

114TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 6253

To establish an advisory commission to examine licensing and certification challenges confronting members of the Armed Forces and their spouses upon post-service entry into the civilian workforce and to make recommendations to Congress for the development of a new class of uniform veteran's certifications for selected occupations that can be accepted by States and United States territories.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 28, 2016

Mr. HECK of Washington introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and in addition to the Committee on Armed Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To establish an advisory commission to examine licensing and certification challenges confronting members of the Armed Forces and their spouses upon post-service entry into the civilian workforce and to make recommendations to Congress for the development of a new class of uniform veteran's certifications for selected occupations that can be accepted by States and United States territories.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; FINDINGS.**

2 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the
3 “Collaborating for Economic Reintegration of Troops
4 Act” or the “CERT Act”.

5 (b) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

6 (1) One of the greatest challenges facing
7 transitioning members of the Armed Forces and
8 their spouses is finding civilian employment.

9 (2) Veterans report that employment is the top
10 challenge upon separation or retirement from the
11 Armed Forces, with as many as 80 percent of mem-
12 bers leaving the Armed Forces without civilian em-
13 ployment in hand and one in four reporting being
14 underemployed and earning below-poverty wages.

15 (3) Military training correlates to approximately
16 962 civilian professions, yet even with their military
17 education and experience, veterans must duplicate
18 their training to meet various State specific certifi-
19 cation guidelines.

20 (4) Veteran transition can be aided by estab-
21 lishing a commission to examine licensing and cer-
22 tification challenges confronting members of the
23 Armed Forces upon post-service entry into the civil-
24 ian workforce.

25 (5) This commission will identify where there
26 are gaps between military training and civilian cre-

1 dentials’ training requirements and can identify op-
2 portunities for military training to be reformed to
3 address such gaps and for transition to be improved
4 by increased recognition of military training as
5 equivalent through a “Blue Star certification”.

6 (6) The Blue Star certification initiative would
7 set sufficient standards for entry into certain li-
8 censed professions. States could adopt Blue Star
9 certifications as equivalent to entry into certain li-
10 censed professions. The Armed Forces, in their
11 training process, would ensure members reach Blue
12 Star proficiency so that upon leaving service they
13 could swiftly transition to civilian employment.

14 (7) Operation Certification would allow for
15 members of the Armed Forces to directly and imme-
16 diately apply their training and experience to the
17 private sector. States that adopt the Blue Star cre-
18 dential will attract and retain talented and civic
19 minded veterans. Furthermore, this would modernize
20 military training within Blue Star occupational spe-
21 cialties to ensure that members are well trained and
22 prepared to meet any challenge upon separation.

1 **SEC. 2. COMMISSION ON VETERAN CERTIFICATION STAND-**
2 **ARDS.**

3 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established an advi-
4 sory commission to be known as the Commission on Vet-
5 eran Certification Standards (in this Act referred to as
6 the “Commission”).

7 (b) MEMBERSHIP.—

8 (1) NUMBER AND APPOINTMENT.—The Com-
9 mission shall be composed of 16 members appointed
10 as follows:

11 (A) The Majority Leader of the Senate
12 shall appoint one member.

13 (B) The Minority Leader of the Senate
14 shall appoint one member.

15 (C) The Speaker of the House of Rep-
16 resentatives shall appoint one member.

17 (D) The Minority Leader of the House of
18 Representatives shall appoint one member.

19 (E) The Chairman of the Committee on
20 Armed Services of the Senate shall appoint one
21 member.

22 (F) The Ranking Member of the Com-
23 mittee on Armed Services of the Senate shall
24 appoint one member.

1 (G) The Chairman of the Committee on
2 Armed Services of the House of Representatives
3 shall appoint one member.

4 (H) The Ranking Member of the Com-
5 mittee on Armed Services of the House of Rep-
6 resentatives shall appoint one member.

7 (I) The Chairman of the Committee on
8 Veterans' Affairs of the Senate shall appoint
9 one member.

10 (J) The Ranking Member of the Com-
11 mittee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate shall
12 appoint one member.

13 (K) The Chairman of the Committee on
14 Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representa-
15 tives shall appoint one member.

16 (L) The Ranking Member of the Com-
17 mittee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of
18 Representatives shall appoint one member.

19 (M) The Chairman of the Committee on
20 Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the
21 Senate shall appoint one member.

22 (N) The Ranking Member of the Com-
23 mittee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pen-
24 sions of the Senate shall appoint one member.

1 (O) The Chairman of the Committee on
2 Education and the Workforce of the House of
3 Representatives shall appoint one member.

4 (P) The Ranking Member of the Com-
5 mittee on Education and the Workforce of the
6 House of Representatives shall appoint one
7 member.

8 (2) DEADLINE FOR APPOINTMENT.—Members
9 shall be appointed to the Commission under para-
10 graph (1) not later than 45 days after the date of
11 the enactment of this Act.

12 (c) CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR.—The Commission shall
13 elect a Chair and Vice Chair from among its members.

14 (d) TERMS.—Members shall be appointed for the life
15 of the Commission. A vacancy in the Commission shall not
16 affect its powers, and shall be filled in the same manner
17 as the original appointment was made.

18 (e) COMPENSATION FOR MEMBERS OF THE COMMIS-
19 SION.—Members of the Commission will not receive wages
20 or compensation on account of their services on the Com-
21 mission, but will be allowed travel expenses, including per
22 diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for employ-
23 ees under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title 5, United
24 States Code, while away from their homes or regular

1 places of business in the performance of services for the
2 Commission.

3 (f) USE OF GOVERNMENT INFORMATION.—The Com-
4 mission may secure directly from any department or agen-
5 cy of the Federal Government such information as the
6 Commission considers necessary to carry out its duties.
7 Upon such request of the Chair of the Commission, the
8 head of such department or agency shall furnish such in-
9 formation to the Commission.

10 (g) POSTAL SERVICES.—The Commission may use
11 the United States mails in the same manner and under
12 the same conditions as departments and agencies of the
13 United States.

14 (h) PERSONAL SERVICES.—

15 (1) AUTHORITY TO PROCURE.—The Commis-
16 sion may—

17 (A) procure the services of experts or con-
18 sultants (or of organizations of experts or con-
19 sultants) in accordance with the provisions of
20 section 3109 of title 5, United States Code; and

21 (B) pay in connection with such services
22 travel expenses of individuals, including trans-
23 portation and per diem in lieu of subsistence,
24 while such individuals are traveling from their
25 homes or places of business to duty stations.

1 (2) MAXIMUM DAILY PAY RATES.—The daily
2 rate paid an expert or consultant procured pursuant
3 to paragraph (1) may not exceed the daily rate paid
4 a person occupying a position at level IV of the Ex-
5 ecutive Schedule under section 5315 of title 5,
6 United States Code.

7 **SEC. 3. COMMISSION HEARINGS AND MEETINGS.**

8 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Commission shall conduct
9 hearings on the recommendations it is taking under con-
10 sideration. Any such hearing, except a hearing in which
11 classified information is to be considered, shall be open
12 to the public. Any hearing open to the public shall be an-
13 nounced on a Federal website at least 14 days in advance.
14 For all hearings open to the public, the Commission shall
15 release an agenda and a listing of materials relevant to
16 the topics to be discussed. The Commission is authorized
17 and encouraged to hold hearings and meetings in various
18 locations throughout the country to provide maximum op-
19 portunity for public comment and participation in the
20 Commission’s execution of its duties.

21 (b) MEETINGS.—

22 (1) INITIAL MEETING.—The Commission shall
23 hold its initial meeting not later than 60 days after
24 the date as of which all members have been ap-
25 pointed.

1 (2) SUBSEQUENT MEETINGS.—After its initial
2 meeting, the Commission shall meet upon the call of
3 the Chair or a majority of its members.

4 (3) PUBLIC MEETINGS.—Each meeting of the
5 Commission shall be held in public unless any mem-
6 ber objects or classified information is to be consid-
7 ered.

8 (c) QUORUM.—Nine members of the Commission
9 shall constitute a quorum, but a lesser number may hold
10 hearings or meetings.

11 (d) PUBLIC COMMENTS.—The Commission shall seek
12 written comments from the general public and interested
13 parties on matters of the Commission’s review under this
14 Act. Comments shall be requested through a solicitation
15 in the Federal Register and announcement on the Internet
16 website of the Commission.

17 (e) SPACE FOR USE OF COMMISSION.—Not later
18 than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act,
19 the Administrator of General Services, in consultation
20 with the Secretary, shall identify and make available suit-
21 able excess space within the Federal space inventory to
22 house the operations of the Commission. If the Adminis-
23 trator is not able to make such suitable excess space avail-
24 able within such 90-day period, the Commission may lease
25 space to the extent the funds are available.

1 (f) CONTRACTING AUTHORITY.—The Commission
2 may acquire administrative supplies and equipment for
3 Commission use to the extent funds are available.

4 **SEC. 4. COMMISSION DUTIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS.**

5 (a) DUTIES.—The Commission shall perform the fol-
6 lowing duties:

7 (1) Examine the unique challenges that con-
8 front members of the Armed Forces and their
9 spouses upon post-service entry into the civilian
10 workforce.

11 (2) Determine best practices and evaluate ef-
12 forts that have been undertaken by the States and
13 the executive branch, including the program required
14 by section 2015 of title 10, United States Code, to
15 assist members of the Armed Forces in obtaining
16 professional credentials, to facilitate the transfer of
17 skills and certifications from the military to civilian
18 settings.

19 (3) Identify industries and jobs that can most
20 benefit from military experience and training and
21 identify military specialties that can readily transfer
22 to high-demand jobs.

23 (4) Develop recommended Blue Star
24 credentialing standards for select professions in
25 order to simplify and streamline training and transi-

tion efforts for members of the Armed Forces and their spouses upon post-service entry into the civilian workforce.

(5) Design an evaluation criteria that the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs can use to evaluate the extent to which States and territories adopt and utilize the Blue Star credentialing standards.

(b) DEVELOPMENT OF COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS.—The Commission shall develop recommendations on the matters subject to its review under subsection (a).

(c) COMMISSION REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS.—

(1) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date on which the Commission is established, the Commission shall transmit to the President and Congress a report containing the findings and conclusions of the Commission, together with the recommendations of the Commission regarding the matters described in subsection (a). The Commission shall include in the report legislative language and recommendations for administrative action to implement the recommendations of the Commission.

(2) REQUIREMENT FOR APPROVAL.—The recommendations of the Commission must be approved

1 by a majority of the members of the Commission be-
2 fore the recommendations may be transmitted to the
3 President and Congress under paragraph (1).

4 (3) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—The Commission
5 shall publish a copy of the report required by para-
6 graph (1) on an Internet website available to the
7 public on the same date on which it transmits that
8 report to the President and Congress under that
9 paragraph.

10 **SEC. 5. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND STAFF.**

11 (a) EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.—The Commission shall
12 appoint and fix the rate of basic pay for an Executive Di-
13 rector in accordance with section 3161 of title 5, United
14 States Code.

15 (b) STAFF.—The Executive Director, with the ap-
16 proval of the Commission, may appoint and fix the rate
17 of basic pay for additional personnel as staff of the Com-
18 mission in accordance with section 3161 of title 5, United
19 States Code.

20 **SEC. 6. TERMINATION OF COMMISSION.**

21 The Commission shall terminate 90 days after the
22 date of the submission of the report under section 4.

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