

VETERANS VOICE EMPLOYMENT CONCERNS



United States veterans returning from service in Iraq and Afghanistan are finding it harder to find a job than civilians in this country. Waterloo, Iowa was the scene on Monday of this week for a hearing to find out why veterans are having such a hard time finding jobs once they return home from service. The hearing was held by a United States House of Veterans Affairs subcommittee on economic opportunity. Nathaniel Rose is a University of Iowa student and a staff sergeant with the Iowa Army National Guard. Rose led off the testimony at the hearing in Waterloo in an effort to describe how difficult it is for service members to describe their skills to employers in the United States. "If I put 'Led over 150 combat missions in Afghanistan' in my resume, most employers would not understand the significance of that," said Rose. "Nor would many soldiers know how to convert that into a resume-friendly statement." Bruce Braley, the US 1st District Representative for Iowa, was one of the hosts of the hearings that took place at the Waterloo Community School District Education Service Center. "As I sit here, I really think what we need is a Rosetta Stone-type of program," Braley said. "Employers seem to shy away from hiring citizen soldiers. With some people, there's a certain stigma that the military is hard charging and aggressive." Col. Ben Corell of Strawberry Point, commander of the National Guard 2nd Brigade Combat Team, returned home recently from Afghanistan and said that 10 years of deployments are wearing on the good will of businesses across the country. "With everything being equal, I'm probably going to lend my support to the guy not in the Reserves or National Guard because they're going to be there every day," he said. "At some point we're going to run out of goodwill and I think we're on the very edge of that, if not past it." Corell also thinks that the high unemployment rate could be mitigated by the fact that a lot of soldiers are returning home, taking advantage of the G.I. Bill, and returning to school for further education. There were quite a few Iowa businesses present at the hearing that claim they regularly hire veterans who have returned home from service. The companies in attendance who made that claim include Deere & Co., Rockwell Collins, and the Principal Financial Group. Then on the other hand, the Iowa Director of the United States Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service, Anthony Smithhart claims that a lot of recruiting events for veterans across the state have very poor turnout and interest. There is a 'Hiring our Heroes' event scheduled for November 8 in Des Moines according to Smithhart.

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