



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON

TELEFAX TRANSMISSION MEMO

ATTENTION: Molly B.  
ORGANIZATION: \_\_\_\_\_  
TELEFAX NO.: (202) 456-7028

FROM: Robert L. Jones, Special Assistant to the Secretary (00F)  
ORGANIZATION: Department of Veterans Affairs  
TELEFAX NO.: (202) 273-4876, Office No. (202) 273-4836  
White House Phone No. (202) 456-5178, FAX No. 456-6218

NO. OF PAGES TO FOLLOW: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

MESSAGE: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Commentary

### Bill Clinton's Bridge

By Paul Spera

Every time Bill Clinton talks about his "Bridge to the 21st Century," I can't help but think of the Bridge on the River Kwai. He wants everyone to help him build this bridge, but he wants veterans to cross it with him. This is best illustrated by the Clinton administration's policies, positions and practices on veterans hiring practices.

The men and women who chose to serve our country in uniform deserve our help when the time comes for them to make the transition from the military to the civilian world. Ensuring a level playing field in the job market is small compensation for their years of service and sacrifice.

During my years with the Veterans of Foreign Wars, I worked closely with many groups on the issue of veterans hiring and have firsthand knowledge of the problems many veterans face in today's job market. Unfortunately, Bill Clinton's administration not only turns a blind eye to these problems, but gives the appearance of discriminating against veterans by opposing programs to give veterans an even break.

The most recent example of this administration-sanctioned discrimination revolves around the VETS-100 reporting law. VETS-100 is a form established in 1988 as a means by which the Department of Labor can track the hiring of disabled veterans and Vietnam War-era vets.

Simply stated, government contractors and other organizations receiving federal monies are required to report annually how many employees are disabled and Vietnam veterans. No quotas, no special breaks, just a simple, one-page form filled out once a year.

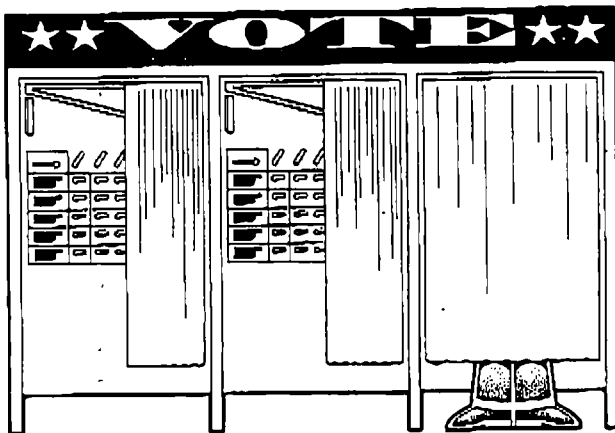
Simple as this requirement is, the Labor Department didn't enforce the provisions of the law and the result was remarkable. A growing number of companies and universities reported astonishingly low rates of veteran employment. San Diego State University, for example, reported a .05 percent veteran employment rate. Incredibly, many of these same companies and universities supported the Employment Nondiscrimination Act of 1996 as employers with non-discrimination policies that covered, among other things, sexual orientation.

Rep. Gerald Solomon of New York responded to the problem by introducing an amendment to the Defense Appropriations Act that would prohibit the Department of Defense from initiating or renewing contracts with DoD contractors, or other entities, including colleges and universities, that refuse to report on their hiring of disabled and Vietnam-era veterans. It was designed to put teeth into a good law that had been badly neglected.

But when officials in Clinton's Pentagon read the Solomon Amendment, they op-

posed it, writing in a memo that it "imposes a draconian punishment on DoD contractors." They ultimately recommended that "the provision be excluded" from the appropriations bill.

Veterans of Foreign Wars reacted quickly by offering full support for the Solomon Amendment and denouncing the Clinton administration's position. The VFW called the amendment a "tremendous assistance to the Department of Labor which has the lead but not sole responsibility for enforcement of Federal Contract Compliance," while "strongly disagree[ing]" with the administration's assessment of the measure as draconian. Many other veterans groups took similar positions as well.



To guard against a Clinton veto of the spending bill, the amendment was negotiated with the administration. While the final draft of the Defense Appropriations bill included a somewhat less stringent standard for reporting veteran hiring practices, it did result in improvements for the enforcement of the VETS-100 reporting requirements.

This anti-veteran bias also reflects directly on Bill Clinton. During his 1992 campaign for president, he promised an administration that looked like America. Yet only 18 of the first 550 jobs at executive agencies went to veterans, including the departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs. To this day, Clinton's own Office of Personnel Management reports that a mere four percent of the men working in the White House are veterans, and there are no women vets on the White House payroll. To put this in perspective, veterans comprise 37 percent of the civilian workforce over the age of 35.

See Bridge, Pg. 17

### Clinton Has Kept His Promises

By Jack Carney

On 6 March, 1995, President Clinton stated in an address to the Veterans of Foreign Wars: "To honor our veterans...gratitude and ceremonies are not enough. We must protect the benefits you have earned, address fully the dangers imposed by modern warfare, and preserve what you have fought for: the American dream at home and our leadership around the world."

As his record clearly and convincingly shows, President Clinton has lived up to that creed and he has kept his promises to veterans.

Employment is a proud part of President Clinton's record of honoring America's veterans. And the bottom line demonstrates

Last July, Labor Secretary Robert Reich announced that "America's Job Bank," an on-line, electronically accessible labor exchange, will allow federal contractors to list jobs. This will provide local veterans employment representatives with more information about available job listings to which qualified veterans could be referred. The Labor Department has also issued new regulations expanding the types of jobs that are subject to the Department's Job Service agencies has more than doubled since 1992. And last year, more than 351,000 veterans were referred to job openings listed by federal contractors through the Job Service agencies. Because of President Clinton's commitment to veterans and what they fought for, he has worked hard to enforce federal laws which prohibit discrimination against them.

President Clinton has demonstrated his commitment to veterans by bringing them into his Administration. Despite federal downsizing under this Administration, veterans have increased as a percentage of full-time permanent new federal hires (from 17 percent in 1990 to 31 percent in 1995). And 20 percent of the President's male appointees are veterans. This commitment has resulted in veterans comprising 27.6 percent of the federal workforce, as compared to 13.1 percent of the civilian workforce.

And veterans, like all Americans, have benefited from President Clinton's actions to strengthen the economy. Our nation's economy now has the lowest unemployment in 7.5 years; 10.5 million new jobs have been created since President Clinton took office.

President Clinton's record of working for veterans goes beyond increasing their employment opportunities. President Clinton has recognized the critical importance of strengthening the VA health care system for the 21st century. That is why the VA under President Clinton has dramatically restructured its health-care system, making it less bureaucratic and focusing more on veterans' needs.

President Clinton proposed legislation to simplify the VA's arcane eligibility rules. The "Veterans Health Care Eligibility Reform Act of 1996," which he proudly signed 9 Oct., will improve access and care for veterans.

The president fought for annual budget increases for VA health care and other programs. He also fought congressional proposals to reduce benefits, including a proposal—passed by the Senate with then-Sen. Dole's support—to take compensation away from certain incompetent veterans. President Clinton submitted legislation that would expand health care options for older veterans by authorizing a pilot project for Medicare to reimburse VA for the care of Medicare-eligible veterans.

See Promises, Pg. 17

Jack Carney is a past national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Paul Spera is the immediate past national commander-in-chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Commentary is a forum for views and opinion within the veterans community. Opinions expressed on the Commentary page represent those of the authors and are not necessarily endorsed by The Stars and Stripes.

4 - 10 NOVEMBER 1996

THESE AND STRIPES

17

## Remains Of Nine U.S. MIAs Returned

(Center)—Remains of nine U.S. pilots and crewmen killed in the Vietnam War are being returned to families for burial in the United States, the Defense Department said 30 Oct.

It said recovery of the remains reduces the number of Americans still listed as missing or unaccounted for in Southeast Asia in that war to 2,136.

It said the nine include Air Force Capt. Howard Purcell, 1st Lt. Neil

McKinney and Staff Sgt. Raphael Cruz, whose B-26B disappeared in Vietnam 6 Sept., 1963, and Navy Cmdr. George Wilkins, whose A-4C attack plane crashed in North Vietnam 11 July, 1966.

It said others were Navy Lt. Cmdr. Gerald Roberts, who did not return from a bomb run over North Vietnam 2 Dec., 1965, and Navy Cmdr. Harry Thomas, whose A-4C ran into

heavy enemy fire 13 Aug., 1965.

The Pentagon said three others were killed in Laos: Air Force Lt. James Widdis and Air Force Maj. Robert Davis, whose A-26 attack plane was apparently shot down 23 March, 1969, and Air Force Maj. Robert Zukowski, whose F-105D fighter struck one target but rolled and crashed as it headed for a second target on 11 Feb., 1969.

## Navy

From 1

leukemia, the study said.

Participants in Operation Crossroads boarded vessels that were covered with nuclear fallout, and tried to decontaminate the vessels by washing them down.

The study's director, Christopher Johnson, said its findings were

in line with previous examinations of British and U.S. servicemen involved in nuclear tests.

Reasons for the higher death rate were unclear, the study said, but could be caused by an unknown factor related to the nuclear tests other than radiation.

Also, it said sailors who became ill may have sought to be included

in the medical follow-up group, raising the mortality rate. But it said that would have a minor effect since nearly all participants have been studied.

The study, funded by the VA and the Defense Special Weapons Agency, was the first extensive review of death rates among this See Navy, Pg. 18

## Bridge

From 7

Making matters worse is the Clinton administration's severe downgrading of the military. Defense Department data show the number of active duty personnel has dropped from 1,807,177 in 1992 to 1,485,540 in 1996. With active duty payrolls shrinking by more than 300,000 since Bill Clinton's election, the administration should be doing more to help veterans find jobs, not making it more difficult.

I'm hesitant to attribute this bias against veterans to anything in particular, but it's consistent with a pattern of disrespect for the military during Bill Clinton's tenure. For ex-

ample, Clinton used the 1993 Memorial Day services at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as an occasion to celebrate his "vindication" for opposing the war in Vietnam, rather than recognizing the sacrifice of those who fought and died in battle.

His insensitivity was reported by Caroline Smith, the mother of an Army Ranger killed in Somalia in 1993. She said after a meeting with Clinton about the action that "the president never acknowledged any responsibility whatsoever" for the death of her son and 17 other soldiers killed in a raid to capture Somali warlord Gen. Aideed, with whom Clinton was negotiating at the time. Equally telling was the

comment from a Clinton White House staff member to a decorated Army general that "We don't talk to people in the military around here," while using honor guards from the Tomb of the Unknowns as messenger boys and commissioned officers as cocktail waiters for White House functions.

Veterans understand the meaning of duty and sacrifice. They expect no special favors, but they also expect no barriers to their civilian job prospects. Job discrimination in any context is reprehensible, but it's a national tragedy when the president deliberately places employment hurdles in the path of those who served with honor.

## Promises

From 7

The Clinton administration has also worked for veterans by significantly reducing the backlog of veterans' benefits claims, expanding services for women and minority veterans, initiating new treatment programs for veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and by increasing assistance to homeless veterans.

President Clinton fought for landmark legislation to compensate victims of the Persian Gulf War with undiagnosed illnesses. He has made clear that he will leave no stone unturned in trying to determine the causes of the illnesses experienced by Persian Gulf veterans and in providing medical care to them.

This past May, in response to a National Academy of Sciences report on possible links between ex-

posure to Agent Orange and prostate cancer and other conditions, President Clinton expanded benefits to veterans exposed to Agent Orange. He also directed the VA to develop legislation to assist the children of these veterans who suffer from spina bifida.

As America completes the most successful restructuring of U.S. military forces ever, America's defense readiness is higher than ever and our forces' capabilities proven—restoring democracy to Haiti, saving lives in Rwanda and bringing stability to Bosnia. President Clinton is determined to keep America's military the best-trained, best-equipped, best-prepared military in the world. That is why he raised the level originally planned for U.S. military spending three times in the last three years for a total of almost \$50 billion.

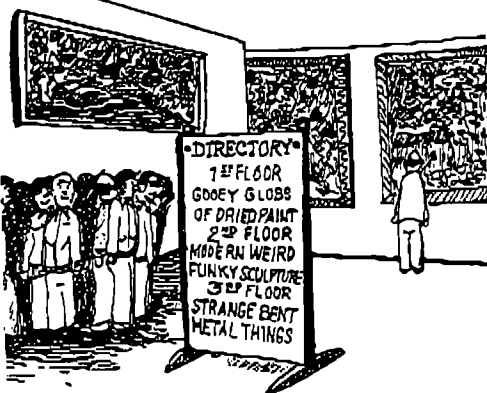
Because he knows that the core of our military strength is the men

and women who serve, the president has made quality-of-life a top priority of his administration—by providing higher pay, better housing, community support, child care and greater access to quality health care for servicemembers and their families.

President Clinton has placed high priority on achieving the fullest possible accounting for Americans who remain unaccounted for as a result of the Vietnam War. Deputy VA Secretary Hershel Gober has made significant progress on this issue through four high-level delegations to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

As *The Stars and Stripes* wrote in its two-year assessment of the president in February 1995, "We believe he has done an outstanding job and deserves credit in an area where credit is due." President Clinton will continue to fight to protect and honor America's veterans.

## THE VA WAY BY J. AXTELL



"I love these domiciliary museum trips. They're so informative."

## Don't Forget — Hire A Vet

### Vote

From 3

In addition, Dole wouldn't be as friendly as Clinton toward Vietnam, his backers say.

"Dole strongly opposed lifting

the economic embargo and diplomatic relations with Vietnam," Miller said.

Better accounting of Asian MIAs would be another task to undertake in a Dole presidency, according to Miller.

### Brother

From 15

College, which he noted ironically in light of his own politics, "is super-liberal."

An important lesson he learned in college, he said, was, "You don't need a revolution to change the world. You can do it through evolution, just get involved."

### Activist Mother

This philosophy was reiterated when he went back to Hickory and enrolled in a Chamber of Commerce "businessmen in politics" course emphasizing involvement.

After taking over the reins of an old family business that was dying, he followed his mother's political lead.

Dorothy Collins Ballenger was a Republican in a Democratic county. She was chairman of Wilkie for President in 1940 and had rocks and tomatoes thrown at her. Then she was precinct chairman of Goldwater for President in 1964.

She lived to see her son become a Catawba County commissioner, a state legislator and a state senator. "She helped me wherever she

could," Ballenger said. "Then she died before I made it into the House."

### Sixth Term

Ballenger's wife of 44 years, Donna Davis Ballenger, travels with him to Washington on Mondays and they return to North Carolina on Fridays. "I wouldn't stay up here if she wasn't with me," he said.

He said he probably has one of the strongest Republican districts, the 10th, which wanders across the western Piedmont Plateau and Appalachian and Blue Ridge mountains because of Democratic gerrymandering.

Running for his sixth full term (he completed James T. Broyhill's term in 1986 when Broyhill was appointed to the Senate), Ballenger said he has told his wife: "Whenever you've had enough, we'll quit."

Using speaker's fees earned by the congressmen, the Ballengers created the Ballenger Foundation to support hospitals and orphanages in places such as Central and South American countries such as Peru, Bolivia and Honduras.

# CLINTON/GORE '96

## COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

*OFFICE OF T. SCOTT NADLER*

PHONE 202-496-5043

FAX 202-496-2776

### FAX COVER SHEET

TO:

MOLLY BROSTROM

FAX #:

# OF PAGES:

4

FROM:

DATE:

TIME:

MESSAGE:

IF YOU HAVE TROUBLE WITH THIS TRANSMISSION,

PLEASE CALL SCOTT NADLER AT (202) 496-5043

THIS MESSAGE IS INTENDED ONLY FOR THE USE OF THE INDIVIDUAL OR ENTITY TO WHICH IT IS ADDRESSED. THIS MESSAGE MAY CONTAIN INFORMATION THAT IS PRIVILEGED, CONFIDENTIAL AND EXEMPT FROM DISCLOSURE UNDER APPLICABLE LAW. IF THE READER OF THIS MESSAGE IS NOT THE INTENDED RECIPIENT, OR THE EMPLOYEE OR AGENT RESPONSIBLE FOR DELIVERING THE MESSAGE TO THE INTENDED RECIPIENT, YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED THAT ANY DISSEMINATION, DISTRIBUTION, OR COPYING OF THIS COMMUNICATION IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED. IF YOU HAVE RECEIVED THIS COMMUNICATION IN ERROR, PLEASE NOTIFY US IMMEDIATELY BY TELEPHONE AND RETURN THE ORIGINAL MESSAGE TO US AT THE ABOVE ADDRESS VIA THE U.S. POSTAL SERVICE. THANK YOU.

PAID FOR BY THE CLINTON/GORE '96 GENERAL COMMITTEE, INC. CONTRIBUTIONS TO CLINTON/GORE '96 ARE NOT TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

Tired  
RESPONSE?

Explain background

### President Clinton: Working for America's Veterans

On March 6, 1995, President Clinton stated, "To honor our veterans...gratitude and ceremonies are not enough. We must protect the benefits they have earned, address fully the dangers imposed by modern warfare, and preserve what they have fought for: the American dream at home and our leadership around the world." As his record clearly and convincingly shows, President Clinton has lived up to that creed and he has kept his promises to veterans.

### Veterans Employment

Employment is a proud part of President Clinton's record of honoring America's veterans. And the bottom line demonstrates it -- when President Clinton took office, the veterans' unemployment rate was 7.2 percent; today, veterans' unemployment is only 3.8 percent.

Under the Clinton Administration, the Department of Labor's Job Service programs have helped move more than two million veterans into jobs. The Departments of Labor and Defense have provided transition assistance to more than 724,000 personnel at more than 200 military bases nationwide -- to help prepare our veterans for entry into the civilian workforce. The Departments of Labor and Veterans Affairs (VA) have improved vocational rehabilitation programs, helping to reduce unemployment among service-connected disabled veterans by almost 12 percent since September 1993.

Long prior to Rep! Solomon's introduction of legislation to bar employers not filing a VETS-100 report from future grants and contracts, the Labor Department's was working to improve this program's bottom line -- not employer<sup>just</sup> filing reports, but veterans getting jobs.

President Clinton has worked hard to give veterans greater opportunity to find jobs so they can provide for themselves and their families. Last July, Secretary Reich announced that "America's Job Bank," an on-line, electronically accessible labor exchange, will allow federal contractors to list jobs in the "Job Bank." This will provide local veterans' employment representatives with more information about available job listings to which qualified veterans could be referred. The Labor Department has also issued new regulations expanding the types of jobs that are subject to the listing requirements. Thanks to these efforts, the number of federal contractors listing jobs with the Department's Job Service agencies has more than doubled since 1992. And last year, more than 351,000 veterans were referred to job openings listed by federal contractors through the Job Service agencies. Because of President Clinton's commitment to veterans and what they fought for, he has worked hard to enforce federal laws which prohibit discrimination against them.

President Clinton has demonstrated his commitment to veterans by bringing them into his Administration. Despite federal downsizing under this Administration, veterans have increased as a percentage of full-time permanent new federal hires (from 17 percent in 1990 to 31 percent in 1995). And 20 percent of the President's male political appointees are veterans. This commitment has resulted in veterans comprising 27.6 percent of the federal workforce, as compared to 13.1 percent of the civilian workforce.

And veterans, like all Americans, have benefited from President Clinton's actions to strengthen the economy. Our nation's economy now has the lowest unemployment in 7.5 years; 10.5 million new jobs have been created since President Clinton took office.

### Health Care, Benefits, and Strong Defense Readiness

*Transition: Record extended beyond emphasis*  
President Clinton has recognized the critical importance of strengthening the VA health care system for the 21st century. That is why the VA under President Clinton has dramatically restructured its health-care system, making it less bureaucratic and focusing more on veterans' needs. President Clinton proposed legislation to simplify VA's arcane eligibility rules. The "Veterans Health Care Eligibility Reform Act of 1996" which he proudly signed on October 9 will ~~increase~~ *improve* access and care for veterans.

The President fought for annual budget increases for VA health care and other programs. He also fought Congressional proposals to reduce benefits ~~including~~ a proposal passed by the Senate with Senator Dole's support -- to take compensation away from certain incompetent veterans. President Clinton submitted legislation that would expand health care options for older veterans by authorizing a pilot project for Medicare to reimburse VA for the care of Medicare-eligible veterans.

The Clinton Administration has also worked for veterans by significantly reducing the backlog of veterans' benefits claims, expanding services for women and minority veterans, initiating new treatment programs for veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, and by increasing assistance to homeless veterans.

*strongly supported*  
President Clinton fought for landmark legislation to compensate veterans of the Persian Gulf War with undiagnosed illnesses. ~~He remains committed to finding a full answer and response for Persian Gulf veterans suffering from unexplained illnesses.~~

*passed*  
This past May, in response to a National Academy of Sciences report on possible links between exposure to Agent Orange, prostate cancer, and other conditions, President Clinton expanded benefits to veterans exposed to Agent Orange. He also directed VA to develop legislation to assist the children of these veterans who suffer from spina bifida. *stop*

As America completes the most successful restructuring of U.S. military forces ever, America's defense readiness is higher than ever and our forces' capabilities proven -- restoring democracy to Haiti, saving lives in Rwanda, and bringing stability to Bosnia. President Clinton is determined to keep America's military the best-trained, best-equipped, best-prepared military in

*He has made clear that he will leave no stone unturned in trying to determine the causes of the illnesses exp'd by some P.G. veterans & provide medical care to them*

the world. That is why he raised the level originally planned for U.S. military spending three times in the last three years for a total of almost \$50 billion. Because he knows that the core of our military strength is the men and women who serve, the President has made quality-of-life a top priority of his Administration -- by providing higher pay, better housing, community support, child care, and greater access to quality health care for service members and their families.

President Clinton has placed high priority on achieving the fullest possible accounting for Americans who remain unaccounted for as a result of the Vietnam War. Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs Hershel Gober has made significant progress on this issue through four high-level delegations to Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

As the Stars and Stripes wrote in its two year assessment of the President in February 1995, "We believe he has done an outstanding job and deserves credit in an area where credit is due." President Clinton will continue to fight to protect and honor America's veterans.



Veterans' Employment and Training Service  
U.S. Department of Labor

**F A X**

**Transmittal Cover Sheet**

SEND TO: Molly Brosteum

FAX #: 456-2028

LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_

FROM: DOL/VETS -

LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of pages (including cover sheet) 4

SUBJECT: Stars & Stripes Response

Please call if you do not receive all pages or need further information.

Telephone: (202)219-9116

FAX: (202)219-4773

**ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS:**

= Paid Dole Campaign Staff Member



Draft # 4; 10/23/96

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF LABOR FOR VETERANS'  
EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PRESTON M. TAYLOR JR.'S  
RESPONSE TO VFW PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER SPERA'S  
CRITIQUE OF THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION'S RECORD ON  
VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT**

In June 1994, in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Veterans preference Act, President Clinton affirmed his personal commitment and this country's debt to veterans when he said, "Our nation owes a great deal to the men and women who have worn our country's uniform. The prosperity and freedom we enjoy are the priceless gifts of their service and commitment." As his appointee to lead the Department of Labor's efforts in behalf of veterans, I am proud of the record we have achieved to date, and of the plans we have for the future. The bottom line is, when this Administration took office, veterans' unemployment was at 7.2 percent. Today, veterans' unemployment is only 3.8 percent, which I believe demonstrates that we have taken our commitment seriously, and that the bridges we have built have provided advantageous avenues for veterans.

During this Administration, our state Job Service agency grantees have helped more than two million veterans obtain jobs. In cooperation with the Department of Defense and military post commanders at more than 200 bases nationwide we have provided transition assistance to more than 724,000 personnel to prepare them to enter the civilian labor force. We have improved our linkages with the vocational rehabilitation program of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and according to the most recent biennial study from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate of service-connected disabled veterans is about 12 percent lower than it was in September 1993. Although the federal government has been downsized significantly during this Administration's tenure, veterans have comprised a much higher percentage of new federal hires, about 32 percent, than they comprise in the total labor force, about 11 percent. In the last two years under former President Bush, veterans comprised 17 to 23 percent of the new federal hires.

Despite those facts about the economic improvements for veterans during this Administration, and the fact that I and my senior staff meet at least once each month with representatives of the major veterans service organizations to air concerns and

-2-

share facts, there has been criticism of this Administration. Most recently attention has been focused on the Federal Contractor Program (FCP) administered by my agency. The FCP statute requires employers that are federal contractors to file an annual report called the VETS 100. We compile contract award information from the best available source, the "Commerce Business Daily", and supply it to each of the State Job Service agencies. We also keep a database that includes all of the subject employers, and annually survey each employer to obtain the required VETS 100 report. This is not a small undertaking--each year we collect more than 150,000 VETS 100 reports! This information management process is costly, but it is designed to ensure that every employer identified as a federal contractor subject to the law complies with the reporting requirement. Of course, the system can be improved. We recently began the process of building a more efficient automated system to do the tasks mentioned above and also to provide more direct, electronic linkages of the contractor information database to local veterans' employment representatives.

Long prior to the Honorable Mr. Solomon's introduction of legislation to bar from future grants and contracts any employer that has not filed a VETS 100 report, we began studying ways to improve the bottom line of this program. The bottom line, after all, is not whether an employer has filed a report, but jobs for target group veterans. We have already taken some significant actions. Last July, Secretary of Labor Robert Reich announced that "America's Job Bank", this Department's on-line, electronically accessible labor exchange, will enable federal contractors to satisfy their job listing requirements by simply listing them there. That action also will facilitate the communication of job listings to local Job Service offices and to their local veterans' employment representatives for the referral of qualified veterans. We also issued new regulations expanding the types of jobs that are subject to the listing requirements.

Since 1992 the number of federal contractors listing jobs with the State Job Service agencies for their referral of veterans has more than doubled. Last year the Job Service agencies referred more than 351,000 veterans to job openings listed by the federal contractors. We are working hard at reducing the bureaucratic aspects of this federal program so that we and subject employers can focus better on what is truly important: good jobs for veterans.

We will continue to work closely with the veterans' service organizations, with

But the bottom line is not whether a report is filed but whether vets have jobs. And no one has

-3-

employers, with unions, with the States, with the Congress, and everyone else whose interest is helping to fulfill the debt this nation perpetually owes to its veterans. I think the factual record of the results of our efforts in behalf of veterans speaks most eloquently of this Administration's commitment to veterans.

- promise to cut \$60B from def spending in 94-97 budgets → did so  
- also gave back to defense (\$50B) → 94-2001  
three times

As America completes the most successful restructuring of U.S. military forces ever, our defense readiness is historically high and our forces' capabilities proven -- whether restoring democracy to Haiti, deterring aggression in the Persian Gulf, saving lives in Rwanda or bringing stability to Bosnia. And President Clinton is determined to keep America's military the best-trained, best-equipped, best-prepared military in the world. That is why he raised the level originally planned for U.S. military spending three times in the last three years for a total of almost \$50 billion. And why, knowing that the core of our military strength is the men and women who serve, he made quality-of-life a top priority for his Administration -- including higher pay, better housing, community support, child care and access to quality health care for servicemembers and their families.

The President also recognizes another simple truth: the troops of tomorrow will only be as strong as our commitment to our veterans today. When our men and women leave the service, we must not let them down. From education to employment, from buying a home to getting quality medical care, our veterans deserve our nation's unwavering support. President Clinton believes America owes all our military men and women -- active duty, retired, veteran, Reserve, National Guard -- a tremendous debt, and therefore we must protect the benefits they have earned just as we preserve the ideals they work so hard to defend.

Molly,  
article looked good.  
I gave you two paragraphs to consider:  
(1) 1st one talks of actual military's strength ~~on~~ <sup>our commitment to</sup> quality of life

(2) 2nd paragraph reiterates why  
imp to remember ~~VETS~~ VETS  
disregard any of it if you want to;  
however, if not too long, suggest add  
just before end. Again, take your  
choice. All of it - you  
decide. X69198

P.S. → send note  
to Jim Seaton  
re: VETS - 100

10-21-96 12:30PM

PHONE NO. : 202 8295657

4800-

202 8295657: # 1 / 2

**PAUL SPERA/VETERAN EMPLOYMENT**

Every time Bill Clinton talks about his "Bridge to the 21st Century," I can't help but think of the Bridge on the River Kwai. He wants everyone to help him build this bridge, but he doesn't want veterans to cross it with him. This is best illustrated by the Clinton administration's policies, positions and practices on veterans hiring practices.

The men and women who chose to serve our country in uniform deserve our help when the time comes for them to make the transition from the military to the civilian world. Ensuring a level playing field in the job market is small compensation for their years of service and sacrifice. During my years with the Veterans of Foreign Wars, I worked closely with many groups on the issue of veterans hiring and have first hand knowledge of the problems many veterans face in today's job market. Unfortunately, Bill Clinton's administration not only turns a blind eye to these problems, but gives the appearance of discriminating against veterans by opposing programs to give veterans an even break.

The most recent example of this administration-sanctioned discrimination revolves around the VETS-100 reporting law. VETS-100 is a form established in 1988 as a means by which the Department of Labor can track the hiring of disabled veterans and Vietnam War era vets. Simply stated, government contractors and other organizations receiving federal monies are required to report annually how many employees are disabled and Vietnam veterans. No quotas, no special breaks, just a simple, one-page form filled out once a year.

Simple as this requirement is, the Labor Department didn't enforce the provisions of the law and the result was remarkable. A growing number of companies and universities reported astonishingly low rates of veteran employment. San Diego State University, for example, reported a .05% veterans employment rate. Incredibly, many of these same companies and universities supported the Employment Nondiscrimination Act of 1996 as employers with non-discrimination policies that covered, among other things, sexual orientation.

Rep. Gerald Solomon of New York responded to the problem by introducing an amendment to the Defense Appropriations Act that would prohibit the Department of Defense from initiating or renewing contracts with DoD contractors, or other entities, including colleges and universities, that refuse to report on their hiring of disabled and Vietnam era veterans. It was designed to put teeth into a good law that had been badly neglected.

But when officials in Clinton's Pentagon read the Solomon Amendment, they opposed it, writing in a memo that it "imposes a draconian punishment on DoD contractors." They ultimately recommended that "the provision be excluded," from the appropriations bill.

Veterans of Foreign Wars reacted quickly by offering full support for the Solomon Amendment and denouncing the Clinton administration's position. The VFW called the amendment a "tremendous assistance to the Department of Labor which has the lead but not sole responsibility for enforcement of

-more-

**PAUL SPERA/VETERAN EMPLOYMENT****PAGE 2**

Federal Contract Compliance," while "strongly disagree(ing)" with the administration's assessment of the measure as draconian. Many other veterans groups took similar positions as well.

To guard against a Clinton veto of the spending bill, the amendment was negotiated with the administration. While the final draft of the Defense Appropriations Bill included a somewhat less stringent standard for reporting veteran hiring practices, it did result in improvements for the enforcement of the VETS-100 reporting requirements.

This anti-veteran bias also reflects directly on Bill Clinton. During his 1992 campaign for president, he promised an administration that looked like America. Yet only 18 of the first 550 jobs at executive agencies went to veterans, including the departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs. To this day, Clinton's own Office of Personnel Management reports that a mere four percent of the men working in the White House are veterans, and there are no women vets on the White House payroll. To put this in perspective, veterans comprise 37% of the civilian workforce over the age of 35.

Making matters worse is the Clinton administration's severe downsizing of the military. Defense Department data show the number of active duty personnel has dropped from 1,807,177 in 1992, to 1,485,540 in 1996. With active duty payrolls shrinking by more than 300,000 since Bill Clinton's election, the administration should be doing more to help veterans find jobs, not making it more difficult.

I'm hesitant to attribute this bias against veterans to anything in particular, but it's consistent with a pattern of disrespect for the military during Bill Clinton's tenure. For example, Clinton used the 1993 Memorial Day services at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as an occasion to celebrate his "vindication," for opposing the war in Vietnam, rather than recognizing the sacrifice of those who fought and died in battle.

His insensitivity was reported by Caroline Smith, the mother of an Army Ranger killed in Somalia in 1993. She said after a meeting with Clinton about the action that "the president never acknowledged any responsibility whatsoever," for the death of her son and 17 other soldiers killed in a raid to capture Somali warlord General Aideed, with whom Clinton was negotiating at the time. Equally telling was the comment from a Clinton White House staff member to a decorated Army General that, "We don't talk to people in the military around here," while using honor guards from the Tomb of the Unknowns as messenger boys and commissioned officers as cocktail waiters for White House functions.

Veterans understand the meaning of duty and sacrifice. They expect no special favors, but they also expect no barriers to their civilian job prospects. Job discrimination in any context is reprehensible, but it's a national tragedy when the president deliberately places employment hurdles in the path of those who served with honor.

Paul Spera is the Immediate Past National Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. A Boston native, he now lives in Attleboro, Mass.