



DoD-State Liaison Office

**OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
(MILITARY COMMUNITY AND FAMILY POLICY)**

**4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000**

Senate Standing Committee on Federal and State Affairs

Testimony HB2154

by Martin Dempsey

March 17, 2015

Honorable Chair Ostmeyer and Committee Members, thank you for the opportunity to provide information and ask for your support for **HB2154, sponsored by Representative Phillips**. My name is Martin Dempsey; I am the Department of Defense (DoD) Regional State Liaison for the Midwestern States, working for the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy. It's a pleasure to be here once again.

The voluntary protection for private sector veterans' hiring veterans' preference issue is an important one for the Department of Defense State Liaison Office for 2015. We have learned that many private sector employers would like to hire veterans because of their unique skill sets, proven work ethic, and reliability, but are hesitant to do so out of fear of being sued under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Because veterans are overwhelmingly male, the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) interpreted many veterans' preference processes to have a disparate impact on women.

However, Title VII, Section 11 of the Civil Rights Act contains a carve-out that exempts veterans' preference processes that are authorized by state statute. HB2154 can be that statute. HB2154 enacts language that offers the option to incorporate a veterans' hiring preference policy. So those crucially needed private sector employers can establish preferred veteran hiring practices without risking claims of discrimination.

We think that private employers are best suited in determining which skill sets are needed in their business. **Since the public sector has accepted practices for veterans preference in hiring, the language in HB2154 that allows private sector veteran preference policies, that are parallel to those used by state and local governments, allow employers to equitably compete for veteran talent.**

We know that 12 states are now providing this private sector protection. While **Washington State was first in 2011, AR, FL, ID, IA, ME, MA, MN, ND, OR, SC, and VA are now on board**. Certainly, **the need for your help is out there**. The latest US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data reported that the unemployment rate for veterans remains much higher in some cases than the general population. For the **Year 2014, 18-24 year old vets had a 16.2% unemployment rate, versus 12.5 for non-vets**. The 25-34 year olds fared better, but still behind non vets, 7.7% versus 6.5. For the month of **December 2014, the 18-24 year old vets stood at 18.2 versus 10.6 for non-vets, and 25-34 years old vets still lagged non vets by 7.5% to 5.6%.**

Improving the Lives of Military Members and their Families



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For the foreseeable future, you will continue to receive many new, highly trained veterans, seeking to transition to civilian life in Kansas. With continued drawing down of the forces that number should remain static or go even higher. So you will be seeing more new veterans with those unique skill sets, proven work ethic, and reliability I mentioned earlier.

We thank Representative Phillips for sponsoring this measure. Thank you for taking up this issue, and for your consideration.

I stand for any questions.

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