

Joshua Lawton-Belous, Iraq Veteran and Business Analyst, Oracle Corporation

Chairman Akaka, ranking member Burr, honorable members of the Committee, I appreciate being here before you to today testify about transition services that are provided to America's men and women serving in uniform. My name is Joshua Lawton-Belous and I am a recently medically discharged veteran who served two tours in Iraq. Currently, I am a business analyst at Oracle Corporation. I believe that the transition services that I am here to speak about today are often times overlooked when considering how to make a service-member's transition from the military to civilian life successful. Yet the services provided by programs like the Army Career Alumni Program referred to commonly as ACAP and Transition Assistance Program commonly referred to as TAPs are in some respects the most crucial elements to a service-member's successful transition. As a former soldier who used programs like ACAP extensively during my recovery at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and as an interviewer for Oracle Corporation's Wounded Warrior Program, I have had the unique experience to both understand the process of transitioning a service-member and the important end result- the resume.

While the Army Career Alumni Program at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and throughout the rest of the Army, should be the first stop for all soldiers transitioning out of the Army, the ACAP office is all too often relegated to a "check the box" function because of command decisions made at different levels, which inhibit or prohibit, the ability of a soldier to obtain career separation counseling in a timely manner. This inability to obtain timely career separation counseling has a detrimental ripple effect. Due to the inability of soldiers to discuss their transitioning and career prospects with transition services many soldiers are provided with limited career counseling and therefore assemble generic resumes. These generic resumes are competitive with neither those resumes that are assembled by those within the industry or by those at colleges and universities. Since these resumes are not competitive soldiers do not obtain jobs that they believe themselves qualified for. This inability to obtain qualified employment reinforces the belief by those soldiers who remain in the military, that transition services add no value to their transition and therefore are not worth fighting with their command to obtain.

Due to the average age of those enlisting in the military, few of them understand the opportunities and culture of the civilian workforce. While these service-members have often earned roles and responsibilities that few of their civilian counterparts have obtained, many veterans do not realize until they have obtained their first civilian job, the value of their experiences during their military careers. To these veterans it was normal for a 21 year-old Sergeant to counsel, supervise, and establish goals for a team of 5 other soldiers. Without understanding the unique nature of their military careers, veterans do not translate the important aspects of their military careers into civilian language, because they have not yet grasped what skills, characteristics, experiences, etc. that employers are looking for.

Yet even if ACAP and TAPs were given the highest priority for service-members who are separating from the military, and those separating service-members were able to translate their military experiences into civilian language, many veterans would still be missing a crucial aspect of every resume- Education. America's current labor market requires those seeking employment to have either a degree or industry standard certifications, if not both. The reality for many enlisted members of the Armed Forces, specifically Marines and Soldiers, is that upon leaving

the military they lack both a degree and industry standard certifications. While veterans are rightly given preference in certain career fields, their lack of formal education often prevents them from obtaining employment even in the federal government.

If we as a country are serious about wanting to decrease the unemployment situation among veterans, our government must take the following steps; 1) Fix the Post 9/11 GI Bill payment debacle. 2) Strengthen the importance of formal education while still in the military 3) Enforce a military command structure that supports those service-members transitioning out of the military.

Chairman Akaka, ranking member Burr, honorable members of the Committee I am humbled by being here before you to testify about transition services that are provided to America's men and women serving in uniform. I thank you for listening, but more importantly I thank you for your continual support of veterans and those still wearing the uniform of our country. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.