The American Legion

OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL COMMANDER

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December 2, 2019

The Honorable James Inhofe
Chairman
Senate Committee on Armed Services
Russell Senate Building, Room 228
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services
Russell Senate Building, Room 228
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Member Reed,

As advocates who remain committed to helping military families transition from the Armed Forces to civilian life, we write to express our support for Section 570F in the House-passed NDAA (H.R. 2500), which would establish a pilot program for the purposes of creating a one-stop online application for members of the Armed Forces and veterans participating in the Transition Assistance Program (TAP).

The current TAP being offered to transitioning servicemembers is plagued with problems, creating challenging obstacles to veterans. The program is exclusively in-person and often during their final days in the military, which has led many separating military personnel to feel as if they're "drinking from a firehose," as quoted in a recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) report.

Additionally, all reporting for TAP is done by paper, which has led to many inaccuracies. The GAO report cited that the Department of Defense (DoD) lacked data for nearly half of National Guard and Reserve members, which has resulted in DoD misstating the actual performance of TAP in its public reporting. Also, since TAP is administered during their time in service, many servicemembers are not given adequate time to take part in the program by their commanders, as they feel that it interferes with mission readiness. Moreover, when a servicemember separates from the military, they are merely provided with the business cards of various points of contact to help them with their issues.

This provision is designed to address the glaring problems with TAP by introducing a technological solution that provides a personalized transition dashboard for veterans to access on their desktop or via a mobile app. This dashboard will provide veterans with employment opportunities, education, health care, financial benefits, and more. Moreover, the platform will provide employers with much needed resources to help them connect with veterans and learn more about the skills they learned while in service that will translate to their industry.

Through American Legion Resolution No. 102*, Expansion of the Department of Defense's Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to Include Ancillary Programs and Services*, our nearly 2 million members support legislation to encourage, "technology innovations in support of the Transition Assistance Program." It is critical that this process be brought into the 21st century to ensure the success of servicemembers who are transitioning.

We respectfully request you support the inclusion of Section 570F in the House-passed NDAA and request that it remain as the House and Senate negotiate in conference. Thank you again for your continued commitment to the men and women who have served our nation in uniform.

For God & Country,

James W. "Bill" Oxford

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