Decentralized Military Transition and Separation: Competing for Veterans

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Concept Description: Separation from the military requires a diverse set of considerations dependent on skills, education, destination, terminal leave duration, financial situation, physical and psychological condition, family requirements, and separation designation among many other elements of life unique to every warrior. The only entities that have a vested interest in a veteran's successful transition is the veteran and the family/community that they will be with. The proposed concept would create a handheld device application-based tool where each veteran will their individual transition process to choose a desired destination to which they intend to relocate. That location will be assigned to a state or community approved Veteran Transition Program with a tailored set of transition assistance sub applications and tasks for the veteran to work through prior to successful separation. Included, but not limited to, will be automatic transfer of Electronic Medical Record (EMR) data to the VA system and local facility; transfer of individual service record to VA compensation and benefit data base; local veteran organization options with contact information (VFW, American Legion, Team Rubicon, etc); Employment Support opportunities (labor and union apprenticeship programs, military friendly job openings, resume/LinkedIn lessons, etc); education support opportunities (undergraduate, adult education, trade programs, etc); local housing support; mental health service providers; automatic introduction to veteran assistance offices, and so on. As each veteran navigates their unique transition process and provide feedback of their experience visible via the applet visible to other veterans and the service providers.

An example of local service delivery itinerary for the individual war fighter if selecting Clark County, Washington as their destination after separation:

1) (Day 1) Veteran Resource Center (VRC) receives cadre of warriors pending transition and reviews individual veteran transition selections:
   a) Workforce Transition information on opportunities, forecasts, contacts
      i) Labor/Union
      ii) Private Sector
      iii) Government
      iv) Entrepreneur
   b) Education Transition information on opportunities, forecasts, contacts
      i) Degree Programs
      ii) Adult skills/trades education and vocational assistance path
         (1) Assigned to individual point of control
   c) Benefits and Medical introductions
   d) Individual Action Plan for the remaining days of transition support
2) (Day 2) Workforce (job fair/interviews)/Education (registrar) engagement by each veteran
3) (Day 3) Private market engagement for housing, clubs/organizations, insurance, etc.
4) (Day 4) Veteran Support Officer and Veteran Organizations engage with veterans
5) (Day 5) Response on Quality of Service and out process with VRC

A voucher equivalent to the current per capita spending in existing separation programs (approximately $1200 per veteran currently) would be authorized for the transitioning veteran to use

during their transition process to support a week of temporary assignment to duty (TAD) that is automatically scheduled in conjunction with the war fighter's last service record audit at the location of choice 2-6 months prior to separation. Following TAD, the warrior would rate their experience with the local community or state. Following transition, each veteran would be prompted to provide a review of their experience in the transition process provided by each unique state or community transition plan they leveraged. Additional ratings would be requested from the veteran via app and email at the one year and five-year anniversary to provide longer term evaluation of the veteran's transition experience according to their respective state or community. These programs and tools would be available for the duration of a veteran's life to provide a more familiar tool to encourage flexibility in future decision making as moves for work, life, family require many similar functions.

Objective & Payoff: The objective of the dramatic change in process is to provide a decentralized and lower level ownership system by which communities and states can compete for veterans by offering the tailored transition support that is then evaluated by the veterans who transition for future veteran evaluation and decision making. States and communities with higher evaluation scores from veterans will attract more veterans separating from service who are above average income earners and reliable community members looking for the best community to transition into. The payoff is that more veterans experience high value transition support unique to their situation which leads to more stable, healthy, and productive lives after transition reducing veteran unemployment, homelessness, substance abuse, or suicide.

What current problems does this project address and how does it affect improvement?
1. There is no feedback loop for current separation processes which leads to stale program curriculum and limited accountability for failed efforts. As Yelp offers users visibility into restaurant quality and services, so to will this enable the veterans (the customers) to define the quality of service to inform other veterans as well as enable the service delivery providers to respond and modify curriculum procedures efficiently at the local level.
2. The DoD is a warfighting organization focused on combat readiness and future threats but not on its ability to transition veterans into healthy and productive lives. The DoD responds to the President and Congressional funding to accomplish missions they are assigned. Veteran transition remains a subordinate task taken out of a sense of responsibility by those in service, not mission necessity. Putting control into the hands of veterans and the communities they will live in pushes authority to the lowest levels aligning decision making, capabilities, and outcomes with those who care most and are incentivized to ensure success.
3. Employers, community groups, veteran groups, mental/physical healthcare providers, trade schools, education institutions, and many others want to provide for and engage with veterans but are not outfitted with knowledge or mechanisms to do so. These entities struggle to communicate leads to delays or failure to deliver fundamental services in time. Pushing transition veterans to a single access point where diverse interests approved by the community or state can engage with the veterans early in the process alleviates many of the obstacles that follow separation and reintegration into a community.

4. The veteran community is small, dispersed, and not well represented in our political system's priorities or actions. Decentralization of the transition process and put in the hands of veterans and local communities removes the burden on Congress and the Department of Labor to provide a one size fits all answer or active responses to curriculum needs. States and communities will now proactively compete to recruit veterans with market value assessed by those veterans.

Benefit to the Individual: This is a veteran focused, veteran and community managed, veteran evaluated process. The quality of services and results will dictate veteran response and provide feedback for the next veteran in line. Information and knowledge empower the community to respond with assistance from cross functional community and veteran stakeholders to respond and correct immediately improving the next veteran in the pipeline and the community at large.

Funding / Cost: Cost of the process would initially work on a per capita level based on existing spending levels. Currently ~250,000 veterans transition out each year with an annual budget of $300,000,000 across all branches of service to support this transition process. Initial investment of less than $10,000,000 will enable the program to stand up while local investment will be dictated by community/sate interest in the program. If they desire successful veterans, they will invest appropriately for their community. Sustainment cost following execution will be tied to administrative oversight of TAD execution and maintenance of central access portal for information at less than $1,000,000 (small team of program managers, information technology experts, and policy/information liaisons).

Metrics/Measures of Success:

1. 50% reduction in veteran unemployment one year after separation.
2. 30% reduction in veteran homelessness for participating veterans compared to existing veterans.
3. 5% increase in veteran annual income for participating veterans.
4. 70% improvement in data conversion accuracy and record retention for VA system.
5. 15% reduction in veteran substance abuse.
6. 10% reduction in veteran suicide.

Potential Transition Plans to Action: To transition, Congress must first allocate the priority of spending and resource allocation. The Office of the Secretary of Defense's Transitions office has made clear they are open and supportive of the concept but will require both Department of Labor and State support to execute. Propose that Washington State (enabled by the Legislature and Governor) be a testbed for this endeavor at a minimum and allow for any other states interested to participate. Development of this vertical will allow for spiral vertical development for spouses, homeless veterans, and veterans after transition to encourage similar program results for those communities.

Participants & Customers:
- **Primary and Alternate POC for monthly reporting**:
  o Primary: Chris Thobaben crthobaben@gmail.com; 217-506-2749, 13801 NW 20th Ct, Vancouver WA, 98685