

Legislative Task Force on Veterans' Reintegration

Minutes

April 14, 2010

Participants

Mike Burton
Sen. Martha Schrader
Rep. Greg Matthews (Phone)
Scott McCrae (Phone)
Jim Booker (Phone)
Pegge McGuire
Val Conley
Ted Swigert
Bob Plame
Sherry Stock
Patricia Sublette
JD Bauchom
Fritz Graham (Phone)
Bill Doctor (Phone)
John Howard (Phone)
Joby Reiley (Phone)
Elanna Schlichting (Phone)
Krissa Caldwell, CCWD
Laura Roberts, CCWD
Karen Humelbaugh, CCWD
Todd Nell, CCWD
Mark Meidema
Brian Worley (Sen. Schrader Staff)

Chair Burton opened the meeting at 10:03 a.m. and introductions were made.

The Chair began by giving a quick overview of issues that would need to be discussed in the Task Force Final Report. He then introduced Krissa Caldwell of the Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD) who would give a briefing on the National Emergency Grant and the Career Readiness Certificate program.

Caldwell noted that the Task Force has talked of a one-stop shop approach to providing regionalized veterans' reintegration services. She said that Oregon's WorkSource system is a federally mandated and supported One Stop System and that many of the services veterans need already are partnering in this system, including the Department of Human Services, Local Workforce Investment Boards, Community Action and more in the statewide system.

Focusing on the National Emergency Grant (NEG), Caldwell and her staff explained that the NEG traditionally is used to help support displaced workers who have been laid off due to plant closures. However, Oregon is the first to apply for the grant for displaced National Guard

soldiers coming off of active duty. Oregon cannot apply for the NEG until the troops come home because the grant was designed to help those already laid off, thus once the National Guard troops come off of active duty orders, her department can submit the application.

The NEG is designed to connect programs with veterans. It can be used for training money, including supplementing the Post 9/11 GI Bill if necessary; and support services, such as paying a utility bill, buying work equipment, and helping a veteran successfully rejoin the workforce.

Pegge McGuire noted that Oregon Housing and Community Services oversees the Community Action Agencies and they are involved with the WorkSource Oregon partners. Her agency can help with housing needs that can be years long, as well as housing support, bus passes and more. She noted that it dovetails with Ted Swigart's TANF program (DHS).

Karen Humelbaugh said that her real need right now is knowing which returning soldiers are unemployed, which counties they live in and if they are interested in training. CCWD surveys dislocated workers, however, the survey different than the one already completed by the National Guard. Scott McCrae said that it would not be possible to give another survey to the troops at this late date, but he would work to get her the demographic information she needs from his survey of soldiers needing employment help.

Karen also noted that her program can pay for peer counseling. In the case of a closed manufacturing plant, people are chosen as peers and they provide information and direction to other employees seeking help. The same could happen for the Guard with peers being chosen and trained to provide information and direction to other Guard members.

Ted Swigart said he is supportive of all the ideas, but cautions that his agency (DHS) already is overwhelmed by the demand for service, which includes one in six Oregonians seeking food stamp benefits. He said his agency does not have the staffing to focus just on veterans as a sub group.

Karen said that once the grant is submitted it could be approved within 60-90 days. McCrae said that would be good timing given his reintegration program of meeting with returning troops at the 30-60-90 day timeframes. Karen was going to email her survey to McCrae and Jim Booker and McCrae were going to provide Karen with the numbers from their employment survey.

Fritz Graham said that if they needed any help from Sen. Wyden's office he would be happy to lend a hand.

Joby asked if the County CVSOs could get the list of unemployed returning soldiers so they also could help.

An idea was floated that perhaps the Employment Department could take the list of formerly returned troops that ODVA has and run them against the Employment computer system to determine if there are veterans in need of further employment services. Staff and Jim Booker will explore this.

Todd explained the Oregon Career Readiness Certificate (CRC). It is a national program used by 36 states, but is new to Oregon. The concept is for people to be trained and then test in three areas – Applied Math, Reading and Locating Information – to earn a CRC which then can be used to show an employer the skills a person has demonstrated. About 40 employers in Oregon have embraced the CRC program and there will be a statewide roll-out in November or December. One idea is to connect it to the Guard's CTAP program.

Sherry Stock and Patricia Sublette provided an overview of their work with Traumatic Brain Injury. McCrae explained the post-deployment screening process and the reluctance of soldiers to admit they have medical issues due to being held at Ft. Lewis. However, the Guard also continues the assessment process once the troops are home. However, there is no active program post 90 days. (NOTE: Veteran Service Officer also screen for TBI when they see veterans).

Sublette explained that she has a grant to create statewide change on brain injury. Stock said that it is not normally the veteran who self-identifies their TBI, rather it is their spouse or family. Stock also said that employers get no information about TBI or PTSD so they do not know how to accommodate employees with these conditions. Stock said that the Brain Injury Association can do these trainings and that the Northwest ADA can help ensure veterans are accommodated in the workplace.

Staff explained that due to agency deadlines, a draft placeholder bill was created that would have all state agencies that intersect with veterans work together on veterans reintegration. Ted Swigart, Pegge McGuire and Krissa Caldwell noted that through the WorkSource they already are doing this. Staff reminded the group that the Governor's Task Force on Veterans' Services found that veterans in 24 communities told that task force that these services were not available. Further, staff noted that often veterans are referred to ODVA instead of provided services by the agency the vet visited. The concept is a "No Wrong Door" approach so that no matter where a veteran enters the system, they are taken care of.

Burton said that he would like the Task Force to begin developing findings. He noted that there are a plethora of services and the process needs to be seamless to veterans who do not have much tolerance for bureaucracy. Burton said the idea is to expand the Vet Net model.

McGuire asked if the Fort Oregon website could include all the Community Action Agencies and the WorkSource groups. Burton said that he believed the Fort Oregon site would accommodate all these resources.

Burton noted that there is a need for a FTE or a 1.5 FTE to coordinate much of this work. McCrae related how Élan Lambert has been holding statewide resource meetings and that she might be a good person to coordinate this effort. McCrae also said that the first year of the Fort Oregon website is paid; however, future funding would have to be sought possibly by Sen. Wyden. Fritz Graham cautioned that the grant the Military Department received would not really fund future maintenance and new money would need to be sought.

Rep. Greg Matthews said he had been listening and wanted the Task Force to remember that veterans need help transferring their military training and skills into work, especially for law

enforcement and fire. Chair Schrader noted that Clackamas Community College is looking at how to do that for veterans to ensure they get the proper amount of credits for their military work.

Chair Burton asked staff to request findings from the Task Force and set up a meeting in May before the May 26 Legislative Interim Committee Hearings. The Chair adjourned the meeting at 11:55 a.m.