

*Statement of U.S. Senator Heidi Heitkamp
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
June 15, 2017*

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing today. I want to thank you and Senator Tester for your leadership in advocating for our nation's veterans. Hearings like this one demonstrate this committee's commitment to improving the lives of those who served our country and making sure we honor our obligation to care for them.

That care extends from the treatment veterans receive in hospitals and clinics to the benefits they earned, from the education they pursue after their service to the employment they seek in the civilian workforce. S. 1218, the bipartisan *Empowering Federal Employment for Veterans Act of 2017* that I introduced with Senator Sullivan, would take important steps in caring for our veterans as they try to find work that is the right fit for them. I appreciate you including this bill on the agenda for today's hearing.

Although federal efforts to promote the recruitment of transitioning servicemembers and veterans have resulted in significant increases in veteran employment throughout the federal government, the programs in place to enhance veteran recruitment, hiring, retention, skills development, and job satisfaction are not always effective in finding the most suitable jobs for a veteran's particular skillset. Ensuring that there are dedicated advocates for veterans' employment at key federal agencies who are focused on finding jobs that are the right fit for veterans would open up more job opportunities for veterans across the federal government beyond the agencies that typically employ veterans in large numbers. Focusing on matching the skills and career aspirations of veterans to specific agency needs while also expanding career development training opportunities would create an environment that improves the long-term wellbeing of veterans as well as the overall efficiency of the federal government.

I very much appreciate the committee's consideration of S. 1218 and look forward to working with the members of the committee to pass this commonsense bill and make it easier for veterans to find the rewarding employment they deserve.