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**Statement for the Record - Veterans Energy Transition (VET) Act & Daniel J. Harvey and Adam Lambert Improving Servicemember Transition to Reduce Veteran Suicide Act**

United States House of Representatives Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

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By

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With Honor Action



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Chairman Van Orden, Ranking Member Pappas, and Members of the Subcommittee,

With Honor Action appreciates the opportunity to submit this Statement for the Record. We thank the Subcommittee for its leadership and commitment to strengthening critical programs that support service members as they transition to civilian life following their service to our nation.

With Honor Action is a bipartisan, nonprofit organization that works to strengthen democracy and fight polarization in Congress through principled veteran leadership. Our work includes endorsing legislative solutions to our nation's most pressing issues, connecting military veteran Members of Congress across the aisle to forge bipartisan bonds, and building coalitions of like-minded organizations to demonstrate constituent support for commonsense policies.

We work with the 38 members of the For Country Caucus in the House of Representatives, all of whom are military veterans, and who have taken our Pledge to serve with integrity, civility, and courage. We also work closely with 11 Senate allies to reach bicameral consensus. These Congressional leaders leverage their military experience and leadership to build support for and pass legislation in national security, national service, and veterans' affairs.

### **With Honor Action supports H.R. 4105, the Veterans Energy Transition (VET) Act**

The transition from active duty to civilian life is a pivotal moment for the future of our veterans and their families, and has been a key part of our bipartisan work. With Honor Action strongly supports the bipartisan Veterans Energy Transition (VET) Act, led by For Country Caucus members Rep. Jen Kiggans, a Navy veteran, and Rep. Chrissy Houlahan, an Air Force veteran. The bill has 16 cosponsors, including six members of the For Country Caucus, and would simultaneously address critical shortages in our energy and advanced manufacturing sectors and the pressing issue of veteran employment after separation.

Research from the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that nearly 10,000 electricians leave the workforce annually, and only roughly 7,000 enter to replace them.<sup>1</sup> As demand for energy markets grows to power our economy and American innovation, these labor shortages in energy and manufacturing are not only a threat to our economic prosperity but also to our national security.

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<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, Electricians, at <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/construction-and-extraction/electricians.html>.



At the same time, around 200,000 service members transition out of active duty each year, and they are ideal candidates for technical careers like those in the energy industry.<sup>2</sup> The VET Act will help defray costs for potential employers by empowering the Department of Labor to provide grants to cover training, certification, relocation, and onboarding for eligible veteran, service member, and spouse hires. The legislation authorizes \$60 million annually through Fiscal Year 2031 for these grants, with a 15% cap on administrative costs.

The bill also prioritizes this support for retirees and veterans with service-connected disabilities and for those experiencing homelessness, targeting populations desperately in need of greater intervention, and recognizes the need for greater interagency cooperation by coordinating implementation with existing Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs programs such as the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), SkillBridge, and Solid Start.

### **With Honor Action supports H.R. 2878, the Daniel J. Harvey and Adam Lambert Improving Servicemember Transition to Reduce Veteran Suicide Act**

With Honor also strongly supports the Daniel J. Harvey and Adam Lambert Improving Servicemember Transition to Reduce Veteran Suicide Act, introduced by Iowa Air National Guardsman and For Country Caucus member Rep. Zach Nunn. This bill, named after two Marines who tragically lost their lives to suicide within a year of separation, will provide tools to support service-related mental health challenges. By incorporating topics like PTSD, depression, substance abuse, and loneliness into TAP, separating service members will receive the information and resources they need to transition successfully.

Similarly, by strengthening the Solid Start program, veterans will have greater awareness of the mental health programs available to them. The first year of separation from service is a highly vulnerable time for veterans experiencing a mental health crisis, with suicide rates reaching 46.2 per 100,000.<sup>3</sup> Early education of, and access to, mental health programs for transitioning service members is critical for reducing veteran suicide rates, which continue to outpace the suicide rates of the general, non-veteran population.

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<sup>2</sup> Government Accountability Office (2024). *Transition to Civilian Life: Better Collection and Analysis of Military Service Data Needed to Improve Oversight of the SkillBridge Program* (GAO-24-107352). <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-24-107352>

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2024 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, Part 1 & Part 2, Office of Suicide Prevention, December 2024, [https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2024/2024-Annual-Report-Part-1-of-2\\_508.pdf](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2024/2024-Annual-Report-Part-1-of-2_508.pdf)



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This bill is cosponsored by another veteran member of the For Country Caucus and Army veteran, Rep. Jason Crow. These veterans, who have experienced the transition from active duty to civilian life, understand the daunting challenges and the much-needed resources that accompany a service member's separation. The early intervention this bill provides to service members is key to facilitating a safe and successful next chapter for those who have served their country.

With Honor Action was proud to endorse these bills upon their introduction, and now we urge the Subcommittee to ensure sustained support for transitioning service members and the workforce and support programs they need to succeed in the civilian world. We thank the Subcommittee for holding today's hearing and for its consideration of this vital legislation.