

JOE WALSH

8TH DISTRICT, ILLINOIS

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

VICE CHAIRMAN

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
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GOVERNMENT REFORM

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CHAIRMAN

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC GROWTH,
TAX, AND CAPITAL ACCESS



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1308

WASHINGTON OFFICE:

432 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3711

www.walsh.house.gov

DISTRICT OFFICE:

50 EAST GRAND AVENUE
FOX LAKE, IL 60020
(847) 973-9341

March 7, 2012

The Honorable Pat Quinn
Governor of Illinois
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Governor Quinn:

I would like to bring to your attention the difficulty our returning service members face in transitioning from military to civilian life and present a way in which our state can help.

The staggeringly high unemployment rate among post-9/11 servicemen and women encapsulates the difficulty service members are having upon completing their service. The unemployment rate for male post-9/11 veterans was 15.5 percent in January and 17.3 percent for female veterans, both of which were significantly higher than the 8.3 percent for the non-veteran population. Most unfortunately, young male veterans between the ages of 18 and 24 have an unemployment rate of nearly 27 percent. This is unacceptable, and much of the blame can be laid at the government's door.

There is a way, however, that we can help address this serious issue. Returning veterans face a lengthy credentialing and licensing process that is required for them to transition their skills, training, and experience from the military to civilian workforce. Many industry areas require specific state licenses and credentials but do not take military training or experience into consideration. For example, an Air Force mechanic who spent his entire military career maintaining \$18 million F-16s has to start his aircraft mechanic certification from scratch when he returns home—an 18-30 month process in Illinois. When civilian credentialing boards and employers fail to fully recognize military education, training, and experience, both the service member and the nation lose out. The veteran faces reduced chances of obtaining a job on par with their skills, and the civilian workforce cannot take full advantage of the extensive skills training in which our nation has invested.

Last month, the American Legion held a conference to discuss the efforts 22 states are taking to streamline the credentialing and licensing process for our returning veterans. Since this is such an important issue, I would like to sit down with you as soon as possible to discuss how Illinois can join these 22 other states and fix this issue so that our brave servicemen and women can return home and put their training to work in Illinois. I hope you will consider meeting with me on this issue, and I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Walsh". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "J" and "W".

JOE WALSH
Member of Congress