

Congressional Veterans Leadership Roundtable
House Veterans Affairs Committee
May 25, 2011

At this session several round tables were set up where Congressional members and committee staff sat at each table as well as veteran and military service organization representatives. Each table had a particular subject. ROA's executive director Major General David Bockel, USA (Ret.), and legislative director Captain Marshall Hanson, USNR (Ret.), as well as Congressman Marlin Stutzman (R, Ind.) were placed at the table that discussed employment issues.

Below is an outline of specific employment issues that were discussed:

- I. Statistics
 - a. A Business Law Review survey found about 60% of employers will not hire a new employee that's in the Guard or Reserve.
 - b. Returning Army National Guard units face particularly high levels of unemployment, with some units as high as 1:3.
- II. Continued Concerns
 - a. The Reserve Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense will continue to seek call ups of the Guard and Reserve even after the withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan.
- III. Solutions
 - a. Provide employers a cash grant or tax credit to hire a contract employee while a permanent Reservist employee is deployed.
 - i. This could alleviate employers' concerns who are distressed by 1 year call ups.
- IV. ESGR and SMLC
 - a. While ESGR (Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve) is a first bridge-gap to this the funding request for FY-12 it is \$2 million less than FY-11.
 - i. With about 4,700 volunteers, ESGR addressed 3,202 employment cases in FY-10.
 - b. ROA's Service Members' Law Center (SMLC) is an avenue for serving members to resolve unemployment issues run by Captain Sam Wright, JAGC, USN (Ret.).
 - i. SMLC receives +500 calls a month, about 80% concerning employment rights.
 - ii. It has counseling and referral services, advise and education to the private legal community, but with nearly 4,800 cases a year, ROA has met financial limits.
 1. Though SMLC is functioning at a modest level, it can provide more, and better augment the services of ESGR, by increasing the size of its staff for far less than the proposed cut to ESGR.
 2. ROA is trying to identify public funding in order to expand this service to larger capacity, and hopes to work with some Congressional offices.
- V. Legislation
 - a. *HR.1657 Amending Title 38, United States Code, to revise the enforcement penalties for misrepresentation of a business concern as a small business concern owned and controlled by veterans or as a small business concern owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans.* Introduced by Rep. Marlin Stutzman (R, Ind.).
 - i. This bill would revise enforcement penalties for misrepresentation of business concern as a small business controlled by veterans or service-disabled veterans.
 - ii. A GAO report identified fraudulent SDVOBs (service-disabled veteran owned business), but the Secretary had not debarred any of them.
 - iii. HVAC wants a 5-year automatic debarment in place as a deterrent and expects the Secretary to aggressively prosecute such firms.

- b. HR.1383 *Restoring GI Bill Fairness Act of 2011* would temporarily preserve higher rates for tuition and fees for educational programs at non-public institutions of higher learning for students enrolled under the Post 9-11 GI Bill. Introduced by Chairman Jeff Miller (R, Fla.).
 - i. To meet statutory Pay-as-you-go (PAYGO) offset requirements the bill per Sec. 3 would freeze the monthly living stipend for all Post 9-11 GI Bill participants at the 2010-2011 academic year rates for two years starting Oct. 11, 2011.
- c. HR.1407 *Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2011* would increase, as of Dec. 1, 2011, rates of compensations for service connected disabled veterans and rates of dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) for survivors of certain disabled veterans. Introduced by Jon Runyan (R, N.J.).
 - i. Sec. 4 provides a 5-year extension to the temporary residence adaptation (TRA) grant which allows for certain service-disabled veterans or service members to receive a TRA grant while the individual resides temporarily in housing owned by a family member.
 - 1. This section requires a PAYGO offset.
- d. HR.1627 *Honoring American Veterans Act of 2011* would provide for certain requirements for placement of monuments in Arlington National Cemetery (ANC). Introduced by Chairman Jeff Miller (R, Fla.).
 - i. Sec. 3 codifies prohibition against reserving gravesites at ANC and limits eligible families to one gravesite except for extreme circumstances.
 - ii. Sec. 4 is a sense of Congress to place a memorial marker on Chaplains Hill honoring the memory of Jewish chaplains who died while on active duty.
 - iii. Sec. 5 is a sense of Congress honoring the service and sacrifice of service members who are or have served in Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn.