

## **Veterans Employment & Education Commission**

Vincent James Troiola, New York, Chairman

Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., Washington, D.C., Director

### **Employment & Veterans Preference Committee**

James Fratolillo, Massachusetts, Chairman

1. Employment and Veterans Preference

- 100-plus career fairs through our partnership with the U.S Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring our Heroes Initiatives.
- 10-plus American Legion career fairs over the past 12 months at Legion posts.
- Participated in and hosted numerous employment workshops and roundtables.

### **Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness Committee**

Eric W. Measles, California, Chairman

1. Education

- On February 28, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division convened a Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) GI Bill Symposium. The director of VA Education Service led the GI Bill symposium after opening keynote remarks from the Veterans Benefits Administration's Principal Deputy Undersecretary.

2. Legislative Activities

- On April 9, staff testified before the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity concerning H.R. 95, H.R. 444, H.R. 1448 and draft legislation:
- H.R. 95: the 'Homeless Veterans Family Act' would amend title 38, United States Code, to ensure that children of homeless veterans are included in the calculation of the amounts of certain per diem grants. The American Legion supports passage of H.R. 95.
- H.R. 444: the 'Reduce Unemployment for Veterans of All Ages Act' would amend title 38, United States Code, to eliminate the period of eligibility for the Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment program of the Department of Veterans Affairs. The basic period of eligibility for VR&E benefits is limited to 12 years from the date of separation from military service or the date of notification by VA of a service-connected disability rating. This legislation eliminates the 12-year limitation to participate in the program and extends opportunities and resources to deserving veterans. The American Legion supports passage of H.R. 444.
- H. R. 1718: the 'GI Education Benefits Fairness Act' would amend title 38, United States Code, to enable GI Bill transferability to ward and foster children. Currently, incongruent statutory language prevents ward and foster children from receiving the same privileges of transferability as an adopted child or biological child. The American Legion supports passage of H.R. 1718.
- Notable among the draft legislation shared is the *Navy Seal Chief Petty Officer William 'Bill' Mulder (Ret.) Transition Improvement Act of 2019*. This bill would make improvements to the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and the overall transition process for servicemembers, to

include an increased focus on career opportunities and entrepreneurship. This bill would represent the largest reorganization of TAP since 2011.

### 3. Credentialing

- On March 12, The American Legion hosted a “Best Practices for Lowering Credentialing for Military Spouses Roundtable” at its D.C. headquarters. The discussion followed part of the Legion’s ongoing mission to focus and provide a more effective way for military spouses to get and keep their licensing and credentials. The roundtable featured remarks from the director of DoD’s Defense-State Liaison Office, the senior advisor for careers at Blue Star Families, and the founder of the Military Spouse Judicial Network.
- Notable among the topics discussed was defining three separate state models as case studies: Utah, Iowa and Florida.
- The state of Utah allows the spouse to work without a Utah permit. Iowa permits them a three-year transitory license to operate as instructors, and Florida permits them a Florida permit dependent on the current license on favorable terms.
- These states are all considered to be exemption states that have set standards for other states to meet. The desired outcome is for all states to recognize that something should be done to accommodate these military spouses and exempt them from state licensing requirements.

### 4. Small Business/Federal Contracting Oversight

- Hosted two VA procurement policy oversight roundtables with government, private businesses and nonprofit stakeholders.
- Testified on issues affecting veterans small businesses and VA’s procurement programs’ shortcomings.
- Lobbied for increasing the federal spend in veterans entrepreneurial programs by an additional \$1 million.
- Protected the SBA’s Boots to Business program from an anticipated 5 percent cut in funding and ensured the permanency of the program as a TAP mainstay through statutory reauthorization.
- Prevented instances of VA contracting fraud, waste and abuse, and saved veteran patient lives by initiating VA OIG inquiries into bad actors in contracting.

### 5. Homelessness and Housing

- Joined the Coalition for the Homelessness Male Service Providers Working Group and participated in the VA Medical Health Advisory Councils Homeless Veterans Roundtables.
- Completed the Prince William County (Va.) Detention Center Volunteer Training Program in support of future service with incarcerated veterans in the detention center.
- Developed a Housing and Homeless Veteran Program Strategic Action Plan for 2019-2020.
- Established a Homeless Veterans Task Force resulting in the appointment of a Legion member as the state-level representative for homeless veteran advocacy efforts.
- Recognized and awarded a department-level Homeless Veteran Outreach Award.
- Attended the VBA’s VA Home Loan Conference, and secured an invitation to participate and facilitate a VSO panel on veteran housing at the 2020 conference.