

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Plaskett Introduces Bill Encouraging Employers To Hire Veterans

VIC News / **Published On May 20, 2015 09:44 AM /**

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WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett has introduced legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives that encourages small businesses around the country to hire veterans who have served in the National Guard and Ready Reserve.

The measure, dubbed Hire-A-Hero, was announced through a press release Plaskett's office issued on Tuesday, and aims to help the men and women of the armed forces better transition to civilian life after serving.

"Introducing the Hire-A-Hero Act is necessary, in part, because we owe a debt of gratitude to our veterans—particularly the men and women of our National Guard – who

continue to selflessly sacrifice in defense of our homeland, whether it's here at home or on distant shores," the freshman congresswoman said. "But it's also important to remember that too many of our returning veterans are having great difficulty transitioning from military service back to civilian life in our communities. Their needs have not been adequately addressed and, unfortunately, joblessness is, quite frankly, unacceptable."

While unemployment among veterans have dropped to its lowest level since 2008, Plaskett said joblessness for post 9/11 veterans -- the group affected the most by unemployment -- is 7.2 percent, compared to the national average of 5.4 percent.

"These are highly trained, well qualified individuals who can add tremendous value to an employer's workforce," said Plaskett.

The Hire-A-Hero Act, according to the press release, will amend the Internal Revenue Code to allow employers a work opportunity tax credit (WOTC) for hiring a member of the National Guard or Ready Reserve, and make the WOTC credit permanent with respect to the hiring of qualified veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserve components.

"On behalf of the more than 45,000 members of the National Guard Association and the nearly 500,000 soldiers and airmen of the National Guard thank you for your commitment to the members of the National Guard and thanks for your leadership," said Major General Gus Hargett, USA (Ret.), President of the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS). The group has expressed strong support for the legislation.

LTC Brian O'Reilly, Legislative Liaison of the National Guard Association of the United States Virgin Islands (NGAUS-VI), joined the chorus of praise for the bill.

"[I support] the Work opportunity Tax Credit initiative because it provides an attractive incentive for employers to seek out National Guard and Reservist in their hiring process," O'Reilly said. "Military members entering into the workforce are fully equipped with a disciplined work ethic and organizational skills that add value to any business or organization."

Plaskett, a member of the House National Guard and Reserve Caucus, co-sponsored legislation earlier this year to ensure veterans access to health care. H.R. 572, called the Veterans Access to Community Care Act of 2015, was introduced to that ensure veterans could receive private healthcare services with or without access to a Dept. of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facility.

In March, the [VA announced](#) it would expand program eligibility to make access to care easier for veterans living more than 40 miles away from a VA medical facility.

Feature Image: The men and women of the Virgin Islands National Guard march during Veterans Day ceremonies in November 2014, in St. Thomas.

Image Credit: Virgin Islands National Guard Facebook page.