



The Green Zone Initiative

CONNECTING A VETERAN COMMUNITY. *State of Nevada*

GREENZONENETWORK.ORG





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Office of the Governor

November 2012

Dear Nevadans:

Thank you for taking a moment to engage with us on the issues facing Nevada's service members, veterans, and their families. Since taking office, I have been impressed by the level of commitment Nevada shows to those who served our state and our nation, and I believe we need to commit to continuing that dedication in the years ahead. It is my hope that you will find this website to be a good place to start the conversation and allow us to work towards our many goals.

I have always supported those who serve, but being elected to serve as the governor of Nevada has given me a new appreciation for our service members, veterans, and their families. As the Commander-in-Chief of the Nevada National Guard, one of my responsibilities is to see off Nevada's service members and welcome them home to a state that appreciates their service and supports them. This is a responsibility that I take very solemnly and that I am deeply proud to hold. But it is also a responsibility that has given me new insights into the personal sacrifices endured by our serve members and their families on behalf of Nevadans and Americans.

Our country has been at war for over a decade, and during that time, there has been tremendous support offered from all levels of government and from our communities. While there are many services, benefits, and opportunities for service members, veterans and their families already in existence, there are also gaps in those services and opportunities for continued support. It is our job to ensure that we improve the delivery of those services to those who served our country, and to ensure that we fill the gaps where and when we can.

Filling the gaps is precisely the focus of the Green Zone Initiative. Through the initiative we have developed a strategy to improve services by mobilizing existing and potential providers of veteran services, providing recommendations to policymakers, non-profits, and other members of the statewide veteran community, and delivering information to veterans in the most efficient way possible. Our focus has been on the areas of veteran education, employment, and wellness benefits, and we have developed an interagency approach to accomplish our goals.

Thank you again for your interest in this important initiative. There is much time and effort directed towards these issues in our state already, and it is my hope that the Green Zone Initiative will build on this foundation to help us achieve even more success in the area of veteran services.

Sincere regards,

BRIAN SANDOVAL
Governor

Executive Summary

Deployed Abroad, Thriving at Home

Veterans returning home offer a unique opportunity for our state to build our communities, advance our economic development goals, and strengthen families. These men and women are proven, trained, committed, patriotic, community oriented Americans. Their individual strengths and capabilities must not be allowed to wither in a dead end job; they should not fail to take the next step in their education because of lack of opportunity; and they should not suffer the traumas of war without assistance.

Estimates vary, however, the number of veterans who call the state of Nevada home ranges anywhere from 243,900 to 339,000.ⁱ Nearly 9% of Nevada veterans are females, 2% are minorities and 26% are veterans of the Gulf Wars.ⁱⁱ Current war era veterans pose a new challenge to our traditional means of outreach and engagement, in that they have a different worldview, they communicate differently, and they are often very busy getting reestablished.

The existing veteran community is having significant challenges in outreach to members of this demographic, finding that traditional methods of communicating with these veterans are not working, and that the benefits and services that are available to these veterans are not being communicated effectively either. We cannot hope to help this current generation of transitioning veterans if we are not coordinating with existing veteran groups and helping to ensure the optimal delivery of benefits to our existing veteran population.

Although the challenges veterans face when returning home are well known, and common to many veterans, they are not insurmountable. Our veterans struggle with finding employment, gaining access to higher education, and maintaining health and wellness when they return home to us.

There is an incredible amount of goodwill, political will and community desire to help these men and women and their families. Countless programs, services, opportunities, and organizations are available to Nevada’s veterans, service members, and their family members to help assist with the challenges of transitioning back to civilian life. So why are we still seeing so many veterans struggle to make the transition and lacking access to the supports they need to thrive? What can Nevada do to impact this issue?

In response, Nevada created the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs in October 2012. The Interagency Council is made up of leadership from across state departments and divisions and is governed by executive order. Nevada is one of the first states in the country to implement an interagency coordinating body for the benefit of veterans, and the first to create a Governor’s Office of Veterans Policy. The Interagency Council will connect fragmented systems in order to ensure an integrated response to the needs of veterans, creating a strong, adaptive and connected system to serve veterans.

Our model for change is based on a proven Nevada model that began in 2007 when the Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition published the Help Hope Home 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness. The plan, and the systems architecture behind it, including an interagency

and inter-municipality council, a funding mechanism, and outreach components, achieved a 30% reduction in homelessness on the streets even during a down economy when homelessness itself was up.

We will build on the strengths of this model, which at its core is about marrying what we know works both nationally and locally with local assets, and aligning our systems of government and community to advance the goal of solving a problem, not just managing it.

We have so many assets to deploy in this fight to improve outcomes for veterans and their families, including the incredible political, social, and community will to ensure that veterans are thriving. We have hundreds of volunteers ready to help, elected officials who are committed to making Nevada home to our veterans, and community members who want to help but don’t know how. The Green Zone Initiative will help to translate that Sea of Goodwill, as the Pentagon calls it, into impact. We know that if we can marry national best practices with local assets and position these partnerships for investment, we will build the system we need, and we will be successful.

We are a fiercely independent state, and an entrepreneurial one as well. We value the individual in Nevada, as well as the collective, and as we prioritize this issue, we will focus on the individual returning home, as well as veterans as a whole. Veterans thriving, by definition, means every single veteran thriving. Success cannot be defined as anything less.

“Nevada has a real opportunity to lead the nation with respect to marshalling all of the available resources for veterans and family members. It’s an exciting opportunity, and one that can have a positive impact for generations.”

— Caleb S. Cage, Executive Director, Nevada Office of Veterans Services



The Green Zone Initiative at Work in Nevada

The mission of the Green Zone Initiative is to ensure that every veteran at home in our state, or returning to our state, and to our communities, is thriving. Now that they are home, now that they are once again part of the communities they came from, or moved to, it is our collective job to create the conditions for employment, education, and wellness that our veterans deserve to come home to.

Within Nevada’s state government, the Green Zone Initiative will provide an interagency approach to veteran education, employment, and wellness benefits. Beyond the state government, it is intended to marshal and align all available resources in order to reduce gaps in service, reduce duplication of services, and otherwise better serve the Nevada service members, veterans, their families and survivors.

OUR VISION

We believe that Nevada can be a beacon state in terms of how we invite, engage, support and maximize the incredible strengths and talents our veterans are bringing home. Our governor, Brian Sandoval, has put a stake in the ground around this issue, and has issued a strong call to action for Nevada to address the challenges our returning veterans are facing, to not only manage the problems, but to solve them.

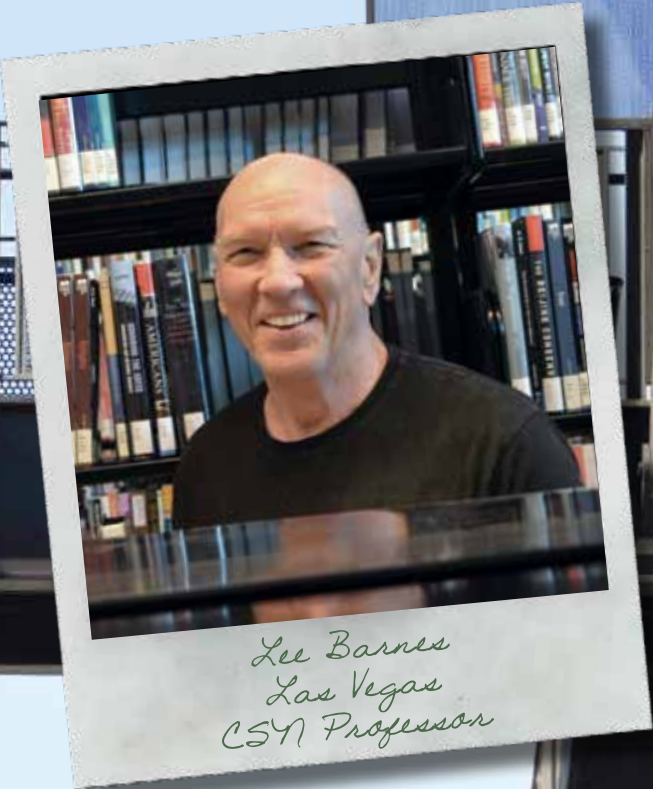
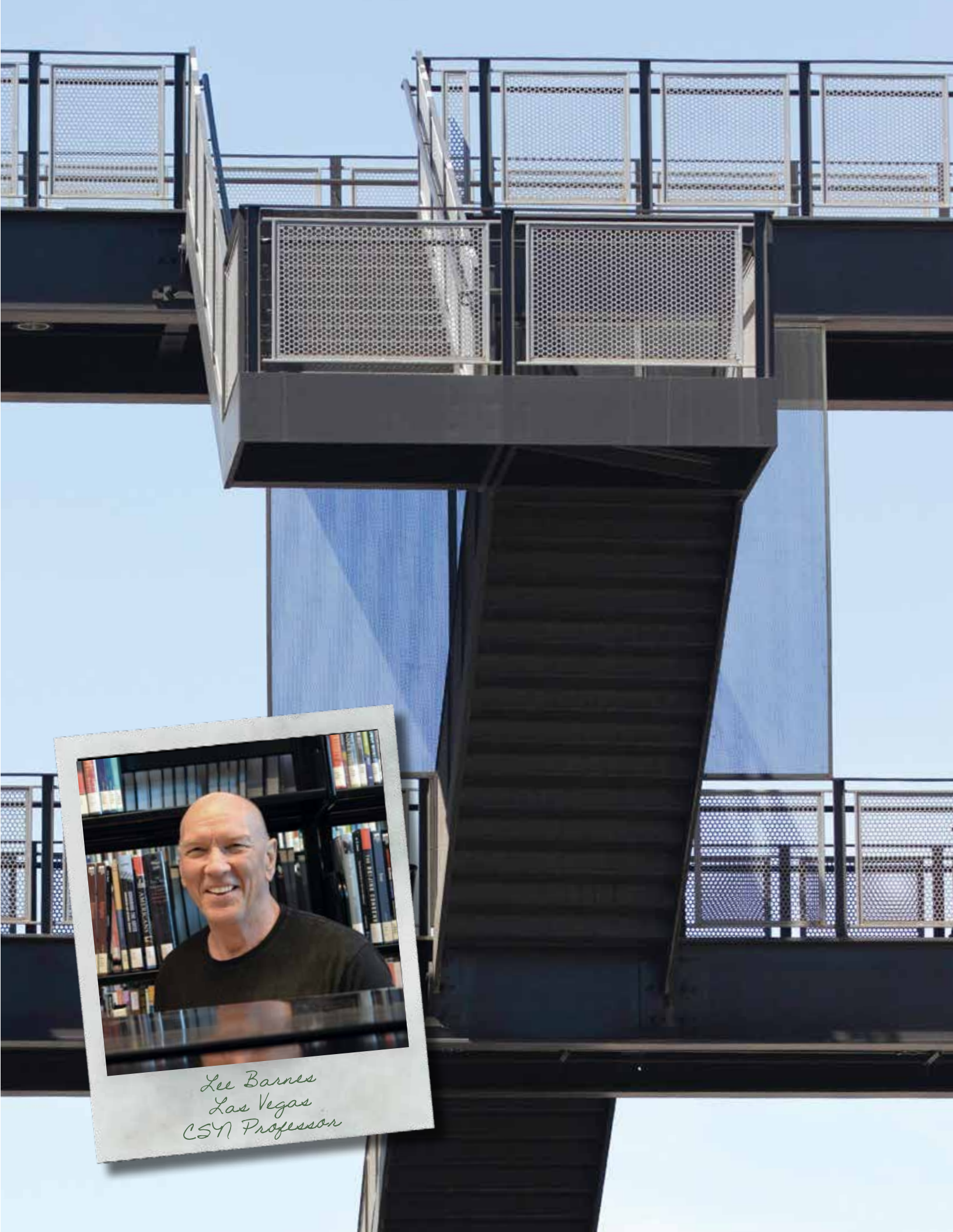
In order to address complex social issues, like this one, we must build systems that can respond, adapt, evolve, and inform that are built by local leaders and stakeholders. We believe that the most powerful way to solve these problems is by connecting and networking the existing programs and organizations across the state that are already serving this population, thereby building something greater than simply the sum of our parts.

The Green Zone Initiative provides the blueprint for a systems based architecture at the state, county, and local levels that will help to integrate existing policies, programs and practices, as well as network the many strong programs and veteran serving organizations across the state.

The Green Zone is not about creating new government programs, but rather about aligning activities around our shared vision, ensuring through research and development that we are working on, and funding the right things. We are prioritizing activities that are proven to drive real, measurable change, and by connecting and leveraging existing assets and partners. Our model will align the financial, political, social and intellectual resources of our state to best solve these problems, and it will provide a framework for action and investment that will advance change.

“Many veterans have chosen to call Nevada their home and the destination to start their businesses. Like the military, Nevada has a diverse population and a vibrant sense of community that bodes well for aspiring entrepreneurs.”

— Terry Johnson, former Director, Nevada Department of Business and Industry



Lee Barnes
Las Vegas
CSN Professor

DEFINING SUCCESS

While the Nevada Office of Veterans Services’ purpose is to provide veterans and their families with claims assistance, burial options through the State Memorial Cemeteries, and long-term care at the Nevada State Veterans Home, veterans often find themselves in need of services that span multiple systems outside the Office of Veterans Services. Already we have identified employment, health and wellness, and education as primary services returning veterans are struggling with. As is the case with many populations and many issues, Nevada lacks a clear mechanism to connect these fragmented systems in order to ensure a seamless, integrated response to the needs of veterans. The Interagency Council intends to become that mechanism, ensuring a better coordinated, connected, and informed system of services.

We know by building the Green Zone, and making coordinated investments in the right areas, the following objectives can be attained. Only when veterans have access to quality education, secure and fulfilling employment, and the ability to access healthcare, wellness programs, and community services can our nation’s service members, their families, and the families of the fallen truly reintegrate back into the communities they grew up in, and are now living in again.

Green Zone success is defined as:

1. Service members, veterans, and families of the fallen have access to high quality higher education programs, and have the financial means to attend college or university. Service members, veterans and their families will also be competitive for admission to universities, colleges, trade schools, and other degree-producing institutions of higher learning.
2. Service members, veterans, and families of the fallen are competitive for high quality jobs and stable employment after their transition out of service.
3. Service members, veterans, their families, and the families of the fallen have access to healthcare, mental health services, prevention services, benefit information, wellness programs, and community supports.

The Green Zone Initiative is aligned with the Pentagon’s Sea of Good will Initiative, which is working across the country to mobilize the goodwill of citizens all over the United States to help service members, veterans and the families of the fallen to reintegrate back into the communities they came from.

“The Green Zone Initiative is about investing, strategically, to create permanent and meaningful change. Foundations like ours are drawn to opportunities to engage the community around upstream problem solving models that reduce the need for traditional downstream giving.”

— Maureen Schafer, Chairperson, Nevada Community Foundation





*Noreen Leary
Reno
VGH-Chief Operating Officer*

NEVADA VETERANS INTERAGENCY COUNCIL LEADING THE CHARGE

Nevada's Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs was created through an executive order signed by Governor Sandoval in October of 2012. The Interagency Council is made up of leadership from across the state's departments and divisions. Members of the Council are appointed by the Governor and meet on a regular basis to coordinate services, develop a common set of outcomes, and collaboratively decide on and implement plans benefiting Nevada veterans. Additionally, the Interagency Council will work to coordinate and collaborate around funding proposals and projects that will make Nevada more competitive for funding while reducing duplication of efforts.

The Council includes representatives of the following State agencies:

- Department of Business and Industry
- Department of Corrections
- Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Public Safety
- Federal Veteran Representation
- Governor's Office of Economic Development
- Local Agency Representation
- Nevada Indian Commission
- Nevada System of Higher Education
- Office of Military and National Guard
- Office of Veterans Services
- Veterans Stakeholder Representation

States across the country are using cross-agency coordinating bodies such as this to systemically change the fragmented and ineffective ways states often do business. Nevada is one of the first states in the country to implement an interagency coordinating body for the benefit of veterans, and the first to create a Governor's Office of Veterans Policy.

While Nevada has experimented with the format of collaborative bodies in the past to some degree of success, the fact that Nevada's Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs is established in statute, supported by the state Governor, and represented by agency decision makers sets this initiative apart from any other in Nevada history.

"Veterans organizations including the Nevada Office of Veterans Services, work together as a team to ensure our veterans receive the benefits and services they have earned. We have one objective: to serve our veterans."

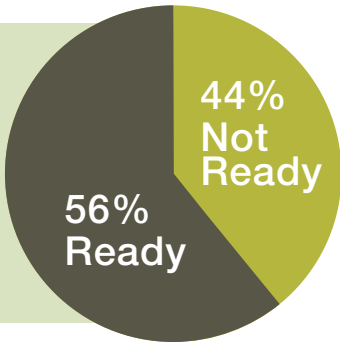
— Bill Baumann, Chairman, Veterans Services Commission and former National Executive Committee Member for the Disabled American Veterans

Why Now? A National Focus After a Decade of War

More than 2.5 million U.S. troops have been deployed as part of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation New Dawn (OND) since October 2001.ⁱⁱⁱ As the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan conclude, and the number of baby boomer veterans enter retirement and encounter aging related issues, the demand for veterans services both nationally and statewide is set to increase substantially.

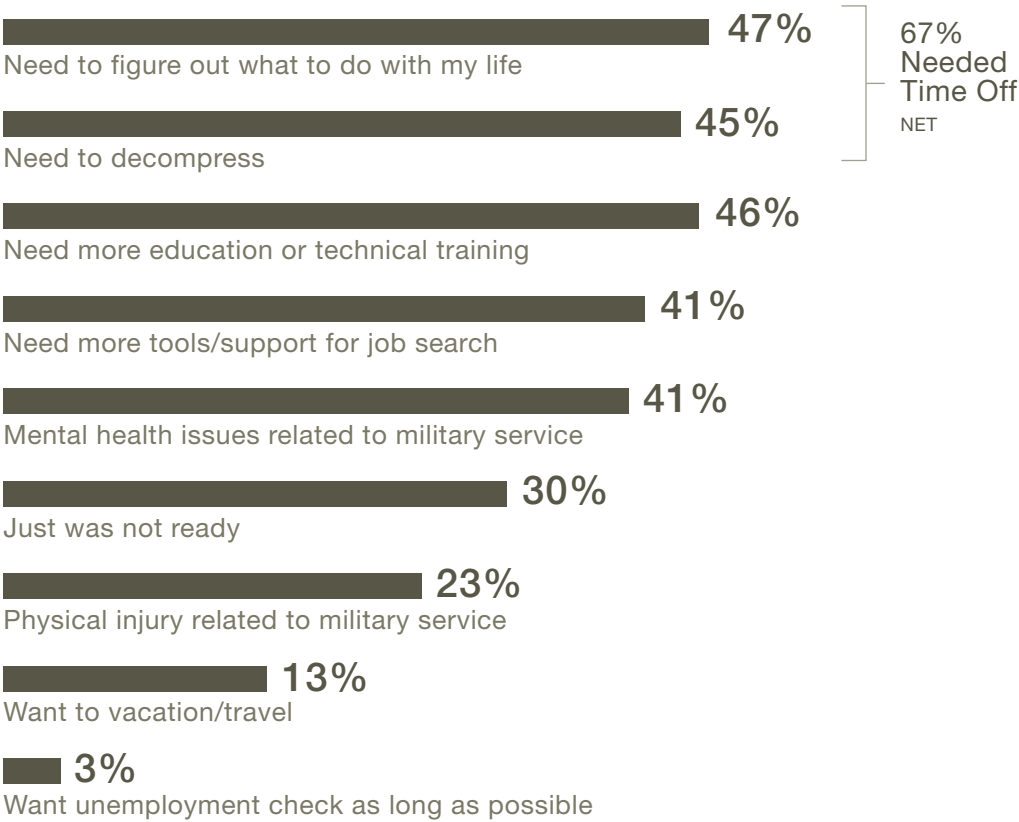
Military service is difficult, demanding and dangerous. But returning to civilian life also poses challenges for the men and women who have served in the armed forces, according to a recent Pew Research Center survey. While more than seven out of ten veterans (72%) report they had an easy time readjusting to civilian life, 27% say re-entry was difficult for them—a proportion that swells to 44% among veterans who served in the ten years since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.^{iv}

Veterans who felt ready to transition to the civilian workforce



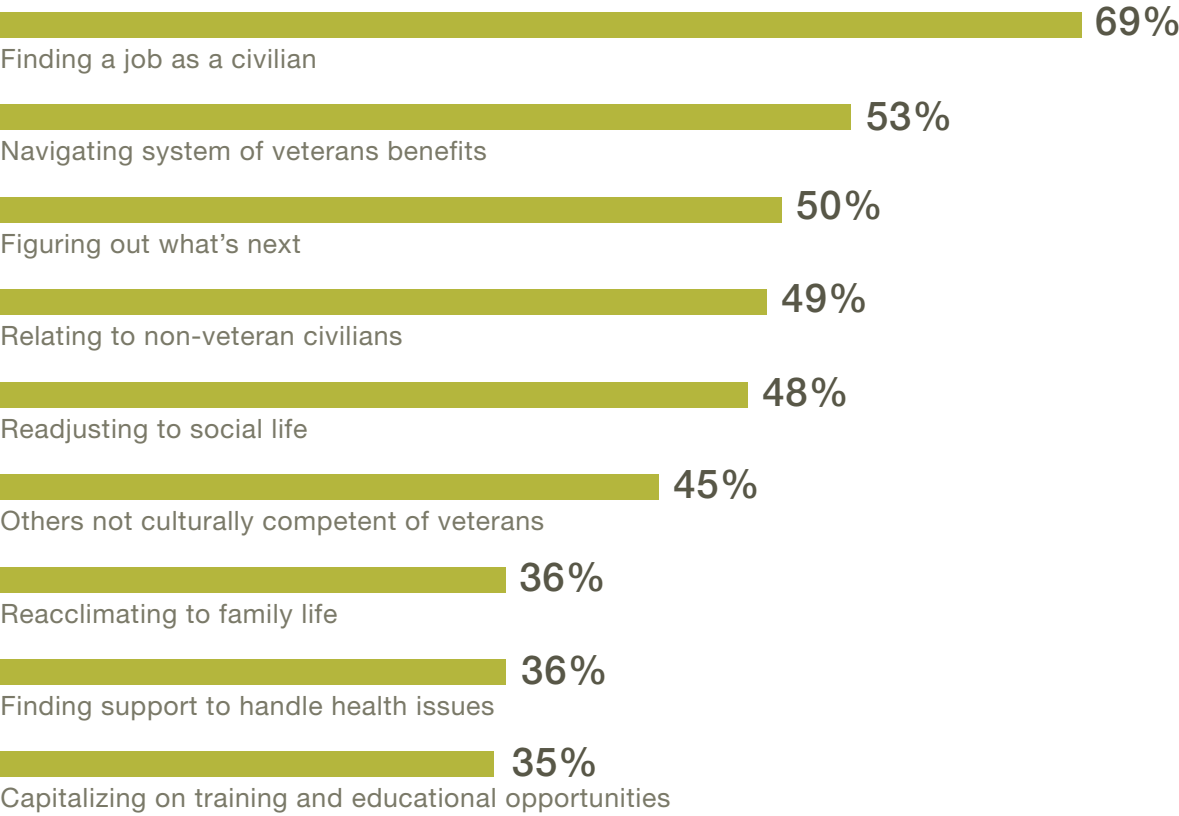
Why veterans don't feel ready for transition^{vi}

Among veterans “not ready” to transition



Difficulties are largely attributed to unemployment and health challenges, but also to the need for time to “figure out what’s next” or decompress after their service. The next greatest challenge for veterans is navigating the benefit and support system for veterans (53%), followed closely by the basic transitional steps of “figuring out what’s next” (50%), and readjusting to their social lives outside of the military (48%).

Greatest Challenges in TRANSITIONING to Civilian Life^{vii}



Not all veterans received support or training for transitioning to the civilian workforce. Two-thirds said they received transition support. The primary source was the Transition Assistance Program, which less than half found effective.^{viii} Veterans deployed six or more times were somewhat less ready than their peers who had fewer deployments (52% vs. 43%). Role in service also has some impact—with the least ready coming from combat arms, protective services, and transportation, and the most ready from electronics, engineering, and administrative backgrounds.^{ix}

“Through the Green Zone Initiative, we have started focusing on existing data in order to develop priorities, make decisions, and drive change with respect to veterans services. The strategies and structures developed through this study will complement existing efforts provided by the Nevada Office of Veterans Services and other agencies and organizations by examining the landscape of Nevada’s services to veterans, and providing a roadmap for coordination and collaboration into the future.”

— Kat Miller, Deputy Executive Director, Nevada Office of Veterans Services



Project/Problem Scope

The unprecedented length of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have impacted the United States in significant ways — from the loss of life of armed forces, contractors, and humanitarian aid personnel to the physical and emotional injuries countless others have sustained. While the challenges of re-entry into American society faced by returning veterans are not new, veterans returning from deployments now face intensified hurdles due to the difficult economic climate and the lack of sufficient resources that span recovery, counseling, re-integration, training, and job placement.

Ironically, although they have been the beneficiaries of extensive and sometimes highly specialized training, a large percentage of returning veterans find themselves out of work and feeling isolated, aimless, and hopeless. The difficulties faced by military personnel and their families as they transition to civilian life are well documented. Returning veterans need access to employment, education and training, physical and mental health services, housing, and family and general support.

Unfortunately, stories of the fallout from veterans unable to re-adjust to family life, college, or a new career are increasingly common. Far too many veterans and their families struggle to find work, appropriate medical care, and other needed services; sadly, some veterans end up permanently unemployed, homeless or incarcerated, and even end their lives due to lack of available care.

Spectrum of Veterans Challenges^x

These examples show the wide range of needs that veterans officials address on a regular basis.

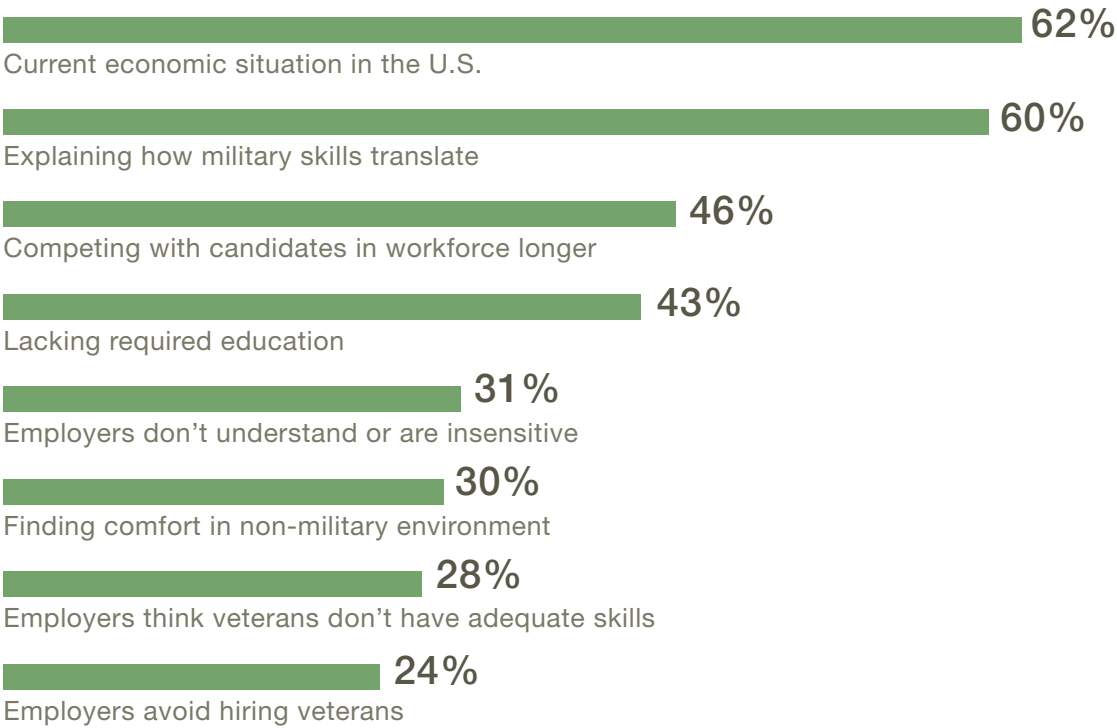
Health	Employment	Education	Finances	Housing	Benefits
Need for general medical care	Identify career opportunities	Integration into education systems	Emergency funds	Transitional housing	Understanding benefits entitlements
Need for specialists, e.g., TBI, PTSD	Obtain skills training	Access GI funds, grants and other benefits	Obtain loans	Affordable housing	Lack of claims processor training
Long-term care for older vets	Obtain good employment	Housing, etc., while in school	Financial counseling	Homelessness services	Delayed processing of claims

This failure to provide a full-spectrum of reintegration services to veterans and their families is not because the broader civilian society does not care. Quite the contrary, today’s generation of veterans are eligible to an unprecedented level of opportunities, services, and benefits, and today’s civilian society has been almost uniformly interested in seeking ways to assist those who have served their nation in uniform. The issues are far more complicated than the social discord and general lack of funding experienced during some previous post-war generations and are largely influenced by the full implementation of the all-volunteer military force and the lack of opportunities for civilians to contribute significantly to the war effort. We believe that the Green Zone Initiative is a great way to capitalize on the wonderful assets our veterans bring with them by providing the leadership and opportunity to serve that so many have looked for and not found.

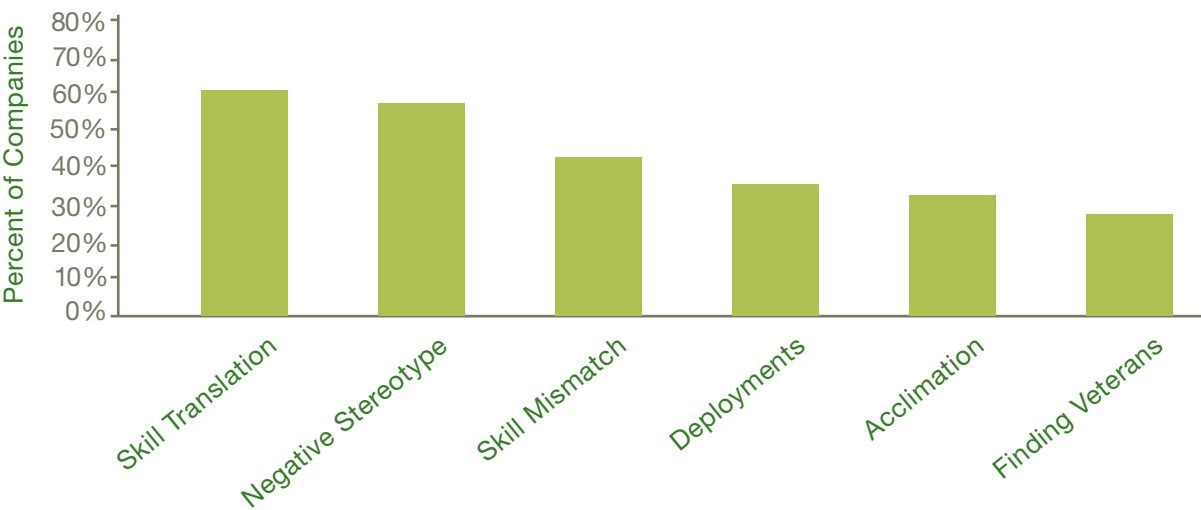
EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES

Returning veterans name “finding a job” as the greatest challenge in transitioning. When asked about their greatest challenge in finding a job, veterans point to the current economic situation in the U.S. as the number one obstacle—recognizing that this macroeconomic issue magnifies the unique challenges that they are already facing. Aside from the difficulties of the current job market, one of the greatest challenges veterans report in finding a job is explaining how their military skills translate to the civilian workforce. This concern is also reported by employers, with civilians noting that they often have difficulty understanding what veterans did in the military and how those skills and experiences can benefit a company.

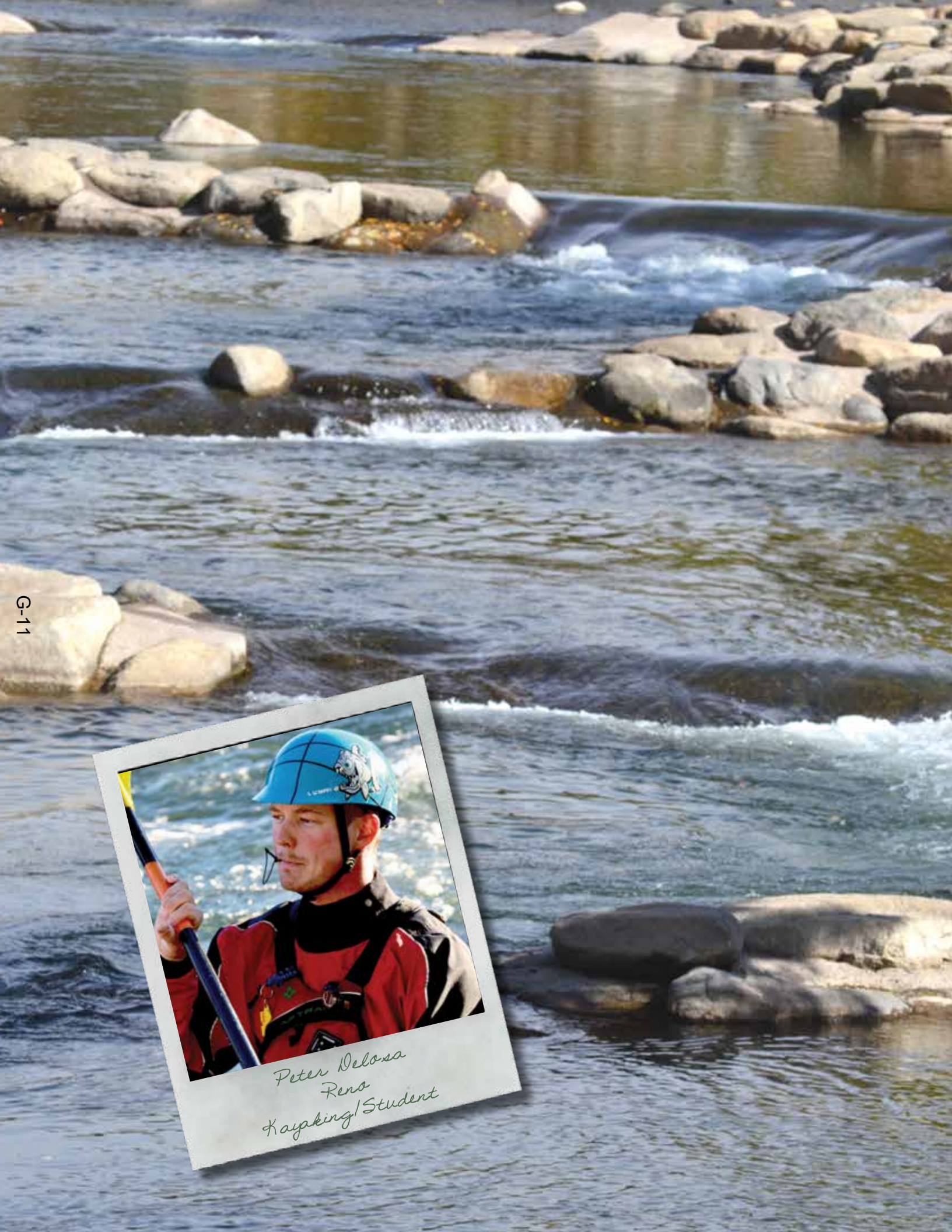
Greatest Challenges in FINDING a job^{xi}



Why Companies Might Not Hire Veterans^{xii}



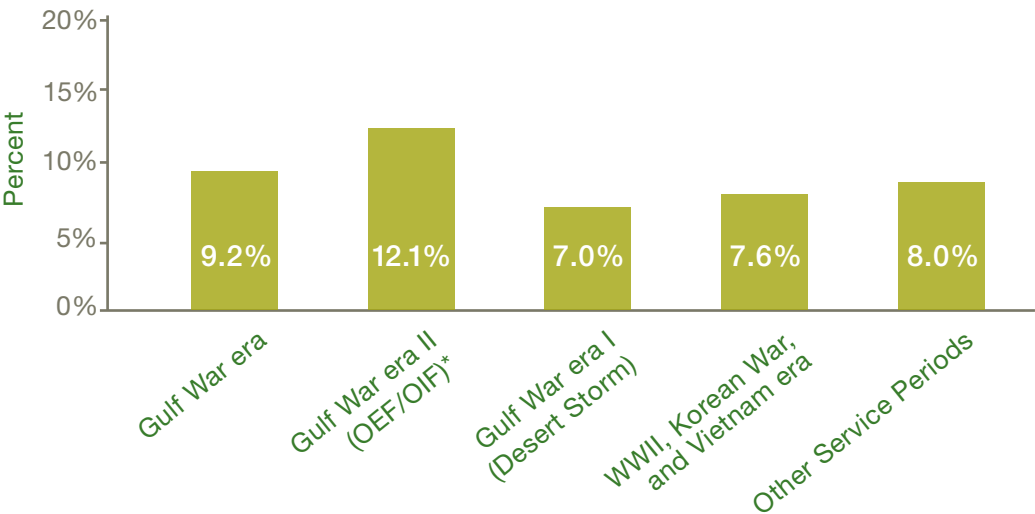
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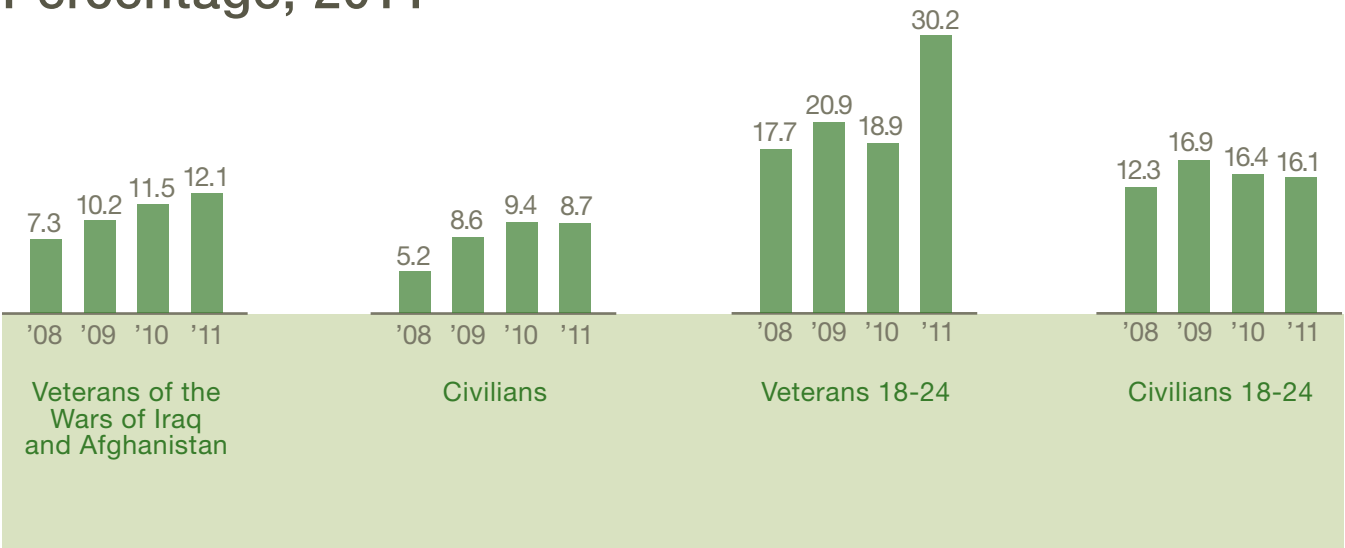
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Although the vast majority of veterans are employed, veterans who served after September 11, 2001 are currently unemployed at a higher rate than veterans from prior wars or their civilian peers. The unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans is typically at least one full percentage point higher than that for non-veterans. When rates are sorted by age, the difference is starker. The unemployment rates for 22- to 24-year-old veterans are, on average, 3% higher than those for non-veterans of the same age, and unemployment for veterans in that age group reached a high of almost 22% in 2009.

Unemployment Rates of Military Veterans by Selected Characteristics, 2011 Annual Averages^{xiii}



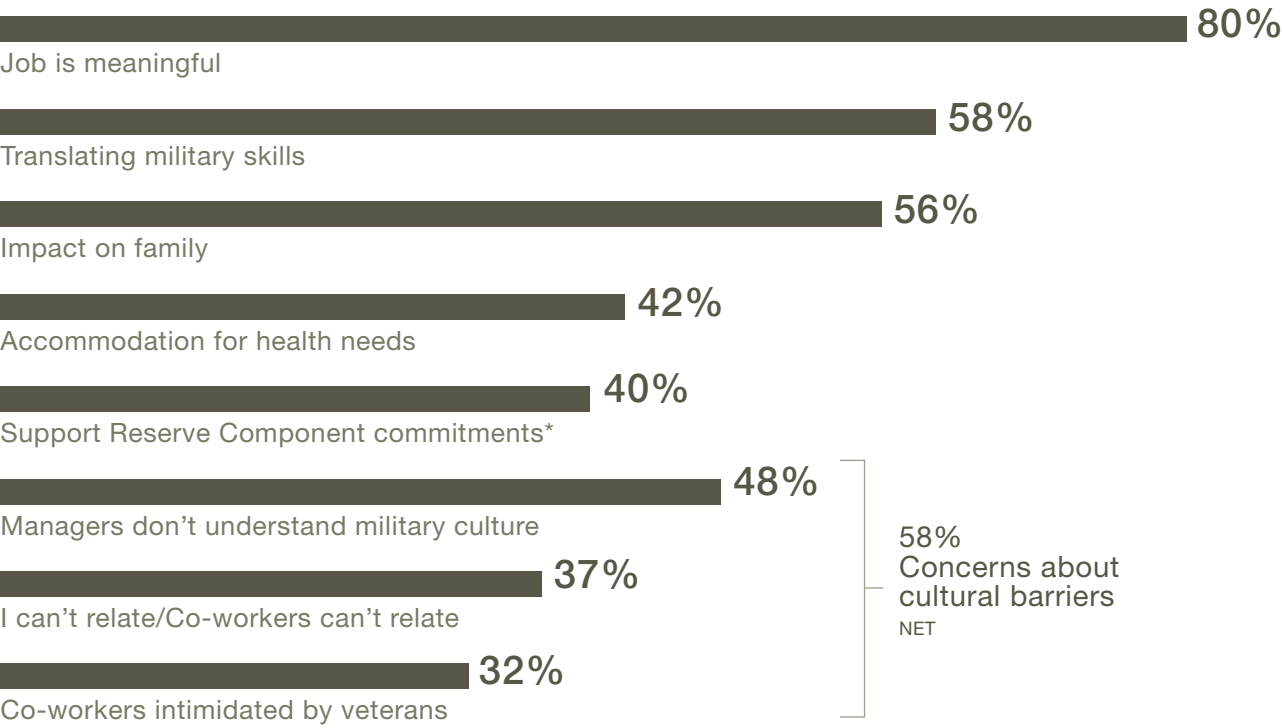
Unemployment Rate, Total Annual Average^{xiv} Percentage, 2011



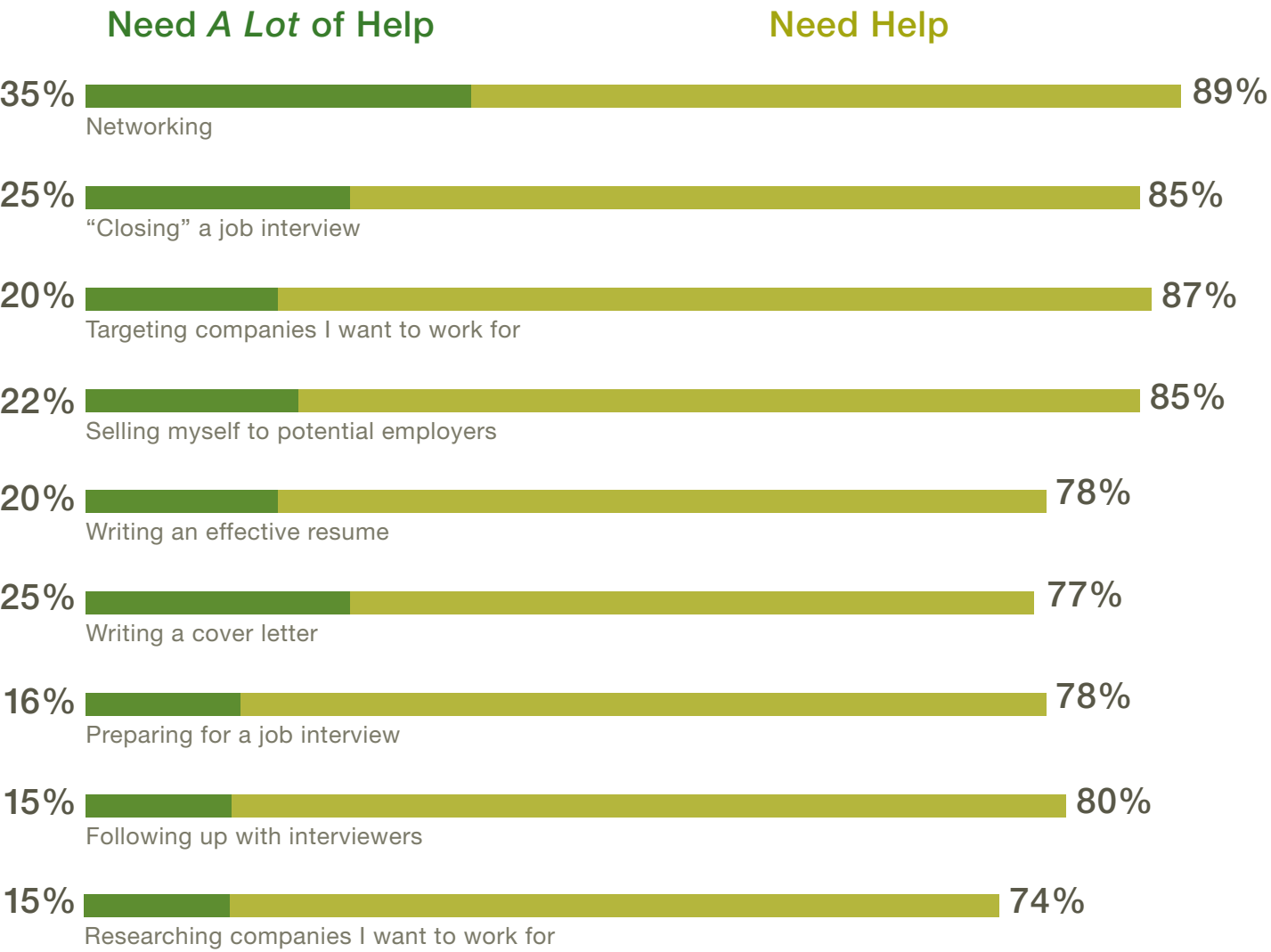
*Operation Enduring Freedom / Operation Iraqi Freedom

Most job seekers say they are prepared to search for a job, but nearly just as many say they need more help with multiple job search skills. Veterans report that they need the most help with networking. Job seekers report using multiple resources for trying to find employment, but show great interest in additional tools. Interest is high in new transition programs or services customized for veterans, which close to three-quarters view as being important to their success.

Concerns when looking for employment^{xv}



Specific Needs of Job Seekers^{xvi}



Overall, the data reveal that the majority of veterans would want and appreciate any additional employment service help they can get.

"We are dedicated to helping the men and women who have risked their lives for their country access the resources they need to successfully transition back into their communities. From training to job placement to help veterans utilize their skills in a variety of industries through out the state, we want to reassure our veterans that we will be with them every step of the way as they pursue their career goals as civilians."

— Frank Woodbeck, Director, Nevada Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation





Lou Richardson
Las Vegas
Business Owner

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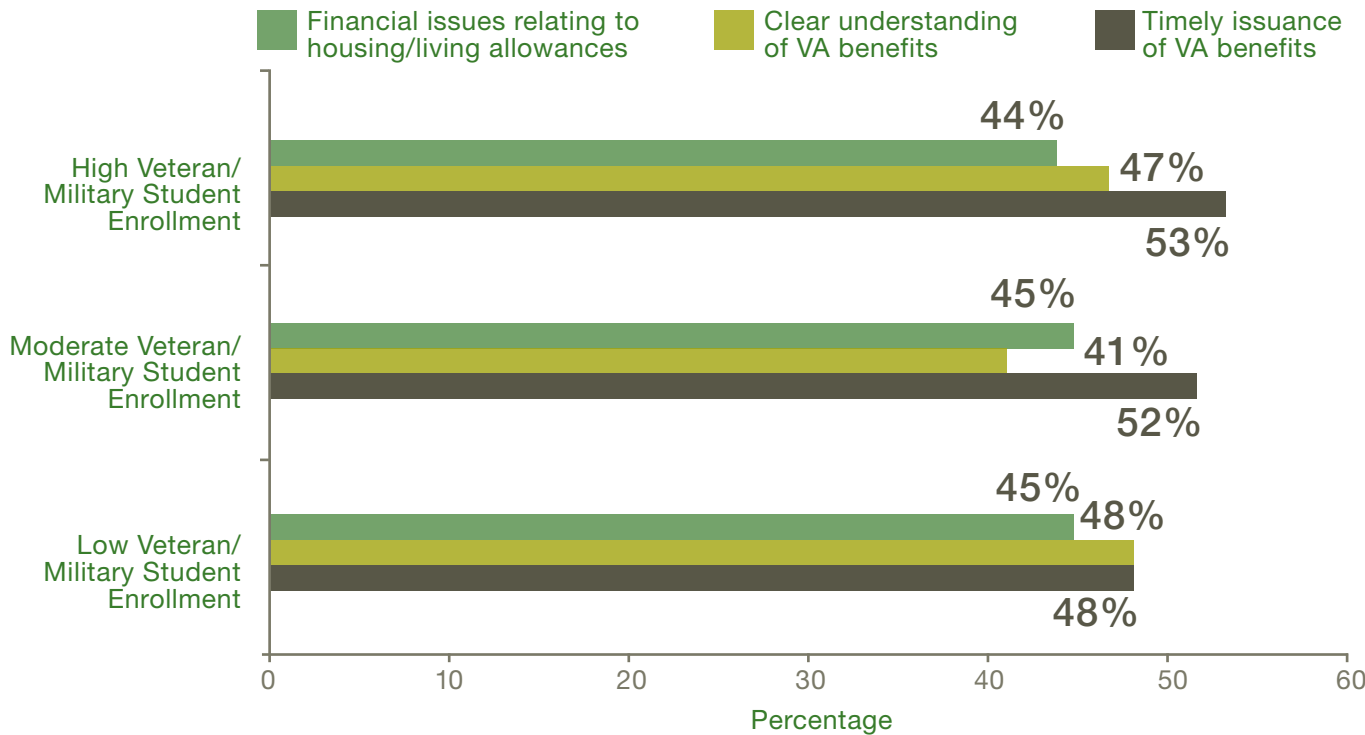
EDUCATION CHALLENGES

The Post-9/11 GI Bill offers the more than 2 million service members who have served in the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts generous support for educational expenses, and has prompted a significant upturn in the number of veterans and military personnel enrolling in higher education. Colleges and post-secondary institutions have not faced such a significant influx of veteran students on campus since World War II. Military personnel and veterans are and have been a tremendous asset to higher education, but they have needs that are distinct from other students.

The most common challenges facing veteran students are financial issues, understanding of VA benefits, retention/degree completion, and social acculturation to campus.

Financial help for military members and veterans is available at many schools. In a study conducted by the American Council on Education, approximately 67% of institutions surveyed reported offering financial aid and tuition assistance counseling to veterans and military students. However, part of the funding challenge lies with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the complexity of the Post 9/11 GI Bill, the study notes. While 87% of schools report offering VA education benefits counseling, some issues, including receiving timely payments from the VA, are out of a school's control.^{xviii} At colleges without a specific office for veterans, timely VA payments posed as big of a challenge as understanding the intricacies of education benefits, the schools reported.^{xix}

Top Three Stressors Institutions Perceive to be Affecting Military/Veterans by Enrollment^{xx}



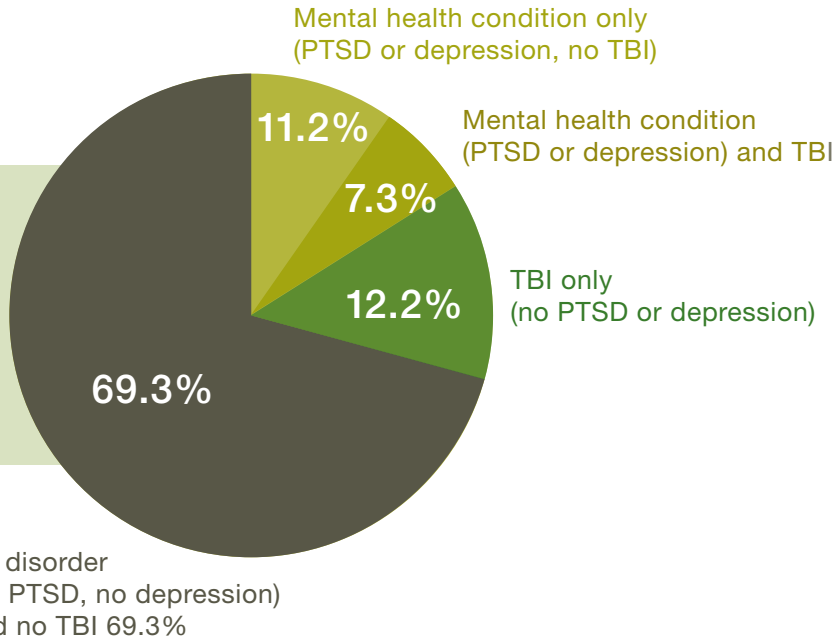
“Over the next five years more than one million service members are expected to transition out of the military. Thanks to the Post-9/11 GI Bill, many veterans will look to post-secondary education to enrich their lives. Nevada’s colleges and universities are well poised to embrace this talented and diverse group of young leaders.”

— Michael Dakduk, Executive Director, Student Veterans of America and UNLV Alumnus

HEALTH AND WELLNESS CHALLENGES

About one-third of returning service members report symptoms of a mental health or cognitive condition. Only 53% of returning troops who met criteria for PTSD or major depression sought help from a provider for these conditions.^{xxi} Of those who had PTSD or depression and also sought treatment, only slightly over half received a minimally adequate treatment (defined according to the duration and type of treatment received).^{xxii} The number who received high-quality care (treatment supported by scientific evidence) would be even smaller.

Rates of Psychological Injuries^{xxiii}



Unless treated, PTSD, depression, and TBI can have far reaching and damaging consequences. Individuals afflicted with these conditions face higher risks for other psychological problems and for attempting suicide. Nevada’s military veterans, particularly younger veterans, are dying from suicide at alarming rates. The suicide rate for female Nevada veterans is more than three times higher than the Nevada female rate and six times higher than the national rate.^{xxv} The suicide rate for Nevada male veterans is also elevated compared to the rates for all males in Nevada and nationally, although the differences are not as dramatic as those for females.^{xxvi}

Veterans struggling with PTSD, depression, and TBI also have higher rates of other unhealthy behaviors—such as smoking, overeating, and unsafe sex—and higher rates of physical health problems and mortality. Individuals with these conditions tend to miss more work or report being less productive. These conditions can impair relationships, disrupt marriages, aggravate the difficulties of parenting, and cause problems in children that may extend the consequences of combat trauma across generations. There is also a possible link between these conditions and homelessness.^{xxvii} The damaging consequences from lack of treatment or under-treatment suggest that those afflicted, as well as society at large, stand to gain substantially if more veterans have access to effective care.

“The mental health challenges that many of our veterans and service members are facing are misunderstood and exaggerated. This has an impact on all aspects of reintegration, but particularly when it comes to finding jobs. What we need to do is educate the employers about what the realities are and help them to understand the tremendous advantage these veterans provide for our workforce.”

— Brigadier General William Burks, Adjutant General, Nevada National Guard

CHALLENGES FOR THE WOUNDED

America’s newest veterans are filing for disability benefits at a historic rate, on track to be the most medically and mentally troubled generation of former troops the nation has ever seen. A staggering 45% of the veterans from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are seeking compensation for injuries they say are service-related.^{xxviii}

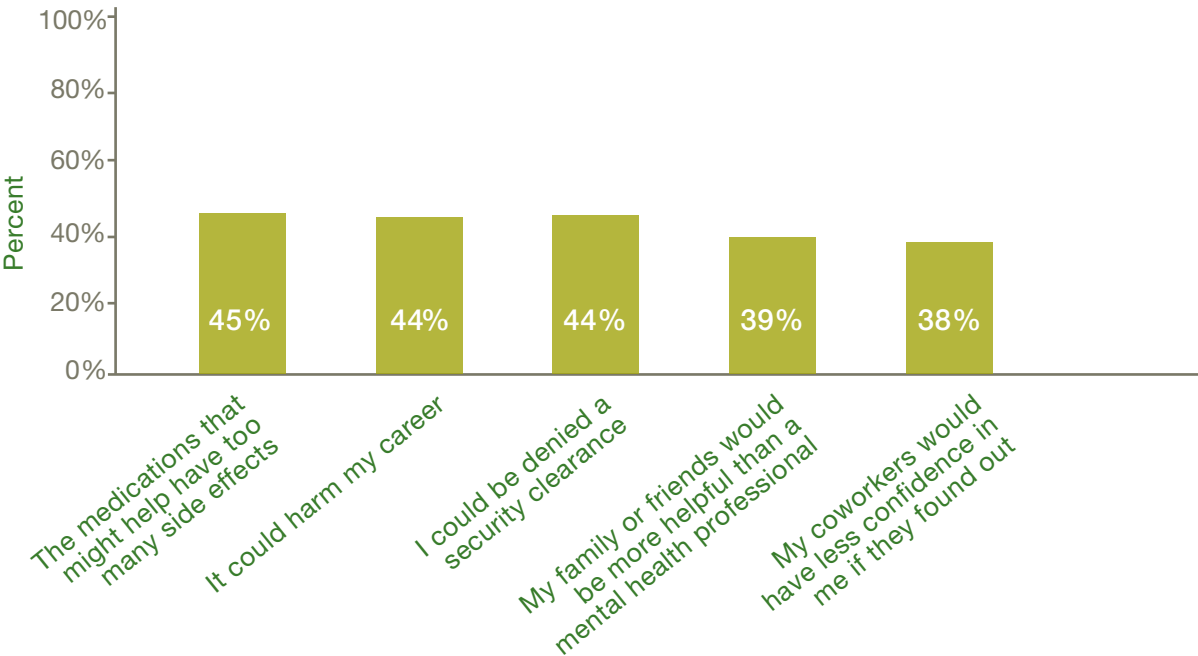
What’s more, these new veterans are claiming eight to nine ailments on average, and the most recent ones over the last year are claiming 11 to 14. By comparison, Vietnam veterans are currently receiving compensation for fewer than four, on average, and those from World War II and Korea, just two.^{xxix}

It is unclear how much worse off these new veterans are than their predecessors. Many factors are driving the dramatic increase in claims — the weak economy, more troops surviving wounds, and more awareness of problems such as concussions and post-traumatic stress. Recent Veterans Administration policy changes have also reduced the evidentiary burden on post-traumatic stress disorder claimants, providing broader access to the diagnosis and related resources than enjoyed by previous generations.

“Veterans share similar health risks and challenges that affect other Americans. However, our unique veteran status puts us at risk for health and wellness issues that are unique to our military service, which are often ill-defined, vague, misunderstood, or misinterpreted by the professional medical community. These dynamics make it imperative that we encourage veterans to take advantage of and to seek out the unique skills, knowledge, and expertise of veteran’s healthcare professionals who understand our military experiences and who can facilitate our return to society as productive, healthy and whole veteran-civilians.”

— Carole Turner, former Deputy Executive Director, Nevada Office of Veterans Services

Top-Five Barriers to Seeking Mental Health Care^{xxiv}



KEY COMPONENTS OF THE GREEN ZONE INITIATIVE

The Green Zone Initiative is solutions driven. We are not building a venue to discuss problems over and over again, but rather to define the problems using data and community input, and then build a system to solve them, and inform that system with research and best practice information. In order to inform the conversation across the state, and build a knowledge platform for us to begin our work, we are presenting the following tools to guide our investments:

Environmental Scan – identify the local service provider landscape for veteran services, including resources, gaps, challenges, and recommendations for change.

Business Case for Support – develop a written business case that makes the case for increased investment in veterans and their families based on the return on investment for the community and for individual donors.

Community Impact Plan – research and present impactful service delivery changes and models to connect and build upon the existing system of services available to military veterans; identify best practices for implementing system change around veterans services; vet model programs amongst stakeholders at the system, policy and advocacy levels; obtain buy-in and develop strategic alliances with stakeholders at all levels.

Funding Analysis – identify public and private funding streams that support veteran issues here and in two other high performing communities, illustrating the compelling need to identify and connect existing resources, address gaps in the continuum of care, and sustain a strong veterans service system for the future.

Social Networking Site – create a social networking community where information can be shared between the various silos of veteran service providers, organizations, and the veterans themselves. A community where new services can develop, and where veterans, service members, family members, and surviving spouses can go to see what services, opportunities, or benefits they might be eligible for. The Green Zone Social Networking site will become a support system and lifeline, helping service members, veterans and families address employment, education, housing, and health issues

In order to meet the needs of today’s veterans, we must build several bridges. As discussed above, we need to provide a better opportunity for the broader civilian society to participate in the veteran reintegration experience. Veterans serving veterans and peer-to-peer activities and support are widely viewed as the most effective tools in spreading information, developing opportunities, and coordinating services. This tool will allow Nevada to bridge the civil-military divide as well as build bridges between the various generations of veterans.

Governor’s Support for the Green Zone – The Nevada Office of Veterans Services has received tremendous support from the Governor to start the Green Zone and to build the governmental architecture around the initiative to make it a success. Governor Sandoval has stood steadfastly with Nevada’s service members and veterans and insisted that his cabinet and executive agencies do all they can to support veterans, service members, and their families. In addition, through executive orders, he has enacted policies such as Executive Order 2012-11, which provides reciprocity for military spouses seeking licensure in Nevada, and Executive Order 2012-15, which creates the Governor’s Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs (ICVA).

A Nevada Response to the Problem

A key part of the Green Zone Initiative that has been facilitated by these executive orders, especially the establishment of the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs, is the convening process. Community and stakeholder convenings allowed the Nevada Office of Veterans Services to not only get a boots-on-the-ground perspective within the three focus areas of employment, education and Wellness, but also to gain buy-in from the stakeholder community. These discussions were broadly organized as brainstorming sessions on the topics of gaps/duplication in services, priorities, and recommendations.

Five convenings were held across the state in various urban and rural communities engaging stakeholders on topics including workforce development and employment, wellness, and higher education. Discussions and recommendations gathered from these convenings were turned over to the Green Zone research team, tested against national best practices, and vetted through high level subject matter experts before public presentation.

These convenings verified what we already know - that Nevadans firmly believe we have the resources and commitment to solve our problems, and that the solutions to our challenges must be sourced from our own communities. Nevada leadership must be engaged at every level for us to solve these problems, and with our Governor leading the way, we know this will happen. We also know that many of the innovations and solutions that will drive change are already known by the leaders, stakeholders and community members who are on the front lines serving the veterans who enter into our social service, family service, homeless, mental health, healthcare and education systems.

As a complement to home grown recommendations for change, the Green Zone Initiative’s professional research team researched programs, practices and policy changes across the country, as well as activities already occurring in Nevada to determine what our priorities should be moving forward. The Green Zone is integrating the following recommendations into the existing fabric of our communities and into the existing infrastructure of our government and social service delivery systems.

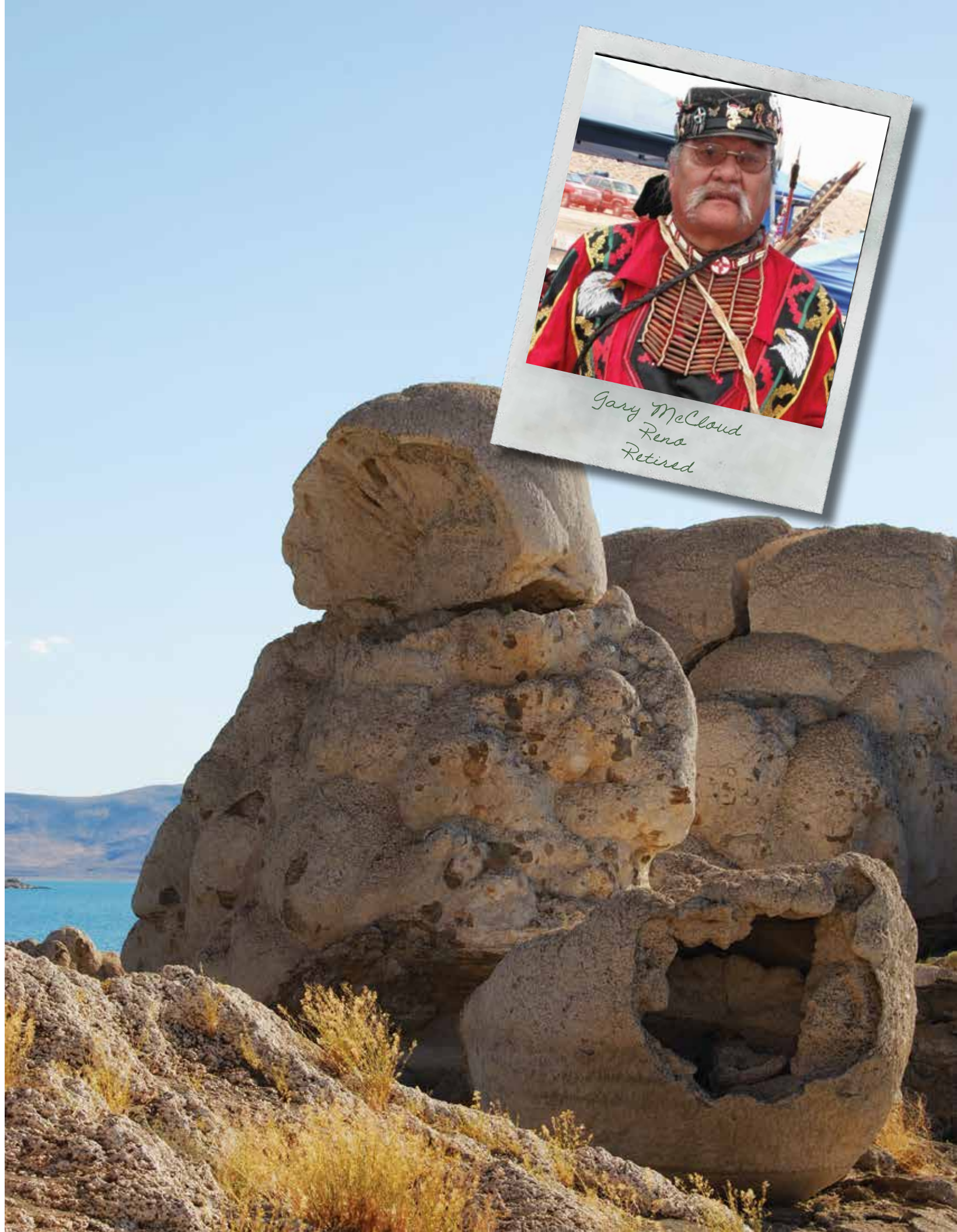
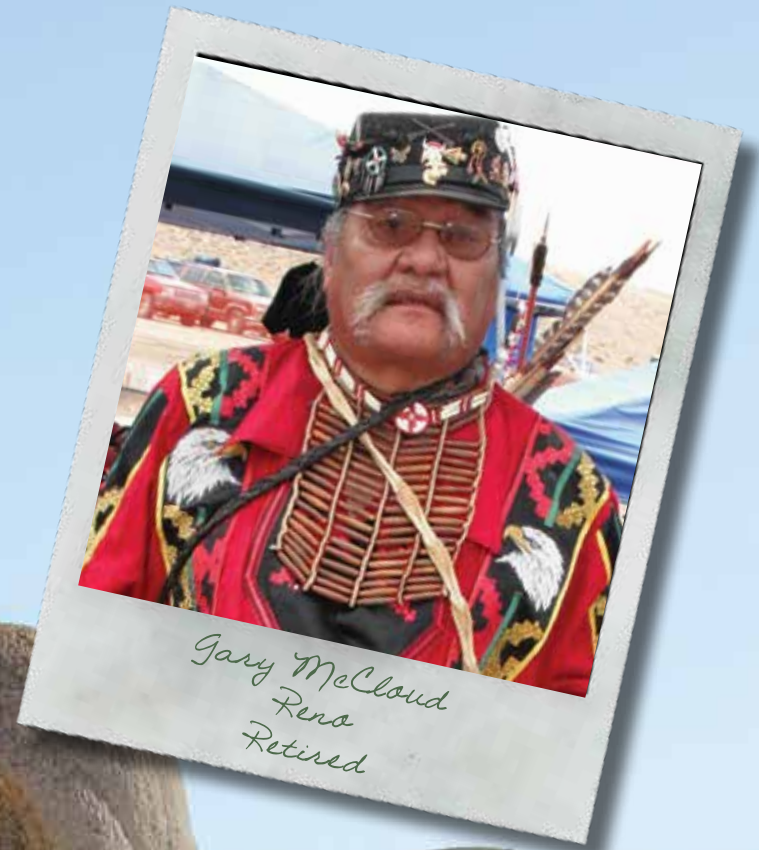
GREEN ZONE GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Veterans Task Force Coordinator:* Following the Utah model to combat homelessness, Nevada should create the position of a statewide coordinator for veterans services. This person should be a member of the Governor’s primary staff, and it should be a stand-alone assignment and not a collateral duty for the NOVS head. The coordination would be responsible for implementing the GZI, holding regularly scheduled meetings throughout the state, and overseeing local committees.
2. *Continuation of the Governor’s Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs:* The Veterans Task Force Coordinator should be the chairman of the ICVA, which should be the statewide coordinating body moving forward. The current ICVA was created on July 3, 2012, to support the GZI, but it will sunset on December 31, 2013.
3. *Maximizing Federal Grant Opportunities:* Through coordination activities like the GZI, Nevada should aim to maximize federal grant opportunities.
4. *Data Warehouse of Veterans Services and Veterans:* Nevada should seek a grant through the federal VA to develop a data warehouse for veterans and available services.

5. *Develop a Social Networking Site:* To build the resource bridge to the current war era veteran generation, NOVS should develop a social networking site that allows for broad community involvement and access to existing resources.

WORKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Develop “Re-Boot” Model:* Develop a program, perhaps an elite program, sponsored by a private or non-profit organization, that would lead qualifying veterans through a challenging leadership, transition, and personal development course that will help them reintegrate into civilian society.
2. *Veterans Chamber:* A regularly scheduled meeting of veterans and community members that is non-transactional in nature: no fee, no pressure for business leads, and no advertising. This should occur in Reno and Las Vegas at a minimum, and should involve speakers and networking periods. Private sector firms would be encouraged to come and recruit or discuss their opportunities.
3. *Work with Private Sector to Demystify Military Service:* Develop a program that translates military performance for the civilian sector, to include testing for skills that employers are looking for.
4. *Reciprocal Licensure:* Military truck drivers, for instance, should be able to use their military training in the civilian world more easily. When possible, state agencies should accept military training as a condition of civilian licensure, along with licensing tests and other requirements.
5. *Work with Active Component 6-months Out:* Nevada should develop an online capability that will allow service members to learn more as they begin to separate from the active component.
6. *Active Military Internship in Private Sector:* Nevada’s Active Component bases in Las Vegas and Fallon should be encouraged to reach out to local private sector corporations for training opportunities.
7. *Develop a List of Hiring Practices for Employers Wishing to Hire Veterans:* Determine what employers need to commit to if they are truly interested in hiring veterans.
8. *A Centralized Web Location for Available Job Opportunities:* Although there are currently many sites and resources throughout the state, this item recommends that the state create a central clearinghouse for employment opportunities for veterans.
9. *Hiring Fairs:* Hold or host annual or quarterly hiring fairs.
10. *Venture Capital Opportunities for Veteran Owned Businesses:* If possible, create a venture capital firm that is interested in funding veteran-owned businesses.
11. *Entrepreneurial Resources:* Provide mentoring and support for veterans who would like to start their own businesses.





HIGHER EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Orientation for Veterans:* This recommendation suggests that veterans in higher institutions receive a special orientation program that is separate and apart from their peers.
2. *Single Point of Contact for Information:* There are many organizations that serve veterans needs and this recommendation gets at a desire to have a single, friendly, and informed conduit for information.
3. *Staffing Structure:* Because every university must have a Veteran Certifying Official to process GI Bill claims, this person becomes the de facto veteran staff for the school. It is impossible to process the claims necessary in addition to counseling and developing programs. A proposed staffing structure will help leadership better use resources.
4. *Improved Information Sharing:* We need a way for the various veteran service providers and veterans to communicate and stay up to date on information.
5. *Career/Job Mentorship in Public/Private Sectors:* There are several different possible formats for this, but this would be a key to helping veterans find jobs in the civilian workforce after they graduate with their higher education degree.

WELLNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Veterans Suicide Task Force:* Nevada should address the need for better coordination between agencies through the creation of a veterans suicide task force, sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Nevada Office of Veterans Services, and made up of members of the statewide veteran and mental health communities.
2. *Veterans Benefits* should be collected through a statewide survey of state and local officials through the Governor's Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs. We should coordinate with VA undersecretaries for a complete listing of federal benefits.
3. Veterans should be identified through an online self-identification mechanism, the Veterans Driver's License, a VA "Request of Names and Addresses," and through self-identification on all state forms.
4. *Advertise in Various Channels:* To build the bridge to other generations, NOVS should use direct mail, eNewsletters, newspaper, and develop a quarterly magazine.
5. *Develop a Hard Copy Benefits Guide:* When all of the benefits are identified, NOVS should publish a print edition of the benefits guide (while a soft copy would be available online), so that all state locations can disseminate them to veterans who might be using their services.

Economic Viability/Financial Sustainability Plan

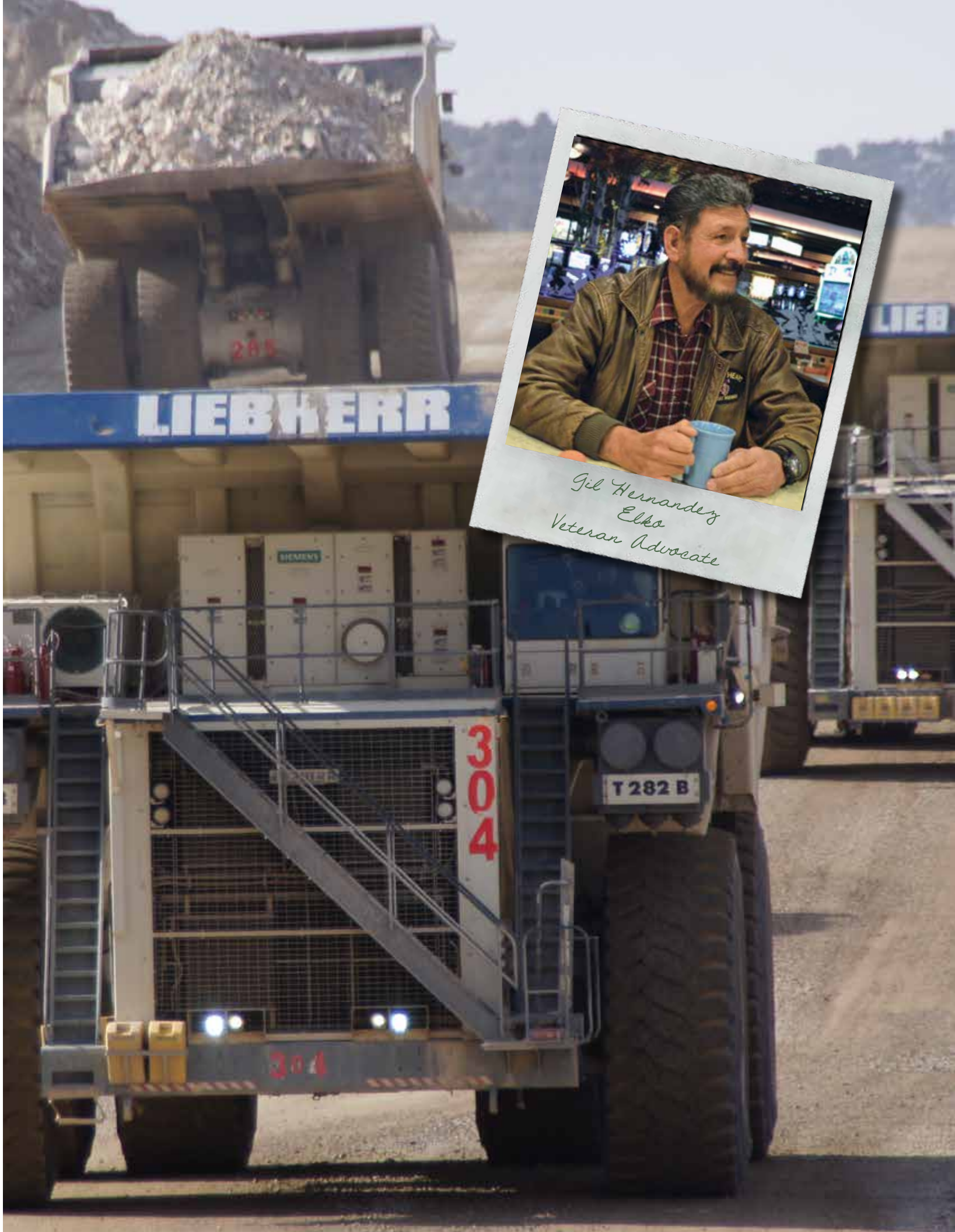
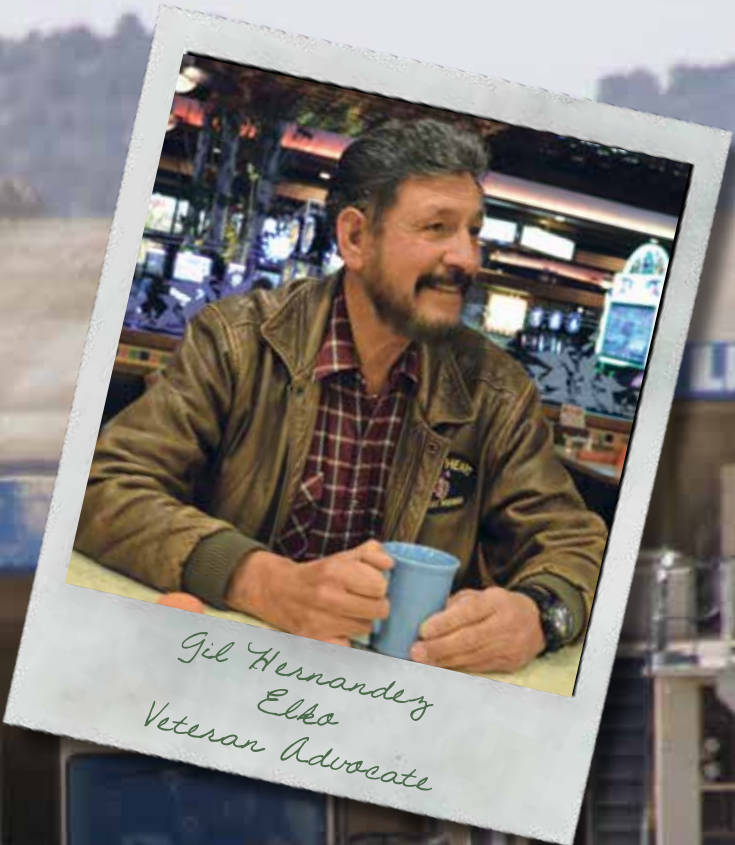
The Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs is one of the first of its kind nationwide, and has started its journey with every opportunity for success. Governor Sandoval has paved the way for the creation of the interagency infrastructure, and the initiative is marching forward with full steam. Much work has been done - the concerns facing Nevada’s veterans have been identified, community stakeholders have been assembled and contributed to identifying and removing barriers to success, recommendations for change have been submitted, and agency leaders are being assembled who have the power to implement change.

While this first step is both monumental and critical, more is needed. All too often, Nevada has a history of starting something, and then walking away, only to see early efforts crumble. The Interagency Council is currently operating on an all-volunteer force made up of the executives of the state’s leading governmental agencies. This level of commitment and cooperation cannot be sustained on a strictly volunteer basis for long. States vary widely on the sources and level of funding provided for similar interagency coordinating bodies. Funding ranges from unfunded structures to those with a steady stream of resources. All entities, regardless of their funding levels, rely on some form of operational resources to fund the complicated and essential work that takes place after each interagency council meeting.

Potential structures vary, and could range from departmental agencies providing staff time as in-kind contributions, to the council collecting and administering funds to other entities. Each extreme is accompanied by pros and cons, however, a minimal amount of funding is recommended to ensure the council maintains the ability to complete its mission while not detracting from the significant responsibilities borne by each council member in their primary role. Nevada has come too far and invested too much in this initiative to bear seed and walk away while it wilts.

One way to ensure that this effort continues and that its momentum is maximized is through the creation of an Office of Veterans Policy. The primary responsibility of the director of this office, once created, should be to implement the elements of this study and seek opportunities to develop future phases of the initiative. The director should chair the Governor’s Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs and should report annually to the Governor on policies, initiatives, and strategies that would develop better services for Nevada’s veterans. In order to do so, the director should be responsible for convening local coalitions to gather information as well as build greater partnerships, seek out national best practices and test them against state and local level recommendations, and be responsible for communicating the efforts to develop veteran friendly features at the state and local level throughout the state and abroad. This will ensure that the plan is fully developed, coordinated, and continued moving forward, and will ensure that Nevada has the best possible offering of veterans services and opportunities in the country.

Additionally, a minimal investment of funding dedicated to the Office of Veterans Policy would position Nevada to develop strong collaboratives, build evidence based projects that leverage governmental, private sector and community resources to make Nevada competitive for federal and national funding. This project will provide a strong return on investment for the state, and for our service members, veterans and families of the fallen.





G-19

Nevada State Veterans Home
100 Veterans Memorial Drive
Boulder City, Nevada 89005
(702) 332-6784 • Fax (702) 332-6762

Northern Nevada
Veterans Memorial Cemetery
P.O. Box 1919
Fernley, Nevada 89408
(775) 575-4441 • Fax (775) 575-5713

BRIAN SANDOVAL
Governor



STATE OF NEVADA
NEVADA OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES
5460 Reno Corporate Drive, Suite 131
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(775) 688-1653 • Fax (775) 688-1656

Office of Veterans Services
6900 N. Pecos Road, Room 1C237
North Las Vegas, Nevada 89086
(702) 224-6025 • Fax (702) 224-6927

Southern Nevada
Veterans Memorial Cemetery
1900 Veterans Memorial Drive
Boulder City, Nevada 89005
(702) 486-5920 • Fax (702) 486-5923

December 1, 2012

Dear Community Partner,

In order to maximize the services and support to our veterans, we must develop a public dialog, build bridges between the many communities and providers, and break down misconceptions for both veterans and the public. The return on our investment is high, but we all have to work together to realize the opportunities we seek.

Veterans are individuals. Like everyone, they make decisions based on their experiences, needs, and knowledge of what is available. As a community that wishes to serve them, it is incumbent upon us to ensure that Nevada's service members, veterans, and their family members have all of the information and tools they need to make the best choices they can about the services that are available.

Communities stand to gain the most from our returning service members and our veteran population. As such, they need to mobilize their good intentions and do everything they can to help reintegrate the veterans that return to them. By seeking to understand the veteran experience and what that may offer them, communities will be a powerful and integral part of ensuring that direct relationships are built.

As a part of communities, non-governmental organizations and businesses deliver services, information, and contribute to the development of programs for veterans. The established Veteran Service Organizations are particularly well-suited to assist veterans through understanding, camaraderie, and information distribution. The business and corporate sector supports the integration and reintegration of veterans to Nevada communities by hiring them into the workforce and supporting programs and initiatives to directly assist veterans.

Local and state governments deliver a range of services to veterans and play a pivotal role in engaging veterans and their families in those services. They are responsive to their communities and to the veteran advocates within them. They can help by ensuring that local barriers to services are minimized or removed completely. All of these organizations and systems have a role to play in ensuring all of Nevada's veterans and their families can fully reintegrate from their service to becoming contributing members of our broader society. It is possible, but it will take all of us.

Caleb S. Cage
Executive Director
Nevada Office of Veterans Services

Green Zone Initiative Partners

- Adopt a Vet Dental Program
- Always Lost project at Western Nevada College
- American Legion
- American Red Cross, Service Coordinator
- Army OneSource
- Chamber of Commerce
- City of Reno, Parks and Recreation Disability Services
- Disabled American Veterans
- Elite Service Connected Disabled Veteran Owned Business of Nevada
- Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve
- Governor’s Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs
 - a. Department of Business and Industry
 - b. Department of Corrections
 - c. Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation
 - d. Department of Health and Human Services
 - e. Department of Public Safety
 - f. Elko County Commission
 - g. Federal Veteran Representation
 - h. Governor’s Office of Economic Development
 - i. Local Agency Representation
 - j. Nevada Indian Commission
 - k. Nevada System of Higher Education
 - l. Office of Military and National Guard
 - m. Office of Veterans Services
 - n. Veterans Stakeholder Representation
- Nevada Community Foundation
- Nevada Human Resources Division
- Nevada Military Support Alliance Representative
- Nevada National Guard Employment Enhancement Program
- Nevada National Guard Representative Family Programs
- Nevada Office of Suicide Prevention
- Nevada Procurement Outreach Program
- Nevada System of Higher Education
- Nevada State Higher Education Certifying Officers: Nevada State College, University of Nevada, University of Nevada Las Vegas, Great Basin College, Sierra Nevada College, Truckee Meadows Community College, Western Nevada College, College of Southern Nevada, and other colleges and universities across the state
- Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Warrior and Family Support
- Reno VetCenter
- Small Business Administration
- University of Nevada Las Vegas Student Veterans Organizations
- University of Nevada Student Veterans Organization
- University of Nevada Veterans Coalition
- United States Department of Labor
- Veteran Medical Centers
- Veteran Fraternity at University of Nevada (Omega Delta Sigma and Nu Phi)
- Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Veterans Services Commission
- Veterans Upward Bound, Truckee Meadows Community College

Credits and Sources

About the Author: Strategic Progress, LLC is a Nevada based company founded and managed by Cyndy Ortiz Gustafson, a Nevada strategist with a proven track record in mobilizing people and resources around systems change work, regional planning initiatives, large scale community development and public policy initiatives. Ms. Ortiz Gustafson directed the research and writing of this project, with Lead Strategist, Jennifer Ouellette.

Strategic Progress works with state and local government leaders, community organizations, and private investors to design systems and projects that have measureable impact, based on proven approaches to social change. We provide consulting, project management and training to individual partners as well as collaboratives to help leaders plan and implement change strategies, and to finance and sustain those strategies long term.

By designing and open sourcing our research and development and producing publicly accessible reports, toolkits, and impact plans we are advancing Nevada’s ability to compete in the marketplace of federal and private funding, ultimately improving the quality, breadth and depth of social impact programs that benefit all Nevadans.

This business case is dedicated to Shannon West-Redwine (1967-2012), tireless advocate for change, daughter of a Major General, and extraordinary Nevadan.

Special thanks to the Board of Directors of the Nevada Community Foundation, and its President Gian Brosco, for their leadership and support of the Green Zone Initiative.

Contributing Photographers: Julie Duewel, Ken Eurick, Charles Pullen, Staff Photographer from College of Southern Nevada, and Vic Trujillo.

<p>ⁱ National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, available at http://www.va.gov/vetdata/; Nevada Office of Veterans Services</p> <p>ⁱⁱ Ibid</p> <p>ⁱⁱⁱ Veterans Outreach Center Inc., Coming Home to Caring Communities: A Blueprint for Serving Veterans & Families, February 2012</p> <p>^{iv} Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Veterans’ Employment Challenges: Perceptions and Experiences of Transitioning from Military to Civilian Life, Prudential, available at www.prudential.com/veterans</p> <p>^v Ibid</p> <p>^{vi} Ibid</p> <p>^{vii} Ibid</p> <p>^{viii} Ibid</p> <p>^{ix} Ibid</p> <p>^x Business Executives for National Security, Veterans Reintegration: A View from the States, February 2010, available at warriorgateway.org</p> <p>^{xi} Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Veterans’ Employment Challenges: Perceptions and Experiences of Transitioning from Military to Civilian Life, Prudential, available at www.prudential.com/veterans</p> <p>^{xii} Margaret C. Harrell and Nancy Berglass, Employing America’s Veterans: Perspectives from Businesses, Center for a New American Security, June 2012</p> <p>^{xiii} US Bureau of Labor Statistics</p>	<p>^{xix} Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Veterans’ Employment Challenges: Perceptions and Experiences of Transitioning from Military to Civilian Life, Prudential, available at www.prudential.com/veterans</p> <p>^{xv} Ibid</p> <p>^{xvi} Ibid</p> <p>^{xvii} American Council on Education, From Soldier to Student II: Assessing Campus Programs for Veterans and Service Members, July 2012</p> <p>^{xviii} Ibid</p> <p>^{xix} Ibid</p> <p>^{xx} Ibid</p> <p>^{xxi} Rand Center for Military Health Policy Research, Invisible Wounds: Mental Health and Cognitive Care Needs of America’s Returning Veterans</p> <p>^{xxii} Ibid</p> <p>^{xxiii} Ibid</p> <p>^{xxiv} Ibid</p> <p>^{xxv} Nevada State Health Division, Suicide Mortality in Nevada’s Military Veterans, 2008-2010, February 2012</p> <p>^{xxvi} Ibid</p> <p>^{xxvii} Rand Center for Military Health Policy Research, Invisible Wounds: Mental Health and Cognitive Care Needs of America’s Returning Veterans</p> <p>^{xxviii} Marilynn Marchione, AP Impact: Almost Half of New Vets Seek Disability, Associated Press, May 2012</p> <p>^{xxix} Ibid</p>
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Duane McCoy
Boulder City
City Councilman



Rick S. Miller



Brian Calanna
Reno
Internal Auditor



Robert Fain
Las Vegas
Retired



Malisa Cutler
South Lake Tahoe
Spouse Caregiver



Patricia Arnold
Reno
PAC-NV Nat Guard



Bob Garlow



Las Vegas
Veteran Volunteer



Gil Hernandez
Elko
Veteran Advisor



Robert Torres
Las Vegas
Nurse



Alan Callanan
Carson City
Victim Survivor Outreach Services



Mike Musgrove
Elko



Pat Matthews
Henderson
Veteran Spouse Volunteer



Earl Skanalar
North Las Vegas
Retired / NVA Volunteer



Jose Co
Winnemucca
Business



Jack Logan



Ken Santon
Reno
Veteran Volunteer



Daniel Waters
Spanish Springs
Nevada National Guard



Don Guspa
Reno
Honor Flight



Charlie D.
Boulder
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