

Action Alert

Veterans Skills to Jobs Act

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American Legion supports H.R. 4155 and S. 2239

(May 16, 2012) After serving our country honorably, all veterans deserve the chance to earn a paycheck and support their families. Unfortunately, the unemployment rate for veterans returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan remains stubbornly high. According to the latest [Employment Situation of Veterans' annual report](#) from The Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate for veterans who served post 9/11 was 12.1 percent in 2011, compared with the jobless rate for all veterans of 8.3 percent. Those hit the hardest from that group are our young male veterans, ages 18-24, which have an unemployment rate of 29.1 percent, higher than the 17.6 percent jobless rate of their young male non-veteran counterparts. This is unacceptable and unnecessary. The Department of Defense provides some of the best vocational training in the nation for its military personnel. There are many occupational career fields in the armed forces that can easily translate to a civilian counterpart; additionally, there are many occupations in the civilian workforce that require a license or certification.

Upon separation, however, many service members, certified as proficient in their military occupational career, are not licensed or certified to perform the comparable job in the civilian workforce, thus hindering chances for immediate civilian employment and delaying career advancement. This situation creates an artificial barrier to employment upon separation from military service.

On March 7, U.S. Rep. Jeff Denham (CA-19) and Rep. Tim Walz (MN-1) introduced the *Veterans Skills to Jobs Act*, **H.R. 4155**, to streamline the bureaucratic processes for veterans with relevant training to get jobs when they return home. Later that month, a companion bill, **S. 2239**, was introduced in the Senate by Sen. Bill Nelson (FL) and cosponsored by Sens. Olympia Snowe (ME), Amy Klobuchar (MN) and Richard Blumenthal (CT).

The *Veteran Skills to Jobs Act* helps address the unacceptably high rate of veteran unemployment by directing the head of each federal department and agency to treat relevant military training as sufficient to satisfy training or certification requirements for federal license, so that veterans can get back to work quickly.

Congress and the nation have a compelling interest in fostering the employment of veterans. An expanded credentialing program has widespread support on Capitol Hill and from many top defense officials. It marks a major cultural shift for the military, which once held the view that making it easier for troops to get out would reduce retention and hurt the military. The federal government is uniquely situated and obligated to take the lead on this, not only to overcome old

attitudes, but to set an example for state and local government agencies which grant occupational licenses and set certain professional standards.

As the nation's largest veterans' service organization, The American Legion believes there are none more deserving than America's service members and veterans. All Legionnaires, concerned citizens, veterans and their families are requested to write, call and visit their congressional representatives to either request their co-sponsorship of the *Veteran Skills to Jobs Act* or to thank them for their support. (If received by email, scroll up and click the Take Action link, otherwise see below and send a message to your senators and representative.)