

**Statement before the Senate Democratic Steering and Outreach Meeting Committee
at a meeting to discuss veteran unemployment on other emerging issues
Reserve Officers Association
Major General Andrew B. Davis, USMC (Ret.), Executive Director
November 16, 2011.**

The meeting was held in the Mansfield Room of the U.S. Capitol.

Leader Reid and Chairman Begich, the Reserve Officers Association thanks you for the opportunity to speak before the committee today.

The VOW to Hire Heroes Act was passed unanimously by the Senate the day before Veterans Day, and I think I can thank Senator Tester for sponsoring and the Senate for passing it on behalf of all the associations present. Such bipartisan action sets the example for further congressional actions needed on veteran employment.

The bill includes:

- Job counseling, training and placement assistance for former members of the military.
- Reforms to the Transitional Assistance Program to make it mandatory and more meaningful to serving members leaving the service.
- Includes work opportunity tax incentive credits from \$2,400 to \$9,600 for employers who hire unemployed veterans and keep them employed for at least a year.
- Also updates the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act to prevent harassment of National Guard and Reserve members at the civilian employment for belonging in the Reserve Component.

This is the first of many steps needed to correct the problem. Unemployment for veterans is outrageously high, especially for those who have recently returned from overseas contingencies.

- For 18 to 24 years old it is over 30 percent according to Dept of Labor October numbers.
- The 25 to 29 years old group is above 19 percent unemployment.

This is our youngest generation of warriors, and they need the type of support included in the VOW to Heroes Act. These young men and women need sustainable employment to help them transition back into society.

This week, I learned earlier while talking with the President of our ROA Department that Indiana has an unemployment rate for members of the Guard and Reserve of 26 percent state wide.

I fear the unemployment rate is so high because employers are shying away from hiring potential employees who are serving in the Reserve Components. It can be subtle and not overt; like “thanks so much for your service... Yet, after the interview, the application and the resume ends up in the round file.

ROA’s Service Members Law Center got almost 500 contacts just last month from concerned Active and Reserve Component members facing employment or reemployment problems.

DoD doesn't want to admit this, but as most of American businesses are small companies, it is easier to hire a non-affiliated veteran than one who may be called up again onto active duty in the future.

While the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve has done a commendable job in the past, I am concerned that it has shifted its focus from working to help the individual serving member to recognizing Patriot employers.

It becomes incumbent upon the military and veteran service organizations to fill the void, and work with our veterans to find sustainable work.

The Reserve Officers Association is developing a career center, wherein older veterans who have succeeded in the private or public sectors can mentor those who are looking for work, not only to help them prepare for the search, but to provide a network of contacts to allow them opportunities that are not published in the classified ads or on internet job boards.

Other associations are working equally hard to put veterans back to work.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share these thoughts. ROA is looking forward to working with you on continuing to improve employment opportunities.