- The Hiring Heroes Act of 2011 -

A bill to help veterans transition successfully from military service to the working world, particularly those brave men and women who have served our country in Iraq and Afghanistan.

A Population Facing Unique Barriers to Finding Employment

Veterans are disciplined, skilled, team players, yet they still face difficulty when applying for employment.

- Recent Department of Labor (DoL) statistics estimate that the unemployment rate for veterans age 20-24 has been as high as 27 percent.
- Overall, the employment rate for this group of veterans has remained high – we cannot afford to leave them behind.
- As servicemembers continue to separate from the military, the problem of veteran unemployment will only grow larger.
- Helping veterans find employment provides an income to support their families; creates self- esteem and pride; and is critical to avoiding veteran homelessness.

A Look at What the Government is Doing and What More Can be Done

This bill authorizes ongoing services we are providing and modifies programs for veterans.

- Modifies federal hiring practices to encourage the hiring of separating servicemembers and would allow servicemembers to begin the federal employment hiring process prior to separation;
- Makes participation in the Transition Assistance Program mandatory for separating servicemembers;
- Requires that each servicemember receive an individualized assessment of jobs they may qualify for when they participate in the Transition Assistance Program;
- Requires DoL to engage with each veteran on a periodic basis to determine whether the veteran is employed or whether the veteran might be interested in further assistance;
- Continues a program that provides rehabilitation and vocational benefits to severely wounded members of the armed forces;
- Provides up to an additional 24 months of vocational rehabilitation and employment services to veterans who have exhausted *both* these benefits *and* state-provided unemployment benefits;
- Requires the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to engage with each veteran who has participated in its Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program periodically to determine whether the veteran is employed.

Innovative Programs to Prepare Veterans to Transition into Civilian Life

This bill authorizes new programs aimed at improving the transition from servicemember to civilian employee.

- Creates a competitive grant program for nonprofit organizations that provide mentorship and job training programs that are designed to lead to job placements;
- Requires the Department of Defense (DoD), DoL, and VA to jointly contract for a study to identify the equivalencies between certain military occupational specialty (MOS)-related skills and civilian employment;
- Allows DoD to create a pilot program to provide paid work experience with civilian employees and contractors to facilitate the transition for servicemembers that are 180 days from separating;
- Requires DoL, DoD, and VA collaboration to eliminate barriers between military training and civilian licensure or credentialing for several military occupational specialties.