

Rear Adm. T. L. McCreary, United States Navy (Ret.), President, Military.com

Statement of
Rear Adm. T. L. McCreary
United States Navy (Ret.)
President of Military.com
before the
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee April 13, 2011

Madam Chairwoman, Ranking Member Burr, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to appear before you today to discuss veteran employment.

As a 27 year veteran of the Navy and the current President of Military.com, I have experienced the issue of veteran employment from both sides. As such, I would like to share with you what our organization is doing to help veterans find career opportunities as well as our belief that aligning government and the private sector will best connect our servicemembers with jobs.

Post-WWII our country experienced what can be called the "Golden Age of Higher Education." Armed with their GI Bill Benefits, 4.4 million servicemembers went to college to build the foundation for a better life.

While today's veterans and servicemembers in transition are still pursuing their educational dreams with the enhanced GI Bill, a weakened economy makes it tougher to find excellent job opportunities. There is a disconnect with the private sector on the transportability of military skills and our veterans are finding it more difficult than ever to translate their total military experience into a civilian career.

The numbers are disturbing. The unemployment rate for all veterans remains stubbornly at 9%, the unemployment rate for post 9/11 veterans is roughly 11%--higher than the national average. Young male veterans between the ages of 18 to 24 had an unemployment rate of 21.9% in 2010 and female veterans face unemployment at a rate of 13.5%, versus 8.4% for non-veteran women.

Many Americans enter the military because of the opportunity to acquire marketable skills along with the ability for advanced degrees. Yet when the time comes to transition today, they are not finding as much opportunity in today's economy. Worse yet, the connection between unemployment and homelessness is irrefutable. Right now the VA estimates there are over 100,000 veterans who have no home.

The reality is, as we continue to reduce our troop end strength, more veterans will be looking for civilian employment while job growth has not accelerated as much as hoped. Competition will be stiff and we already know that unemployment is higher for veterans than for civilians.

Military culture, language and job skills are not easily translated to the civilian world. Potential employers have very little understanding of the diverse jobs and skill sets one can learn in the

military. Additionally, our veterans are coming out of the service with little experience in writing a civilian resume and no exposure to private sector business culture or language.

There is no doubt that given the service these veterans have provided us during wartime, we owe them the best support possible in their post-service life.

So how do we do that?

First, programs that allow those who have served in uniform and who desire to continue their government service in a civilian capacity should be embraced. There is great value in the government competing for these outstanding men and women.

But the majority of transitioning servicemembers do look to the private sector for employment so focus should be put on public, private efforts to land veterans jobs.

So to assist, military personnel need more exposure to the private sector before they leave the service. That exposure needs to happen in the form of enhanced Transition Assistance Programs where the focus needs to be on the veteran getting ahead rather than just getting out. It needs to be taught by human resource professionals from the private sector with some military knowledge so instructors can provide the best chance for the military member to find the best opportunity on the outside. It must include skill-specific resume writing services, information on private sector business culture and hands-on training on how to use all available private sector resources so veterans can get in front of the employers and compete in the human resource networks that exist in the private sector. And it must teach networking and where to find those who can help and give our veterans insight into the marketplace.

Post-service employment preparation should be focused on how to enter the civilian job market rather than trying to create stand-alone programs run by the government. The vast majority of companies in the private sector have very good and generally very efficient ways to find good talent. The key must be to help the veterans get into that system, be identified as veterans...and compete.

Second, if government wants a program they can sink their teeth into, it should fund training for those in the field of human resources on how to understand military skill sets and how those skills apply to the civilian world. This training needs to include explanations for primary, secondary and tertiary duties an individual may have had in the service. The Department of Labor has a basic program around this but it could be greatly enhanced.

Third, a better understanding of how military certifications translate to civilian professional certifications should be addressed with all state governments.

My Military.com director of community outreach visited a number of military installations overseas in February of this year. During his visit to Marine Corps Base Camp Butler, he met a Navy Hospital Corpsman Second Class who had recently returned from his second tour in Afghanistan. The Navy Corpsman earned a Bronze Star with a Combat "V" for his heroic efforts in performing a tracheotomy on a wounded Marine during a firefight engagement with

insurgents. This Navy Corpsman has the exceptional skills and abilities to perform such a task under extreme hazardous conditions and do it effectively, yet does not warrant becoming a qualified emergency medical technician in the civilian community unless he goes through a full training and certification program where he probably is more qualified than the instructor.

It astounds me that a soldier, sailor, airman, Marine or Coastguardsman can perform surgery on the battlefield but not be certified an EMT in the civilian world without starting from scratch. An all-out effort between VA, Labor and DOD with the 50 states could probably develop a program of what knowledge, skills and abilities would be accepted as certifications within all states with a very short testing period.

Finally, leveraging the expertise of private companies like Monster.com and Military.com is crucial to sustaining any successful, long-term veteran employment efforts.

Military.com knows the private sector; with our parent company, Monster.com we can and do specialize in harnessing the best technology along with the most effective methods to connect our servicemembers with employers. And while most employers don't tell us how many vets they hire, we do know they continually search resumes with veteran status and continually advertise their positions on Monster and Military.com

While the government assists servicemembers with getting out through the Transition Assistance Program, we at Monster.com and Military.com help them get ahead by tapping into our large data base of jobs and providing the guidance needed to enter the civilian job world.

Military.com was founded in 1999 by a young Navy reservist to revolutionize the way our 30 million Americans with military affinity stay connected and informed.

Today, Military.com is the largest military and veteran membership organization with more than 10 million members and we're one of the largest news destination sites on the Internet. Our free membership connects servicemembers, military families and veterans to each other and to all the benefits of service at all stages in their lives — government benefits, resources and career services, education information and scholarships, discounts, news and discussion forums to share the great stories and challenges inherent in military life, and more.

In 2004, Military.com joined forces with Monster Worldwide to accelerate our growth and change the playing field for career and educational opportunities for active duty personnel, as well as Guard and reservists, veterans and military spouses. We work hard every day to serve those who serve our country and we're committed to helping our members find work and enter into career paths that will compliment and build on the skills they acquired in the military.

We do this both online and offline.

Online, we offer a comprehensive offering of services, resources and information to support every stage of a military career, from recruitment to boot camp to promotions, retirement, education and second careers.

Military.com created a veteran career center using technology to successfully deliver a personalized experience with a variety of interactive tools and resources. We offer the largest

veteran job board in the world featuring military-friendly employers as well as hundreds of thousands of job postings available through our Monster.com database.

We also offer personalized email alerts for new postings that match a veteran's resume and job interests, as well as resume writing tools, education and training information, mentoring through our Veteran Career Network, and electronic newsletters with news and employer information. To help veterans begin their new career search, we developed our Military Skills Translator. We use the Department of Labor's online resource known as "O-Net," or Occupational Data Network as a baseline to translate current and older military occupational specialty codes into civilian occupations

Then Military.com is taking it one step further. We present the veteran with equivalent jobs currently posted on the Monster job board, including those posted by thousands of military employers specifically looking for veterans. The veteran can immediately apply to one of these jobs from our site or review the job postings and learn what specific experiences, skills, education, and training employers are seeking for this type of position. This information can help the job seeker better "civilianize" their military experience on their resume and best communicate the skill, knowledge, and abilities they acquired while in service. Over the last year, we had over 250,000 separate individuals use our translator an average of 4-5 times per person.

Through the Military Skills Translator, not only are veterans empowered to apply to currently available jobs, they can also see members of our Military.com's Veteran Career Network who have indicated they held that same Military Occupational Specialty.

One of our fastest growing services that is still in beta form is this mentor network that connects veterans seeking new careers with employed veterans as well as military supporters.

Military.com members who volunteer for this feature create a profile containing details about their military experience, professional interests, and their current job position and employer.

Veterans using this feature can find a career network mentor by company, government agency, career field, industry or geographic location. Once the veteran job seeker has identified someone with whom they would like to network, he or she can contact a mentor directly through our secure Military.com email tool.

Since the implementation of our Veteran Career Network in 2007, over one million Military.com members have signed on to network with other veterans and help transitioning servicemembers jumpstart their civilian careers.

Our members also access financial information and guidance. Our Finance Channel drew over 450,000 views in March 2011 because of the comprehensive information VA home loans and our relocation guide which helps military families through their mandatory moves.

For example, in March of 2011 alone we had 3 million views on our Benefits and Education Channel which includes information on Tricare, GI Bill, VA health care, survivor benefits and information on PTSD resources and support.

We keep our members in touch with the latest information about their benefits and interests with our email newsletters, of which 35 million are sent each month to our members who subscribe to them. Our most popular newsletters are the Veterans Insider with over 8 million subscribers, our Careers newsletters with over 800,000 subscribers and our Active Duty Insider with over 4 million subscribers. These newsletters offer tailored content and feature relevant information and resource links for our audience.

Offline, we actively engage with the communities we serve through in person events.

Currently we host, in conjunction with our non-profit partner, the Non-Commissioned Officers Association, over 40 career expos a year. Our efforts and quality of service have not gone unnoticed. PBS News recently featured our efforts during a segment on veteran's employment issues and Sen. Mark Warner has supported our work by acting as an honorary host for our events in Virginia.

In 2010, over 15,000 members attended our 33 career fair events across the country. Since January of this year, we have held 11 career fair events, attended by more than 3500 veterans and transitioning servicemembers. We have also recently begun hosting Veteran Power Seeker Workshops in advance of our career fairs to help attendees write resumes, acquire interviewing and networking skills and research employers so they are prepared to most successfully engage with employers at the event.

These career fairs are important because it gives us one to one interaction with both employers and transitioning servicemembers. Here we are able to walk job seekers through the interview process, review resumes and counsel them about the many opportunities outside of the government that they may not have known they were qualified for. Conversely we get the chance to meet with employers and "de-code" the military skills or vernacular they are seeing on resumes and point out what skills sets will best fit their needs.

If you question the ability of the private sector to embrace and assist our veterans in their job search, look no further than Military.com and the solid relationships we have created between our servicemembers, veterans and employers.

In conclusion, we no longer have finite wars with treaties being signed on the deck of a battleship. Today's changing global environment means that any time our military can be called to action, tapped for humanitarian assistance or used to quell instability around the globe.

As such, we have a much longer-term obligation to understand veterans and the employment they seek. Rather than the "home from war" mentality of previous generations, we now have to see veteran's employment as a rolling responsibility that will remain a permanent fixture on our national landscape.

Just as the Post WWII generation enjoyed the "Golden Age of Education" we can and should see this as our opportunity to create the "Golden Age of Employment" for those who have served our nation so proudly. We are fortunate enough here in our country to have an all-volunteer force, one that emerges from, and ultimately goes back into the civilian population.

It stands to reason that a crucial component in ensuring jobs for those veterans who return to civilian life is leveraging the expertise and involvement of the private sector.

Madam Chairwoman and members of the Subcommittee, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.