

## **Congressman John Rutherford (FL-04) Testimony**

### *H.R. 3965, Veterans Armed for Success Act*

House Veterans' Affairs Committee – Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

October 11, 2017

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Chairman Arrington, Ranking Member O'Rourke, fellow members of the Subcommittee – thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of my legislation, the Veterans Armed for Success Act.

In my district in Northeast Florida and on my time serving on this Committee, I have heard how companies prefer to hire veterans for many reasons. They are responsible, responsive, and hard-working. Their skills translate well into many fields. In short, veterans get the job done right. Yet, many veterans I have met feel frustrated with their post-service career opportunities and often do not know how to translate their learned skills into the job market.

There are few things more important to the quality of life for our nation's veterans than transitioning into stable, long-term employment. It creates economically prosperous families; it builds our local communities; and of extreme importance, it improves the mental health for many veterans.

In response to these growing needs of veterans and their families in our area, Operation New Uniform in my home city of Jacksonville was created. With large Navy, Marine Corps, and Florida Guard installations in my district, thousands of active duty personnel and 150,000 veterans call Northeast Florida home.

When you match this population with the huge corporate interest in Jacksonville, ONU has successfully matched these veterans with companies looking to hire veterans. Through their skills-based learning and training, 96% of veterans who have gone through their program have found meaningful careers within four months of completing the program. I have spoken at an ONU graduation and seen firsthand how effective this program is. It has been a huge win for both veterans and Northeast Florida businesses. While the group has been hugely successful, ONU is funded through private donations and, unfortunately, they have had to turn away many veterans who apply for the program because they do not have enough resources.

When I first met with the group, I was surprised to hear that, currently, no federal grant program exists for these organizations. In looking further into the issue, I learned that while the DOD Transition Assistance Program and efforts at the Department of Labor have worked to meet veterans' needs, there needs to be supplemental, off base programs for those who need further assistance in finding employment. ONU is just one example of the many organizations that VA, DOD, and DOL can work with more closely to ensure that the programs and resources our veterans receive are directly leading to long term careers.

My legislation will create a federal grant-matching program to encourage more organizations to set our veterans up for success, will shore up our commitment to getting resources to veterans in need of further assistance, and will also gauge the nationwide needs for programs like ONU.

In closing, I would like to thank the Chairman, the Ranking Member, my fellow Congressman from Jacksonville, Al Lawson, for introducing this bill with me, as well as my colleagues on the Subcommittee and the Subcommittee staff for their commitment to this and other bills under consideration today. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.