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THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

**Testimony of Roger Newman,  
Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs,  
Concerning Employment Opportunities for Veterans in New York  
City**

**November 18, 2009**

Good afternoon Chair Sanders, and members of the Veterans Committee, my name is Roger Newman and I am the Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs (MOVA). I am here today to testify on the issue of employment opportunities for New York City veterans. I will start by highlighting some of the work our sister agencies, the Department of Homeless Service (DHS) and Department of Small Business Services (SBS) have been doing.

MOVA often operates as a conduit and coordinator for veterans in need of the many services provided throughout the City. For instance, MOVA works very closely with the DHS in creating short-term and permanent housing specifically tailored for the unique needs of veterans and their families. Since 2006, DHS has helped more than 2,300 homeless veterans move into permanent housing, including nearly 600 to date in 2009. DHS in partnership with the Veterans Administration established a Multi-Service Center (MSC) at the Project TORCH facility in Brooklyn. For the first time, veterans can access their federal benefits, obtain homeless services and receive an education and employment assessment to ascertain whether adult education is needed and skill level for job placement. In operation since May 2008, the MSC has

proudly served more than 4,841 homeless veterans. More than 400 homeless veterans have moved into permanent housing with federal HUD-VASH Section 8 vouchers, which pair rental subsidies with VA services, and an additional 800 voucher applications have been submitted. Similarly, development of veterans-only short-term housing now is complete, with the April 2009 opening of a new facility, by the Doe Fund Veterans Program. Veterans at this facility spend 9-12 months in a supervised, residential work program, and receive life skills and job preparation classes, on-site adult education, GED preparation and computer classes. Many of the veterans in the program also are in the Doe Fund's Ready, Willing and Able program, which focuses on job training and placement into permanent housing. The work of DHS in providing housing for veterans via the Doe Fund Veterans Program and the Borden Avenue Veterans Residence as well as their work with the federal government has led to a 62% reduction in the number of homeless veterans in the DHS shelter system from September 2006 to September 2009. These programs are designed to provide housing but in doing so veterans are receiving much needed job training and placement thus ensuring that the cycle of veteran homelessness ends.

Last week, Mayor Bloomberg announced that the SBS is offering specialized job training and placement programs specifically for veterans and their spouses. This program allows for any veteran and their spouse to have priority service at any of the seven Workforce1 Career Centers, and the two Sector Career Centers (healthcare and transportation). This means that they will be fast tracked for appointments and assessments for both training and job placement. These Career Centers are located throughout the five boroughs and are on pace to make over 20,000 job placements this year. Over \$20 million will be invested in occupational training this year alone for growing and in-demand occupations. This training and subsequent job placement are available free of charge.

Additionally, using Federal Stimulus dollars SBS is also focusing on specific healthcare job training services for veterans in partnership with Goodwill Industries. This December, the Department of Small Business Services will launch a specialized training in the healthcare sector that aims to place veterans in the healthcare profession as certified nurse's aides, medical assistants, emergency medical technicians, counselors and/or social workers. By the end of the year, Workforce1 Centers around the City will be able to assist veterans interested in applying for the training program. Recruitment for the program will be throughout the 5 boroughs and through partners including: the VA, Black Veterans for Social Justice, United Spinal (formerly Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association.), Heritage of America (holder of the US Department of Veteran's Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation & Education grant), Harbor and Bronx VA Medical Centers, Blinded Veterans Association, Coalition for Homeless Veterans, Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs, New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs, U.S. Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Service, Disabled Veterans Outreach Programs and Local Veteran's Employment Representatives. The program will serve 200 people per year using an investment of nearly \$900,000.

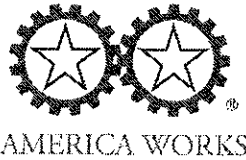
We are extremely excited and supportive about the work our sister agencies are doing for veterans; and look forward to working with them on other veteran specific initiatives in the future.

In March 2008, MOVA partnered with America Works to assist with veteran job placement and through this partnership, 207 veterans are now employed. Given the current state of the economy, MOVA is extremely proud of the successful job placements we have made with America Works. Additionally, MOVA has made employment referrals to other agencies,

reminding them that veterans receive additional points on civil service exams and sending specific resumes to agencies that have sought MOVA's assistance. Additional referrals have been made to employers, such as One Step above Security, that are looking specifically to hire veterans.

Veteran employment is a priority for my office. As a Vietnam veteran, I can identify with some of the difficulties experienced by many returning service members today; and I am confident that The City is committed to facilitating an easier transition back into civilian life for returning veterans and their families.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to take any questions.



Prepared Testimony of Philip Jones and Carlyle Outten  
on Behalf of America Works of New York, Inc.

To The New York City Council Committee On Veterans Affairs

Wednesday November 18, 2009

Chairman James Sanders and distinguished members of the New York City Council Committee on Veterans' Affairs, good afternoon.

On behalf of America Works of New York, Inc. Chief Executive Officer Dr. Lee Bowes and Founder Mr. Peter Cove, I would like to express our gratitude for the opportunity to be here today to address the New York City Council Committee on Veterans' Affairs about our Veterans Employment Programs.

My name is Philip Jones, and I am the Senior Vice President of America Works of New York. I've been with our organization for almost 23 years, and have played an integral part in helping America Works place over 175,000 individuals in employment. I'm here today with Carlyle Outten, who is the Director of our Veterans' Programs. Mr. Outten's recent programs (including work with Veterans on Food Stamps, public assistance, and homeless or sheltered in New York City) has helped him place and retain over 180 Veterans in the past 9 months alone.

### Who We Are

America Works is a private, for-profit performance-based workforce development firm that specializes in placing, what some may call, "The Hard-to-Serve Populations" in employment. We've been doing this since 1984. We have helped low-income individuals and public assistance recipients across a broad demographic spectrum become self-sufficient by obtaining and retaining jobs, or improving their career positions. We also work with individuals who are receiving food stamps; the formerly incarcerated; youths aging out of foster care; the homeless and sheltered; non-custodial parents; people living with HIV/AIDS and Veterans of the United States Armed Forces.

America Works was the pioneer company whose work led to the 1996 Personal Responsibility And Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, moving national welfare programs to back-to-work programs. America Works is currently a Human Resources Administration funded Back to Work program provider, and has consistently rated number 1

among all BTW providers for both job placement and job retention services, as well as in the top 3 providers for lowest recidivism rates.

To date, America Works has placed over 175,000 hard-to-serve individuals into jobs in cities across the United States. We currently have three offices in New York City, located in Midtown Manhattan, Bay Ridge Brooklyn, and Far Rockaway Queens. At all three locations, America Works currently recruits Veterans, including homeless Veterans, and places them into direct employment. We've worked tirelessly with Commissioner Doar and Commissioner Newman to provide these services to impoverished Veterans, and we have received funding from the Federal Department of Labor to provide services to homeless Veterans.

### Why Veterans

Over the last few years America Works has seen a growing number of Veterans coming into our offices seeking employment. These Veterans came to us through our homeless programs, food stamps programs, public assistance programs, and frequently through our ex-offender programs. Concerned about our country's heroes rapidly sinking into the depths of poverty, we began researching what services were available for Veterans. We found that while the Department of Veterans Affairs states that "nearly 200,000 service members separate from the military each year" and that right now another 200,000 Veterans are incarcerated, there are few to no direct employment services provided to Veterans by either the Department of Veteran Affairs or by the Department of Defense. In a time when our national unemployment rate tops 10.2% and the national poverty rate grows every day, we need to provide better, enhanced services to the men and women who risk their lives for our country. In order to do this, America Works has begun leveraging funds from other national scale programs to provide services to some of the Veterans in most need. But still, significantly more needs to be done, especially here in New York City.

### Types Of Veterans We Serve

Currently, we serve Veterans through several different programs. We actively serve Veterans receiving:

1. Public Assistance
2. Food Stamps
3. Veterans who have HIV / AIDS
4. Veterans receiving SSI and SSDI Benefits
5. Formerly Incarcerated Veterans
6. Veterans who are Non-custodial parents
7. Homeless and Sheltered Veterans who participate in our Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP)

While it seems we are serving many Veterans through our numerous programs, we lack the funding to provide preventive, direct employment services so that Veterans do not have to

become homeless or receive welfare or steal for their food to be in our programs. It is too much of a tragedy to allow these Veterans to languish in poverty after they have given everything they could for their country to not provide them better services.

### Our Model

So what is the answer? How do we provide appropriate, effective, and timely services for Veterans in New York City. The answer is **work-first** programming; programs that provide direct, rapid attachment to the workforce. These are not programs that provide training for a job that doesn't exist and, these are not programs that refer Veterans to websites where they can virtually apply to jobs for which they will not receive a call back. These are programs that directly link the Veteran to a real live job that exists in the job market right now. To ensure performance, the government only pays these programs after the Veteran is actively working on the job. There is no room for error in this model because if you can't get people jobs, you simply lose the program. These programs don't make money until the Veteran, him or herself, is making money. These concepts have been the bedrock upon which America Works has been built. This bedrock has led to over 175,000 individuals obtaining and retaining employment across the United States.

### What We Have Learned

Through our work with these amazing servicemen and women, we have learned many lessons that should be taken to heart. First, our nation's Veterans want to work. Our Veterans will certainly experience difficulties and hardships, but they *want* to work and continue to be the breadwinner for themselves and their families. In the first nine months of 2009, we have placed over 180 Veterans in employment in New York City with an average hourly salary of approximately \$10.00. And we did the majority of this thanks to the hard work and dedication shown by Commissioner Doar and Commissioner Newman to help us leverage existing funding.

Second, there is a tremendous need for direct employment services for Veterans. While Veterans are motivated, many cannot find employers and they will struggle with barriers that will prevent them from successfully obtaining and retaining employment on their own. Performance-based contracted services are needed to effectively provide job placement services to Veterans today. Our Veterans are fighting with over 20 million other unemployed Americans for a limited amount of jobs and they deserve a leg up in the competition.

Third, companies are not only willing to hire Veterans but actively seek out Veterans to employ, and especially so in New York City. The problem is one of time and resources. Companies need to fill positions quickly and they don't have the resources to advertise at length for Veteran-only employment opportunities. Through a service like ours, companies can call us up and ask us to fill jobs with Veterans that same day.

Finally, the VA alone should not be the only champion in this fight to implement employment programs of the breadth and scale necessary for today's Veteran population. We believe that through strategic partnerships, the Department of Defense, the Department of Veteran Affairs, the City of New York and private contractors can provide performance-based employment programs to New York City's 237,000 Veterans.

### Our Recommendations

We recommend the following steps be taken immediately to help our Veterans from today onwards:

1. We need to design and provide specific, direct service employment programs to aide in transitioning today's military into successfully employed Veterans. This service should be offered from transition onwards, and would work in collaboration with current services, including the Veteran's Administration programs and New York City TANF, Homeless Services, and Workforce Investment Act funded programs. These programs will be pay-for-performance to ensure that our service men and women obtain and retain civilian employment.
2. In light of the number of wounded warriors returning from our 21<sup>st</sup> century conflicts, we also need to provide these direct employment services to spouses and dependents of Veterans. A wounded warrior needs his family to heal, but he or she also needs income to provide stability. We propose to offer these employment programs for the spouses and dependents of wounded warriors in New York City. This can begin by working with families who are involved in Veterans Administration hospital programs and those currently receiving public housing and TANF services in NYC. Jobs will be found to accommodate caring for the wounded warrior while also providing economic stability.
3. The United State Department of Labor has designed specialized employment programs for Veterans, and these need to be expanded at the local level. In particular, the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program has provided much needed help to homeless Veterans nationwide. This program should be expanded to help thousands of other homeless Veterans in New York City. Programs for incarcerated Veterans should also be provided in New York City to address the particular needs of incarcerated Veterans. These programs can leverage Workforce Investment Act and TANF dollars to provide much needed specialized services to these Veterans with additional barriers to employment.
4. Finally, let us provide the services necessary to more of New York City's Veterans. In NYC today, there are over 237,000 Veterans, and an unemployment rate for Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans tops 14.6%. Allow America Works to provide a direct employment program here in NYC to more of the unemployed Veterans beyond those receiving Food Stamps, public assistance and those who have become homeless.

With additional funding, leveraged through the Workforce Investment Act, we can work together to help *prevent* Veteran homelessness and poverty.

As a lifelong employee of America Works, and a proud American, I believe we need to do more for the servicemen and women who return to New York City. I ask you today to make a real change for Veterans and their families, to make New York City a city for Veterans. Our servicemen and women have served us, it is now our responsibility to serve them.

Chairman James Sanders and distinguished members of the New York City Council Committee on Veterans' Affairs, thank you for your time.



UNITED WAR VETERANS' COUNCIL  
Of New York County, Inc.

### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** New York City Council – Veteran Committee  
**FROM:** Vince McGowan,  
**RE:** Jobs  
**DATE:** 11/18/09

New York is protected by its NYS & National Guard Units that supplement our traditional uniformed services.

Because of the schedule requirements of membership in these Guard units meaningful employment is very hard to get.

Request that the NYC Council review the circumstances of this situation and formulate some methods to resolve the issue.

Post-It* Fax Note	7671	Date	11/17/09	# of pages	1
To	ASHWIN	From	V. McGowan		
Co./Dept.	NYCC	Co.	UWVC		
Phone #		Request #	2621329		
Fax #	212-2889112	Fax #			