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**U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON CONTRACTING OVERSIGHT HEARING
HEARING: “Veterans Employment and Government Contractors”**

Statement of Senator Tom Carper

As prepared for delivery

Today’s hearing is great opportunity to hear from businesses and nonprofit leaders, as well as other employers who have made a special and important commitment to hiring veterans. As a veteran, I know the sacrifices our service members make by defending our nation, and we have a responsibility to ensure that our heroes have the proper resources and support to re-enter the workforce once they arrive home.

In 2011, our nation had nearly 857,000 unemployed veterans seeking work. The jobless rate among post-9/11 veterans continues to be higher than the national average, and women veterans have one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation. That is unacceptable. That’s why I was proud to pledge my support to the bipartisan Senate Veterans Jobs Caucus to help find solutions to lower the disturbingly-high veteran unemployment rate. Members of this caucus have made the commitment to hiring veterans, developing veterans’ employment initiatives, and partnering with businesses and organizations to boost veteran job-training and hiring.

But as I always like to say, ‘you can’t manage what you can’t measure,’ and in order to make sure the public and private sectors are doing all that they can to hire more of our service men and women, we must have the proper metrics in place to track hiring and employment. As we’ve learned over the past couple of years, there have been several notable inconsistencies in reports that government contractors are required to submit to the Labor Department’s Office of Assistant Secretary for Veterans Employment and Training (VETS). It is critical that we examine these discrepancies to make sure that the Department of Labor has the proper tools in place to track veterans’ reintegration back into the civilian workforce and ensure that we don’t leave our heroes behind once they arrive home.

Four years ago, Congress passed the Post 9/11 GI Bill. Under this law, members of the armed forces who have served after Sept 10, 2001 are entitled to a very generous education benefit that essentially pays the costs of earning a college degree. While I’ve introduced legislation to close the 90/10 loophole in the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill., *the Military*

Veterans Education Protection Act (S.2116), to me, the G.I. Bill continues to be a great motivation for veterans to encourage them to go back to school, to better themselves and to increase their attractiveness to employers with well-paying jobs. However, as we've seen today, there is still work to be done.

I appreciate this opportunity today to hear from our witnesses and to evaluate the integrity of the reporting system used to quantify veteran hiring by contractors and veterans hiring as a whole. We owe our nation's veterans – including the more than 78,000 veterans in Delaware – more than just a debt of gratitude for their service to our country. We owe them our sincere commitment to providing them with new jobs. As Congress, the President and companies across America focus on creating jobs for our nation's unemployed, we must strengthen our efforts to get veterans in Delaware and across the country back to work.

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