

May 16, 2013

United States Senator Tim Kaine
United States Senate
B40C Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

United States Representative Tammy Duckworth
United States House of Representatives
104 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Troop Talent Act of 2013 (S. 700 & H.R. 1796) – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Kaine and Representative Duckworth:

On behalf of the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC), an organization dedicated to promoting job growth, economic expansion, and preserving the overall global competitiveness of California and Los Angeles County, I'm writing to commend you for introducing S. 700 and H.R. 1796, respectively, (taken together, "the Troop Talent Act of 2013") and to express our strong support for the bipartisan legislation, which provides a framework for a smoother transition for service members and veterans into the civilian working world. Above all, the Troop Talent Act of 2013 creates a much-needed pathway for service members from active duty to the civilian workforce by improving the alignment, articulation and translation of specialty skills acquired in the military with civilian credentials or licenses required for post-service civilian employment.

The timing of the Troop Talent Act couldn't be more crucial with hundreds of thousands of veterans transitioning out of the military and into the civilian workforce in the coming years. Home to almost two million veterans already, California will have more service members coming home than any other state. The Troop Talent Act would help ease the adjustment and conversion of tens of thousands of service members to the civilian workforce by doing the following:

- Improve the articulation of military skills to civilian credentials and licenses by providing service members more information about how to apply their specialty skills to civilian work;
- Prevent credential fraud by setting stricter standards for courses or programs that would guarantee credentials after completion, as well as re-establish a Department of Veteran Affairs committee that oversees the credentialing process; and
- Expand the Department of Defense pilot program on credentialing to include information technology, giving service members more access to high-demand career fields.

According to CareerBuilder, the military has over 7,000 job positions across more than 100 functional areas, and more than 80 percent of these jobs have a direct civilian equivalent. Even so, the unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans stands at about 9.2 percent (March 2013) – about 1.7 percentage points above the national rate of 7.5 percent – and almost 90,000 veterans are forced to rely on unemployment benefits to survive. This is simply unacceptable considering what our service members and veterans have sacrificed to serve and protect this country. Worse, veterans possess many of the intangibles businesses desperately want in a new hire, including discipline, dedication, leadership, courage, teamwork, punctuality, integrity and respect. Talk about skills that would enhance any company's productivity.

In many cases, resolving the job matching inefficiencies and imbalance between the supply of veteran labor and the private sector's demand may be as simple as translating military jargon (along with military occupational specialty codes) and experiences into language better understood by private sector employers, as well as making service members and veterans aware of the professional qualifications that are required for employment in many civilian sectors. The Troop Talent Act of 2013 overcomes some of these job matching inefficiencies by providing professional certifications to veterans who have experience performing similar duties during their time of active service; by supplying early *and* continuous (education and training) information about employment opportunities and how to properly transition from soldier to civilian work; and by expanding programs specifically designed to increase access to high-demand career fields.

We owe our returning service members and current veterans more than structural joblessness and dependence on unemployment benefits when they come home. Though a lot more needs to be done to help transition our veterans back to civilian life and to fix the unacceptably high veteran unemployment and homeless rates, the Troop Talent Act represents a down payment on our nation's thanks and gratitude.

For all of the above reasons, we strongly support the Troop Talent Act of 2013.

Sincerely,



Bill Allen
President & CEO
LAEDC

cc: Members of the Senate Committee on Armed Services
Members of the House Armed Services Committee