

Transition

VFW's Concerns:

The period of moving from active duty to civilian life can be challenging for some transitioning service members (TSMs). Leaving a structured life in the military and moving to an entirely different atmosphere brings with it many difficulties. Finding a new job, moving away from base, going to school, or leaving friends and comrades are just some of the issues service members face during the military to civilian transition.

Through the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), the Department of Defense (DOD) in cooperation with the Department of Labor, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Small Business Administration, ensures service members have a seamless path to civilian life. TAP has improved drastically over the past few years, but there are still many changes that need to be made to this vital program.

The *VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011* requires TSMs to attend TAP class prior to 90 days before leaving active duty service. Currently, less than half are attending by the required date. Additionally, less than 15 percent are attending the supplemental classes for education, entrepreneurship, or career technical training. Late attendance can lead to TSMs not having certain VA benefits available as soon as they leave active duty service.

Another key area that needs to be addressed is the ability for veterans to access TAP-style information and resources after they leave military service. Reopening a pilot program to offer TAP in the community for veterans is an excellent way to provide access. Once veterans reintegrate into their communities, it is important for them to be able to access specific transition resources that apply strictly to their local communities. Veterans who participated in the TAP in the community pilot program were able to access information and resources they may have missed during their initial TAP classes. Unfortunately, the pilot program was discontinued before sufficient data could be collected to determine whether it was effective.

Taking TAP class earlier with the option to attend again if possible is the best way to ensure TSMs are properly set up for success. DOD needs to be pressured to make sure TSMs have easy access to materials and resources geared toward civilian life, and encourage unit leadership to take care of their service members as they transition out of military service.

VFW's Solution:

The VFW calls on the Senate to swiftly pass H.R. 5649, *Navy SEAL Chief Petty Officer William 'Bill' Mulder (Ret.) Transition Improvement Act of 2018*, which was passed by the House on July 24, 2018, and would:

- Require service members to begin TAP classes 12 months out from separation.
- Reorganize TAP to include mandatory information about education, entrepreneurship, or technical skills.
- Reopen TAP in the community programs for veterans.
- Provide grants for private organizations that specialize in transition to employment as they are much more familiar with the job markets and their expertise is vital.
- Open pathways for veterans to connect with community and veteran organizations in their hometowns while still on active duty.