>> Matan Koch: Welcome to the last in our Road to NDEAM series, which is Employing Veterans with Disabilities. I'm Matan Koch, Senior Policy Advisor at RespectAbility, and I will be your host today, but you won't be hearing so much from me, because you'll be hearing much more from our wonderful panelists. But a few things of housekeeping first. First of all, you will note that we have live captioning and we have an ASL interpreter. But if you would prefer to view the live captioning in a separate window, my friend and colleague Eric Ascher has just put that information into the chat, and you can bring up the transcript on a separate video. The interpreter will be spotlighted at the times when the presentation is up, but if you would like, you can also right click on her picture and spotlight her for yourself if you -- if that would make it easier for you. We really do encourage your active participation through questions. The way to do that is to put your questions in the Q&A box at the bottom of your screen. We may answer them as we go, we may answer them during the designated Q&A period, but we definitely want to answer them. Eric can you put up the presentation on the bios -- on the participants slide, please? So it is my great pleasure to introduce today's speakers we have Billy W. Wright, who is the National Employment Coordinator for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. We have Charles W. McCaffrey, who is the Director of the Veterans Career Program at the Paralyzed Veterans of America. And we have Mike Thompson, who is Director/Investigator for the State of Indiana at the Veterans Employment and Training Service of the U.S. Department of Labor. Thank you all for joining us gentlemen, and since each of you are in fact veterans, thank you as well for your service. And now we'll jump into the presentation. So these are people with disabilities. And why do we show you this? We show you this because people with disabilities are in all walks of life and doing all kinds of things. We have a disabled veteran who became a famous Senator -- you see John McCain there in the corner. We have the President of the United States, Joe Biden, up there in a picture, and lots of other faces you probably recognize that just show you really the breadth of the community that we're talking about. Next slide please. Disabilities can be temporary, they can be permanent. They can be apparent, they can be non-apparent -- I mean, sometimes you can perceive it yourself, sometimes you don't know. And of course, they can be from birth or acquired later. Next slide please. So there are 61 million people in the United States who have a disability. That's one in four adults. And the reason that's important to know is that this is not a small group. If you are in our audience today and you are a person with a disability or you have a loved one with a disability, you're not alone, you're not unusual, you are part of what we like to call the largest minority. And we're here to talk about your employment. And why are we doing it? We're doing it because we know that organizations are at their best when they welcome, respect, and include people of all backgrounds, which includes people with disabilities. And now I'm going to talk a little bit about how to do that, I'm going to turn it over to Mike to tell us about our target population.

>> Mike Thompson: Hello everybody, Mike Thompson. So a lot of times -- another category of disabilities is a disabled veteran. And sometimes conversations arise of, well, what is a disabled veteran, you know, what do we go to to define that? So most of the time the gold standard for at least federal agencies and other -- other organizations that may pull grants or dollars or service disabled veterans use the 38 U.S. C Chapters 4211. And as you can see a veteran who is entitled to compensation or who but the receipt of military retired pay would be entitled to compensation under laws administered by the secretary, or a person who is discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability. This population also includes veterans who retired from service normally, but qualify for compensation due to service connected disabilities. That has a lot of ties to the federal VA that does provide those compensations through service connected disabilities. Sometimes disabled veterans can have a disability that's unrelated to their service. They may have an additional disability that is recognized by Social Security, or it may be recognized through ADA. So there's a lot of different organizations, and a lot of -- going to the Federal and to the State that recognize. And at the times, and in certain categories and circumstances, each of these situations, disabled veterans tend to be of the working age at the time of their retirement or and they're just looking for a new career. So be very careful when you look at the label of disabled veteran, and where the official law or policy or guidance is coming from. Next slide. [crosstalk]

>> Charles W. McCaffrey: So you know, the overall series title for these webinars has been Road to NDEAM, so National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October. And so -- have a couple of slides here to talk a little bit about disability employment for the veteran community. So in total, about 1.6 million working age disabled veterans in the workforce. Numbers are a couple years old, 2021 there, but you know, every year more than a hundred thousand disabled veterans leave the military to transition, and oftentimes transitioning into new careers. Next slide please. So every month, the Bureau of Labor Statistics puts out a jobs report. There's a special section on veteran employment or unemployment. So some of the numbers that we're seeing through -- so the report came out at the beginning of September for August. In general, for veterans with no disability, unemployment rate of 2.5 percent, which is amazing, especially for those of us that were around in the early 2000s when we were looking at double digit unemployment numbers for the veteran community. However -- within the disability community, that percentage rate is doubled, so about five percent. Again, not a bad number, but some of the things that we need to look at dig a little bit deeper into that -- and you can go ahead to the next slide -- part of it has to do with how many of those working age veterans are actually participating in the workforce and in the labor force, and that means are either working or actively looking for employment. You see a fairly significant gap -- about 21 point gap between veterans with disabilities and veterans without service-connected disabilities that are participating in the workforce. And that can come from a number of reasons. Part of it may be they are still recovering, rehabilitating from the disability. I work very closely with veterans with spinal cord injury and dysfunction, and sometimes that can be a -- you know, over a long period of time. If you go to the next slide, we can see how that service-connected disability impacts employment so -- or unemployment. So as you increase in the service connected rating -- for those with a service-connected disability rating of 60 percent or lower, the unemployment rate is about 36.6 percent. For the overall group with a rating above 70 -- or 70 percent or above, you see it increases to 55.3 percent. And then I just wanted to throw in, you know, veterans with spinal cord injury and dysfunction, which typically is a hundred percent service connected disability, the unemployment rate really jumps up, you know, a little bit over 70 percent, and that's been fairly steady for quite some time. The other thing we want to talk about on this slide is, especially for those of us that are working in veteran employment arena, is the family unit. Oftentimes the military spouse is also a military caregiver, and oftentimes may also be a veteran themselves. And so when you look at the unemployment rate across a family unit, we talk about that participation rate for military spouses and veteran spouses it's -- 42 percent are no longer even looking for work. And the same with the military caregivers, you know, 63 percent of them have have cut down or stopped working at all. So again, as we talk about disabled veterans, you know, the aggregate number at five percent doesn't seem that bad, but when you start breaking it down based upon disability rating, it can be significant. And why it is significant for employers to be considering persons with disability and specifically disabled veterans. Next slide please. Yeah, and I think that's over to Billy.

>> Billy W. Wright: Okay, thanks. Specific challenges for disabled veterans. Again, as you read the bullets, the Center for a New American Society -- Security, Veterans Pathways to Employment -- Hurdles and Opportunities reported -- and it's a true statement -- disabled veterans choosing a new career path might not know exactly what accommodations they need, especially if their disability was recently acquired. So if you serve in a workforce where, you know, the majority of the service members don't have a disability, understanding the process of requesting an accommodation -- it can be challenging. As far as negative perceptions, most of these are myths, especially when it comes to accommodations. The 2020 survey -- report prepared by the Job Accommodations Network for the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy showed that the average cost of an accommodation was $500. And 56 percent of the workplace accommodations for employees cost absolutely nothing. So at this point I turn it over to Mike for the next slide please.

>> Mike Thompson: Thank you Billy. So I'm going to talk a minute about post-traumatic stress disorder. With that I'll also say be mindful of labels. Even though this is recognized by most organizations -- in the future slides we'll be talking about labels when you're hiring veterans, especially disabled veterans. But the myths about PTSD -- this will help not just veterans, but anybody that would have PTSD that's not a veteran, or even employers that are out in the field looking to understand more about PTSD. So the myth, the first one we look at, was most veterans have PTSD. You know, that's a stereotype, because when you start to look at the data coming from the VA, about 10 to 20 percent of veterans may have some form of PTSD -- just for the sake of language, I'm going to call it PTS. PTS can [only] result from military service. Well that's not necessarily true, because if you look at ambulance drivers or paramedics, there could be other forms of traumatic stress that they have encountered outside of being a veteran, right? Next myth: veterans are much more likely to have PTS than non-veterans. Well that goes back to exactly what I said - prevalence of PTS among veterans is not much higher than the rate among non-veteran population. There's a lot of different stressors out there in emergency situations that First Responders may have, right? Veterans and people with PTS are prone to violence. Well, veteran status does not predict violence, and associations between PTS and violence are most explained by, you know, a risk analysis. You know, what is the person's personality, you know, what did they go through? What treatments have they have? So there's a lot of what-ifs. Next myth: people with PTS cannot be reliable. They can't be efficient employees. Many folks have PTS -- many folks have PTS that you would never even think they have, because it's not something you see. You know, most think of disability as something that's physical or you can see it, where it's not, it's a mental. So you know, that's just another stereotype. Accommodating PTS is difficult and expensive. Well, it's usually easy and it's inexpensive. A lot of that has to do with communication, you know, between the employer and between the veteran or the family member of the veteran just to understand what's going on, if the veteran is willing to disclose to the employer, and then working, as Billy said, through an accommodation. There may be no cost at all. We also included a link at the bottom at the PTSD home for the VA gov, if anybody's interested looking for more information. Okay, so I'm going to be followed up. Next slide please with Billy.

>> Billy W. Wright: Okay, benefits of hiring veterans. You know, again, as you read through the bullets, leadership and teamwork: military service creates individuals who work to earn the respect of their peers and understand how to bring people together to pursue strategic common goals. Another benefit: problem solving and decision making. Service members and service women -- servicemen and servicewomen are required to react quickly and precisively -- adapting to new information and dynamic and high pressure situations. And definitely if you've ever been to combat -- that's definitely a high pressure situation, where it's life or death, if you've not had a chance to experience that and live through it, thank God for that. Honesty and attention to detail: many veterans have high level security clearances, and we all are trained to meet the highest standards when it comes to ethics, safety, and other organizational imperatives. Global perspectives: members of the military usually -- have years of on the ground experience working with international teams of diverse individuals, and it's a distinct advantage in our globalizing economy. And much of what I'm speaking to is from the Society of -- the SHRM, Human Resource Management, business case for hiring veterans, military veterans. So let's move on to the next slide please. Okay. General benefits of disability talent. You know, again, as you read through the bullets, we are in a time when there are more job openings in the -- U.S. than workers, and this is a perfect time to tap into a largely untapped talent pool. Many people with disabilities often possess a hidden talent of solving problems, and that ability to solve problems and meet challenges often come with the day-to-day life of living with a disability. And I'm actually a veteran -- even though I served in combat, I'm a person with a disability that's always -- that's also a veteran. My injury wasn't service connected. And definitely, like I said, I can speak to, you know, people with disabilities, you have to grow up fast. I mean, you know, being able to solve problems and meet challenges, and it is based on the day-to-day life that we live. I mean you start with limited accessibility to buildings, public transportation, and other facilities. We -- you know, back 20 years ago -- 20 years ago, I mean, it was even worse, but we still -- have those challenges every day. Inadequate educational structure, you know, that don't cater to the diverse needs and abilities. Poverty and low income, which affect our access to health care, housing, and social services. You know, health inequities -- we're at higher risk of developing physical and mental health conditions. And then we have the societal -- barriers and stigmas that limit our opportunities and participation. So you know, I think as Matan mentioned, you know, in his slide earlier -- I mean, if we increase the hiring of people with disabilities into the labor force, it could bring as much as 25 billion dollars through the economy. And -- you think about, you know, folks who work and spending paychecks bring money into the economy, and we are the largest diverse population -- people with disabilities. Okay -- let's move over to the next slide, there we go. Okay, you know, as you see -- the bullets there, the disability inclusion advantage. And as you read the bullets, studies completed by Accenture, Disability:IN, and the American Association of People with Disabilities revealed that companies that embrace best practices for employing and supporting more persons -- people with disabilities in their workforce have vastly outperformed their peers. So that's all I have, we can move over to the next slide.

>> Matan Koch: Alright, so now we're actually sort of switching from dimensionalizing the issue to talking about how to effectively include disabled veterans. And each of our panelists are going to speak to different parts of that, so thank you, you all, for the introductory information. And now we move on to what we really hope you're going to dig in, listen to, and learn from, which is how can we set this population up for success and gain some of those benefits that Billy was talking about in the last slide. So we're going to move to the next slide please, Eric. And remind me who's going to do this --

>> Mike Thompson: This is me, Matan, yep.

>> Matan Koch: Thanks Mike.

>> Mike Thompson: Thank you. So as I had said earlier in the slide addressing PTS, and a lot of folks classify that as PTSD, you've got to be very inclusive with your language in job descriptions. And this is really particularly for veterans and for employers, because you want to avoid -- just words of wisdom, you want to avoid any kind of negative words or -- that may have a negative connotation, because that really may drive off anybody that would apply for the job if they saw that in a job description. So a lot of times if you look at -- just common sense, if you don't know, then ask. So there's a lot of organizations and agencies that can help an employer or could help the veteran to understand how to write the resume or maybe how to have inclusive language to write into their job descriptions. Some examples: you know, the word "handicapped." That could be used as a negative word, you probably would want to soften that and have it in a positive light and use the word "accessible." Little things like that can make your company more attractive to disabled veterans or disabled individuals. And also, a veteran needs to understand that as they apply for a job and they're writing a resume, they want to use positive language as well, so -- including sometimes a disabled veteran or veterans or anybody with a disability on your hiring process is very important. For one, it gives you a subject matter expert that brings a lot of information and knowledge to the process. But it also gives somebody to connect with that person. So a veteran in -- a cliche, but a veteran has an easier time to talk to a veteran, so that may help you overall. You want to have a quick and simple and published accommodation process. If you don't know, then ask. If you want to have further questions talk to your HR department internally, because HR is very familiar with a lot of laws that have accommodations. You may want to also talk to some of your organizations and nonprofits and other Federal organizations as well, ADA, and also the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission that can provide guidance in law for accommodations. And then finally, after you've hired -- now you have this disabled veteran or you have this veteran or spouse -- well now a good idea for an organization, if they have it to capitalize, is have your own internal veteran agency or sometimes called an affinity group. That gives a veteran or disabled veteran a landing point and a culture that they can grow and flourish in. And sometimes even just sharing common language, which we'll talk here in a little bit. Next slide. So accessibility in job seeking. As I mentioned before, agencies and organizations -- there's a lot of acronyms there, but the Veterans Affairs Veteran Readiness & Employment Group, Chapter 31 that goes to the Veterans Benefit Administration, VBA. Also with the VHA -- Veterans Health Administration -- they have their VR&E program. These are federal programs that help disabled veterans and veterans with medical conditions find employment. Additionally they help try to understand military skills and translating that into language. You know, for example, I came up as a local veteran employment rep when I worked with the state helping veterans find employment. I would get veterans in the office and they would say well, I'm an 11 Bravo infantryman, and I used the saw -- and you know, a lot of acronyms, a lot of jargon, right? We and other organizations help them to take that language and take it -- well, you were a sergeant, but now you're a small team leader, and there's a direct correlation between the two. So you're taking language that an employer would understand, especially during a resume or interview process. A lot of these organizations, federal, state, nonprofits, help with advanced education and certifications. Dollars, money, you know -- and as I said before, if you don't know, you find somebody and you ask. Find out where their -- opportunities might be. And it's also working with the employers directly to improve the processes and programs for disabled veterans. Our office -- I'm sure the VA, you know, DOL Vets, VA, anybody -- PVA -- that's listed here on the panel, every day you got a veteran with a new problem, and you think you've got it all solved but you haven't. And you're like, oh, well, I need to ask somebody. And so you find a solution to help the veteran and help the employers. And then lastly on the slide, educating hiring managers about veterans and disability topics, including in the process. Sometimes employers don't know. They say "I'd like to hire this guy but I don't understand what PTS means. What do I do?" If you don't know, ask. Talk to a subject matter expert. They will point you in the right direction to be able to connect with all the different levels of services that help veterans and help employers and help disabled veterans. Next slide --

>> Matan Koch: Hey Mike, before we move off this slide, there seem to be some questions in the chat that you might be able to speak to -- sorry, in the Q&A box that you might be able to speak to you as a part of this slide. You, Charles, or you, Billy, may also have some answers. But it seems to fit real nicely with where we are. So the question was asked that if you want to do this -- if you want to make sure to hire disabled vets, then how do you connect with disabled vets and how do you positively promote your desire to hire disabled vets by making folks see the listings and feel seen, but not also make them feel like you are, you know, singling them out or tokenizing.

>> Mike Thompson: Those are great questions. I will definitely take the first one and, Billy, Charles, if you want to jump in, you know, by all means. I would say, if you're looking for resources and you're looking for information, you want to as I -- in my head you always want to look at the top and maybe work your way down. So there's Federal programs that provide dollars and leadership and guidance and law. So for instance Department of Labor VETS, we're a small niche that provides employment opportunities to help disabled veterans, but how do we do that? Well we have -- a grant called the Jobs for Veteran State Grant, that is administered down to all 50 states, and they apply for that grant, and it's a personnel staffing and training grant. And then they hire veteran representatives inside what we call an American Job Center, and that is where you would go for unemployment help or help with services for employment. A veteran with a disability can go into the AJCs -- in Indiana they're called WorkOne -- and find a vet rep. Similarly I don't want to speak for the VA, but as I mentioned before, VBA, VHA, their counselors within the chapter 31 program or their vocational rehabilitation program, for VHA they have counselors that can connect veterans and opportunities. And I would say even state job boards that are open throughout the states where you can find veterans that need to apply for jobs, or an employer that wants to post a job. If you go underneath that, you've got hundreds and thousands of non-profits and organizations that work hard every single day to connect veterans to employers and employers to veterans for opportunities. Fellows, did I miss anything?

>> Matan Koch: Well I want to ask a follow-up, Mike, jus to clarify something you said. Those are great list of resources, but if you're an employer who wants to get your jobs out there, where should -- an employer really specifically be targeting?

>> Mike Thompson: I would -- I'm going to cherry pick the organization that I work with. I would say you want to go to dol.gov and just do a quick search for hiring veterans. It'll take you directly to our network of all 50 states and all the American Job Centers, and connect you with their teams. That's on my end. Anybody want to speak for the VA or your organization other than me?

>> Billy W. Wright: Okay, yeah I'm going to come off mute. Yeah, thanks a lot, Michael. And yeah, we work very closely with DOL. You know we -- apprenticeships, we've done a lot of work, like I said. You know, we have a joint work group that we meet monthly to work with with DOL vets, and then we also work with some of our -- we have 80 employment coordinators throughout the country. There's one in each attached -- at least one or two attached to each regional office nationwide. And definitely -- my contact information, we'll make sure we get that out there. But you know, definitely -- that's their job is to work with employers, connect with employers that are looking to create opportunities for the veterans that we serve, along closely with that Voc Rehab counselor. So definitely -- you know, they just take you through the whole process of finding qualified veterans that may match the skills that you're looking for. They help with accommodations. We have -- if you're a federal agency we have a non-paid work experience where you can actually bring a veteran on -- and it's a win-win for both sides, you know? You can bring that veteran in for six months. If they fit in and you want to create an opportunity for them, you have an opportunity to use a special hiring authority to bring that veteran on permanently. So -- definitely VRE would be a great contact for employers out there that are looking to hire veterans with service-connected disabilities.

>> Matan Koch: Charles, you wanna --

>> Charles W. McCaffrey: Yeah, of course I'll do a plug for the Veterans Service Organizations. You know, my organization has counselors around the country who work, both with the individuals and with companies to make sure that it's a good match. So we cover all 50 states. I want to say we have about a caseload of about 500 individuals throughout the year that we're working with, so we're always welcome for employers to reach out to us. You know, we do a little bit of screening the -- some of the things that Mike talked about, you know, do you have veterans in your recruiting and HR arena? Do you use inclusive language? Do you have a published accommodations process? Do you have employee resource groups or affinity groups? You know, these things show us that you're -- it's not just "I want to hire veterans" but you're there to hire, support, and retain them. There are other VSOs, so Disabled American Veterans -- DAV -- Wounded Warrior Project. You know, there are a number of them around the country. I would highly recommend reaching out to them as well.

>> Matan Koch: Thank you so much, and if we can move on now to our next slide? And Michael, were you going to talk to this or was it going to be Charles?

>> Mike Thompson: Yeah, I'll take this one, Matan. So to continue on, if you don't know, ask. There are -- there is awareness training for supervisors that are out there. There has been a large push in the last few years for universities and agencies to come together to assist federal organization, state organization, and nonprofits to help train the supervisors, or help train employers. So in recent studies that -- what happens is that -- that training trickles and helps out everybody else to understand, well, what does that mean? You know, "should I hire that veteran -- a disabled veteran?" Or "if I want to hire them, how do I help them and how do I help myself to understand what's going on, you know, with certain things?" So it understands the veteran experience, and what issues, if there's any, into the reintegration from being a service member into being a veteran, because there is a difference. And also it helps reject any of those negative stereotypes or any of the language or the unknowns. It's just common, I think, in human error or human experience that we tend to negative label things we don't understand. You know, that's my opinion. But this helps. This helps avoid that and put it into a positive light, and look at the benefits and opportunities that a disabled veteran would bring. And as we've talked earlier, setting up the accommodations. It could be as easy as moving a machine halfway to the left because the veteran has a problem with turning their neck, you know, just little things like that. That employer says, "oh, well that's easy, that didn't cost me any money." Yeah, some of that's just in communication. So listed below is some of the organizations that we put our collective minds together. We did list Cornell and some of the leader training that they have provided some of the federal agencies. The National Organization on Disability Disability in the Workplace toolkit, and of course, good old RespectAbility and the Veteran resources that are listed here. With that, anybody else want to have any inputs for this?

>> Billy W. Wright: I think you pretty much covered it.

>> Matan Koch: So I'll just jump in and say that in addition to RespectAbility's resources, we also do have a training practice where your organization can actually bring us in to do training. I'm reasonably certain, Charles, that you also offer training, is that correct, in some places? I just want to make sure we're giving equal billing to all of our -- panelists and their services.

>> Billy W. Wright: Yeah we are certified, we got a small team of five national employment coordinators so -- we are certified Windmills trainers. And you know, basically -- we're able to provide disability awareness training from all, you know, from a wide range of topics regarding the employment of people with disabilities. So yeah, I am certified through Windmills.

>> Matan Koch: So that's Billy talking, and just to ask to the other panelists as well, training resources that you offer?

>> Mike Thompson: Yep, so here at DOL Vets, we work collectively together through the National Veterans Training Institute out of Dallas. It's a federally funded program that they train and certify veteran -- understanding veteran licenses for our veteran representatives and our own personnel and partners. So I would also say the NVTI as a resource. Sometimes some of those classes are free, there's no charge, they may even be virtual. There's podcasts that are available. Any of that can be connected through our office here at DOL Vets, or as I said before, a state partner that would fall underneath the Jobs for Veterans State Grant inside of the American Job Center. They can connect you to the right folks.

>> Charles W. McCaffrey: Yeah and then I would say -- myself and my team, we're more than happy to have the conversation. We haven't put together any sort of specific certificate training or anything like that, but we're always happy to have conversations with supervisors, people in HR and recruiting, and have these conversations and give them best practices.

>> Matan Koch: Fantastic. Well so there you have it, lots of resources just among our panel. Next slide please, Eric. Oh, and now we get to my favorite part of the presentation, which is where we get to answer your questions. But let's start with the question of -- and Mike, it was you that brought this up, but I'd love to hear everyone's perspective on it. You talked about the notion of translating military experience into civilian workforce experience, and you used this specific example that was language, but what are some other helpful bridging techniques, some other things that carry over well from service related skills to private sector or, you know, civilian employment?

>> Mike Thompson: I could jump in on just a quick tool. ONET, you can do a Google search, you can see what the military member's occupational specialty was. I would say for the Army, it's MOS, Military Occupation especially, but they cover all the branches. And it'll list all of the skill sets that come with that job description of their position in the military, and how it's relatable to the employer and to the civilian sector. And this way, not only the employer can understand, well, what's this mean on a resume, you know, I saw this veteran put this down, the veteran can say, well, I can't say that I was a sniper, but I can say that I was a specialist with high monetary equipment -- you know, very expensive equipment. And so you'll be able to cross-relate that. Now that's a tool, it's an online thing, but I would also say find specialists. Find folks that are out in the field, ones that are non-profit, state, or federal that know the terminology, that'll sit down for free, and be able to help that veteran and employer understand what the difference is between the two.

>> Matan Koch: That's really helpful. Do the other panelists have thoughts to add on that as well? [crosstalk]

>> Billy W. Wright: Go ahead.

>> Charles W. McCaffrey: I was just going to say what, you know, one of the things especially for employers to understand is sometimes veterans leave the military and don't want to continue doing the job they did in the military. And so you may see some things like leadership, you know, in charge of budgets, things like that that directly come from their military -- time in the military. But you may also then see certifications and additional training to change jobs. And so, you know, don't let that be like -- what's going on with this person. It's like -- it is very natural. We recently had an individual who had spent time in the military as an electrician's mate, had been an electrician in the civilian world, suffered a spinal cord injury, and after recovery, was working with my counselor and said, "you know, I've always wanted to be a chef." And you know, kind of a tough translation from electricians mate over to a chef, but organizations like ours are like, "yep, so let's get you in there. Let's get you into the training and everything like that." So don't -- don't let those disparities shy you away from a viable candidate.

>> Matan Koch: Fantastic. Because of course, the skills are -- even if the electrician skills are not transferrable, all of the wonderful things that -- that Billy mentioned when he was talking about the benefits that the veterans bring to the table are not necessarily about their technology expertise, which gives me a good segue to say Billy, do you have anything to add on this topic as well?

>> Billy W. Wright: Well yeah, I think Mike mentioned it earlier about using O\*NET, and it is good. If you, you know, in order to attract veterans, sometimes, you know, you can use O\*NET, you know, like if you're looking for somebody in security. I know I'm in a Marine Corps -- well I know the Army, you know, they use the 11 Bravos and that was my same job. I was infantry in the Marine Corps but we use the MOS code is 0311. But you know, simply putting in 11 Bravo in a job announcement will attract the veteran that's looking for something in security, because they recognize that code. You know? And that's another way of attracting veterans. And, you know, even through onboarding, you know, you want to be able to explain your agency's culture. You know, most veterans are -- they -- the camaraderie means a lot, and you know, just simple things when you bring them on board. You know, what times -- does the new team members show up, or what time do they have their meetings? Is it 8 or 8:30? Yeah -- just make them feel welcome and keeping them engaged -- you can do that with anybody, basically -- where do folks go for lunch, local restaurants, you know? Key initiatives that the team is working on, and where you -- where you're headed -- where -- do you see the future of your organization? Those are the things you can do when you bring them on board, because again, these type of questions -- a veteran employee will get a deep understanding on why your agency matters and -- veterans, we do -- we generally trend attach to values and the mission, you know, all those things. There was a purpose, you know, those are those strong words that you can use that really will attract a veteran. And again -- we've mentioned that already -- Mike -- pairing them with -- affinity groups and pairing them with other veterans or people that have been in the organization for a while, they can help a new employee come on board, say hey this is -- now that you're here, all right, what type of goals -- where do you see your future? You know, are there other opportunities you can see within the agency that may match -- that you may -- opportunities that you may enjoy doing more or the current skill set that you have, or -- pairing them with another veteran or someone that's been an organization a while will help them really take the next steps and really put them on the right track, because they've been there for a while, and they know how the organization works. So just simple things like that that you can do.

>> Matan Koch: Thank you so much. We have a related question that has come in through the Q&A, which is we have a representative of a very large disability employment organization, some of you will have heard of it, Source America, who is asking what specifically could they do to attract more veterans to their programs, but also to educate the people running their programs how to make those programs more attractive to veterans? Anyone like to take a stab at that?

>> Mike Thompson: I'll go ahead and jump in real quick. I can drop a link into the chat. It's literally the dol.gov hire a veteran page. I can also mention that within our organization, DOL, DOL VETS, is that we have what's called Regional Employment Coordinators -- Regional and Veteran Employment Coordinators, called RVECs, that are covering several States for each region. And it's their job to go out into the field and discuss what employment opportunities and educate and train of what a disabled veteran is for the employers. But we're only one to maybe small percentage or even a third of a percentage, because you know -- even right here in our panelists, you've got the VA that's here, and you got PVA that's here, and the plethora of organizations that are out there. I would say use resources first. Use your online resources to see what you can find. Once you find a person, talk to that person, whether it's federal or state, and they're going to point you in the right direction of who you need to talk to. And then use -- at the local level, one entity that we didn't mention -- we've talked about the AJC with the DOL, we've talked about chapter 31 and several VA programs, we've talked about nonprofits, but the county CVSOs -- the County Veterans Service Officers -- that's another cornerstone for your community that you can talk to. To A, to talk about veterans and veteran benefits, but they can point you in the right direction to any of the thousands that are on the ground level providing those hard-earned and hard work services to Veterans every single da. So yeah, as a team we all come together. We all have the same mission, we have the same passions, and that's why I love to be here in particular, because we are a team. You know, we really stick together and to help the veterans, help the families.

>> Matan Koch: Thank you Mike. All the other panelists, anything you want to add on that question?

>> Billy W. Wright: Yeah we're quite familiar with Source America. Glad you're on board. And we work very closely with Source America. Our employment coordinators -- and I know because -- I know what a lot of your -- the employers that are in your organization, they have to hire a certain percentage of people and Veterans with disabilities, especially those that have federal government contracts. So VA VRE, you know, definitely you can give us a call or email us. We'll be happy to -- like I said, work with them over the years, and we've had a lot -- success.

>> Matan Koch: Fantastic, thank you Billy for the personalized invitation. You got a question, reach out to Billy, is the -- the step there. And just want to make sure, Charles, in case you have anything you want to add, you certainly don't have to, we got very thorough answers from Billy and from Mike, but I want to make sure to give you floor --

>> Charles W. McCaffrey: Sure, no. I know John and very familiar with Source America, we've had them on one of our webinars that we do. One of the things that I was saying that -- this isn't just Source America but any employer too -- the veterans are very proud people, right? And and a lot of times they don't self-identify as being disabled veterans, that that isn't what they want to be identified as. And so you know, that language is very important. And so job descriptions and and companies that emphasize the mission, the teamwork, the support, as opposed to just emphasizing, you know, we hire disabled veterans -- it is going to get more interest from the veteran community, because it is about more than just overcoming the disability. It has to do with all those things that Billy and Michael have talked about with teamwork and -- a strong workforce and everything like that.

>> Mike Thompson: I'd like to add too, oftentimes what we like to lead with is what the veteran brings to the table, you know, their skills, their experiences, who they are, their personality. But at the end of the day, there is some -- there's some breaks out there for employers that hire veterans, there's breaks to help hire disabled veterans. Another program to be interested is a work opportunity tax credit - WOTC is what we'd call that. There's up to a $9,600 tax break to hire a disabled veteran for employers. We often don't lead with that, because hiring a veteran -- they bring everything else to the table, why would you talk about money -- but it is something that is out there that employers can learn more about, yep.

>> Matan Koch: So I'm gonna take moderator privilege to pose one last question for each of you to answer that does not come from the Q&A box, it comes from me, which is that you all referenced bits and pieces like emphasizing teamwork and what have you of what the veteran who is seeking a job is looking for, what makes a job attractive to a veteran. In our last few minutes, can you each give a quick answer -- and just for fun I'm going to start with Billy -- as to what it is that would -- that you think veterans are looking for to make jobs particularly attractive to them? [crosstalk] Got it, good. Go ahead.

>> Billy W. Wright: Okay, well you know, it -- definitely mission focused, you know, something that has a purpose generally attracts a lot of veterans. I mean -- those are the type of guys that I see down here in southern Maryland, you know, I can always tell a lot of times -- they'll pull over and help somebody change the tire -- just meaningful. And you know for me, I'll tell you it wasn't -- it was the lady who I met with at a job fair when I got my first opportunity to work, and I I'm just going to say this real quick, you know, I remember it was raining cats and dogs, it was a thunderstorm, I mean, but raining so hard. And I got to this job fair being a grunt and -- of infantry. And my resume was all wet, I handed the lady my resume, she looked at me, I looked at her and I said oh man, I'm really making a really bad first impression. But anyway, that lady saw that I was hungry and I wanted an opportunity. And I just think back to things like that. Sometimes your career doesn't find you, you don't find a career, sometimes the career finds you. And -- I'll just share that, you know, and that's where I got my opportunity, and that's how I got into the line of work that I'm in. My original thing I wanted to do was be -- work with special forces, I mean Secret Service, and be on the hill, you know, protecting the big guys. You know, wearing a nice suit and carry a big gun, that was my -- what I always wanted to do.

>> Matan Koch: Sounds like a really good -- I think that people with disabilities have benefited by the fact that you ended up on a different path, as important as that path is.

>> Billy W. Wright: Yeah, I'm just gonna say -- I was just hungry, I just wanted a job. It wasn't anything about who was going to attract me to them, I just wanted somebody to give me a job, and-- that's the real deal on that, you know, my experience. Go ahead.

>> Matan Koch: And now Charles, I wanna give you the floor for a minute or two?

>> Charles W. McCaffrey: Yeah absolutely. So absolutely concur with Billy: veterans want something that has mission and purpose behind it. But the other thing that I will say -- and this comes from my personal experience -- the first job I took after leaving the military, after about a month or two, my supervisor was like "I don't understand you veterans. Why are you always looking for direction?" And it's like, well, because that's what we do, right? We don't run off and do our own thing in the military, right? And so -- but there's a big difference between direction and micromanagement. So you know, veterans want to be in an organization where there is that mission, that purpose and direction, but also the the independence and the trust to then execute on that mission and direction, and I think that's really important.

>> Matan Koch: Great, thank you. And Mike, you wanna bring us home on this one?

>> Mike Thompson: Sure. I like to use the lawyer's response of "well it depends." That's a huge question. A lot of variables. I can use affectionate cliches and say veterans come in all flavors. Some veterans did not have a good experience while they were in, and they're not ready yet. Sometimes they just got to come home and decompress a little bit, and then they might be ready. Or a veteran might have retired after 20-30 years and not ever want to work a day again. So it all comes to fruition when that veteran is ready for what they're ready for. But with my own experience, you know, working for my ground level up as a lever helping veterans find employment in a small town in Indiana, to being this program director for the entire State now, I can say that I heard this thousand times. Veterans walk in through the office --multiple offices of folks -- and say "I wish I was still in." It's that service, I think, that we crave. And it may take a while to get back to it, but I think that's why we all raised our hand. And so, I used to tell folks straight to their face -- I'd say you don't have to be in uniform to serve. What do you think about this? And there's so many opportunities out there to give back your service and give back your time to help. Maybe somebody took a chance on you, you know, Billy, somebody took a chance and said hey, I want to hire this person right now, because I see that hunger. Well now that you're here, I would say it's time to give it back. It's time to pay it forward. And I look at that in my own -- my own career, my -- where I'm at now, and that's what I do, is I try to raise and help as many as I can. For one, I'm not going to be here forever. Two, I want to mentor and train others around me, and hopefully I can make this world a better place, so you know, I think it's the service that we're all connected to ultimately.

>> Matan Koch: Well, I think there could not be a better note to end on than that. Gentlemen, I thank you for being here today, for the incredible work that you put into preparing for this and bringing your all here to us, and for the work that you do every day to help your fellow Veterans to continue to serve, to borrow from Mike's formulation there. And I want to thank everyone in our audience for staying with us, for tuning in. But I also want to say that I will really thank you if you take something you've heard here today and do something about it. And as my friend and colleague Eric Ascher has said, please watch your inboxes because we will be sending you a quick survey to find out how this experience landed for you, and that allows us to continue to produce high quality content for you in the future because we can quantify our impact. But thank you so much for joining us today. Thank you to our panel, thank you to our interpreter and our captioner, and of course to the incredible Eric Ascher for making it all happen. And I guess that's all.

>> Charles W. McCaffrey: Thank you Matan, appreciate the opportunity.

>> Mike Thompson: Thanks team, appreciate it!