

VETERAN UNEMPLOYMENT: CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES AND REMEDIES

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A thesis submitted to Johns Hopkins University in conformity with the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Arts in Government

Baltimore, Maryland  
May 2014

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## **Abstract**

U.S. military veterans who served in the military after September 11, 2001 have seen consistently higher unemployment rates than the national average since 2006. Understanding the causes, consequences and remedies for this trend are important public policy and national security imperatives. Each segment of American society from the federal government, the private sector and the military to veterans themselves has a role to play in improving the employment picture. Much progress has been made in helping veterans but much work remains. Failure to take the necessary steps to remedy the unemployment trend will have long-term consequences including an erosion of the American public's relationship with its military, long-term recruitment issues that may threaten the health of the all-volunteer force and massive economic challenges. To understand the unemployment challenge for post-9/11 veterans and ultimately overcome it requires a holistic look at the role of each key stakeholder: employers, veterans and the federal government.

The aim of this thesis is to evaluate the unemployment situation of veterans, understand the challenges the private sector faces, evaluate the growing civilian-military divide, assess the federal government's role in veteran employment and finally to offer policy recommendations to help solve this challenge. Each chapter uses the latest social, economic and military literature as well as various surveys to reflect the views of each audience. To reflect the views of the private sector, I use two recent surveys including the Center for a New American Security's "Employing America's Veterans: Perspectives from Businesses." The second survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) polled 359 private sector human resources professionals on the challenges faced when hiring veterans. To reflect the views of veterans, I use a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, a Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation poll and a poll conducted by the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. To reflect the views of government, I use Congressional testimony, Congressional Research Service reports as well as statements in the news media.

Ultimately what I found was that over the two-year time frame in which I wrote this thesis, the private and public sectors have made significant progress increasing veteran employment across the country. With large private sector firms and the Obama Administration forging the way forward, the military and individual veterans will have to play a larger role in the employment equation.

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Dorothea Wolfson

Thesis Readers: Dr. Dorothea Wolfson and Professor Thomas H. Stanton

## Preface

I have spent two years struggling to understand why the unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans has been consistently higher than the national average. Despite working in this space, I find this question to be one of the most daunting questions to answer – and one without an extraordinary amount of research.

I have strived to answer the question knowing that the United States military is about to reduce its end strength to the lowest levels since before World War II and recognizing that many of our nation's military members who have sacrificed so much will be forced to transition out of the military without the appropriate level of support from each service branch and the federal government. As someone who did not serve, I feel the heavy burden of keeping our social contract with our all-volunteer force and ensuring veterans have employment opportunities when they transition back to civilian life.

As the wife of a post-9/11 Army veteran with two combat tours, I have witnessed firsthand how difficult this transition can be. I also have had the privilege to watch the very real progress made by the private sector in meeting the challenge head on. Apart from the academic literature and improvements in the data, there was a noticeable difference between my husband's job search in 2009 compared to the one in 2012. This is largely a byproduct of the significant progress made in the private sector. It has been my honor to play a role in this progress as a senior executive at one of the leading companies hiring veterans. Through my research at Johns Hopkins, I have been able to help advance private sector policies as well as influence the broader public debate about veteran employment.

Lastly, I am indebted to my husband who has been a driving force for me in doing this research. He has been my sounding board, my sanity and my support throughout this process. I admire his drive, courage and dedication in everything that he does.

Thank you,  
Shannon O'Reilly

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## **Introduction**

Forty years ago, on the heels of the Vietnam War, the United States moved away from a conscription-based military to an all-volunteer force. With the post-Vietnam military riddled with problems and American civil society war-weary, the draft was no longer politically feasible. The all-volunteer force “came into its own” in the mid-1980’s and performed so well in the first Gulf War that it became the model for the U.S. military.<sup>1</sup> After the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, America’s leaders chose to use military force to invade Afghanistan and Iraq, starting the longest protracted ground wars in American history. What has resulted is thirteen years of war fought by less than .5 percent of American society.<sup>2</sup> More than two and a half million troops have served in Iraq or Afghanistan – and almost half deployed more than once.<sup>3</sup> With federal budget cuts, the drawdown in Afghanistan and the imminent downsizing of the force, approximately one million service members, about 250,000 annually, will transition out of the military and back into communities over the next four years.<sup>4</sup>

Upon transitioning out of the military, one of the first tasks veterans face is finding employment. While this may seem like an easy task for a demographic that is more educated than their civilian peers, is combat-tested and has had more responsibility than most of their civilian peers will have in a lifetime, the unemployment rates tell a different story. The unemployment rates for post-9/11 veterans, those who have served in the military after September 11, 2011, have been consistently higher than the national average for eight consecutive years.<sup>5</sup> From 2006-2013, post-9/11 veterans have been unemployed at rates of at least two points higher

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<sup>1</sup> Lawrence J. Korb and David R. Segal, “Manning & Financing the Twenty-First- Century All-Volunteer Force,” *Daedalus*, Summer 2011, page 79.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Taylor et al., *The Military-Civilian Gap: War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era*, Pew Research Center, October 5, 2011, page 2. Also see: Karl W. Eikenberry and David M. Kennedy, “Americans and Their Military, Drifting Apart,” *New York Times*, May 26, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Dave Baiocchi, “Measuring Army Deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan,” RAND, Updated data as of November 27, 2012. [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR100/RR145/RAND\\_RR145.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR100/RR145/RAND_RR145.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> White House statistic, cited in numerous news articles and repeated by Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel at event this author participated in on November 1, 2013 at JPMorgan Chase.

<sup>5</sup> See Table 1 in the Appendix on pages 97-98. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Annual Employment Summary, Current Population Survey.

than their civilian peers.<sup>6</sup> When sorted by age, the rates are even bleaker. The unemployment rates for the youngest veteran demographic, ages 18 to 24, are on average 5 percent higher than those for non-veterans of the same age, and unemployment for veterans in this age group reached a high of 30.2 percent in 2011.<sup>7</sup> After considering this data, the question that comes to mind is why? Why has the unemployment rate for this group of veterans been higher than the national average?

The main goal of this thesis is to uncover the answers to this question. In order to do that, one must understand each audience that plays a role in veterans obtaining employment: the federal government including the military, post-9/11 veterans, private sector employers and civil society writ large. Chapter One of this thesis was written in late 2012 when veteran unemployment had peaked and the public's focus was on the private sector's role in hiring veterans. The United States was still reeling from the 2008-2010 economic crisis, and with a moderate economic recovery underway, the expectation was for the private sector to step up and do a better job recruiting, hiring and training veterans. As a result, Chapter One focuses on identifying the barriers to veteran employment from the perspective of the private sector. At the time of this writing in 2012, a further understanding of the challenges faced by employers when hiring veterans made a large contribution to existing research.

Using two surveys portraying the views of private sector employers, chapter one identifies the five most commonly cited barriers to employment from the view of private sector employers and offers recommendations to alleviate those challenges based on the experience of three companies. The first survey was conducted by the Center for a New American Security (CNAS) and published in a report titled "Employing America's Veterans: Perspectives from Businesses." The authors, Margaret Harrell and Nancy Berglass, interviewed 87 people from 69

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<sup>6</sup> See Table 1 in the Appendix on pages 97-98. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Annual Employment Summary, Current Population Survey.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

different companies.<sup>8</sup> The second survey, conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), polled 359 private sector human resources professionals on the challenges faced when hiring veterans.<sup>9</sup> The five barriers identified using these two surveys and academic literature include: a knowledge gap between military and civilian cultures; negative stigmas associated with veterans' mental health issues; employers' fear of future deployments for newly hired veterans or active service members; challenges finding veteran talent; and perceptions that veterans are not suited for employment. While these barriers surely present obstacles to matching veterans with job opportunities, the most prominent challenge was the knowledge gap between military and civilian cultures.

That is why Chapter Two of this thesis examines the knowledge gap between military and civilian cultures. The knowledge gap relating to veteran employment can be defined a few different ways. First, the knowledge gap can be defined as employers simply not understanding the U.S. military or the training and skills veterans gain throughout their military career. This is seen as a barrier to employment because recruiters and hiring managers fail to understand veterans' resumes and skills and therefore do not put forth the effort to hire them. Second, the knowledge gap can be defined as veterans not understanding the highly competitive, profit-driven civilian workforce and have difficulties translating their military experience into civilian job requirements. This is a barrier to employment because veterans are not familiar with how to network in the civilian marketplace or how to advocate for themselves during the interview process. Third, the knowledge gap can be defined as the broader gap in civilian-military relations, which has plagued our society in the last decade plus years of war. As Chapter Two explains, the American public is fatigued from 13 years of war. As the U.S. military draws down in Afghanistan, there is anticipation that the general public will feel relief and assume the

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<sup>8</sup> Dr. Margaret C. Harrell and Nancy Berglass. *Employing America's Veterans: Perspectives from Businesses*. Center for a New American Security, June 2012, 9. The CNAS study is based on confidential qualitative interviews with 87 representatives from 69 companies. The companies varied in size, location, industry and the extent to which they targeted veterans for hire.

<sup>9</sup> Society for Human Resource Management, "SHRM Poll: Military Employment," February 17, 2012, <http://www.shrm.org/Research/SurveyFindings/Articles/Pages/MilitaryEmploymentSHRMPoll.aspx>.

problems are mostly over for transitioning military members, when, in fact, they will be just beginning. If the American public loses sight of the importance of successfully reintegrating America's veterans into civilian society, it would be a massive breach of this nation's social contract with its all-volunteer military.

Research conducted in Chapter Two concluded that the gap between civilian and military cultures has widened and has been exacerbated by 13 years of war. While not yet reaching a tipping point, the gap must be bridged or risk the possibility that the military feels as though its contract with society has been broken. Danger signs are already prevalent as seen in two surveys of post-9/11 veterans cited in Chapter Two. The first survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2011 shows 84 percent of post-9/11 veterans feel the American public does not understand the problems they face.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, 44 percent said their readjustment to civilian life was difficult; by contrast, just 25 percent of veterans who served in previous eras said the same.<sup>11</sup> The second survey conducted by the *Washington Post* and the Kaiser Family Foundation in 2014 found sentiments had actually worsened since the Pew survey was conducted in 2011. 50 percent of veterans now say their transition to civilian life was very difficult, up from 44 percent.<sup>12</sup> When asked to describe why, more than 25 percent said it was because of employment-related issues, such as adjusting to a civilian work environment.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, 50 percent of veterans said the military is not doing enough to help them transition out of the military and adjust to civilian life.<sup>14</sup> Among those still in the military, 43 percent expect a difficult transition to civilian life.<sup>15</sup> One could conclude that because the sentiments of post-9/11 veterans have become more pessimistic over three years, the knowledge gap is not improving.

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<sup>10</sup> Paul Taylor et al., *The Military-Civilian Gap: War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era*, Pew Research Center, October 5, 2011, page 8.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "A Legacy of Pride and Pain," *The Washington Post*, March 29, 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "A Legacy of Pride and Pain," *The Washington Post*, March 29, 2014.

Chapter Three investigates the remaining audience in the veteran employment equation: the federal government and Congress.<sup>16</sup> Offering the most comprehensive look at federal government programs and legislation that affect veteran employment, Chapter Three makes a significant contribution to existing research. One of the most notable findings in this chapter was that top-down leadership has been paramount in effecting change. The Obama Administration has taken the lead on influencing policy changes and advancements in the lives of veterans and their families by implementing executive orders, pushing new legislation through Congress and raising awareness through the bully pulpit as well as through the First Lady's Joining Forces Initiative. An under-reported fact is that the President has included veterans' policies in every state of the union address since 2009. This demonstrates a willingness on behalf of the Administration to elevate veterans issues to the highest level of the domestic policy agenda.

Chapter Three, which was written nearly two years after Chapter One, includes a fresh look at the unemployment situation of post-9/11 veterans. Unfortunately, two years of new data show that military veterans still represent one of the largest unemployed demographics in American society despite the advancements made by the private and public sectors.<sup>17</sup> Again, the author seeks to answer why and evaluates several new theories along the way. New theories as to why unemployment rates remain high for post-9/11 veterans include: a link between longer deployments and the unemployment rate; gender, age and service-connected disabilities as factors; skills and education gap among veterans; and the continued failure of the transition process out of military service.

Chapter Three includes several key findings. First, female post-9/11 veterans are unemployed at higher rates than their male veteran counterparts as well as their civilian peers. Second, older veterans face equal difficulty finding employment than their younger veteran peers.

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<sup>16</sup> State and local governments have a role to play in the veteran employment equation, but were deliberately left out of this report for mere scoping purposes.

<sup>17</sup> See Table 1 in the Appendix on pages 97-98. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Annual Employment Summary, Current Population Survey.

Third, veterans with higher education levels than their civilian peers are still performing worse in the labor market. A conclusion drawn is that employers are placing prior civilian work experience at a higher premium than military service and education. Fourth, there is a direct correlation between extended wartime deployments and high unemployment rates among post-9/11 veterans, but the root effects are uncertain. And finally, the military is failing to prepare its departing service members for the transition into civilian society, especially the civilian job market. With these key findings in hand, Chapter Three offers policy recommendations to improve the unemployment situation of veterans.

Employment is the lynchpin to a service members' successful transition out of the military and into civilian life. Not only does it give veterans a sense of purpose and a sense of belonging to a team, it provides family and financial stability. The time to fix the veteran unemployment crisis is now, before we withdraw from Afghanistan, further reduce military end strength and transition one million military members into civilian life. The consequences are grim. On any given night there are at least 63,000 homeless veterans and another 1.4 million veterans are at risk of homelessness.<sup>18</sup> We do not have an adequate understanding of the long-term effects of multiple deployments, posttraumatic stress and/or traumatic brain injury on post-military lives. We do know that at least one third of returning soldiers suffer from PTSD or TBI and that veteran suicides average 20 per day.<sup>19</sup> According to the Department of Defense, more than 51,000 troops have been "wounded in action" in Iraq, Afghanistan or in other missions to support the wars.<sup>20</sup> Another 470,000 troops reported being injured while deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan or in support of the wars.<sup>21</sup> These challenges will be amplified in the coming years if the veteran employment picture does not improve. Without improvements in post-service life

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<sup>18</sup> National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, Background and Statistics, [http://nchv.org/index.php/news/media/background\\_and\\_statistics/](http://nchv.org/index.php/news/media/background_and_statistics/).

<sup>19</sup> Hannah Fischer, "U.S. Military Casualty Statistics: Operation New Dawn, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Enduring Freedom," Congressional Research Service, February 5, 2013.

<sup>20</sup> Hannah Fischer, "U.S. Military Casualty Statistics: Operation New Dawn, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Enduring Freedom," Congressional Research Service, February 5, 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "A Legacy of Pride and Pain," The Washington Post, March 29, 2014.

outcomes of veterans such as steady employment, financial stability, positive health and wellness, family well-being and social mobility, the willingness of future generations to volunteer for military service will be in jeopardy.

## **Chapter One: Veteran Employment: The Road to Reintegration and Wellness**

### **Introduction**

There are approximately 21.6 million veterans in the United States.<sup>2223</sup> Among this group are 2.6 million men and women who have served in the military since September 11, 2001. This most recent group of veterans is commonly referred to as post-9/11 veterans or Gulf War-era II veterans. While the unemployment rate for all military veterans improved in 2012, U.S. Department of Labor statistics from the past six years show that post-9/11 veterans are unemployed at higher rate than the national average.<sup>2425</sup> Additionally, more than 1 million service members are projected to transition out of the U.S. military by 2016. That number, coupled with a slow-growth economy and the highest unemployment rates seen since the Great Depression, has shined a spotlight on the issue of veteran employment as an important public policy issue.

The unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans has been at least two points higher than the national average from 2006-2012.<sup>26</sup> Yet the academic community is only beginning to understand the irony of this unemployment trend. It's ironic because military veterans are a unique demographic of American society. First, only four in ten Americans are eligible for military service due to high standards for recruits.<sup>27</sup> For example, it is no longer enough to be

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<sup>22</sup> Prudential Financial, Inc. and Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. *Veterans' Employment Challenges: Perceptions and experiences of transitioning from military to civilian life*, August 2012, 10. Also see Executive Office of the President, *Military Skills for America's Future: Leveraging Military Service and Experience to Put Veterans and Military Spouses Back to Work*, May 31, 2012, 4.

<sup>23</sup> According to United States law 38 USC § 101, a veteran is "a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable." Legal Information Institute, Cornell University: [www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/38/101](http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/38/101).

<sup>24</sup> The unemployment rate represents the number unemployed as a percent of the labor force. Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics, [http://www.bls.gov/cps/cps\\_htgm.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cps/cps_htgm.htm).

<sup>25</sup> As defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, persons are classified as unemployed if they do not have a job, have actively looked for work in the prior 4 weeks, and are currently available for work. Persons who were not working and were waiting to be recalled to a job from which they had been temporarily laid off are also included as unemployed. Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics, [http://www.bls.gov/cps/cps\\_htgm.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cps/cps_htgm.htm).

<sup>26</sup> See Table 1 in the Appendix on pages 97-98. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment Situation of Veterans," years 2007-2012.

<sup>27</sup> Annalyn Kurtz, "Getting into the military is getting tougher," CNN, May 15, 2013, <http://money.cnn.com/2013/05/15/news/economy/military-recruiting>.

young, patriotic and fit to qualify for military service. Individuals must have at least a high school diploma,<sup>28</sup> a clean credit report and no criminal record or prior drug use. Potential recruits must also pass drug tests and meet tough physical fitness standards. Service members then undergo specialized training relevant to their military occupation. Along the way, junior and senior service members are immersed in a culture that emphasizes skills in leadership, teamwork, discipline and mission focus.

The post-9/11 veteran class has experienced more than thirteen years of war. When compared to their civilian counterparts, these men and women have accepted much greater responsibility and authority early in their careers. They have been forced to adapt to different operating environments and cultures and work in high-pressure environments, often with little guidance. Employers could benefit immensely from the experience veterans have gained. But if academic research from various fields such as business, psychology and sociology link characteristics represented by military members with traits desirable to enhance business performance and compete in a world of globalization, why are we seeing such undesirable trends in veterans' unemployment?

### **Research Focus and Question**

The private sector is currently the largest employer of post-9/11 veterans. A further understanding of the challenges they face when hiring veterans will make a large contribution to existing research. This chapter analyzes the unemployment situation of post-9/11 veterans from 2007-2012. It then explains why the unemployment situation for post 9/11 veterans is a serious public policy concern that, if left unresolved, could evolve into a more serious national security concern. Next, using two surveys portraying the views of the private sector, the five most commonly cited barriers to employment are identified. The two surveys include a Center for a New American Security (CNAS) report titled "Employing America's Veterans" in which there is

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<sup>28</sup> Ninety percent of service members have a high school diploma or higher. The other 10percent may have been homeschooled or have GED's. Some, but very few, are given waivers. Rod Powers, "United States Military Enlistment Standards," About.com, <http://usmilitary.about.com/od/joiningthemilitary/a/enlstandards.htm>.

an anonymous survey of private sector employers.<sup>29</sup> The second survey was conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). SHRM polled 359 human resources professionals in the private sector on the challenges they face when hiring veterans.<sup>30</sup> The five barriers include: a knowledge gap between military and civilian cultures; negatives stigmas associated with veterans' mental health issues; employers' fear of future deployments for newly hired veterans or active service members; challenges finding veteran talent; and perceptions that veterans are not suited for employment. This chapter then offers three examples of private sector companies with best-in-class veteran hiring programs as a way to highlight how some companies have overcome these obstacles. Chapter one combines existing academic research in the fields of military policy, public policy, human resources and organizational culture and the practical experiences of private sector employers.

### **Employment Situation of Veterans**

The unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans has been consistently higher than the national average for the last six years.<sup>31</sup> Figure One summarizes the unemployment situation of all Americans, all veterans and post-9/11 veterans from 2007-2012 based on data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and Department of Labor.<sup>32</sup> The unemployment trend line spikes in 2009 at the height of the global economic and financial crisis and reaches its peak in 2011 as the U.S. military withdrew its forces from Iraq. The unemployment trend starts to decrease in 2012 as public and private sector initiatives to hire veterans are implemented across the country. This trend line is expected to increase again in 2013 as the United States nears the fiscal cliff and large defense companies who traditionally hire veterans continued to downsize. At the same time, the U.S. military is both downsizing and reducing the number of troops serving in Afghanistan.

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<sup>29</sup> Margaret C. Harrell and Nancy Berglass. *Employing America's Veterans: Perspectives from Businesses*. Center for a New American Security, June 2012, 9.

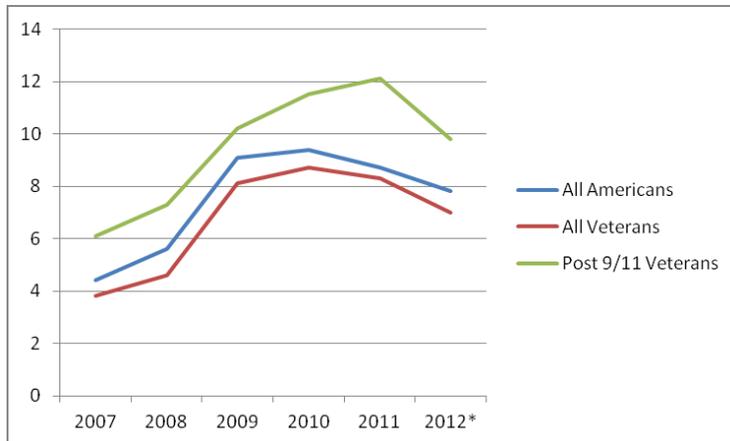
<sup>30</sup> Society for Human Resource Management, "SHRM Poll: Military Employment," February 17, 2012, <http://www.shrm.org/Research/SurveyFindings/Articles/Pages/MilitaryEmploymentSHRMPoll.aspx>.

<sup>31</sup> Chapter one was written in 2012. At that time, annual unemployment data was only available from 2007 to 2012. Chapter three includes annual employment data from 2006 to 2013.

<sup>32</sup> See Table 1 in the Appendix on pages 97-98. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment Situation of Veterans," years 2007-2012.

Together, these factors will add significant pressure on veterans attempting to enter the labor market. While high unemployment rates among the post-9/11 veteran class can be attributed partly to weak labor markets and an underwhelming economic environment, there are other factors at work.

**Figure 1: Annual Unemployment Rates 2007-2012**



\*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey<sup>33</sup>

### **Veteran Unemployment as a Public Policy and National Security Concern**

*A man who is good enough to shed his blood for his country is good enough to be given a square deal afterwards. More than that no man is entitled, and less than that no man shall have.*<sup>34</sup>

– Theodore Roosevelt speech to veterans, Springfield, IL, July 4, 1903

The unemployment rate for Gulf War-era II veterans was 9.9 percent compared to 7.9 percent for their civilian counterparts in 2012.<sup>35</sup> This disparity is a public policy concern for several reasons. First, employment is a linchpin to successful reintegration into civilian life and to overall wellness of service members and their families. According to Nancy Berglass, veteran physical and psychological well-being is informed by four interrelated elements: purpose, health,

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Theodore Roosevelt Association, “In His Own Words,” <http://www.theodoreroosevelt.org/life/quotes.htm>.

<sup>35</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Employment Situation of Veterans: 2012,” Released March 20, 2013, [http://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/vet\\_03202013.htm](http://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/vet_03202013.htm).

social and personal relationships and fulfillment of materials needs.<sup>36</sup> At the top of this list is employment, which provides purpose and structure to one's day. Employment also provides financial stability, and a social support structure and camaraderie amongst colleagues, some of whom may be veterans with common experiences. The bridge from military to civilian life is important to veterans, their families and surrounding communities. The inability of veterans to secure employment has been linked to declining health and wellness outcomes such as high divorce rates, homelessness, poverty, drug abuse and suicide.<sup>37</sup> Higher numbers of veterans falling into these categories will exact a higher cost on taxpayers through access to Social Security, unemployment compensation and disability compensation benefits.<sup>38</sup>

Second, and perhaps most important, is the concern that high unemployment rates for the veteran population – and the perception that military service will not help someone advance in society – could create a long-term readiness issue for the military. This in turn has long-term national security implications for the country as a whole. Military recruiters recruit young talent on the promise that military service will provide the training and experience needed to succeed in society. If young enlistees and officers lose faith in their ability to find meaningful employment and purpose after service, it will become increasingly difficult for the U.S. military to recruit top military talent. The shift in 1973 to an all-volunteer force placed a heavy burden on a small segment of society. If the U.S. military cannot recruit enough men and women to sustain the all-volunteer force, the military will undoubtedly have a serious readiness issue with major national security implications. At that point, the country either reverts to a conscription force or provides more lucrative financial incentives at a time when social safety programs and defense budgets are adding to nation's outstanding national debt. Civil society must therefore deal with the veteran

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<sup>36</sup> Nancy, Berglass, "Veteran Reintegration and American Communities," Center for a New American Security, April 2012, 14.

<sup>37</sup> Michael J. Haynie, "Guide to Leading Policies, Practices & Resources: Supporting the Employment of Veterans & Military Families," Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families, page 7.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, page 5.

unemployment challenge by ensuring that labor markets, schools and communities remain committed to helping service members transition into civilian life.

Third, the private sector is not meeting its growth and productivity potential by hiring qualified veterans at lesser rate than their civilian counterparts. Transitioning service members and veterans have the characteristics American businesses seek to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century's highly globalized economy. They are adaptive, entrepreneurial, educated, highly trained, team-oriented and mission-focused to name a few. Additionally, service members and their families are great human capital resources and civic assets with high rates of volunteerism, voting behavior and charitable giving.<sup>39</sup> If American companies do not hire veterans, they are missing out on a highly skilled segment of society than can help thrust the entire economy forward. The next section identifies the key challenges faced by private sector employers when hiring veterans.

### **Five Barriers to Employment from the Private Sector Perspective**

This section will take a closer look at the key challenges private sector employers face when hiring veterans. Five key barriers to employment are found using two surveys of private sector employers. One survey was conducted by the Center for a New American Security (CNAS) and published in a report titled "Employing America's Veterans: Perspectives from Businesses." The authors, Margaret Harrell and Nancy Berglass, interviewed 87 people from 69 different companies.<sup>40</sup> The second survey, conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), polled 359 private sector human resources professionals on the challenges faced when hiring veterans.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Blue Star Families, "Military Family Lifestyle Survey: Findings and Analysis," Department of Research and Policy, May 2012.

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/student\\_family/military/va\\_council/resources/blue\\_star\\_virginia\\_council\\_07182012.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/student_family/military/va_council/resources/blue_star_virginia_council_07182012.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> Dr. Margaret C. Harrell and Nancy Berglass. *Employing America's Veterans: Perspectives from Businesses*. Center for a New American Security, June 2012, 9.

<sup>41</sup> Society for Human Resource Management, "SHRM Poll: Military Employment," February 17, 2012, <http://www.shrm.org/Research/SurveyFindings/Articles/Pages/MilitaryEmploymentSHRMPoll.aspx>.

The most commonly cited barrier is a knowledge gap between civilian and military cultures.<sup>42</sup> The second barrier to employment is that businesses have a negative perception of post-9/11 veterans due to stigmas associated with mental health issues such as posttraumatic stress. The third barrier is that employers remain hesitant to hire members of the National Guard or Reserves. Fearing that service members will be redeployed, employers in many cases would rather not risk dealing with the associated costs of providing benefits to deployed service members and their families as well as to temporary replacement hires. The fourth barrier is that businesses have difficulty finding veteran talent – whether its difficulty accessing military bases, recruiting online or geographic challenges. This is most problematic among our youngest veterans from rural communities who leave first-term enlistments and often relocate back to their hometowns before seeking employment. The fifth barrier is the private sector thinking that veterans may not be seeking employment or they may not be ready for employment.<sup>43</sup>

#### **Barrier One: Knowledge Gap**

The most commonly cited challenge that private sector employers face when hiring veterans is the knowledge gap between civilian and military cultures. The knowledge gap can be defined a few different ways. First, it can be defined as employers simply not understanding the U.S. military or the training and skills veterans gain throughout their military career. This is seen as a barrier to employment because recruiters and hiring managers fail to understand veterans' resumes and skills and therefore do not put forth the effort to hire them. Second, the knowledge gap can be defined as veterans not understanding the highly competitive, profit-driven civilian workforce and have difficulties translating their military experience into civilian job requirements. This is a barrier to employment because veterans are not familiar with how to network in the civilian marketplace or how to advocate for themselves during the interview process. Third, the knowledge gap can be defined as the broader gap in civilian-military

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<sup>43</sup> Haynie, Michael J., "Guide to Leading Policies, Practices & Resources: Supporting the Employment of Veterans & Military Families," Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families, page 7.

relations, which has plagued our society in the last decade plus years of war.

Veterans have a difficult time adapting their resumes and military experience toward civilian jobs requirements and civilian employers do not understand military occupational specialties (MOS), the ranking system or the training service members receive throughout their military careers. When the United States discontinued the draft in 1973, the civilian population had less of an opportunity or reason to understand and interact with the military. Simply put, these two groups don't understand each other. In *Employing America's Veterans: Perspectives from Businesses* the authors note the difficulties that both veterans and employers face when trying to match qualified candidates with open positions, writing that, "Companies reported the problem of skill translation more frequently than any other challenge to veteran employment."<sup>44</sup> The SHRM poll found similar results. Over half the organizations surveyed agreed that the biggest challenge in hiring veterans was translating military skills into civilian job experience.<sup>45</sup> Another survey conducted by the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) concurred with those findings as well. IAVA polled 2,453 veterans and transitioning service members in an online survey from December 12, 2011 through January 23, 2012.<sup>46</sup> According to the results, veterans listed "finding a job" as the greatest challenge in transitioning from the military, with transferring military skills to a civilian job the biggest hurdle.<sup>47</sup> What is missing from these reports though are ways the private sector is bridging this knowledge gap. For example, some companies have established training programs to teach non-military experienced hiring managers about the military and the skills gained during military training and service. The private sector examples included later in this chapter will list some leading practices that are underway to

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<sup>44</sup> Harrell, Dr. Margaret C. and Nancy Berglass. *Employing America's Veterans: Perspectives from Businesses*. Center for a New American Security, June 2012, 21.

<sup>45</sup> Society for Human Resource Management, "SHRM Poll: Military Employment," February 17, 2012, <http://www.shrm.org/Research/SurveyFindings/Articles/Pages/MilitaryEmploymentSHRMPoll.aspx>.

<sup>46</sup> Prudential Financial, Inc. and Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. *Veterans' Employment Challenges: Perceptions and experiences of transitioning from military to civilian life*, August 2012, 10.

<sup>47</sup> Prudential Financial, Inc. and Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. *Veterans' Employment Challenges: Perceptions and experiences of transitioning from military to civilian life*, August 2012, 3.

bridge the civilian-military culture gap as a model for other companies to adopt.<sup>48</sup>

Another commonly cited theme related to the civilian-military divide suggests the military is doing a poor job preparing transitioning military personnel for civilian careers. This includes basic transition assistance such as resume-building, help with skill translation and interview preparation. However, two-thirds of veterans surveyed in the IAVA survey reported receiving some kind of support or training as they transitioned out of the military.<sup>49</sup> But of that number, less than half reported that the program was valuable.<sup>50</sup> Further research on veterans' employment issues by Erin Silva of the University of Rhode Island suggests that transition assistance programs have little impact on the success rate of veterans seeking unemployment.<sup>51</sup> Additionally, it is claimed that the military only prepares its soldiers, Marines, airmen and sailors for civilian life when they are getting out of the military rather than throughout their military career. This creates what economist Joshua Angrist calls a "loss-of-experience" hypothesis where military experience is only a partial substitute for civilian labor market experience.<sup>52</sup>

According to the survey from IAVA, only one quarter of veterans reported that their chain of command took any steps to prepare them for post-military careers.<sup>53</sup> This shows a lack of seriousness on behalf of the military and the U.S. government more broadly to assume responsibility for helping service members prepare for life beyond the uniform. What this survey and other reports do not discuss, however, are the policy changes President Obama directed in August 2012 mandating that all service members go through transition assistance training – and

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<sup>48</sup> The private sector examples include a deeper look at veteran employment programs at Humana, JPMorgan Chase and General Electric on pages 23-31.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>51</sup> Erin Silva, "Participation in the Transition Assistance Program and job placement outcomes of U.S. veterans" (2011). *Dissertations and Master's Theses from the University of Rhode Island*. Paper AAI1491543. <http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/dissertations/AAI1491543> (accessed October 26, 2012).

<sup>52</sup> Joshua D. Angrist, "Lifetime Earnings and the Vietnam Era Draft Lottery: Evidence from Social Security Administrative Records." *The American Economic Review* 80 (1990): 314, 329, 331.

<sup>53</sup> Prudential Financial, Inc. and Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. *Veterans' Employment Challenges: Perceptions and experiences of transitioning from military to civilian life*, August 2012, 10.

the trickle down effects of this presidential directive.<sup>54</sup> In an off-the-record interview conducted with the office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs on September 25, 2012, this author learned that the Army has provided official guidance to the command structure to provide post-military career advice to young officers and enlisted soldiers.<sup>55</sup> At the time of this writing, there is minimal literature on the changes implemented to the transition assistance program each service offers and their effectiveness.<sup>56</sup> The *USA Today* reported that the Pentagon is in the process of launching enhancements to each service's transition program.<sup>57</sup> The first phase went into effect November 21, 2012 and other key elements will go into effect over the next two years. Chapter Three of this thesis analyzes these enhancements, measure their effectiveness and identify gaps needing additional attention.<sup>58</sup>

### **Barrier Two: Negative Stigmas**

The second barrier to employment is that the business community has a negative perception of post-9/11 veterans because of the publicity surrounding mental health issues. This includes posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), high suicide rates, substance abuse and traumatic brain injury (TBI). While most media coverage surrounding these issues is well-intentioned, it can negatively affect the way ordinary Americans perceive military veterans. The Center for a New American Security report surveying businesses seeking to hire veterans provides evidence to support this claim. According to the report, nearly one-third of the companies surveyed were concerned about post-traumatic stress disorder among veterans – and that these concerns often played a role in hiring decisions.<sup>59</sup> The SHRM study reports that 36 percent of respondents noted

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<sup>54</sup> Chapter three goes into extensive detail about this executive order issued by President Obama and the effectiveness of the program. See pages 59-60, 65, 76-78.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army, Manpower and Reserve Affairs (M&RA), September 25, 2012.

<sup>56</sup> Chapter three goes into extensive detail about the effectiveness of the program. See pages 59-60, 65, 76-78.

<sup>57</sup> Gregg Zoroya, "Pentagon helps troops move into civilian life," USA TODAY, December 7, 2012, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2012/12/06/soldier-job-training/1737743/>. Accessed December 6 and 8, 2012.

<sup>58</sup> See pages 59-60, 65, 76-78.

<sup>59</sup> Dr. Margaret C. Harrell and Nancy Berglass. *Employing America's Veterans: Perspectives from Businesses*. Center for a New American Security, June 2012, 24.

PTSD or other mental health issues as a barrier to employment.<sup>60</sup> According to the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, one in three troops who test positive for a mental health problem worry about the effect it will have on their career.<sup>61</sup> The stigma associated with veterans and mental health issues is a double edged sword as ill-informed employers do a disservice to themselves and veterans by using stereotypes as a reason for passing on qualified candidates. Meanwhile veterans not receiving mental health treatment may be stereotyped and veterans in need of mental health care may forgo treatment for fear of limiting future employment opportunities.

Post traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, is defined as, “an anxiety disorder that some people develop after seeing or living through an event that caused or threatened serious harm or death. Symptoms include flashbacks or bad dreams, emotional numbness, intense guilt or worry, angry outbursts, feeling “on edge,” or avoiding thoughts and situations that remind them of the trauma.”<sup>62</sup> Combat veterans face PTSD, but so do people who have survived traumatic events such as sexual trauma, violence, natural disasters and tragic events such as acts of terrorism or watching a loved one die of cancer. In fact, 8% of all Americans will have post traumatic stress disorder in their lifetime.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, 74% of women who were sexually assaulted battle with post traumatic stress.<sup>64</sup> These and many other unreported facts are left out of every news story about military members facing PTSD, which is a major cause of employers misunderstanding this psychological trauma.

A service member who has psychological trauma from picking up the remains of one of his or her friends who was blown up by an IED in Iraq is more “normal” than having no issues at

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<sup>60</sup> Society for Human Resource Management, “SHRM Poll: Military Employment,” February 17, 2012, <http://www.shrm.org/Research/SurveyFindings/Articles/Pages/MilitaryEmploymentSHRMPoll.aspx>.

<sup>61</sup> Vanessa Williamson and Erin Mulhall, “Careers After Combat: Employment and Education Challenges for Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans,” Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, January 2009. Accessed November and December 2012: [http://iava.org/files/iava\\_careers\\_after\\_combat\\_2009.pdf](http://iava.org/files/iava_careers_after_combat_2009.pdf). Also see Mental Health Advisory (MHAT) IV, Final Report: Operation Iraqi Freedom 05-07, Nov. 17, 2006, p. 25.

<sup>62</sup> National Institute of Mental Health, “Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Research Fact Sheet,” <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-research-fact-sheet/index.shtml>.

<sup>63</sup> General Peter Chiarelli, “Post-traumatic stress an injury, not a disorder,” RAND, December 31, 2012, <http://www.rand.org/blog/2012/12/retired-general-chiarelli-discusses-perceptions-of-post-traumatic.html>.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

all. A soldier such as Sergeant Adam Schumann, who was regarded as one of his battalion's best soldiers, carried his battle buddy down five flights of stairs after he was shot in the head and saved his life.<sup>65</sup> Because of the way Sergeant Schumann was carrying his friend, the blood from his gunshot wound ran into Schumann's mouth. Days and months after that incident, Sergeant Schumann couldn't get the taste of his friend's blood out of his mouth and was ultimately sent home from Iraq with severe post traumatic stress.<sup>66</sup> These people are heroes – not unemployable ticking time bombs as dramatized news stories portray. Part of the challenge of post traumatic stress among post-9/11 veterans is simply scale. The number of soldiers, airmen and Marines who were deployed – 2.6 million in 13 years – and the extremely high operational tempo, or number of times they deployed, are two reasons why the sheer volume of service members with PTSD seems as though there is an epidemic.

Three things come to mind from an employer standpoint. First, employers need to understand the facts about PTSD and not succumb to the negative stigma associated with having a “disorder.” Second, employers should be prepared to identify and assist employees with PTSD – not just military veterans but those who face devastating events. For example, JPMorgan Chase and many other employers in New York had to deal with the psychological issues stemming from the terrorist attacks on 9/11 and Hurricane Sandy in 2012. Third, it is still unknown why some people get PTSD and others do not. People like former Army Vice Chief of Staff General Chiarelli and the non-profit One Mind for Research are working on understanding the human brain. But because we know so little, it is irresponsible to cast a wide shadow over such a unique demographic of human capital in American society.

While attending a “Navigating Life Event” focused on veterans transitioning into the civilian workforce at JPMorgan Chase in New York on November 7, 2012, a common theme was that the over-emphasis on the need to “help” veterans find jobs has made many veterans feel like

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<sup>65</sup> David Finkel, “The Good Soldiers,” Sarah Crichton Books, 2009.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

charity cases. Many veterans feel that the national media attention and employment efforts have hurt their advancement opportunities. A recent article authored by a military mental health care provider cited a phone call she received from a friend seeking advice on hiring a veteran.<sup>67</sup> The concern was whether or not the veteran would “go crazy” down the road and if there was specific questions to ask during the interview “to assess for mental damage.”<sup>68</sup> This extreme example highlights the cultural divide and ignorance of many Americans when it comes to a military that is increasingly isolated from most of the country. It also begs the question that if Americans were still required to serve through conscription, would this perception problem exist? Would this knowledge gap exist? It’s difficult to answer these questions scientifically and an analysis of these issues is beyond the scope of this paper. However, one can look at what the civilian job sector is doing to bridge the knowledge gap and consider additional steps that can and should be taken across the country to ensure our society is better informed about military experience.

### **Barrier Three: Employers’ Fears of Service Member Deployments**

Studies and surveys also reveal a hesitancy to hire service members who are still in the National Guard or Reserves because of fear they will be deployed. The Guard and Reserves – also known collectively as “the reserve component” – are comprised of seven entities within the armed forces: the Army National Guard, Air National Guard, Army Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve and Coast Guard Reserve.<sup>69</sup> Members of the National Guard and Reserves are often referred to as “weekend warriors” and “citizen soldiers” due to the dual role they play within the military and private civilian sector. The concept is that this unique group maintains full-time employment, reports to their military job one weekend each month and trains two weeks each summer. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan required recurring mobilizations and deployments by the Guard and Reserves, which today include 1.1 million

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<sup>67</sup> Morrison, Marjorie, “Are Our Vets Getting a Bum Rap?” Huffington Post, December 7, 2012. Accessed December 7 and December 8, 2012: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marjorie-morrison/veterans-mental-health\\_b\\_2248868.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=tw](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marjorie-morrison/veterans-mental-health_b_2248868.html?utm_hp_ref=tw).

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> John Nagl and Travis Sharp. *An Indispensable Force: Investing in America’s National Guard and Reserves*. Center for a New American Security, September 2010, 11.

service members – 43 percent of total U.S. military manpower.<sup>70</sup> Because of the extremely high operational tempo of the last 11 years of war, the National Guard and Reserves have filled the personnel gap that resulted from an overstretched active duty military trying to fight two wars simultaneously with an all-volunteer force. It has been said that without the Guard and Reserves, the all-volunteer force would have broke.<sup>71</sup>

Businesses that employ members of the Guard or Reserves are required under federal law to protect service members that are placed on active duty. The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) of 1994 protects the employment rights of Guardsmen and women and Reservists who are called to active duty by mandating that employers: maintain deployed service members' jobs, provide benefits and pension commensurate with their level of employment; and receive continuation of health care for themselves and their dependents.<sup>72</sup> The law is meant to “prohibit discrimination against persons because of their service in the uniformed service.”<sup>73</sup> The impetus behind the law is that American businesses need to do their part to support the nation's military by providing job protection and benefits to service members and their families. Though the law's intention is respectable it is a difficult ask for many small employers who lack the resources to overstaff due to our nation's foreign policy. Foremost, there is a huge cost to protecting the employment rights of Guardsmen, women and Reservists – especially among small businesses. In addition to the financial cost and legal burden, it has been reported that the suicide rate among members of the Guard and Reserves is higher than that of the active component of the military, fueling the negative perception noted previously.<sup>74</sup> More than

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 11. Also see Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, “Reserve Affairs Overview” (May 2010), <http://ra.defense.gov/documents/Reservepercent20Affairspercent20Overview.pdf> (accessed October 30, 2012).

<sup>71</sup> See Nagl, John and Travis Sharp. *An Indispensable Force: Investing in America's National Guard and Reserves*. September 2010; and Michele Flournoy and Tammy Schultz. *Shaping U.S. Ground Forces for the Future: Getting Expansion Right*. June 2007.

<sup>72</sup> United States Department of Labor, The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), <http://www.dol.gov/compliance/laws/comp-userra.htm>.

<sup>73</sup> Legal Information Institute, Cornell University, 38 U.S. Code § 4301 - Purposes; sense of Congress, <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/38/4301>.

<sup>74</sup> Harrell, Dr. Margaret, “Losing the Battle: The Challenge of Military Suicide,” Center for a New American Security, October 31, 2011.

one-third of respondents in the CNAS survey raised concerns about reservists and guardsmen deploying.<sup>75</sup> The authors write, “Of note, more than half of those companies that do not formally target veterans for hire raised this issue. They expressed particular concerns about the duration of deployment and the possibility that the same employee could deploy multiple times.”<sup>76</sup> The SHRM report did not cite concerns over employing members of the Guard or Reserves.<sup>77</sup>

#### **Barrier Four: Finding Military Talent**

Another concern from businesses is the challenge they face finding veteran talent. SHRM found that only 13 percent of those polled said their organizations were aware of effective resources for finding veteran job candidates and 35 percent were not at all aware.<sup>78</sup> Approximately one-fourth of the companies that participated in the CNAS survey struggled to find veterans to hire.<sup>79</sup> The CNAS report notes several vignettes from companies sharing their frustration, “It’s not that companies are reluctant to hire veterans, they just don’t know where to go. There are so many third parties, hiring events, consultants. And they turn you off.”<sup>80</sup> This statistic presents an opportunity to educate employers on how to source veterans and to work with the military services to provide more effective data during the transition process. The challenge faced by employers is also related to the U.S. military’s culture of retention, which is evident in existing base policy and TAP effectiveness. Private sector companies are not allowed on military bases for recruitment purposes. As a result, each service and each government agency has created its own technology solution compounding the problem. As exhibited in the CNAS and SHRM studies, this is confusing for companies and serves as a deterrent to hiring veterans.

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<sup>75</sup> Dr. Margaret C. Harrell and Nancy Berglass. *Employing America’s Veterans: Perspectives from Businesses*. Center for a New American Security, June 2012, 25.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Society for Human Resource Management, “SHRM Poll: Military Employment,” February 17, 2012, <http://www.shrm.org/Research/SurveyFindings/Articles/Pages/MilitaryEmploymentSHRMPoll.aspx>.

<sup>78</sup> Theresa Minton-Eversole, “U.S. Military Veterans Being Hired but Not Targeted in Recruitment,” Society for Human Resource Management, February 23, 2012, <http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/staffingmanagement/Articles/Pages/USMilitaryVeteransBeingHired.aspx>.

<sup>79</sup> Harrell, Dr. Margaret C. and Nancy Berglass. *Employing America’s Veterans: Perspectives from Businesses*. Center for a New American Security, June 2012, 28.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

## **Barrier Five: Veterans Are Not Ready to Rejoin the Workforce**

The fifth most commonly cited barrier to veteran employment is that veterans are not ready to enter the civilian workforce. Of the companies surveyed in the CNAS report, those that do not target veterans in their recruiting process cite the fact that veterans need time to re-acclimate into society before joining the workforce.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, the SHRM poll noted that the same findings among 29 percent of employers surveyed, suggesting that it would take too long for veterans to adapt to civilian culture.<sup>82</sup> While these perceptions are not necessarily grounded in truth – especially since most large corporations are large top-down bureaucracies similar to the military branches - one factor that may contribute to this perception is that many post-9/11 veterans return to their “home-of-record” before seeking employment. Recruiting efforts targeting transitioning service members may be overlooked while veterans focus on returning home rather than finding a career opportunity.<sup>83</sup> Additionally, many service members are returning to rural areas where finding employment is more difficult than in urban areas. Gaps in employment tend to feed the perception by companies that veterans are not ready to rejoin the workforce which essentially becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

### **Examples**

While these barriers are realities for many employers, there are three companies that stand out for their veteran hiring programs. Each company has taken these challenges into consideration and established unique programs to overcome them. The following section offers details about the veteran hiring programs at General Electric, JPMorgan Chase and Humana and lists their leading practices in an effort to help companies overcome barriers.

In an effort to develop a list of best practices that can be adopted by other private sector companies who want to hire veterans but do not know how or where to begin, this research

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>82</sup> Society for Human Resource Management, “SHRM Poll: Military Employment,” February 17, 2012, <http://www.shrm.org/Research/SurveyFindings/Articles/Pages/MilitaryEmploymentSHRMPoll.aspx>.

<sup>83</sup> Haynie, Michael J., “Guide to Leading Policies, Practices & Resources: Supporting the Employment of Veterans & Military Families,” Syracuse University’s Institute for Veterans and Military Families, page 8.

includes several examples of companies executing best-in-class veteran hiring methods. The three companies selected - Humana, JPMorgan Chase and General Electric – were chosen based on cross referencing six lists: GI Jobs’ 2013 military friendly employer list,<sup>84</sup> 2012 Military Times EDGE “Best for Vets Employer” list, CivilianJobs.com Most Valuable Employers (MVE) for Military, the Families and Work Institute’s list of best employers for veterans,<sup>85</sup> companies that participated in the CNAS study, “Employing America’s Veterans,” and companies cited in Syracuse University’s Institute for Veterans and Military Families’ (IVMF) “Guide to Leading Policies, Practices and Resources.” Each list ranks military-friendly civilian employers and the two reports are the leading studies in the field of veteran hiring. The following twelve companies were referenced on four of the aforementioned lists: Amazon, Bank of America, Booz Allen Hamilton, Inc., CACI International, Inc., Citigroup Inc, Lockheed Martin, Merck & Co., Inc., Prudential Financial, USAA, Verizon Communications Inc., Wal-Mart, Waste Management, Inc. Humana was referenced on five lists and General Electric and JPMorgan Chase were on all six lists. Therefore, this research reflects details about the most frequently cited companies: Humana, JPMorgan Chase and General Electric.<sup>86</sup>

The following three examples highlight the most impactful companies in the veteran community. Each firm is measured against the previously acknowledged barriers to veteran employment. Best practices were collected so companies could adopt them when developing new veteran hiring programs. Previously mentioned barriers to employment include a knowledge gap between civilian and military cultures, negative stigmas associated with mental health issues, hesitancy to hire members of the Guard and Reserves, challenges finding military talent to hire and the view that service members are not ready to enter the civilian workforce.

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<sup>84</sup> GI Jobs, “Top 10 Ranked Top 100 Military Friendly Employers,” <http://employers.militaryfriendly.com/>.

<sup>85</sup> Families and Work Institute, “Resources for Transitioning Members of the American Military Community and Businesses Hoping to Hire and Support Them,” <http://www.familiesandwork.org/site/events/veterans.html#statistics>.

<sup>86</sup> Please see Table 2 in the Appendix for a list of all companies that were mentioned on at least two or more lists.

## **Humana**

Humana is a leading health care company that administers health benefits under the Department of Defense's TRICARE program.<sup>87</sup> It is a publically traded for-profit company with over a billion dollars in revenue.<sup>88</sup> Humana employs more than 40,000 people of whom 1,700 are veterans or are still in the Guard or Reserves.<sup>89</sup> It has a Veterans Hiring Initiative, a Veterans Network Resource Group and a dedicated on-boarding team. Humana's recruiting program consists of three full-time employees dedicated to hiring veterans and military spouses. The company also has a dedicated military section on the company website. Having a dedicated recruiting team to hire veterans helps the company overcome the obstacle of difficulty finding military talent. Most companies do not have dedicated resources to recruit military members. Recruiting military-experienced job candidates is different than other experienced candidates. It requires having a military base strategy, attending military-specific job fairs and seeking out non-traditional recruiting channels specific to military. For example, LinkedIn is a primary online platform for recruiting people in general, but the tactics used to recruit military candidates from LinkedIn are different. Having dedicated recruiters to build expertise in this area makes this a best practice.

A Veteran Network Resource Group is an employee-based group specifically for employees with military experience and other employees with a specific interest in military and veterans affairs. Other examples of resource groups include: professional women's groups, African American or Latino groups and those who are gay or transgender. Resource Groups do organized activities such as luncheons and volunteer activities to support certain causes. Veteran resource groups are particularly valuable because of the "knowledge gap" that exists between military and civilian cultures. Veterans sometimes feel as though civilians don't understand them

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<sup>87</sup> GI Jobs, "Top 10 Ranked Top 100 Military Friendly Employers," <http://employers.militaryfriendly.com/militaryfriendly-employer/humana>.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

or their experiences. As a result, they can lean on their fellow military-experienced employees to talk about their military service, build camaraderie and help acclimate to their new career.

On-boarding is the practice of bringing on a new staff member: prepping them before their arrival, ensuring they have what they need upon arrival and training them in their first weeks. This practice is particularly important for veteran employees as a civilian work environment is very different from the military. Often times new staff members are left to fend for themselves in these large companies, having to figure out the technology systems or even something as simple as where to get staples or finding “conference room A.” This can be very overwhelming for anyone really. One interesting anecdote is that many veteran employees don’t stay in their first job for very long; in other words, retention is a challenge. Onboarding teams are a best practice because they help increase retention in first jobs for the simple fact that they make the individual’s transition much easier.

Humana is well known for hiring military spouses, which is viewed in the military and veteran communities as equally important as hiring veterans.<sup>90</sup> That is because military spouses have significant difficulty maintaining careers when they have to move their family every two years for a new military assignment. As a result, companies like Humana that prioritize hiring them and offer job portability and other types of support programs are seen as leading practices. Humana also provides flexible work options for military spouse employees with a family member deployed including part-time employment and virtual work from home options.<sup>91</sup>

Another aspect of Humana’s program that stands out is their ability to track military and spouse applicants in their application system. When companies in the private sector launched veteran employment campaigns in 2011, one of the early hurdles was the inability to track veteran hires in their human resources systems. As a result, many companies didn’t really know how

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<sup>90</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Warrior and Family Support Office, “Keeping Faith with Our Military Family,” September 18, 2012, [http://www.jcs.mil//content/files/2012-09/092012163425\\_Keeping\\_Faith\\_with\\_Our\\_Military\\_Family\\_percent28Finalpercent29.pdf](http://www.jcs.mil//content/files/2012-09/092012163425_Keeping_Faith_with_Our_Military_Family_percent28Finalpercent29.pdf).

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

many veterans they already employed, how many veterans they hired, how they are doing in their new jobs or whether or not they were being retained. Putting this technological infrastructure in place is no easy task and Humana tracks both veterans and military spouses. That gives the company the ability to track their progress and conduct targeted outreach to this unique population. Another highlight of Humana's program is that as part of the interview process, applicants are put in touch with veteran employees to ask questions about the company's culture and specific roles. Giving job candidates the ability to talk with other employees – and those with military experience nonetheless – is a huge advantage. This is another aspect that helps ease the transition from the military into a civilian culture. Job candidates can ask questions that the other person can relate to and offer unique insight.

Humana also implemented a mandatory training program for recruiters, which is incredibly important for bridging the knowledge gap. The military is a very opaque organization and is difficult to understand unless you've been trained to gain a better understanding. For example, many civilians do not understand the difference between being enlisted versus an officer, or what training service members gain at each step in the promotion process or what different military occupations mean. Humana's training program makes their recruiters more informed about the military, which makes them more likely to understand a veteran's resume and therefore hire them.

In 2011, Humana pledged to hire 1,000 veterans or their spouses by 2014 as part of the First Lady's Joining Forces initiative.<sup>92</sup> Towards this goal Humana has hired 750 veterans and spouses as part of that commitment and has developed several training programs that help service members transition from military to civilian life.<sup>93</sup> They are also a member of the Military Spouse Employment Partnership.<sup>94</sup> The company also has a specific program targeting service-

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<sup>92</sup> GI Jobs, "Top 10 Ranked Top 100 Military Friendly Employers," <http://employers.militaryfriendly.com/militaryfriendly-employer/humana>.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

disabled veterans and it accepts technical certification for military experience in any field. Accepting military certifications is significant because according to state law, military certifications are not the equivalent of civilian training – not necessarily because the training isn't equal, but more because of technicalities. There is a big movement by the First Lady's Joining Forces program to reconcile these certification inconsistencies, but companies like Humana are way ahead of the curve.

Humana signed the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) statement of support, has won the patria award and offers full salary for Guardsmen, women and Reservists when they are deployed for one year.<sup>95</sup> It also continues life insurance benefits and continued medical coverage for Guard and Reservists and their families when employees are activated. This is significant because one of the biggest barriers to veteran employment is fear of Guard and Reservist employees getting deployed. By signing the ESGR statement of support and offering unique benefits to this population, Humana stands as an exemplary company for how to make this work for the business and the employee.

### **JPMorgan Chase**

JPMorgan Chase (JPMC) is a leading financial services firm with close to one hundred billion dollars in annual revenue and a market capitalization of over \$200 billion.<sup>96</sup> Veteran employment is a major initiative at the firm both in terms of hiring internally and also in leading the 100,000 Jobs Mission. Of 260,000 fulltime employees, 6,500 are veterans or in the reserves. In leading the 100,000 Jobs Mission, JPMC leads a coalition of 85 companies committed to hiring 100,000 veterans by 2020 and sharing best practices. Internally, JPMC has a dedicated office of military and veterans affairs with 20 full-time employees. This includes a dedicated military recruiting team comprised of 14 full time employees, 12 of whom have prior military

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> JPMorgan Chase, "2011 Annual Report," (2011), [http://files.shareholder.com/downloads/ONE/2213452286x0x556139/75b4bd59-02e7-4495-a84c-06e0b19d6990/JPMC\\_2011\\_annual\\_report\\_complete.pdf](http://files.shareholder.com/downloads/ONE/2213452286x0x556139/75b4bd59-02e7-4495-a84c-06e0b19d6990/JPMC_2011_annual_report_complete.pdf).

experience or are still in the Guard or Reserves. JPMorgan hires recruiters with military experience to bridge the gap between military and civilian cultures. JPMC has also developed internal training programs for recruiters and hiring managers without military experience with the goal of educating them on the skill sets service members bring to the table. It also has internal training programs for new veteran hires to help them assimilate into the corporate culture. Like Humana, JPMC has an employee networking group for veterans that provides peer-to-peer mentoring which serves as a networking tool for internal mobility. The firm tracks military employees through a self-identification process. To indicate its commitment to veterans and service members, the company signed the ESGR statement of support, offers an employee's full salary when deployed for one year and offers full job security for those deployed. JPMC continues life insurance benefits and continued medical coverage for Guard and Reservists and their families.

Similar to the explanations listed in the Humana section, all of these internal resources are leading practices because they allow JPMorgan Chase to bridge the knowledge gap and ease the transition for new veteran employees. One of their training programs is called Military 101, which is for recruiters and hiring managers to teach them about the U.S. military. Another program called Body Armor to Business Suits teaches newly hired veteran employees about corporate culture. These leading practices are then shared with companies in the 100,000 Jobs Mission and are published for all employers on their website, JobsMission.com.

### **General Electric**

General Electric (GE) is an advanced technology company with more than 100,000 employees of whom 10,000 are military or veteran employees.<sup>97</sup> Like Humana and JPMorgan Chase, GE also signed the ESGR statement of support and was awarded the Secretary of Defense

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<sup>97</sup> GI Jobs, "Top 10 Ranked Top 100 Military Friendly Employers," <http://employers.militaryfriendly.com/militaryfriendly-employer/general-electric-company>.

Employer Support Freedom award.<sup>98</sup> The company also provides full salaries, continued life insurance and continued medical benefits to deployed Guardsmen, Guardswomen, Reservists and their dependents.<sup>99</sup> GE provides job security for those deployed as well. Internally, GE has ten full time employees working on military programs including recruiters and trainers.<sup>100</sup> It has mandatory training for HR managers and recruiters and a dedicated military section on their website. GE has a unique program called the junior officer leadership program designed to help veterans transition into corporate culture.<sup>101</sup> The company also launched a manufacturing track for service members in partnership with Boeing, Alcoa and community colleges across the country called “Get Skills to Work.”<sup>102</sup> The idea is that the military has already provided substantial training which should be expanded upon. This collaboration of companies will identify existing skills and, if ready, will hire veterans on the spot.<sup>103</sup> If there is a skill gap, GE and its consortium will underwrite veterans to obtain the necessary skills through its various community college partnerships.

All three companies have one common element: a focus on the entire employment continuum to bridge the gap between military and civilian cultures. The employment continuum represents the employment process from start to finish from identifying job candidates, interviewing and hiring them, to onboarding, training and retaining them. Each company has programs unique to military candidates at each step in the employment continuum. They have dedicated recruiting, hiring, on-boarding, assimilating, training and retention programs. They have full-time employees, many of whom served in the military and are experts in military training and experience dedicated to hiring veterans. The firms also have internal training programs for recruiters and hiring managers. Each company has a webpage dedicated to hiring military talent that offers jobs that fit military experience and more information about internships

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Get Skills to Work, About, <http://www.getskillstowork.org/>

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

and other entry-level programs for young veterans. These elements are critical to bridging the gap between civilian and military cultures. Each company has also signed the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve statement of support, which commits to honoring the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act. ESGR provides the necessary tools to employees who are members of the Guard or Reserves and their managers; and encourages companies to seek opportunities to hire Guardsmen, women and Reservists.<sup>104</sup> Moreover, each company has a dedicated employee assistance program offering resources for employees with posttraumatic stress and for all employees to understand what it means to have posttraumatic stress as a result of military experience. Each employer uses all means necessary to build a veteran talent pipeline for recruiting veterans.

## **Conclusion**

Employment is the key for veterans' successful transition into civilian life and to their overall wellness. Employment provides structure, purpose, financial well-being and an organizational attachment similar to what service members experienced in the military. Many companies are hiring veterans and are hiring them for the right reason, which is that it's good for business. Veteran employees have proven to be entrepreneurial; they assume high levels of trust; they have advanced technical training; are comfortable in discontinuous environments; have high levels of resiliency; they exhibit advanced team building skills; have strong organizational commitment; have more cross-cultural experience than their peers; and have experience and skills in diverse work settings.<sup>105</sup> Additionally, veteran employees volunteer for civic causes more frequently than their civilian peers and have higher rates of charitable giving.<sup>106</sup> For all of these reasons, companies are hiring veterans because of their diverse backgrounds and adaptability.

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<sup>104</sup> Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, Statement of Support Program, <http://www.esgr.mil/Employers/Statement-of-Support.aspx>.

<sup>105</sup> Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University, "The Business Case for Hiring a Veteran, Beyond the Cliches," March 5, 2012, <http://vets.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/The-Business-Case-for-Hiring-a-Veteran-3-6-124.pdf>.

<sup>106</sup> Blue Star Families, "Military Family Lifestyle Survey: Findings and Analysis," Department of Research and Policy,

Yet much work remains. The unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans is 12.1 percent, nearly 4 points higher than the national average at 8.7 percent.<sup>107</sup> And more than 1 million more service members are expected to transition out of the military by 2016. As Theodore Roosevelt said in 1903, “a man who is good enough to shed his blood for his country is good enough to be given a square deal afterwards. More than that no man is entitled, and less than that no man shall have.”<sup>108</sup> More employers need to take this quote seriously and recognize they have a role to play in employing our veterans, Guardsmen and Reservists. This is not about charity; it’s good business.<sup>109</sup> This generation of veterans has the potential to do for the American economy what the veteran population did after World War II and the potential to become the next greatest generation. Employers and civilians without military experience need to take the time to understand the military and educate themselves on the value of service. The media has a large role to play in this education process as well. This includes telling the full story, with the appropriate level of context and facts, which may not sell as many newspapers as more sensational pieces. The real story is that most veterans are educated, highly experienced, mentally stable and perfectly capable of entering and performing at a high level in the civilian workforce. This may not make as good of a story as veterans committing suicide, but the nation must do everything it can to employ veterans and give them the square deal they deserve.

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May 2012.

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/student\\_family/military/va\\_council/resources/blue\\_star\\_virginia\\_council\\_07182012.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/student_family/military/va_council/resources/blue_star_virginia_council_07182012.pdf)

<sup>107</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Employment Situation of Veterans: 2010,” Released March 11, 2011, [http://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/vet\\_03112011.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/vet_03112011.pdf).

<sup>108</sup> Theodore Roosevelt Association, “In His Own Words,” <http://www.theodoreroosevelt.org/life/quotes.htm>.

<sup>109</sup> Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University, “The Business Case for Hiring a Veteran, Beyond the Cliches,” March 5, 2012, <http://vets.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/The-Business-Case-for-Hiring-a-Veteran-3-6-124.pdf>.

## **Chapter Two: Bridging the Civilian-Military Divide in the Post-9/11 Era**

*“I fear they do not know us. I fear they do not comprehend the full weight of the burden we carry or the price we pay when we return from battle.” – Speech delivered by Admiral Mike Mullen, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at the graduation ceremony at West Point in 2011<sup>110</sup>*

### **Introduction**

Forty years ago, on the heels of the Vietnam War, the United States moved away from a conscription-based military to an all-volunteer force (AVF). With the post-Vietnam military riddled with problems and American civil society war-weary, the draft was no longer politically feasible. The all-volunteer force “came into its own” in the mid-1980’s and performed so well in the first Gulf War that it became the model for the U.S. military.<sup>111</sup> After the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, America’s leaders chose to use military force to invade Afghanistan and Iraq, starting the longest protracted ground wars in American history. What has ensued is twelve years of war fought by less than .5 percent of American society.<sup>112</sup> More than two and a half million troops have served in Iraq or Afghanistan – and almost half of them deployed more than once.<sup>113</sup> With federal budget cuts, the drawdown in Afghanistan and the imminent downsizing of the force, approximately one million service members, about 250,000 annually, will transition out of the military and back into communities.<sup>114</sup>

The American public is fatigued from almost 13 years of war. As the U.S. military draws down in Afghanistan in 2014, there is anticipation that the general public will feel relief and assume the problems are over for our transitioning military members, when, in fact, they will be

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<sup>110</sup> Admiral Mike Mullen, “West Point Graduation Ceremony as Delivered by Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,” (speech, United States Military Academy, West Point, NY, Saturday, May 21, 2011), <http://www.jcs.mil/speech.aspx?id=1598>.

<sup>111</sup> Lawrence J. Korb & David R. Segal, “Manning & Financing the Twenty-First-Century All-Volunteer Force,” *Daedalus*, Summer 2011, page 79.

<sup>112</sup> Paul Taylor et al., *The Military-Civilian Gap: War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era*, Pew Research Center, October 5, 2011, page 2. Also see: Karl W. Eikenberry and David M. Kennedy, “Americans and Their Military, Drifting Apart,” *New York Times*, May 26, 2013.

<sup>113</sup> Baiocchi, Dave. “Measuring Army Deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan,” RAND, Updated data as of November 27, 2012. [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR100/RR145/RAND\\_RR145.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR100/RR145/RAND_RR145.pdf)

<sup>114</sup> White House statistic, repeated by Secretary Hagel at event this author participated in on November 1, 2013 at JPMorgan Chase.

just beginning. Scholars, members of the military and civilians alike have raised concern that there is a growing “chasm” in civilian-military relations, sounding the alarm that the rift must be addressed. This is not a new concern, in fact civil-military relations has been an important conversation throughout American history stemming back to the Federalist papers and the framing of the U.S. Constitution. But in this post-9/11 era, there is evidence that the gap between civilian and military cultures has reached an unhealthy level.

### **Research Focus and Question**

As defined in Chapter One, the knowledge gap between civilian and military cultures is the biggest barrier to veteran employment. Civilian-military relations can be classified two ways: the relationship between the military and civil society and the relationship between senior members of the military and high-level civilian policymakers. A deliberate divide between military and civilian cultures is not new. In most instances, academics and practitioners agree a gap should exist, but warn about the size of the gap.<sup>115</sup> Now in the post-9/11 era of protracted conflict we may be facing a time in history where the gap is so large that it is cause for concern. That the sacrifices made by the military and their families are so great and the recognition by the public so small, there exists unhealthy resentment amongst the military population.

This research will examine the post-9/11 military’s relationship with the civilian society that it serves. The paper asks: has the divide between civilian and military societies grown in the post-9/11 era? If so, what is causing the divide and why does it matter? How can the United States bridge the gap?

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<sup>115</sup> The exception is that feminists in the 1970’s did not think there should be a gap. Cohn, Lindsay, “The Evolution of the Civil-Military “Gap” Debate,” Paper prepared for the TISS Project on the Gap Between the Military and Civilian Society, 1999, page 8.

## Explaining the Civilian-Military Gap

The concern over the gap in the relationship between the military and civilian society became pronounced after the end of WWII with Samuel P. Huntington's book *The Soldier and the State* and Morris Janowitz's *The Professional Soldier*.<sup>116</sup> Academics during this time focused on the nature of the relationship between the military and civilian worlds.<sup>117</sup> Huntington's view was that the military was separate and distinct from civilian society primarily because of the drastically different function the military provided.<sup>118</sup> His concern was the "civilianization" of military culture because it would decrease military effectiveness.<sup>119</sup> Janowitz agreed the military was its own unique culture but argued that the military would have to adapt to a changing civilian culture.<sup>120</sup> He worried the military would lose touch with the society it swore to protect and, if it did, a situation could arise in which the civilian government may not trust the advice of a military with such a different culture and vice versa.<sup>121</sup>

This debate shifted after the Vietnam War when the U.S. did away with the draft in 1973 and adopted a professional force. Literature from this period focuses on lessons from Vietnam, including how the all-volunteer force would change the nature of the U.S. military and whether those changes would widen the gap between the military and civilian worlds.<sup>122</sup> The major concerns about the civilian-military (civ-mil) gap focused on whether an ignorant civilian society would elect officials who were unqualified to make military decisions, whether an isolated

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<sup>116</sup> Cohn, Lindsay, "The Evolution of the Civil-Military "Gap" Debate," Paper prepared for the TISS Project on the Gap Between the Military and Civilian Society, 1999, page 1.  
[http://lpcohn.squarespace.com/storage/Cohn\\_Evolutionpercent20ofpercent20Gapppercent20Debatepercent201999.pdf](http://lpcohn.squarespace.com/storage/Cohn_Evolutionpercent20ofpercent20Gapppercent20Debatepercent201999.pdf)

<sup>117</sup> Cohn, pages 2 and 3.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Cohn, pages 4-5.

<sup>120</sup> Cohn, page 3.

<sup>121</sup> Cohn, page 5.

<sup>122</sup> Cohn, page 5.

military would become hostile to civilian society and whether women should be allowed to serve.<sup>123</sup>

The civ-mil debate shifted again in the early 1990's at the end of the Cold War primarily because there was a massive drawdown of the force coupled with technological advances and a changing security environment. The gap was classified into three sets of conversations: the culture gap or the traits that each culture cultivates; an understanding gap between cultures or the lack of social connection between military members and the rest of society; and a gap perpetuated by organizational structure, all of which are relevant to the veteran employment concern.<sup>124</sup>

### **Has the Civilian-Military Divide Widened in the Post-9/11 Era?**

There is evidence that the gap between military and civilian cultures has widened in the post 9/11 era. Not only has there been a massive outcry by military and civilian leaders alike, numerous surveys and opinion polls show that this gap has reached an unhealthy level. As retired Lt Gen Karl Eikenberry said, "The greatest challenge to our military is not from a foreign enemy — it's the widening gap between the American people and their armed forces."<sup>125</sup> The gap can be classified in two camps: cultural differences between military and civilian societies and the knowledge gap between the two cultures.

On the cultural front, some suggest the gap is improving, particularly when looking at social issues including the military's repeal of the "Don't Ask Don't Tell" policy and doctrinally allowing women in combat roles. But when looking at the demographics of the military, service members come from a narrower segment of society – geographically, socio-economically and culturally. Military service is a family business and there are a disproportionate number of

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<sup>123</sup> Cohn, page 8.

<sup>124</sup> Cohn, pages 10-11.

<sup>125</sup> Karl W. Eikenberry and David M. Kennedy, "Americans and Their Military, Drifting Apart," The New York Times, May, 26, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/27/opinion/americans-and-their-military-drifting-apart.html? r=0>

military members from the geographic south of the country and not a significant representation from society's liberal cities or elite universities.<sup>126</sup>

While the culture gap deserves attention, the knowledge gap is the most concerning and military and civilian leaders alike have sounded the warning bell. Admiral Mullen, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and perhaps the most outspoken on the civilian-military divide, gave a chilling speech at the 2011 West Point graduation ceremony. Speaking about civil society, Mullen stated "I fear they do not know us. I fear they do not comprehend the full weight of the burden we carry or the price we pay when we return from battle."<sup>127</sup> Admiral Mullen is referring to the immensity of the expectation that American policymakers, and in turn civil society, placed on the military and their families during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and how the military adapted to the changing needs of our nation. When we moved to an all-volunteer force, we shifted the responsibility of war to a small percentage of civil society. And over time, military doctrine has expanded the role of military members from being warfighters to being peacekeepers, disaster relief rapid responders and diplomats. This has caused the following to occur simultaneously: longer deployments, less dwell time,<sup>128</sup> higher operational tempo, and higher reliance on the National Guard and Reserves. Polling data shows that the American public does not understand how this broadening of responsibility has affected the military and their families during the last twelve years of war.<sup>129</sup> One recent survey was conducted by the Pew Research Center about the attitudes and experiences of U.S. military veterans. The survey included a sample set of military veterans and the other was a national representative sample of

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<sup>126</sup> Roth-Douquet, Kathy, "AWOL: The Unexcused Absence of America's Upper Classes from Military Service and How It Hurts the Country," Harper Perennial; Reprint edition (May 1, 2007). Also see: Miller, Cheryl, "Underserved, A Case Study of ROTC in New York City," American Enterprise Institute, May 2011, [http://www.citizenship-aei.org/wp-content/uploads/ROTC-Final-May-2011.pdf?utm\\_source=scholar&utm\\_medium=paramount&utm\\_campaign=cheryl-miller](http://www.citizenship-aei.org/wp-content/uploads/ROTC-Final-May-2011.pdf?utm_source=scholar&utm_medium=paramount&utm_campaign=cheryl-miller).

<sup>127</sup> Admiral Mike Mullen, "West Point Graduation Ceremony as Delivered by Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff," (speech, United States Military Academy, West Point, NY, Saturday, May 21, 2011), <http://www.jcs.mil/speech.aspx?id=1598>.

<sup>128</sup> Dwell time is the amount of time an active duty service member spends at home.

<sup>129</sup> Paul Taylor et al., *The Military-Civilian Gap: War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era*, Pew Research Center, October 5, 2011, page 2.

the general American public. Of the post-9/11 veterans that took the survey, 84 percent felt the American public does not understand the problems faced by those in the military or their families.<sup>130</sup> The American public understands the military has sacrificed more than the general public, but believes that's part of being in the military.<sup>131</sup> It is true that those who serve volunteer to serve in the military. But herein lies the underlying natural tension of the civ-mil divide.

### **The Knowledge Gap**

The gap can be classified in two camps: the knowledge gap between military and civilian societies and cultural differences between the two. First and most prominently is the knowledge gap between civilian and military communities that is not being filled by either group in American society. This gap manifests itself in multiple ways including: frustrated civil-mil relations amongst policymakers and the military; military members and their families feeling as though the broader public does not understand the immensity of their sacrifices; and the public, including employers, misperceiving the military as seen only through sensationalist media coverage.

The relationship between civilian policymakers and the military over the last twelve years of war can be characterized as frustrated on both sides. After civilian policymakers decided to invade Iraq in 2003, it was clear to some in the military that expectations didn't match the invasion and post-invasion plans. When Eric Shinseki, who at the time was the Army Chief of Staff, told Congress the Administration drastically underestimated the number of ground forces needed to complete the mission, he was marginalized by his civilian superiors. Additionally, in 2006, a number of retired general officers spoke out against the Iraq war including retired Major Genera Paul Eaton, Lt. Gen. William Odom, Retired Marine General Anthony Zinni, Retired Lt

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid, page 8.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, page 9.

Gen Greg Newbold, Lt Gen Bernard Trainor and Maj Gen John Batiste.<sup>132</sup> In fact, several of the aforementioned generals retired in protest against the Iraq war. This generation of general officers served as junior officers during the Vietnam War and promised that if one day they held senior level positions, they would act in the best interest of the country and not “collapse before civilian delusion and zealotry.”<sup>133</sup>

It turned out that those concerned with post-invasion planning had well-founded concerns. The U.S. was not prepared to send the level of ground troops necessary for the fight in Iraq. To compensate for the gap in available forces during the height of the “surge” in Iraq, civilian policymakers extended Army deployments from 12 to 15 months, rather than relying on the Selective Service to fight two ground wars, and reduced dwell times. Civilian policymakers also reassigned soldiers from other assignments and missions to the pool of soldiers rotating to Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and greatly increased the rate at which soldiers rotated to and from the wars.<sup>134</sup> Because of demands by civilian policymakers, the military also placed an increased reliance on the Guard and Reserves and lowered recruitment standards while troop numbers were increased.<sup>135</sup> And even after these changes, the military had very little capacity to ramp up if another contingency arose putting our national security apparatus in overdrive and in a vulnerable state.<sup>136</sup> Together these policies placed a huge burden on American ground forces and their families.

Andrew Bacevich, renowned civil-military scholar and Professor at Boston University, scorned civilian leaders’ unwillingness to rely on the Selective Service and discussed how unfair of a request that was to make of our military.<sup>137</sup> Lawrence Korb and David Segal also looked at

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<sup>132</sup> Solaro, Erin, “Retired Generals Against Iraq War,” Seattle Post Intelligencer, April 15, 2006, <http://www.courageto resist.org/news/41-retired-generals-against-iraq-war.html>.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Timothy M. Bonds, Dave Baiocchi and Laurie L. McDonald, *Army Deployments to OIF and OEF*, RAND, 2010.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Andrew Bacevich, “Breach of Trust,” Metropolitan Books (September 10, 2013). Also see: Bacevich, Andrew, “Whose Army?,” *Daedalus* 140:3, Summer 2011, *The Modern American Military*.

the original all-volunteer force strategy and how it evolved over the last 40 years. They examined the Selective Service System and how it was not activated at the height of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>138</sup> Confirming how much stress – both physical and psychological – was put on our all-volunteer force, Korb and Segal wrote, “If the Joint Chiefs had followed the original blue print for the all-volunteer force, they would have demanded that the secretary of defense and the president activate the Selective Service, which, by 2000, had on file some twenty million men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four. But they lacked the political will to challenge their civilian superiors.”<sup>139</sup> Korb and Segal went further, stating that the overuse of the nation’s ground forces, both active and Reserve forces, was “a moral outrage perpetrated against the troops and their families.”<sup>140</sup> Other examples of frustrated civil-military relations include General Petraeus deliberately circumventing his chain of command to advise on Iraq War policy<sup>141</sup> and General McChrystal getting fired after his staff made disparaging comments about several civilian leaders including Vice-President Biden to a *Rolling Stone* journalist.<sup>142</sup> Bob Woodward’s book, *Obama’s War*, documents the friction President Obama faced from his military commanders when making policy on the war in Afghanistan.<sup>143</sup>

This level of frustration should be contextualized with lack of military experience by American policymakers. Right before the end of the draft, 73 percent of Congressional officials had military experience.<sup>144</sup> During the Iraq War and presently, that amount has decreased to a mere 20 percent, which is the lowest amount since WWII.<sup>145</sup> These elected officials and those of

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<sup>138</sup> Lawrence J. Korb & David R. Segal, “Manning & Financing the Twenty-First- Century All-Volunteer Force,” *Daedalus*, Summer 2011, page 81.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> Thomas E. Ricks, “Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq,” Penguin, May 2007.

<sup>142</sup> Michael Hastings, “The Runaway General,” *Rolling Stone* magazine, June 22, 2010.

<sup>143</sup> Bob Woodward, “Obama’s Wars,” Simon and Schuster, Sep 28, 2010. Also see: Davidson, Janine, “The Contemporary Presidency: Civil-Military Friction and Presidential Decision Making: Explaining the Broken Dialogue,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 1, March 2013.

<sup>144</sup> Jennifer E. Manning, “Membership of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress: A Profile,” Congressional Research Service, December 6, 2013.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.* Also see: Karl W. Eikenberry and David M. Kennedy, “Americans and Their Military, Drifting Apart,” *New York Times*, May 26, 2013.

the Executive Branch make military policy; the military does not. And of post-9/11 veterans who participated in the Pew survey, only one third felt that the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have been worth fighting.<sup>146</sup> And about half (51 percent) say relying too much on military force to defeat terrorism creates hatred that leads to more terrorism.<sup>147</sup>

Another important element of the knowledge gap is the sheer lack of understanding about the military and the burden they've carried during our most recent wars. According to Admiral Mullen, "The public knows generically that their troops are at war, but 'the day to day connections are less than they used to be, the depth and breadth of who we are and what we're doing, isn't there."<sup>148</sup> More than two and a half million troops have served in Iraq or Afghanistan – and almost half of them deployed more than once.<sup>149</sup> The U.S. military has been deployed 144 times in the 40 years since the draft was abolished in 1973.<sup>150</sup> That is compared with 19 deployments in the 27 years between the end of WWII and 1973.<sup>151</sup> Those time periods presented a different set of security challenges, but it is clear there has been increased reliance on the professional force.

A third element of the knowledge gap is how the news media, sometimes referred to as the fourth branch of government, covers war – or doesn't cover war for that matter. The changing media landscape and the need for newspapers to sell have resulted in sensationalized coverage of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. For example, a disproportionate number of stories revolve around posttraumatic stress and military suicides and do not focus on any of the good the military has done. This has fueled misperceptions by the public and employers about military

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<sup>146</sup> Paul Taylor et al., *The Military-Civilian Gap: War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era*, Pew Research Center, October 5, 2011, page 7.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Philip Ewing, "Defense leaders fear military-civilian 'disconnect'," Politico, February 20, 2011.

<sup>149</sup> Dave Baiocchi, "Measuring Army Deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan," RAND, Updated data as of November 27, 2012. [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR100/RR145/RAND\\_RR145.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR100/RR145/RAND_RR145.pdf)

<sup>150</sup> Karl W. Eikenberry and David M. Kennedy, "Americans and Their Military, Drifting Apart," *New York Times*, May 26, 2013.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

members, which has further widened the civilian-military gap.<sup>152</sup> As noted in Chapter One, the CNAS report, “Employing America’s Veterans,” cited an uninformed employer, “I think the only reason companies might be hesitant to hire veterans is because of PTSD. They don’t want to hire someone who is not only an unknown but may be damaged, too.”<sup>153</sup> Some employers who participated in that same study pointed to the news media as the source for negative perceptions around PTSD stating, “The media propagates the notion that all vets have PTSD, and that is only the case for a very minor portion of the military population.”<sup>154</sup> Another poll conducted in 2012 by The Mission Continues confirmed America’s misperception about PTSD. Those surveyed believe that a majority of post-9/11 veterans suffer from PTSD when in reality only about 2 in 10 do.<sup>155</sup> In addition, the public assumes that veterans have lower levels of education when in fact veterans are more likely than their non-veteran peers to have some college education and advanced degrees.<sup>156</sup> Part of the challenge is the lack of reporters and newspaper editors with military experience. For example, *Foreign Policy* magazine does not have a single person on its staff that is a veteran which makes telling the story through the eyes of a veteran that much more challenging.<sup>157</sup> More research should be conducted about the news media’s role in America’s perception of our military. It would be especially interesting to know how many staff members have military experience and/or what their level of understanding of the military is.

Another concern facing the military and veteran communities is whether or not the news media will continue to cover military issues after we draw down in Afghanistan. Conversations with dozens of newspaper reporters and editors have shown frustration that stories about the war in Afghanistan aren’t even tier three stories – and we still have more than 60,000 American

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<sup>152</sup> Margaret C. Harrell and Nancy Berglass, “Employing America’s Veterans,” Center for a New American Security, June 2012, page 24.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> “A New Generation of Leaders: A Report on America’s Perceptions of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans Mission Continues Survey,” The Mission Continues, June 13, 2012, <http://missioncontinues.org/newgeneration>.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Event was held on November 15, 2013 at JPMorgan Chase.

troops there. Americans are tired of twelve plus years of war and they do not want to read about war or hear about war on television. As a result the news media has lost focus of the current war and the transition that veterans face back into society.

### **The Cultural Gap**

The second indication that the civilian-military gap is widening can be viewed through a cultural lens. Military and civilian worlds barely come into contact— geographically, socio-economically and culturally. Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has acknowledged that few Americans have a connection to the U.S. military.<sup>158</sup> The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were fought by the smallest number of Americans than any other war in our history: less than 0.5 percent of the American public served compared with the nearly 9 percent of Americans who served in World War II.<sup>159</sup> More than three-quarters of Americans over the age of 50 have an immediate family member who served in the military compared to only one third of Americans ages 18 to 29 with a family member who served.<sup>160</sup> The data shows a growing generation gap, with younger Americans far less likely than older ones to have a family member who served.<sup>161</sup>

Another factor is that military bases are isolated from society, protected by heavy security especially since 9/11.<sup>162</sup> These military enclaves have their own schools, hospitals, and grocery stores.<sup>163</sup> The geographic location of military bases further separates military families from the rest of society. They are often located away from major population centers, which make it unlikely that military members and civilians to cross paths in large numbers. This perpetuates the military's tendency to recruit from rural Southern and Western populations – sometimes

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<sup>158</sup> Robert M. Gates, *Duty*, Knopf, First Edition edition (January 14, 2014).

<sup>159</sup> Paul Taylor et al., *The Military-Civilian Gap: War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era*, Pew Research Center, October 5, 2011.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. Also see: Sabrina Tavernise, "As Fewer Americans Serve, Growing Gap Is Found Between Civilians and Military," *New York Times*, November 24, 2011.

<sup>162</sup> Phillip Carter and David Barno, "How the military isolates itself — and hurts veterans," *Washington Post*, November 8, 2013.

<sup>163</sup> Phillip Carter and David Barno, "How the military isolates itself — and hurts veterans," *Washington Post*, November 8, 2013.

preserving military service as a family heritage – and a conservative political view.<sup>164</sup> General Eikenberry and David Kennedy wrote recently, “In sharp contrast [to the members of Congress], so many officers have sons and daughters serving that they speak, with pride and anxiety, about war as a ‘family business’”<sup>165</sup> The authors suggest that we are in “the makings of a self-perpetuating military caste, sharply segregated from the larger society and with its enlisted ranks disproportionately recruited from the disadvantaged. History suggests that such scenarios don’t end well.”<sup>166</sup> Additionally the military tends to be more conservative, politically and socially, than the America as a whole. According to the Pew study, post-9/11 veterans are more likely to identify with the Republican Party than the public – “36 percent are Republicans compared with 23 percent of the general public.”<sup>167</sup> Veterans and the public are equally Independent at 35 percent and 21 percent of vets and 34 percent of the public are Democrats.<sup>168</sup>

### **Why is the Divide Important?**

The widening civ-mil divide is important for several reasons, especially its affect on service members’ transition back into civilian society and their prospects of finding employment. The unemployment rate amongst the youngest post-9/11 veterans (ages 20-24) is more than twice the national average (17.9 percent, national average is 7.4 percent) and has remained that way for several years.<sup>169</sup> That is because military members don’t understand the civilian workforce and civilians don’t understand the military. Veterans also drop out of college at a higher rate than their peers feeling out of place with their younger peers.<sup>170</sup> A lack of understanding of the military experience over the last twelve years of war makes it tough not only for service members

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Karl W. Eikenberry and David M. Kennedy, “Americans and Their Military, Drifting Apart,” *New York Times*, May 26, 2013.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Paul Taylor et al., *The Military-Civilian Gap: War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era*, Pew Research Center, October 5, 2011.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> “The Employment Situation of Veterans,” Syracuse University’s Institute for Veterans and Military Families, July 2013. This is a monthly figure as opposed to the annual averages seen in Table 1 on pages 97-98.

<sup>170</sup> David Wood, “Veterans’ College Drop-Out Rate Soars,” *Huffington Post*, October 25, 2012.

but for their families as well. 44 percent of post-9/11 veterans say their readjustment to civilian life was difficult; by contrast, just 25 percent of veterans who served in earlier eras say the same.<sup>171</sup> About half (48 percent) of all post-9/11 veterans say they have experienced strains in family relations since leaving the military and 47 percent say they have had frequent outbursts of anger.<sup>172</sup>

Here are a few additional worrisome statistics that if the unemployment situation does not improve will be exacerbated. On any given night there are at least 63,000 homeless veterans, and another 1.4 million veterans are at risk of homelessness.<sup>173</sup> More than 51,000 troops have been physically wounded during both wars and we do not have an adequate understanding of the long-term effects of multiple deployments, posttraumatic stress and/or traumatic brain injury.<sup>174</sup> At least one third of returning soldiers suffer from PTSD or TBI and veteran suicides are averaging 20 per day.<sup>175</sup> These challenges will be amplified in the coming years as approximately one million service members will transition out of the military back into communities. As we downsize, one million will transition out – that is 225,000 per year and about 10,000 per month.

### **Recommendations: How the U.S. Can Reconcile the Civilian-Military Divide**

One highly controversial fix to the widening civ-mil gap would be to bring back the Selective Service. General Eikenberry and David Kennedy recommend a draft lottery that would be activated when volunteer recruitment falls short.<sup>176</sup> If this proposal would have been leveraged at the height of the Iraq war when the Army was overleveraged, their hypothesis is we would have had a very different national debate. Eikenberry and Kennedy suggest a draft lottery be

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<sup>171</sup> Paul Taylor et al., *The Military-Civilian Gap: War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era*, Pew Research Center, October 5, 2011.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, Background and Statistics, [http://nchv.org/index.php/news/media/background\\_and\\_statistics/](http://nchv.org/index.php/news/media/background_and_statistics/).

<sup>174</sup> Hannah Fischer, "U.S. Military Casualty Statistics: Operation New Dawn, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Enduring Freedom," Congressional Research Service, February 5, 2013.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Karl W. Eikenberry and David M. Kennedy, "Americans and Their Military, Drifting Apart," *New York Times*, May 26, 2013.

“weighted to select the best-educated and most highly skilled Americans, providing an incentive for the most privileged among us to pay greater heed to military matters.”<sup>177</sup> They also suggest restoring the Total Force Doctrine, which shaped the early years of the all-volunteer force but was later dismantled.<sup>178</sup> The Total Force Doctrine would require a large-scale call-up of the Reserves and National Guard at the start of any large, long deployment.<sup>179</sup> Research and polling shows that bringing back the draft may not be feasible unless there is a tipping point in the civ-mil gap or if recruitment is at a dangerously low level, which is currently not the case. The recent Pew survey showed that both the public and veterans oppose bringing back the draft: more than eight-in-ten post-9/11 veterans and 74 percent of the public say the U.S. should not return to the draft at this time.”<sup>180</sup> While Dr. Andrew Bacevich does not advocate a return to the draft, he believes that if the American military was a conscription force, there would be more political accountability to the use of military force.<sup>181</sup>

Given that another draft is politically unfeasible, at a minimum, the American public should try to understand the military culture and services. As voters, Americans should elect officials who are consistent with their views about the future of the country, its national security and the role that America should play on the global stage. As Admiral Mullen said, “This is important, because a people uninformed about what they are asking the military to endure is a people inevitably unable to fully grasp the scope of the responsibilities our Constitution levies upon them.”<sup>182</sup> This speaks to the very concerns felt after Vietnam that an ignorant civilian society would elect officials unqualified to make military decisions and whether an isolated military would become hostile to civilian society. Perhaps of all members of civil society,

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Paul Taylor et al., *The Military-Civilian Gap: War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era*, Pew Research Center, October 5, 2011.

<sup>181</sup> Andrew Bacevich, “Whose Army?” *Daedalus* 140:3, Summer 2011, The Modern American Military.

<sup>182</sup> Admiral Mike Mullen, “West Point Graduation Ceremony as Delivered by Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,” (speech, United States Military Academy, West Point, NY, Saturday, May 21, 2011), <http://www.jcs.mil/speech.aspx?id=1598>.

lawmakers have the biggest responsibility to understand the military and their sacrifices. One does not need military experience to understand the military, but more than a basic understanding is necessary to make national security decisions involving the use or threatened use of military forces both in combat and non-combat roles.

Another option for consideration is one by retired General Stanley McChrystal. He suggested that the U.S. create a volunteer corps of one million full-time civilian national-service positions that would complement the active-duty military – and would change the current cultural expectation that service is only the duty of those in uniform.<sup>183</sup> This recommendation has taken hold among senior policymakers in a project at the Aspen Institute called the Franklin Project.<sup>184</sup>

In regards to the fact that civilians rarely come into contact with the military, the military should attempt to be more open to the rest of society as it was before 9/11. They could have open houses and other public events with the local communities. The military should consider its geographic footprint when building the future force and establishing recruiting arms at elite schools and in more liberal population centers. Similar to the counterinsurgency strategy, or population centric warfare waged in Iraq and Afghanistan, the military should put forth a similar integration strategy and approach towards American society. This includes integrating geographically and physically with the public, and building something similar to their counterinsurgency strategies in Iraq and Afghanistan such as forward operating bases in population centers outside of the “green zone” at home.<sup>185</sup> This will help the military diversify culturally as well as geographically. The military could also send children to public schools and eliminate the taxpayer-subsidized commissaries on base.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Stanley McChrystal, “Lincoln’s Call to Service—and Ours,” WSJ, May 29, 2013.

<sup>184</sup> See the Leadership Council of the Franklin Project here: <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/policy-work/franklin-project/leadership-council>.

<sup>185</sup> Phillip Carter and David Barno, “How the military isolates itself — and hurts veterans,” Washington Post, November 8, 2013.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

In regards to the knowledge gap specific to employment, the military should allow and encourage private sector companies to access bases to talk with transitioning military members. Military bases are largely closed off to civilians as a security measure. Additionally, the military cannot show favoritism to any one company so giving companies access to bases is a gray area. The military should also fully integrate the private sector into their new transition assistance program. Each military branch should consider apprenticeship programs for military members before they transition –not just senior officer fellowships, but civilian job training programs for enlisted members too. All of this would require the military services to shift their culture from one of retention to one that recognizes that 80 percent of service members will leave the military before retirement.<sup>187</sup> The military branches, and Army in particular, needs to model its post-transition network after the Marine Corps' Marine for Life Program. In 2013, the Army stood up the first ever Soldier for Life program. But what the Marines do so well is indoctrinate their people from day one: once a Marine, always a Marine. That mantra is carried out when Marines transition out of the Corps as well, which is why Marines have a great post-military network.<sup>188</sup> The Army needs to think through how to change its culture to reflect a similar mindset. The services could also help transitioning military members obtain important civilian certifications before they transition out as well. Another recommendation would be to break up the military's transition assistance program (TAP) into two segments: one before they head home and one a couple months after they've had time to reconnect with their families and start thinking about their future. Many young, primarily enlisted troops, attend TAP because they have to. They do not pay attention to the benefits and are really anticipating just getting out and seeing friends and family. What if in order to fully transition from the military, they had to come back for the second part of TAP. It would force old units to get back into contact – allow them to network with each other after having been separated for a few months – and then perhaps their mindset

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Marine for Life, Connecting Marines with Opportunity, [www.marineforlife.org/](http://www.marineforlife.org/).

will be more likely to listen, learn and adapt for a civilian life. This could get expensive but not as expensive as each military service paying one year of unemployment benefits to service members' and then having society pick up the unemployment tab after they've been out of the workforce for a year and are having a hard time finding a job.

In regards to the increased use and scope of the professional force, it has become a moral hazard, making it easier for presidents to resort to military force.<sup>189</sup> Because the military budget is significantly smaller than in past years and because it is an all volunteer force, the American public isn't holding lawmakers accountable for the use of force primarily because they do not feel the stress of going to war. As the Pew study notes, most Americans recognize the sacrifices of the military but do not think it's unfair because that's the nature of being in the military.<sup>190</sup> Additionally, Congress has not formally declared war since WWII. General Eikenberry and David Kennedy recommend revisiting the 1973 War Powers Act, which requires notification of Congress after the president orders military action, with a mandate that the president consult with Congress before resorting to force.<sup>191</sup> They argue that this would add needed legitimacy to military interventions and further protect the president from scrutiny.<sup>192</sup> It would also bring the use of force back into the public discourse, a needed step to lessen the civ-mil gap.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the civilian military gap is alive and well. The gap has widened and has been exacerbated by 12 years of war.<sup>193</sup> The gap is not at a dangerous level but at an unhealthy level and needs to be addressed. The gap has been recognized by military and civilians alike and much foundational work has been done to address the gap. We are at a turning point in American

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<sup>189</sup> Karl W. Eikenberry and David M. Kennedy, "Americans and Their Military, Drifting Apart," *New York Times*, May 26, 2013. See Barno op-ed as well.

<sup>190</sup> Paul Taylor et al., *The Military-Civilian Gap: War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era*, Pew Research Center, October 5, 2011.

<sup>191</sup> Karl W. Eikenberry and David M. Kennedy, "Americans and Their Military, Drifting Apart," *New York Times*, May 26, 2013.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Chapter Two was written in Fall 2013; at that time, we had been at war for 12 years.

history where the U.S. will draw down from Afghanistan at the end of 2014 and a record one million service members are projected to transition out of the military in the next three years. Now is the time to weave all of the foundational work together – at the national, state and community levels – or risk the possibility that the civ-mil gap will widen, reaching dangerous levels where the military feels as though its contract with society has been broken.

It is also time for civilian policymakers to do some soul searching and offer a clear view of the role of the United States in the world and what instruments of national power should be used to achieve our national interests. Policymakers must ask if American exceptionalism is sustainable, and if so, ensure Congress agrees and is willing to fund a force that meets these expectations and that the American public agrees so as not to further exacerbate the civ-mil gap. A national conversation is due. We owe it to the military families who have sacrificed so much in the last twelve years of grueling war – and to the taxpayers who have born the financial brunt.

## **Chapter Three: Veteran Employment: Progress and Remaining Challenges**

### **Introduction**

The unemployment situation for post-9/11 veterans improved in 2012 and 2013, falling from 12.1 percent in 2011 to 9.9 percent in 2012 and then to 9 percent in 2013.<sup>194</sup> During that time, the public and private sectors mounted hugely visible campaigns to raise awareness about veterans' issues especially as it related to employment. Initiatives such as the White House-led Joining Forces Initiative and corporate America's 100,000 Jobs Mission have organized and diverted vast attention and resources to help veterans find meaningful employment.

The federal government through the leadership of the Obama Administration has played a key role in improving the employment situation of veterans. The President has influenced policy changes through all means possible including executive orders, pushing new legislation through Congress and raising awareness through the bully pulpit. In fact, the President has included veterans' policies in every state of the union address since he was elected.

### **Research Focus and Question**

Chapter One of this thesis identified the key barriers to veteran employment from the view of private sector employers. The five barriers included: a knowledge gap between military and civilian cultures; negatives stigmas associated with veterans' mental health issues; employers' fear of future deployments for newly hired veterans or active service members; challenges finding veteran talent; and perceptions that veterans are not suited for employment. While all of these barriers are certainly challenges, the biggest hurdle was the knowledge gap between military and civilian cultures. That is why Chapter Two of this thesis took a closer look at that knowledge gap and found that the chasm has been exacerbated by 13 years of war. Each audience that plays a role in the veteran employment equation – the federal government, the

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<sup>194</sup> See Table 1 in the Appendix on pages 97-98. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Annual Employment Summary, Current Population Survey.

private sector, the military, civilian society writ large and veterans - has a responsibility to help bridge this widening gap between civilian and military societies.

Chapter Three first provides an overview of the progress made by the private sector in the last several years, including their efforts to “bridge the knowledge gap.” The second section reviews existing federal programs that provide employment-related services to veterans and have positively impacted the unemployment rates. This thesis does not attempt to provide an exhaustive list of all federal programs established to help veterans in the labor market, nor does it attempt to provide comprehensive information about the programs discussed. Instead, it provides an overview of the largest federal employment programs that have made a positive contribution to veteran employment trends in 2012 and 2013. The third section offers an update on the most recent veteran employment trends, which show that while veteran unemployment has improved, the rates are still higher than the national average. Again, the author seeks to answer why unemployment rates remain high despite all of the progress. The fourth section of Chapter Three will evaluate new theories to try to find an answer to this question. New theories include: a link between longer deployments and the unemployment rate; gender, age and service-connected disabilities as factors; skills and education gap among veterans; and the failure of the transition process out of military service. Several new data sources are used including statistical analysis featured in *Economic Perspectives* magazine in 2013 that evaluates the correlation between deployments and unemployment.<sup>195</sup> Chapter three also draws on data from three surveys of military veterans: a Pew Research Center survey of a nationally representative sample of 1,853 veterans conducted in 2011, the Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey (CPS) from 2006 to 2014 and a recent survey by the Washington Post and the Kaiser Family Foundation. Finally, it offers policy recommendations to help remedy the unemployment situation of post-9/11 veterans.

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<sup>195</sup> Jason Faberman and Taft Foster, Unemployment Among Recent Veterans During the Great Recession, (February 22, 2013). *Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 2013. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2385972>

## Private Sector Progress: Breaking Down Barriers to Employment

The U.S. economy is showing signs of recovery, including a reduction in overall unemployment to 6.7 percent.<sup>196</sup> The private and public sectors have contributed positively to the improvement in veteran hiring policies and practices across the country. The private sector alone has created 8.5 million jobs over the last two years and witnessed a surge in the number of companies committed to hiring veterans.<sup>197</sup> Progress made towards those commitments prove that some of the private sector's earlier concerns about veterans as discussed in Chapter One, could be fading into the background as stigmas about veterans are put to rest.

One of the largest private sector coalitions committed to hiring veterans is the "100,000 Jobs Mission." The 100,000 Jobs Mission launched in 2011 with eleven companies and a commitment to hire 100,000 veterans by 2020.<sup>198</sup> By the end of 2012, the coalition had grown to 92 companies and hired more than 51,000 veterans.<sup>199</sup> One year later, the coalition, including 131 companies, had hired more than 117,000 veterans, reaching their goal seven years early.<sup>200</sup> With tremendous success in the veteran employment space, the 100,000 Jobs Mission doubled down on the original hiring commitment and pledged to hire to 200,000 veterans.<sup>201</sup> As of March 2014, the coalition had grown to 143 companies spanning almost every sector and geography in the American economy. Another example is the White House's Joining Forces program, a public-private partnership focused on veteran and military spouse employment. The Joining Forces Program is run out of the office of the First Lady and in partnership with the Administration. In

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<sup>196</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment Situation of Veterans: 2013," Released March 24, 2014, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/vet.pdf>.

<sup>197</sup> Pellerin, Cheryl, "First Lady: 100 Companies to Hire 100,000 Vets Over 5 Years," American Forces Press Service, February 10, 2014. <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=121636>

<sup>198</sup> JPMorgan Chase Announces 10 Initial Corporate Partners for Its 100,000 Jobs Mission, March 9, 2011, <https://www.veteranjobsmission.com/press-releases/47>.

<sup>199</sup> 100,000 Jobs Mission Hires More than 51,000 U.S. Veterans in Two Years, January 23, 2013, <https://www.veteranjobsmission.com/press-releases/42>

<sup>200</sup> 100,000 Jobs Mission Reaches Goal Seven Years Early; Companies Hire 117,439 U.S. Military Veterans, January 27, 2014, <https://www.veteranjobsmission.com/press-releases/561>.

<sup>201</sup> 100,000 Jobs Mission Doubles Its Commitment to Hire Veterans, November 7, 2013, <https://www.veteranjobsmission.com/press-releases/511>.

August 2011, President Obama challenged the private sector to hire or train 100,000 veterans and military spouses by 2013. One year later, the First Lady announced that American businesses had already hired or trained 125,000 veterans and military spouses, and committed to hiring or training 250,000 more by the end of 2014.<sup>202</sup> The following spring in April 2013, Joining Forces announced they had hired or trained 290,000 veterans or military spouses, with an additional commitment of 435,000 veterans or military spouses hired or trained by the end of 2018.<sup>203</sup> Additionally in February 2014, Joining Forces partnered with a consortium of construction companies to hire 100,000 veterans in five years (starting in 2014).<sup>204</sup>

Many other companies have committed to hire veterans. For example, retail-giant Wal-Mart announced in January 2013 that it would hire any veteran that had transitioned out of the military in the last year with an honorable discharge.<sup>205</sup> Wal-Mart could not promise full-time jobs in each case, but the commitment was still substantial given Wal-Mart's retail presence across America. In April 2013, private equity firm Blackstone committed to hire 50,000 veterans across its 80 company portfolio in five years.<sup>206</sup> In November 2013, Starbucks committed to hire 10,000 veterans in their retail stores in five years.<sup>207</sup> The International Franchise Association (IFA) and its 1,200 affiliate companies committed to hire 80,000 veterans and military spouses through 2014.<sup>208</sup> According to IFA, since 1991, over 64,000 veterans, military spouses and

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<sup>202</sup> The White House, Office of the First Lady, "President Obama, Vice President Biden, First Lady Michelle Obama, and Dr. Jill Biden Announce that Since President Obama's Challenge in August 2011, American Businesses Have Hired or Trained 290,000 Veterans and Military Spouses," April 30, 2013, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/04/30/president-obama-vice-president-biden-first-lady-michelle-obama-and-dr-jj>.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Pellerin, Cheryl, "First Lady: 100 Companies to Hire 100,000 Vets Over 5 Years," American Forces Press Service, February 10, 2014. <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=121636>

<sup>205</sup> James Dao, "Wal-Mart Plans to Hire Any Veteran Who Wants a Job," The New York Times, January 14, 2013.

<sup>206</sup> "Blackstone Hosts Inaugural Veterans Hiring Summit," Blackstone, September 23, 2013, <http://www.blackstone.com/news-views/press-releases/details/blackstone-hosts-inaugural-veterans-hiring-summit>. Some of Blackstone's better-known companies include Hilton, Sea World, The Weather Channel, La Quinta, Extended Stay, Michaels Stores, Nielsen and Allied Barton.

<sup>207</sup> Starbucks Looks to Hire 10K Vets, Military Spouses, Reuters, November 6, 2013, <http://nypost.com/2013/11/06/starbucks-looks-to-hire-10k-vets-military-spouses/>

<sup>208</sup> The White House, Office of the First Lady, "President Obama, Vice President Biden, First Lady Michelle Obama, and Dr. Jill Biden Announce that Since President Obama's Challenge in August 2011, American Businesses Have Hired or Trained 290,000 Veterans and Military Spouses," April 30, 2013, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/04/30/president-obama-vice-president-biden-first-lady-michelle-obama-and-dr-jj>.

wounded warriors have started careers in franchising, including 4,314 who have become veteran franchise business owners since 2011.<sup>209</sup> UPS made a commitment to hire more than 25,000 veterans over the next five years (starting in 2013).<sup>210</sup> And finally, Disney committed to hiring 2,000 veterans by 2015.<sup>211</sup>

Given the degree to which the business community has committed to hire veterans, one could deduce that employers are more comfortable hiring veterans and less concerned with veterans' mental health issues, costs and uncertainty associated with future deployments and veteran suitability for employment as highlighted in Chapter One. In fact, many of the aforementioned private sector companies have become very sophisticated in their efforts to hire military veterans with a particular focus on bridging the gap between civilian and military cultures, the number one barrier to veteran employment. The firms comprising the 100,000 Jobs Mission began publishing best practices to inform other employers on the successes made in the veteran hiring space. For example, one founding members of the 100,000 Jobs Mission, JPMorgan Chase, published a training guide about the U.S. military to bridge the knowledge gap between military and civilian cultures. Developed first as an internal training tool, the guide, "Military 101," explains each branch of the military, what training service members receive throughout their military career and many other helpful facts about the military experience and culture.<sup>212</sup> This best practice has been shared with the entire set of companies in the 100,000 Jobs Mission.<sup>213</sup> Many companies have adopted Military 101, amending and adding to it to better fit their own unique corporate cultures. AT&T, for example, added a section called "myth busters,"

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<sup>209</sup> The White House, Office of the First Lady, "President Obama, Vice President Biden, First Lady Michelle Obama, and Dr. Jill Biden Announce that Since President Obama's Challenge in August 2011, American Businesses Have Hired or Trained 290,000 Veterans and Military Spouses," April 30, 2013, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/04/30/president-obama-vice-president-biden-first-lady-michelle-obama-and-dr-ji>.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Disney Offers Free 'Veterans Institute' Workshop To Encourage And Support Hiring Of Military Veterans, Business Wire, September 10, 2013, <http://www.thestreet.com/story/12032513/1/disney-offers-free-8216veterans-institute8217-workshop-to-encourage-and-support-hiring-of-military-veterans.html>.

<sup>212</sup> Military 101: Introduction to Hiring Military Candidates, JPMorgan Chase, <https://www.veteranjobsmission.com/groups/military-101-introduction-hiring-military-candidates>.

<sup>213</sup> At the time of this writing, there are 143 companies in the 100,000 Jobs Mission.

which shares facts and information about post-traumatic stress disorder to de-mystify and breakdown negative stereotypes.<sup>214</sup> Another leading practice published by the 100,000 Jobs Mission titled, “A Guide for Employers: Where to Find Military Talent,” offers the best tools employers use to recruit military-experienced job candidates, again breaking down a key barrier found during research for chapter one of this thesis.<sup>215</sup> In 2013, Disney hosted a daylong “Veterans Institute” for 400 small and medium-sized companies to discuss and learn from best veteran hiring practices.<sup>216</sup> Disney also published leading practices associated with its “Heroes Work Here” initiative.<sup>217</sup> General Electric launched a coalition of manufacturing companies, educators and non-profits to help bridge the skills gap in advanced manufacturing jobs, a subset of the U.S. economy with close to 600,000 job openings.<sup>218</sup> GE also launched the U.S. manufacturing pipeline, which enables veterans to match skills to open manufacturing jobs, to identify any gaps that may exist and, if there are gaps, to partner schools across the nation that offer accelerated training in manufacturing skills.<sup>219</sup>

After aggregating all of these commitments, the private sector has committed to hire and train nearly 1 million veterans. In real numbers, the number of all unemployed veterans is 722,000 and the number of unemployed post-9/11 veterans is 205,000. Keep in mind, however, that one million more service members will be transitioning out in the next few years.

### **Federal Government Progress: Breaking Down Barriers to Employment**

The federal government has also made meaningful advances transforming policies and practices to better address the lives of veterans. The Obama Administration has made supporting

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<sup>214</sup> Author’s personal knowledge.

<sup>215</sup> A Guide for Employers: Where to Find Military Talent, 100,000 Jobs Mission, <https://www.veteranjobsmission.com/knowledge-exchange/guide-employers-where-find-military-talent-1>.

<sup>216</sup> Disney Offers Free ‘Veterans Institute’ Workshop To Encourage And Support Hiring Of Military Veterans, Business Wire, September 10, 2013, <http://www.thestreet.com/story/12032513/1/disney-offers-free-8216veterans-institute8217-workshop-to-encourage-and-support-hiring-of-military-veterans.html>.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Get Skills to Work, About, <http://www.getskillstowork.org/>

<sup>219</sup> Get Skills to Work, About, <http://www.getskillstowork.org/>

service members a key element of its domestic policy agenda by focusing on reducing the rates of unemployment, suicide and homelessness among veterans. The White House has succeeded by implementing executive orders, pushing Congress to adopt new legislation and using the bully pulpit to raise awareness. The First Lady has also played a key role through the Joining Forces initiative. President Obama has mentioned his Administration's focus on veterans issues in every State of the Union address since January 2009. His top-down leadership and support of the veteran community have paved the way for widespread national action on veterans issues.

President Obama's White House made veterans issues a domestic policy priority from the start. In November 2009, President Obama Executive Order 35463 which outlined six key areas to drive the federal government's prioritization of veteran hiring.<sup>220</sup> The first section describes how the new administration is to enhance the employment of veterans within the executive branch. Second, it required the creation of a high-level council on veteran employment led by the Secretaries of Labor and Veterans Affairs. Third, the Executive Order mandated that each agency represented on the council create an agency-specific operating plan on hiring veterans. Fourth, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) was directed to develop a government-wide recruiting and employment plan to be updated at least every three years. The fifth section outlined the responsibilities of the Secretaries of Defense, Labor, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security including by aligning veteran talent to federal jobs in their respective agencies, reinforcing the military's commitment to service members' transition process and providing training to the federal workforce about hiring veterans. While the federal government has prioritized hiring veterans dating back to the Civil War, this was an early and very helpful step in the right direction. Executive Order 35463 was effective because it elevated awareness about the unemployment situation of veterans, made senior cabinet members responsible for hiring veterans at their respective agencies and showed the private sector that the federal government could lead

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<sup>220</sup> The White House, "Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government," November 9, 2009, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/executive-order-veterans-employment-initiative>.

by example. The results have been encouraging as well. In 2013, about 28 percent of employed post-9/11 vets hold public-sector jobs, compared to 14 percent of employed civilians.<sup>221</sup>

In April 2011, President Obama, Vice President Biden, First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden launched the Joining Forces Initiative with the goal to bring together the veteran community and build partnerships across government, the private sector and the non-profit community. Since the founding of Joining Forces, more than 2,000 companies in the United States have committed to hiring and training veterans and military spouses.<sup>222</sup> The success of the initiative is widely attributed to top down efforts stemming from the White House. Driving this effort, the President and First Lady have addressed top CEO's at quarterly business roundtable meetings as well as through meetings at the White House and across the country. To date, companies under the Joining Forces umbrella have hired or trained 290,000 veterans and military spouses and committed to hire or train another 435,000 veterans and military spouses in five years (starting in 2013).<sup>223</sup>

Another key policy change driven by the President was his mandate to revamp the military's Transition Assistance Program (TAP). TAP was established 22 years ago to meet the needs of separating service members by offering job-search assistance and related services. In an August 2011 speech, President Obama spoke about the importance of spending more time preparing service members to transition out of the military.<sup>224</sup> He said, "The problem is that right now, we spend months preparing our men and women for life in the military, but we spend much less time preparing them for life after they get out. So we'll devote more time on the back end to help our veterans learn about everything from benefits to how they can translate their military

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<sup>221</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment Situation of Veterans: 2013," Released March 24, 2014, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/vet.pdf>.

<sup>222</sup> The White House, Issues, Veterans, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/veterans>.

<sup>223</sup> Kevin Freking, "White House Says Jobs Program has Exceeded Goal," Associated Press, April 30, 2013, <http://news.yahoo.com/white-house-says-jobs-program-exceeded-goal-185633296.html>.

<sup>224</sup> The White House, "Remarks by the President on the Administration's Work to Prepare our Nation's Veterans for the Workforce," August 5, 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/08/05/remarks-president-administrations-work-prepare-our-nations-veterans-work>.

training into an industry-accepted credential.”<sup>225</sup> Shortly thereafter the President rolled out the new initiative, “Transition Goals, Plans Success” or ” Transition GPS.” Developed by the Departments of Defense in collaboration with the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Labor, Education and Homeland Security, the new program is supposed to accomplish several tasks. First, it offers individual counseling to help service members’ define their post-military path; second, it eliminates the Department of Labor’s 140 slide power point briefing; third, it establishes three different specialized tracks (employment, entrepreneurship and/or education); and fourth it extends the program from three days to five days. Congress also got involved and passed a law mandating that all service members enroll in Transition GPS before separation whereas before it was optional.

Additionally, President Obama directed each service secretary to incorporate transition planning into the service member’s entire career – shifting the culture of the military from one of retention to one with a transition mindset.<sup>226</sup> President Obama asked them to think about the military as a stepping-stone in one’s career as opposed to an end point. As noted in Chapter One, the Army has given guidance but unfortunately shifting this massive bureaucracy’s culture will take time.

## **Congress**

Congress has offered consistent bi-partisan support focused on improving the post-service lives of veterans. In 2008, Congress passed the most generous education benefit in history, the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 also known as the Post-9/11 GI Bill.<sup>227</sup> This law provides education benefits to veterans and service members who served on

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<sup>225</sup> The White House, “Remarks by the President on the Administration’s Work to Prepare our Nation’s Veterans for the Workforce,” August 5, 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/08/05/remarks-president-administrations-work-prepare-our-nations-veterans-work>.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, History and Timeline, <http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/history.asp>.

active duty after September 11, 2011 including payment of a veterans' entire in-state tuition.<sup>228</sup>

The Post-9/11 GI Bill provides a monthly housing stipend along with a stipend for books and other materials. Eligible service members who serve at least 10 years may transfer all 36 months or the portion of unused Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to a dependent (i.e. spouse or child).<sup>229</sup> The Bill also offers up to \$2,000 for licensing and certification tests.

One of the biggest and most impactful pieces of legislation that the Obama Administration and Congress cooperated on was the "Vow to Hire Heroes Act," signed into law in November 2011 at the height of the veteran unemployment crisis.<sup>230</sup> The Act is comprised of five main components. First, it provides nearly 100,000 older veterans, ages 35-60, who served prior to 9/11 with up to one year of additional Montgomery GI Bill benefits to qualify for jobs in high-demand sectors such as trucking and technology.<sup>231</sup> With an estimated budget of \$1.1 billion, the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP), offers 12 months of education benefits for older veterans who are not eligible for any GI Bill or another VA education program. Second, the bill authorized the aforementioned enhancements to the transition assistance program. Third, it allows veterans to obtain veterans preference status for civil service jobs prior to separation in order to reduce the amount of time required to start a federal job after separation. Fourth, the bill requires the Department of Labor to develop new ways to translate military skills and training into civilian jobs and to ease the burden for service members to get comparable licenses and certifications needed to pursue similar occupations in civilian life. For example, combat medics, truck drivers, project managers and human resource professionals require civilian certifications that are not administered during military service. Because of the similar nature of

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<sup>228</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, History and Timeline, <http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/history.asp>.

<sup>229</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Transfer Post-9/11 GI Bill to Spouse and Dependents, [http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/post911\\_transfer.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/post911_transfer.asp).

<sup>230</sup> U.S. House Committee on Veterans Affairs, "VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011," <https://veterans.house.gov/vow>.

<sup>231</sup> This benefit dubbed the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) offers 12 months of education benefits for older unemployed veterans between the ages of 35 to 60 that don't qualify for other education benefits. The post-9/11 GI Bill, passed in 2008, is much more generous benefit covering the full tuition at state schools, providing a housing stipend and subsidies for books and other expenses.

these job functions both in and out of the military, the law aims to grant civilian credentials for military expertise. Lastly, the VOW to Hire Heroes Act provides tax credits to businesses that hire veterans as an incentive, though this benefit has since lapsed and new legislation was not passed because not many employers were taking advantage of the credit.

In July 2012, Congress advanced the fourth piece of the Vow to Hire Heroes Act in a separate bill that mandated federal agencies to accept military training as sufficient to satisfy training or certification requirements for federal licenses and certifications under reasonable circumstances. Today the Veterans Skills to Jobs Act helps to reduce redundancies in licensure and certification procedures for service members transitioning from a military to civilian career.<sup>232</sup> Unfortunately, the law does not affect professional licenses issued by states and counties. Several states have addressed the transferability issues between military training and civilian licensure, but much work remains to be done. The Obama Administration through the Joining Force Initiative is working with states to streamline licensing both for transitioning military as well as their spouses who face unique challenges because of frequent moves.<sup>233</sup> President Obama called on the Department of Defense to create a Military Credentialing and Licensing Task Force, which has helped push 34 states to pass laws waiving driving tests for veterans with a record of safely operating vehicles similar to the trucks and buses for which a commercial driving license is required.<sup>234</sup> The Task Force continues to work with states to streamline licensing for service members and veterans, specifically targeting the occupations of bus and truck drivers, emergency medical technicians, paramedics and licensed practical nurses.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Congressional Budget Office, “S. 2239, Veterans Skills to Jobs Act,” July 5, 2012. Also see: The White House, “The Fast Track to Civilian Employment,” February 2013.

<sup>233</sup> The White House, “The Fast Track to Civilian Employment,” February 2013, [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/military\\_credentiaing\\_and\\_licensing\\_report\\_2-24-2013\\_final.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/military_credentiaing_and_licensing_report_2-24-2013_final.pdf).

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

## Department of Labor

The Department of Labor (DOL) plays a unique role in the area of veteran employment. As a federal agency, it makes policy, enforces policy and also provides direct programs and services to veterans. One key role DOL plays as a policy enforcer is to administer the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). USERRA protects the employment rights of service members who must temporarily leave their civilian job for military service.<sup>236</sup> Employers are required by law to hold a service member's job and to reemploy them upon return. USERRA covers all employers regardless of size and all employees regardless of full or part-time status. USERRA also protects service members against discrimination by employers as it relates to their military status. Just as veteran unemployment reached its peak in 2011, so too did the number of USERRA complaints (1,548 new complaints) filed that year. The number of complaints declined slightly in FY2012 to 1,466.<sup>237</sup>

Another law enforced by DOL's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) is the Vietnam Era Veteran Readjustment Assistance Act (VEVRAA) of 1974.<sup>238</sup> This law requires employers doing business with the federal government to provide equal opportunity to recruit, hire and promote veterans, including disabled veterans and recently separated veterans.<sup>239</sup> In August 2013, OFCCP announced new provisions to VEVRAA, dubbed "the Final Rule," including a benchmark of hiring veterans at 8 percent of its total workforce.<sup>240</sup> The Final Rule also called for companies to invite employees to self-identify as veterans and to track data about veteran employees. The Final Rule goes into effect on March 24, 2014.

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<sup>236</sup> United States Department of Labor, Veterans' Reemployment Rights, <http://www.dol.gov/topic/termination/veterans.htm>.

<sup>237</sup> United States Department of Labor, Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) Information, <http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/userra/>.

<sup>238</sup> United States Department of Labor, The Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act (VEVRAA), <http://www.dol.gov/compliance/laws/comp-vevraa.htm>.

<sup>239</sup> United States Department of Labor, Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP), Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act (VEVRAA) of 1974, <http://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/fsvevraa.htm>.

<sup>240</sup> Jay-Anne B. Casuga, "OFCCP Announces 'Historic' Final Rules On Contractor Hiring of Veterans, Disabled," Bloomberg, August 30, 2013, <http://www.bna.com/ofccp-announces-historic-n17179876631/>.

The Department of Labor also provides direct programs and services to veterans in the area of employment and training through its Office of Veteran Employment and Training Service (VETS). DOL VETS offers job training and counseling, employment placement programs and job training programs. Together, the DOL and Department of Veterans Affairs administer the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) as authorized in the Vow to Hire Heroes Act. As of March 10, 2014, the VA processed more than 143,000 VRAP applications and of the 126,000 approved applicants, more than 74,000 have enrolled in a training program.<sup>241</sup> The revised TAP program is administered by DOL VETS in partnership with the Departments of Defense, Veteran Affairs and Homeland Security. The Department of Labor also runs 3,000 career centers across America known as “American Job Centers.” These job centers help job seekers assess their skills, provide assistance with unemployment benefits, provide assistance searching for jobs and offer career counseling and information about education and training.<sup>242</sup> When veteran unemployment peaked in November 2011, President Obama issued an executive order establishing a new resource for post-9/11 veterans called the “Veteran Gold Card.” This resource provides personalized case management at American Job Centers, explanation of GI Bill benefits as well as faster access to government resources. As of July 2012, 133,000 veterans had signed up to use this benefit and about 43 percent of them received staff assisted or “intensive services.”<sup>243</sup> With a target to help at least 200,000 post-9/11 veterans, the program is well on its way to achieving its goal. As part of Executive Order 68786, President Obama announced the launch of DOL’s online platform “My Next Move for Veterans.” The tool that was designed to

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<sup>241</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, “Veterans Opportunity to Work, Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP),” <http://benefits.va.gov/VOW/education.asp>.

<sup>242</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, “American Job Centers,” Benefits.gov, <http://www.benefits.gov/benefits/benefit-details/87>.

<sup>243</sup> Joel H. Delofsky, VETS’ Office of National Programs, Presentation at the America’s Job Link Alliance Annual Conference from July 26-27, 2012, titled “Tracking and Reporting Veterans’ Programs and Initiatives.”

help veterans find civilian jobs that match their military occupation.<sup>244</sup> The site also provides helpful information related to apprenticeships by state, local and other employment resources.

### **Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs**

The Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs partner with other key federal agencies to deliver on different pieces of the employment spectrum for veterans. For example, DOD, DOL and VA partnered on the “National Resource Directory,” an online portal for veterans, wounded veterans, caregivers and their families. The National Resource Directory is the home of the Veterans Jobs Bank and the DOL’s Gold Card as well as a central location for other helpful information on benefits and compensation, education and training, employment, family and caregiver support, health, homelessness assistance, housing and volunteer opportunities.<sup>245</sup> It is the first and only online tool that lists the programs and services for veterans linked to these three key federal agencies.

DOD, VA, DOL and DHS also partnered to deliver the revamped TAP program, Transition GPS. TAP provides pre-separation services and counseling to service members separating from the military. DOD rolled out a pilot program of the new Transition GPS at seven military bases in 2012. The “core” curriculum was implemented in November 2012 and the substantive tracks are to be fully implemented by March 2014.<sup>246</sup>

National Guard and Reserve forces make up nearly 50 percent of our military strength.<sup>247</sup> DOD and DOL share the responsibility for promoting a clear understanding of USERRA to employers. DOD is the home of the office of the “Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve”

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<sup>244</sup> The White House, We Can't Wait: Obama Administration Announces New Initiatives to Get Veterans Back to Work,” November 7, 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/07/we-cant-wait-obama-administration-announces-new-initiatives-get-veterans>.

<sup>245</sup> National Resource Directory, <https://www.nrd.gov>.

<sup>246</sup> Benjamin Collins, et al, “Employment for Veterans: Trends and Programs,” Congressional Research Service, February 20, 2014, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R42790.pdf>.

<sup>247</sup> U.S. Department of Labor Office of the Assistant Secretary for Veterans’ Employment and Training, “USERRA FY 2012 Annual Report to Congress,” December 2013, <http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/userra/2012USERRAReport.pdf>.

(ESGR), an operational committee whose mission is “to gain and maintain employer support for Guard and Reserve service by advocating relevant initiatives, recognizing outstanding support, increasing awareness of the law and resolving conflict between employers and service members.”<sup>248</sup> Ongoing military operations and humanitarian missions make civilian employers’ support of citizen soldiers critical to our national defense. Today, more than 4,900 ESGR volunteers serve across the nation in all 50 states, U.S. territories and the District of Columbia.<sup>249</sup> In FY 2012, ESGR volunteers briefed over 161,440 employers and 482,916 service members, informing both groups about the rights protected under USERRA.<sup>250</sup> One outreach program has employers sign an ESGR statement of support showing employer commitment to USERRA and Guard/Reservist employees. In FY 2012, 54,889 employers signed the statement, up from 45,140 in FY 2011. This signals a heightened awareness among employers about USERRA and “bridging the knowledge gap” as defined in Chapter One.<sup>251</sup>

In June 2012, the Department of Defense established a Military Credentialing and Licensing Task Force. The Task Force was charged with identifying military specialties that readily transfer into civilian jobs; working with civilian credentialing and licensing associations to address gaps between military training programs and certification and licensing requirements and providing service members and veterans with greater access to certification exams.<sup>252</sup> The Task Force focused on industries short on skilled workers such as manufacturing, information technology, health care, transportation and logistics. The Task Force has made positive changes, with the help of the Administration’s Joining Forces Initiative, by launching public-private

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<sup>248</sup> U.S. Department of Labor Office of the Assistant Secretary for Veterans’ Employment and Training, “USERRA FY 2012 Annual Report to Congress,” December 2013, <http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/userra/2012USERRAReport.pdf>.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> U.S. Department of Labor Office of the Assistant Secretary for Veterans’ Employment and Training, “USERRA FY 2011 Annual Report to Congress,” July 2012, <http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/userra/2011USERRAReport.pdf>.

<sup>252</sup> The White House, Fact Sheet: Administration Partners with Industry to Get Service Members Credentialed for High-Demand Jobs, April 29, 2013, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/04/29/fact-sheet-administration-partners-industry-get-service-members-credenti>.

partnerships with IT and manufacturing companies and states to streamline licensing and certifications across state lines.<sup>253</sup>

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) plays a key role in the transition assistance program and the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program among others. The VA also is the lead administrator of GI Bill benefits for veterans. The majority of veterans who utilize education benefits do so under the Post-9/11 GI Bill or the Montgomery GI Bill.<sup>254</sup> In 2013, Congress allocated \$10.4 billion for GI Bill benefits.<sup>255</sup> Since the adoption of the post-9/11 GI Bill in 2008, the number of veterans enrolled has increased each year as the program gained traction among veterans. In FY2009, more than 34,000 enrolled, a number that grew to 365,640 in FY 2010, 555,329 in FY 2011 and 646,302 in FY 2012.<sup>256</sup> However until recently, there has been no way to measure the efficacy of the program because of an absence of public data on veterans' graduation rates. Last year, Student Veterans of America, the VA and the National Student Clearinghouse teamed up to mine the data on degree attainment for veterans who have used the Montgomery GI Bill and the post-9/11 GI Bill.<sup>257</sup> While preliminary, the coalition found that 51.7 percent of veterans have received a postsecondary degree or certificate and between 20-35 percent went on to obtain more advanced degrees.<sup>258</sup>

### **Small Business Administration**

The Small Business Administration (SBA) has a number of programs to help veterans start and manage a small business including financing and technical assistance.<sup>259</sup> SBA also helps veteran-

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<sup>253</sup> The White House, Fact Sheet: Administration Partners with Industry to Get Service Members Credentialed for High-Demand Jobs, April 29, 2013, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/04/29/fact-sheet-administration-partners-industry-get-service-members-credenti>.

<sup>254</sup> Benjamin Collins, et al, "Employment for Veterans: Trends and Programs," Congressional Research Service, February 20, 2014, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R42790.pdf>.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, Annual Benefits Reports, 2000 to 2012, <http://www.vba.va.gov/REPORTS/abr/>.

<sup>257</sup> Student Veterans of America, "SVA Releases Findings from the Million Records Project," March 24, 2014.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> U.S. Small Business Administration, Veteran-Owned Businesses, <http://www.sba.gov/content/veteran-service-disabled-veteran-owned>.

owned businesses obtain federal contracts and provides additional training as part of the new TAP program's "entrepreneurship" track. In partnership with Syracuse University, SBA launched "Boots to Business," which is the "starting a business" track as part of the new Transition Assistance Program.<sup>260</sup> FY2013 funding by the SBA includes \$2.5 million for Veterans' Business Outreach Centers and \$7 million for "Boots to Business."<sup>261</sup>

### **With All of This Progress, Why is Post-9/11 Veteran Employment Still so High?**

While veteran unemployment decreased last year, falling to 9.0 percent from 9.9 percent, it still remains about 1.6 points higher than the national average.<sup>262</sup> The public, private and non-profit sectors have directed vast resources towards improving veteran programs over the last seven years. Why then has the unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans remained stubbornly higher than the national average since 2006? Based on the author's research, several theories are identified. First, gender, age and service-connected disabilities could be factors. Second, a skills and education gap among veterans could play a role as well. Third, there could be a direct link between deployment time and high unemployment. Lastly, despite the improvements in government and military policies and practices related to separation, the transition process out of military service and into civilian life is still failing.

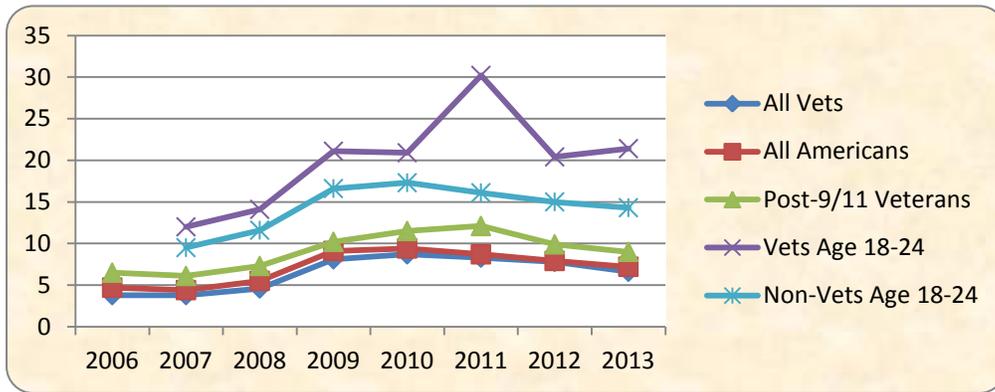
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<sup>260</sup> U.S. Small Business Administration, Operation Boots to Business: From Service to Startup, <http://www.sba.gov/bootstobusiness>.

<sup>261</sup> Benjamin Collins, et al, "Employment for Veterans: Trends and Programs," Congressional Research Service, February 20, 2014, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R42790.pdf>.

<sup>262</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment Situation of Veterans: 2013," Released March 24, 2014, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/vet.pdf>.

**Figure 2: Veteran and Civilian Unemployment Situation 2006-2013**



*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey*

### Service Connected Disabilities

In 2011, the Pew Research Center conducted a survey to capture the state of the veteran population in America. The survey used a nationally representative sample of 1,853 men and women veterans including 1,134 who were discharged prior to Sept. 11, 2001, and 712 veterans discharge after 9/11.<sup>263</sup> Included in the Pew survey were 227 veterans who were seriously injured while in the military. The survey found that veterans who suffered major service-related injuries are more than twice as likely as their peers to have serious difficulty readjusting to civilian life and that same group is almost three times as likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder.<sup>264</sup> The survey also found that that same group is less likely to hold full-time jobs later in life, a fact that is not distinguished between post-9/11 veterans and veterans of different eras.<sup>265</sup>

Interestingly, the Bureau of Labor Statistic’s Current Population Survey (CPS) tells a different story. The CPS is a monthly sample survey of 60,000 households in the United States.

<sup>263</sup> Rich Morin, “For Many Injured Veterans, A Lifetime of Consequences,” Pew Research Social & Demographic Trends, November 8, 2011, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/11/08/for-many-injured-veterans-a-lifetime-of-consequences/>.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

In August 2013, a supplement to the CPS collected additional information about veterans with service-connected disabilities.<sup>266</sup> The survey found that nearly 3 in 10 post-9/11 veterans reported having a service-connected disability, amounting to 827,000 people.<sup>267</sup> Of this group, 70.5 percent were in the labor force in August 2013, which is lower than the labor force participation rate of 85.4 percent for veterans from this period without a service-connected disability.<sup>268</sup> The unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans with a disability was 8.6 percent, which is lower than the unemployment rate for those with no disability at 9 percent in 2013.<sup>269</sup> The survey also found that one in three employed veterans with a service-connected disability work in the public sector as compared to one in five who work in the public sector without a service-connected disability.<sup>270</sup>

While the labor participation rate of disabled veterans is lower than their peers without a disability, the federal government employment programs for disabled veterans appear to be helping. In addition to one-third of veterans with service-connected disabilities working in the public sector, their overall unemployment rate is lower than their peers. Therefore, veterans with service-connected disabilities are not playing a statistically significant role in the high unemployment rates among the post-9/11 veteran population.

### **Age, Gender and Race**

About 2.8 million of the nation's veterans served during the Gulf War II era – or after September 11, 2001.<sup>271</sup> About 20 percent of post-9/11 veterans are women, compared with 4 percent of veterans from previous eras. The unemployment rate for post-9/11 women veterans (9.6 percent) was higher than nonveterans (6.8 percent) and higher than their male-veteran peers

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<sup>266</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment Situation of Veterans: 2013," Released March 24, 2014, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/vet.pdf>.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

<sup>271</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment Situation of Veterans: 2013," Released March 24, 2014, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/vet.pdf>.

(8.8 percent) in 2013.<sup>272</sup> Looking at Table 1, post-9/11 women veterans have had consistently higher unemployment rates than their male counterparts, their women-civilian counterparts and all Americans since 2006.<sup>273</sup> The unemployment rates differed by age. Female Gulf War-era II veterans ages 18 to 24 had a higher unemployment rate than male civilians of the same age group (14.3 percent and 12.8 percent, respectively). For those ages 25 to 34, female veterans also had a higher rate than female civilians (10.8 percent and 7.2 percent, respectively).<sup>274</sup> For women 35 and older, unemployment rates were also higher for veterans in comparison with non-veterans.<sup>275</sup>

The unemployment rate for male post-9/11 veterans (8.8 percent) was higher than that for male nonveterans (7.5 percent) in 2013.<sup>276</sup> Male Gulf War-era II veterans ages 18 to 24 had a higher unemployment rate than male civilians of the same age group (24.3 percent and 15.8 percent, respectively). For those ages 25 to 34, male veterans also had a higher rate than male civilians (9.2 percent and 7.5 percent, respectively). For men 35 and older, unemployment rates were not different for post-9/11 veterans and nonveterans.

After distilling this data into absolute numbers, the unemployment picture for post-9/11 veterans becomes even more revealing. The number of unemployed post-9/11 veterans in 2013 was 205,000. Of that number, 34,000 post-9/11 veterans age 18-24 were unemployed; 113,000 veterans age 25-34 were unemployed; and 57,000 veterans over 35 were unemployed.<sup>277</sup> The media focuses heavily on the unemployment rates of the youngest veteran population, but in real terms, older veterans are facing more difficulty finding employment than their younger peers.

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<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> See Table 1 in the Appendix on pages 97-98. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Annual Employment Summary, Current Population Survey.

<sup>274</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment Situation of Veterans: 2013," Released March 24, 2014, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/vet.pdf>.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

The unemployment situation for post-9/11 veterans by race doesn't exhibit any remarkable trends. The unemployment rates among white (9.0 percent), African American (9.0 percent), Asian (9.7 percent) and Latino (10.3) are not statistically significantly.

In conclusion, the findings show that women post-9/11 veterans are unemployed at higher rates than their male veteran counterparts as well as their civilian peers. The findings also reveal that older veterans are facing more difficulty finding employment than their younger veteran peers. Lastly, investigating the unemployment situation of post-9/11 veterans by race does not show any meaningful trends.

### **Education Gap**

There are only 2,000 unemployed post-9/11 veterans who have an education status of less than a high school education. In other words, less than 1 percent of unemployed post-9/11 veterans have less than a high school diploma compared with 11 percent of the unemployed civilian population.<sup>278</sup> 9 percent of unemployed post-9/11 veterans have at least a high school education (7.6 percent among unemployed civilians); 9.6 percent have some college or an associates degree (6.3 percent among unemployed civilians) and 5.3 percent have a bachelors degree or higher (3.6 percent among unemployed civilians).<sup>279</sup> The data suggest that veterans with higher education rates often perform worse than their civilian counterparts in the labor market. One could deduce that because civilians with lower education levels than veterans are employed at higher rates, employers are placing previous work experience at a higher premium than prior military service and education. If true, that suggests a skills gap for military members and corroborates Researcher/Professor David Mann's findings that "the civilian sector places a

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<sup>278</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment Situation of Veterans: 2013," Released March 24, 2014, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/vet.pdf>.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

high premium on civilian sector experience over military experience.”<sup>280</sup> It also confirms Joshua Angrist’s “loss-of-experience” hypothesis cited in Chapter One where military experience is only a partial substitute for civilian labor market experience.<sup>281</sup>

## Skills Gap

Job vacancies in the United States rose to 5.1 million in 2014, but the supply/demand rate is 2:1 for each vacancy, which means that there are at least 2 people competing for every open job.<sup>282</sup> Veterans entering the civilian workforce have many desirable skills such as discipline, teamwork, leadership and, in some cases, training specific to their military occupation. However, veterans may lack the hard skills needed for the most competitive jobs, including prior civilian work experience. Additionally, employers are less likely to take hiring risks during slow economic times.

A skills gap occurs when there is a mismatch between the skills of the workforce and the skills required for available jobs. This definition is analogous with models of structural employment where workers in declining industries are eventually forced to search for work in industries where their skills are less valuable.<sup>283</sup> In this scenario, workers have a hard time finding employment and are often paid less as a consequence. Of the 5.1 million open jobs in the United States there was an uptick in open positions in occupations such as transportation, healthcare support and office work.<sup>284</sup> But there are two to three people competing for each

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<sup>280</sup> Mann, David R., “Why We Fight: Understanding Military Participation over the Life Cycle.” *Journal of Human Capital*, Vol 6. No. 4 (Winter 2012), page 281.

<sup>281</sup> Angrist, Joshua D. “Lifetime Earnings and the Vietnam Era Draft Lottery: Evidence from Social Security Administrative Records.” *The American Economic Review* 80 (1990): 314, 329, 331.

<sup>282</sup> The Conference Board Employment Trends Index, Online Labor Demand, March 10, 2014, <http://www.conference-board.org/data/eti.cfm>.

<sup>283</sup> Jason Faberman and Taft Foster, Unemployment Among Recent Veterans During the Great Recession, (February 22, 2013). *Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 2013. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2385972>.

<sup>284</sup> The Conference Board Employment Trends Index, Online Labor Demand, March 10, 2014, <http://www.conference-board.org/data/eti.cfm>.

vacancy in these fields.<sup>285</sup> The picture is different for higher demand occupations such as information technology and healthcare professional jobs with worker shortages. In these industries, there are typically three or more vacancies for each unemployed worker with the skill set needed for those jobs.<sup>286</sup> According to the latest Bureau of Labor Statics, veterans are stratified into management roles (38.2 percent), service occupations (13.9 percent), sales and office occupations (17.4 percent), construction and maintenance occupations (14 percent) and transportation and logistics (16.5 percent).<sup>287</sup> These job types are extremely competitive. Veterans would have less difficulty pursuing higher demand occupations such as in technology or healthcare – and that information should be part of the TAP curriculum.

In conclusion, the only clear evidence of a *unique* skills gap among veterans is their lack of prior civilian work experience. That being said, veterans likely face a skills gap on par with the rest of the American workforce, which is why programs such as GE’s Get Skills to Work, Microsoft’s training program for veterans for technology careers and Syracuse University’s Veteran Career Transition Program are so important.<sup>288</sup> Now the military and the vendor producing the TAP curriculum need to share such opportunities with transitioning service members, which they currently are not.

### **The Selection Effect**

If there is a skills gap among military veterans, one cause could be a phenomenon called the selection effect. High operational tempo and numerous wartime deployments may cause military members who are otherwise well suited for military work to leave the military. This

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<sup>285</sup> The Conference Board Employment Trends Index, Online Labor Demand, March 10, 2014, <http://www.conference-board.org/data/eti.cfm>.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Employment Situation of Veterans: 2013,” Released March 24, 2014, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/vet.pdf>.

<sup>288</sup> Eduardo Porter, “Stubborn Skills Gap in America’s Work Force,” The New York Times, October 8, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/09/business/economy/stubborn-skills-gap-in-americas-work-force.html>.

causes somewhat of a selection effect for post-9/11 veterans.<sup>289</sup> Retention rates declined significantly after the start of the Iraq War (as well as after the start of the first Gulf War).<sup>290</sup> At the same time, retention rates are also higher during economic downturns, most notably during the 1991 and 2008-2010 recessions. The Department of Defense reported that 2008 was its most successful recruitment year since conscription ended in 1973.<sup>291</sup> The link between high retention rates and economic downturns is clear and irrefutable.

The selection effect is also correlated to reduction in defense spending caused by sequestration. Sequestration, the 2011 law reducing defense and non-defense discretionary spending by about \$1 trillion through automatic, arbitrary and across-the-board budget cuts is pushing out military members who might have otherwise stayed in uniform. For example, after reaching a peak of 570,000 troops during the Iraq War, the Army is reducing its end strength to the lowest levels since WWII.<sup>292</sup> The end strength goal of between 440,000 to 450,000 troops will be met through voluntary and involuntary separations.<sup>293</sup> The Army will attempt to retain the best and the brightest, which implies that those pushed out are not the most highly rated soldiers. There is substantial risk in that storyline garnering attention in the media, resulting in a spike in negative perception by employers who perceive that those veterans separating are being pushed out for performance reasons.

### **Deployment Time and High Unemployment**

Economists R. Jason Faberman and Taft Foster found that there is a direct correlation between extended wartime deployments and high unemployment rates among post-9/11

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<sup>289</sup> Jason Faberman and Taft Foster, Unemployment Among Recent Veterans During the Great Recession, (February 22, 2013). Economic Perspectives, Vol. 37, No. 1, 2013. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2385972>.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

<sup>291</sup> Mann, David R., "Why We Fight: Understanding Military Participation over the Life Cycle." Journal of Human Capital, Vol 6. No. 4 (Winter 2012), page 280.

<sup>292</sup> Thom Shanker and Helen Cooper, "Pentagon Plans to Shrink Army to Pre-World War II Level," The New York Times, February 23, 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/24/us/politics/pentagon-plans-to-shrink-army-to-pre-world-war-ii-level.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/24/us/politics/pentagon-plans-to-shrink-army-to-pre-world-war-ii-level.html?_r=0).

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

veterans.<sup>294</sup> In a recent paper, Faberman and Foster conclude that the strain caused by extended deployments that begin in 2001 and continue today appear to be hindering labor market outcomes after separation. They offer a few theories as to why wartime deployments may negatively affect the prospects of post 9-11 veterans finding a job, but also admit that the root effects are uncertain and that further research is needed. First there are the physical and psychological effects of war that may affect employment.<sup>295</sup> Second, the training service members' receive during wartime deployments as compared with training during peacetime deployments differs.<sup>296</sup> In some cases, the hard skills gained during peacetime training are more transferrable to the civilian job market than the skills gained during wartime. Hard skills are the tangible skills you build over time for a particular job such as learning to be in an office setting, using a computer and answering a phone. The soft skills gained during wartime deployments, such as leadership, mission focus, dedication, discipline and responsibility are in high demand by the private sector. Their third theory is that high operational tempo and demand for more personnel during wartime lowered recruiting standards. While recruiting standards were lowered, the Bureau of Labor Statistics data suggests that education rates for veterans are actually higher than their civilian peers. (Not enough data exists about criminal history or drug use.)

### **Transition Process for Veterans is Still Failing**

While updates to the transition assistance program are a first big step in the right direction, the transition process is still failing. First, the new Transition GPS program will not meet its implementation target of March 2014. Second, the contractor who designed and developed the curriculum did not involve the private sector when building out the employment track. Third, most of the counselors are older retired veterans – not people with HR or other backgrounds that can help navigate the current job market. A recent poll confirms that veterans

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<sup>294</sup> Jason Faberman and Taft Foster, *Unemployment Among Recent Veterans During the Great Recession*, (February 22, 2013). *Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 2013. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2385972>.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*

are displeased with the transition process with more than 50 percent stating that the military is not doing enough to help them transition.<sup>297</sup>

While a great attempt at interagency cooperation, Transition GPS is still falling short of the President's mandate. Ultimately, responsibility has trickled down the chain of command and was outsourced to a third party vendor that is over budget and behind schedule. Additionally, the federal government and their vendor cut the private sector out of the process, which is a huge disservice to military members. In an off the record interview, a senior administration official stated that despite costing the taxpayers \$122 million, Transition GPS is "red on every single deliverable."<sup>298299</sup> When asked how the private sector could help get the program on track, the advice was to avoid the TAP process all together.

In another interview with a regional director for the small business administration who also asked to remain anonymous, this author learned that the small business classes being taught as part of Transition GPS are taught by retired veterans with no background in small business.<sup>300</sup> Additionally, the classes are taught in geographic locations that are difficult to attend. For example, the classes for the northeast region are taught at West Point in upstate New York and at Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn, New York. Service members from surrounding states such as Vermont and Pennsylvania are required to travel to these locations. The average class size is 2-5 people and the classes are taught on an ad hoc basis as scheduled by the instructor. Besides low turnout and hard to access physical class locations, the class about how to start a business is taught by a 72 year old regional director. The author asked some substantive questions about the class and walked away very disheartened.

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<sup>297</sup> Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "A Legacy of Pride and Pain," The Washington Post, March 29, 2014. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/national/2014/03/29/a-legacy-of-pride-and-pain/>.

<sup>298</sup> This interview took place on February 11, 2014. The military uses the stoplight strategy to code risk level – red, yellow and green for the different statuses and levels of risk.

<sup>299</sup> Benjamin Collins, et al, "Employment for Veterans: Trends and Programs," Congressional Research Service, February 20, 2014, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R42790.pdf>.

<sup>300</sup> This interview took place on March 19, 2014.

In addition to the challenges faced by the Transition GPS program, the military branches have failed to evolve the culture to one that considers post-military life as part of a service members' career progression. Progress has been made through the credentialing and licensing task force, but not enough with other military occupations. For example, one veteran recently said he had sought permission from his commander to participate in a military-funded internship a few months before separation and his commander said no.<sup>301</sup> Another big challenge is that the handoff from the military to the civilian labor market is far from smooth. The private sector has repeatedly asked DOD for information about service members that are transitioning out so recruiters can recruit them up before or while separating from the military. DOD is still having trouble developing an approach to this process given legal hurdles with sharing personal information.

### **Findings and Recommendations**

There are several key findings in this thesis. First, top down leadership from the White House has been key in influencing policy changes both within the federal government and the private sector. Before the end of President Obama's second term, he should put pressure on the military to get the transition process right.

Second, female post-9/11 veterans are unemployed at higher rates than their male veteran counterparts as well as their civilian peers. Unfortunately, there is not enough social science research to determine why women veterans may face higher unemployment rates than their male and civilian counterparts. More research should be conducted to identify causes and to propose meaningful solutions for this population.

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<sup>301</sup> Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "A Legacy of Pride and Pain," The Washington Post, March 29, 2014. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/national/2014/03/29/a-legacy-of-pride-and-pain/>.

Third, older veterans face more difficulty finding employment than their younger veteran peers. While the federal government's VRAP program is showing early signs of success, the enrollment period ends in March 2014. Congress should extend the VRAP benefit. The news media should shed light on the need for renewing the program so the private sector will target more than just younger veterans in their employment programs.

Fourth, veterans with higher education rates often perform worse than their civilian counterparts in the labor market. One could deduce that because civilians with lower education than veterans are employed at higher rates, employers are placing previous work experience at a premium than prior military service and education. This suggests a skills gap in civilian workforce situations for military members. To remedy this, DOD should implement a civilian internship program for its troops at all levels. Currently, DOD has a very highly selective fellowship program for officers. A similar program should be put in place for the enlisted ranks as well as at various stages in their military career.

Fifth, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, a majority of employed veterans have gone into highly competitive occupations such as management roles and service occupations. TAP and the military branches should build upon these findings by educating transitioning service members about high-demand jobs and by teaching them how to obtain the right skills and training to get there. Not only would this make it easier for transitioning veterans to find jobs, they would be compensated better.

Sixth, as the military reduces its end strength, low-performing troops will get pushed out of the military. If that storyline takes hold in the news media, we could see a spike in negative perception of veterans by employers who perceive that those separating are being pushed out because of performance. The military should be very mindful of this fact when contributing to the public dialogue.

Seventh, R. Jason Faberman and Taft Foster found that there is a direct correlation between extended wartime deployments and high unemployment rates among post-9/11 veterans though they acknowledge that the root effects are uncertain. More research should be conducted around why deployments and unemployment have such a high correlation.

Eighth, Transition GPS is not meeting today's standards and needs to be immediately put back on track. The private sector must be involved in the development of the curriculum and TAP instructors should have relevant experience to the substance they are teaching. Additionally the Department of Defense needs a to change the way it thinks about post-military careers in order to ensure a more seamless handoff between the military branch and the civilian labor market. Each service branch should have a specific office dedicated to the post-military life of its service members. These offices should be modeled after the Marine for Life Program. The offices should establish a service-specific database where service members can opt-in to receive job information from employers. The challenge DOD faces in handing over information about its people is the legality and privacy concerns surrounding personal data. This opt-in system managed by Marine for Life, Soldier for Life, etc. would solve for that regulation.

### **Chapter Three Conclusion**

While much progress has been made in the military and veteran space, more work remains if we are going to reduce the unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans to at least the national average. More work remains on the part of the government, each branch of the military, the private sector and the veterans themselves. There are an overwhelming number of resources out there for veterans; the challenge is directing the right resources to veterans before they transition out of the military. Simultaneously, veterans need to realize that finding employment is not an exact science; it takes time, preparation and like most things a little bit of luck. Veterans need to leverage the resources available to them while staying patient and remaining optimistic

that opportunities will eventually present themselves. Additionally, more veterans should use the post-9/11 GI Bill. If traditional college is not the right fit, funding can be used to get the appropriate training or certifications needed for a career of choice - whether it's becoming an electrician, a medic or an HVAC repairman/woman. Veteran unemployment cannot be solved unilaterally, each piece of the puzzle must have the dedication and commitment to ensure our service members have the opportunities they deserve when transitioning out of the military. It is America's social contract with those who have bore the burden of 13 years of war.

### **Thesis Conclusion**

The unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans has remained consistently higher than the national average since 2006. This research identifies potential causes for the statistically significant differences in unemployment rates between veterans and civilians. Understanding the challenges and attempting to find viable solutions is an important public policy and national security imperative.

Chapter One identified five key barriers faced by the private sector in hiring veterans including: a knowledge gap between military and civilian cultures; negative stigmas associated with veterans' mental health issues; employers' fear of future deployments for newly hired veterans and Guardsmen and Reservists; challenges finding veteran talent; and perceptions that veterans are not suited for employment. Chapter One also identified three companies - General Electric, JPMorgan Chase and Humana - that overcame these challenges and offered examples as to how. The research found that apart from a strong commitment to veterans, the three firms shared one common element: a focus on bridging the gap between military and civilian cultures. General Electric, JPMorgan Chase and Humana hired employees who served in the military or had expertise in military and veterans issues. This internal subject matter expertise allowed the firms to build programs and train staff, including recruiters and hiring managers, accordingly.

Because a key challenge for employers is finding and attracting qualified veterans, each employer used in-house knowledge to build a strong veteran talent pipeline for recruiting veterans. Each company also has unique support programs for part-time warriors (members of the Guard and Reserve) and each company signed the ESGR statement of support. Moreover, each company has a dedicated employee assistance program offering resources for employees with posttraumatic stress and information for others who wish to understand what it means to have posttraumatic stress as a result of military experience. These elements are critical to bridging the gap between civilian and military cultures.

Not every company has the resources or desire to establish such robust programs focused on hiring veterans. This is why joining coalitions such as the 100,000 Jobs Mission, the Chamber of Commerce's Hiring Our Heroes program, GE's Get Skills to Work group or others are beneficial for private sector firms. Most memberships are free of charge, and companies without the resources or knowledge can learn from other more experienced partner companies. Apart from sharing knowledge and best practices, some coalition's members share military talent. As a result, companies can expand the recruiting pipeline through memberships.

Chapter One found the knowledge gap between military and civilian cultures to be the most significant barrier to veteran employment. Chapter Two examines this issue more closely. A key finding was that the civilian-military divide has actually widened in the post-9/11 era and has been exacerbated by 13 years of war. Many veterans feel that their service is underappreciated and that the civilian population is largely unaware of the difficulties endured since 9/11. While not yet reaching a tipping point, the gap between civil society and the military must be bridged. Otherwise the military may feel that its social contract has been broken. In fact, danger signs are prevalent. 84 percent of post-9/11 veterans feel the American public does not

understand the problems they face.<sup>302</sup> Additionally, 44 percent said their readjustment to civilian life was difficult; by contrast, just 25 percent of veterans who served in previous eras said the same.<sup>303</sup> Sentiments grew worse in 2014. 50 percent of veterans now say their transition to civilian life was very difficult, up from 44 percent in 2011.<sup>304</sup> When asked to describe why, more than 25 percent said it was because of employment-related issues, such as trouble adjusting to a civilian work environment.<sup>305</sup> Additionally, 50 percent of veterans did not think the military was doing enough to help them transition and adjust to civilian life.<sup>306</sup> Given the increasingly pessimistic sentiments of post-9/11 veterans over three years, it appears that the knowledge gap is not improving.

Chapter Three found that top-down leadership from the White House has been paramount to implementing changes to policies impacting veterans and the military. With only two years left in office, President Obama must continue to prioritize veterans issues in his domestic agenda. Additionally, the President should put more pressure on the military to improve the Transition Assistance Program. His administration should also institutionalize the successful Joining Forces Initiative in order to keep attention and efforts focused on veterans issues after his Presidency.

Chapter Three had several other important findings related to high rates of veteran unemployment. First, female post-9/11 veterans are unemployed at higher rates than their male veteran counterparts as well as their civilian peers. Second, older veterans are just as likely to face difficulty finding employment as their younger veteran peers despite what the news media reports. Third, employers are placing prior civilian work experience at a premium compared to military service and education. Fourth, there is a direct correlation between extended wartime

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<sup>302</sup> Paul Taylor et al., *The Military-Civilian Gap: War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era*, Pew Research Center, October 5, 2011, page 8.

<sup>303</sup> Paul Taylor et al., *The Military-Civilian Gap: War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era*, Pew Research Center, October 5, 2011.

<sup>304</sup> Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "A Legacy of Pride and Pain," *The Washington Post*, March 29, 2014. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/national/2014/03/29/a-legacy-of-pride-and-pain/>.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

deployments and high unemployment rates among post-9/11 veterans, though the root effects are uncertain.

The Department of Defense and each military branch must play a larger role in helping veterans reintegrate into civil society, including opening doors to civilian employment opportunities. Military service forces its members to adopt the military lifestyle. For most, this means a career, home, family and social life that are centrally planned and wrapped around the flag. As a result, when individuals separate from the military, they are leaving behind a familiar and regimented lifestyle that is very different from civilian life. Most veterans have known nothing else as an adult which can make the transition to civilian life challenging. With a mindset and culture that is one of retention, the services have had difficulty carrying out President Obama's directive to incorporate transition into the service member's career. This is understandable. Yet consequences for the status quo are stark from a public policy, national security and financial standpoint. An unemployment level for veterans that is higher than the national average and that costs taxpayers nearly \$1 billion dollars annually in unemployment compensation for ex-service members must be improved.<sup>307</sup> With one million service members projected to separate from the military over the next four years, it is critical that the public, private and non-profit sectors continue to build on their recent successes.

### **Recommendations: DOD and the Military**

The Department of Defense must improve the utility of the transition assistance program. Having witnessed the importance of top-down leadership in influencing change, the Office of the Secretary of Defense should be responsible for ensuring TAP is executed successfully, on time and on budget. This means ensuring that the TAP curriculum is developed in partnership with experts in each of the various tracks: private sector employment, small business formation and

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<sup>307</sup> Julie W. Whittaker, et. al., "Unemployment Insurance: Programs and Benefits," Congressional Research Service, February 12, 2014, page 12, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL33362.pdf>.

education. Additionally, TAP classes should only be taught by those with current knowledge, expertise and experience - not old retired veterans working for the VA who have never owned a business or taught a class.

DOD should find ways to grant private sector companies access to military bases. This would allow them to incorporate private sector recruiters, HR leaders and hiring managers in their transition panels as part of TAP. The private sector has requested such access but DOD has refused to change its policy. One challenge is the government cannot show favoritism to any company. As such DOD must find a workable and legal solution that satisfies all parties.

The Department of Defense should leverage its Guardsmen, -women and Reservists during the transition process. Part-time warriors with civilian work and military experience are an underused asset for newly transitioning service members. Through the various military networks (Marine for Life, Soldier for Life, etc.), members of the Guard and Reserve could serve as mentors to service members getting out and to veterans who have already separated.<sup>308</sup> Mentoring one or two individuals could be incorporated into weekend duties.

DOD should consider the following changes to the Transition Assistance Program. First break TAP up into two segments: part one should take place as it currently does before the service member transitions; and part two should take place 3-5 months after separation and should run by the military branch “for Life” offices. The mindset of many military members during transition is one of anticipation about reconnecting with families and friends. As a result, many transitioning service members do not pay attention to the material taught in TAP. Additionally, most are unfamiliar with what it takes to find a job in the private sector, or what it takes to go back to school or how to use their VA benefits. If TAP part two were implemented, veterans would remain in contact after separation – allowing them to assimilate and network

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<sup>308</sup> Phillip Carter and David Barno, “How the military isolates itself — and hurts veterans,” Washington Post, November 8, 2013.

together. This may help some adapt to the challenges of civilian life. This recommendation may be cost prohibitive but it would be worthwhile to do a cost-benefit analysis in comparison with the \$1.1 billion spent on unemployment benefits and the secondary and tertiary financial effects down the road.

The military must carry out President Obama's directive to incorporate transition planning into service members' careers. Each service should establish transition and post-military career offices modeled after the Marine for Life program. What the Marines do so well is indoctrinate their people from day one: once a Marine, always a Marine. While Marines still face transition difficulties just like other service members, they have a very beneficial program in Marine for Life to help them transition into the civilian workforce. The Army stood up its Soldier for Life program in 2011, which was a big first step in the right direction, but still has a long way to go to change its culture to reflect a similar mindset.

As part of each service branch's "for Life" office, a transition database should be kept on all service members in the transition process. For legal reasons, this would be an opt-in system where individuals could opt to share personal information with employers and the Department of Defense.<sup>309</sup> Employers would be able to recruit from this database and successfully match supply with demand. This recommendation could gain traction if mandated from the top – for example by Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel or each service Secretary. That being said, getting DOD to undertake a massive information technology project would be challenging seeing that DOD and the Department of Veterans Affairs still cannot link up their technology systems.

Each military branch should create public-private partnerships with companies, colleges, non-profits and vocational schools whereby partnership are centered on creating internship and apprenticeship opportunities for military members before they transition. These types of

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<sup>309</sup> This idea was born through a conversation with this author and someone in government. The name will remain anonymous because I don't have permission from the individual to cite them.

partnerships exist, but are mostly reserved for senior military officers rather than younger junior officers or enlisted members. Given that prior civilian work experience is a key skills gap among military members, this could have a positive impact on the veteran employment situation.

Congress should mandate that DOD submit an update on the progress of the licensing and credentialing task force. For example, how many military careers have been identified as transferrable to the civilian workforce? What is the progress on getting them civilian licenses as part of their military occupational specialty MOS training? Tracking and analyzing these data are key to improving the program which in turn will help thousands of veterans cut red tape and more quickly become members of the civilian workforce.

### **Recommendations: Private Sector**

One way the private sector could partner with DOD to overcome legal concerns about possible favoritism in giving companies access to transitioning service members and their personnel data is by developing a coalition of coalitions to oversee the transition process.<sup>310</sup> For example, if the 100,000 Jobs Mission, Veterans on Wall Street (VOWS) and GE's Get Skills to Work group joined forces in a massive public-private partnership, it could help mitigate DOD's legal concerns. This could create an opportunity for the private sector to partner with DOD on TAP, affording them access to military bases and exchange data on transitioning service members. While this idea in theory could open the doors to many other partnerships both the government and the private sector may lack the collective will to make this happen. The logistical, administrative and financial hurdles to seeing this through would be difficult.

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<sup>310</sup> Institute for Veterans and Military Families and Institute for National Security and Counterterrorism, Syracuse University, "A National Veterans Strategy: The Economic, Social and Security Imperative," February 19, 2013, <http://vets.syr.edu/report-from-syracuse-universitys-institute-for-veterans-and-military-families-and-institute-for-national-security-and-counterterrorism-argues-for-a-national-veterans-strategy/>. Concept was first proposed in IVMF national strategy and has been discussed in many circles since.

Private sector companies should continue to help bridge the gap between civilian and military cultures by developing internal training programs for recruiters and hiring managers. Employers have a free resource in Military 101 and through free veteran-focused coalitions such as the 100,000 Jobs Mission. And most importantly, private sector companies should not lose momentum in their efforts to hire, train and retain military veterans.

### **Recommendations: Military Members**

Service members need to do a better job taking ownership of their transition from service to civilian life. This includes starting the transition as soon as possible – ideally 12-18 months before separating.<sup>311</sup> Service members must also take it upon themselves to expand their networks in order to increase their chances of finding a job. Understanding their options is a key step to obtaining the right training to reach their goals. Transitioning service members must also seek employment opportunities in high-demand careers as often as possible. They must use the GI Bill and relocate to geographic locations where there is high job growth and vibrant economies. Service members must find a way to harness the courage and sacrifices they've made during the military and channel that into the civilian economy. They also must realize that a gap in employment history will make the job search even more difficult. They should have a plan and execute on that plan before separation.

Service members also need to work on bridging their own gap with civilian society. Just as civilians have a responsibility to understand the military, military members need to do the same. Moving off a military base without its own schools, grocery stores and hospitals may be a culture shock for some veterans. But it is a change that transitioning service members and their families should prepare for.

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<sup>311</sup> This recommendation is in a forthcoming publication by this author. It will be available on JobsMission.com in May.

Ultimately, solving the veteran unemployment challenge requires participation from all sides of the equation: the federal government, private sector, and service members. After 13 years of war and a challenging economic downturn, America is on the rebound and it must fulfill its social contract with this nation's all volunteer force.

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Appendix

**Table 1: The Unemployment Situation of Veterans from 2006-2013**

Categories	2013 in Real Terms	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
All Veterans		6.6	7.8	8.3	8.7	8.1	4.6	3.8	3.8
All Americans		7.2	7.9	8.7	9.4	9.1	5.5	4.4	4.7
All Women Veterans	97,000	9.6	8.3	9.1	7.9	8	5.2	4.8	5.2
All Women Civilians		6.8	7.7	8.2	8.4	7.8	5.2	4.3	4.7
All Male Veterans	625,000	6.5	8	8.3	8.8	8.1	4.6	3.7	3.7
All Male Civilians		7.5	8.1	9.2	10.3	10.3	6	4.6	4.7
Post-9/11 Veterans*	205,000	9	9.9	12.1	11.5	10.2	7.3	6.1	6.5
Post-9/11 Veterans (women)*	39,000	9.6	12.5	12.4	12	11.5	8.9	9.1	7.1
Post-9/11 Veterans (men)*	166,000	8.8	9.5	12	11.4	9.9	7.1	5.6	6.4
Veterans Age 18-24*	34,000	21.4	20.4	30.2	20.9	21.1	14.1	12	
Civilians Age 18-24		14.3	15	16.1	17.3	16.6	11.6	9.5	
Women Veterans Age 18-24*	6,000	14.3	23.9*	36.1	15.3	19.2	15.1	16.8	
Women Civilians Age 18-24		12.8	13.6	14.5	14.6	13.9	10	8.4	
Male Veterans Age 18-24*	27,000	24.3	20	29.1	21.9	21.6	13.9	11.2	
Male Civilians Age 18-24		15.8	16.4	17.6	19.7	19.1	13	10.5	
All Veterans Age 25-34*	113,000	9.5	10.6	13	12.6	11.1	6.1	6	7.5
All Civilians Age 25-34		7.3	8.2	9.3	10	9.8	5.8	4.6	4.6
Women Veterans Age 25-34*	23,000	10.8	11.6	10.6	13.6	11.6	9.8	7.6	
Women Civilians Age 25-34		7.2	8.3	9.1	9.1	8.6	5.5	4.6	

<b>Male Veterans Age 25-34*</b>	90,000	9.2	9.6	13.4	13	11.2	6.8	5.8	
<b>Male Civilians Age 25-34</b>		7.5	8.1	9.5	10.7	10.9	6.1	4.7	
<b>Post-9/11 Veterans Age 35+</b>	57,000 unemployed								
<b>Post-9/11 Veterans (women) Age 35+</b>	9,000								
<b>Categories (cont'd.)</b>	2013 in Real Terms	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
<b>Post-9/11 Veterans (men) Age 35+</b>	49,000								
<b>White post-9/11 veterans</b>	158,000	9.0							
<b>Black post-9/11 veterans</b>	31,000	9.0							
<b>Asian post-9/11 veterans</b>	7,000	9.7							
<b>Latino post-9/11 veterans</b>	30,000	10.3							

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Annual Employment Summary, Current Population Survey<sup>312</sup>

<sup>312</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment Situation of Veterans: 2007," Released April 10, 2008, [http://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/vet\\_04102008.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/vet_04102008.pdf).  
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Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment Situation of Veterans: 2012," Released March 20, 2013, [http://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/vet\\_03202013.htm](http://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/vet_03202013.htm).  
Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment Situation of Veterans: 2013," Released March 24, 2014, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/vet.pdf>.

**Table 2: Companies Hiring Veterans**

GI Jobs	Military Times EDGE	Civilian Jobs 2012 MVE	Families and Work Institute	CNAS report	IVMF
Allstate Corporation	Amazon	Allstate Corporation	Amazon	AstraZeneca, PLC	General Electric
Amazon.com, Inc.	BAE Systems, Inc.	Amazon	AT&T	AT&T, Inc.	Google
AstraZeneca PLC	Bank of America	Booz Allen Hamilton	Bank of America	BAE Systems, Inc.	JPMorgan Chase
AT&T Inc.	Boeing Co.	CACI International Inc.	Booz Allen Hamilton	Bank of America	Prudential
BAE Systems	CACI International Inc	Chesapeake Energy Corporation	Capital One	Boeing Company	United Parcel Service, Inc.
Bank of America Corporation	Charles Schwab & Co	Citi	Citi	Booz Allen Hamilton, Inc.	
Booz Allen Hamilton Inc	Citi	Crete Carrier Corp.	Deloitte	CACI International, Inc.	
CACI International Inc	CSC	CSX Corporation	Ernst & Young	Chesapeake Energy	
Capital One	DaVita Inc.	DaVita, Inc.	General Electric	Cintas Corporation	
Charles Schwab & Co., Inc.	Deloitte	Fluor Corporation	General Mills	CSX Transportation	
Chesapeake Energy Corporation	DynCorp International	General Electric	Hewlett Packard	DynCorp International	

CINTAS Corporation	General Electric	Humana Inc	Humana	Ernst & Young	
Citigroup Inc	Harris Corp.	JPMorgan Chase & Co.	JPMorgan Chase	General Electric Company	
Crete Carrier Corporation	Humana Inc	Lockheed Martin Corporation	Lockheed Martin	Google, Inc.	
CSC (Computer Sciences Corporation)	JPMorgan Chase & Co.	ManTech International Corporation	Merck	Humana, Inc.	
CSX Corporation	Merck & Co.	Northrop Grumman Corporation	Microsoft	JPMorgan Chase & Co.	
DaVita, Inc.	Prudential Financial	Schneider National, Inc.	Northrop Grumman	Lockheed Martin	
Deloitte Federal	Southern Company	Sears Holdings Corporation	PricewaterhouseCoopers	ManTech International	
DynCorp International	The Hartford	Southern Company	Prudential Financial	Merck & Co., Inc.	
Fluor Corporation	U.S. Bank	Southwest Airlines	USAA	PepsiCo, Inc.	
General Electric Company	USAA	URS Federal Services	Verizon Communications	Prudential	
General Mills	Verizon Communications Inc	USAA	Wal-Mart	SAIC (Science Applications)	
Harris Corporation	Wal-Mart	Verizon Communications Inc.		Schneider National, Inc.	

Hewlett-Packard Company	Waste Management, Inc.	Waste Management, Inc.		Sodexo	
Humana				United Parcel Service, Inc.	
JP Morgan Chase & Co.				Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.	
Lockheed Martin				Waste Management, Inc.	
ManTech International Corporation					
Merck & Co., Inc.					
Microsoft Corporation					
Northrop Grumman Corporation					
PepsiCo, Inc.					
Prudential Financial					
SAIC					
Schneider National, Inc.					

Sears Holdings Corporation					
Sodexo					
Southern Company					
Southwest Airlines Co.					
The Hartford Financial Services Group Inc.					
U.S. Bank					
URS Federal Services					
USAA					
Verizon Communications Inc.					
Wal-Mart					
Waste Management, Inc.					

### **Shannon O'Reilly Biography**

Shannon O'Reilly is the Executive Director in Communications for Military and Veterans Affairs at JPMorgan Chase & Co., a role she began in February 2012. In this capacity, she is a senior advisor on communications, strategy and policy for the firm's military and veterans affairs program focused on employment, housing, education and philanthropy. She is also the communications director for the 100,000 Jobs Mission, a growing coalition of companies committed to hiring U.S. military veterans.

Prior to joining JPMorgan Chase, Ms. O'Reilly was the Director of External Relations at the Center for a New American Security (CNAS), a non-partisan national security think tank in Washington, D.C. Before joining CNAS, Ms. O'Reilly was a strategist for the global strategic communications firm The Rendon Group, supporting high level government and corporate clients. Throughout her career, she has also worked on several political campaigns as a foreign policy advisor and communications expert.

Ms. O'Reilly is currently a member of the Board of Advisors at the Center for a New American Security. She was recognized in the Diplomatic Courier's annual "Top 99 under 33 Foreign Policy Leaders" list in 2012 for innovative work in the military and veterans space. She holds a Bachelors degree in political science from the University of Massachusetts Amherst.