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May 27, 2010

The Honorable Max Baucus
Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing to answer a question you asked me during my testimony to the Finance Committee on April 14, regarding my ideas to provide better service to veterans with respect to employment.

First, continued support and increased funding of the Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) and the Local Veteran Employment Representative (LVER) programs is essential. The U.S. military services discharge approximately 160,000 active duty service members and approximately 90,000 Reserve and National Guard Members annually. We can expect a greater demand for transition services and employment services for Veterans over the next few years.

Second, the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) has teamed with the Direct Employers (DE) Association to create the National Labor Exchange (NLX), which has a special focus for providing enhanced services to Veterans. Let me start by describing the DVOP and LVER programs, and then I will cover the NLX.

State Workforce Agencies (SWAs) receive funds from the U.S. Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) to assist veterans in obtaining positive employment outcomes through services provided at One-Stop Career Centers and other locations. Grants are provided to the SWAs for the DVOP and the LVER programs; these programs support staff dedicated to serving Veterans.

DVOP and LVER specialists provide services through Wagner-Peyser Act funded One-Stop Centers. DVOP specialists provide intensive services to those veterans in dire need of assistance. Some DVOPs provide recovery and employment assistance to wounded and injured Service Members receiving care at military treatment facilities. LVER staff provides employment services to transitioning service members and conduct outreach to employers and engage in advocacy efforts with hiring executives to increase employment opportunities for Veterans, encourage the hiring of disabled Veterans, and economically or educationally disadvantaged Veterans.

The USDOL VETS office has designed a new model to improve the quality and effectiveness of employment services by:

- 1) targeting disabled and recently separated service members and reservists,
- 2) linking closely with the Transitional Assistance Program (TAP), and
- 3) providing intensive employment services through a customer-focused case management approach.

Approximately 640,000 participants were served through these grants in fiscal year 2009, and the target for fiscal year 2010 is to serve over 650,000. The DVOP and LVER programs have been successful in assisting Veterans in their efforts to become gainfully employed. I believe the planned redesign of the DVOP and LVER program will enhance the services our agencies provide to veterans. It is important to maintain the connection of the DVOP and LVER programs with the Wagner-Peyser Act system.

Transitional Assistance Program (TAP) Employment Workshops are provided at military installations to help Service Members and their spouses make the initial transition from military service to the civilian workplace. The TAP workshops consist of comprehensive two and one-half day employment workshops. The DVOP and LVER specialists provide TAP workshops in selected sites, including once per month at Malmstrom Air Force Base in Great Falls, Montana. (There are eight DVOP and LVER staff assigned to cover the entire state of Montana – some of these positions are assigned half-time.)

NASWA, in partnership with DirectEmployers Association -- a nonprofit consortium of 500+ leading U.S. corporations, operate the JobCentral National Labor Exchange (NLX), a sophisticated electronic labor exchange solution. This online network connects businesses and state workforce agencies in their mission to create a cost-effective system that improves labor market efficiency and reflects our nation's diverse workforce.

VetCentral is the NLX service that delivers federal contractor jobs for states to use in providing employment services to eligible veterans. According to requirements set forth in the [Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act](#) (VEVRAA), as amended by the [Jobs for Veterans Act](#) (JVA), employers receiving over \$100,000 in federal funds must list all job vacancies on state websites or with the **“appropriate local employment service delivery system.”** The VetCentral service allows businesses to meet these Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP – USDOL) compliance requirements and puts jobs in the hands of the state staff that work with veterans on a daily basis.

In addition to the LVER and DVOP staff, states include local center managers as recipients of VetCentral job orders. Veteran customers are served by many parts of our system and, as you know, staff members, must operate under “priority of service” to veterans’ regulations promulgated by the VETS and the Employment and Training Administration, USDOL. The VetCentral service brings synergy between the two sets of regulations, allowing employers to meet OFCCP regulations, state staff to implement “priority of service” regulations better, and Veterans to receive better access to currently available jobs.

I am totally committed to provide the best service possible for our veterans, but I also want to ensure services are available for the spouses and dependents of our service members and veterans. This population typically receives services through the Wagner-Peyser Act (employment services), which has been flat-funded for many years. I advocate any legislation regarding veterans' services consider the needs of spouses and dependents.

Finally, thank you for your support of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The benefits of this new legislation has opened the doors for many returning service members to obtain the quality training needed to gain the skills and knowledge needed to compete in the new work environment they face when returning home from service. In addition to all the benefits available through the Post-9/11 GI Bill, it also allows the transfer of benefits to their dependents.

If you have additional questions, please call the NASWA Deputy Executive Director Bob Simoneau on 202.434.8021. NASWA would be pleased to offer you further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen Lee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and "L".

Karen Lee
President, National Association of State
Workforce Agencies and Commissioner,
Washington Department of Employment
Security