

Joined by a twice-deployed Vermont Guard member and small business owner, Rep. Peter Welch touted the success of a Vermont-pioneered partnership that helps returning veterans start small businesses. Welch recently amended a House-passed bill to expand the partnership nationwide.

"Our troops do whatever is asked of them at war but too often struggle to find a job when they come home," Welch said. "This innovative partnership matches their unique qualifications with the challenges of starting a new small business. This is a good Vermont idea that works."

The Vermont partnership is a marriage between the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) – which helps Guard members returning from deployments – and the Vermont Small Business Development Center (SBDC), which provides management assistance to current and prospective small businesses. The partnership began in 2008 with a \$300,000 grant secured by Welch and has since helped Vermont Guard members turn their small business ideas into reality with business and marketing advice as well as start-up money.

Bolstered by the success of the program in Vermont, Welch amended the 2013 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to expand the program's reach nationwide, requiring similar partnerships in every state. The NDAA passed the House and is awaiting action in the Senate.

Welch was joined in Rutland Tuesday by Eagle Eye Property Management owners Tim and Michelle McCollum, who shared their success story. Tim, twice deployed with the Army National Guard, and Michelle found out about the Vermont partnership at a YRRP presentation and sought out a SBDC counselor with their business idea.

The SBDC counselor worked with the McCollums during Tim's deployment, holding two conference calls with him in Afghanistan, to confirm details of the business and a marketing plan. After returning, the business was ready to hit the ground running: State requirements were completed, resources were lined up, financing was in place, equipment was ready to purchase and marketing was ready to go. The business is running and successful.

For more information on Eagle Eye Property Management, [CLICK HERE](#) .