

Prioritize Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities

Nearly a third (29.6 percent, 3.5 million) of the 12 million working-age veterans report having a disability: 12.4 percent with a service-connected disability; 10.5 percent with non-service-connected disabilities only; and 6.7 percent reporting both service-connected and non-service-connected disabilities.¹ Despite employment protections provided under the Americans with Disabilities Act and other disability employment rights laws, the labor force participation rate among people with significant disabilities remains at roughly 30 percent, while that for people without disabilities is approximately 70 percent. Only about a third of veterans who report both a service-connected and a non-service-connected disability (32 percent) and 37 percent of those reporting only a non-service-connected disability are employed, compared with over three-quarters of veterans without disabilities.

Although the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), provides vocational rehabilitation for veterans with service-connected disabilities, many of these veterans, as well as non-service-connected disabled veterans, also rely on the same employment programs and systems available to assist non-veterans with disabilities. They will face many of the same employment challenges in the years ahead as the country emerges from the pandemic. PVA supports legislation that would protect and strengthen disability employment rights; increase tax incentives for employers to hire and retain persons with disabilities; enhance opportunities for entrepreneurs with disabilities; and improve federal hiring and promotions under Schedule A, federal contracting rules, veterans' preference, and other authorities targeting those with significant disabilities.

PVA Position

- PVA supports passage of the **Disability Employment Incentive Act (S. 630)**, which would enhance the current Work Opportunity Tax Credit available to employers by raising the amount of salary eligible for the credit, raising the maximum available tax credit, and extending the availability of the credit for any business that retains an employee for a second year of employment.
- PVA supports passage of the **National Apprenticeship Act (H.R. 447)**, which would support development of apprenticeship programs across the country, offer technical assistance to state apprenticeship agencies and promote greater diversity in the national apprenticeship system. People with disabilities are among the populations specifically identified in the legislation for recruitment, employment, and retention in the nation's apprenticeship system. The bill also requires states to collect data on participation of people with disabilities in their apprenticeship programs and encourage the participation in the apprenticeship system of employers that target individuals with barriers to employment such as individuals with a disability, veterans, and military spouses.
- PVA supports the **Relaunching America's Workforce Act (H.R. 602/S. 200)**, which would authorize \$15 billion in funding into the workforce system over the next three years to help employers keep workers on the job and help displaced or underemployed workers quickly re-enter the workforce. These funds will strengthen workforce training activities—including on-the-job training and registered apprenticeships—as well as career services, including career navigation support, online skills training, and employment services. Many of the programs covered under Title I

¹ Employment Data for Veterans with Disabilities, ADA National Network, <https://adata.org/factsheet/employment-data-veterans-disabilities>

of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act are authorized to serve veterans and other people with disabilities so this much needed infusion of capital into those programs should enable them to serve better these individuals who have suffered disproportionately during the pandemic.