U.S. labor market associated with the recent Great Recession, while the estimates are somewhat imprecise, that gap appears to have widened.



Source: Council of Economic Advisers tabulations of Current Population Survey data. Estimates are not seasonally adjusted. The fully reweighted estimates for civilian spouses were produced using weights constructed to reproduce the education, age, race, ethnicity, and gender characteristics of military spouses in the civilian spouse sample.

Unemployment rates for active duty spouses also have tended to be higher than those for their civilian counterparts, with the gap between the two groups again having widened since the end of 2008. As was the case for recent veterans, it appears that military spouses may have experienced increased job-finding difficulties during this period.

POLICY AND PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT EMPLOYMENT IN MILITARY FAMILIES

Military veterans have served and sacrificed in defense of our Nation. President Obama is committed to doing everything in his power to assist these veterans in re-entering civilian life and finding employment. Administration policies to help veterans transition to private-sector employment include expanded reemployment services, such as the Veterans Job Bank, and initiatives to expand the number of jobs for veterans. The Obama Administration also has made a commitment to support military families, and has called on the Federal government and private employers to play a prominent role in helping veterans and military spouses find jobs.

Easing the Transition to Civilian Careers

When military service members leave active duty, they may have trouble finding civilian jobs. A veteran entering private sector employment for the first time may lack the familiarity with effective job search strategies that someone with civilian work experience could be expected to have. Some veterans may have held jobs that do not exist in the civilian world and others may have a hard time figuring out how to use the skills they acquired in the military in a different context, even where those skills are more directly applicable. Recognizing these issues, this Administration has taken a number of steps to help veterans who are transitioning to the civilian workforce.

One important program designed to help service members successfully reintegrate into civilian life is the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), an interagency effort among the Departments of Labor (DOL), Veterans Affairs (VA), Defense (DOD) and Homeland Security (DHS). Through TAP, DOL provides a comprehensive two-and-a-half-day voluntary Employment Workshop at U.S. military installations around the world to assist separating service members and their spouses transition from the military to civilian employment. In 2011, for example, the Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) at DOL provided more than 4,200 TAP Employment Workshops to nearly 145,000 participants at domestic and overseas locations.

To build on the existing TAP program, in August 2011, the President called for the creation of a Veterans Employment Initiative Task Force for a Career-Ready Military led by DOD and VA with other agencies including DOL, the Department of Education, the Small Business Administration, and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), to develop proposals to maximize the career readiness of all service members. This effort will transform the services' approach to education, training, and credentialing for service members, and bolster and standardize the counseling services that service members receive prior to separating from the military. The program will be designed to give separating service members a clear path to civilian employment; to success in an academic or technical training program; or to the successful start-up of an independent business entity or non-profit organization. The VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, which the President signed into law in November 2011, complements the work of the DOD/VA Task Force by requiring, with minimal exceptions, service member participation in all TAP components.

In response to external assessments and participant feedback, VETS recently revised the curriculum for TAP and is currently piloting a redesigned Employment Workshop at 11 test sites that it plans to have fully implemented at all locations by November 2012.

Like all Americans, veterans have access to almost 3,000 American Job Centers across the country that offer job search assistance to those seeking employment. Veterans receive priority of service for many of the programs offered at these Job Centers, including Workforce Investment Act employment services and training. Through the Jobs for Veterans State Grants program administered by VETS, the majority of these job centers have dedicated staff members who provide services to veterans. The Obama Administration has made veterans a priority through the Veteran Gold Card program, launched on November 7, 2011. With the Veteran Gold Card, veterans are ensured up to six months of personalized case management, skill assessment, career coaching, and job search assistance.

DOL also has launched an online tool called *My Next Move for Veterans*, a specialized version of a more general tool that is designed specifically to help the veteran population. Using the general tool, *My Next Move*, Americans can search for occupations that fit their skills and interests. The tool also provides easy-to-access information about jobs available in those occupations. For those looking ahead to the future, the tool identifies credentials or educational degrees required for certain occupations and helps users find training programs to prepare for those occupations. *My Next Move for Veterans* has an added feature that allows veterans to input their military occupation specialty (MOS) code to find out which civilian occupations are best matched with their skills. As of May 2012, the *My Next Move for Veterans* site had received more than 161,000 visits.

The Obama Administration also launched the Veterans Jobs Bank, an easy-to-use tool to help veterans find job postings from companies looking to hire them. The Veterans Job Bank is located on the National Resources Directory (NRD) website – a website for wounded warriors, service members, veterans, their families, and those who support them that serves as the Federal government’s one-stop website for benefits and services available to these groups. The website is run jointly by the DOD and the VA. As of May 2012, more than 800,000 jobs were posted to the Veterans Jobs Bank and that number continues to grow. To date, more than 700,000 job searches had been conducted on the Veterans Jobs Bank.

If veterans need training in order to move into civilian employment, they can fund it with the GI bill. Through the Post 9/11 GI bill, which expanded education benefits for veterans of recent wars, and its predecessors, education benefits were provided to more than 900,000 individuals in 2011. The Post 9-11 GI bill accounted for the majority of these benefits. Enacted in 2008 and effective August 2009, for a qualifying veteran or family member, the Post 9/11 GI bill covers the full cost of in-state tuition and fees at public schools and up to \$17,500 towards tuition and fees for the 2011-2012 academic year at private and foreign schools. Among other benefits, eligible students also may receive a monthly housing allowance, and an annual stipend for books and supplies. The Administration has also taken action, through a new Executive Order, to

ensure all of America's service members, veterans, spouses, and other family members who want to pursue further education and training have the information they need to make informed educational decisions and are protected from aggressive and deceptive targeting by educational institutions.

As a part of the President's Fiscal Year 2013 Budget, the Administration would ensure that the Federal government has the staffing necessary to provide veterans with the help required to make a successful transition back to civilian life. The Budget would support the hiring of 279 additional vocational rehabilitation and employment counselors in connection with the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) and VetSuccess on Campus initiatives. IDES and VetSuccess counselors ensure that veterans, especially wounded warriors and students, receive timely information about education opportunities, job counseling, and placement assistance to successfully transition from the military to a civilian job.

Leveraging Military Skills in the Labor Market

Experts project that openings for jobs requiring post-secondary education including associates' degrees and occupational certificates will grow faster than employment overall in the years ahead (Lockard and Wolf, 2012, Carnevale, Smith and Strohl 2010). Employers in some industries report difficulty filling jobs that require specific technical skills – a trend that, though not responsible for America's current unemployment situation, indicates the importance of education and training for our nation's future. According to estimates produced by the McKinsey Global Institute, by 2018, unless critical workforce gaps are closed, the country will have 1.5 million fewer data managers and analysts than needed (McKinsey Global Institute 2011a, 2011b), and other analysts have projected significant shortages of workers to fill technical and vocational jobs (Carnevale, Smith and Strohl 2010). There is a significant opportunity for veterans to fill these positions utilizing their military training, especially in sectors like health care and manufacturing.

As a part of the President's Fiscal Year 2013 Budget, the Department of Defense will spend nearly \$10.4 billion to train active duty and reserve service members. This high-quality training is closely linked to many of the high-demand, high-growth occupations in the civilian sector. Without proper credentialing and licensing, however, it may be difficult for service members to translate their skills and knowledge to employment in these high demand sectors.

Military medics, for example, have extensive experience administering care in high pressure situations that can serve them well in civilian jobs as paramedics or nurses. By 2020, the Department of Labor estimates that demand for licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses will increase 22 percent. Former medics may wish to transfer their skills to civilian jobs as nurses, but a registered nurse typically has received a diploma from an approved nursing program and must pass the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (Department of Treasury and Department of Defense 2012).

The manufacturing industry also highlights the opportunity to better match veterans to skilled jobs. In 2011, Deloitte and the Manufacturing Institute conducted a survey of over 1,100 U.S. manufacturers. Among skilled production positions such as machinists and technicians, 83 percent of companies reported moderate to serious shortages of skilled laborers (Deloitte and the Manufacturing Institute, 2011). As the President's Advanced Manufacturing Partnership Steering Committee has recognized, veterans and separating service members are primed to help fill this gap due to the life and work skills they have acquired while on active duty, including their outstanding training and extraordinary leadership, adaptability, and team building skills. Veterans need the ability to send a clearer signal to potential employers that their military skills translate to civilian opportunities. Access to nationally-portable, employer-driven credentials will provide them with this ability.

Accordingly, the Department of Defense has been working to ensure that the skills of military service members are easily translated to the civilian sector through appropriate credentialing. The Navy and Army have a program for service members, called Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL), to help veterans identify and pursue relevant civilian job credentials coordinated with their military experience. For example, the Association of Diving Contractors International has formally recognized Navy training and experience for certain certifications. Without additional training or testing, sailors are awarded certifications including: Entry Level Tender/Diver, Mixed Gas Diver, Rescue Diver, and Surface-supplied Air Diver. The Army is also currently undertaking initiatives to promote certification and licensure for service members in over 25 individual fields. Among these, the FAA recognizes Army flight training and waives additional flight test requirements, requiring only a simple written test, to then issue a commercial helicopter license to Army aviators. These various efforts by the Department of Defense are steps towards helping to ensure that our veterans are in the best positions possible to enter high-paying, high-growth fields upon separation from the armed forces.

Building on this work, the Department of Defense, under the direction of the President, is launching a Military Credentialing and Licensing Task Force that will undertake a systematic effort to identify opportunities for service members to earn civilian-equivalent occupational credentials and licenses. Within one year, the Task Force will define a list of Military Occupational Codes (MOCs) that best transfer to high-demand civilian occupations; work with civilian credentialing and licensing associations to address gaps between military training programs and credentialing and licensing requirements; make credentialing and licensing options and information available to service members; and facilitate the administration of credentialing and licensing exams. Initial Task Force efforts will focus on developing pathways to credentialing and licensing for service members in industries that leverage military training and have a need for more skilled workers including: manufacturing, first responders, healthcare, information technology, transportation, and logistics.

In the first phase of this effort, the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps have worked with manufacturing and credentialing agencies to create pathways to certification for 126, 000 military personnel with skills in the high-demand fields of engineering, logistics, machining, maintenance, and welding. Through these partnerships, service members will be able to test for

and earn civilian credentials immediately upon completing their initial military training. For example, through a partnership between the Army, American Welding Society (AWS), and National Institute for Metalworking Skills (NIMS), the Army's Ordnance School will be accredited to provide unlimited certification testing for soldiers with certain welding and machinist skills. Located in Fort Lee, Virginia, the Ordnance School trains thousands of service members every year in the maintenance of weapon systems. The partnership between NIMS and the Ordnance school will be implemented in July 2012 to test for the NIMS "Level 1 Machinist" Certification and the partnership between AWS and the Ordnance school will begin in December 2012 to test for the AWS "Welder" certification.

Expanding Jobs for Veterans

In addition to helping veterans transition from military service into civilian jobs, the Administration is committed to expanding job opportunities for veterans. The Administration has taken bold steps to create jobs for all Americans through tax cuts that put money into working families' pockets; investments in infrastructure, manufacturing, and clean energy; and aid to state and local governments. Beyond these initiatives that benefit all Americans, the Obama Administration has expanded jobs for veterans through generous tax credits that encourage employers to hire veterans; developed private-sector partnerships that have produced significant commitments to hire veterans; and enhanced government recruitment and promoted government employment opportunities for veterans.

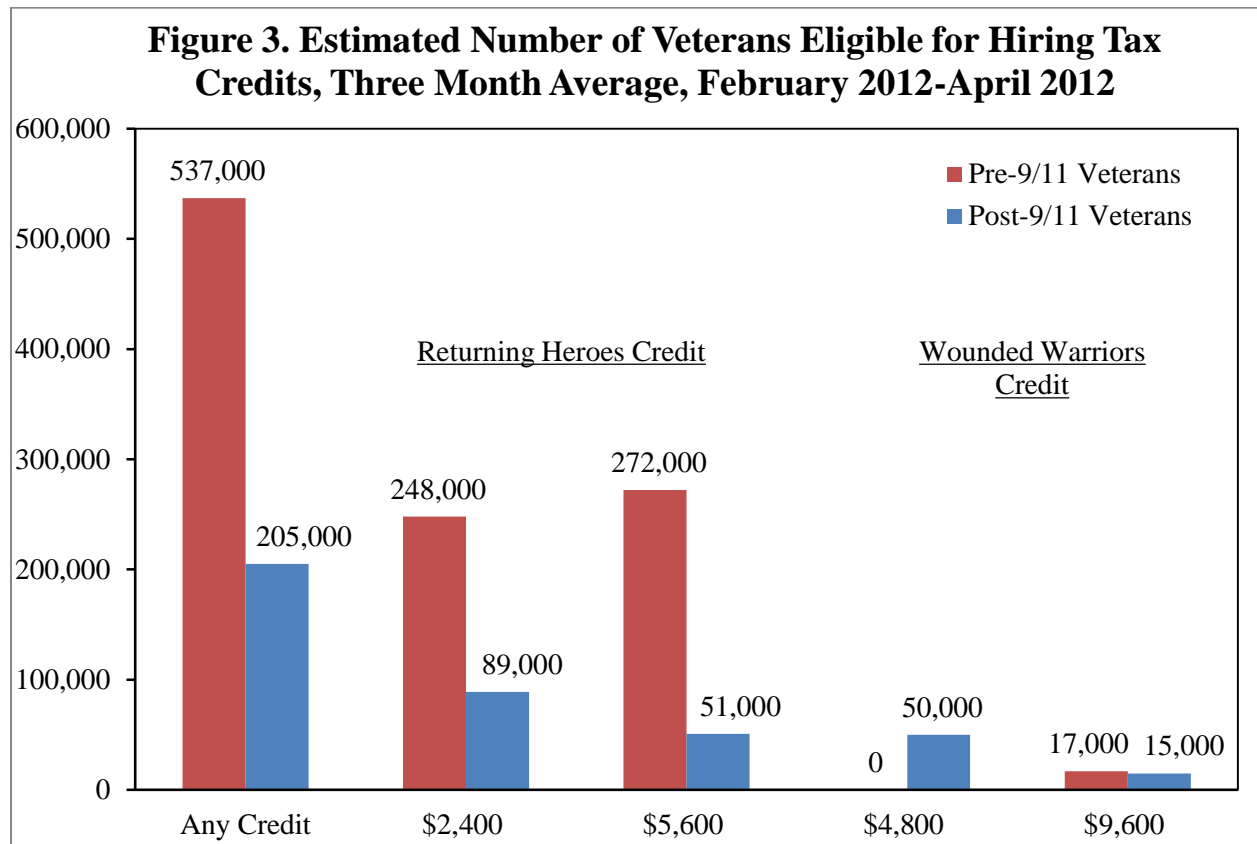
Tax Credits to Encourage Hiring

In November 2011, the President signed the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 to lower the rate of unemployment among our nation's veterans. This law combines provisions of veterans' tax credits from the President's American Jobs Act, Chairman Jeff Miller's Veterans Opportunity to Work Act, and Chairman Patty Murray's Hiring Heroes Acts into a comprehensive package, with the ultimate goal of lowering the unacceptably high rate of veterans' unemployment. The Act includes two separate tax credit provisions—one provision that rewards an employer for hiring an unemployed veteran and a more generous provision that rewards an employer for hiring a veteran with a service-related disability.

- **Returning Heroes Tax Credit:** This new tax credit encourages firms to hire unemployed veterans, with a larger incentive for hiring veterans who have been unemployed for six months or more. Employers can claim a credit for 40 percent of the first \$6,000 of wages paid to a veteran who has been unemployed for at least 4 weeks in the last year or is a member of a family that has received Supplementary Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for three of the past 15 months at the time of hire—a credit of up to \$2,400. If an employer hires a veteran who has been unemployed more than six months in the last year, then the credit is equal to 40% of the first \$14,000 in wages—a credit of up to \$5,600.

- Wounded Warriors Tax Credit:** The Wounded Warriors tax credit encourages firms to hire unemployed veterans with service-connected disabilities by maintaining and expanding the existing Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) for these veterans. The new law maintains the existing WOTC provision for a maximum \$4,800 credit for firms that hire veterans with a service-connected disability within one year of discharge or release from active duty. The credit for hiring veterans with service-connected disabilities who have been unemployed for more than six months in the last year is raised to 40 percent of the first \$24,000 in wages paid, up to \$9,600.

The Administration also has taken steps to make it easier for employers to take advantage of these tax credits and hire more veterans. In February, the Treasury Department issued guidance clarifying that employers may obtain certification of eligible veterans electronically and by-pass complicated paperwork that has prevented employers from utilizing the tax credits in the past. The Council of Economic Advisers (CEA) has produced rough estimates of the number of veterans potentially eligible for these various tax credits that are displayed in Figure 3. These estimates are based on Current Population Survey data on unemployed veterans, together with auxiliary information on the prevalence of service-connected disabilities and on the number of veterans who are newly separated (details available upon request). Veterans eligible for a hiring credit because of a previous spell of unemployment or family SNAP eligibility are not reflected in these figures, meaning that, if anything, the numbers are likely to be an underestimate.



Source: Council of Economic Advisers calculations based on Current Population Survey data.

How Can Employers Benefit and Help?

- Employers can benefit from the extraordinary skillset and work ethic of veterans through active use of the new Returning Heroes and Wounded Warriors hiring tax credits.
- For-profit employers and qualifying tax-exempt organizations, including 501(c) organizations, are eligible.
- To qualify for the Returning Heroes hiring tax credit an employer may hire a veteran who has been unemployed for at least 4 weeks in the year prior to hiring or is a member of a family that has received assistance under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in at least 3 of the 15 months prior to hiring. Employers who hire a veteran meeting either of those conditions after November 21, 2011 are eligible for a credit up to \$2,400. Employers who hire a veteran unemployed for a total of 6 months in the year prior to hiring are eligible for a credit up to \$5,600.
- To qualify for the Wounded Warriors tax credit, an employer may hire a veteran entitled to receive compensation for a service-connected disability. Employers who hire a veteran with a disability who has been discharged or released from active duty in the past year are eligible for a credit up to \$4,800. Employers who hire a veteran with a disability who has been unemployed for a total of 6 months in the year prior to hire are eligible for a credit of up to \$9,600 regardless of the date of the veteran's discharge.
- In order for an employer to claim these credits, veteran hires must be certified as eligible:
 - By June 19, 2012 (or 28 days after the veteran begins work, whichever is later), the employer must submit IRS form 8850 and either the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) Form 9061 or Form 9062 to their local state employment security agency.
 - As explained in recent guidance from the Treasury Department, the Administration has taken steps to make it easier for employers to submit these forms, allowing them to be submitted electronically or by FAX, removing a barrier that has discouraged employers from utilizing tax credits in the past. (See IRS Notice 2012-13: http://www.irs.gov/irb/2012-09_IRB/ar07.html for details.)
 - Once the employer receives a certification letter, they can claim the tax credit for certified workers on their annual income tax returns (e.g. IRS form 1120 for corporations, 1065 for partnerships, or 1040 for the self-employed).
 - The tax credit is considered a general business credit, and to the extent that general business credits claimed exceed the tax liability for a given year, they can be carried back or forward to prior or future years.
 - An IRS FAQ sheet on the WOTC credit provides additional information: <http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/article/0,,id=253949,00.html>.
- To help employers better connect with job-seeking veterans, the Administration is supporting a range of resources companies can use in the recruitment process:
 - **National Resource Directory:** The Departments of Defense, Labor, and Veterans Affairs have partnered together to create the National Resource Directory (NRD), a website that connects service members, veterans and their families with those who support them. In addition to providing information on topics such as education and training, health, and homeless assistance, the website also powers the Veterans Job Bank. The Veterans Job Bank is a central location where veterans can find employment opportunities and employers can find qualified veterans: <http://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/employment>.
 - **VetSuccess:** VetSuccess.gov is a website sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs. It provides the opportunity for veterans to post their resumes, and for employers to post job openings, and links directly to Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) national employment resources for employers: <http://www.vetsuccess.gov/>.
 - For further resources, links and guidance on hiring and retaining veterans, employers may refer to the White House Business Council Guide on Hiring Veterans: http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/white_house_business_council_-_guide_to_hiring_veterans.pdf.

The CEA estimates show that nearly three quarters of a million (742,000) veterans are eligible for the employer hiring tax credits that the Administration has supported, a number that includes 537,000 pre-9/11 veterans and 205,000 post-9/11 veterans. Pre-9/11 veterans account for the majority of those eligible for either the \$2,400 or the \$5,600 Returning Heroes Credit, depending on how long they have been unemployed. Only post-9/11 veterans are eligible for the \$4,800 Wounded Warriors Credit, available to those with a service-connected disability who have separated from military service in the past year; roughly equal numbers of pre-9/11 and post-9/11 veterans are eligible for the larger \$9,600 Wounded Warrior Credit, available to those with a service-connected disability who have been unemployed six months or more.

Partnerships with the Private Sector

The skills, talent and dedication that veterans have demonstrated during their military service make them excellent hires for many private sector employers. Speaking at the Washington Navy Yard on August 5, 2011, the President issued a challenge to the private sector to hire or train 100,000 veterans and their spouses by the end of 2013.

Under the leadership of First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden, Joining Forces is leading this effort to get veterans and military spouses back to work. As is explained further below, the First Lady and Dr. Biden launched Joining Forces on April 12, 2011, to bring Americans together to recognize, honor and serve our nation's veterans and military families. As a part of this initiative, companies may also commit to helping veterans train for careers or explore their career options by offering credentialing and education programs, hosting job fairs, and developing online resources.

Since President Obama issued his August 5th challenge, more than 70,000 veterans and military spouses have been hired and more than 1,600 companies have committed to hire or train 175,000 veterans and their spouses in the coming two years. For example, Siemens Corporation reserved ten percent of the more than 3,000 open positions in their clean technology plants for veterans. Within months, Siemens hired 300 veterans and—based on the quality of the people they recruited into the company—doubled their commitment to 600 veteran hires. This new, elevated hiring target was subsequently exceeded. Job training and mentoring through an internal Veterans Network with more than 150 members will be mobilized for these new hires. The International Franchising Association (IFA) and its 1,100 affiliate companies have committed to hire 80,000 veterans and military spouses by 2014. Other companies that have made commitments include Microsoft, Citi, and Disney.

Recognizing that health care is the one of our fastest growing industries—and one that is expected to generate significant numbers of jobs in the years ahead—the Obama Administration has asked this sector specifically for commitments to hire veterans. On October 25, 2011, the Department of Health and Human Services announced an initiative to challenge Community Health Centers to hire 8,000 veterans—approximately one veteran per health center site—over the next three years. The Administration also announced that it would work with health

practitioner training programs to expand opportunities for returning service members with medical training to become physician assistants.

To support these initiatives aimed at private-sector hiring, the White House Business Council has prepared *A Guide to Hiring Veterans*, a manual outlining guidelines for receiving tax credits, accessing recruitment resources and seeking other information on hiring, training, retaining and supporting veterans in the workforce. The guide answers common questions such as how to locate and hire veterans, how to accommodate employees with disabilities and how to address veterans' psychological and mental health concerns.

Veterans in Public Service

President Obama expects the government to act as a role model in hiring highly-qualified veterans to join the labor force. On November 9, 2009, he launched an initiative designed to transform the Federal government into the model employer of America's veterans, signing an Executive Order to establish an Interagency Council on Veterans Employment. This Council advises the President and the OPM Director on strategies to increase the number of veterans employed in the Federal Government and report on progress toward that goal.

Since this Executive Order was signed, veteran hires have grown as a share of all Federal hires, and the employment of veterans in the Federal government has risen. OPM data show that veteran hires represented 24.0 percent of all Federal hires in 2009; that share had risen to 28.3 percent by 2011. Employment of veterans in the Federal Executive Branch has grown by 10.7 percent from 2009 levels and as a share of total employment, veteran employment rose from 25.8 percent of all employment in 2009 to 27.3 percent of all employment in 2011. This 1.5 percentage point increase in the veteran share of employment in the Executive Branch compares with a 0.2 percentage point increase between 2007 and 2009. Veterans with disabilities have also grown as a share of all Federal employees. In 2011, veterans with disabilities accounted for 7.7 percent of all employees and 28.0 percent of all veteran employees in the Federal government.

Veterans' Entrepreneurship

Another route for veterans to use their skills in civilian life is through entrepreneurship. The Obama Administration has supported veteran entrepreneurs by increasing entrepreneurship training opportunities for veterans and increasing access to capital and government contracts. President Obama has signed 17 tax cuts for small businesses into law since 2009 and helped these businesses get the loans they need to grow and hire. Between January 2009 and March 2012, the Small Business Administration (SBA) supported small businesses and high growth start-ups owned by veterans and service-disabled veterans with over 11,500 loan guarantees totaling more than \$3.5 billion.

To support the next generation of small business leaders, as a part of the Veterans Job Corps initiative, the President's Fiscal Year 2013 Budget includes funding for a three-phase, intensive

entrepreneurship program integrated into the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) that would be available to all separating veterans. Related to the TAP initiative, SBA is also in the process of rolling out an enhanced entrepreneurial training initiative for retiring service members looking to become entrepreneurs. The SBA initiative will offer veterans more in-depth entrepreneurial training through an in-person and 8-week online training program, which has the potential to teach the skills needed to be a successful entrepreneur to over 10,000 veterans annually, as well as expand the existing suite of programs and public-private partnerships supporting entrepreneurship and small business development for veterans and veterans' families, including an intensive entrepreneurship boot camp.

In Fiscal Year 2011, over 200,000 veterans received small business counseling or training through SBA and its resource partners. In addition, since 2009, SBA has doubled the number of SBA Veteran Business Outreach Centers nationwide. Over the past three years, SBA also has expanded the Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities to eight top U.S. business schools nationwide.

Programs to Support Military Families

In addition to programs aimed at increasing support for veterans' employment, the Obama Administration has brought attention to the needs of America's military families more broadly. The Joining Forces initiative, led by First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden, seeks to mobilize all sectors of society—citizens, communities, businesses, non-profits, faith-based organizations, philanthropic institutions, and government—to ensure that military families have the support they deserve and to address the unique issues faced by military families in securing employment, helping their children make educational transitions across state lines, and maintaining their physical and mental health. The initiative focuses on improving employment, education, and wellness of America's troops, veterans and military families, as well as raising awareness about the service, sacrifice, and needs of all who serve our country, both abroad and here at home. In just one year, Americans from communities across the country—our businesses, schools, faith groups, non-profit organizations, and neighborhoods—have stepped up with an overwhelming amount of support for these heroes, not just with words, but with real, concrete actions to make a difference in their lives. Working with Joining Forces, these groups have helped thousands of veterans and military spouses find jobs, improved educational opportunities for military children, supported our nation's wounded warriors and their caregivers, and honored our nation's fallen and their families whose strength continues to inspire us all.

In June of 2011, Dr. Jill Biden announced a new Military Spouse Employment Partnership, led by the Department of Defense, to connect military spouses with job opportunities throughout the nation. Through this partnership, more than 130 companies are now advertising more than 130,000 jobs for military spouses, and those job listings are now consolidated in one place on the Joining Forces website. In just 10 months, partner companies have hired more than 22,000 military spouses. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce also has launched the Hiring our Heroes Program and supported Joining Forces through more than 100 hiring fairs in the past year. Based

on the success of these fairs, the Chamber will conduct hiring fairs for veterans and military spouses virtually and in over 400 local communities across the country by March of 2013.

More recently, the Joining Forces initiative brought attention to the issue of the portability of occupational licenses. As already noted, military spouses are ten times more likely to have moved across state lines in the last year than their civilian counterparts. Yet, nearly 35 percent of working military spouses are employed in professions that commonly require a state license (such as teaching or nursing), and when they move from state to state, many are forced to pay significant fees or fulfill onerous requirements to obtain a new license. Nearly 40 percent of military spouses surveyed said “easier state-to-state transfer of certification” would have helped them find work after their last military move (Department of the Treasury and Department of Defense, 2012).

The Obama Administration has identified best practices to help ease these burdens on military spouses, and the First Lady and Dr. Biden have called on America’s state legislatures and governors to pass and sign legislation to promote licensing portability across state lines. To date, 22 states have stepped up and passed legislation or implemented an executive order supporting military spouse license portability.

On April 4, 2012, First Lady Michelle Obama announced a major commitment to hire 15,000 military spouses and veterans into home based jobs and at contact centers located near military bases. Home based jobs can address the issues that military families face when moving across state lines and give home-bound veterans with disabilities new opportunities to have a fulfilling job. Contact centers are physical locations of companies near military bases. They often support military families through family-friendly scheduling and other means and enable the seamless transfer from one contact center to another in the event of a relocation. Among the 15,000 commitments announced on April 4th was a commitment from Hilton Worldwide to hire military spouses for 3.5 percent of their Hilton@Home call center positions. As another example, Quality Contact Solutions, a women owned business, is creating as many as 150 work-at-home business-to-business marketing and communication jobs for military spouses over the next 2 years.

Veterans Job Corps Initiative

Going forward, the President continues to champion programs that put veterans back to work. In his State of the Union Address, President Obama called for a new Veterans Job Corps to help veterans transition into civilian jobs. As a part of the Veterans Job Corps, the Obama Administration has proposed to put veterans back to work preserving and restoring America’s land and resources. The President’s Fiscal Year 2013 Budget includes \$1 billion to establish a Veterans Job Corps conservation program that will put up to 20,000 veterans back to work over the next five years in land preservation and restoration services, including providing visitor programs and operating facilities, restoring habitat and cultural resources, and repairing and rehabilitating trails, roads, and recreation facilities. The program will provide opportunities for all veterans, with a particular focus on post-9/11 veterans.

The Veterans Job Corps initiative also includes new incentives to hire veterans as first responders and law enforcement officers. The President announced \$166 million in 2012 funding for Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Hiring grants and \$320 million in 2012 Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants. COPS funding preserves law enforcement jobs and spurs new ones by making grant awards to communities across the country. SAFER grants provide funding directly to fire departments and volunteer firefighter interest organizations in order to help them increase and retain the number of trained firefighters available in their communities, enhancing the local fire departments' abilities to comply with staffing, response, and operational standards. The President's Fiscal Year 2013 Budget includes a further \$4 billion for COPS grants and \$1 billion for SAFER grants, as proposed in the American Jobs Act, and maintains the preference for communities that hire post-9/11 veterans.

CONCLUSION

There will continue to be significant numbers of veterans transitioning from active duty service to civilian life over the coming years and the Obama Administration is committed to making sure that these veterans receive access to all the resources they need to find a good job and support their families. The Administration is expanding jobs for veterans by putting in place generous tax credits that incentivize employers to hire veterans, making the government a model employer, and asking companies and other sectors of society to support military families. The unemployment rate for recent veterans recently has begun to edge downward and this change is encouraging, but unemployment among veterans and military spouses still remains too high. The Administration's continued efforts will ensure that veterans and military families who have done so much in service to our country receive a fair shot at a bright future.

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