



## INFO REPORT ON THE VET ACT OF 2025

**The SPRING Group**

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**Prepared for:**

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# 1. Current State of Veteran Employment

## 1.1 Employment Trends

In 2024, the Veteran unemployment rate stands at 3.0% which is slightly below the national average of 3.9%<sup>1</sup>. While this appears to suggest a positive scenario, these statistics hide deeper issues that remain in veteran employment. Veterans aged 18-34, particularly those who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, face disproportionately high unemployment rates, with many filling roles that do not match their skills or experience accurately<sup>2</sup>.

Additionally, Veterans face elevated barriers to reentry in the civilian workforce, such as difficulty translating military experience into job qualifications, gaps in employment due to service, and mental/physical challenges that resulted from their time in the military<sup>3</sup>.

According to the Department of Labor's 2024 report, nearly 50% of veterans said they encountered difficulty finding work after leaving the military, often citing a lack of employer understanding and certification issues.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.2 Cuts to Benefits and Support Programs

The past several years have seen radical cuts in federal initiatives for veteran hiring. In 2023, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) implemented a hiring freeze and projected cuts in staff by up to 30,000 workers by the end of FY 2025 through retirements and attrition<sup>4</sup>.

Furthermore, the VA's Veteran Readiness and Employment program and the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) have also experienced staffing and funding related problems. According to the Government Accountability Office, TAP's career counseling services lost 20% of its staff, resulting in increased wait times and diminishing client satisfaction<sup>5</sup>.

Also, the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which was once the cornerstone of veteran upskilling, has not kept pace with rapidly increasing price of tuition nor the application of non-traditional credentials such as coding bootcamps, trade certifications, etc. Veterans pursuing this pathway often receive little to no support.

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<sup>1</sup> [Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Time, 2014](#)

<sup>3</sup> [US Department of Labor, 2024](#)

<sup>4</sup> [US Department of Veterans Affairs, 2025](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Government Accountability Office, 2023](#)

## 1.3 Disparities by Demographics

Veterans from marginalized groups continue to face inequalities in employment. Black veterans had an unemployment rate of 5.0% in 2024, compared to the average of 3.7% for White veterans<sup>6</sup>.

Additionally, female veterans face workplace discrimination at increased rates. Not only that, but female veterans in 2024 had an unemployment rate of 3.5%, and those aged between 18 and 24 had much higher levels of unemployment at 10.2%, which is double that of non-veteran women in the same age group<sup>7</sup>.

Finally, LGBTQ+ veterans suffer from workplace discrimination, increased challenges that result in joblessness and lowered job satisfaction, though lacking full federal data on LGBTQ+ veterans joblessness<sup>8</sup>.

## 2. Similar Initiatives

### 2.1 Energy Jobs for Veterans Act (H.R.4592)

The Energy Jobs for Veterans Act was introduced on February 3, 2010 by Representative Harry Teague (D-NM). The bill attempts to increase the employment of veterans in the energy sector. It does so through the creation of a pilot program called the “Veterans Energy-Related Employment Program”. Specifically, the program uses grants to achieve its mission. The bill requires the Secretary of Labor to “award competitive grants to three States for the establishment and administration of a State program” that provides grants “to energy employers and labor-management organizations that provide covered training, on-job training, apprenticeships, and certification classes to eligible veterans.”<sup>9</sup> The state-level program is named the “State Energy-Related Employment Program”. In order for a state to receive a grant from the pilot program, they must first submit an application to the Secretary of Labor. This application must contain “a proposal for the expenditure of grant funds to” create the program designed to provide the resources detailed above, including certification classes, apprenticeships, etc., to “a significant number of eligible veterans” while

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<sup>6</sup> [US Dept of Labor Veterans Review, 2023](#)

<sup>7</sup> [National Partnership for Women & Families, 2024](#)

<sup>8</sup> [American Progress, 2022](#)

<sup>9</sup> [United States Congress, 2010](#)

ensuring they receive “lasting and sustainable employment in well-paying jobs in the energy industry.” Finally, the application must also have information proving the state has a large enough population of veterans, the ability to enact this program, and “a robust and diverse energy industry”. Other information the Secretary desires can also be mandated to be included in the application. If a state is then approved for the grant, they may use the funds to either reimburse energy employers and organizations for the cost of providing training, on-job training, certification classes, or apprenticeships, or for outreach to inform energy employers, veterans, and labour-management organizations “of their eligibility or potential eligibility for participation in the State program.” For the energy employer to receive a grant, they must submit an application to the state-level program that includes “the rate of pay for each eligible veteran proposed to be trained using grant funds”, “the average rate of pay for an individual employed by the energy employer in a similar position who is not an eligible veteran”, and any other information the administration might require including a quarterly report for the administrator over information they specify. Additionally, an annual report is required to be submitted to Congress detailing the activities of the program as a whole and an evaluation. Finally, The Secretary of Labor is appropriated 10,000,000 dollars each year from the period of 2011 to 2015, to use towards the pilot program. The act passed the House on March 23, 2010, but never received a full vote in the Senate. However, the program was adopted as part of the Veterans Benefits Act of 2010 under Title 1, Section 106. The key difference with this version of the program was that the amount appropriated for the Secretary of Labor was reduced to 1,500,000 dollars each fiscal year from 2012 to 2014.<sup>10</sup>

## **2.2 Energy Jobs for Our Heroes Act of 2019 (S.876)**

The Energy Jobs for Our Heroes Act was introduced by Senator Duckworth (D-IL) on March 26, 2019. The bill amends the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and creates a program that encourages veterans to pursue a career in the energy industry. This program is called the Energy-Ready Vets Program and works with the Department of Defense’s SkillBridge program. Specifically, it helps to provide standardized training programs in various sectors including solar, wind, cybersecurity, other low and zero carbon sectors, and careers that work to build and maintain energy industry infrastructure.<sup>11</sup> Finally, an annual report is required that covers the activities and results of the initiative. The bill itself stalled and never received a full vote in the Senate nor House, but was included in the American Energy Innovation Act in 2020 under Section 2307.<sup>12</sup> The American Energy Innovation Act was introduced by Senators Murkowski (R-AK) and Manchin (D-WV) but

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<sup>10</sup> [United States Congress, 2010](#)

<sup>11</sup> [United States Congress, 2019](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Congressional Research Service, 2020](#)

stalled on the senate floor. Much of the act was included in the passed Energy Act of 2020, however notably excluding the Energy-Ready Vets Program.<sup>13</sup>

### 3. The VET Act of 2025 (H.R. 4105)

#### 3.1 Key Features

The Veterans Energy Transition Act of 2025 also referred to as the Vet Act of 2025, was introduced to the House of Representatives by Representative Kiggans (R-VA-2) on June 24, 2025. The bill aims to “amend title 10, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Labor” to enact a grant program that will aid “certain members of the Armed Forces, veterans, and their spouses,” in “obtain[ing] employment in the energy industry.”<sup>14</sup> The bill repeals sections 1152 and 1153 of title 10, United States Code and inserts a new section 1152. This new section requires the Secretary of Labor, in consultation with the Transition Energy Committee, to establish a grant program for “eligible entities” that employ members of the Armed Forces, veterans, and their spouses. The bill delves into the specificities of which entities are eligible to receive a grant as well as certain entities that should receive preference. Any entity that has a primary function of either “the generation, transmission, storage, or distribution of energy” or “the manufactur[ing] or distribution of equipment and components critical to the energy industry” is considered eligible, as long as they employ the targeted demographic of people. Preference is given to entities that either operate in a qualified opportunity zone, which is defined as “a population census tract that is a low-income community that is designated as a qualified opportunity zone” in section 1400Z-1 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, or are a small business concern, which is defined as enterprises that “[are] independently owned and operated and which is not dominant in its field of operation” in section 3 of the Small Business Act.<sup>1516</sup> Additionally, while all members of the armed forces, veterans, and their spouses who are employed in certain entities are eligible, there is preference given according to four different criteria in no order. First is if the individual “is involuntarily separated, approved for separation under section 1174a or 1175 of this title, or retires pursuant to the authority provided in section 4403 of the Defense Conversion, Reinvestment, and Transition Assistance Act of 1992”. The second criteria is if the individual has specifically or experience in energy construction, manufacturing, or production. The third criteria is if the person lives in a qualified opportunity zone,

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<sup>13</sup> [Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, 2020](#)

<sup>14</sup> [United States Congress, 2025](#)

<sup>15</sup> [US Code, n.d.](#)

<sup>16</sup> [US Code, n.d.](#)

defined above. Lastly, if the person “has a service-connected disability, is a homeless veteran, or faces another significant barrier to employment.” Once the grant is awarded, it can be used to reimburse the entity for required licensing and training of the specified employee, recruitment costs, and costs for relocation, administration, and orientation. Additionally, the amount of grant money may not exceed 10,000 dollars per covered individual nor 500,000 dollars total. Also, on condition of accepting the grant the entity must agree to submit an annual report over various information including the use of funds, an audit from the Inspector General of the Department of Labor or the Comptroller General, and repay any misused funds. The Secretary of Labor also has to submit a report, however it is to Congress on a date no later than September 30, 2030 and it must include a recommendation to either expand, amend, or extend the program. Next, The Secretary of Labor is required to work in collaboration with other programs similar to this one including SkillBridge, the Solid Start Program, and the Transition Assistance Program. Finally, 60,000,000 dollars per fiscal year is to be appropriated to the Department of Labor from the years 2026 to 2031.

### **3.2 Recommendations**

Members of the armed forces, veterans, and their spouses sacrifice themselves for the sake of the country. They spend much of their life putting their lives at stake and dedicating their time to a profession in which they don't receive nearly enough recognition for. It is an injustice that these veterans who sacrifice so much are an afterthought in public policy, which is why legislative action like this bill that attempts to increase employment of veterans is so important.

That being said, we would like to endorse the bill but call for some reforms to be made. First, the VET Act of 2025 has several very effective and thoughtful features that will ensure its success. The requirement of annual reports by eligible entities and subjecting them to audits is an effective measure to prevent abuse of the program and ensure funds are used efficiently. Additionally, the level of specification and preference in the bill surpass its similar predecessors discussed in section 2. This is good because it ensures that the most vulnerable business and designated groups of people will receive the aid they need to secure gainful employment and a grant. The increased cooperation with already successful programs like SkillBridge will similarly ensure the success of this legislation if enacted. While the VET Act does stand out from previous legislation, there are sections from other legislation that it should draw from and lessons it should learn from the failure of many previous legislation. First, in its current state the VET Act of 2025 lacks specificity on how the eligible entities would apply to receive grants. The

Energy jobs for Veterans Act discussed in Section 2 does an excellent job at this. If this bill could include more requirements for applications to include critical information about the number of veterans employed and whether the business can operate effectively. Next, the act should focus more on training initiatives and incentivize companies for providing them for veterans. At its current state, the bill appears to favor personnel already trained and gives no benefit for a company to train a new employee versus someone who is already qualified. The bill should be more proactive about helping entities more than simply covering their hiring veterans. Considering the salary is not included, there exists no reason for entities to choose a veteran over others with experience already. Lastly, a big concern that is likely to serve to the detriment of the bill is the amount of money appropriated. While it is important to allocate a significant amount of money for programs like this, the Energy Jobs for Veteran Act displays what will happen if the amount remains at a high level. In that case, the original amount allocated was 10,000,000 dollars and then the bill stalled, before being implemented with another act at only 1,500,000 dollars allocated. While the amount of money spent on programs like this one has increased in the past 15 years, it's important to be cognizant of the massive cost that many will be skeptical to commit towards this project.

### **3. Veterans in the Energy Sector**

#### **3.1 Increased Representation**

According to the United States Energy & Employment Report 2024, veterans hold 744,128 jobs in the energy field across the country.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, they make up 9% of the total energy workforce. This number is higher than the percentage of the total workforce veterans make up, at just 5%. As veterans continue to struggle to find employment, it is clear that the energy industry presents an excellent opportunity to combat this issue.

#### **3.2 Easily Applicable Skill Set**

Despite veterans often encountering trouble finding employment that matches their skills and experience, the energy industry serves as an outlier. First, veterans are experienced in working within high-pressure environments and leading teams, which is

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<sup>17</sup> [US Department of Energy, 2024](#)

applicable to more operational and managerial positions in the energy sector.<sup>18</sup> Secondly, experience in handling electronics and mechanical systems is often included in basic military training. These skills are valuable as they can be applied to technician and construction based roles in the industry. Lastly, veterans have many “get-it-done” skills that are valuable to any situation and allow for quick adaptability in the sector.<sup>19</sup>

### 3.3 Mission Driven Objective

Veterans commit to a mission of protecting and serving the country. Transition to the energy industry can serve to fulfill this same mission for the many millions of veterans across the country. Army veteran Nate Humphrey explains how he “used to defend the country, and now [he] lights it up”.<sup>20</sup> While on the surface the energy industry doesn’t appear to be in line with the same mission of the armed forces, the service and work committed towards initiatives like rural electricity are in line with the military’s mission because they serve to continue to protect the citizens of the country and serve them. During natural disasters like Hurricane Harvey, Irma, and Katrina, the commitment of veterans to rural electricity showed to massively help the many citizens across the country.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, army veteran Lakiesha Lloyd explains how “The renewable energy industry...can be military personnels’ next tour of duty,...You are giving back and serving your country when you are investing and working within renewable energy”.<sup>22</sup>

### 3.4 Growing Demand

While having jobs that are good fits for veterans is important, it is equally as essential that there exists enough opportunities available for them to be able and actually fill the roles. That being said, the clean energy industry added jobs at a rate of 4.2% in 2024 compared to the national average remaining at only 2% that same year.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, the energy construction industry grew at a rate of 4.5% compared to the general construction industry only growing at a rate of 2.3%.

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<sup>18</sup> [Pattern, 2025](#)

<sup>19</sup> [Baskin, 2013](#)

<sup>20</sup> [Cash, 2017](#)

<sup>21</sup> [ibid](#)

<sup>22</sup> [Reinink, 2025](#)

<sup>23</sup> [US Department of Energy, 2024](#)



## 4. Benefits of Employment on Veterans

### 4.1 Financial

As outlined in Section 1, there remains a crisis of veterans not being able to find employment that is only increasing with hiring freezes hitting organizations like the VA who attempt to help veterans become employed. This is harmful because veterans are not able to support themselves and their families. The ability to put food on the table or afford housing becomes impossible without landing a stable job. In fact, one in every nine working-aged veterans are food insecure.<sup>24</sup> Also, while veterans only make up 7% of the population, they make up 13% of the homeless population.<sup>25</sup> A stable job that can be provided in the energy industry, can allow for veterans to return to normality and provide for their or and others basic needs.

### 4.2 Mental Health

A 2024 study by researchers at the University of Texas at El Paso found that the employment of veterans is not only essential for financial support but also for their mental well being.<sup>26</sup> In fact, unemployed veterans are twice as likely to experience depression than their counterparts who are employed. Employment leads to more positive emotions and an easier transition to civilian life. Additionally, a study in 2013 found that mental health related issues developed from service like PTSD, significantly decreased the probability of employment for veterans.<sup>27</sup> In fact, a study was published in Mental Health Services Research that found PTSD was linked with a 50% higher chance of being unemployed among veterans.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> [Feeding America, n.d.](#)

<sup>25</sup> [National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, n.d.](#)

<sup>26</sup> [The University of Texas at El Paso, 2024](#)

<sup>27</sup> [Jason et al., 2013](#)

<sup>28</sup> [Institute for Advanced Medical Research, n.d](#)