THE AMERICAN LEGION

The State of Credentialing of Service Members and Veterans

Challenges, Successes, and Opportunities

Reported by The American Legion

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Report Preparation

The report was prepared by SOLID, LLC. SOLID provides policy research and analysis support to government and private sector clients with an emphasis on the areas of education, training, and employment of current and former military personnel. They have specialized expertise in credentialing of service members and veterans that dates to 1996 when staff members conducted the first formal research in this area sponsored by The American Legion. Since then, they have performed extensive additional research in this area under the sponsorship of numerous public and private sector organizations.

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The American Legion has a long history of advocacy on behalf of increased civilian credentialing opportunities for Service members and Veterans, based on our longstanding conviction that this promotes the professionalization of the military Force and enhances the prospects for Veterans to make a seamless transition from the military to the civilian workforce. We conducted the first systematic study in this area in the mid-1990s, and since then have undertaken numerous initiatives to further facilitate the credentialing of Service members and Veterans. This includes numerous Credentialing Roundtables held over the past ten years as well as two highly successful National Credentialing Summits held in 2012 and 2015. Legion staff members have also served on advisory committees, we have worked closely with Congressional leaders and staff to promote legislation that will facilitate the ability of Service members and Veterans to attain civilian credentials, and we have informed numerous White House initiatives on credentialing.

One of the most compelling takeaways from our work in this area has been that facilitating the credentialing of Service members and Veterans is a complex issue that involves a multitude of stakeholders. The Legion has worked to bring order to this multifaceted issue by convening key groups of stakeholders, and coordinating the development of strategies to overcome the unique barriers to credentialing faced by those whose primary occupational training is gained during military service. Significant progress has been produced by the commendable efforts exerted by a variety of stakeholders. However, due to the magnitude and complexity of the issue, significant opportunities remain to enhance the ability of Service members and Veterans to attain the credentials they need to enhance their career prospects in the civilian workforce.

Accordingly, The Legion has plans underway to conduct two credentialing roundtables and another National Credentialing Summit in 2017. To set the stage for these events and to help inform the new Administration, The Legion has taken the opportunity to issue this "State of Credentialing Report." The report highlights the challenges faced by Service members and Veterans in attaining civilian occupational credentials, the recent successes attributable to a variety of stakeholders, and the opportunities for additional action. The American Legion is committed to continuing to further the dialogue on this important issue, and welcomes the involvement of those like-minded organizations and individuals that are committed to the professional success of our Nation's dedicated Service members and Veterans.

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Executive Summary

When The American Legion began its efforts to address the challenges faced by service members and veterans in attaining civilian occupational certifications and licenses in the mid-1990s, little was known about the extent of the problem. Anecdotal evidence at the time suggested that service members transitioning to the civilian workforce were having difficulty attaining civilian licenses and certifications that were needed for civilian employment. To shed some light on the issue, The American Legion commissioned the first systematic study to examine barriers to credentialing for service members and veterans.

Over the past decade, The Legion has continued to keep a spotlight on these issues though its work on variety of efforts coordinated with multiple stakeholders. This includes numerous Credentialing Roundtables held over the past ten years as well as two the highly successful National Credentialing Summits held in 2012 and 2015. Legion staff members have also has also served on federal advisory committees, worked closely with Congressional leaders and staff to promote legislation that will facilitate the ability of Service members and Veterans to attain civilian credentials, and informed numerous White House initiatives on credentialing.

While The Legion's early work in this area led to meaningful improvements, a broader and more sustained focus on the issue has taken place over the past seven years. The recent emphasis on credentialing of service members and veterans was initially a direct response to the high level of veterans' unemployment that resulted from the combination of the recession of 2008 along the downsizing of the military that occurred with the drawdown of troops in the Middle East. To help improve the transition of service members to the civilian workforce, policymakers began to focus heavily on promoting occupational credentialing of service members during their period of military service as a way to translate and document military training and experience for civilian employers. While promoting transition to civilian employment continues to be a major thrust of the early and recent initiatives to facilitate credentialing of service members and veterans, the military Services also have embraced credentialing because of the benefits that accrue in-service in terms of recruiting, retention, and professionalization of the force.

Challenges in Promoting Service Members' and Veterans' Attainment of Civilian Occupational Credentials

Enlisted service members and veterans face unique challenges when it comes to credentialing because their occupational training is attained primarily through their military service, as opposed to the more traditional approaches central to civilian career preparation. The military invests extensively in formal training for its enlisted personnel, complemented by extensive on-the-job training and hands on experience. Military training is state-of-the-art and, early in their careers, service members gain opportunities for direct experience that are unprecedented in the civilian sector. However, the eligibility requirements for civilian credentials seldom offer direct recognition of military training and experience as a means of qualification.

These military-specific challenges to credential attainment have been well-researched and, appropriately, there have been numerous successes in overcoming them. While more can be done in this area, it is becoming increasingly clear that many of the remaining credentialing hurdles facing the military are rooted in the same types of impediments with which the civilian sector also is grappling. These problems are, in large part, due to the complexity of the nation's civilian credentialing system, which is characterized by numerous diverse stakeholders, a lack of consensus in defining basic credentialing terminology, absence of agreement on the standards to be applied to ensure the quality of credentials, and a scarcity of research on the labor market demand for credentials. This combination of military-specific credentialing challenges and the burgeoning complexity of civilian credentialing is proving to be the key challenge to the military's development of comprehensive credentialing programs and policies.

Key Successes in Facilitating Credentialing of Service Member and Veterans

Due in large part to the active engagement of multiple stakeholders committed to unraveling these complex issues and developing innovative solutions, there have been many notable successes in recent years in reducing credentialing barriers for service members and veterans. In looking to further advance progress in this area, it is useful to understand the steps that already have been taken so as not to unnecessarily recreate past efforts. In addition, learning about these successes also offers an excellent opportunity to identify best practices that are worthy of emulating.

The significant number of successful initiatives are varied with each contributing a piece to the puzzle of how to best facilitate credentialing for service members and veterans. They include numerous legislative actions at the state and federal level with goals that range from promoting credential attainment during military service to mandating consideration of equivalent military training and experience for state licensure and academic credit. Other successes include initiatives led by the Department of Defense and other federal agencies, in collaboration with other stakeholders, such as comprehensive demonstration programs designed to tease out credentialing barriers and solutions in specific civilian occupational areas that have numerous service members in the corresponding military occupations, that are in demand in the civilian workforce and that include credentialing requirements. That effort included pilot programs in aircraft and automotive mechanics, healthcare support, logistics and supply, and truck driving.

Finally, in addition to the public-sector initiatives underway at the state and federal levels, other stakeholders also have stepped up to the challenge of alleviating credentialing barriers for service members and veterans. Many of these initiatives have built on the federal and state initiatives described above, and have involved extensive coordination among the participating public and private sector organizations, including labor unions, regional educational consortia, and national associations.

Opportunities for Action

Despite the commendable efforts of the many stakeholders, challenges and opportunities to improve credentialing opportunities for service members and veterans still exist. The U.S. Senate made clear its commitment to the issue during a Senate Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Personnel hearing on 15 February 2017. Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts noted, "America spends hundreds of millions of dollars each year to train service members to do highly skilled jobs…they should be ready to move into civilian life with [the help of] certifications." She emphasized that the Senate "wants to work on making it easier for our service members when they leave the service to have that credential in hand and recognized in all 54 jurisdictions of the United States." The subcommittee chairman, Senator Thom Tillis of North Carolina, expressed his strong agreement with Senator Warren and commented that this is clearly an issue that will continue to receive bipartisan support.

Building on the substantive efforts that have already been undertaken to facilitate credentialing of service members and veterans, The American Legion has identified eight opportunities for action. These include some remaining opportunities that might be considered military-centric in that they are intended to reduce barriers that are unique to individuals who have attained the majority of their occupational preparation through military training and experience. They also include opportunities that are in line with the significant efforts currently underway to reform and add transparency to the civilian credentialing system. Accordingly, a key step moving forward is to ensure that service members' and veterans' needs are represented in the many efforts underway to enhance the civilian credentialing system.

1. ***Improve the Post 9/11 GI Bill Licensing and Certification Benefit.*** Amend the legislation pertaining to the Post 9/11 GI Bill payment of licensure and certification exam fees so that rather than charging an entire month's worth of a beneficiary's entitlement for the cost of a credential exam (which typically is about $250), the amount of benefit charged would be pro-rated to the cost of the exam.
2. ***Ensure the Quality of Certification Programs.*** Two key opportunities to ensure the quality of certifications programs include: (a) Raise the awareness of industry of the importance of accreditation as an important discriminator of quality; and (b) Provide government incentives to certification bodies to attain accreditation, possibly through funding for accreditation of certification agencies that can demonstrate a demand for their certification but lack the funding to seek accreditation, or by incorporating favorable consideration for the use of third party accredited programs in contract and grant awards.
3. ***Ensure the Quality of Non-Traditional Credential Preparation Programs.*** To improve the ability of service members and veterans to meet credential eligibility requirements and/or pass associated exams, resources to pay for non-traditional credentialing preparation programs need to be increased. This is predicated, however, on the increased establishment and use of quality assurance mechanisms for non-traditional education, accompanied by better dissemination of information about those programs that have undergone a quality

assurance review. The following opportunities exist to lay the foundation for this:

- Identify existing quality assurance screening mechanisms for non-traditional education, and an assessment of the extent to which they would apply to credential preparation programs. (This might include, certificate accreditation programs established in recent years by the American National Standards Institute and the National Commission for Certifying Agencies, as well as programs recognized by the Council on Occupational Education, etc.)
- Develop a compendium of federal programs that currently fund non-traditional education programs, including the screening mechanisms and criteria they use and whether they would apply to credential preparation programs, and an assessment of the accessibility of information on approved programs. (This would include, for example, programs administered by the Departments of Labor, Defense, Education, and Veterans Affairs.)

4. ***Better Identify the Labor Market Demand for Credentials.*** Increase research on the labor market demand for credentials with an emphasis on ensuring that the unique value of occupational credentials for military trained civilian job seekers is captured.
5. ***Track Credential Attainment Outcomes.*** Increase research on tracking credentialing outcomes, with an emphasis on:
   - In-service effects of credential attainment for service members, including the impact on such things as promotion, job performance, and retention;
   - Civilian labor market outcomes for the general population as well as transitioning service members and veterans.
6. ***Reduce State Licensure Barriers.*** Build on the significant strides made in recent years to reduce state licensing barriers for service members, veterans, and military spouses and: (1) continue to promote legislation, policies, and programs that will allow for greater recognition of military training and experience for purposes of state licensing and academic credit, and that will help reduce barriers to state licensing for military spouses, (2) track and report on existing state efforts to reduce licensing barriers for service members, veterans, and spouses, (3) encourage state licensing agencies and academic institutions to rely on existing third-party assessments of military training and experience, such as the ACE credit recommendations.
7. ***Develop a Repository of Information on Best Practices to Facilitatethe Credentialing of Service Members and Veterans.*** Develop a repository of information on best practices to facilitate the credentialing of service members and veterans to allow stakeholders to learn from and emulate successful initiatives.
8. ***Ensure Military and Veteran Credentialing Interests are Represented in Civilian Workforce Credentialing Initiatives.*** DoD, the military Services, and veterans' organizations should become actively involved in initiatives underway to reform the nation's credentialing system to: (1) stay abreast of civilian credentialing trends to ensure military credentialing policies and programs remain relevant, (2) ensure that the unique needs of service members and veterans are considered; and (3) promote military training and experience as a more widely accepted form of demonstrating competency to perform in the civilian workplace.

Background

When The American Legion began its efforts to address the challenges faced by service members and veterans in attaining civilian occupational certifications and licenses in the mid-1990s, little was known about the extent of the problem. Anecdotal evidence at the time suggested that service members transitioning to the civilian workforce were having difficulty attaining civilian licenses and certifications that were needed for civilian employment. This reportedly resulted in either unemployment or underemployment. The problem appeared to be due, at least in part, to the lack of recognition by civilian credentialing agencies of the equivalency of military training and experience. However, it was not yet clear exactly what types of barriers were faced, or the extent to which they affected service members and veterans across different occupational areas.

To shed some light on the issue, The American Legion commissioned a study to examine barriers in two key occupational areas that represented a large number of service member and that were subject to a high degree of occupational credentialing – healthcare and aircraft maintenance. This foundational study revealed that transitioning service members in these occupational areas were indeed likely to face barriers to employment due to their lack of credentials as well as the fact that civilian credentialing agencies did not know how to assess military training and experience. Some of the key types of barriers identified included the lack of mechanisms by which credentialing agencies could recognize equivalent military training and experience; the lack of bridge training to fill gaps between military training and civilian credentialing requirements; and variations in licensing requirements across states. This study and others have shown that unless service members are provided the opportunity to prepare for and attain credentials during their military service, they would likely continue to face chronic issues of unemployment and underemployment.

While The Legion's work in this area dates back over 20 years and has led to meaningful improvements in the subsequent decade, a broader and more sustained focus on the issue has taken place over the past seven years. During this time, the United States began to draw down its forces in the Middle East, and the numbers of service members leaving the military workforce skyrocketed. Transitioning service members were faced with finding new jobs in a civilian workforce that was still reeling from the Great Recession of 2008 where jobs were scarce. The unusually high large numbers of separating service members combined with the instability of the civilian workforce meant that the Department of Defense was faced with staggering unemployment compensation bills for former service members reaching an all-time high of over $900 million in Fiscal Year 2011.

> "The potential lack of recognition of the extensive training and experience received in the military can have a number of adverse effects, including:
>
> - Need for Veterans to attain potentially duplicative additional skills training (often paid for through government programs) in order to qualify for civilian jobs;
> - Periods of unemployment or underemployment for Service members transitioning to the civilian workforce;
> - Lack of use of qualified transitioning Service members and Veterans to fill labor shortages in the civilian workforce."
>
> Excerpted from: *U.S. Department of Labor. (2014). Pilot Study Translating Military Skills to Civilian Employment: Study on Equivalencies between Skills Developed in Military Occupational Specialties and Qualifications Required for Civilian Employment with the Private Sector.*

Studies during that time showed that civilian employers were enthusiastic about hiring transitioning service members and veterans, based on the widespread perception that these applicants had an outstanding work ethic and significant skills. However, hiring managers had trouble determining the applicability of military training and experience to the jobs they were trying to fill. A 2010 Society of Human Resource Management study, for example, showed that 60 percent of civilian employers cited their inability to translate military training and experience as a key barrier precluding them from hiring transitioning service members and veterans.

To help improve the transition of service members to the civilian workforce, policymakers began to focus heavily on promoting occupational credentialing of service members during their period of military service as a way to translate military training and experience into terms understood by civilian employers. The idea was that attainment of civilian credentials by service

members offers validation by a third-party organization recognized by industry of the individual's competency to perform in a civilian capacity. Policymakers also recognized that, in some occupational areas, credentials – typically occupational licenses – are mandatory to hold the civilian jobs, so it is important to ensure that transitioning military personnel have or can acquire the applicable licenses.

While promoting transition to civilian employment has been a major thrust of the early and recent initiatives to facilitate credentialing of service members and veterans, the military Services also have embraced credentialing because of the benefits that accrue in-service in terms of recruiting, retention, and professionalization of the force. The Services recognize that, depending on the alignment between the military occupation and the civilian occupation, there may be legitimate gaps between military training and experience on the one hand, and the civilian credentialing standard on the other hand. They are not asking for these gaps to be ignored. Rather they are seeking maximum credit from credentialing agencies for military training and experience that relate to their credentialing standards, while encouraging service members to close legitimate gaps while they are still in the military. In addition to improving the civilian career prospects of service members, filling those gaps benefits the military by producing a cadre of more fully-trained and better-rounded service members.

Challenges in Promoting Service Members' and Veterans' Attainment of Civilian Occupational Credentials

Enlisted service members and veterans face unique challenges when it comes to credentialing because their occupational training is attained primarily through their military service, as opposed to the more traditional approaches central to civilian career preparation. The military invests extensively in formal training for its enlisted personnel, complemented by extensive on-the-job training and hands on experience. Military training is state-of-the-art and, early in their careers, service members gain opportunities for direct experience that are unprecedented in the civilian sector. However, the eligibility requirements for civilian credentials seldom offer direct recognition of military training and experience as a means of qualification.

In looking for a solution to this complex issue, some have been inclined to oversimplify by proposing that the military should simply change its training, or that the civilian credentialing agencies should uniformly accept military training and experience. These proposals are unrealistic because they ignore two important and directly related facts. First, that the military trains for a mission, which means that many military occupations are not directly aligned with comparable civilian occupations. Second, as noted above, because of this lack of direct alignment, there usually are legitimate knowledge, skill or experience gaps for service members and veterans seeking civilian credentials related to their military training and experience. Accordingly, military personnel clearly deserve opportunities to fill the unique gaps that exist, while getting credit for the extensive training and experience that they already possess.

These military-specific challenges to credential attainment have been well-researched and, appropriately, there have been numerous successes in overcoming them. While more can be done in this area, it is becoming increasingly clear that many of the remaining credentialing hurdles facing the military are rooted in the same types of impediments with which the civilian sector also is grappling. These problems are, in large part, due to the complexity of the nation's civilian credentialing system, which is characterized by numerous diverse stakeholders, a lack of consensus in defining basic credentialing terminology, a lack of agreement on the standards to be applied to ensure the quality of credentials, and a scarcity of research on the labor market demand for credentials. This combination of military-specific credentialing challenges and the burgeoning complexity of civilian credentialing is proving to be the key challenge to the military's development of comprehensive credentialing programs and policies.

Table 1: Key Barriers to Credentialing for Service Members and Veterans Identified by DoD in 2012

- Service members' and Veterans' lack of awareness of credentialing and resources to facilitate credentialing
- Lack of incentives for Service members to attain credentials during military service
- Cost of credentialing
- Gaps between military training and experience and civilian credentialing requirements
- Credentialing boards unaware of or do not recognize equivalency of military education, training and experience to civilian credentialing requirements
- Credentialing agencies lack of access to information to adequately assess military training and experience for civilian credentialing
- State licensing requirements

Source: U.S. Department of Defense. (2012). *Assessment of Service Credentialing Programs, Identification of Best Practices that can Serve as a Baseline Model for Service Credentialing Programs.*

The varied nature of these barriers means that the solutions do not lie solely with the military or with civilian credentialing agencies. Rather, they require coordinated efforts by the multiple stakeholders that play a role in facilitating the credentialing of military trained individuals. This includes DoD and the military Services, credentialing agencies, training providers, veteran advocates, industry, thought leaders from academia, and policymakers at all levels. The solutions also cannot be solely military-centric, they must consider the numerous efforts currently underway to reform the U.S. credentialing system. Therein lies the dual challenge that The American Legion has committed to address – convening the varied players who play a role in facilitating the ability of service members and veterans to attain

civilian credentials, while ensuring that the unique needs of military service members and veterans are accommodated in the broader efforts to bring greater order to our nation's civilian credentialing system.

Table 1 lists the key barriers to credentialing that were identified in 2012 in the Department of Defense study, Assessment of Service Credentialing Programs, Identification of Best Practices that can Serve as a Baseline Model for Service Credentialing Programs. As the next section of this report describes, many successful initiatives aimed at reducing these barriers have been implemented. As progress continues to be made in addressing these barriers, new issues requiring attention are emerging. Looking ahead, opportunities remain to continue building on the significant work that already has been accomplished, as the final section of this report will discuss.

Key Successes in Facilitating Credentialing of Service Member and Veterans

Due in large part to the active engagement of multiple stakeholders committed to unraveling the complex issues and finding innovative solutions, there have been many notable successes in recent years in reducing credentialing barriers for service members and veterans. In looking to further advance progress in this area, it is useful to understand the steps that have already been taken so as not to unnecessarily recreate efforts. On the other hand, learning about these successes is also a good opportunity to identify best practices that are worthy of emulating. While not intended to be an exhaustive compendium, below are some key highlights of recent successes.

Legislative Action Taken to Facilitate Credentialing of Service Members and Veterans

Reflecting policymakers' ongoing desire to ensure the smooth transition of service members to the civilian workforce and enhance the employability of our Nation's veterans, numerous federal and state legislative initiatives supporting credentialing of service members and veterans have been enacted in recent years. The American Legion has played a key role in recommending or formulating many of the legislative proposals, and has provided important technical guidance as the legislation was drafted and revised in the course of the legislative process.

Federal Legislation

Since 2011, over a dozen legislative initiatives designed to enhance the ability of service members and veterans to attain civilian licenses and certifications have been enacted. The resulting set of statutory provisions has grown incrementally on an annual basis, based upon the findings and successes of earlier legislative initiatives. For example, in 2011 and 2012, Congress directed both the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Labor (DOL) to undertake demonstration projects focusing on specific occupational areas in which credentialing plays a large role in civilian employment. Building on the findings of those successful pilot programs, additional legislation oriented to facilitating credentialing has been enacted each year since then as part of the annual National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA. Some of the key provisions have included:

- ***NDAA FY 13, Section 543*** – Expanded upper limit of number of occupations included in DoD pilot program (authorized by NDAA FY 12, Section 542) and allowed DOL to withhold grant funding for veterans' employment services to states that lack provisions allowing for recognition of equivalent military training and experience for state licensure purposes.
- ***NDAA FY 14, Section 542*** – Required DoD to disseminate information to service members throughout their careers on civilian licenses and certifications that match their military occupations, skills, and experience.
- ***NDAA FY 15, Section 551*** – Required DoD to carry out a credentialing program to allow service members to attain credentials related to military training and skills that " (1) are acquired during service in the armed forces incident to the performance of their military duties; and (2) translate into civilian occupations.
- ***NDAA FY 16, Section 559*** – Specified criteria by which the Services could approve payment of specific credentials, with a primary focus on credentialing programs that have been accredited by a third-party accreditor of personnel certification programs.
- ***NDAA FY 17, Section 561*** –
  - » Expanded the criteria by which the Services could pay for credentialing programs beyond accreditation status, to include state and federal licenses as well as credentials that have employer and industry recognition or have been approved by another federal agency.
  - » Removed the restriction that payment be limited to credentials that are "incident to the performance" of military occupational duties.
- ***NDAA FY 17, Section 724*** – Expanded the authority of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences to include award of certificates, certifications, and undergraduate degrees, in addition to the advanced degrees that it was previously authorized to award.

Appendix A contains a detailed list of key federal legislative actions related to credentialing of service members and veterans, along with summaries of their

intent, status, and significance.

State Legislation

At the state level, there are two key areas in which service members and veterans face challenges in attaining credentials – meeting state licensing requirements, which often vary by state, and attaining academic credit for military training and experience.

State Licensure. Many years ago, when The Legion first identified state licensure as a potential barrier to credentialing of service members and veterans, it was generally seen by many as an intractable problem that would be very difficult to resolve. Accordingly, efforts to address credentialing barriers tended to focus more on federal licensure and national certification. However, in recent years, numerous successful initiatives have been undertaken to raise awareness of the need for states to recognize military training and experience for state licensure purposes. Attention has also been given to removing licensure impediments for military spouses as they move from state to state. In the past five years, every state has passed some form of legislation designed to address one or both issues.

The types of legislative actions supporting licensure of service members, veterans, and spouses vary by state, but include such things as:

- Requiring state licensing agencies to recognize equivalent military training and experience;
- Promoting reciprocity, wherein two (or more) state licensure boards agree to recognize the other's license(s) as equivalent;
- Allowing licensure by endorsement, which provides an unrestricted license to practice for an individual who holds a valid license in another jurisdiction;
- Providing temporary licenses until the individual can attain licensure in the state;
- Providing streamlined approvals, which can be important especially for spouses whose stay in a state may be limited to just a few years; and
- Allowing deployed service members to extend the period to renew state licenses until post-deployment.

Some of the state legislative initiatives are broad and address all occupations subject to state licensure, while others focus on specific occupational areas.

Academic Credit. Ensuring academic credit for military training and experience is another issue that is closely tied to facilitating the credentialing of service members and veterans. Many civilian certifications and licenses have eligibility requirements that include either specific college degrees or accumulated college credit in the form of semester hours. Healthcare occupations are a prime example of occupations for which the completion of academic programs or degrees is a pre-requisite for sitting for certification and licensure exams. Since enlisted military personnel face the unique challenge of having attained significant state-of-the-art training and experience outside of the traditional college or university environment, they do not always get recognition for their non-traditional education.

To compensate for this, DoD and the military Services have commissioned the American Council on Education (ACE) to review military training and experience and make specific college credit recommendations. Moreover, enlisted personnel in the Air Force are awarded college credit because most of their military training is offered through the Community College of the Air Force, a federally-chartered degree-granting institution, which is regionally accredited in conjunction with its Air University parent. Despite these efforts to promote the recommendation and award of college credit for military training and experience, many academic institutions remain reluctant to award academic credit for military training.

Recognizing this as an impediment for service members and veterans seeking to attain civilian occupational licenses and certifications, many states have passed legislation in recent years that requires state educational institutions to act to award credit for military training and experience. Virginia, for example, passed a law in 2015 that requires community colleges to award academic credit to students who have successfully completed military training that is:

1. Recommended for academic credit by a national higher education association (such as ACE) that provides academic credit recommendations for military training courses or programs;
2. Noted on the student's military transcript issued by any of the armed forces of the United States; or
3. Otherwise documented in writing by any of the armed forces of the United States.

DoD and Military Services' Initiatives

As noted above, DoD has embraced the advantages of promoting civilian credentialing for many reasons,

including recruiting, retention, professionalization of the Force, and transition. In recent years, DoD has implemented numerous successful initiatives that have led to the institutionalization of the promotion of credentialing of service members during the military life cycle. Some key examples of DoD and the military Services' efforts in this area are described below.

Pilot Programs

In recent years, DoD has conducted numerous pilot programs designed to identify credentialing barriers for service members and test ways to resolve them. For example, Section 558 of the FY 12 NDAA required the DoD to "carry out a pilot program to assess the feasibility and advisability of permitting enlisted members of the Armed Forces to obtain civilian credentialing or licensing for skills required for military occupational specialties (MOS) or qualification for duty specialty codes." DoD's Force Training Office successfully coordinated the pilot program with the Services, focusing on five occupational areas – aircraft mechanics, automotive mechanics, healthcare support, logistics and supply, and truck drivers. Each of these occupational areas had: a) numerous service members in the corresponding military occupations; b) a positive civilian labor market outlook; and, c) at least one civilian credential that is either required or in strong demand for employment in the civilian workforce.

Among other things, the pilot program assessed potential gaps between military training and experience and the applicable civilian credentialing requirements, and it identified and tested the implementation of strategies to fill the gaps. Those strategies included collaboration among DoD and the military services, civilian credentialing agencies, academia, training providers, and others to develop bridge programs to identify and fill gaps. DoD submitted its report to Congress in September 2013 providing details of the pilot findings. There were many occupation-specific findings, but overall, it concluded that credentialing of service members is feasible, advisable, and cost effective, and DoD reported that the average cost per Pilot participant was $289.

Service Credentialing Programs

In the past, the extent to which the military Services promoted credentialing of service members varied significantly across Services. The Army established the first formal Service-wide voluntary credentialing initiative in 1999 to create a tool for Soldiers, counselors, civilian employers, and credentialing boards to use to:

- Determine the extent to which Army military occupational training and experience meets civilian credentialing requirements; and
- Obtain ready access to resources that are available to fill any gaps that exist between Army training and civilian credentialing requirements.

From this grew the Army's Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) web site which was designed to serve as the tool for information dissemination. In 2006, recognizing the value of credentialing, the Navy worked with the Army and created its own credentialing program and a corresponding Navy COOL web site. The Navy credentialing program also included, among other things, payment of credential fees for credentials that are related to enlisted Sailors' ratings. The success of the Army and Navy COOL initiatives prompted Congress to include in the NDAA for FY 14, Section 542 which required all Services to create credentialing information dissemination programs. Accordingly, the Marine Corps and the Air Force have since created their own credentialing programs with COOL web sites as central components.

Over time, as the Services' continued to recognize the value of credentialing and as additional legislation has been passed, the goals of the Services' credentialing programs have evolved to include:

- Dissemination of information on credentials related to military occupations, the potential gaps between military training and experience and civilian credentialing requirements, and resources to fill gaps;
- Integration of credentialing into service members' professional development;
- Payment of credentialing fees; and
- Coordination with internal and external stakeholders.

The Services' credentialing programs now operate under the auspices of the Joint Services Credentialing Working Group, which is led by representatives of each of the Service's COOL programs with participation from the Office of Secretary of Defense and other stakeholders.

State Advocacy

Recognizing the importance of state involvement in reducing barriers to state licensure for service members, veterans, and spouses, in the past five years, DoD has undertaken multiple initiatives to address this issue, including engagement of its State Liaison Office. The

goal of that DoD office is to engage state policymakers, not-for-profit associations, concerned business interests, and other state leaders about the needs of military members and their families. The issues it addresses are broad and may include such things as promoting affordable child care for military families and policies to support regulations restricting predatory lending practices.

Each year, DoD identifies 10 key state-based issues that will be addressed by the State Liaison Office. In recent years, the top 10 issues have specifically included multiple initiatives to reduce barriers to state licensing for service members and spouses, and/or to promote academic credit for military training and experience. These efforts have been highly successful and have resulted in, among other things, the enactment of many of the state legislative actions noted above. DoD continues its efforts in this area, and three of the top 10 priorities guiding the State Liaison Office during the current fiscal year relate to improving credentialing opportunities at the state-level. These include:

- Licensure and Academic Credit for Separating Service Members;
- Licensing Compacts Recognizing Military Requirements; and
- Removing Certification Impediments for Transitioning Military Spouses.

In addition to these state liaison initiatives that are underway on an annual basis, DoD's Force Training Office also continues to work on these important issues with a broad spectrum of stakeholders at the state level, as well with national associations that represent their interests. The Force Training Office undertakes targeted initiatives to promote action at the state level in selected occupational areas. The Force Training Office also maintains on annual basis for every state detailed documentation of pending state legislation and state legislation recently enacted.

Coordination with Internal and External Stakeholders

DoD and the Military Services' have coordinated their credentialing goals and programs with stakeholders both inside and outside of the military. Inside the military, for example, the credentialing initiatives have been coordinated with voluntary education programs, such as Tuition Assistance, to enable service members to meet credential eligibility requirements and prepare for credentialing exams. Service members can use Tuition Assistance to pay for courses or degrees that might help them meet certification or licensure requirements, within the applicable constraints of Tuition Assistance eligibility requirements. Service members also can use Tuition Assistance to participate in DoD's new Career and Technical Education, which allows service members to earn certificates (to be distinguished clearly from certifications) by successfully completing specified academic courses and earning credits that are directly transferable into pre-identified career oriented degree programs.

Recognizing the important role that attainment of postsecondary academic credit plays in the ability of service members to be licensed or certified in certain occupational areas, DoD and the Services also have actively expanded their partnership with ACE to raise awareness among credentialing bodies and academia regarding the rigor with which the ACE college credit recommendation process is carried out. This has improved the confidence of credentialing bodies and academic institutions in accepting ACE credit recommendations for military training and experience.

Coordination with external stakeholders has also helped DoD and the military Services promote its credentialing goals. This includes working closely with other federal agencies, state and regional initiatives, academia, and non-profit organizations. These coordinated efforts have gone a long way towards reducing credentialing barriers, and notable successes are described in more detail below.

Other Federal Agency Initiatives

In partnership with DoD, other federal agencies have also worked to facilitate credentialing of service members and veterans. This includes federal agencies, such as DOL, which plays a significant role in promoting training and employment for both civilians and military. It also includes agencies that may have a direct role in licensing, such as the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

U.S. Department of Labor/National Governors' Association Demonstration of Licensing and Certification for Veterans

The Veterans' Opportunity to Work to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (the VOW Act) was a key stimulus enacted by Congress to promote civilian occupational credentialing for veterans. One section of that legislation authorized DOL to conduct a demonstration project that would engage governors in developing accelerated

pathways for veterans to attain civilian credentials. In 2013, DOL contracted with the National Governors' Association (NGA) to carry out the 18-month demonstration project, and NGA selected six states through a competitive process to participate in the demonstration. Each participating state selected three high-demand occupations as the focus their strategies to streamline credentialing opportunities for veterans.

The state and local programs explored during the demonstration were concentrated in civilian healthcare occupations, with an emphasis on preparation for civilian licensure as Paramedics or as Licensed Practical Nurses. Upon conclusion of the demonstration, NGA prepared a final report to document state strategies and inform future state efforts to implement accelerated pathways for veterans to licensure and certification. That report was published recently in a document titled Veterans' Licensing and Certification Demonstration. The first section of the report describes strategies that states can implement to accelerate pathways to licensing and certification for veterans, and provides a step-by-step blueprint that states can follow to carry out those strategies. The second section of the report presents the results of an analysis of the potential reductions in the length of time required by veterans to attain certification or licensure, and the corresponding potential reductions in the costs of the accompanying GI Bill benefits for tuition and living expenses.

U.S. Department of Labor Study on Equivalencies Between Skills Developed in Military Occupational Specialties and Qualifications Required for Civilian Employment with the Private Sector

The VOW Act also contained a requirement for the Secretary of Labor, in consultation with the Secretaries of Defense and Veterans Affairs, to "conduct a study to identify equivalences between the skills developed by members of the Armed Forces through various military occupational specialties (MOS), successful completion of resident training courses, attaining various military ranks or rates, or other military experiences and the qualifications required for various positions of civilian employment in the private sector." In response, DOL sponsored a study to pilot test a methodology that could be used to improve the existing crosswalk between military and civilian occupations taking into consideration the factors required by law. The study built on the research conducted as part of the DoD credentialing initiatives and focused on a subset of military occupation codes (MOCs) that represented 57 percent of enlisted service members.

The Pilot methodology resulted in the creation of a more robust military to civilian crosswalk for the Pilot military occupations providing numerous additional career options for military service members and veterans to consider. Specifically, the Pilot Crosswalk increased the average number of military to civilian occupational linkages per MOC from 1.5 civilian occupations per MOC in the existing crosswalk to 14.1 per MOC. It also resulted in the creation of indicators by which service members and veterans can gauge the relevance and attainability of the civilian jobs identified. The results of the study were incorporated into the DOL's Occupational Information Network (O*NET) – a database classifying the civilian workforce structure and providing crosswalks among various classification schemes. They were also incorporated into the Services' COOL web sites. DOL issued its report to Congress in September 2014.

U.S. Department of Transportation Military Skills Waiver Program

In 2011, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) of the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) published a regulation that includes a provision giving state driver's licensing agencies the authority to substitute two years of safe driving experience in military equivalents of commercial motor vehicles for the skills test portion of the Commercial Driver's License (CDL) test. This provision, called the Military Skills Waiver, applies to all Service Members across all military Services. This provision was quickly adopted by all 50 states and the District of Columbia and, to date, has enabled the issuance to service members and veterans of over 15,200 Commercial Driver's Licenses. The rapid success of this regulatory initiative was facilitated by extensive coordination among multiple stakeholders, including DoD and the Services, DOT/FMCSA and the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA).

Other U.S. Department of Transportation Commercial Driver's License Initiatives

In July 2012, the Congress passed and the President signed transportation legislation called the "Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act" or "MAP–21." Section 32308 of that statute directed the Secretary of Transportation, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense and in cooperation with the states to conduct a

study assessing the regulatory, economic, and administrative barriers to obtaining commercial driver's licenses (CDLs) that are faced by service members and veterans who receive training and safely operate military vehicles that are equivalent to commercial motor vehicles during military service. The statute also required the Secretary of Transportation to submit a report summarizing the findings and recommendations of the study to the appropriate congressional committees.

In 2013, DOT submitted to Congress and FMCSA posted on its web site the report titled, Program to Assist Veterans to Acquire Commercial Driver's Licenses. Adopting the perspective of service members and veterans who gained experience during military service operating military vehicles comparable to commercial motor vehicles, the report provides information on the eligibility requirements and testing procedures for attaining CDLs, the drug and alcohol regulations and medical qualifications that must be met, and the barriers created by inconsistencies between the military and civilian procedures for training, testing, licensing and maintaining records for motor vehicle operators. In addition, the report includes recommendations for actions to be taken by the military Services and by the federal and the state agencies responsible for the oversight and issuance of CDLs to facilitate the transition to civilian CDL licensure for those service members and veterans who gained military training and experience operating military vehicles equivalent to commercial motor vehicles. DoD and the Services, DOT/FMCSA, AAMVA and state driver's licensing agencies continue to coordinate their actions to fulfill the recommendations.

In 2016, FMCSA also published a draft regulation proposing a pilot program to allow a limited number of individuals between the ages of 18 and 21 to operate commercial motor vehicles in interstate commerce if they have received specified heavy-vehicle driver training while in military service, and are sponsored by a participating motor carrier. Under current regulations, state driver's licensing agencies may issue intra-state CDLs to applicants between 18 and 21, but those CDLs are restricted to use within the state and do not authorize the drivers to operate commercial motor vehicles in interstate commerce. During the three-year pilot program, the safety records of the younger drivers (the study group) will be compared to the records of a control group of comprised of drivers who are 21 years of age or older and who have comparable training and experience in driving vehicles requiring a CDL.

U.S. Department of Transportation, Maritime Administration (MARAD) Military to Mariner (Mil2Mariner) Initiative

The office of the Maritime Administrator's Committee on the Marine Transportation System (CMTS), has been working diligently to facilitate the transition of seafaring members of the U.S. Navy, U.S. Army, and U.S. Coast Guard into high demand civilian mariner careers. This includes careers in federal civil service with the Military Sealift Command and other federal seafaring agencies as well as opportunities within the commercial shipping industry. A key component of this initiative is facilitating attainment of mariner credentials by military service members and veterans. The Army and the Navy are the two Services with military occupations most closely aligned with civilian mariner careers and they have been closely involved with broader initiatives to promote credentialing and employment in the mariner industry.

The CMTS "Mil2Mariner" initiative pulls together leaders in federal entities to include the Department of Defense, Department of the Navy, Department of the Army, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Labor, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration as well commercial shipping industry leaders through inputs from the U.S. Coast Guard's Maritime Personnel Advisory Committee (MERPAC). Through close collaboration with those diverse entities, the U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard worked jointly to develop a "Blueprint to Mariner" guide and posted it on the U.S. Navy Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (Navy COOL) website to help current Service members understand the process and apply for the necessary U.S. Coast Guard, National Maritime Center credentials that are required for entry into this important and in demand career path.

Other Notable Initiatives

In addition to the public-sector initiatives underway at the state and federal levels, other stakeholders also have stepped up to the challenge of alleviating credentialing barriers for service members and veterans. Many of these initiatives have built on the federal and state initiatives described above, and have involved extensive coordination among the participating public and private sector organizations. Highlighted below are some key initiatives sponsored in specific occupational areas by various stakeholders, including labor unions, regional educational consortia, and national associa-

tions. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of the good work of this type that has been accomplished, and, as will be discussed, the opportunity exists to develop a more comprehensive compendium of best practices in promoting credentialing of service members and veterans.

International Brotherhood of Teamsters Commercial Driver's License Initiative

In coordination with the CDL initiatives undertaken by DOT in partnership with DoD, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) has sponsored numerous initiatives to promote CDL licensure for service members near the end of their military service, as well as for veterans. These initiatives have been and continue to be implemented as part of the IBT's Military Assistance Program (MAP). Under the most ambitious MAP initiative to date, those interested service members who are nearing separation from military service and meet program eligibility requirements have an opportunity to attain Commercial Driver's Licenses (CDLs) while still on active duty.

The MAP initiative operates under DoD's SkillBridge authority, which allows service members to be released from their military duties during their final months of military service so they can master skills and attain credentials that will assist them in gaining civilian employment, and thus be prepared to make a smooth transition from the military to life as a civilian. The service members participating in MAP receive training in operating commercial motor vehicles at military installations where they are stationed. IBT instructors deliver the training by guiding the service member trainees in operating commercial motor vehicles loaned by a major trucking company. Upon successfully completing the training, participating service members are assisted to apply for and attain CDLs. Immediately after separation from the military, these newly licensed drivers receive priority consideration for employment by the trucking company that provides the equipment for this initiative.

Regional Initiative - Multi-State Collaborative on Military Credit

During the recent years of renewed attention to civilian occupational credentialing for service members and veterans, initiatives have been undertaken at the state, regional and national levels. The most prominent example of a regional initiative has been the Multi-State Collaborative on Military Credit (MCMC), which represents the interests of twelve states that are members of the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC), along with Kentucky. The mission of MCMC is "to facilitate an interstate partnership of 13 states, and to translate competencies acquired by veterans through military training and experiences toward college credentials." MHEC provides MCMC with the operational and administrative support needed to pursue that mission.

In 2014 and 2015, MHEC received substantial grants from the Lumina Foundation and the USA Fund to support the ongoing work of MCMC. With the benefit of that support, MCMC has hosted conferences and webinars and has participated in numerous conferences sponsored by organizations with similar goals. MCMC also has sponsored the development of varied resources that support the complementary efforts exerted by professionals in higher education and by service members and veterans to translate credit for military training and experience toward fulfillment of the requirements for civilian academic credits, degrees and credentials. Valuing Military Learning: A Guide to Military Prior Learning Assessment and More is a resource sponsored by MCMC and developed by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). It can be characterized as a consumer's guide to civilian postsecondary education for service members and veterans, with an emphasis on specific opportunities in civilian healthcare careers for service members and veterans with related military training and experience. MCMC is continuing its efforts to promote enhanced practices among the postsecondary institutions within its jurisdiction, and is reaching out to coordinate its efforts with related initiatives sponsored by other regional and national organizations.

Initiatives by National Associations Representing Specific Healthcare Occupations

A large number of enlisted military personnel hold military occupational specialties in the healthcare field, but they do not always have the licenses and certifications required for civilian employment. In some healthcare occupations, the service member or veteran will have highly relevant experience, but lack the formal credentials. In others, there may be some training gaps that need to be filled in order to attain the credentials. Several initiatives have been implemented in recent years to facilitate credentialing of individuals trained in healthcare by the military.

A prominent early initiative was implemented by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN), which created a gap analysis comparing the knowledge and skills acquired by military medics and corpsmen to the knowledge and skills required to be mastered prior to eligibility for state licensure as a licensed Practical Nurse (LPN). The gap analysis consists of the knowledge and skills included in a standard civilian LPN training curriculum displayed as a matrix that maps the civilian requirements to the documented knowledge and skills gained by medics and corpsmen serving in the most common military healthcare specialties in the Army, Navy and Air Force. The gap analysis makes it possible to quickly determine whether a veteran with prior experience as a medic or corpsman has mastered the specific knowledge and skill areas required by a civilian LPN training program. This feature of the gap analysis has enabled numerous postsecondary institutions to develop approaches to expedite the attainment by many former medics and corpsmen of the knowledge and skills required to sit for LPN licensing exams.

The National Association of State EMS Officials (NASEMSO) has implemented initiatives to encourage, facilitate and expedite the transition of veterans with experience as medics and corpsmen into civilian careers in emergency medical services. NASEMSO initiatives have included the promotion of expedited application processes for former medics and corpsmen seeking state licensure as emergency medical technicians and paramedics, as well as development and dissemination of standardized data collection and reporting procedures that include relevant data on military service. NASEMSO also has explored the feasibility of achieving more widespread availability of accelerated training programs that assist former medics and corpsmen to advance from the emergency medical technician skill level they gained during military service to the paramedic skill level that they need to earn adequate civilian pay and benefits.

Opportunities for Action

Despite the commendable efforts of the many stakeholders, challenges and opportunities to improve credentialing opportunities for service members and veterans still exist. The U.S. Senate made clear its commitment to the issue during a recent Senate Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Personnel hearing held on 15 February 2017. Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts noted, "America spends hundreds of millions of dollars each year to train service members to do highly skilled jobs…they should be ready to move into civilian life with [the help of] certifications." She emphasized that the Senate "wants to work on making it easier for our service members when they leave the service to have that credential in hand and recognized in all 54 jurisdictions of the United States." The subcommittee chairman, Senator Thom Tillis of North Carolina, expressed his strong agreement with Senator Warren and commented that this is clearly an issue that will continue to receive bipartisan support.

Building on the substantive efforts that have already been undertaken to facilitate credentialing of service members and veterans, The American Legion has identified eight opportunities for action. These include some remaining opportunities that might be considered military-centric in that they are intended to reduce barriers that are unique to individuals who have attained the majority of their occupational preparation through military training and experience. They also include opportunities that are in line with the significant effort to reform and add more transparency to the civilian credentialing system. Accordingly, a key step moving forward is to ensure that service members' and veterans' needs are represented in the many efforts underway to reform the civilian credentialing system.

#1 – Improve the Post 9/11 GI Bill Licensing and Certification Benefit

Qualifying service members and veterans who participate in either the Montgomery GI Bill or the Post 9/11 GI Bill can use their GI Bill benefit to pay for credentialing exam fees. Both bills will pay for the cost of the certification exam fee, up to $2,000 per exam, and both will pay for an unlimited number of certification exams (not to exceed the individual's available entitlement). However, Post 9/11 GI Bill beneficiaries are charged a greater portion of their monthly entitlement for exam fees than participants in the Montgomery GI Bill.

Post-9/11 GI Bill recipients are charged one full month of entitlement, while for Montgomery GI Bill participants, the charge to entitlement is pro-rated to the cost of exam. So, for example, if a credential exam cost $200, the Post 9/11 participant would be charged an entire month worth of entitlement, which can equate to over $1,500; while the Montgomery GI Bill would be charged only $200 against their monthly entitlement. Since the average licensing and certification test fee typically is about $200 to $300, each payment by the GI Bill benefit for a modest exam fee can result in the loss of a substantial amount of monthly entitlement for Post 9/11 GI Bill participants. In addition, most GI Bill beneficiaries now are covered under the Post-9/11 rather than the Montgomery GI Bill, including veterans who originally participated under the Montgomery GI Bill and elected to transfer to the Post 9/11 GI Bill. So, many veterans could be negatively impacted.

Opportunity: Amend the legislation pertaining to the Post 9/11 GI Bill payment of licensure and certification exam fees so that rather than charging an entire month's worth of a beneficiary's entitlement for the cost of a credential exam (which typically is about $250), the amount of benefit charged would be pro-rated to the cost of the exam.

#2 – Ensure the Quality of Certification Programs

While accreditation is commonly used as a means of ensuring quality in higher education, the use of accreditation as a quality control mechanism for certification programs is not widespread. Currently, numerous certification programs that are not accredited by a third party have received industry endorsement and have achieved widespread acceptance in various industries. This includes, for example, the Automotive Service Excellence automotive technician certifications that are widely recognized in that sector, as well as numerous certifications in the manufacturing industry that have been endorsed by the National Association of Manufacturers Institute. The Department of Defense indicates that about 70 percent of the certifications linked to military occupations have not been accredited and has therefore adopted its own screening mechanisms for certifications for which it pays.

The Legion believes that third-party accreditation of certification programs conducted by accrediting bodies that meet rigorous standards is the "gold standard" in ensuring the quality of credentialing programs. Wide-

spread accreditation of certification programs would make it easier for all stakeholders to more easily discriminate among certifications, especially as the number of certifications continues to proliferate. However, since certification represents a relatively new approach to establishing workplace competency, accreditation of certification programs is yet to be demanded across industry. Accordingly, it cannot yet be relied upon as the only means of ensuring the quality of certifications, or as the sole determinant of which credentials should be paid for by the government. For that reason, The Legion supported the amendment to the FY 17 NDAA (Section 561) that broadened the criteria that the military can use to approve credentials for payment, as a stop gap solution until accreditation is more widely demand by industry. The Legion believes, however, that ultimately accreditation should become the primary means for ensuring the quality of credentials.

Opportunities: Two key opportunities to ensure the quality of certifications programs include:

- Raise the awareness of industry of the importance of accreditation as an important discriminator of quality.
- Provide government incentives to certification bodies to attain accreditation, possibly through funding for accreditation of certification agencies that can demonstrate a demand for their certification but lack the funding to seek accreditation, or by incorporating favorable consideration for the use of third party accredited programs in contract and grant awards.

#3 – Ensure the Quality of Non-Traditional Credential Preparation Programs

Another area in which quality screening mechanisms need to be explored and promoted is credential preparation programs. The steps required to prepare to attain a certification or license vary depending on the associated eligibility requirements that the applicant must meet prior to sitting for the credential exam. Typical eligibility requirements include education, training, or experience. If a service member or veteran has gaps in any of these areas that require training outside of the well-established traditional education models (i.e., colleges and universities), the resources available to them to pay for this type of training are limited.

Even when there are no explicit education and training eligibility requirements that require a credential preparation program, individuals seeking a credential can benefit substantially from programs that help them prepare for the credential exam. Increasingly, these preparation programs are offered by non-traditional training providers. Bootcamps, for example, have become a popular and successful way of refreshing knowledge and skill areas in preparation for certification and licensing exams. However, unless these preparation programs are affiliated with a college or university and are credit-bearing courses, the resources to pay for them are limited.

The lack of emphasis on non-traditional preparation programs is due primarily to the shortage of established mechanisms to ensure the quality of these programs. As noted above, while quality assurance mechanisms, such as institutional and programmatic accreditation, are commonplace for traditional forms of education offered through colleges and universities, similar mechanisms are not as widely applied to non-traditional education. This is due, in part, to the relatively recent proliferation of these programs. Thus, while the government is willing to sponsor benefits, such as Tuition Assistance and various GI Bill educational benefits, for traditional programs, it is appropriately reluctant to provide funding for non-traditional programs without a means of ensuring that they are quality programs that warrant the investment. This has been the case for the military. While the military is legislatively authorized to pay for credential preparation expenses, the Services have, for the most part, limited this authority to programs covered by Tuition Assistance. One exception is that the Air Force is implementing a limited pilot program to cover credentialing expenses from non-traditional providers.

Opportunities: To improve the ability of service members and veterans to meet credential eligibility requirements and/or pass associated exams, resources to pay for non-traditional credentialing preparation programs need to be increased. This is predicated, however, on the increased establishment and use of quality assurance mechanisms for non-traditional education, accompanied by better dissemination of information about those programs that have undergone a quality assurance review. The following opportunities exist to lay the foundation for this:

- Identify of existing quality assurance screening mechanisms for non-traditional education, and an assessment of the extent to which they would apply to credential preparation programs. (This might include, certificate accreditation programs established in recent years by the American National Standards

Institute and the National Commission for Certifying Agencies, as well as programs recognized by the Council on Occupational Education, etc.)

- Develop of a compendium of federal programs that currently fund non-traditional education programs, including the screening mechanisms and criteria they use and whether they would apply to credential preparation programs, and an assessment of the accessibility of information on approved programs. (This would include, for example, programs administered by the Departments of Labor, Defense, Education, and Veterans Affairs.)

#4 – Better Identify the Labor Market Demand for Credentials

Closely tied to the need to promote mechanisms to ensure the quality of credentials is the need to better understand the labor market demand for specific credentials. Understanding what value employers place on specific certifications would help service members and veterans better differentiate among competing certifications. Initiatives are underway to bring clarity to this issue, including initiatives sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor and the Lumina Foundation. In addition, the military Services' COOL programs have incorporated data collected by DOL on "in demand" credentials to help service members assess the potential value of civilian certifications applicable to their military occupations. However, research in this area is relatively new and current data sources are not likely to provide a full picture of the demand for credentials across industries, or to reflect the unique value they may have for military trained job seekers.

Much of the data on the demand for credentials is generated from job postings on various web sites. Given the proliferation of job posting web sites, and the fact that different industries tend to utilize different sites, data mining can be difficult. Moreover, some research has shown that online job postings tend to be oriented to high-skilled, white-collar occupations requiring a Bachelor's degree or higher. Many of the enlisted personnel leaving the military service would not fit into that category and therefore the certifications that would be applicable to the types of jobs they are seeking may be under-represented in current data sources. Finally, third-party certifications may have greater value to military trained job applicants than to their civilian counterparts seeking employment, and this may not be reflected in job ads. As noted earlier, civilian hiring managers have difficulty assessing military training and experience; however, if military trained applicants have a civilian occupational certification, employers may be better able to assess their qualifications and be more likely to hire them. Thus, while an occupational certification may not be required across the board for job applicants and therefore does not appear in employment ads, it may still have value for military trained applicants.

Opportunity: Increase research on the labor market demand for credentials with an emphasis on ensuring that the unique value of occupational credentials for military trained civilian job seekers is captured.

#5 – Track Credential Attainment Outcomes

While the quality and potential hiring value of credentials are important in selecting those credentials that service members and veterans might pursue, tracking the outcomes of their credential attainment is also important. Unfortunately, research on credentialing outcomes, in general, is sparse and the research on outcomes for service members and veterans is even scarcer. While research on credentialing outcomes is available in some industries, such as information technology, for most industries very little systematic research has been done on the extent to which a specific credential contributes to labor market outcomes, such as professional growth and earnings.

For individuals who attain credentials while in the military, the scarcity of information is due primarily to the fact that programs to pay for credentials for service members are relatively new. However, as these programs mature, DoD and the military Services are beginning to explore methods to measure credential outcomes. The Center for Naval Analyses (CNA), for example, conducted a study in 2015 that showed some positive effect of participation in the Navy's credentialing program on professional development in-service. It also showed that credential attainment may be effective in reducing unemployment for sailors who separated. CNA will be expanding upon this research in 2016. In addition to the CNA study, DoD has also engaged the RAND Corporation to conduct a study that is examining the relationship between military occupations and civilian labor force outcomes, including separation earnings and employment data for enlisted veterans.

Opportunity: Increase research on tracking credentialing outcomes, with an emphasis on:

- In-service effects of credential attainment for ser-

vice members, including the impact on such things as promotion, job performance, and retention;

- Civilian labor market outcomes for the general population as well as transitioning service members and veterans.

#6 – Reduce State Licensure Barriers

The strides that have been made to facilitate state licensure for service members, veterans, and spouses have been significant. Of particular note are the state mandates (through legislation and executive orders) requiring recognition of equivalent military training and experience for state licensure purposes. DoD, the military Services, state legislators, academia, and others have successfully worked together to find ways to do so. A key lesson that has been learned from these efforts is that, to the extent possible, state licensing agencies and academic institutions that have been tasked to recognize equivalent military training and experience should rely on existing third-party assessments rather than attempting to conduct their own evaluation of the numerous and ever-changing military training courses. DoD and the military services have invested a significant amount of time, effort, and money in having the American Council on Education conduct rigorous assessments of military training and experience for college credit. It is duplicative and costly for individual credentialing organizations or academic institutions to recreate this review for training that has already been fully assessed.

Opportunity: Build on the significant strides made in recent years to reduce state licensing barriers for service members, veterans, and military spouses and: (1) continue to promote legislation, policies, and programs that will allow for greater recognition of military training and experience for purposes of state licensing and academic credit, and that will help reduce barriers to state licensing for military spouses, (2) track and report on existing state efforts to reduce licensing barriers for service members, veterans, and spouses, (3) encourage state licensing agencies and academic institutions to rely on existing third-party assessments of military training and experience, such as the ACE credit recommendations.

#7 – Develop a Repository of Information on Best Practices in Facilitating the Credentialing of Service Members and Veterans

With the increased emphasis on the importance of facilitating credentialing of service members and veterans in recent years, stakeholders of all types have embraced the challenge. DoD, the military Services, credentialing organizations, legislators, academia, foundations, advocacy groups, and others, have all worked to remove impediments to credentialing. A significant amount of time and effort has been invested in these initiatives, resulting in numerous successes. Sharing these successes so that others can emulate best practices is key to furthering efforts in this area.

Opportunity: Develop a repository of information on best practices to facilitate the credentialing of service members and veterans to allow stakeholders to learn from and emulate successful initiatives.

#8 – Ensure Military and Veteran Credentialing Interests are Represented in Civilian Workforce Credentialing Initiatives

The past decade has seen a marked increase in interest in post-secondary credentials as a way of preparing individuals for the workforce. Numerous initiatives have been undertaken to bring clarity and order to the nation's credentialing system by better defining terminology, identifying credential pathways, and finding ways to better assess and communicate the quality, demand, and value of credentials. The Lumina Foundation has been at the forefront of these initiatives as it pursues its "Goal 2025," which reflects its commitment to increasing the proportion of Americans with high-quality degrees, certificates and other credentials to 60 percent by 2025. For example, "Connecting Credentials," a Lumina-sponsored initiative being undertaken by the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce, has defined a 7-point action plan that identifies specific actions that can be taken to develop a more cohesive credentialing system in the United States.

Developing consensus on terminology has been a large focus of recent initiatives. Simply defining the term, "credentials," for example, and promoting agreement on how to describe the different types of credentials has been at the forefront of recent discussions. This is important because while the military has defined credentials primarily to include civilian certification, licensure, and apprenticeship, the trend in the civilian workforce is to define the term more broadly to include those three types as well as badges, certificate programs, diplomas, micro-credentials, and degrees. The military will be well-served to stay abreast of the various trends and initiatives to ensure that the credentials attained by

service members remain relevant and valuable.

The "Credential Engine" is another Lumina-sponsored initiative designed to improve transparency in the credentialing marketplace. This initiative will create a nationwide web-based registry of credentials designed to capture, connect, archive, and share information about credentials, credential organizations, quality assurance organizations, and competency frameworks. The credential Engine casts a wide net by embracing a broad meaning of the term "credentialing organizations," and thereby including a diverse set of organizations, such as universities, colleges, schools, industry and professional associations, certification organizations, and – importantly – the military.

The military stands to benefit from the Credential Engine's Credential Registry as both a consumer and a provider of information. As a consumer, the military will be able to more readily attain critical information about credentials that will allow it to better identify those that are of high quality and value. As a provider of information, the military will be able to input information into the Credential Registry that educates key stakeholders, such as academia, credential providers, and employers, about the high-quality training offered by the military. DoD and the military also can post information about the credentials they award, such as those offered through the Defense Acquisition University, the Community College of the Air Force and Air University, as well as the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences whose authority to issue credentials recently has been expanded by Congress. A primary result of the military posting to the registry will be increased recognition of the high caliber of workplace training and experience that service members and veterans possess.

Opportunity: DoD, the military Services, and veterans' organizations should become actively involved in initiatives underway to reform the nation's credentialing system to: (1) stay abreast of civilian credentialing trends to ensure military credentialing policies and programs remain relevant, (2) ensure that the unique needs of service members and veterans are considered; and (3) promote military training and experience as a more widely accepted form of demonstrating competency to perform in the civilian workplace.

Appendix A – Recent Legislative Actions and Other Initiatives to Facilitate Credentialing of Service Members and Veterans

Relevant Legislation	Section Title/Summary	Agencies Responsible	Status/Significance
NDAA FY 17	**Section 561. Modification of program to assist members of the Armed Forces in obtaining professional credentials.** This section amends NDAA FY 16, Section 559 (see below) by expanding the criteria that military can use to pay for credentials to include more than just accreditation status.	Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Homeland Security, with respect to the Coast Guard when it is not operating as a service in the Navy	Broadened criteria allow the Services to pay for credentials that have not been accredited, but are highly valued by industry and/or approved through another government program.
NDAA FY 17	**Section 724. Modification of authority of Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences to include undergraduate and other medical education and training programs.** Broadens the authority of the USUHS to provide not only graduate degrees, but also certificates, certifications, and undergraduate degree programs.	Secretary of Defense	Broadened authority will allow USUHS to award academic credit and offer undergraduate degrees to service members in allied health related occupational areas. This will enhance their ability to attain civilian certifications and licenses and to receive academic credit from USUHS that can be accepted by other colleges and universities.
NDAA FY 16 (P.L. 114-92)	**Section 559. Quality assurance of certification programs and standards for professional credentials obtained by members of the Armed Forces.** Commencing not later than three years of enactment, required each concerned Secretary to ensure that any credentialing program used in connection with the program required in NDAA FY 15 is accredited by an accreditation body that meets the specific requirements. [Note: this legislation was amended in NDAA FY 17, Section 561 – see above.]	Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Homeland Security, with respect to the Coast Guard when it is not operating as a service in the Navy	• Intent was to implement mechanisms to ensure that credentials paid for by the military are of high quality. • Due to lack of widespread accreditation of credentialing programs, this would have severely impacted the number of credentials for which the military could pay.

Relevant Legislation	Section Title/Summary	Agencies Responsible	Status/Significance
NDAA FY 15 (P.L. 113-291)	**Section 551. Enhancement of Authority to Assist Members of the Armed Forces to Obtain Professional Credentials.** Requires the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Homeland Security to carry out a program to enable members of the armed forces to obtain, while serving in the armed forces, professional credentials related to military training and skills that— (1) are acquired during service in the armed forces incident to the performance of their military duties; and (2) translate into civilian occupations.	Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Homeland Security, with respect to the Coast Guard when it is not operating as a service in the Navy	• Credentialing program now required not just authorized. • Secretaries of Defense and Homeland Security required to prescribe regulations that specify: program eligibility requirements; covered credentials and occupations; and provide a mechanism for oversight of the payment of expenses. • Types of expenses that can be covered are expanded to include not just exam fees, but "class room instruction, hands-on training (and associated materials), manuals, study guides and materials, text books, processing fees, and test fees and related fees." • As of this report writing, the Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marine Corps all have voluntary credential payment programs and disseminate information to service members on occupationally related credentials through their Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) web sites. The U.S. Coast Guard expects to implement a similar program by FY 2018.
NDAA FY 14 (P.L. 113-66)	**Section 542. Enhancement of Mechanisms to Correlate Skills and Training for Military Occupational Specialties with Skills and Training Required for Civilian Certifications and Licenses.** The focus of NDAA Sec. 542 is on facilitating credentialing of service members and has two key elements: 1. Information Dissemination - DoD and the Services should disseminate information to service members throughout their careers on civilian licenses and certifications that match their military occupations, skills, and experience and this information should be consistent with Transition GPS. [Note: legislation specifically cites COOL web sites as a means of disseminating information.] 2. Access to Military Training Materials - DoD and the Services should provide credentialing agencies with access to military training materials to improve their ability to assess the equivalency of military training.	Secretaries of Military Departments in coordination with the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness	**Information Dissemination.** The information dissemination requirements are being met based on 15-Nov-2012 guidance memorandum to the Services issued by the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (Readiness and Force Management). **Access to Military Training Materials.** DoD has worked with state licensing agencies and related entities to share training materials so that they can better assess the equivalency of military training. DoD has also worked to publicize the availability of information on existing third-party evaluations of military training and experience, such as those done by the American Council on Education.
NDAA FY 13 (P.L. 112-239)	**Section 543. Expansion of Department of Defense Pilot Program on Receipt of Civilian Credentialing for Military Occupational Specialty Skills** This section amends NDAA FY 12, Section 558 (see below) by removing the upper limit on the number of occupational specialties that can be included in the credentialing pilot.	See NDAA FY 12, Section 558 below	See NDAA FY 12, Section 558 below

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NDAA FY 13 (P.L. 112-239)	**Section 544. State Consideration of Military Training in Granting Certain State Certifications and Licenses as a Condition on the Receipt of Funds for Veterans Employment and Training.** Allows Department of Labor (DOL) to withhold grant funding for veterans' employment services to states that do not have provisions that allow for recognition of equivalent military training and experience for state licensure purposes.	Department of Labor	• Most states have passed legislation or have proposed bills to recognize equivalent military training for state licensure purposes.
NDAA FY 12 (P.L. 112-81)	**Section. 558. Pilot Program on Receipt of Civilian Credentialing for Skills Required for Military Occupational Specialties.** Secretary of Defense will carry out a Pilot Program to assess the feasibility and advisability of permitting enlisted members of the Armed Forces to obtain civilian credentialing or licensing for skills required for military occupational specialties (MOS) or qualification for duty specialty codes. [Note: initial legislation stated that Pilot will cover not less than three and not more than five military occupational specialties or duty specialty codes. The upper level restriction on number of military occupations was removed in NDAA FY 13, Section 543 – see above.]	**Lead:** Secretary of Defense **Others:** Department of Labor and Department of Veterans Affairs	• The pilot program was conducted on five occupational areas: (1) aircraft mechanics, (2) automotive mechanics, (3) healthcare support, (4) logistics and supply, and (5) truck drivers. • These occupational areas were selected because of the large numbers of Service members in the corresponding military occupations, and because the labor market outlook for the civilian jobs is projected to have medium to high wages, high employment, and/or significant growth. Each of these occupational areas also has at least one civilian credential that is either required for employment or is in strong demand among employers in the related industry. • Pilot was completed and a report was sent to Congress in 2013.
Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (P.L. 112-141)	**Section 32308. Program to Assist Veterans to Acquire Commercial Driver's Licenses.** Requires the Secretary of Transportation, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, to conduct a study to reduce barriers service members and veterans face in attaining Commercial Driver's Licenses (CDLs).	**Lead:** Department of Transportation **Others**: Department of Defense	• The study was completed and a report was sent to Congress in September 2014. • The study highlights, among other things, federal and state efforts to promote attainment of CDLs by service members and veterans.`
Veterans Skills to Jobs Act (P.L. 112-147)	**An act to direct the head of each Federal department and agency to treat relevant military training as sufficient to satisfy training or certification requirements for Federal licenses.** Requires the head of each Federal licensing authority to consider and recognize equivalent military training for federal licensing purposes.	All Federal Agencies Issuing Federal Licenses	• This legislation is consistent with legislation that DoD has encouraged states to pass for state licensing purposes. • Emphasizes importance of credentialing of service members and veterans.

Relevant Legislation	Section Title/Summary	Agencies Responsible	Status/Significance
VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-56)	**Section 222. Individualized Assessment for Members of the Armed Forces Under Transition Assistance on Equivalence Between Skills Developed in Military Occupational Specialties and Qualifications Required for Civilian Employment with the Private Sector.** The Secretary of Labor shall, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, enter into a contract with a qualified organization to conduct a study to identify any equivalences between the skills developed by members of the Armed Forces through various military occupational specialties (MOS), successful completion of resident training courses, attaining various military ranks or rates, or other military experiences and the qualifications required for various positions of civilian employment in the private sector. Information gleaned from the study must be published on the web and made available through individualized assessments in the Transition Assistance Program.	**Lead:** Department of Labor **Others**: Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs	• A study was conducted matching 68 military occupation codes (MOCs) to civilian O*NET codes taking into account military training, pay grade, and experience. (These 68 military occupations represented 57 percent of enlisted service members.) • The results of the study and the subsequent occupational matches were validated by Service subject matter experts. • Study resulted in greater matching between military and civilian occupations and the assignment of additional indicators that will help service members and veterans gauge the relevance and attainability of the civilian jobs identified. • Information on results of study was incorporated into DOL's military to civilian crosswalk.
VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-56)	**Section 237. Enhancement of Demonstration Program on Credentialing and Licensing of Veterans.** Requires DOL to conduct a demonstration project on of members of the Armed Forces to facilitate their seamless transition to the civilian workforce.	**Lead:** Department of Labor **Others:** Secretary of Defense and Secretary of Veteran's Affairs	• DOL contracted with the National Governors Association to conduct the demonstration project with six states (IA, IL, MN, NV, VA, WI). • Pilot began 1-Oct-2013 and concluded 31-Jan-2015.

Notes

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