

Mr. Charles S. Ciccolella, nominated to be Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans' Employment and Training

STATEMENT OF  
CHARLES S. CICOLELLA  
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF LABOR FOR  
VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING  
BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
July 14, 2005

Good morning Chairman Craig, Ranking Member Akaka, and Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee today. I thank the Committee for considering my nomination and for the courtesies that have been extended to me.

I also thank all members of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee for their effective oversight of the Veterans' Employment and Training Service. This Committee and the Congress have always supported our budget requests and you have acted on important legislation that has benefited veterans and transitioning military members.

I am joined today by my wife Donna. I am very fortunate and deeply grateful for her wisdom and her support for the past 33 years of our marriage, and she is my closest adviser.

Donna and our daughter, Connie always allowed and helped me pursue my passion for serving my fellow soldiers when I was in the military. Today, both Donna and Connie have their own careers in government service, but they support me in the same way in my efforts to serve our nation's veterans and transitioning service members, many of whom have not been as fortunate as I.

I'm speaking especially about those who come back from the military with serious injuries and disabilities. I'm speaking about our veterans who have barriers to employment, including those who have become homeless.

**I AM HONORED TO BE NOMINATED**

My family has a long a tradition of military service to our country. My father was an Infantry officer who fought in North Africa and Germany in World War II, and later rose to the rank of Major General. My father in law served in the Navy and saw action in both World War II and Korea. My brother in law served in the U.S. Navy and saw action in Vietnam. My two brothers and I each were commissioned in the Infantry through Army ROTC. Each of us is a combat veteran of Vietnam and each rose to the rank of Colonel.

The values of the military have defined our lives. We know firsthand the unwavering commitment, professionalism and honor with which American soldiers serve. We are a family with well over 100 years of military service. We understand the blessings of freedom and the sacrifices made by our men and women in uniform. We know and love our fellow soldiers and veterans. They are the best of America.

That is why it is such an honor for me to be nominated by President Bush to be Assistant Secretary of Veterans' Employment and Training, so I may continue to build on the success of this Administration in providing the highest quality of employment services to our nation's veterans.

If the Senate confirms my nomination, it will be my privilege to lead the Veterans' Employment

and Training Service. I pledge my full commitment to helping transitioning military members and veterans find better jobs and the training needed for those jobs.

That is, after all, what the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) is charged with doing - helping veterans and transitioning service members with the resources and services they need to succeed in the 21st century workforce. VETS is a small agency, with a very big job.

#### GOALS FOR THE VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE

I have been fortunate to have served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of VETS for the past four years. We have made much progress in those four years, but challenges remain. With the help of the VETS' professional staff, and the collaboration of the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense, and Homeland Security, we will meet those challenges.

If confirmed by the Senate, I will strive to achieve three primary goals:

- To better integrate the services of the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) in the One Stop Career Centers. This will require better training for our DVOPs and LVERs and it will result in a higher quality of employment services to veterans by the entire Career One Stop System.

- To improve transition assistance services for Active Duty, Reserve and National Guard members who are moving from the military to civilian life. We also must continue to ensure all service members and veterans understand their employment and reemployment rights.

- To focus our intensive employment services and personal, face to face assistance for those service members who are recently separated from the military - and for those veterans who need our help the most - those who have been seriously wounded or injured and those with significant barriers to employment, including homeless veterans.

In working to achieve each of these goals, we must focus on how better to reach employers so they are actively involved in making the veteran employment connection.

#### VISION FOR VETS

These are my goals and they are actually continuing goals for me. I understand the enormous responsibility of making sure we achieve these goals and get this right. My vision for the Veterans' Employment and Training Service is, and has been, to change the manner in which employment and training services are delivered to veterans. We want to improve upon the traditional idea of service delivery by embracing a 21st century model that is focused on equipping veterans with the resources they will actually need to be successful in their chosen career field.

This vision is widely shared in the Department of Labor. Secretary Chao and the Labor Department are working hard to advance and support the public workforce system's provision of priority of service to veterans through education, outreach and better services. We are working hard with the State Workforce Agencies to expand the number of veterans who use these services, and to ensure they have access to the full array of resources.

#### WE ARE MAKING PROGRESS, BUT CHALLENGES REMAIN

Four years ago, approximately three in ten veterans using the workforce system were being

placed into jobs. Today, nearly six in ten are entering employment. We have extended the highly successful Transition Assistance Program (TAP) employment workshop to serve service members separating overseas. We are also beginning to provide those services to returning guard and reserve members where and when requested.

Over the past four years, we have vastly improved military members' and veterans' knowledge of their employment and reemployment rights. We will soon publish, for the first time ever, regulations implementing the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA).

While we have made significant progress, we must continue to set higher standards for performance outcomes in job placements and job retention, and we must always stress better performance and accountability on the part of those who directly serve veterans.

We have a tremendous opportunity today to move to a higher level in helping service members and veterans obtain better training for better jobs. Our economy is strong, our country needs workers, veterans are outstanding employees, and there are many new career opportunities, especially in high growth, high demand industries.

In my lifetime, I have never seen soldiers and veterans held in higher esteem than they are today. They have earned that. They deserve our best efforts to help them.

We have the support, commitment and collaboration of the entire Department of Labor, as well as the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense and Homeland Security, to improve employment opportunities for veterans. We will continue to set the bar very high so they receive the dignity, respect and services they have earned.

Mr. Chairman, I am honored and humbled by President Bush's and Secretary Chao's confidence in me for this nomination. I look forward to this honor and to the challenge, if the Senate so entrusts me, of becoming the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans' Employment and Training.

I pledge to work with this Committee and the Congress, to keep you informed, and to be responsive to your oversight responsibilities.

Thank you for allowing me to appear before this Committee today. I thank the Chairman, the Ranking Member and all Committee Members for considering my nomination.