

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 2, 2023

Secretary Denis R. McDonough  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Ave, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20571

Dear Secretary McDonough:

Every year approximately 250,000 servicemembers transition out of military service into civilian life. Whether the servicemember is finishing their first deployment, or retiring after 20 years, transitioning back into civilian life is a precarious time full of uncertainties for themselves and their families. While the Department of Defense, the Veterans Affairs Administration, and others have significantly improved the program over the past decade, one area that continues to lag is the warm hand-off into the community.

This does not have to be the case. During the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) that all servicemembers must attend, time should be set aside to allow servicemembers to contact state bureaus of veteran services to initiate that warm hand-off in the states they are considering moving to post-separation.

We understand that the VA is currently reviewing new guidelines for its one-day VA TAP curriculum that will be implemented later this year and into 2024. We strongly encourage you to pilot a section of the VA TAP curriculum that focuses on servicemembers proactively reaching out to contacts in the states they are interested in.

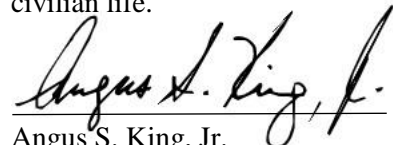
Currently, the information for connecting with state bureaus of veteran services is on page 179 of 200 of the VA Benefits and Services Participant Guide, where it is lost among the deluge of information. Given the importance of warm hand-offs and the benefit peer-navigators can have during an individual's transition, we strongly suggest that this information be moved to the top of the guide.

We also recommend spending an effective amount of time of their curriculum to actively reach out to the state bureaus of veterans' services in their home state to connect and log their information with such agencies. This will allow the servicemember to be connected with relevant information and persons in the states where they plan to move prior to separating from the military, and helps ensure that these servicemembers are welcomed back into civilian life with peers that can help them navigate that difficult transition.

We look forward to your response on the following questions:

- Will the VA pilot using at least 15 minutes of the VA TAP curriculum for servicemembers to contact the bureaus of veteran services in states where they are considering moving to post-separation?
- Will the VA move the move the "Information for Your State" page of the VA's Benefits and Services Participant Guide to the top of the guide?

Thank you for your attention to how we can work better to assist our servicemembers as they transition to civilian life.



Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator

Sincerely,



Kevin Cramer  
United States Senator