

Brandon McGuire, Veteran, Local 367, Plumbers and Pipefitters

Hello and thank you for having me here today. My name is Brandon McGuire and I am a representative of Local 367 Plumbers Pipe Fitters here in Anchorage, Alaska. I am an Iraq War Veteran who proudly served his country.

I have been asked to come today and speak on the programs available to veterans trying to transition from military status to civilian status as well as to the benefits of these programs. I know of only a few of these programs, but am happy to give my opinion on them.

VIP, or Veterans In Piping is the program that I would like to hit on first. Although it has not yet been used in our state, it was put into action in 2008. The United Association of Plumbers, Pipefitters and Sprinklerfitters (UA) has partnered with the U.S. military to create the UA Veterans In Piping (VIP) Program, which provides returning vets with 16 weeks of accelerated welding training. But before that career training begins, they kick off the program with an additional two weeks of transitional training to help returning veterans to adjust to civilian life – a process that can be especially difficult for those who joined the military right after high school. As you very well know, welders are in demand across our nation right now.

Helmets to Hardhats is another program that is very beneficial to our veterans in search of careers in the trades. This program helps veterans to decide what fields they might be interested in and also helps to guide them into these fields by direct indenture. They can help to prepare veterans by improving their interview skills through mock interviews. The program also, on a case by case basis, has the ability to help veterans with financial assistance while going through training. I cannot say enough how beneficial this is, especially in a line of work that can be “feast or famine”.

The last program that I would like to touch on is one that I am very familiar with, the GI Bill. I was able to use this while going through

my apprenticeship and it helped immensely, allowing me to make it through hard times. The program pays based on hours worked in any given month. There is a slight draw back to the program in that it can and often will account for hours worked while not paying the benefits directly related to those hours. It is in my opinion the only real chink in the armor that I can see.

All of these programs help our veterans and in turn help to provide the next generation of workforce that is going to help re-build our future and our nation.

Thank you for your time and attention.