

Veterans Administration from being taken into account for purposes of the employer mandate under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

At the request of Mr. MCCONNELL, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3057 intended to be proposed to H.R. 3474, *supra*.

AMENDMENT NO. 3058

At the request of Mr. JOHANNIS, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3058 intended to be proposed to H.R. 3474, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow employers to exempt employees with health coverage under TRICARE or the Veterans Administration from being taken into account for purposes of the employer mandate under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

At the request of Mr. MCCONNELL, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3058 intended to be proposed to H.R. 3474, *supra*.

AMENDMENT NO. 3063

At the request of Mr. JOHANNIS, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3063 intended to be proposed to H.R. 3474, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow employers to exempt employees with health coverage under TRICARE or the Veterans Administration from being taken into account for purposes of the employer mandate under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

AMENDMENT NO. 3066

At the request of Mr. JOHANNIS, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3066 intended to be proposed to H.R. 3474, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow employers to exempt employees with health coverage under TRICARE or the Veterans Administration from being taken into account for purposes of the employer mandate under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

AMENDMENT NO. 3067

At the request of Mr. JOHANNIS, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3067 intended to be proposed to H.R. 3474, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow employers to exempt employees with health coverage under TRICARE or the Veterans Administration from being taken into account for purposes of the employer mandate under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

AMENDMENT NO. 3068

At the request of Mr. JOHANNIS, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3068 intended to be proposed to H.R. 3474, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow employers to exempt employees with health coverage under TRICARE or the Veterans Administration from being taken into account for purposes of the employer mandate under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

AMENDMENT NO. 3072

At the request of Mr. ROBERTS, the name of the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3072 in-

tended to be proposed to H.R. 3474, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow employers to exempt employees with health coverage under TRICARE or the Veterans Administration from being taken into account for purposes of the employer mandate under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

At the request of Mr. JOHANNIS, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3072 intended to be proposed to H.R. 3474, *supra*.

AMENDMENT NO. 3073

At the request of Mr. JOHANNIS, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3073 intended to be proposed to H.R. 3474, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow employers to exempt employees with health coverage under TRICARE or the Veterans Administration from being taken into account for purposes of the employer mandate under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

AMENDMENT NO. 3074

At the request of Mr. ROBERTS, the name of the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3074 intended to be proposed to H.R. 3474, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow employers to exempt employees with health coverage under TRICARE or the Veterans Administration from being taken into account for purposes of the employer mandate under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

At the request of Mr. JOHANNIS, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3074 intended to be proposed to H.R. 3474, *supra*.

AMENDMENT NO. 3077

At the request of Mr. JOHANNIS, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3077 intended to be proposed to H.R. 3474, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow employers to exempt employees with health coverage under TRICARE or the Veterans Administration from being taken into account for purposes of the employer mandate under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

At the request of Mr. MCCONNELL, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3077 intended to be proposed to H.R. 3474, *supra*.

AMENDMENT NO. 3078

At the request of Mr. JOHANNIS, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3078 intended to be proposed to H.R. 3474, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow employers to exempt employees with health coverage under TRICARE or the Veterans Administration from being taken into account for purposes of the employer mandate under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

At the request of Mr. MCCONNELL, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3078 intended to be proposed to H.R. 3474, *supra*.

AMENDMENT NO. 3086

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from New Hamp-

shire (Ms. AYOTTE) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3086 intended to be proposed to H.R. 3474, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow employers to exempt employees with health coverage under TRICARE or the Veterans Administration from being taken into account for purposes of the employer mandate under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

AMENDMENT NO. 3087

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. AYOTTE) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3087 intended to be proposed to H.R. 3474, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow employers to exempt employees with health coverage under TRICARE or the Veterans Administration from being taken into account for purposes of the employer mandate under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. KAINE:

S. 2341. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to enhance the authority for members of the Armed Forces to obtain professional credentials; to the Committee on Armed Services.

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, since taking office, one of my highest priorities has been finding solutions to the unemployment rate among American veterans. We proudly in Virginia proclaim a tighter connection with the American military than any other State—and I know 99 or 98 other Senators would argue with me about that, but 1 in 9 Virginians is a veteran. Virginia has 27 military installations, including the largest naval base in the world in Norfolk, and all marine officers are trained at Quantico. Virginia's map is a map of Virginia's military history: Yorktown, where the Revolutionary War ended; Appomattox, where the Civil War ended, and other Civil War battlefields; and the Pentagon, where one of the two attacks on 9/11 occurred.

Our servicemembers in Virginia and nationally make a tremendous sacrifice for our country, and we have to have a commitment to honor these sacrifices and demonstrate to service men and women the same degree of commitment as they have demonstrated to our country.

That is what makes the unemployment rate among our veterans so troubling. Veterans who are exiting military service in the Iraq and Afghan war era—especially enlisted men and women who may not have college degrees—have an unemployment rate significantly higher than the national average. In fact—a statistic that when I heard it really stunned me—between the fiscal year 2001 and 2012, the Department of Defense spent \$9.6 billion on unemployment insurance payments—\$9.6 billion in payments to men

and women who had exited the military and then couldn't find a job. Obviously, these are men and women who served valiantly during the longest period of war in the history of this country.

As our Armed Forces continue to draw down in Afghanistan after nearly 13 years of combat operations—and those combat operations are scheduled to cease this year—we have to do everything we can to ensure that these servicemembers can find a way to quickly transition from military to civilian life and find good jobs in the process.

We know—and the Presiding Officer knows very well in his personal capacity—that servicemembers gain incredibly valuable skills while serving in the military. We make a significant investment as a society in training each and every member of our Armed Forces in a military occupation or specialty, many of which of have parallel fields in the civilian workforce.

I have a child in the military now. Watching the degree of training he undergoes—training that will be very valuable for civilian work when he chooses to make that transition—and seeing the kind of training his colleagues undergo as well convinces me of these great skills that adhere in our military. But instead of making it easier for these servicemembers to get credit for their skills that would help them as they transition to civilian life, they are often continuing to face roadblocks.

That inspired me to introduce my first bill as a Senator last year, the Troop Talent Act of 2013. The Troop Talent Act required that information on civilian credentialing opportunities be made available to servicemembers during their Active-Duty training and that information on military training and experience be provided to civilian credentialing agencies to help them understand how the skills for success in military life transfer directly to the skills for success in civilian life. If you are learning to operate heavy equipment in the military, get the commercial driver's license right when you are learning it. If you are learning to be a battlefield medic in the military, get physician assistant or nursing credits right when you are getting that. If you are at the ordnance school at Fort Lee in Virginia learning to be an ordnance officer, get the American Welding Society's certificate after you take your welding class, put it in the personnel file, and when you get ready to move to civilian life, you will have credentials that will be understood by a civilian workforce.

I am proud that key parts of the bill were signed into law as part of the national defense authorization bill we passed in December, and with this information servicemembers will be more prepared to transfer into civilian life. They will have a better sense of what skills servicemembers possess as they enter civilian life. So the passage of

this Troop Talent Act was for me a first step, but there are many more steps we have to take to tackle this problem of veterans' unemployment.

In speaking with military leadership, servicemembers and veterans, I have learned there are some additional barriers to the employment of our veterans that deal with how tuition assistance monies can be used by those in active service. One is the cost of fees associated with getting credentials while on Active Duty. Those costs of credentials are not covered by the current military tuition assistance program.

Some military members transfer out of the service and they decide to pursue a degree at a college or university, but others are ready to immediately enter the workforce with the skills they obtained through military training. Again, to use the example I started with earlier, if you are a logistics ordnance officer training in Fort Lee in Virginia, you take metalworking courses, you take welding courses, and those are the kinds of skills in very significant demand in the American manufacturing sector right now. Those individuals often have an ability—they certainly have the skills—to get good jobs when they leave. But they often lack something important. They lack the credential the civilian workforce understands—in this case an American Welding Society credential, for example.

Currently, the military tuition assistance program provides Active-Duty servicemembers financial assistance up to \$4,500 in aggregate per fiscal year for postsecondary courses or degree programs. While you are in service, you can take degree programs, and up to \$4,500 a year, those degree programs and courses will be supported by the military tuition assistance program. But despite the success of this program, certification and license fees are not allowed to be paid with tuition assistance benefits.

So in other words, if you are in the military and you want to take a college course, you can get paid. If you are in the military and you want to pass a welding certificate exam to be a welder, the tuition assistance program will not pay for that. This is a challenge because these credentialing exams can cost significantly out-of-pocket, often \$300 to \$500, and many of our enlisted men and women don't have that. It is really inequitable we would allow Active-Duty military to draw down up to \$4,500 for college courses but not draw down one penny to get a credential for a technical skill they maintain.

This is part of a larger societal issue. I think we value college and community college in a way we do not or have not traditionally valued career and technical education programs. So many of our programs—Pell grants and Stafford loans, GI bill benefits—often can be used more easily for community college or 4-year colleges than they can be used for even the highest quality career and technical programs.

That is why today I am introducing the Credentialing Improvement for Troop Talent, or CREDIT Act. The legislation will go into that military tuition assistance program and expand the authority of the program so that it can cover credentialing expenses for those military men and women who want to move into career and technical fields. It will give servicemembers the means to pay for credentials while they are still on Active-Duty and before they transition into civilian workforce.

In addition, the legislation will ensure the credentials our servicemembers earn are of the highest quality and that they are recognized by national and international standards, and not offered by shady or sort of fly-by-night organizations that simply want to pocket money that our military men and women are entitled to in order to help them get an education for themselves.

We in Virginia have seen firsthand how the skills and talents of the men and women who serve our country can benefit our workforce and contribute to our economy. We make a huge investment in our servicemembers, and it is a disservice not only to them but also to our Nation not to take advantage of the skills we bestow on these men and women once they transition to civilian life. We have to, all of us, Mr. President, stay focused on this. It is unacceptable for us as a Nation to look in the mirror and say: Our servicemen and women who served in Iraq and Afghanistan have an unemployment rate higher than the national average, but I guess there is nothing we can do about that. No, we can do a lot about it. We can make sure they get skills while in the military that a civilian workforce will understand, and that those skills can also carry with them credentials that will enable them to get a quicker traction when they move into the civilian workforce.

It is unacceptable we are paying \$800 million a year in the Federal budget to pay for unemployment benefits for people who exit the military and then can't find jobs when they do. We need steps such as the CREDIT Act and others to bring down that veterans' unemployment rate, to enable people to get the kinds of jobs that will help them have a happy and successful life postservice, and that will enable society to take advantage of the great skills and talents they have.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 446—RECOGNIZING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONGRESSIONAL DECLARATION OF BOURBON WHISKEY AS A DISTINCTIVE PRODUCT OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. McCONNELL (for himself and Mr. PAUL) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to: