

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON GLOBAL OPPORTUNITIES
AND THE CREATIVE/INNOVATIVE ECONOMY

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Friday, April 4, 2014
10:15 a.m.

PRESENT:
COUNCILMAN DAVID OH, CHAIR

RESOLUTION 130791 - Resolution authorizing
Council's Committee on global Opportunities
and the Creative/Innovative Economy to hold
hearings on the state of affairs of veterans
in the City of Philadelphia.

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COUNCILMAN OH: Good morning.

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My name is Councilman David Oh and I'd

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like to call to order this hearing on

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Resolution 130791, and I'll ask the Clerk

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to read the resolution.

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THE CLERK: Resolution 130791,

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authorizing Council's Committee on Global

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Opportunities and the Creative/Innovative

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Economy to hold hearings on the state of

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veterans affairs in the City of

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Philadelphia.

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COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very

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much.

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I am going to start by thanking

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all of you for being here and just to lay

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out some parameters of what we're doing

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and to try to let you know what our goals

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are.

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The first thing is that we're

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trying to hold a "comprehensive" hearing,

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and I say that in quotes because there's

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so many issues that we cannot cover them

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all, certainly not in two hours, not in

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four hours. We could be here all day.

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2 The second thing is, we are
3 asking each witness to try to give your
4 testimony regarding the most important
5 things that you have to share. Five
6 minutes is the time period that we're
7 looking at, because we have 23 witnesses,
8 and there are questions that different
9 Councilmembers, as they come, may want to
10 ask or I may want to ask to clarify, and
11 if we did that five minutes and five
12 minutes, we'd be here for three hours,
13 and that looks like what we're going to
14 be doing is three hours.

15 So I know that each of you
16 could probably talk for several hours in
17 great detail with very important,
18 substantive information that we do need
19 to hear, but that opportunity is ahead of
20 us. What we're trying to do right now is
21 move away from the trees that we deal
22 with and get an overview of the forest
23 and, in doing so, also allow each of you
24 that some deal with very specific issues
25 to hear from or read, if you cannot stay,

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2 the testimony of other people, because
3 within the veterans community itself,
4 there may be an opportunity for sharing,
5 assisting, and helping, and that goes
6 both ways for sure, and I think that's
7 one of the things that we have to do.

8 When was the last time our city
9 did a comprehensive overview of the state
10 of veterans in Philadelphia? I have no
11 idea. Perhaps after the Vietnam War,
12 maybe after World War II, could have
13 about after the Korean War, but it was no
14 time recent, and things are a lot
15 different now. If it was never done,
16 then I'm happy that we're doing it now.

17 We will record it. Your
18 testimony is being transcribed, and as we
19 sit here, this hearing is being
20 broadcast. And so we have a record now
21 of what the issues are, how we can work
22 together, are our programs working in
23 government, in the private sector, are
24 they failing, do they need to be
25 adjusted, what can we do to bring assets

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2 together, what can we do to get out of
3 the way of things that are happening.
4 Those type of issues are the things that
5 we're trying to deal with.

6 Being that government's
7 resources are oftentimes limited -- and
8 I'm talking about the City -- we will
9 have to try to prioritize with your help
10 where can the City best puts its assets
11 and resources in, how can we be most
12 effective, and how can we work with you,
13 the folks who are really on the ground
14 doing things. And in terms of advocacy,
15 for the services, benefits and the things
16 that are owed to our veterans, how can we
17 best advocate in Harrisburg or in DC on
18 behalf of our veterans.

19 So with that, I will let you
20 know that on my left we have a timer. It
21 will ring at five minutes. You don't
22 have to stop right away. It's just going
23 to ring all by itself, but it will let
24 you know to try to wrap up in 30 seconds
25 or a minute. There can be room for

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2 questions. It may be that you can
3 further articulate things at that point
4 in time, and at the very end, we have an
5 opportunity for anyone, anybody in the
6 public, to make a public comment, but
7 they will be limited based on the number
8 of people to three minutes, and if
9 there's only one person, they'll have a
10 lot more time. That's our procedure, and
11 it's really no disrespect to anyone
12 testifying. It is respect for the people
13 who are behind you. And I know some of
14 you are on pretty tight schedules, and we
15 want to respect that as well.

16 So with that, I will ask the
17 Clerk to call the first witness.

18 THE CLERK: Clarena Tolson,
19 Commissioner of the Revenue Department.

20 (Witness approached witness
21 table.)

22 COUNCILMAN OH: Good morning,
23 Commissioner.

24 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Good
25 morning, Councilman.

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2 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you so
3 much for joining us. Would you please
4 state your name for the record and
5 provide us with your testimony.

6 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Good
7 morning. My name is Clarena Tolson. I'm
8 the Commissioner of the Department of
9 Revenue and I also serve as the City's
10 Chief Collectors Officer.

11 Good morning to Councilman Oh
12 and other staff members who are here as
13 part of the Committee on Global
14 Opportunities and Creative/Innovative
15 Economy. My name is Clarena Tolson, the
16 Revenue Commissioner. I was asked to
17 participate in this morning hearing to
18 report on the status of the credit for
19 employment of returning veterans of the
20 Armed Services as it was established by
21 ordinance, City Council Bill No. 120491,
22 signed by the Mayor on June 27th, 2012.
23 This ordinance was to provide
24 Philadelphia-based employers a business
25 income and receipts tax credit upon

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2 hiring veterans between July 1, 2012 and
3 June 30, 2014.

4 I would like to note that there
5 are two real estate tax programs to
6 provide relief to members of the Armed
7 Services, one for veterans disabled in
8 combat and the other for those who serve
9 in active duty.

10 To receive the business income
11 and receipts tax credit for employment of
12 returning veterans, a business must hire
13 a veteran in a position where he or she
14 earns wages subject to the Philadelphia
15 wage tax.

16 A business may receive up to
17 \$2,000 tax credit each year for each
18 veteran employed by the business for more
19 than six months, up to \$1,000 for each
20 part-time veteran employee. The maximum
21 amount of the credit a business may
22 receive over all tax years for any one
23 full-time veteran is \$4,000 and for any
24 one part-time veteran, it is \$2,000.

25 To date, the City has received

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2 one application for this credit. The
3 application unfortunately was not
4 approvable, as the applicant did not meet
5 the program guidelines. We are ready and
6 willing to work with Council to improve
7 the climate for our returning veterans to
8 the City.

9 We thank you for this
10 opportunity to testify, and I'm happy to
11 be here today.

12 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
13 much. When the bill was drafted -- and I
14 authored the bill and worked with the
15 Finance Department -- the issue at the
16 time was that there was a concern that
17 the tax credit would be used too much
18 and, therefore, the request was made that
19 instead of being three years, it be two
20 years, and instead of it being \$5,000,
21 that it be \$2,000 for two years. So from
22 a \$15,000 tax credit to a \$4,000 tax
23 credit for full time. And it was a
24 request that was very reasonable just to
25 look at how this tax credit would

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2 perform. The reason the discussion
3 occurred was because in comparison to the
4 tax credit for those who have a felony
5 record, which is \$10,000 over three years
6 or \$30,000 tax credit, but it had never
7 been used. It was very difficult for
8 employers to use that tax credit, but the
9 thought was because we're dealing with
10 veterans and they have easily accessible
11 records and that veterans are very
12 desirable as employees, that this tax
13 credit would be readily used.

14 And so what are your
15 thoughts -- and it may not be your area
16 of expertise as to the mindset of
17 employers or things like that or of
18 veterans who are seeking jobs, but what
19 are your thoughts about why this tax
20 credit is not being more -- isn't being
21 used more?

22 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: There
23 certainly are -- there should be many
24 opportunities for businesses to take
25 advantage of the program. I think that

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2 there's a couple things that need to
3 happen. A greater effort with outreach
4 within our service organizations who
5 support veterans and certainly a greater
6 effort possibly on the part of my agency
7 to share information about the
8 availability of this.

9 We have recently had
10 discussions with our Commerce Department
11 and PIDC to talk about expanding the
12 reach to make sure that as we are seeking
13 new businesses in this community, as we
14 try to work with businesses to expand,
15 that we share information about the
16 opportunities available through this tax
17 credit.

18 Additionally, I think that we
19 have to educate our veterans about the
20 availability of this offering so that
21 they can use it as a sale point and a
22 pitch point, if possible.

23 I certainly was not here in
24 this capacity several years ago when
25 initial discussions were had about how

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2 the program should work, but I think that
3 to the extent that people have to weigh
4 the options of participating in this
5 program, say, versus a job creation
6 program, that it may be viewed that the
7 job creation tax credit is one that they
8 would prefer, because that too offers
9 some benefits based upon a single
10 employee.

11 So I think that there's
12 numerous things that would have to be
13 considered when talking about how we
14 could possibly improve the opportunities
15 to this tax credit.

16 COUNCILMAN OH: All right.
17 Thank you. What I would say is that my
18 office has had some communication with at
19 least the U.S. -- the department of the
20 U.S. Army in an effort to try to see if
21 we could get involved as a city in
22 notifying active-duty soldiers and
23 eventually hopefully broaden it to all
24 branches of the service that Philadelphia
25 is a vet-friendly city, that you could

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2 apply here and receive -- the employer
3 would receive a tax credit for hiring the
4 veteran, with the thought that it would
5 do two things. One, it would help
6 veterans who are transitioning from
7 military service back to the civilian
8 world, but that it would really benefit
9 our city to enlarge our pool of available
10 workforce and particularly those with
11 training and experience that would be
12 valuable to employers.

13 I would very much like to
14 explore with our private industry and our
15 city the opportunity to better notify
16 employers about the tax credit. I think
17 it's something that we can work with our
18 Chamber and other folks, but I certainly
19 will after today's hearing probably be
20 back in touch with your office to see if
21 we could tweak this tax credit so that it
22 does achieve the things that we need. I
23 think at this point in time being that
24 there's been only one application and
25 that was an unsuccessful application,

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2 that we may look at trying to increase
3 the tax credit and enlarge at least the
4 benefits. And it does have a cap. I was
5 looking at a thousand. We capped it at
6 500, just because it would have been
7 problematic for the City to lose money,
8 but at this point in time since there's
9 only been one application, perhaps we can
10 enlarge that tax credit and see if some
11 people won't take advantage of it in a
12 way that is beneficial to the City.

13 COMMISSIONER TOLSON:

14 Councilman, I would certainly look
15 forward to the opportunity to engage in
16 that dialogue and find ways that we can
17 increase the number of participants into
18 this program.

19 COUNCILMAN OH: Well, thank you
20 very much. I know you have a very busy
21 schedule and so I appreciate your coming
22 here yourself, and I know how supportive
23 you are of these efforts, and so I thank
24 you and the Administration for your work.

25 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Thank

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2 you, Councilman.

3 COUNCILMAN OH: I'll ask the
4 Clerk to call the next witness or
5 witnesses.

6 THE CLERK: The next panel:
7 Michael Maher, John Titus, Mary Hagy,
8 Michael Manning.

9 (Witnesses approached witness
10 table.)

11 COUNCILMAN OH: So why don't we
12 do this: Why don't we have the first two
13 sit in whatever order and then we'll have
14 the next two or we can pull up one more
15 chair and have four seats there.

16 All right. Very good. Thank
17 you very much. We will begin our
18 testimony on this panel which deals with
19 leadership and success that benefits our
20 city, and so I'll ask each of you going
21 from your right to your left to identify
22 yourself and provide us with about five
23 minutes of your testimony. What I will
24 ask you to do, being the nature of this
25 hearing, to just give us at least some

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2 ability to understand who you are from a
3 military background, if you have a
4 military background. So just about 15 or
5 20 seconds about that. And so we'll
6 start with John Titus.

7 CAPTAIN TITUS: Sure. Thanks,
8 Councilman.

9 COUNCILMAN OH: Please state
10 your name for the record and introduce
11 yourself and then provide us with your
12 testimony.

13 CAPTAIN TITUS: Sure. My name
14 is John Titus and I work with Comcast.
15 I'm a Navy veteran. I actually enlisted
16 in the Navy here in Philadelphia in 1982,
17 and I just retired in 2012 in
18 Philadelphia, in 2012. So I did a full
19 circle, 30 years in the Navy service,
20 started as an enlisted man and worked my
21 way up through to Naval Academy, got my
22 commission through there, and recently
23 retired as a captain in the Navy. And I
24 was a Navy logistician or what we call
25 the Navy Supply Corps officer.

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2 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
3 much. And currently you're Vice
4 President at Comcast Cable.

5 CAPTAIN TITUS: Yes. I'm a
6 Vice President of Operations in Comcast
7 Cable.

8 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
9 much. Would you provide your testimony,
10 please.

11 CAPTAIN TITUS: Sure. David, I
12 want to try to highlight three parts
13 here, my military transition to Comcast
14 and how that happened. As you know, they
15 don't usually hire someone off the
16 street. They usually require 15 years of
17 telecom experience to fill someone in my
18 role. And having zero telecom
19 experience, how was I able to kind of
20 convince Comcast that I could add value
21 to the company.

22 Second thing, I want to talk a
23 little bit about what the military skills
24 bring to a company. And I get constantly
25 asked about we don't understand what the

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2 company can bring -- I mean, what a
3 military person can bring to a company.
4 I always like to turn around and say,
5 What can a military person bring and how
6 they can add value to your company. So
7 there's tremendous skills that we can
8 bring. And then some of the Comcast
9 initiatives that we're doing right now,
10 not only to recruit veterans, but also
11 how can we take care and feeding of our
12 veterans as well.

13 So first of all, I'd like to
14 kind of talk about quickly my transition.
15 I was very fortunate. With our training,
16 we do a lot of military planning, and so
17 I made my transition sort of a mission
18 planning set and put every effort like I
19 would. Like when I was sent to Pakistan
20 to do an earthquake relief operation, we
21 put full fervor and effort in everything
22 we have to planning that mission. And
23 that's where I think some of the skills
24 that we bring is mission planning skills
25 but also an area of opportunity for the

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2 City to help transitioning military out,
3 because we really don't link up -- before
4 they leave the military, how do we get
5 involved with the transition assistance
6 programs that services offer so it's a
7 seamless handoff from the military to the
8 local community.

9 So that's one avenue that -- I
10 made sure they did the mission planning
11 with the plan of action and milestones
12 and then being able to clearly articulate
13 my skills and also backing it up with
14 experience, not just military terms but
15 within corporate terms and using my
16 experience to how that -- and using it in
17 a corporate example of how I can
18 translate those skills in a company
19 environment.

20 And I was very lucky.
21 Networking. Not networking just because
22 I'm getting out, but every tour, military
23 should be actively involved with the
24 community, and not with the sole
25 purposes, Now I need to be involved with

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2 community since I'm getting out. And so
3 by being involved, you get to meet great
4 people, like I got a chance to meet
5 yourself, Ken Wong, some very important
6 people in the community that were able to
7 see me as a person and then know me and
8 then trust enough to refer me to other
9 people that I am getting out and he may
10 be a good candidate for you to hire. So
11 networking is critical. And we do not
12 offer enough opportunities while an
13 active-duty person is still in during his
14 last tour. How do we create those
15 network opportunities for an individual.
16 They usually wait until when they get
17 out, and it's too late then.

18 So just by being able to
19 articulate my skills and convincing
20 Comcast that the value -- it took eight
21 interviews. Just being able to just
22 clearly articulate the key values of
23 leadership, integrity, and collaboration
24 were the key three things that I tried to
25 use, not only with examples but also --

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2 military examples, but also corporate
3 examples, how I could do that in their
4 companies by doing research of their
5 problems and how using my skills I could
6 help them with their problems.

7 So that touched on my
8 transition and some of the key military
9 skills. I always try and stress the
10 leadership side. Coming into Comcast, I
11 love the culture and focus of mission,
12 getting a mission done and taking care of
13 your people. So a company like Comcast,
14 very, very commensurate to what we do in
15 the military, especially from an officer
16 perspective. Immediately when I came in,
17 I felt the senior executives and the
18 other executives, I felt it was a
19 wardroom environment. It was an officer
20 wardroom environment where we took care
21 of each other and it was mission above
22 self. And so that's what really made me
23 lean towards Comcast.

24 The Comcast initiatives, as you
25 know, we started up our Comcast Veteran

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2 Network here in 2012, made a commitment
3 to hire a thousand in three years. We
4 met that goal. We set another commitment
5 to hire a thousand. We met that goal
6 already. So through the combination of
7 NBC and Comcast, we are on a definitely
8 upward trend seeing a great value of
9 hiring veterans, and we stay committed to
10 do that. So Will Baas is our senior lead
11 for military recruiting, and we try to
12 attend every Hiring Our Heroes event,
13 especially the one here locally that just
14 happened here in Philadelphia. And
15 they're off into another state right now
16 making sure they're attending our Hire
17 Our Heroes event.

18 The key thing what we do there
19 is, we try to bring Comcast veterans to
20 those events. Not just recruiters but
21 actual veterans. As you know, an Army
22 guy likes to talk to another Army guy and
23 speak their speak. So we bring
24 multi-service Comcast employees to these
25 events, and we found out we have a better

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2 connection that way.

3 A couple things that I know
4 that we talked about before, ways to make
5 things better, and we can talk about it
6 during the Q and A, is just -- I touched
7 on it a little bit, the better process of
8 the vet handoff, how can the City help
9 by -- for example, in Fort Dix, McGuire
10 Air Force Base, getting involved -- every
11 soldier, sailor, airman has to go through
12 a transition assistance program before
13 they get out of the service, and then how
14 do we get better engaged with that
15 process. We can help guide them not only
16 with the job search but also with
17 medical.

18 As a disabled veteran myself, I
19 probably could have used a lot more. And
20 I was very knowledgeable, but just that
21 handoff, just knowing that we -- the
22 proper handoff, like a race, a relay
23 race, that probably needs to be a lot
24 more seamless that way.

25 One of the things that we're

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2 really working on right now is trying to
3 get a common operating picture of all the
4 veteran groups. As we stand up, Comcast
5 and NBC are now combined and looking to
6 help with the community involvement. We
7 don't have a list of what veteran
8 organizations are out there and what are
9 they doing and how can we add value, so
10 we as a big corporate world can get
11 together and how we can add value to what
12 they're already doing, not tell them what
13 to do, but just add value and help them
14 out. So a common operating picture or
15 even a simple veteran group symposium we
16 can kind of better coordinate together
17 will be kind of key.

18 Every rock I turn, I see
19 another veteran group. Just coming here,
20 meeting people here, a lot of great
21 initiatives, but they're all stovepipe,
22 not integrated. So we got to kind of
23 create a communication channel, a blog, a
24 website or maybe on the Council website a
25 list of veteran groups. That will be

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2 great for us so we know what they're
3 doing. More importantly, the events. I
4 just found out there's some races going
5 on that I could easily put on our own
6 corporate websites, veteran network
7 websites, to get more vets involved in
8 stuff like that.

9 So all I'm trying to do is get
10 my Army of vets in Comcast more involved
11 in the community. So I think that would
12 be very beneficial. And to your point,
13 making this a vet-friendly city.

14 Thank you very much.

15 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
16 much. I will point out that our new
17 Executive Director of the Veterans
18 Advisory Commission, Scott Brown, is
19 seated to my right taking notes.

20 So let me ask you just a couple
21 questions before we move on and get to a
22 question for the entire panel, but I
23 could see that Comcast with its
24 commitment to veterans and history of
25 hiring veterans and this new initiative

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2 would be very welcomed to connect with
3 various military entities as they
4 transition their troops out, but putting
5 it all under one umbrella of the City may
6 be a way for small employers or lesser
7 known employers to basically be a
8 credible funnel. Sometimes government to
9 government works when private industry
10 cannot make that connection because
11 there's so much involved in that.

12 Do you think that would be a
13 good way to handle this or is there
14 something that is going on already that
15 I'm not aware of?

16 CAPTAIN TITUS: No, Councilman
17 Oh. That is a great idea. We can
18 definitely -- you can leverage the
19 Comcast media part and also NBC to do
20 that, but I totally agree. It should be
21 a third party, keep it more neutral,
22 because we're all competing for the best
23 assets, and some people want to work for
24 a small company and some people want to
25 work for a large company like Comcast,

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2 but I'd like to give them a choice.

3 We've held a couple events. We
4 held an event at Comcast, a veteran
5 event, where small business came, and we
6 just wanted to introduce veterans to
7 large business and small business, and it
8 worked out fantastic. Felt a little
9 intimidated by being in a Comcast
10 building, but we told them straight up
11 front that all we care about is getting
12 you transitioned, whether to our company
13 or to another company. That's all we
14 cared about.

15 COUNCILMAN OH: Does Comcast
16 have or is it developing a program where
17 in addition to hiring veterans they
18 invest in startup businesses or do B-to-B
19 with other veteran businesses?

20 CAPTAIN TITUS: Yes. We are
21 developing our strategy on that. As you
22 know, we're brand new in 2012. So we
23 definitely are looking for our vendors,
24 looking for more of that. In our
25 contracting business we have to do small

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2 business vendors, and then what we don't
3 have a veteran -- my background is into
4 Navy Marine Corps business operations,
5 and contracting is a very integral part
6 of that and small business was very, very
7 important in that. So how do we get more
8 veteran-owned businesses, small
9 businesses involved with our vendor
10 contract selections. And when we have to
11 go through a large contract, what is the
12 requirement to make sure they hire
13 service as a small business.

14 We've just started that, but
15 what we do in the government, we give
16 tax -- not really tax breaks, but we give
17 definitely points for saying -- example,
18 Lockheed Martin comes in. If you meet a
19 51 percent small business goal, you have
20 a better chance of getting that contract.
21 So some kind of incentives like that that
22 the City can build for a large contractor
23 to ensure they do not only small business
24 but veteran-owned small businesses would
25 go a long way for incentives.

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2 COUNCILMAN OH: You may not be
3 in a position to answer this, but I have
4 to ask. We're so happy to have the
5 investment of Comcast into this new
6 Innovation Center, and part of that I
7 understand is an ability or a desire of
8 Comcast to actually invest funds into
9 incubators, innovation centers, that type
10 of thing. And in terms of what Comcast
11 will do to invest money into
12 creative/innovative technology businesses
13 and other things, are you aware of what's
14 going on there? And being that so much
15 of it is tied in with military
16 technology, let's say, and processes, is
17 there also some identification of
18 veterans who do the creative/innovative
19 technology?

20 CAPTAIN TITUS: I'm not
21 intimately involved with those, but I
22 know Comcast is committed to making that
23 Innovation Center one of the leaders in
24 the nation, not only with the new
25 Innovation building, but also with our

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2 partnership with Time Warner, how we're
3 going to leverage that huge capability
4 and capacity and then with the Innovation
5 Center, leveraging -- building the
6 Silicon Valley in Philadelphia, how could
7 we make that kind of investment here and
8 hire our own engineers and keep our
9 engineers, keep our investments here, our
10 great schools here innovating for the
11 City of Philadelphia. We are definitely
12 committed to finding new ways and would
13 definitely help -- seek help in any
14 avenue.

15 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
16 much.

17 Would you, Mr. Manning, provide
18 your name, your background, and provide
19 us with your testimony. Thank you.

20 MR. MANNING: Sure. My name is
21 Michael Manning. My background is a
22 business entrepreneur, healthcare
23 executive, career military, and teacher.
24 I grew up in the Far Northeast and went
25 to Nazareth Academy, went to Archbishop

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2 Ryan. In 1972, I joined the Army. I did
3 a tour for two years. I came back. I
4 had the GI Bill. I went to Penn State
5 for a year and a half. I got a job
6 working for the Archdiocese of
7 Philadelphia teaching 6th grade down on
8 Spring Avenue, and then went back into
9 the service. I was recruited back into
10 the service, went into Special Forces and
11 stayed there until 1989.

12 So my jobs in the military. So
13 I started out as a craftsman rescue
14 medic, combat medic, and then when I went
15 back into the service, I went into the
16 Special Forces PA program where I stayed
17 until I was a staff sergeant E-6, and
18 then I went on to OCS, where I got a
19 commission, and because I spoke arabic
20 and had deployed to the Middle East
21 previously, I went back to Special Forces
22 to the same unit and commanded an
23 operational detachment for a couple of
24 years until I was injured and then got
25 reassigned to the Special Warfare

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2 Training Center where I worked as a
3 company commander and logistician for
4 about three and a half years. And from
5 there, I went to the advanced course,
6 graduated, was assigned to LaSalle
7 University as a Professor of Military
8 Science where I was a commandant of the
9 Cadet Corps for two and a half years, and
10 then I was reassigned to Special Forces
11 where I deployed to the Far East.

12 In 1989, I retired from the
13 military and moved back to Pennsylvania,
14 moved up to Pittsburgh after I networked
15 with a group of people here in
16 Philadelphia. It was an unplanned
17 transition, and so I had the normal
18 challenges that you would encounter.
19 There were no groups available to help me
20 make a transition from where I was to
21 where I needed to go. I have five kids,
22 and I needed to support them, which I
23 think is a typical scenario for most
24 military members.

25 I enrolled at Carnegie Mellon

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2 in the graduate program. I got a job at
3 UPMC, started out as a materials director
4 for one of their more challenged
5 hospitals. Within two years I became an
6 assistant administrator for occupational
7 medicine, and then I became a hospital
8 CEO. I moved down to Louisiana. I
9 worked for a company called Continental
10 Medical Systems. I built a hospital from
11 scratch, ran the hospital for two years,
12 won awards for the performance of the
13 hospital, and then went to work for Tenet
14 Healthcare, a much larger corporation.
15 So after about six or seven years of
16 doing that, I really understood that I
17 had the capability of starting my own
18 businesses.

19 At that point in time, I
20 started a chain of companies, had 15
21 since that were all in the healthcare
22 medical services sector, up to the point
23 where I am today where I have a company
24 that specializes in capturing information
25 from patients specific to their

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2 healthcare treatment. We've been awarded
3 six patents for the work that we do, and
4 that's my current status. That's my
5 background.

6 COUNCILMAN OH: That's
7 fantastic.

8 Because our microphone is not
9 really picking up your voice so well as I
10 would like it to, would you pull that
11 closer to you.

12 MR. MANNING: So I think John
13 did an excellent job of describing things
14 that could be done and are being done.
15 Mine isn't scripted, but the things that
16 you've identified you can tell are what
17 service members understand need to occur
18 in order to make this transition more
19 effective for veterans and former
20 military members.

21 I think the most challenging
22 things I hear are already being
23 addressed, which is that the military now
24 has a transition program which allows for
25 service members that have decided to

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2 depart the service, give them a period of
3 time in order to prepare, and if they
4 could connect with a city like
5 Philadelphia and know that it's welcoming
6 and that there are certain opportunities
7 that give them an opportunity to compete,
8 I think that that would be very
9 effective.

10 I listened earlier to the
11 testimony on the tax credits. I think
12 from a company's perspective, those tax
13 credits are useful. I'm not sure they
14 are what motivates the organization. I
15 will say the amount of money that we're
16 talking about is really -- may need to be
17 reconsidered. It's simply not enough.
18 And if you're trying to motivate a
19 company to help bring a service member on
20 board, there's a certain period of time
21 that they have to transition into that
22 company, and \$2, \$3, \$4,000 may not even
23 cover the salary for that individual
24 during the transition period, and that's
25 probably what you're trying to support.

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2 But I think that for most
3 service members, we don't go around
4 looking for somebody to do something for
5 us. I mean, that's one thing that we all
6 have in common. We get things done.
7 That's how we're trained. That's why
8 we're in the service, and that's really
9 the benefit that we have to contribute to
10 a workforce.

11 I think one of the challenging
12 things that I heard again being addressed
13 by John's company is that one service
14 member talking to another service member.
15 So their recruiter being a service member
16 and understanding and really being
17 accepting I think would make a huge
18 difference. I think that most service
19 members are not promoters. They don't
20 promote themselves. If they were trained
21 to do something, they do it very
22 effectively, and if they're given an
23 opportunity to do it again, they will.
24 Sometimes it's the translation of what
25 they've done in the service that people

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2 are not prepared to translate for them.

3 So if you're talking to an individual who
4 never had any military experience, it's
5 very difficult to communicate to them in
6 a way that they would perceive as
7 productive and/or useful the talents that
8 you bring to the table.

9 So leadership, that's something
10 that we all have in common down to the
11 private in the military. We all
12 understand how to take orders. We all
13 understand how to listen. We all
14 understand how to teach, and then we all
15 understand how to lead, because we're
16 trained that way. And those are not
17 skills that you would ordinarily see in
18 the public sector or the private sector,
19 and I think that that's really the
20 contribution that we've known that
21 military members make for generations
22 upon generations.

23 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
24 much for that testimony. Let me ask you,
25 you've had challenges at different levels

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2 in and outside of the military, and
3 people would look at you and look at your
4 history as CEO of a hospital and owning
5 these various companies and say, Well,
6 that guy is not like me, he's a military
7 guy who was in an elite unit with all
8 this great training, he must have this
9 incredible network, maybe he's rich,
10 maybe he comes from a wealthy family and,
11 you know, he's made it.

12 What are your challenges today
13 and how would you respond to someone who
14 would say, Listen, your experience is
15 nothing that I could relate to, because
16 I'm a private getting out of the military
17 and I'm nothing like you and I don't know
18 what you have that is valuable to me.

19 MR. MANNING: Well, I have none
20 of the above, the things that you
21 suggested. So I had a modest upbringing.
22 My parents, you know, lived from paycheck
23 to paycheck. Oftentimes I'd go to school
24 and find out that my tuition wasn't paid,
25 and, you know, you have those moments of

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2 embarrassment, but a lot of people have
3 that. That's very common.

4 I never got a job, I will say,
5 because someone said, Oh, well, you're
6 Mike Manning, let me give you this job.
7 So it was always a matter of performance.
8 That's the other thing about the
9 military. You are trained to perform and
10 you are evaluated on your performance.
11 It's probably the best structure that I
12 can imagine, and I've tried to duplicate
13 that in any organization that I've gone
14 to, so that it's not about the
15 personality. It's really about the
16 individual's performance and how well
17 they perform.

18 I did have some people along
19 the way that took a special interest in
20 me, and they gave me a chance really. In
21 fact, the first hospital CEO job that
22 I've got was because the person that was
23 recruiting had been a prior service
24 member, and he looked at my CV, which had
25 all military education and experience on

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2 it, and knew how to translate it, and
3 they were looking for a CEO. Well, they
4 originally gave me the COO job. They
5 paid me half what you would ordinarily
6 get paid. I accepted it because it was
7 probably \$20,000 or \$30,000 more than
8 what I was making in the military, and
9 what I knew was I had to perform. There
10 were very definite goals and expectations
11 that you had to meet. So it wasn't a job
12 where performance wasn't really the
13 expectation. And so I would say to
14 anyone who accustomed to performing,
15 you're given a task, all military members
16 go through this system, and you either
17 meet the task or you don't. If you
18 don't, you get remedial training and
19 hopefully you progress.

20 The military is an upper out
21 organization, though. So there is
22 significant competition, probably more
23 significant than in the private sector,
24 and it is all about performance as
25 opposed to anything else.

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2 So most military members come
3 to a workforce knowing that they need to
4 meet expectations, and the expectations
5 that they are ordinarily accustomed to
6 meeting are far greater than what you
7 would ordinarily expect from anyone else.

8 My last point about this,
9 military members don't stop at 5 o'clock.
10 They don't have that mental clock where,
11 you know, I'm working from 9:00 to 5:00.
12 And I'm not criticizing that at all. I'm
13 just sharing the workforce that absorbs
14 those individuals gets people who are
15 dedicated, loyal. They give them so much
16 more than what you would ordinarily find
17 in a lot of other cases. That's one of
18 the great things that makes them so
19 valuable.

20 COUNCILMAN OH: All right.
21 Thank you very much.

22 MR. MANNING: I have to excuse
23 myself to go to New York.

24 COUNCILMAN OH: Yes. Thank you
25 for taking the time to be here.

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2 MR. MANNING: Happy to.

3 COUNCILMAN OH: Would you
4 please identify yourself for the record
5 give us your military background and then
6 give us your testimony. Thank you.

7 MR. MAHER: Michael Maher,
8 former Navy veteran, proud Philadelphian,
9 and humbled to be here today. Thank you,
10 Councilman, for holding this hearing.

11 I would open up and say if at
12 least the minimum thing that occurs from
13 this hearing is the fact that I got a
14 chance to be with the amazing people that
15 I'm testifying with today, and that's a
16 huge win. And I can tell you that
17 because there's some tremendous people in
18 the room that I have worked with and
19 there's some people in the room that I
20 have not worked with. I think one of the
21 biggest challenges that we face as a
22 veteran community here in Philadelphia is
23 awareness, how do we create awareness and
24 coalesce, the veteran community, both
25 business owners, public-private sector,

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2 and organizations, to foster an
3 environment where veterans feel like this
4 is a place where they can start, stay,
5 and grow.

6 So my background is a former
7 naval officer. I'm a 2005 Naval Academy
8 graduate, played varsity soccer there,
9 went on to do surface warfare, which is a
10 ship driver, served about four or five
11 years doing that job until I came here to
12 Philadelphia. I did three deployments in
13 four years driving ships, two tours in
14 the Persian Gulf, one in Southeast Asia,
15 anti-piracy defense, a lot of really,
16 really amazing things and a lot of
17 valuable experiences and skill sets that
18 I learned during that time period.

19 Came here in Philadelphia and
20 became a recruiter. I was in charge of
21 chaplains and JAGs for the five state
22 districts that is NRD Philadelphia, the
23 great NRD Philadelphia that Captain John
24 Titus came through 30 years ago. And I
25 really honed in on my skills as a talent

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2 finder and became one of the best
3 chaplain recruiters in the country.

4 I recently left the military as
5 of January 1st of this year and I am now
6 a successful entrepreneur and I run a
7 co-working space called Benjamin's Desk,
8 which is a local soft incubator, if you
9 will. It's a shared office space for
10 mobile professionals, entrepreneurs, and
11 startups, and in a very short period of
12 time, I've emerged as somewhat of a
13 leader of the startup technology and
14 innovation community here in
15 Philadelphia.

16 So there's a lot of things that
17 I wanted to say, and my perspective for
18 testifying today was really to talk about
19 the skill sets that I learned in the
20 military and how that helped prepare me
21 to be an entrepreneur. And when I look
22 at what it takes to be an entrepreneur,
23 it really comes down to risks and
24 opportunities, and when you weigh the
25 risks of being an entrepreneur or a small

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2 business owner, it really comes down to a
3 few things. When you compare those risks
4 of several hundred thousand dollars being
5 on the line from personal guarantees to
6 debt to equity and stakeholders and then
7 you compare that with the jobs that you
8 held in the military, well, I was in
9 charge of men and women, their lives,
10 their families, their personal and
11 financial success, I was in charge of
12 hundreds of millions of dollars of
13 equipment. The risk comparison there, it
14 really isn't that hard of a jump to go
15 into small business or entrepreneurship.
16 And I love that comparison, because it
17 really draws into perspective what all
18 the veterans really do when they serve
19 their country.

20 You've heard about leadership
21 from the two gentlemen before me. I'd
22 also like to talk about two real skill
23 sets that most military service members
24 learn, and it's a great asset and value
25 that they bring to the broader community.

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2 One is being very process oriented,
3 meaning we can execute on just about
4 anything. Very, very mission oriented.
5 But at the same time, we're
6 outside-the-box thinkers. We subscribe
7 to the model of adapt and overcome. We
8 always have plans, but we never fall in
9 love with our plan. So challenges, ups
10 and downs, getting things done, 24/7
11 hour, you know, work initiatives, that's
12 ingrained in what we do, and that's
13 tremendous value that we bring to the
14 table.

15 I always look for analogs and
16 comparables with what I do as an
17 entrepreneur and in my role in the local
18 technology and startup ecosystem, and one
19 of the amazing things about the
20 Philadelphia ecosystem as it is today as
21 far as technology and entrepreneurship is
22 this idea that we have a mature
23 ecosystem, but we're very fragmented.
24 It's probably the best comp to the state
25 of the veteran community.

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2 It is a very, very mature
3 veteran community. We have one of the
4 largest and most active Pennsylvania
5 National Guards in the entire country.
6 We have the Union League of Philadelphia,
7 to which some members are sitting next to
8 me and behind me. They have an Armed
9 Service Council that is very active.
10 Guys like Alex Archawski, who you'll hear
11 from later today, the Greater
12 Philadelphia Veterans Network, doing
13 amazing things to teach corporations on
14 how to hire vets. And we have, you know,
15 a tremendously large organization called
16 Comcast that is making leaps and strides
17 and bounds with what they're doing as far
18 as hiring vets. I'm proud to call
19 Comcast a partner of mine at Benjamin's
20 Desk, which is my business. But it
21 really comes down to one single thing,
22 and I think it's mentorship.

23 The same thing that I think
24 holds back the Philadelphia
25 entrepreneurial ecosystem, which is

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2 fragmentation and mentorship, is the same
3 thing that haunts the veteran community
4 here in Philadelphia. If we can really
5 come together via your committee and the
6 folks in this room and establish a really
7 smart way to have the Captain John
8 Tituses of the world continuing to mentor
9 the young Mike Mahers of the world, I
10 really think that's how you move the City
11 forward and the climate for veteran jobs
12 and the willingness to have veterans step
13 out on the ledge and be entrepreneurs.

14 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
15 much. And this being the official start
16 of Philly Tech Week, I really appreciate
17 you being here.

18 When you were departing from
19 the military, your experience might have
20 been different from others, being that I
21 know you a little bit, but I never asked
22 you about this. Did you ever have fear,
23 concern, did you ever say, Oh, my
24 goodness, I'm leaving the military, I
25 don't know what I'm going to do next, or

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2 did you just find yourself doing it and
3 when you left the military, you're
4 already set up?

5 MR. MAHER: So, you know, Alex
6 Archawski and I talk often, and he often
7 says I'm somewhat of an anomaly in the
8 sense that I really had no fear of the
9 transition, but I can tell you that that
10 fear is real. The fear of change is
11 real. And even in my experience now,
12 although I started my transition fairly
13 early, when I look back just at January 1
14 and all the things that I've now had to
15 do that I had no experience in doing,
16 finding healthcare, making sure that I
17 had a doctor to go see, I mean, these are
18 very, very basic things that I think the
19 broader civilian community doesn't
20 necessarily understand. That transition
21 is real. There's real things that people
22 take for granted on a daily basis that
23 veterans, you know, what we have
24 available by way of resources via
25 healthcare and doctors and all that

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2 stuff, it's just something that we take
3 for granted.

4 So that transition is very
5 real. It wasn't as daunting for me as it
6 is for a lot of service members, but one
7 of the things I've tried to do is
8 establish some type of mentorship
9 pipeline with local vets in the area that
10 I know are transitioning. I get tons of
11 e-mails on a monthly basis from what I
12 call "centers of influence," people in
13 the area that are vets and they know of
14 other veterans that are transitioning,
15 and I help to talk to them about here's
16 what you should be doing, I just went
17 through this. We need more of that at a
18 high level, at a low level, and it can't
19 just be about officer to officer. It
20 needs to be enlisted to enlisted. We
21 need more of the services involved. But
22 I'll tell you, we have all of the natural
23 resources right here in Philadelphia to
24 make this the best place in the world for
25 veterans, for jobs, and for

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2 entrepreneurship. I'm a 100 percent
3 believer in that.

4 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
5 much.

6 And, Mary Hagy, would you
7 please introduce yourself, give us your
8 background, and then provide us with your
9 testimony. Thank you.

10 MS. HAGY: Good morning.

11 COUNCILMAN OH: Good morning.

12 MS. HAGY: Thank you so much
13 for this opportunity to address the
14 Committee and also to have the experience
15 of watching this community coalesce right
16 in front of us.

17 My name is Mary Hagy and I'm an
18 Army veteran. I served six years on
19 active duty, and during that time, I was
20 with the Armed Forces Radio and
21 Television Network, and when I left
22 active duty, I went on to become a
23 civilian executive in public affairs and
24 congressional liaison and, through that
25 period, created a national outreach

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2 program for commanders in the field who
3 were faced with the realities of cleaning
4 up toxic waste at their military bases
5 and how to work and involve citizens in a
6 truthful and authentic manner.

7 In 1991, I successfully was
8 selected by a team of U.S. Army Corps of
9 Engineers. There were 75 of us, and we
10 went into Dhahran for Dessert Storm and
11 remained there until we went into Kuwait
12 City. That's where I spent my war time.

13 When I came back, I found a
14 Naval Academy man and walked away from my
15 career at the top of my game. And he and
16 I moved here to Philadelphia in 1991
17 because we were drawn by then Mayor Ed
18 Rendell's executive group who were
19 charged with how do we get the City back
20 from bankruptcy. We fell in love with
21 the City. We've been here ever since.
22 We live blocks away. We built our
23 businesses here. I'm a serial
24 entrepreneur, and I see another one next
25 to me, and it takes a curious kind of

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2 insanity to do that and to do it
3 successfully, and I've done it
4 repeatedly. And it comes from -- there's
5 a profound effect that the military
6 experience has on us. Those of us who
7 are here know that. We also accept -- if
8 we are candid with ourselves and honest
9 with ourselves, we have a recommendation
10 to ourselves and responsibility to our
11 communities to continue to serve. So it
12 is with that that I looked around in the
13 last year or so and I saw an opportunity
14 as an entrepreneur, and that opportunity
15 is that there's a fuller story to be told
16 of veterans.

17 We hear a lot of media coverage
18 about those that are most in need. That
19 media coverage needs to continue. We
20 need to solve those problems. The
21 opportunity that I saw was that we might
22 be able to create the wherewithal to get
23 into the pipeline earlier so that the
24 problems that our veterans and their
25 families are facing could be prevented

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2 from the beginning.

3 So I formed Our Vet Success.

4 Our Vet Success is dedicated to
5 increasing public awareness of successful
6 veterans and the businesses that employ
7 us. We have a national public awareness
8 program going on right now. We have a
9 television series that we are producing
10 that is going to begin here in
11 Philadelphia and then go national. These
12 are profiles of distinction. These are
13 veterans who have successfully
14 transitioned and are continuing to serve
15 in their communities by driving
16 employment, by contributing to the
17 economic welfare, by raising their
18 families and being very involved in their
19 communities. It's a very exciting
20 opportunity.

21 Here in Philadelphia with the
22 2014 Year of the Veteran, I'm very
23 pleased to be able to share something
24 with you, because we are very much about
25 nuts and bolts and mission and getting

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2 things done. I'm a life member of the
3 Union League of Philadelphia, and the
4 work that I do there is very much a
5 passion of civic outreach. And since the
6 Union League was formed in the Civil War,
7 after every war the Union League
8 membership has gotten together and said,
9 How do we get veterans jobs. That
10 stopped after Vietnam War. So as I
11 looked around the opportunity there, I
12 said, We need to galvanize one more time.
13 Our veterans that are coming back, we
14 have an obligation and an opportunity to
15 work with them. We are launching in the
16 next the couple of months a veteran
17 employment initiative where all 3,200
18 members, each of whom has a business or
19 works for a business that can hire
20 veterans, we will find a way for them to
21 work with the Department of Labor and we
22 also would like to work with the
23 Department of Veteran Affairs and also
24 the City of Philadelphia to make sure
25 that all of these businesses have access

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2 to veterans to hire.

3 May I hear a yes?

4 COUNCILMAN OH: Yes. Yes.

5 Thank you very much.

6 MS. HAGY: Yes. It is quite an
7 awesome opportunity, and those of us that
8 are in the Union League are pulling
9 together the brightest and smartest
10 minds, and there are all kinds of ways
11 that -- pieces that need to come together
12 around this, but we're doing it and we're
13 launching it.

14 Also, on May 17th we have a
15 career assistance seminar that we are
16 sponsoring. I would like to be among the
17 many here to thank Comcast for its
18 support of both Our Vet Success and the
19 May 17th event, and that May 17th event
20 is going to enable 100 veterans, families
21 members, and transitioning active-duty
22 people to come and get a very intensive
23 one-to-one experience throughout the day.
24 They're going to not only understand how
25 to market themselves better; they're also

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2 going to understand their
3 responsibilities, their personal
4 accountability for the transition as
5 well.

6 So we are looking to employers
7 to -- and we're providing them the
8 wherewithal in terms of training and
9 support to effectively transition and
10 integrate the veterans into their
11 businesses. And I'm the first one to say
12 that we all have our own responsibility
13 to make sure that we do what's right for
14 ourselves.

15 And, finally, Our Vet Success
16 is very pleased to announce that we are
17 going to support the National Wheelchair
18 Games by getting a community group
19 together to do whatever it takes to
20 support the Wheelchair Games. The 600
21 athletes that are coming here are all
22 success stories and their stories need to
23 be told. The economic impact of these
24 games on this city is pretty substantial,
25 and we need to recognize that opportunity

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2 and optimize it.

3 Thank you.

4 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
5 much.

6 I'm going to start pushing us a
7 little further ahead, so I will save
8 questions for later and ask that the next
9 panel step forward.

10 Thank you very much.

11 MS. HAGY: Thank you.

12 THE CLERK: Timothy Meserve and
13 Scott Brown.

14 CAPTAIN TITUS: Councilman, may
15 I approach?

16 COUNCILMAN OH: Yes, please.

17 Something from the Navy.

18 Something about winning the 13th time. I
19 don't know.

20 (Witnesses approached witness
21 table.)

22 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you for
23 being here. Would you please state your
24 name, give us your background, and
25 provide us with your testimony.

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2 MR. MESERVE: Tim Meserve,
3 Executive Director of Veterans
4 Multiservice Center. Air Force veteran,
5 retired, United States Air Force Academy
6 graduate 1991, the service that holds the
7 most trophies of the commanders and
8 chief, just for the record.

9 I'm obviously a retired Air
10 Force veteran. I'm a disabled veteran,
11 but I'm also currently a military spouse.
12 My wife is still active duty, so I get
13 the opportunity to where several hats.

14 MR. BROWN: Scott Brown, United
15 States Navy, 100 percent
16 service-connected veteran and the
17 Director of the Veterans Advisory
18 Commission in City Hall.

19 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
20 much. Maybe we can start left to right
21 and, Tim, if you'd provide us with your
22 testimony. And this panel deals with
23 veterans benefits and services.

24 MR. MESERVE: Well, thank you
25 for the opportunity. I appreciate the

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2 ability to speak and for the Year of the
3 Veteran here in Philadelphia.

4 As the Executive Director of
5 the Veterans Multiservice Center, it was
6 established in 1980 and exists solely to
7 serve veterans. We've served over 2,500
8 veterans and their families. We do this
9 annually. And it's truly closest to a
10 one-stop center for veterans. We
11 basically operate Stand Down Monday
12 through Saturday and some holidays for
13 the City's veterans homeless population
14 and recently housed.

15 One thousand two unique
16 homeless veterans walk through the doors
17 of our headquarters facility, which is
18 right under the Ben Franklin Bridge. The
19 VMC operates vans, picks up veterans at
20 City shelters and conducts multiple runs
21 to the VA Medical Center daily. We
22 operate from ten federal grants and two
23 recently awarded state grants. The VMC
24 has four federal housing programs and
25 four federal grants and per diem programs

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2 to include transitional housing for men
3 and women, and we have 125 beds.

4 The VMC is also a core member
5 of the HUD VA Boot Camp team in the City,
6 which is part of a nationwide campaign to
7 end veterans homelessness. The results
8 of the team have been amazing, and the 11
9 major partners in that have moved
10 homeless veterans forward and, in our
11 first hundred days, did over a 400
12 percent increase in chronic home and
13 veteran placements for the City of
14 Philadelphia.

15 We do have job training
16 programs. We have a grant from the
17 Department of Labor and placed over 300
18 veterans in the last year. However, we
19 lost \$376,000 in federal funding during
20 this fiscal year with the loss and the
21 ending of the incarcerated veterans
22 training program.

23 We operate two computer
24 classes. We have 12 computers for our
25 lab to help with job searches and check

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2 e-mails, and we pursued new
3 opportunities. We are now a licensed
4 Microsoft refurbisher and a Microsoft
5 Training Academy. We've created two
6 philanthropic businesses, and one major
7 aspect of the program is actually to hire
8 veterans. Basically we've proven when we
9 hire veterans even at part time, they are
10 more valuable and marketable to the
11 business community, and we've turned our
12 business employees over multiple times
13 already.

14 We have 88 employees, and 77
15 percent of those employees are veterans.
16 We do have two full-time service
17 officers, and the VA Regional Office also
18 comes to our facility two days a week.
19 The Philadelphia Medical Center also
20 operates the Community Resource and
21 Referral Center from our location, and
22 it's a VA national model. It includes
23 veterans justice outreach, HUD-VASH
24 teams, Grant and Per Diem teams, and we
25 basically have formed a partnership that

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2 is very beneficial to the City's veterans
3 that allows them to seek services outside
4 of a hospital.

5 We do operate a thrift shop in
6 the Frankford section of Philadelphia,
7 again, to hire veterans, but also to
8 provide furniture for the clients that we
9 put into housing. We started a small
10 veterans relief fund to take care of
11 those barriers. Sometimes as low as \$25
12 where an individual needs a license to
13 get a job. We have a small fund to take
14 care of those and end those barriers to
15 employment. And we also opened a new
16 women's center. This is the only veteran
17 population that's going to grow in the
18 future, and it's something that as a city
19 we're going to have to work to have more
20 women's programs moving forward.

21 Challenges that I see are
22 obviously in the jobs arena, and they
23 were discussed, but we tend and look at
24 the college graduates, the highly
25 marketable individual leaving the

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2 military, but when you look at the
3 homeless population, that is an older
4 population. We do need jobs in the lower
5 spectrum. So while CEO opportunities are
6 great, entrepreneur opportunities, but we
7 also need, in a lot of senses, jobs for
8 veterans.

9 It's great to see Scott at the
10 Commission. One of the things I would
11 like to see in the City moving forward is
12 that there are a lot of City offices that
13 have resources that assist veterans. If
14 his office could have oversight and those
15 offices send him the programs they get,
16 whether it's state or federal, from
17 housing programs to jobs to mental
18 health. There are a lot of City agencies
19 that do receive funds to support
20 veterans, and a nice clearinghouse, if
21 they could send that data in some formal
22 way to the Veterans Office, that would be
23 helpful.

24 If City Council could authorize
25 a small veterans relief fund for City

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2 Council. In a sense, what some of the
3 non-profits do in the area is have a
4 process to have a small fund to eliminate
5 some of those barriers. And I think that
6 would be very helpful to the community at
7 large.

8 And I'd also like to see moving
9 forward as a baseline each City
10 department actually track as a metric how
11 many veterans they currently employ in
12 their departments and see if that is a
13 good or great number or possibly a poor
14 number, and then we can work towards
15 hiring veterans within the City. I know
16 many departments do veterans preference,
17 but I think to me I'm a big metrics and
18 accountability person. Seeing those
19 numbers publicly would be a great start
20 to know where we are as a City hiring
21 veterans.

22 Basically collaboration is the
23 key, with the team to end homelessness
24 working together with the resources that
25 exist. We do need some more corporate

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2 sponsorships in that ending homelessness
3 fight, but it is a nationwide campaign,
4 and we are part of one of the 25 cities
5 that met in DC just last week to do that.

6 The VMC will continue to morph
7 and transform problems facing veterans as
8 we move forward. We've been around for
9 33 years. We expect to be around 33 more
10 years, but we will change to the needs of
11 veterans as they develop.

12 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
13 much. I will say that I'm going to hold
14 my questions, not because I don't have
15 questions. It's because I want to
16 respect the people's time that have yet
17 to testify. I will announce that we will
18 have Judge Patrick Dugan, who is
19 currently sitting in Veterans Court right
20 now, come over at some point in time when
21 he can. He's going to step off the
22 bench. When he comes, we'll interrupt,
23 let him testify so he could go back and
24 continue hearing cases. But I appreciate
25 his coming here, and we're going to

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2 accommodate him that way.

3 So, Scott, if you'd please
4 identify yourself, give us your
5 background, and provide us with your
6 testimony.

7 MR. BROWN: Yes. Thanks,
8 Councilman Oh. Again, my name is Scott
9 Brown and I'm the newly appointed
10 Director of the Veterans Advisory
11 Commission in Room 127 in City Hall.

12 I'm a Navy guy, born and raised
13 in South Philly and worked a little bit
14 with different small groups in my local
15 neighborhood for activists for cleaning
16 the neighborhood type of thing and got
17 involved with Councilman Squilla's office
18 to help veterans who basically were
19 retirees who were looking for volunteer
20 opportunities, and I got hooked right by
21 the line and sinker to begin different
22 outreach for local veterans. We started
23 a program at the Mummers Museum helping
24 veterans, guide them in the right
25 directions in our local neighborhood, and

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2 then obviously now I'm on board on a much
3 larger scale.

4 One of the things that I hear a
5 lot in our office is what can your office
6 do for me, and that's usually the veteran
7 who walks in or the family thereof. And
8 I would love to say "everything," and I
9 think that -- we don't like to send
10 somebody away without a good answer. And
11 I think that's what the goal was in '57
12 and now for Council that us downstairs,
13 we are an advisory, and what I've been
14 doing in the last eight weeks is meeting
15 these different organizations that are
16 working with veterans, such as Tim and
17 the Multiservice Center and then the VA,
18 Fern, and local American Legion groups,
19 that are truly dedicated to serving
20 veterans in the City. I tried to learn a
21 little bit about their program and at
22 least put the dotted lines on where I
23 would be able to advise a veteran that
24 came in our office.

25 Downstairs I work closely with

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2 Wanda Pate and Joyce Mckeown, and it's
3 great to -- funny, yesterday something
4 happened. I said, Joyce -- she's been
5 there so long. She's been there over 25
6 years. So she's seen a few directors in
7 her time and definitely a lot of veterans
8 come in the office. And said, What do I
9 do with this, and one of the great things
10 that she points out is that Council
11 President has put our office in the sight
12 of a veterans. And there are issues with
13 veterans ID's that was we see on a daily
14 basis, homeless veterans. They're not
15 scorned or scared to come into our
16 office. It's a very relaxed environment.
17 Wanda has done a lot of outreach in the
18 local American Legions throughout the
19 City to get them to come and utilize our
20 office. And Joyce's point brings to mind
21 that this Council President has made it
22 his work to make it comfortable for
23 veterans and get as many resources.
24 Obviously naming a director and the Year
25 of the Veteran 2014 was not only

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2 beneficial to me, but it was beneficial
3 to the veterans community of
4 Philadelphia.

5 I see that a lot of these
6 places say better outreach, better
7 communication. They would like to be
8 more educated and informed, and I think
9 that that will foresee a great goal for
10 our office, is that once I left a meeting
11 with somebody that I met for the first
12 time, I've asked to have that continue,
13 and Tim and I set up our monthly lunch to
14 know what's going on there and what I can
15 be informed on and our office can be
16 informed on and say, This is where that
17 veteran needs to go for this particular
18 situation.

19 I think that that reserve list
20 will continue to grow throughout the year
21 and onward way past 2014, but it will
22 make the office in City Hall a lot more
23 successful once we're able to advise for
24 sure that once we tell that veteran,
25 Here's the contact information, this is

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2 where you need to be, that there isn't a
3 concern that that veteran has received
4 his or her benefits or at least an answer
5 of what that particular issue may have
6 been.

7 You started off with not sure
8 on when this meeting has taken place
9 last. I can say that as long as I'm at
10 the helm of 127, it will continue,
11 because I think this is a great idea that
12 can only grow on advising veterans. I
13 was in the Navy. We had the LOOF brief
14 meetings, which happened once a month,
15 and they stood for learn, outreach,
16 onward, formation. And I think that we
17 need to have that set up, and I'm willing
18 to commit to that in our office so that
19 these local organizations can get
20 together at least once a month and say,
21 Hey, this is what we've got done, this is
22 what we need to get done, can we work on
23 this.

24 One of the things that our
25 office has started about three years ago,

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2 Wanda teamed up with Council President
3 and Will Carter and they got a very
4 successful resource fair two years, very
5 successful. I looked at the numbers.
6 They're growing, and now we've set a goal
7 for our third year annual resource fair,
8 and, that is, we want to see our number
9 double. So approximately 500 veterans
10 attended our resource fair, and we want
11 to see that number double. So we're
12 looking for a thousand vets on Wednesday,
13 May 21st, noon to 3:30. The letters are
14 actually going out today to the
15 organizations that had a table and
16 presentation last year. We look to see
17 that to grow. We could extend it an hour
18 in time.

19 We will have a registration
20 system set up too for our veterans. So
21 once we get them -- it's not for solicit
22 purposes, but for our database. We have
23 a veteran, the name and the needs of that
24 particular veteran or family member, that
25 will also be in effect come Wednesday,

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2 May 21st.

3 It can only be bigger. It can
4 only be bigger because of groups like
5 this that come and are committed. And
6 our office, Wanda, Joyce, myself, Council
7 President, Will Carter, the staff,
8 they're all committed to making this
9 office grow and be the great advisory
10 that it was set up to be. And I think
11 that this will be our first good stance
12 on good ground for a great kickoff. And
13 we'll see the veterans groups and
14 organizations not come out for the last
15 two years, but also good new
16 organizations who are just starting.
17 I've met a lot of them and say, Hey, this
18 is my first time around at this, and
19 that's great, join the club, this is my
20 first time as director. So this is a
21 good chance to get off running and get it
22 done assertive and clean and to continue
23 long after us. So that's what is
24 happening at 127.

25 COUNCILMAN OH: That's great.

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2 I will make the public worry that the way
3 I understand these things work is that
4 when veterans don't take advantage of
5 their benefits and services, we get less
6 money for everybody. So it's kind of an
7 odd thing. A lot of veterans don't want
8 to go in and take advantage of their
9 benefits, but when they don't do that, we
10 end up as a city with less resources for
11 veterans overall.

12 MR. BROWN: It is true. Our
13 staff has heard that a lot, I just didn't
14 know I could take advantage of it. Well,
15 it doesn't hurt to ask. And I've said
16 this to you a couple times in different
17 meetings that I don't understand why
18 veterans aren't utilizing their benefits
19 or what's due them, because when they
20 signed up on the dotted line to be a
21 member, it was without hesitation. They
22 did it because they wanted to most of the
23 time, and I think that that's what we
24 need to see, is that we're here for you,
25 the veteran, without any reserve.

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2 COUNCILMAN OH: All right.

3 Thank you very much. Thank you for your
4 testimony. Thank you for your service.

5 I'll ask the Clerk to call the
6 next panel, which is veterans hiring.

7 THE CLERK: Alex Archawski.

8 (Witness approached witness
9 table.)

10 COUNCILMAN OH: Good morning.

11 MR. ARCHAWSKI: Good morning,
12 Councilman.

13 COUNCILMAN OH: Would you
14 please state your name, provide your
15 background, and give us your testimony.

16 MR. ARCHAWSKI: Absolutely.
17 Thank you very much for inviting me here
18 today with the distinguished group of
19 individuals. My name is Alex Archawski.
20 I'm the Founder and Director of Greater
21 Philadelphia Veterans Network. My
22 background is, I'm a former search and
23 rescue swimmer, the United States Navy,
24 transitioned twice out of the service,
25 first time active duty, second time as a

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2 reservist, called to 9/11 with an
3 in-shore boat unit, sent to the Middle
4 East.

5 I'm here to talk about hiring
6 and really where we see today possible
7 challenges and, of course, the success
8 going forward.

9 So if you think about the model
10 of hiring for a lot of companies for
11 years, it's really what's fed by a lot of
12 recruiters. So recruiters were saying,
13 Why don't you hire the junior military
14 officers, which is a good hire. It's a
15 very good hire, but it was probably the
16 smallest percentage of the military. So
17 it was the easiest way for companies to
18 do a filtering to hire vets so that we're
19 maybe filling compliance or quotas. And
20 then when we created the organization, it
21 was really more for challenging the
22 companies, challenging the companies to
23 understand where is it that you want to
24 hire more and how could we help you
25 facilitate that. So as an organization,

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2 our mission is really twofold, is to
3 train and educate service members to help
4 them define their career and also help
5 them create and execute a job search and
6 networking strategy with over 1,500
7 people in our network. And then for the
8 employer, it's help them create and
9 execute a hiring process and then give
10 them the tools for their success.

11 So what we saw it was --
12 everything was for training for veterans
13 for hiring and, more specifically, for
14 their career services was done very
15 workshop oriented. So workshop oriented
16 meant you're giving a PowerPoint
17 presentation and binder to go home. So
18 that we relate it to if you teach a
19 five-year-old how to ride a bike, give
20 him a PowerPoint presentation. So it's
21 not effective, and it's really hands-on
22 that they need to learn really how to
23 hire and really engage with the veterans
24 and give them opportunities specifically
25 in the career field they're looking for,

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2 and that's what we do.

3 The majority of them do not
4 know sales, marketing, different
5 industries, underwriting, insurance. So
6 it really doesn't matter what jobs are
7 available. If they're not sure what to
8 apply for, how are they going to
9 interview for it. So that's what we do.
10 So we allow the companies to teach them
11 the DNA of a veteran, to understand them,
12 that these vets just need a possibility
13 of a second chance in an interview if
14 they're being too humble. So these
15 companies are learning how to hire
16 veterans, and in the meantime, they're
17 also expanding the type of vets that
18 they're hiring. They're hiring
19 entry-level, they're hiring mid managers,
20 and they're hiring senior leaders. So
21 just this year, we're doing a How to Hire
22 Senior Military Leaders. Ken is helping
23 us as well as Captain John Titus and
24 others that are on our committee, because
25 if you look at the population and if you

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2 ever analyze all the jobs that are out
3 there, they're pretty much entry-level
4 and below. So how could we help these
5 companies to expand their search when
6 they have a lot more jobs.

7 The biggest issues we see is
8 knowledge for these companies. They're
9 afraid that they don't -- as Captain John
10 Titus said, if they don't have telecom
11 experience, you know, how are they going
12 to fit in our company. So we've talked
13 to leadership trainers, CEOs. And the
14 majority of the companies don't hire
15 leaders. They just hire specific skills,
16 and what we're doing is, we're trying to
17 tell them the opposite of doing so that
18 they could bring in the skills, but they
19 should be hiring leaders first. So a lot
20 of companies are lined up. We've got Day
21 and Zimmerman, SEPTA, Comcast, Vanguard,
22 SEI. A lot of them are following that.
23 And we're getting some good results from
24 people like SEPTA as well of things that
25 they've been trying to do to hire

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2 veterans and expanding their search on
3 the types of vets that they're are
4 looking for.

5 So for the City of
6 Philadelphia, there's a lot more
7 involvement on learning especially and
8 more for -- almost like accountability.
9 Accountability is you can't make it their
10 mission to do it. They really have to
11 tell you what their needs are. And the
12 same applies with a veteran. If they're
13 saying, I need a job, it's not our job to
14 make it their job. We just need to
15 figure out how could we help them as
16 they're going along their mission.

17 So the biggest issue is right
18 now -- it's still a lot of time for human
19 resources. They have a lot of
20 compliance. So they think it's very
21 overwhelming, and they really need good
22 information. And just, for example,
23 yesterday I was at Penn training 15
24 people in HR on how to create and execute
25 a hiring process, but at the end of the

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2 day, it was done by Penn that wanted it
3 and is looking to do it. So that's how I
4 see the future. Going forward, we cannot
5 propose it to companies. If they can't
6 see the business sense of hiring
7 veterans, then it's difficult to kind of
8 continue the same message. They always
9 want us to say it over and over, but
10 we've seen companies that need more of
11 our time to do that.

12 So going forward, a lot more
13 companies are looking to expand the types
14 of hiring they're doing, different
15 departments that they never realized, and
16 by doing that, that's why we go to the
17 base and bring the employers to the base
18 for them to understand the military so
19 they can say, Well, it's interesting, we
20 should be hiring that kind of skill set
21 for different departments.

22 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
23 much. I will say that you were coupled
24 with Commissioner Clarena Tolson who
25 because of her schedule we took earlier

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2 and told us that the tax credit was not
3 being used, and then we heard that it
4 might actually be quite effective
5 actually. So the question now is perhaps
6 we should rethink this whole tax credit
7 thing. It seems that you're working with
8 employers and you're training them how to
9 appreciate the resources out there. If
10 they're not using this tax credit to hire
11 folks -- and maybe we should separate
12 from the entry-level jobs and kind of the
13 lower skill jobs for some of our folks
14 that need that, but in your world, what
15 do you think will facilitate or help
16 these HR folks to put more resources in
17 to hiring veterans and learning how to
18 hire veterans?

19 MR. ARCHAWSKI: Councilman, did
20 you mean to utilize the tax credit?

21 COUNCILMAN OH: Or maybe we got
22 to come up with -- in other words, the
23 folks that you are working with, to train
24 them how to hire veterans, to appreciate
25 their skills, to hire leadership and then

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2 give them the skills, that type of thing,
3 is there something that you see that
4 would facilitate or help these companies
5 do a little more?

6 MR. ARCHAWSKI: I think that
7 they are -- if you look, about a couple
8 years ago, I'd say ten years, that a lot
9 of them are doing more. A lot of them
10 are understanding. Before they were --
11 after post 9/11 if you thought about it,
12 the majority of the people were doing it
13 a lot for patriotic reasons. They
14 deserve it. And now they went through a
15 phase of feeling frustrated. And they
16 told us this. Frustrated meaning they
17 just didn't understand and that they
18 didn't get all the information correctly.
19 They were going to job fairs like Hire
20 Heroes USA, and the veteran came up to
21 them and the veteran does not have a
22 career objective and just says, I want
23 your job. He doesn't know what it is.
24 So as an employer, they felt frustrated,
25 saying, How do I help this when I don't

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2 know if they want my job. They just are
3 looking for a job.

4 So that's where over the years
5 they're starting to understand now that
6 it takes a little bit more time than any
7 other demographic to look at resumes
8 differently, to interview differently, to
9 on-board differently, and to go into the
10 community. As Captain John Titus said,
11 we're telling them to engage with
12 veterans more with their veteran team.
13 So perfect example is, with SEI
14 Investments, we have talked to HR.
15 They're using their veterans now to look
16 at the resumes to help HR. So if you
17 think about it, it's a process. It's a
18 process for them, because at the end of
19 the day, if they use an automated
20 system -- here's the key as well -- if
21 they use an automated system called an
22 ATS, so you apply online, if it doesn't
23 match, then there's no opportunity for
24 them. And I'm talking about the big
25 companies out there. The small-to-medium

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2 size one, that's why we teach people how
3 to network through that. It's easier
4 through there.

5 So to answer your questions
6 about the large companies, it is almost
7 the software that they're using, because
8 if the resume does not talk to that job
9 description, then there's no opportunity
10 for them to even make it as a candidate.

11 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay.

12 MR. ARCHAWSKI: So what we're
13 trying to do is avoid the ATS and use
14 some sort of backdoor mechanism to get it
15 in front of HR. So a perfect example is,
16 this week we had somebody approach HR
17 from another veteran that prescreened
18 them, we prescreened them as well because
19 it is the right candidate and as well as
20 HR is now considering them. So it's not
21 placement, but at least a consideration
22 at the table.

23 So hopefully that answers your
24 question on that. It's varied software
25 that's going to be our enemy.

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2 COUNCILMAN OH: Great
3 information. It tells me I have to do my
4 job. All right. Thank you very much.

5 Judge Dugan is here. We did
6 say we would interrupt. I really
7 appreciate you coming off the bench. So
8 we're going to take you right now.

9 (Witness approached witness
10 table.)

11 COUNCILMAN OH: Your Honor,
12 thank you for coming. We have about five
13 minutes of your testimony and a little
14 time for questions, so you've got to play
15 with about ten minutes. And if you would
16 please state your name, identify your
17 military service, and then provide us
18 with your testimony. And this is about
19 Veterans Court.

20 JUDGE DUGAN: Good morning,
21 Councilman. Patrick Francis Michael
22 Dugan. I'm a judge in Municipal Court.
23 I'm still in the Army. I'm a JAG officer
24 with the Army Reserves. Previously I was
25 enlisted as a civil affairs soldier, and

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2 in the 1980s back in the day I was an
3 infantry paratrooper. I've been in and
4 out of the military since 1981. I've
5 served with the 82nd Airborne, the 2nd
6 Infantry Division, 10th Mountain. Active
7 reservist enlisted officer, Afghanistan,
8 Iraq, Panama, South Korea, Fort Bragg. I
9 can go on and on. So I've been in and
10 out. And currently I preside over
11 Veterans Court here in Philadelphia.

12 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
13 much. Would you give us your testimony,
14 please.

15 JUDGE DUGAN: And, again, good
16 morning, Councilman Oh. Councilman Oh
17 and I are both fellow paratroopers. It's
18 good seeing you, sir.

19 Veterans Court -- actually, if
20 I could, one thing I did want to say
21 before we get into it is that for
22 those -- and I know I'm preaching to the
23 choir with the folks that I see here in
24 the audience. In March, zero casualties,
25 zero deaths of American troops in

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2 Afghanistan, which is awesome. And then
3 we unfortunately had the incident down at
4 Fort Hood where we had some soldiers that
5 were killed through fratricide.

6 Basically for me what I want to
7 give to City Council is that the vast
8 majority of our veterans are extremely
9 productive citizens. They're some of our
10 best citizens that we have, and, you
11 know, the folks that are sitting back
12 here behind me are proof of that.

13 I happen to sit in Municipal
14 Court where we have a specialty court
15 called Veterans Court. It's in the
16 Criminal Division. Municipal Court is
17 sort of at the front lines of court
18 system. Municipal Court, though, is sort
19 of leading the way in terms of how to
20 deal with criminal cases.

21 We have courts such as Dawn's
22 Court for prostitutes; John's Court,
23 that's for those who are patronizing
24 prostitutes; Mental Health Court, those
25 who have issues in their mind. We have

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2 alternative misdemeanor programs for
3 those who are just entering the court
4 system, the criminal system, small
5 amounts of marijuana, DUI treatment, Drug
6 Treatment Court. So Municipal Court has
7 been trying for the last few years to
8 come up with innovative ways to keep
9 people from recommitting crimes and
10 filling our prisons. As we all know, the
11 prisons are probably the best industry
12 out there in terms of growth. So the
13 courts certainly are -- Municipal Court
14 is certainly one of those courts that's
15 trying to stop that epidemic.

16 Our jails, unfortunately, are
17 full of those who have served our nation
18 in other conflicts. The amount of
19 Vietnam veterans that are sitting in our
20 jails, it's staggering. The letters that
21 I get from them, I can't do much for them
22 now. They're already incarcerated doing
23 long sentences, but I know that the VA is
24 going into the prison, trying to assist
25 these veterans and provide them with some

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2 of the benefits and rights that they've
3 earned, even while they're incarcerated.

4 In Veterans Court, our motto is
5 "leave no veteran behind," and one of the
6 things that we do when one of our
7 veterans graduates is, they get one of
8 these military coins. Those who have
9 served understand the value of the
10 military coin. They're priceless.

11 So that's what we're trying to
12 do, is leave no veteran behind. Veterans
13 Court, we bring together various veterans
14 organizations. Some of them are sitting
15 behind me, including the VA. We bring
16 them into court and to become a partner
17 in the process that's going on. We have
18 a veteran who has an allegation of a
19 criminal offense. We bring them in. We
20 have the VA or other organizations.
21 We'll do an assessment to see what are
22 the issues, what are the underlying
23 issues that got this defendant into a
24 courtroom.

25 The Commonwealth will screen

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2 the veteran defendant's records to see
3 how many other offenses has he committed,
4 he or she committed. We'll talk to the
5 victim. We do this assessment to see
6 what kind of underlying issues there are,
7 and then we bring the team together,
8 including veteran mentors and these other
9 organizations, and try to come up with a
10 plan to see how we can keep this veteran
11 from reoffending and put them back to
12 being one of our best citizens, because
13 as we know, it's a very small percentage
14 of people willing to raise their right
15 hand, swear to defend the Constitution of
16 the United States of America and then put
17 their life on the line. Very few that
18 are willing to do that. And these
19 people, these veterans who are committing
20 these crimes, we're trying to put them
21 back to being our best citizens. So by
22 bringing all these organizations together
23 and doing this holistic approach to try
24 to get them back to where they should be,
25 that's what's going on in Veterans Court.

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2 It's not a slap on the wrist.

3 Some of these defendants have to go to
4 jail. Some of them are on regular
5 probation. Some of them get what's
6 called a complete diversion, where they
7 stay out of trouble, the case goes away.
8 Now, there's a screening process to see.
9 There's other -- throughout the court
10 system, these programs are available to
11 non-veterans, but for us we bring them
12 together because it appears that it works
13 much better when you bring veterans
14 together or any other like group
15 together, surround them with peers and
16 friends, talk their lingo, and talk with
17 them about what's going on.

18 The recidivism rate for
19 Veterans Court is much lower than 10
20 percent, and 10 percent is a goal for
21 all -- zero percent is what we would
22 like, but depending on who you're talking
23 to about the figures, some people tell
24 you it's 3 percent, 5 percent, 6 percent.
25 I'm telling you, it's much lower than

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2 everything else that we're doing in the
3 courts. My regular courtrooms, I sit in
4 Veterans Court once a week, every
5 Wednesday. The other weeks I'm doing
6 200-and-some criminal cases. The
7 recidivism rate in Veterans Court, it's
8 much lower than in any other courtroom
9 that I'm involved in.

10 Our veterans range from World
11 War II veterans -- I had a veteran who
12 served with Douglas MacArthur that was a
13 defendant, and it goes right down to
14 young men and women who have currently
15 enlisted recently and then get in
16 trouble. Many veterans who have served
17 in Iraq and Afghanistan are coming back
18 with some issues. You send somebody on
19 deployments for over 12 years, put them
20 at risk, get shot at, get TBI, traumatic
21 brain injury, there's going to be some
22 issues when people come home. Most of
23 them are coming home and being productive
24 citizens. Some of them are getting
25 arrested. They're the ones that we're

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2 dealing with.

3 Our courts, Korean War
4 veterans, Vietnam War veterans, Persian
5 Gulf veterans, et cetera, Peacetime
6 veterans, men, women, officers, West
7 Point grads, enlisted, active,
8 reservists, National Guards. Across the
9 board they're coming into our courts.

10 While I say that the vast
11 majority of our veterans are productive
12 citizens when they come back, I also will
13 say that I think we're still looking for
14 the epidemic of issues with people coming
15 back. You send people to war, and you
16 come back a changed person. Whether or
17 not you commit a crime or not, that's a
18 different story. You come back a changed
19 person. I will tell you -- I know the
20 doctors don't agree with me. I think
21 anybody that's put in a situation where
22 they're in a violent conflict, whether
23 they're an active participant or they're
24 just an observer who happens to be on a,
25 quote, safe base, but they moiety all the

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2 time, it's going to affect that human
3 being. We're fragile. Human beings are
4 fragile. Military people don't -- we're
5 tough guys, tough ladies, but we're all
6 fragile human beings.

7 I was a 43-year-old, in quotes,
8 mature person when I went to Iraq, and it
9 affected me. And I wasn't 11 Bravo
10 kicking down doors. I was civil affairs
11 shaking hands. It still affects me. I'm
12 good to go, but I'm thinking about those
13 18, 19, 20-year-old young men and women
14 who are going on multiple deployments,
15 being shot at, shooting people, the
16 effect that it has, and they're coming
17 into the court system as well as having
18 other issues, suicide, homelessness. I'm
19 sure other folks have talked about some
20 of these.

21 But one of the good things for
22 City Council to look at and the
23 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is that we
24 bring in the feds. If I put somebody on
25 probation in my courtroom, they get 12

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2 months, two years, three years probation,
3 whatever it is, it's a county cost. It's
4 a state cost. In Veterans Court, we're
5 pushing it off to the feds, because
6 they're going to the VA in a lot of cases
7 getting the rights and benefits that they
8 have earned, they have earned. So the
9 costs are -- the burden is coming off the
10 City and the State in many cases by
11 utilizing Veterans Court.

12 And, again, I'll leave you
13 with, in terms of my testimony, that the
14 goal of our court and the team is to
15 leave no veteran behind. And, again, I
16 appreciate the folks that are here today
17 and all those other organizations that
18 have been helping out our veterans who
19 have taken a step backwards and trying to
20 get them back to being our most
21 productive citizens.

22 Again, I appreciate the time.
23 Thank you.

24 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
25 much, Judge. I will, because I'm

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2 familiar with you and your program, say
3 that we have two Supreme Court justices,
4 Chief Justice Ron Castille and Justice
5 Seamus McCaffery, both veterans, who
6 support this court. But this court, from
7 prosecutor to defense attorney to
8 mentors, are -- they're all veterans and
9 it's all veterans in that courtroom, but
10 this program would not exist if there was
11 not a person who cared to be the judge,
12 and that person is a veteran. And that's
13 just an example of how the court system,
14 which we wouldn't think would have an
15 innovative program for veterans because
16 veterans are in charge and took on the
17 extra work, have this innovative program
18 that has been criticized, but veterans
19 wanted to bring out the best in veterans.

20 Could you share a little bit
21 about your experiences as a veteran,
22 being involved with this program and what
23 you've seen there?

24 JUDGE DUGAN: Yeah. And,
25 again, I appreciate you letting everyone

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2 know that the justices -- and, again, are
3 Chief Justice Ron Castille, obviously a
4 Marine Corps veteran, who lost a limb as
5 a platoon leader in Vietnam, and Justice
6 McCaffery, who spent 40 years in the
7 Marine and Air Force Reserves. Yes.
8 They're leadership. They push down, and
9 this was something that I wanted to do
10 from the get-go, and when they said it's
11 going to happen, it happened. So it was
12 awesome under their leadership that we
13 were able to do it. We've been doing it
14 about four years now. We've had over 350
15 graduates, guys that have -- men and
16 women who have gone through our program
17 and are continuing to be successful at a
18 very, very high rate.

19 The thing about Veterans Court
20 and veterans being in charge -- and I
21 will correct you on one thing,
22 Councilman, that the vast majority of the
23 people that work on our courtroom are
24 veterans. We do have some people who are
25 not, including right now our public

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2 defender, but we still give her an MRE
3 once in a while. I can't say enough
4 about what she does.

5 Our district attorney is
6 also -- he's a JAG officer. The prior
7 assistant district attorney was a Marine
8 Corps veteran. So, yes, staffing it with
9 veterans because they understand.

10 But the other thing about
11 veterans that we're doing in Veterans
12 Court, we hold them to a higher standard.
13 I expect the veterans that come in front
14 of me to perform better than I do my
15 typical defendant who is placed on my
16 probation. I know that the veteran in
17 front of me can perform at a very high
18 level, and I expect it. So him missing
19 an appointment, I can't tolerate that,
20 because I expect more out of them. They
21 know how to make formation. They know
22 how to be deployed. So I expect much
23 more out of the veteran defendants.

24 As a court, we are much tougher
25 and stricter on our veteran defendants

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2 than we are in a typical courtroom, and
3 the veterans are certainly hearing that
4 and knowing that, and if they don't want
5 to be there, they can opt out. They have
6 to volunteer to come in and work with us.

7 Our graduation, we do it twice
8 a year, and as a judge, I sit in the
9 Criminal Division. I handle everything
10 from homicide prelims down to summary
11 offenses, smoking in the subway, et
12 cetera. So I see a lot. And it is so
13 rewarding when we have a graduation to
14 have 45 veteran defendants. They each
15 get the mic. We let them say what they
16 want, and then they tell us the feedback
17 on what they got out of it. To hear some
18 of the things that they tell us, it's
19 amazing compared to what I'm getting from
20 my other defendants every other day. So
21 it certainly to me appears to be working.
22 Obviously we have some issues every once
23 in a while, but you're not going to be
24 able to do a hundred percent, but we
25 continue to try.

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2 COUNCILMAN OH: Judge, thank
3 you for your work. Thank you
4 particularly for interrupting your day on
5 the bench and your important work to come
6 over here to give us that testimony, but
7 I think everybody will agree it's
8 invaluable. So thank you very much.

9 JUDGE DUGAN: I appreciate it.
10 And the only reason why I was -- my
11 request was to please let me just come
12 over and speak is because I actually do
13 still have a courtroom full of cases that
14 are waiting, and I told them I was taking
15 my quick break to come over here.

16 Thanks. I appreciate it.

17 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
18 much.

19 JUDGE DUGAN: Thank you. Take
20 care.

21 COUNCILMAN OH: All right.
22 I'll ask the Clerk to call our next
23 panel.

24 THE CLERK: Aronda Smith, Cathy
25 Santos.

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2 (No response.)

3 COUNCILMAN OH: And we're just
4 calling the witness, not trying to
5 embarrass anybody, but for the record, we
6 do want people to know that we are very
7 interested in the topic of women
8 veterans, and unfortunately our two
9 witnesses were unable to make it. I will
10 ask, do we have any female veterans in
11 the room right now? I was kind of
12 hanging on Mary Hagy, but she left.

13 (No response.)

14 COUNCILMAN OH: So let me just
15 say this, and it is critically important.
16 So much of our veterans services are
17 oriented towards men. So much of
18 veterans helping and serving veterans is
19 still geared towards men. And we just
20 have so many women in the military, and
21 their issues are different. They do need
22 to have their own organizations. I very
23 much believe that one of the things we
24 need to do is to help facilitate women
25 veterans organizations, their own

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2 leadership, separate and apart from the
3 men. Certainly there's a lot of things
4 we can do together, but I think it is
5 critically important.

6 I will say that in my own
7 limited experience with my organization,
8 we don't have any women, and as most
9 people know in this room, that's not such
10 an easy bridge to cross. But it is a
11 critically important issue, and I hope
12 that we will be able to address it. We
13 are not addressing it today,
14 unfortunately. We did try. We will keep
15 trying. And I know that everybody in
16 here, certainly all of our witnesses, are
17 doing things, there are things being
18 done, but as a city, we do have to know
19 what role can we fill.

20 So with that, I will ask Tim
21 Meserve to come up, because I do know
22 that the Veterans Multiservice Center
23 does have a women's project moving
24 forward. And if you could just take a
25 couple minutes to tell us about it and

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2 help us to kind of comprehend what's
3 going on.

4 (Witness approached witness
5 table.)

6 MR. MESERVE: Tim Meserve,
7 Executive Director of the Veterans
8 Multiservice Center.

9 We actually have a program.
10 It's not located in the City of
11 Philadelphia, but we have the third
12 largest women's transitional facility in
13 the country. It's operated on the
14 grounds of the VA Medical Center in
15 Coatesville, and it specializes in
16 military sexual trauma. We are embedded
17 with the VA. Their psychologists do the
18 screening and work with the individuals
19 that stay in our facility, and that holds
20 30 women. So that is a facility, quite
21 frankly, even though it's not located in
22 Philadelphia, it is a resource for
23 Philadelphia, and women from Philadelphia
24 do reside in that.

25 We did very recently open a new

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2 women's center. It's basically a private
3 space. We have large areas that are open
4 to women, but some women, especially if
5 they had a military sexual trauma
6 incident, which is obviously -- there's
7 varying degrees, some women do not feel
8 comfortable in a large open space. Some
9 of our women won't ride with a male
10 driver. So we basically work to create a
11 space that is just for women. It is
12 small. We have bigger plans to make a
13 larger facility, but it's a place where
14 they can come in, get services. We
15 basically have computers and other
16 resources they have there. We've
17 partnered with several other women's
18 groups to bring in various workshops, et
19 cetera.

20 Basically it's an opportunity
21 for women to come, but they can also
22 bring children if they them. Some of our
23 other spaces, due to the varying degrees
24 of our clients, we are a big participant
25 in Veterans Court. Not ideal for

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2 children, so yet another reason that we
3 have that special space.

4 It is something we're growing.
5 The women's population -- and the VA can
6 probably talk very eloquently about this.
7 They are not enrolled to the levels that
8 have served this country. And some of
9 the women -- I won't say they deny their
10 veteran status, but they're harder to
11 pull out generally than a male veteran,
12 less visible. We want to create those
13 opportunities for women to come and feel
14 comfortable with their military
15 background. That's what we're trying to
16 do.

17 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
18 much for that, and that's great work. So
19 thanks for filling in, but providing that
20 valuable testimony.

21 MR. MESERVE: Thank you, sir.

22 COUNCILMAN OH: I'll ask the
23 Clerk to call the next panel.

24 THE CLERK: Elizabeth Helsel.

25 (Witness approached witness

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2 table.)

3 COUNCILMAN OH: And this panel
4 has to do with the state of veterans
5 healthcare, and thank you very much for
6 being here. Would you please state your
7 name for the record, give us a little bit
8 about your background, if there is
9 military otherwise, and provide us with
10 your testimony.

11 MS. HELSEL: Great. Thank you.
12 Thank you, Commissioner, and thank you to
13 all the veterans in the room for your
14 service. My name is Elizabeth Helsel.
15 I'm the Associate Director at the VA
16 Medical Center in Philadelphia. I am not
17 a veteran, although I am a veteran of
18 serving veterans at the VA for almost 30
19 years. I'm also married to a veteran,
20 and my father was a World War II veteran,
21 as well as a hard-working coal miner. So
22 I learned a hard work ethic growing up.

23 I'm very appreciative of the
24 opportunity to come and talk about VA
25 healthcare and also to learn and hear

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2 from the other testimonies in the room.
3 It's been very interesting.

4 Philadelphia VA Medical Center
5 is part of the Department of Veterans
6 Affairs' Veterans Health Administration.
7 That's VHA for short. VHA consists of
8 over 1,700 sites of care and serves more
9 than 8.6 million veterans every year.

10 VA Healthcare is a
11 comprehensive program that includes an
12 extensive array of inpatient, outpatient,
13 and home care services to promote,
14 preserve, and restore health.
15 Traditional hospital services include,
16 but are not limited to, surgery, critical
17 care, medicine, rehab, orthopedics,
18 mental health, and some things that you
19 don't typically find in a private-sector
20 hospital such as pharmacy and lab
21 services, also radiology and physical
22 therapy.

23 In addition, most of our VA
24 Medical Centers offer specialty care such
25 as audiology, dermatology, dental,

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2 geriatrics, oncology, podiatry,
3 prosthetics, urology, and also vision
4 care and eyeglasses. Certainly
5 comprehensive mental healthcare is key to
6 our VA mission.

7 At the Philadelphia VA, we
8 provide healthcare to veterans in
9 Philadelphia and the surrounding six
10 counties in Pennsylvania and Southern New
11 Jersey. The main medical center is
12 located in West Philly, and we operate
13 four outpatient clinics, three in New
14 Jersey, including Camden, Gloucester
15 County, and one on the base of at Fort
16 Dix, and we have one clinic in
17 Pennsylvania, which is in Horsham,
18 Montgomery County.

19 In addition to the four
20 outpatient centers, we operate an
21 off-site dialysis center, which has the
22 capacity for 48 veterans and runs Monday
23 through Saturday, and this is located a
24 few blocks from the Medical Center in
25 West Philly. And we'll also be opening

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2 the Snyder House, which is a 40-bed
3 residential rehab treatment center in
4 South Philly, and that does include a
5 specific section to care for the needs of
6 our female veterans.

7 Philadelphia VA Medical Center
8 also serves as a tertiary care and acute
9 care referral center for the other VA's
10 in our eastern part of the market, such
11 as Coatesville, Wilmington, Wilkes-Barre.
12 We provide comprehensive surgical,
13 medical, and psychiatric care, as well as
14 drug and alcohol dependency, home care,
15 and rehab care.

16 The following are a few brief
17 facts about the Philadelphia VA:

18 Our operating budget is
19 approximately \$500 million, and we hope
20 to continue to have a good budget in the
21 future fiscal year.

22 We have a total of 280 beds;
23 145 are inpatient and medical and
24 surgical. We have a 40-bed inpatient
25 psych unit. We have critical care,

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2 telemetry, and a very busy emergency
3 room. We also have 135 beds in our
4 Community Living Center or nursing home,
5 which is located across the street from
6 the Medical Center. And we have a very
7 extensive array of community-based home
8 care services.

9 The number of enrolled veterans
10 has continued to increase, and we had
11 about 54,000 in 2008. We have 58,500
12 enrolled in 2013. We employ
13 approximately 2,200 employees, and many
14 of them are veterans.

15 The VA nationally, including
16 Philadelphia VA, has continued to
17 increase mental health capabilities and
18 staffing, with a special emphasis on PTSD
19 as well as suicide prevention.

20 We're constantly upgrading our
21 facility and the equipment, and we're
22 proud of the care that we are able to
23 provide to veterans with state-of-the-art
24 equipment. Just this week, we unveiled
25 something called a da Vinci Robotic

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2 Surgical System that allows surgeons to
3 perform delicate and complex operations
4 with tiny incisions. This provides a
5 surgeon with more precise control and
6 provides the veteran with less scarring
7 and shorter hospital stays.

8 We have an extensive electronic
9 medical record. We've had it in place
10 for much longer than the rest of the
11 world even thought about it, and we offer
12 a very popular program called My Healthy
13 Vet that allows veterans to go online and
14 review their medical records, make
15 requests such as medication refills, and
16 also correspond securely with their
17 provider.

18 Since 2012 when we started
19 tracking figures, Philadelphia VA has
20 provided care to more than 12,216
21 Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation
22 Iraqi Freedom, and Operation New Dawn
23 veterans. The VA provides comprehensive
24 case management support to these
25 veterans. The primary challenges

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2 presented by this group of veterans have
3 been musculoskeletal injuries as well as
4 mental health issues. In 2013, the
5 Philadelphia VA provided care to 5,251
6 OEF/OIF veterans.

7 One of the fastest growing
8 groups we have in the VA is the women
9 veterans, and we provide
10 multi-disciplinary healthcare offering
11 primary, gender specific, behavioral, and
12 specialty care for veterans that are
13 women. In the fiscal year, 9.8 percent
14 of the total patients enrolled in
15 Philadelphia were female veterans. We've
16 added services such as, partnering with
17 the community, such as maternity care and
18 followup after the birth of the baby to
19 assure they're getting the appropriate
20 neonatal services.

21 We also have comprehensive
22 services and staff that partner with the
23 community to provide care to the homeless
24 veterans, and Jim Hammond, our Chief of
25 Social Work, will speak more about that.

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2 We look forward to continuing
3 to provide the highest quality care to
4 the veterans that we serve. We consider
5 our veterans heroes, and we're proud to
6 be a part of Philadelphia and be able to
7 serve them.

8 I want to close by reminding
9 everybody about the National Veteran
10 Wheelchair Games coming up August 12th to
11 the 17th. That's already been alluded to
12 by some of the other people that
13 testified. We're honored that the games
14 were included as an important part of the
15 Council's Year of the Veteran
16 proclamation. The games are co-sponsored
17 by the Department of Veterans Affairs and
18 the Paralyzed Veterans of America,
19 attract over 600 veteran athletes,
20 consist of 17 different sports, and bring
21 in a significant amount of revenue into
22 the City. So we invite everyone to be a
23 part of the games whether as a volunteer,
24 spectator or just come to learn.

25 Thank you.

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2 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
3 much. I know we're pushing on time, so I
4 will not have questions and ask the Clerk
5 to call the next panel.

6 THE CLERK: David Kamioner,
7 Mike Graber, Jim Hammond.

8 COUNCILMAN OH: This panel is
9 on homeless veterans.

10 (Witnesses approached witness
11 table.)

12 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you for
13 attending. Would you, from your right to
14 your left, identify yourself, give your
15 background, and then provide your
16 testimony. Thank you.

17 MR. HAMMOND: Thank you. My
18 name is James Hammond. I'm Chief of
19 Social Work at the Philadelphia VA. It
20 seems to be the running theme. I'm a
21 Navy veteran. I like that. I've been
22 here in Philadelphia for five years,
23 total time in the VA for 20. So what I
24 want to do today is just give you an
25 overview of our homeless services from

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2 entry to permanent housing.

3 So at the most basic level, we
4 have homeless outreach. It's a main
5 portal of entry for any homeless veteran
6 or any veteran who is at risk for
7 homelessness. After that, we have the
8 Community Resource and Referral Center,
9 which is a partnership we have with Tim
10 Meserve down at his place, and that
11 opened in December 2012. It's a
12 collaborative multi-agency,
13 multi-disciplinary program, serves
14 homeless, of course, and at-risk, and all
15 of our -- all the VA programs are
16 represented there. So every program I'm
17 going to talk about has a representative
18 at that site to assist anyone who comes
19 there. I just want to say that so far
20 this year, we've had 1,429 veterans come
21 through the CRRC.

22 So in terms of housing support,
23 Philadelphia provides several levels of
24 supportive housing, and at the very
25 beginning of that continuum is Safe

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2 Haven, which is transitional residents
3 that provides a low-demand site, meaning
4 that the house rules are kept to a
5 minimum. The primary focus is on the
6 safety of the veteran. We also want to
7 move the veteran into obtaining and
8 maintaining housing stability.

9 So the next program in that
10 transitional housing continuum would be
11 Grant and Per Diem. That helps veterans
12 by building a strong foundation and
13 support of a successful recovery. We
14 also help them establish reliable income,
15 then move towards long-term, stable
16 housing. So last year we had 784
17 veterans go through our Grant and Per
18 Diem program. Sixty-five of those were
19 returning veterans and 30 were female.
20 This year the numbers are 562 total so
21 far through last week, including 40
22 returning veterans and 14 women.

23 So our largest program -- and
24 I'm sure everybody knows about this
25 one -- is our HUD-VASH program, the

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2 collaborative between VA and HUD. So
3 currently in Philadelphia we have 460 of
4 our 620 vouchers. The remainder are
5 Camden and Bucks County. As of
6 yesterday, of those 460, 390 veterans
7 were leased. They were in housing. We
8 expect to expand those efforts this year.
9 We fully expect to have more vouchers
10 available for veterans. Hopefully we'll
11 be seeing those in June and July.

12 Also as part of the HUD-VASH
13 program, we have something called Housing
14 First. Pathways to Housing is our
15 partner. And that's geared towards those
16 veterans who are, one, chronically
17 homeless who are also diagnosed with a
18 serious mental illness. We prioritize
19 them for immediate housing under this
20 model. The chief goal of the model is to
21 first move the homeless veteran and/or
22 their family members into their own
23 permanent housing and then address other
24 issues that may be affecting the
25 veteran's ability to remain in housing.

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2 Once housed, the model provides
3 the veterans with wrap-around case
4 management services. Right now we have
5 60 veterans housed through that model.

6 One of the other services that
7 we offer at the Medical Center for our
8 homeless veterans is the Homeless Patient
9 Align Care Team, or as we refer to it as
10 HPACT. This is a medical team. We
11 operate open access clinic Monday through
12 Friday, and the goal of the team is to
13 provide services to those veterans who do
14 not regularly attend their medical
15 appointments and provide same-day care to
16 those in need. We also offer same-day
17 behavioral health services.

18 As Judge Dugan mentioned, we
19 have the VJO program. I will not go over
20 what he did, because that was a very,
21 very good presentation, but I will say in
22 Fiscal Year '13, we had 354 veterans who
23 went through that program, 78 returning
24 vets and 15 female. So far this year,
25 167, six female and 57 returning vets.

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2 I would be remiss if I didn't
3 mention the National Homeless Call
4 Center. That is 1-877-424-3838. The
5 Call Center takes calls from veterans as
6 well as family members and non-VA
7 providers calling on behalf of a veteran.
8 Once that call is made, the hotline staff
9 will conduct a brief assessment. That
10 assessment, that information is then
11 given to our homeless outreach team.

12 So Tim Meserve mentioned this,
13 and I have to piggyback on this also,
14 that Philadelphia is part of the VA's 25
15 city campaign to eliminate homelessness
16 by the end of 2015. We were all in DC
17 last week. Those efforts -- we really
18 began those efforts working with our
19 community partners and City partners in
20 August of last year. We continue to meet
21 weekly. Some of the members of the team,
22 OSH, DBH is there, HUD is there of
23 course, Multiservice Center, PHA, Impact
24 is there. I know I'm missing somebody,
25 so I apologize for that. But I want to

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2 say that since we began our efforts,
3 between us all since August of last year,
4 we've been able to house 261 veterans,
5 and 106 of those are chronic veterans,
6 and we will continue those efforts.

7 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
8 much.

9 MR. HAMMOND: Thank you.

10 COUNCILMAN OH: Would you
11 please state your name for the record and
12 provide us your background and give us
13 your testimony.

14 MR. GRABER: My name is Mike
15 Graber, Sr. I'm in my 21st year working
16 with Impact Services. I am the original
17 staff member and began with a single day
18 program, which ultimately became the
19 Veteran Services Division in the company.

20 Impact currently has a number
21 of different housing programs. We have
22 four Grant and Per Diem programs at
23 various levels of stability and sobriety,
24 early, middle, late, and I have a
25 mentoring program of four apartments. We

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2 just began a permanent housing program,
3 which is a HUD program, about a year and
4 a half ago. In total we have 154 beds
5 considering the Grant and Per Diem, the
6 permanent, and the mentoring program.

7 What we're trying to accomplish
8 is maintain a presence in such a manner
9 that we can utilize our experience and
10 background to plan the opening of a new
11 program which was funded, and we're in
12 the stages of new construction to open up
13 the very first female permanent housing
14 facility in Philadelphia for females that
15 have co-occurring disorder, which is a
16 major mental health disorder in
17 conjunction with a D&A diagnosis.

18 Of note, we also work
19 specifically in all of our other housing
20 programs as a rule with veterans, both
21 male and female, that have co-occurring
22 disorder, dual diagnosis. We also do a
23 number of different outreach scenarios
24 with a number of different locations in
25 the region, which is unique because we do

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2 not accept any referrals over the phone.
3 Anyone that we speak to, we go to the
4 site of a hospital or the organization
5 where they're inpatient. Our job always
6 began when the person is being discharged
7 from an inpatient unit, wherever that may
8 be, or an organization referring them.
9 We actually go to the organization. We
10 sit with the individual. We listen to
11 what they have to say. We speak to them.
12 We develop a discharge plan that's
13 acceptable to all parties, and then
14 transport the person back to the location
15 of the housing unit, whatever that may
16 be.
17 We are also in the stages of
18 planning a geriatric center for senior
19 veterans over the age of 62. Being that
20 I'll be 64 this July, I can tell you
21 there are several different veterans in
22 my age bracket, the baby boomers, which
23 is a vast growing number, which I don't
24 believe -- my own opinion is they're not
25 receiving the attention they need as a

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2 specific group, growing as it may, for
3 specialized housing, again, for those
4 senior veterans that have co-occurring
5 disorder, and that has been our rule. We
6 prefer to work with difficult to reach
7 and work with veterans. We believe they
8 are some of the neediest veterans there
9 are and the need for the continuum they
10 require, and we feel as though the
11 creation of more permanent housing beds
12 for females and for seniors may very well
13 help put a significant dent in some of
14 the problems associated with instability,
15 suicide, et cetera, et cetera.

16 I'm very proud to say that
17 we've been working with the VA for all
18 these years. Without their assistance
19 and support, what we've done would never
20 be possible, and we're looking to a
21 future of even greater accommodations for
22 the veterans that we serve, and it's a
23 pleasure to be here today. I thank you
24 very much.

25 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very

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2 much for your testimony.

3 Thank you both very much for
4 your work.

5 With that, I'll have the Clerk
6 call the next witness.

7 THE CLERK: Chris Diaz.

8 (Witness approached witness
9 table.)

10 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you for
11 being here. I know you're on a tight
12 schedule. These things do tend to run a
13 little bit over. We will make all this
14 testimony available online.

15 So would you please state your
16 name for the record, give us your
17 background, and provide us with your
18 testimony.

19 MR. DIAZ: Good morning. Thank
20 you for having me today, Councilman Oh
21 and Mr. Brown. Thank you. My name is
22 Chris Diaz. I am a six-year Navy
23 veteran. I spent my time in the Navy
24 serving two deployments on an aircraft
25 carrier to the Persian Gulf, and my last

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2 deployment was spent with the Marine
3 Corps where I served as a grunt corpsman
4 in Afghanistan.

5 I am currently here in
6 Philadelphia now studying at Drexel
7 University, where I am the proud
8 President of Drexel Veterans Association.
9 There are 850 veterans throughout our
10 campus, and ahead of this hearing, I
11 spoke with the presidents of the
12 university clubs, veteran clubs, at
13 University of Pennsylvania, Wharton
14 Business School, and Villanova and
15 Temple, because we are working together
16 to advance the causes of veterans in the
17 City of Philadelphia.

18 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
19 much. Please provide your testimony.

20 MR. DIAZ: So I'm here today to
21 talk a little bit about the transition of
22 a veteran going from the military service
23 into school and to provide some of the
24 background onto what services are
25 provided to the veteran that is seeking

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2 higher education. We've talked a lot
3 today about how to get veterans into the
4 job market and the networking piece, but
5 I really feel that the educational piece
6 is the missing component to getting them
7 the education needed to supplement their
8 military service and the leadership
9 skills that's provided obviously in their
10 branches, the work that they did while
11 serving the Armed Forces.

12 One of the things that we're
13 able to have at Drexel is the Yellow
14 Ribbon Program instituted, which allows
15 for the University to bridge the gap
16 between the Montgomery GI Bill, which
17 many of us take. So I'm allowed to
18 actually afford to be able to go to
19 school at Drexel because universities
20 take this on themselves.

21 Now, Drexel is making huge
22 strides not only in Philadelphia but in
23 the nation as a veteran-friendly school.
24 However, there's still opportunities for
25 us to grow. So one of the initiatives

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2 that we've held really close to us at DVA
3 is the institution of veteran-only
4 orientations where instead of a veteran
5 when he transitions from the military
6 taking orientation with 18-year-old
7 freshmen, there is a group of individuals
8 that have their orientation solely for
9 them, which allows them to kind of
10 connect with our club and provide the
11 support system that's been proven to be
12 so effective and so vital for success.

13 I believe that the VA and the
14 universities need to do a better job of
15 partnering and holding universities
16 accountable to track the graduation rates
17 and success rates of the student
18 veterans. It's something right now that
19 we can't know what programs are actually
20 effective and what is actually working
21 unless we actually start being able to
22 provide concrete numbers. And I know the
23 VA has worked with numerous organizations
24 now to try to provide some concrete
25 figures and statistics to provide, but

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2 that's something I think that the
3 universities have a little bit more of a
4 responsibility on themselves to be able
5 to know what is successful.

6 In the past few months, our
7 club has grown exponentially. We focus
8 on integrating the veterans from the
9 military back into civilian life,
10 specifically the collegiate life. We
11 work at getting them to advance through
12 professional and academic success and
13 that we get the service piece. So for
14 this month, you mentioned women veterans
15 causes. Unfortunately, some of our women
16 vets from our club weren't able to be
17 here today, but we're having a toiletry
18 drive for the homeless shelters in the
19 City. There's three organizations that
20 we're partnering with, and that's run
21 through our Women Veterans Causes, run by
22 a nursing Army medic actually at our
23 school at Drexel.

24 I thank you all so much for
25 allowing us to be here to speak today in

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2 front of you, and I hope that this is
3 just the start of bridging the divide
4 between the civilian and veteran, which
5 is so important for the City for us to be
6 successful.

7 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
8 much, and I will say that a lot of people
9 have been looking for you. I know that
10 there are a lot of veterans organizations
11 out there who are looking for where are
12 the young returning veterans, and here
13 you are. So you've been identified and
14 your entire group.

15 MR. DIAZ: I am here. We feel
16 that the OIF/OEF veteran is a new veteran
17 and we are willing to work with all
18 veterans, not just the ones in college
19 but throughout the City. We're excited
20 about the partnership and excited to be
21 part of Philadelphia's Year of the
22 Veteran.

23 Thank you so much, Councilman.

24 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
25 much.

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2 I'll ask the Clerk to call the
3 next panel, please.

4 THE CLERK: Larry Holman, James
5 Abrams, Casey O'Donnell.

6 (Witnesses approached witness
7 table.)

8 COUNCILMAN OH: This panel is
9 services for drug and alcohol abuse,
10 PTSD, depression, and anger management.

11 Thank you, gentlemen, for being
12 here and waiting so patiently. What I
13 will do is, I will ask you to identify
14 yourself for the record, moving from your
15 right to your left. Please start.

16 MR. ABRAM: Good morning,
17 Councilman Oh and to Brother Brown and to
18 City Council at large. I thank God for
19 the opportunity to come this morning and
20 speak my heart to you.

21 I served with the First Calv in
22 Vietnam 1966. I served with Charlie
23 Company, the 1st of the 12th, which is
24 one of the most decorated units that was
25 in Vietnam the whole time we were over

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2 there.

3 I'm the President and founder
4 of a group called Pointman Soldiers Heart
5 Ministry. We are an advocacy group. We
6 advocate for veterans, those who fell
7 through the crack and those who are on
8 some kind of substance abuse, along with
9 the suicide and family matters. That's
10 what we in the bad lands for. It's 2801
11 Frankford Avenue, Frankford and Somerset
12 in the Kensington section of
13 Philadelphia.

14 COUNCILMAN OH: I'm sorry. I
15 have to interrupt you on a technical
16 reason. I was just alerted. Would you
17 please state your name for the record so
18 we have it on the transcript.

19 MR. ABRAM: My name again is
20 James Abram, A-B-R-A-M.

21 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
22 much. Sorry for the interruption.
23 Please continue.

24 MR. ABRAM: I got to find where
25 I stopped at.

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2 Well, okay. No problem. My
3 heart and mission is to help veterans.
4 One gentleman stated earlier, leave no
5 veteran behind, and we are here to help
6 vulnerable veterans, because we are
7 vulnerable veterans. I came from Vietnam
8 with a profile after serving one year in
9 Vietnam that has affected my life
10 forever. I wanted to make sure that
11 those veterans who are not CEOs and
12 presidents of companies to get their
13 proper share and their entitlements.

14 I think the panels that was
15 before us, they spoke, but I want to
16 speak to those people who are not here.
17 This is the second hearing I came to, and
18 there's no veterans. It's a problem --
19 something is happening here in this
20 Administration. And I'm here to not beat
21 you down, but I want to tell you
22 something. We are the ones that laid in
23 the rice patties. We are the ones that
24 came back from Vietnam with profiles,
25 post traumatic stress. I was a product

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2 of Agent Orange. I'm a diabetic, you
3 know, high blood pressure, all this. I
4 served my country gallantly and valently.
5 When you call for a hearing,
6 the word needs to get out to the veterans
7 community. This place should be packed
8 with veterans to hear this information
9 that the panels before us had. Second
10 time -- it's not even 25 people in the
11 audience. The first time we came when
12 Mr. Brown was appointed in his position.
13 Four people came here and spoke, and that
14 was it. No veterans. They don't have a
15 clue who he is. And this is what I'm
16 saying. We need an open line of
17 communication. When you going to have a
18 hearing, you got advertisement, you got
19 the SEPTA buses, you got radio, TV,
20 newspapers. Let our community know. And
21 I called guys last night about the
22 hearing. What hearing? And this is a
23 plague that's plaguing Philadelphia. It
24 causes separation of the veterans. I'm
25 not going down there, they not going to

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2 do anything. That's how they feel. But
3 y'all as leaders, you guys going to have
4 to step up to the plate and be true to
5 your calling. And my passion and
6 Pointman passion still is the Director of
7 Veterans Affairs, being appointed by City
8 Council, President Darrell Clarke. We're
9 fighting for all veterans, not just
10 Pointman, but all veterans.

11 Follow the law, the state law.
12 This city -- as large as this city is, we
13 don't even have a Director of Veterans
14 Affairs, not even yet. And we went in
15 front of Council President a year ago,
16 brought it to his attention and to the
17 Mayor, you know. You going to do what
18 you want to do, to hell with the
19 veterans. You going to do it your way.
20 That's unacceptable, and I just want to
21 let you know this. I want it to be on
22 record that James Abram said this,
23 Pointman Soldiers Heart Ministry, who
24 fought this country. I gave my life to
25 this country because -- I'm going to die

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2 because of the results of Agent Orange.

3 I will expire.

4 And thank you for hearing me.

5 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you for

6 coming and sharing your testimony.

7 Would you please identify

8 yourself for the record, your background,

9 and provide us with your testimony.

10 DR. O'DONNELL: Good afternoon,

11 Councilman Oh. My name is Casey

12 O'Donnell. I work at Impact Services. I

13 am not a veteran. I have the privilege

14 of working with Mr. Graber, who didn't

15 tell you that he's served in two branches

16 of the military and is a disabled vet

17 himself.

18 I'm here to speak about the

19 effects of trauma, PTSD, mental

20 healthcare for veterans. As I said, I'm

21 not a vet. My experience in the veteran

22 community was as a therapist at the

23 Philly VA, and I also had the opportunity

24 to work for the National Center for PTSD,

25 Evaluation Division, and traveled the

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2 country visiting 42 residential treatment
3 programs for PTSD, interviewing 250
4 clinicians and patients to understand
5 what's working and not working in the
6 care for veterans.

7 COUNCILMAN OH: I do understand
8 you have your Ph.D., so you're an expert.

9 DR. O'DONNELL: Well, I'm a
10 doctor of clinical psychology. I've
11 worked in child welfare. Most of the
12 focus of my work has been in trauma, and
13 I only have a couple points for you today
14 and I'll be brief.

15 What I would like you to take
16 away from my testimony is that
17 trauma-informed care is necessary to
18 eradicate homelessness among veterans.
19 My guess is, you've heard some of this in
20 the child welfare area in Philadelphia,
21 and many of the same competencies apply.
22 But what it means is as service
23 organizations, whether we provide housing
24 or if it's anything around psychotherapy,
25 which the VA does and the VA does

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2 psychiatric care, the rest of the service
3 community needs to have the competencies
4 to understand the effects of trauma.
5 They need to understand what reactions
6 are going to come from our clients and
7 how to interact with them and what their
8 special needs are. We have to foster
9 increased self-efficacy. We have to
10 foster increased hope, and we can't be
11 housing facilities. We have to wrap care
12 around the people that are in our
13 facilities.

14 You probably know that there
15 are models. The Sanctuary Model is the
16 big one in Pennsylvania. There are ways
17 to implement evidence-based practices,
18 not necessarily just psychotherapy but in
19 regard to trauma-informed care, what the
20 organization needs to look like. The VA
21 has even reorganized residential programs
22 not only to integrate specific treatments
23 but what other constellation of services
24 need to be in place, so nutrition, what
25 healthcare needs to be in place,

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2 transitioning war eras. Most of the
3 people that are in care are still
4 Vietnam-era veterans, how do we continue
5 to serve these gentlemen and also prepare
6 to serve OEF/OIF vets that are only
7 starting to hit bottom for those that
8 really struggle.

9 There was a study recently
10 where a thousand homeless OEF/OIF
11 veterans went through a battery of
12 assessments. Sixty-six percent of them
13 met the diagnostic criteria for PTSD.
14 Sixty-seven percent of that group met the
15 diagnostic criteria for another mental
16 health disorder or substance abuse
17 disorder. That's a huge number of
18 people. That's not even speaking about
19 the sub-threshold clinical symptoms. So
20 you actually have to meet certain
21 diagnostic criteria to have a diagnosis.
22 You can still experience all kinds of
23 symptoms and not meet that clinical
24 threshold. So we're talking about a vast
25 group, right?

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2 Mike mentioned that we're
3 opening 26 units for female homeless
4 veterans with co-occurring disorders.
5 What he didn't mention is that we are
6 providing space for their children. It's
7 a family program. That's necessary for
8 all vets, but specifically women. It's
9 not something people are touching on.

10 When I went around the country,
11 there were only a handful of programs
12 that were accommodating women. Tim, I
13 didn't know there was a program that
14 opened that is accommodating 30 women in
15 Coatesville for military sexual trauma.

16 There are programs out there.
17 We need to look at what the evidence
18 tells us. We need to look at what the
19 empirical process tells us about care,
20 and that needs to guide our thinking and
21 programming. So we can be innovative,
22 but the threshold for us as service
23 providers is trauma-informed care.

24 Thank you.

25 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very

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2 much.

3 Thank you. Please provide your
4 name, your background, and give us your
5 testimony.

6 MR. HOLMAN: Thank you. My
7 name is Larry Holman and I'm here on
8 behalf of the Vietnam Veterans of America
9 Liberty Bell Chapter 266 today. I was on
10 active duty in the Navy from 1958 until
11 1982, went up through ranks from E-1 to
12 O-4 and retired in 1982.

13 Now, you mentioned early on,
14 Councilman Oh -- by the way, thank you
15 very much for inviting me. I really
16 appreciate being here.

17 You need to be really aware
18 about what is the most important thing
19 that I want to mention. Well, that is
20 the 22 suicides per day nationally, 8,000
21 a year nationally, but I don't know the
22 answer to the question how many are
23 happening in Philadelphia. With 88,000
24 veterans in Philadelphia, I think that's
25 a number we should all know. We should

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2 all know what that is. We know what it
3 is nationally. We should know what it is
4 in Philadelphia. So wherever that number
5 is, we need to ferret it out and get it
6 out here into the public so we know what
7 we're dealing with here in Philadelphia.

8 Now, many veterans who come
9 back from many kind of wartime experience
10 feel alienated. Now, I lived a
11 cloistered life in the military before
12 and after my wartime experience, and
13 maybe that added, but I had a feeling of
14 alienation that I felt civilians would
15 never understand me. I did not feel safe
16 confiding in them about anything. And so
17 that's the way it happened.

18 Now, we look at recent
19 incidents just yesterday at Fort Hood.
20 We have people that are being traumatized
21 and their needs are not being met in a
22 timely and comprehensive manner so as to
23 prevent these kinds of violence and loss
24 of life.

25 Now, we mentioned earlier here

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2 on this panel about empirical data, and I
3 believe what we really need and one of
4 the purposes of this hearing today is to
5 gather information, but right now as we
6 speak, there is a study going on at the
7 state level, a veterans needs assessment
8 study being carried out by Penn State
9 Harrisburg. Now, I think that's good to
10 look at the state level data, but I think
11 Philadelphia with 88,000 veterans here
12 deserves its own study in a similar
13 manner using scientific methods to drill
14 down into the veteran population that we
15 have here.

16 And veterans in Philadelphia --
17 the people should be tracked from the
18 time -- a Philadelphian should be tracked
19 from the time he joins the service, he or
20 she joins the service, until the time
21 they end up in the cemetery. We should
22 have our arms around that data, who are
23 they, and we need to work with places
24 like the Census Bureau, the DOD, the VA,
25 the Pennsylvania Department of

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2 Multi-Veterans Affairs, educational
3 institutions, realtors, corrections
4 departments, religious institutions,
5 employers, the IRS, veterans service
6 organizations, outreach providers, and
7 PennDOT just as sources of the data that
8 we need to get our arms around regarding
9 veterans, who they are and where are
10 they.

11 We need to send out survey
12 instruments to every veteran and try to
13 get a measure of how are they doing,
14 where are they, and what's going on in
15 their lives. We need to learn their
16 status. Employment, healthcare, housing,
17 education level, income level, VA
18 enrollment. There was a number mentioned
19 here before. I think it was 58,000 or
20 68,000 enrolled in the VA. Well, that's
21 not all of the veterans that live in
22 Philadelphia. So there's a lot of them
23 that are not enrolled.

24 Also, you know, we know that
25 only half of the veterans in

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2 Pennsylvania, almost a million, are
3 involved in any way with the veterans
4 service organizations. Most of them are
5 not involved at all, not in -- do not
6 participate. So they're not getting the
7 information. So there needs to be much
8 more vigorous outreach.

9 So I'm thinking without a
10 formal study, the information that we
11 gather is only going to be anecdotal and
12 incomplete. So we need to understand the
13 magnitude of the problem. We know that
14 there are homelessness, substance abuse,
15 incarceration, unemployment, PTSD,
16 traumatic brain injury, and family
17 violence. All of that are sequelae to
18 military experience.

19 We also need to answer the
20 question how many federal VA dollars
21 comes into Philadelphia via the VA
22 regional office activities in supplying
23 benefits to veterans. I think that's an
24 important number to have, if we don't
25 already have it.

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2 Another question is how many
3 veterans are in the Philadelphia Bar
4 Association and does the Philadelphia Bar
5 Association have a veterans section, and
6 what can they do to help us in our goals
7 as a city.

8 I'm thinking that Philadelphia
9 City government has to synchronize its
10 efforts with those of the state
11 government and the federal government.
12 The Philadelphia Veterans Advisory
13 Commission should be an active
14 participant in the Pennsylvania State
15 Veterans Commission, which, by the way,
16 is meeting today, and the Pennsylvania
17 War Veterans Council, which met
18 yesterday. The Philadelphia Veterans
19 Advisory Commission should track how many
20 Philadelphia veterans are receiving
21 services from the Delaware Valley
22 Veterans Home, which is a state
23 institution, the VA Medical Center, the
24 VA regional office, and the national
25 cemeteries. This is data we should get

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2 our arms around.

3 The veteran community, as my
4 friend Jim recently pointed out, needs to
5 be reengaged with 88,000 in Philadelphia.
6 Where are they?

7 Thank you very much, Councilman
8 Oh. I appreciate your attention.

9 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
10 much.

11 I will have just one question
12 for Dr. O'Donnell and kind of in line
13 with the conversation. I don't know if
14 you can answer this question, but this
15 panel has to do with drug, alcohol abuse,
16 PTSD, depression, anger management. So
17 when we look as a layperson at our
18 typical example or person, they have
19 served in the military, they have a
20 unique set of examples. Some have served
21 in combat, some have not. But returning
22 to civilian life, they are
23 self-medicating. They are building up
24 this level of frustration and anger to
25 the point where it's triggered by very

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2 slight things, that the reaction is an
3 explosion and then regret, and the
4 inability to control themselves is an
5 issue, the feeling of being debilitated.
6 What is that? How are you -- and as was
7 pointed out, where are all the veterans?
8 It's not for the lack of notice, and it
9 isn't that you haven't notified your
10 folks. Is it that the veterans, there's
11 some issue they don't come forward? As
12 we talked about, the services are
13 available and there are certainly
14 veterans groups and organizations, people
15 to get together, but where do you think
16 is the answer to the problem?

17 DR. O'DONNELL: So somebody
18 said repetition, and I would even say
19 practice. If I could speak broadly for
20 one second and then --

21 COUNCILMAN OH: Sure.

22 DR. O'DONNELL: And keep in
23 mind, I'm not citing any specific
24 research, but sort of the body of
25 research.

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2 The recent transition -- and
3 I'll get to your point, but the recent
4 transition of diagnoses for PTSD speaks
5 to this. So while that's a specific
6 disorder, there was a move, it's called
7 the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual.
8 There's a new one that came out last
9 year. There was a shift in understanding
10 the effects of trauma. And when that got
11 pulled apart a little bit, one of the key
12 components that was sort of brought to
13 light and articulated clearly is the
14 shift in beliefs. And I think part of
15 what you're asking -- and there are a
16 million reasons why people wouldn't be
17 here, but what is someone's belief about
18 self world and future. You'd figure a
19 healthy belief about the future is
20 tomorrow will be or could be better than
21 today. If you've suffered trauma,
22 whether it's combat trauma or sexual
23 abuse or you grew up in the worst
24 neighborhoods in Philly and violent was
25 all around you and the center of your

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2 brain, which doesn't do a lot of
3 thinking, the front of your brain makes
4 the decisions, the center of your brain
5 is triggered every day, your fight or
6 flight response is triggered every day,
7 and you're looking out for violence every
8 day or you're a recent returnee --
9 somebody that has served in the military
10 can give me the proper phrasing, but
11 there's this idea of situational
12 awareness when you're in combat. That
13 situational awareness is still turned on
14 when you come back, right? So your fight
15 or flight system is triggered like that.
16 Your brain is adaptive. PTSD is almost a
17 normal response to really unusual
18 circumstances, right? So whether it's
19 combat or violence or violent crime.
20 Why people aren't here I think
21 is because there's been a shift in their
22 beliefs about the world, about City
23 Council. You mentioned sort of the
24 willingness to engage the veteran, what
25 is the belief about treatment providers.

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2 The VA is ramping up as quickly and as
3 fast as they can to accommodate the needs
4 of vets that are coming home. So people
5 are trying, but what are the veterans'
6 beliefs? So you're combining a shift in
7 a belief system, like the judge said --
8 and the doctors do agree with him; he
9 said they don't, but like he said,
10 military service, specifically combat,
11 changes people. All trauma changes
12 people, and we need to be mindful of
13 that.

14 So that's a little longwinded.
15 I don't know if that sort of answers your
16 question, but you're talking about shift
17 in beliefs, shift in emotional reactions
18 and, as someone mentioned, the need to
19 practice emotion regulation. And sort of
20 that's the phrase clinicians use, but I
21 think it's pretty self-explanatory.
22 Mindfulness meditation isn't something
23 you can augment treatment with, right?
24 Recognizing the moment what you're
25 thinking or feeling, give yourself a

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2 moment to just put it out here so it
3 doesn't have as much power instead of it
4 being really close.

5 You know, as service providers,
6 even though we don't do psychotherapy,
7 when we do a housing program, why can't
8 we integrate -- I'm sorry. Go ahead.

9 COUNCILMAN OH: No, no. I'm
10 just letting him know that I see his hand
11 and I will go to him.

12 DR. O'DONNELL: I could go on
13 and on, but I think that -- does that
14 answer your question?

15 COUNCILMAN OH: You know, it
16 does provide a view that -- of course,
17 I'm not asking as a physician. I'm
18 asking as a legislator to understand what
19 it is that you as the service provider
20 are trying to do and how we might be able
21 to help in what your efforts are.

22 And so, Mr. Abram.

23 MR. ABRAM: Quick observation.
24 I think the military has dropped the ball
25 on the veterans. I'll tell you what I

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2 mean by that. Okay. You have a soldier
3 that has done four or five deployments,
4 Afghanistan, Iraq, and you only have --
5 when he come home, he only have 30 days
6 or 60 days and the ETS. So he's out of
7 the service. He's still hyped up from
8 Afghanistan and he's out on his own. And
9 this is why we say in our first
10 engagement with City Council, like the
11 United States will say, Thank you for
12 your service, you're on your own. And
13 these men and women are left really
14 holding the bag, no place to fall but on
15 their backside.

16 I don't think that the
17 government, the Army, Navy, Marine, Air
18 Force, I don't think they should let
19 those soldiers out so early. Before they
20 leave, they should have some training in
21 mental health. They should be observed.
22 Their conditions should be observed. You
23 just can't have a service person to --
24 like we did in Vietnam. I mean, the
25 A Shau Valley, fighting for my life, 24

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2 hours later I'm on Broadway in New York
3 City, still hyped up. And it's been with
4 me 48 years, you know. I've learned how
5 to manage my PTSD with therapy, with
6 group therapy.

7 And another thing the VA does
8 is just give you medicine, give you
9 pills, pills, pills. People need -- and
10 where we have dropped the ball as a
11 nation, it's a spiritual thing, and this
12 is what Pointman -- we serve veterans
13 because we serve God. And we have lost
14 that Godly connection within ourselves,
15 you know, and this is where -- I have 25
16 years on spiritual welfare, you know, and
17 I see the results of what these veterans
18 are going through. It's not them. It's
19 the spirit, evil spirit, you know, what's
20 been put upon them.

21 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
22 much.

23 Yes.

24 DR. O'DONNELL: I'll make sure
25 your office gets this. You asked what

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2 you can do as legislators. Promote
3 trauma-informed care among service
4 providers for veterans.

5 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. I did
6 write that down. I need to translate
7 that a little bit because it's a
8 professional term, but please send that
9 to my office.

10 DR. O'DONNELL: You got it.

11 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you.

12 I'll ask the Clerk call the
13 next witness.

14 MR. ABRAM: Thank you very
15 much.

16 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
17 much.

18 THE CLERK: Terry Williamson.

19 (Witness approached witness
20 table.)

21 COUNCILMAN OH: And I do
22 understand that you have a visual aid for
23 us as well.

24 So if anybody wants to assist
25 Mr. Williamson. Yes.

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2 This panel is on remembering
3 veterans. I see that Bill Kelly of the
4 Korean War Memorial is not here. There
5 are other groups. In particular, I know
6 there's an effort for the regiment from
7 Puerto Rico trying to get the Gold Medal.
8 We've had the Mantra report in Marines.

9 Terry Williamson in particular
10 is with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial,
11 and it is one of the unique things about
12 veterans, is that there's a great
13 priority on remembering those veterans
14 who did not return. That is unlike
15 almost any other organization or
16 function, because veterans come back and
17 they don't come back with the people that
18 they were with, and that remembrance is
19 critically important and oftentimes not
20 understood by civilians. An example is,
21 we have some wonderful young people,
22 creative, but part of their enjoyment
23 involves damaging these memorials.
24 Unfortunately, they don't understand what
25 it means because they have not had the

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2 experience. And so Terry Williamson is
3 really here testifying on behalf of all
4 veterans who have that priority.

5 So thank you very much for
6 being here. Would you please state your
7 name for the record.

8 MR. WILLIAMSON: Sure. My name
9 is Terry Williamson. I'm President of
10 the Philadelphia Vietnam Veterans
11 Memorial Fund. Professionally I'm a
12 communications consultant. As far my
13 service background, I served as a Marine
14 infantry officer in Vietnam, commanding
15 Marines at both the platoon and company
16 level. And thanks very much, Councilman
17 Oh, for permitting me an opportunity to
18 speak today.

19 I think all of you know by now
20 what a great advocate for veterans
21 Councilman Oh is and, of course, not to
22 slight at all the fact that he's a
23 veteran himself.

24 Scott, I don't know you. I
25 hope some time I get that opportunity

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2 since you're new. I know Wanda and Joyce
3 very well and have been to some of your
4 activities.

5 I'm going to talk today about
6 the Memorial in the fashion in which
7 David suggested, but before that, I would
8 like everybody to know, veterans and
9 non-veterans alike, that our Board sees
10 its role really as one that transcends
11 our important mission to honor those lost
12 in the Vietnam War.

13 Now, I don't mean to suggest
14 that's not our paramount reason for
15 existence, because it is. However, we
16 are committed to not just leaving a
17 granite legacy, but ensuring we remain a
18 force for the betterment of the
19 community.

20 That's why we led the effort to
21 establish a visitors tour of local
22 memorials, not just war memorials, and
23 why we're working with the City to create
24 a memorial district near Penn's Landing
25 and why we are standing by the Vietnamese

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2 American community to create at the
3 Memorial the Republic of Vietnam Heritage
4 and Freedom Flag monument, which I'm
5 going to show just to you very shortly,
6 which is in fact one of the first of its
7 kind.

8 Indeed, one of the primary
9 purposes -- and I hope you can hear me
10 well enough -- one of the primary
11 purposes of the new project for the
12 Memorial is open -- and, David, maybe you
13 can help me.

14 Both David Smith and Bob Green
15 from Owner's Rep are project managers
16 here.

17 Maybe you can turn it around so
18 those folks can see it.

19 But the idea behind the
20 project -- the concept for what we call
21 the Spring Street Project is to open --
22 this is the current wall -- or not the
23 current but the open version of the
24 current wall, which is along Spruce
25 Street. Our intent is to open up and

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2 create a channel from Spruce Street to
3 the wall of names, putting the focus
4 where it appropriately needs to be, on
5 those that were lost in the Vietnam War.

6 Immediately behind and to
7 David's right up here and to everybody
8 else behind me -- I'm sorry; David's
9 left, we are working with the Vietnamese
10 American community to create the monument
11 I spoke of, which recognizes the joint
12 sacrifice of Vietnamese and American
13 troops. We're glad to do this because
14 one of the reasons that we're moving
15 forward with this project is to have it
16 become more of an educational or more of
17 a way to talk about not just the 646, but
18 the Vietnam War, and of course, the South
19 Vietnamese involvement was critical to
20 that.

21 The Memorial was originally
22 designed as a sanctuary -- again, this
23 wall currently goes across right here --
24 as a sanctuary to provide a place of
25 quiet reflection for what at that time

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2 were ignored Vietnam veterans. It became
3 apparent, however, that many people were
4 unaware of the Memorial because of that
5 reason. We had neighbors down there,
6 There's a memorial? You know, they
7 didn't even know because there's no way
8 to see. All you see is earth essentially
9 down there.

10 The addition of granite signage
11 along Delaware or Columbus and along
12 Spruce Street will also make it
13 immediately recognizable. Now, this is
14 important given what I said before,
15 because, remember, this belongs to the
16 City, not just veterans, although
17 obviously it's an important recognition.
18 And the concept is by creating this open
19 area and making it more aware, along with
20 efforts like a memorial district, we'll
21 start hopefully bringing more people down
22 there, and that's really the reason for
23 our existence, is to let people know and
24 see the sacrifice down there.

25 This is actually the second

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2 phase of the Duty to Remember campaign
3 where we raised about a million dollars
4 over the course of seven years. This is
5 the second phase. The first phase was
6 our project to restore the Memorial after
7 20 years of wear and tear, frankly, on
8 it. This is the second. It took seven
9 long years, because it's a capital
10 project. The City had a role in this as
11 well as some large financial donors, but
12 we're still \$126,000 short, which is why
13 we're trying to be creative with crowd
14 funding and our Got Concrete campaign.
15 For anybody who has been by the Memorial,
16 which is at Front and Spruce Street,
17 you'll see signs out there "Got
18 Concrete," because we're trying to
19 encourage primarily contractors but
20 others as well can donate \$130 for a yard
21 of concrete. It's that kind of effort
22 that we need to bring this over the top.
23 One of the unfunded items is an
24 educational kiosk which will tell the
25 story of the 646 Philadelphians who lost

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2 their life in the war and also provide
3 some historical context.

4 One more thing, if I may,
5 Councilman, that I would like to address
6 before I leave, and that is the
7 resolution declaring 2014 the Year of the
8 Veteran. While I applaud that and always
9 will, I think -- and you heard some of
10 that today. In fact, I want to expand on
11 what Judge Dugan said today. I also see
12 a disturbing trend that's being repeated
13 from our Vietnam experience. The veteran
14 is a troubled, dysfunctional member of
15 society. As Judge Dugan said, it's not
16 the case at all. This sentiment, though,
17 is an undercurrent of the goodwill tide
18 that's now sweeping the country. The
19 recent shooting at Fort Hood certainly
20 didn't help that sentiment nor the
21 off-sighted high suicide rates among
22 veterans, but I'd point out that just
23 like the Vietnam era, it doesn't reflect
24 the reality for most veterans, and I
25 think every veteran in the room here

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2 would agree with that, no matter what
3 their focus is on serving veterans'
4 needs.

5 Then, as now, most have
6 returned and are getting on or want to
7 get on with their lives, eager to put
8 what they saw and experienced behind
9 them. America loves hyperbole, and the
10 routine was always going to take a back
11 seat to the dramatic. One case in point,
12 22 veterans -- and Larry indicated this
13 when he spoke -- are committing suicide
14 each day. That's appalling to be sure,
15 but that's from an entire veterans
16 population of 22.3 million, and it must
17 be contrasted with 105 people in America
18 who commit suicide every day.

19 Admittedly, and I want to make sure
20 everybody understands this, admittedly,
21 there is an alarming rise in the suicide
22 rate among veterans, but at least it's on
23 the radar screen. That reflects the
24 differences between Vietnam and now.

25 Let me give you an example.

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2 Veterans homelessness, which you've heard
3 about here, and one of the greatest
4 afflictions for some returning veterans,
5 PTSD, received relatively little
6 attention at first. As I told you, I'm a
7 former Marine infantry officer and I can
8 tell you anyone who has experienced
9 combat has PTSD in some form or the
10 other. For many, they deal with it and
11 move on. For some, it eats at their
12 psyche. It's a good example, however,
13 the kind of perspective and balance I'm
14 urging.

15 Sadly, war is American as apple
16 pie, and young men and now young women
17 will always rise to the challenge.
18 Service is the norm, but let's keep in
19 mind so is endurance and the indomitable
20 resilience of the human spirit. Let's
21 also keep that in mind when we think
22 about veterans.

23 Thank you.

24 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
25 much, and thank you for bringing in that

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2 beautiful model.

3 MR. WILLIAMSON: We'll put it
4 out there so that folks can see it on the
5 way, and hopefully you got an idea from
6 the graphic of what it is. But thanks
7 again.

8 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
9 much.

10 I believe we have our last
11 witness, our last panel, and I'll ask the
12 Clerk to call the last panel.

13 THE CLERK: Ken Wong, Terry
14 English.

15 (Witness approached witness
16 table.)

17 COUNCILMAN OH: Unfortunately,
18 Terry English at the last minute was not
19 able to attend, but this panel is veteran
20 and citizens supporting veterans and is
21 representative of the type of work that
22 is out there, both military, non-military
23 folks lending a hand and helping
24 veterans. Half of that statement is an
25 issue about the government not doing

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2 enough to fulfill its obligations. The
3 other half, however, is about citizens of
4 our country, both military and
5 non-military, stepping up voluntarily.

6 I will say that Terry English
7 is a Board member of the Veterans
8 Multiservice Center and a co-founder of
9 the Special Forces Charitable Trust.

10 Ken Wong is going to now state
11 his name, provide us his background and
12 his testimony so I don't have to go any
13 further. Thank you.

14 MR. WONG: Thank you,
15 Councilman. My name is Ken Wong and I'm
16 a local businessman here in Philadelphia
17 and I am not a military veteran.

18 I was asked today to come to
19 talk about efforts of citizens in their
20 support of veterans and the veterans
21 issues and affairs. There are many, many
22 wonderful organizations throughout the
23 Philadelphia area that are doing many,
24 many things to help the veterans, whether
25 they're military, whether on active duty

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2 or if they have separated from service,
3 such as the Liberty USO, the Greater
4 Philadelphia Veterans Network. Alex
5 Archawski had testified earlier.
6 Corporations like Comcast with their Vet
7 Net group, as Captain Titus mentioned;
8 the Philadelphia Veterans House; Thank a
9 Vet; the Multiservice Veterans Service
10 Center, what Tim had mentioned earlier;
11 the American Legion Post. The
12 organizations go on and on, some large
13 and some small, but all with the
14 intentions and the mission of helping our
15 military and military veterans. And
16 because of the change in the dynamics and
17 the demographics of the American
18 population, only 1 percent of the
19 American population has any connection
20 with the military, whether they served or
21 whether they had a family member that
22 served. So we really have a large
23 population of people who really don't
24 understand a lot about what's involved
25 and the sacrifice of people in uniform

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2 and the sacrifices that their families
3 make, which in many cases goes unnoticed
4 and not talked about. But we have many
5 National Guardsmen here in the
6 Philadelphia area. When they get
7 deployed, it changes their lives
8 dramatically. It changes the dynamics of
9 their family structure dramatically,
10 because they're used to working a job and
11 doing their drill on weekends, and all
12 the sudden now they're gone for a length
13 of time away from their families, and
14 it's not something they're used to, but
15 it's something they do because they did
16 raise their hand and pledge themselves to
17 serve this country and defend this
18 country.

19 So as a citizen that did not
20 serve, I feel it's important that we
21 serve the ones that have served us to
22 support the military. I believe it's in
23 the Constitution that states that it's
24 the obligation of the nation and of its
25 citizens to support and build the

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2 military.

3 But it also involves a lot of
4 education, both on the civilian side and
5 also in the military side. We talk -- we
6 heard a lot of testimony today about the
7 challenges that the military has, and
8 there's also a lot of challenges that the
9 civilian side has, because they don't
10 understand the challenges that the
11 military folks have.

12 COUNCILMAN OH: Ken, could you
13 for those listening -- I happen to know
14 you, so I know what you've done, but
15 could you state what organizations you
16 belong to and tell us how you got
17 involved in the first place.

18 MR. WONG: Well, I serve on the
19 Board of Directors of the Liberty USO,
20 which is the local USO here that services
21 Pennsylvania and Southern New Jersey. I
22 chair the Army's Community Advisory
23 Board, which is an organization that's on
24 a national basis that the U.S. Army
25 developed in their recruiting side to

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2 help develop and educate the communities
3 in regards to what the needs of the Army
4 may be in the areas of recruiting, both
5 on what they call the non-professional
6 side and on the medical recruiting side.
7 I serve on the Armed Services Council for
8 the Union League as a member of the Union
9 League, and then I provide any assistance
10 that I can to many organizations and
11 individuals that are doing various things
12 for the military, both active duty and
13 veterans.

14 COUNCILMAN OH: So I'll just
15 summarize by saying you've raised a lot
16 move money for a lot of different
17 veterans causes, and that's just the way
18 it is. So I think a lot of people
19 already know that. A lot of heads are
20 shaking.

21 And how did you get involved in
22 that and what do you see in terms of --
23 there are some issues today. Terry
24 Williamson, he needs to raise some money,
25 and certainly there are services being

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2 provided and there's an entire lack --
3 and maybe it's like a lot of things,
4 maybe there's just, you know, a lot of
5 citizens have got to step up. I know a
6 lot of veterans are stepping up to
7 provide services as best they can and
8 otherwise. You can't get all the
9 veterans to help out. They serve -- they
10 may not feel that this is something
11 they're going to do right now. Even more
12 so, getting citizens to open up their
13 wallets, their hearts and to participate.

14 What do you think would be a
15 way for Council to facilitate or help in
16 that process?

17 MR. WONG: A lot of it, as I
18 alluded earlier, is education. I believe
19 that the City Council through leadership
20 can help to coordinate a lot of the --
21 one, a lot of the veterans organizations
22 that have testified today and getting
23 people -- getting the organizations
24 coordinated. They're all trying to meet
25 a mission and serve the veterans. But

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2 also, two, from an educational point of
3 view, how do we articulate and
4 communicate to the civilian population in
5 general to get people to understand what
6 the sacrifices that people in uniform
7 have made.

8 I believe that most people want
9 to support the military. They just don't
10 know how, and it really boils down to
11 having good leadership at the top to help
12 coordinate some of these efforts and
13 utilizing -- not reinventing the wheel,
14 but utilizing a lot of the resources that
15 were in this room today and some of the
16 folks who could not make it today and
17 utilizing a lot of their experience and
18 institutional knowledge to help educate
19 the general population. I mean, in
20 schools there should be a lot more
21 programs in the schools to talk about
22 what our military has done to defend this
23 country and how we can support the
24 military and its veterans as a citizen
25 even if you're not serving in uniform,

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2 but you can still serve them in many
3 other ways.

4 Raising money honestly,
5 Mr. Councilman, that's the easy part.
6 The heavy lifting has been done by many
7 of the folks behind me and folks that are
8 still out there serving. So it's a
9 matter of just developing that leadership
10 and giving people a mission focused to
11 focus their resources at. I think people
12 do want to help. They just don't know
13 how to. And there's a lot of different
14 organizations all at one time, and I
15 believe if we can try to coordinate some
16 of that, everybody can get the assistance
17 they need, but get them out of the silos
18 and see if we can get everybody on the
19 same sheet of music.

20 COUNCILMAN OH: So I'll ask the
21 magic question that people are wondering.
22 So how is it easy to raise money? In
23 other words, you have been able to raise
24 money, and that's not easy, but what is
25 it that you think when you're approaching

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2 people that has been able to get them to
3 give this money and sports items and
4 airplane tickets and all that stuff? Do
5 you find that -- and I'm not going to lay
6 it down and say you're a special kind of
7 salesman, because I don't think you think
8 you are and I don't know that you are,
9 but what about your approach have you
10 found that is causing people to say, Yes,
11 I will; Yes, you have that; Here's the
12 money?

13 MR. WONG: Raising money is a
14 process. It's not an event. I know a
15 lot of organizations have events and they
16 hope to raise money at those events.
17 Raising money is a process, and part of
18 the process is articulating your story,
19 articulating your mission. And then the
20 other process is the actual ask and the
21 other process is keeping people
22 connected, informed, and educated. And I
23 think what we have is, we have a lot of
24 very important needs and those needs need
25 to be addressed now, but it's the process

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2 that has to be implemented and planned
3 out in order to raise money.

4 I don't have a story of my own
5 to tell, because I didn't serve. You
6 know, my own story is that I'm a family
7 of immigrants and immigrants that came to
8 this country because of the very special
9 things that this country offers its
10 citizens. But, again, those benefits
11 don't come free and somebody paid the
12 price. So that's really my own little
13 story, but the story of men and women who
14 have served, that's something that I've
15 learned from hearing things from many
16 people I've come across that are veterans
17 and asking people in a manner which --
18 and letting them know they can help.
19 Like I said earlier, people want to help.
20 They just don't know how. So it's a
21 matter of articulating your story and
22 your ask in a way where people -- you're
23 giving people the opportunity to help.

24 COUNCILMAN OH: Well, thank you
25 very much. I'll just conclude by saying

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2 that perhaps what we can do is find
3 people who are very good at getting money
4 and share those approaches and whatnot
5 with many of our veterans organizations.

6 I know there are veterans that
7 raise money from veterans and there are
8 veterans who raise money from
9 non-veterans, and you are one of the
10 folks -- and we hope to see more of
11 you -- who are non-veterans raising money
12 from veterans and non-veterans.

13 So thank you for coming in and
14 thank you for sharing your testimony.

15 MR. WONG: Thank you.

16 COUNCILMAN OH: At this time, I
17 will ask if anyone -- and we had people,
18 and I hope they're still around -- who
19 are certainly very much experts in their
20 own rights here, but if there is anyone
21 who would like to make public comment,
22 there is a sign-up sheet and please step
23 forward. We do have a time limitation.
24 We'll make it three minutes, but we can
25 extend it a little bit, but I just got to

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2 try to keep it at three minutes to
3 maintain some general level of order.

4 So I'll ask the Clerk to call
5 the witnesses.

6 THE CLERK: There is no sign-in
7 sheet, but there are people who would
8 like to make comment.

9 COUNCILMAN OH: So I apologize
10 for that. How many comments do we have?
11 Three, okay.

12 So why don't we do five minutes
13 each, and you're closest to the
14 microphone. But why don't you two
15 gentlemen also come forward and take a
16 seat.

17 (Witnesses approached witness
18 table.)

19 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
20 much. I will ask all of you to pull the
21 microphone real close. I will remind you
22 in case you didn't hear that you are
23 being televised and recorded and
24 transcribed.

25 So please for the record state

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2 your name and give us a little bit about
3 your military background, if you have
4 one, and then provide us with five
5 minutes of your comment. Thank you very
6 much.

7 CAPTAIN GOODWIN: You're
8 welcome. Good afternoon, sir. My name
9 is Alfeia DeV Vaughn Goodwin. I am a
10 Philadelphia resident born and raised.
11 I'm also an Iraq veteran, former
12 sergeant, present captain. I am a
13 chaplain, direct commission, currently
14 628th Aviation Support Battalion
15 chaplain, and I'm also a Philadelphia
16 police officer, which is the reason why I
17 had to change.

18 COUNCILMAN OH: Well, thank you
19 very much for being here.

20 CAPTAIN GOODWIN: Thank you. I
21 wanted to get here earlier and speak in
22 reference to female veterans, but I
23 wasn't because I was actually in court
24 with Judge Dugan.

25 COUNCILMAN OH: Well, thank

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2 you.

3 CAPTAIN GOODWIN: He was able
4 to make it over.

5 But thank you very much for
6 hosting this event and for hearing our
7 experiences. I think that what happens
8 for the most part with female veterans is
9 that Philadelphia in some ways simply
10 isn't conducive to the experiences to
11 developing leadership of women such as
12 myself who are Iraq veterans, who are
13 officers in the military, and it can be a
14 bit much. So basically if you look at
15 someone like me as a police officer, I am
16 a part of the hybrid community of
17 veterans returning to the City who did
18 things like became police officers,
19 became firefighters, went into politics
20 and law, because we are public servants.
21 But I think that the problem is that in
22 many of those regards, although we are
23 welcomed as public servants and as City
24 employees, it's that there seems to be
25 somewhat of a flat line there. There is

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2 a barrier.

3 Let's say, for example, if
4 you're someone such as myself and, as I
5 said, you've been a sergeant, you've been
6 a lieutenant, I am in the captains rank,
7 but I am the first police officer in my
8 family. So what happens is the
9 mentorship -- and as a soldier, you
10 understand it, sir. In the military, you
11 simply can't move without mentors. This
12 is what the military is based on. We
13 always have that. We always have people
14 in the ranks to say, Okay, let me pull
15 you to the side and show you how to do
16 this. We have that intermediate radar.
17 And in the Philadelphia Police Department
18 that is very City based, locality is what
19 time I'm talking about, and military
20 people when we are coming from an
21 organization, a national organization
22 that functions globally, we kind of think
23 differently.

24 So my point here in what I
25 would like to see happen in terms of

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2 change is, I would like to see City-based
3 organizations that employ veterans, that
4 welcome veterans provide more training,
5 more mentorship, more leadership
6 development and just helping veterans
7 successfully transition back into the
8 civilian population.

9 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
10 much for that statement. You know, it's
11 interesting to me -- I will make comment,
12 because we had a panel on female veterans
13 and unfortunately they were not able to
14 show up, and there are some issues that
15 we have to -- about our outreach and
16 women veterans feeling welcome and all
17 that type of thing.

18 CAPTAIN GOODWIN: Yes. What
19 happens, sir -- I hope I'm not going over
20 my time -- is with the female veterans,
21 specifically female veterans who are in
22 positions of leadership, we are few and
23 far in between. For myself, I am the
24 first African American chaplain in the
25 history of Pennsylvania's Army. I am the

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2 only African American female chaplain,
3 the first African American female in the
4 history of Pennsylvania's Army. I am the
5 first female to promote into the rank of
6 captain in the Army National Guard. In
7 the United States Army National Guard,
8 there are eight African American female
9 chaplains in the country and I'm number
10 four. So we are few and far in between.
11 So when we come to City organizations, we
12 really need that mentorship for people to
13 say, This is how this works here. You
14 were successful in the military, and this
15 is how you take those same skills, those
16 same attributes, that same level of hard
17 work and kind of create somewhat of a
18 transitional factor. That's pretty much
19 what happens, because I think that
20 organizations like the Philadelphia
21 Police Department could become conducive
22 to female veterans returning to the City,
23 but in order for that to take place,
24 there has to be a place at the table for
25 female veterans who are already in

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2 positions of leadership, and right now
3 unfortunately it just isn't there.

4 COUNCILMAN OH: Well, that is a
5 very concrete thing that we can work on.
6 So I will ask Lois to get your
7 information and you get hers, and I think
8 we could probably put together something
9 and move forward from there.

10 CAPTAIN GOODWIN: Yes. Thank
11 you, sir.

12 COUNCILMAN OH: But I really
13 want to thank you for coming over here
14 and testifying, because that's not been
15 an easy thing for us to find, and what
16 you're saying is very concrete and I
17 think it will be something that we can
18 do. So, again, thank you so much.

19 CAPTAIN GOODWIN: Thank you,
20 sir. Thank you, everyone, for your
21 service. Thank you.

22 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you.

23 MR. ALI: Good afternoon,
24 Councilman Oh. My name is Jihad Ali.
25 I'm a frequent attendee at City Council.

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2 Just in this regard, I am a veteran and I
3 served in the, what we call, the finest
4 fighting force on the face of the planet,
5 the United States Marine Corps. I served
6 in the Marines from 1973 to 1980. I went
7 in as a young man that didn't know my way
8 and came out as a man that was determined
9 to accomplish whatever I set my mind to.
10 So I'm thankful for the Marines. I'm
11 thankful that the Marines helped me
12 survive the streets of Philadelphia, gave
13 me an alternative. I'm thankful to the
14 Marines because it set me on a course of
15 education through attending Temple
16 University.

17 But I wanted to come down here
18 to thank you, Councilman, because, you
19 know, really I kind of lost sight of
20 that, and it wasn't until I started
21 seeing the posters around City Hall
22 about, you know, Year of the Veteran that
23 I was reminded that somebody actually
24 cared about veterans. Because although
25 this Council does a lot, you know, there

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2 just wasn't any veteran other than the
3 great Lucien Blackwell, because there was
4 a period of time where we had a lot of
5 veterans. We had Lucien Blackwell, Cecil
6 Moore, we had Senator Anthony Hardy
7 Williams. They were all great veterans
8 in the African American community that a
9 lot of young men looked up to. And when
10 they were gone, it was like this gap,
11 until you came along, and then you
12 reminded us all about the veterans.

13 So I want to thank you for
14 that. Because as a young man when I came
15 out, you know, like the lieutenant from
16 the Marine Corps had pointed out, that a
17 lot of veterans come back and they don't
18 have the stress. And I think it was
19 today it was noted President Bush said,
20 We want to stop saying the disorder part
21 of the stress, because it almost puts
22 them at a disadvantage to say they have a
23 disorder. And I also agree with the
24 statement, although I'm a Vietnam era
25 veteran, I agree with the statement what

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2 the lieutenant said, the former Marine,
3 where he said, you know, anybody in
4 combat is going to have some stress, but
5 there's a lot of Marines and other
6 service members that come out and they
7 just get along fine, they just want to
8 pick up their life. And when I recall
9 what I came out, there was nobody to help
10 you when you're making that transition.
11 I had a wife that was nine months
12 pregnant. I wasn't going to sign up
13 another four years to have the baby. So
14 that was a big hurdle for me. And I
15 think somebody directed me over to John
16 Dobbs from the People's Campaign, and
17 that helped me make that transition,
18 because they provided me with the name of
19 a hospital. We were able to have our
20 child and came out and picked up life.
21 So I think there needs to be a
22 connection for when people are coming out
23 of service that the City -- they're made
24 of the resources that the City has.
25 That's really one of the problems that I

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2 see, that people aren't aware of all the
3 resources, and I think by just getting
4 that public service message out through
5 our various means, whether it's the
6 Channel 64 that you have or PhillyCAM,
7 but getting those messages out that
8 there's help out here for veterans I
9 think will do a lot with that.

10 I'd like to thank everybody
11 that came and testified today. You know,
12 I think the woman that testified earlier,
13 I think female veterans have an issue. I
14 think all the veterans from all our
15 communities, I think we all have issues
16 that we can -- at least we have somebody
17 to bring them to. So that's why I wanted
18 to thank you. I wanted to come here and
19 put that on the record and put on the
20 record my service, because I'm proud of
21 my service. I'm proud of the Marines.

22 Thank you.

23 COUNCILMAN OH: Well, thank you
24 for your service, and thank you for those
25 very kind statements.

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2 Mr. Eastman, would you please
3 state your name for the record and a
4 little bit about your background and then
5 five minutes, please. Thank you.

6 MR. EASTMAN: Yes. My name is
7 Joe Eastman. I'm a Navy veteran. I'm
8 actually a retired naval officer that
9 enlisted in 1971, made chief petty
10 officer in the Navy, got a commission and
11 retired in 1996 as the executive officer
12 of command in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.
13 Since then, I've been, at least for the
14 last seven or eight years, actively
15 involved in veterans affairs. Until this
16 past December, I was the director of
17 veteran services at an organization
18 called Broad Street Ministry, and now I'm
19 on the Board of Directors of several
20 veteran services organizations here in
21 the City.

22 I took several notes today and
23 so this might not be in any kind of
24 order, but I can get it done in a couple
25 of minutes.

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2 With respect to the tax
3 credits, there was a meeting held in
4 Philadelphia about two years ago, maybe
5 even longer than that. At the time, I
6 was a member of the Philadelphia Homeless
7 Veterans Coalition, which was a group put
8 together as an advisory group to the
9 Mayor's Office of Supportive Housing.
10 And at this meeting were the staff
11 members of the entire Southeastern
12 Pennsylvania congressional delegation,
13 both democrats and republicans, and the
14 issue of tax credits was brought up in
15 context with jobs and things like that.
16 And to a person the staff said what they
17 were being told at least at the national
18 level -- I don't know how it filters down
19 to the local level, but at the national
20 level, they were being told unless those
21 tax credits covered hiring, training, and
22 some other costs, they were a
23 non-starter. That was not going to be a
24 reason why they would hire veterans, a
25 sole reason why they would hire veterans.

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2 Where that went, I don't know, but that I
3 think surprised a lot of people in the
4 room at that point in time.

5 With respect to the active
6 duty, I retired in '96. If somebody
7 knocked on the door of my office and
8 said, Hey, I'm here from the civilian
9 world, I would have said, Don't let the
10 door hit you on the butt on the way out.
11 But I think the military is a lot more
12 flexible now given the issues that our
13 returning men and women are dealing with.

14 There was a conversation held
15 by a group of veterans this past week
16 with a retired senior naval officer, and
17 he was saying the same thing we did about
18 the active duty. He is taking that to
19 the chief of naval personnel at the
20 behest of our veterans, which is a
21 three-star boat in Washington, I think,
22 seeing about how the services, at least
23 the Navy, might change their policy to be
24 more flexible, which I think is a good
25 idea. And that probably can be something

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2 that Council can help along with with
3 some of our congressional delegation here
4 in this area.

5 One of the things I think we
6 did not do today, although there was kind
7 of attempts at it, I don't think we
8 defined what veteran is. I mean, are we
9 talking about the retired '06 or '07 or
10 '08 with three Master's degrees or the
11 men or women maybe did their four years
12 with a high school diploma? Are we
13 talking about a senior NCO, like I was at
14 one time in my life, or are we talking
15 about the homeless veteran with only the
16 shirt on his back and probably hasn't
17 eaten in two days? It is not a
18 one-size-fit-all situation, and that's
19 kind of where we are right now, I think.

20 The other thing is -- and this
21 will probably be my last comment -- is
22 that we haven't talked about what I think
23 is the white elephant in the room that
24 everybody is talking about but we just
25 don't talk about it in forums like this.

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2 Homeless veterans and the returning
3 veterans that are going to start. Unlike
4 in 19 -- right before I retired, 1992,
5 '93, somewhere in there, after the Gulf
6 War with the Peace Dividend, they did a
7 downsizing. The economy could absorb a
8 lot of those people. This economy can't,
9 I don't believe anyway. If you look at
10 just what the Army is doing with their
11 downsizing, you got to be pretty scared.

12 The homeless veteran issues,
13 I'm not somebody that believes that
14 that's going to be resolved in 2015 like
15 we said. So if we have problem know, can
16 you imagine what they're going to be in
17 another couple of years when all these
18 people, these men and women, start coming
19 home with the same exact needs that we
20 see today. We need to be thinking about
21 that.

22 I would also -- we also talked
23 about why veterans aren't here. I don't
24 think it was from a lack of publicizing.
25 I personally sent it out to 400 veterans

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2 and veteran services organizations as
3 soon as I heard about it. I got e-mails
4 from the Veterans Advisory Commission,
5 Scott Brown's office. There might be a
6 couple of reasons. Maybe it's a work
7 time, people can't be here. There's also
8 a healthy skepticism out there. There's
9 been a lot of people that have just not
10 been serviced well by the system. And
11 you can define the system any way you
12 want to define it. I would suggest
13 getting these out in the community.

14 I was up at the Mayfair
15 Community Center the other night. That
16 would be a perfect thing for a forum such
17 as this. We got to find out why veterans
18 aren't showing up. I agree with several
19 of the comments here. This room should
20 be filled with veterans.

21 One last thing. I promise this
22 is the last thing. You have to look at
23 veterans in that because I'm a veteran --
24 and maybe as a retired officer, I look at
25 a little bit differently, and I'll give

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2 you a perfect example. When the COLA
3 thing came up a couple months ago, I
4 talked to a staff member of a United
5 States Senator about it, and I was
6 shocked to hear that they did not get
7 many calls about that. But it occurred
8 to me, if I'm a guy that just did four
9 years, I may not care about that. If I
10 was not retired, I wouldn't care about
11 it. What veterans need to do is to see
12 that all these things affect all of us in
13 some way, that if somebody is going to
14 take something away from this demographic
15 at veterans, you may very well lose this
16 benefit somewhere down the road. So the
17 comments about education and advocacy
18 were correct. You guys get inundated
19 with a lot of stuff. You're the only
20 veteran on Council. They can't be
21 experts on this. It's up to us to filter
22 through all the agendas in the veterans
23 community and tell you what's important,
24 because unless we do that, we can
25 complain all we want, but we've

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2 contributed to the problem as opposed to
3 helping you solve the problem. And I
4 think in this Year of the Veteran, we
5 have great opportunity. I tell people
6 this around the country all the time.
7 Philadelphia is as veteran a friendly
8 city as I've been in, and I've lived in
9 military towns across this country. We
10 have a City Council that I believe gets
11 it, because I have never been turned
12 down -- I've called you when we had some
13 problems and Councilman Squilla. I've
14 never been turned down by a Councilmember
15 for any issue that deals with veterans.
16 We have to use this year and capitalize
17 on that, because what I'm afraid of is
18 that if we're talking about many of these
19 same issues one year from now, we're
20 going to lose a lot of these veterans who
21 are already skeptical, and it's a shame
22 if that happens.

23 And I thank you for holding
24 this, Councilman, and I hope you do more
25 of them and I hope you get them out into

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2 the community.

3 Thank you very much.

4 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
5 much, Joe.

6 Do we have another witnesses?

7 Yes, sir.

8 (Witness approached witness
9 table.)

10 MR. DOUGLAS: Hello,
11 Councilman.

12 COUNCILMAN OH: Hello. How are
13 you?

14 MR. DOUGLAS: My name is Jim
15 Douglas. You have to excuse me. My
16 throat is a little messed up.

17 COUNCILMAN OH: Yes. I'm
18 sorry.

19 MR. DOUGLAS: Anyway, I'd like
20 to say a few things. One thing is is
21 that I'm an Air Force veteran. I'm a
22 combat veteran of the United States Air
23 Force. My family really has a great
24 military background. We all are proud of
25 our background. We come from different

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2 branches of the service and we have both
3 male and female, and we're from enlisted
4 all the way through officer ranks in all
5 branches.

6 What I would like to say really
7 is that I feel really that -- before I
8 get to that, I'd like to say that I
9 represent a few veterans organizations
10 right here in the City. One is that I
11 represent Aces Museum. I also work with
12 Pointman. I also work really with
13 NazVets, and Rabbi Goodman started the
14 12-step Post Traumatic Stress Group here
15 at the VA, and I am President of the
16 Action Committee for the Post Traumatic
17 Stress Group. And I thank you also for
18 coming out to our annual picnic.

19 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
20 much. You know, I now recognize you. So
21 I apologize. My glasses are not helping
22 my bad eyesight.

23 MR. DOUGLAS: That's all right.
24 That's all right. I can understand. You
25 see a lot of people, so I can understand

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2 that very easy.

3 Once thing I wanted to say is
4 that we have at the Museum for the
5 Holocaust Remembrance Day, which is
6 coming up. It's going to be on Monday,
7 April the 28th. And for people that
8 don't know, the Museum located at 5801
9 Germantown Avenue, where we're going to
10 have some representatives from the Anne
11 Frank family that are going to be there,
12 and we would like really to have as many
13 people come out to hear what they have to
14 say and to meet with them.

15 So I gave out a few of these,
16 and they're on the really Internet, but I
17 just ran a few off really so that I could
18 bring them in today so people could have
19 some.

20 In conjunction really to what
21 Jim Abram was saying, I feel, although I
22 know I myself, just as the gentleman that
23 was just up here said, that I have spoken
24 to quite a few vets that I know too, but
25 the thing of it is that there's a lot

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2 more vets than what we know that need to
3 be reached, and as of right now, a lot of
4 them are not being reached, including the
5 homeless vets that we're speaking about
6 sometimes right now. I know several
7 homeless vets that if I happen to send
8 anything to them personally, they
9 wouldn't have known a thing. Maybe,
10 maybe it might be something to think
11 about putting the poster on some of the
12 buses or maybe having a few announcements
13 over the radio and TV that would go out
14 from Comcast and all. That might help to
15 get through to more people. I don't
16 know. I can't really say.

17 I can add this, though: My
18 wife was also a veteran, combat veteran,
19 Vietnam era as well as some others. She
20 volunteered for service twice. She
21 served proudly and worn the women's
22 ideals and things really to be recognized
23 and remembered. She also wanted people
24 to know that it was not just nurses that
25 served in Vietnam. There were other

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2 women that served in Vietnam also, which
3 she happened to be one of the other ones.

4 I was mentioning that Aces
5 Museum, we try to reach really all
6 veterans and all military personnel.
7 Even though really it is mainly a
8 minority museum, it also tries to get
9 across to everyone, not just minorities
10 alone, because we have sections for
11 everyone, active duty as well as
12 non-active duty of all branches of the
13 service as well. So we try not to leave
14 anyone out. Just like we're having Anne
15 Frank at the Museum, we're also going to
16 have really some representatives of the
17 WACs come out a little later, which is
18 the Women's Army Corps. We also have
19 WAFs and other things really that will be
20 coming through, and we have a section
21 there for these different ones.

22 We would like to be able to get
23 more funding for the Museum as well as
24 more funding for vets in general, because
25 these different veteran groups, in order

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2 to be able to really help vets, they need
3 funding. Now, the funding that comes
4 into the City I'm sure helps some, but we
5 need really some specific earmarks to the
6 different organizations and groups that
7 address vets, that address really the
8 problems that vets have just like you
9 were asking about. We need this, because
10 really these organizations are working
11 off of very limited small funds. Most of
12 them are only working off the funds that
13 they get from their own organization,
14 nothing else. And if they could get
15 more, then they can do more. Just like
16 really right now most of the members of
17 our Post Traumatic Stress Group that
18 Rabbi Goodman started has started to
19 dwindle some, mainly because really of
20 nutrition and people dying, things of
21 that nature really. So it's getting
22 smaller. We need really to keep it
23 going, because it can help things. It
24 can help people. It's been helping
25 people. If you ever get a chance to come

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2 by some time on Wednesdays when we're
3 having our meetings, you'll see how it is
4 helping. Sit in for a while and listen
5 to what some of the fellows are talking
6 about.

7 Just like the incident that
8 just happened out at Fort Hood, that
9 could have been really a lack of really
10 more or less really counseling. It could
11 have been really some of that that really
12 could have helped prevent some of that.
13 But unfortunately sometimes really when
14 the guys and the women get back, they
15 don't really get the support that they
16 need, just like I heard somebody say.
17 They're dropped more or less and walked
18 away from. That's basically what
19 happens. I can say that from personal
20 experience even. And I can say too that
21 I was very discouraged when I first got
22 back by trying to deal with really the VA
23 and the different organizations that are
24 around really to help vets. Of course,
25 now I'm not quite as -- let's say I'm not

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2 as quick now really to not recognize some
3 of the help that is available, I'll put
4 it that way, when before I was a little
5 more, I guess, hot-tempered and a little
6 more fiery when I was younger, so I
7 didn't have too much patience or too much
8 time. And I know really people coming
9 back from Iraq, Iran, a lot of them are
10 younger too. We had some older ones
11 coming back too, but we have some younger
12 ones, and they are just as hotheaded and
13 just as more or less the same as I was.

14 So if we could just let them
15 know that there really is people out here
16 that are willing to help and let them see
17 really that they are -- reach out, as you
18 said, have an outreach really that
19 everyone is doing to try and bring them
20 into the fold so that they can get help.
21 And the ones that are already here, the
22 older ones like myself and some of the
23 others from Korea, Second World War and
24 so forth and so on still need help.

25 COUNCILMAN OH: Yes.

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2 MR. DOUGLAS: So it would be
3 very good really if we could get really
4 some funding really to help some of these
5 groups that are trying. And I mean
6 they're really trying --

7 COUNCILMAN OH: Right.

8 MR. DOUGLAS: -- to help.

9 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you.

10 MR. DOUGLAS: Thank you. Oh,
11 yeah. One more thing before I go. I'd
12 like to mention that I mentioned my wife.
13 My wife was in Vietnam and unfortunately,
14 as Abram had mentioned, she was affected
15 by Agent Orange and she died from
16 complications of Agent Orange, and most
17 of the people in her unit have died from
18 that.

19 So it would be very good really
20 when we're looking really to be helping
21 these women to be thinking about really
22 that they were affected just as much as
23 the men and their service was just as
24 important as the men.

25 COUNCILMAN OH: Yes.

1 4/4/14 - GLOBAL OPPORTUNITIES - RES. 130791

2 Definitely so.

3 MR. DOUGLAS: That's something
4 that some of us seem to forget. And I
5 would really -- the 12-step group is
6 trying to reach out really to some of the
7 women too and try and help them really to
8 get some help also. So we're trying to
9 work with them.

10 COUNCILMAN OH: Well, thank you
11 very much for your testimony and sharing
12 that with us.

13 MR. DOUGLAS: And thank you.

14 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay.

15 There are no other witnesses
16 for public statement that I'm aware of.
17 I would like to thank everyone for
18 attending this hearing. I know you're
19 all very busy. You've taken your time
20 out.

21 We will transcribe. We have
22 the record. We have an ability to get
23 the DVD of this. We'll make the record
24 available for anybody who wants it. We
25 will examine this record and we will try

1 4/4/14 - GLOBAL OPPORTUNITIES - RES. 130791
2 to come up with some recommendations and
3 do some followthrough.

4 So with that, I will conclude
5 this hearing on this resolution and thank
6 you all for being here.

7 (Committee on Global
8 Opportunities and the Creative/Innovative
9 Economy concluded at 1:40 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the
proceedings, evidence and objections are
contained fully and accurately in the
stenographic notes taken by me upon the
foregoing matter, and that this is a true and
correct transcript of same.

MICHELE L. MURPHY
RPR-Notary Public

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