

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 19, 2023

Assistant Secretary James D. Rodriguez
Department of Labor, VETS
200 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20210

Dear Assistant Secretary Rodriguez,

We are writing to bring to your attention to an inadequacy in the eligibility criteria for programs under the Department of Labor's Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) for servicemembers transitioning out of the military. Under the current guidance for this grant, assistance to transitioning servicemembers is only provided if the installation commander finds that servicemember lacking in their career readiness standards. In those cases, the servicemember can be referred to an American Job Center and is eligible to receive case management services from a Disabled Veterans Outreach Program specialist through JVSG-funded programs. However, this only accounts for approximately 20 to 30-percent of servicemembers.

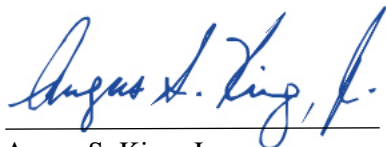
On the other hand, a transitioning servicemember who is not designated as lacking career readiness standards, and who proactively reaches out to local career center supported by a JVSG funded staff member to prepare for their transition, are ineligible to receive the full suite of services that are otherwise provided to veterans with significant barriers to employment. This gap in providing much needed employment services for transitioning servicemembers can and should be easily fixed by changing the eligibility criteria to include all transitioning servicemembers up to 6 months prior to their separation.

Each year, approximately 200,000 servicemembers transition out of military service into civilian life. This period is a precarious time for servicemembers full of uncertainty for themselves and their families. Among the many stressors experienced by transitioning servicemembers is the challenge of finding a job. It can often be surprising and demoralizing to be rejected from scores of job applications over a period of months after having had a clear structure in the military. Struggling with unemployment, or finding a lack of fulfillment in their employment, can cause poorer mental health and well-being among veterans.

Tragically, the disproportionate number of veteran suicides occur within two to three years of separation from active duty. It is of paramount importance that we provide the resources necessary for servicemembers to find meaningful employment in a field of interest during this difficult time.

We therefore request that you change the eligibility criteria for the Jobs for Veterans State Grant, and finding other ways to improve the servicemember transition experience. Ensuring a fulfilling career is a critical step in transitioning out of the highly structured military way life, and the Department of Labor has an important role to play in providing the training and assistance that servicemembers require to do so.

Sincerely,



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Bill M. Cassidy
United States Senator