

Program would partner veterans with employers for on-the-job training

WASHINGTON, DC - Rep. Peter Welch testified Wednesday before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity in support of his bill to help veterans find work and get the training they need for quality jobs.

The Military Occupational Specialty Transition Act (MOST), H.R. 929, which Welch first introduced in the 110th Congress, builds upon the success of the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act, which helped veterans in the 1990s find work during a period of force reduction.

The MOST program would help veterans who are not currently eligible for training or education benefits, are unemployed or underemployed, and whose military training does not readily transfer to the civilian workforce. MOST would help businesses defray the costs of providing veterans with on-the-job training by providing up to 50 percent of a veteran's wages during training. The Congressional Budget Office estimates MOST could provide 3,000 veterans a year with the skills they need to compete in this challenging economic environment.

"The men and women of the United States military are the world's finest," Welch said during his testimony in front of the Veterans' Affairs subcommittee. "When I speak with them back home in Vermont and on Congressional delegation trips to Iraq and Afghanistan, I am consistently impressed by the dedication, professionalism and selflessness of those who wear our country's uniform. It is critical that after leaving the military, veterans can find steady employment. Those who have given and risked so much deserve our support."

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate last year for post-9/11 veterans between 18 and 54 years old was 6.5%, as compared with a 4.7% rate for non-veterans. Veterans between the age of 25 and 34 were unemployed at the rate of 7.5%, as compared with 4.6% for non-veterans.

In the last Congress, MOST was incorporated into H.R. 6221, which was passed by the House. The Senate did not take up the bill.