

Rep. Sloan Chairs Military & Veterans Affairs Task Force Meeting

Rep. Tom Sloan (R, Lawrence) served as Chairman of the National Conference of State Legislatures' (NCSL) Military & Veterans Affairs Task Force meeting. Military veterans have one of the highest unemployment rates of any identifiable demographic group. Reintegration issues as the military downsizes following the withdrawals from Iraq and Afghanistan provide opportunities for state governments and businesses to assist these returning veterans.

Panelists presented information on state options and best practices for providing assistance to returning veterans, understanding treatments for veterans with traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD). Other presentations addressed the impact of civilian encroachment on military base viability, the Army's Energy Initiative Task Force efforts to promote renewable energy, providing services to homeless veterans, and the transition of unmanned aircraft systems from military to civilian use. Participating legislators also engaged in round table discussions about 2013 legislative initiatives in active duty voting opportunities, health care needs for veterans that may or may not be available through the Veterans Affairs Department, and professional licensure issues affecting veterans and their spouses.

"I presented information about HB 2078 that streamlines the way state licensure agencies evaluate Department of Defense (DoD) educational and training curriculums and certificates," said Sloan. "During the legislative session, a Navy Commander testified before a House Committee at my request and then met with the Board of Regents and health care licensure leaders to develop lines of communication between the state and DoD. While HB 2078 is the most comprehensive "best practice" bill enacted in 2013, the most important achievement is the rapidly evolving partnership between Kansas' licensure and educational institutions and the DoD training staff."

"The willingness of Kansas' education and licensure communities to reach out to DoD educators/trainers to develop contacts and criteria for the civilians to evaluate the knowledge levels of returning veterans has caught the attention of Pentagon leaders," Sloan said. "The Governor created a Task Force comprised of the Secretary of Commerce, Secretary of Labor, and CEO of the Board of Regents to help veterans and employers match skills and needs. The evolving partnership between Kansas licensure boards, educators, and the DoD will support the Governor's initiative and veterans will be better able to reintegrate productively into civilian lives."

Rep. Sloan is serving his ninth term in the Kansas House of Representatives. He is Chairman of the Vision 2020 Committee and a member of the Transportation and Agriculture & Natural Resources Committees. In addition to serving on the NCSL Military & Veterans Affairs and Energy Supply Task Forces, he is Co-Chairman of the Council of State Governments' Interstate Electric Transmission Siting Task Force and a member of the Department of Energy's Electricity Advisory Committee and the Federal Communications Commission's Intergovernmental Advisory Committee.

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