



From the office of Texas Workforce Commission

# Chairman Tom Pauken

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Opinion/Editorial

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## TWC Chairman Highlights Success of Programs to Help Returning Veterans

*By Tom Pauken*

Recent media reports on the difficulty returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan face in finding jobs as they transition to civilian life raise some important issues. How do you translate their military skills and experience to civilian workforce needs?

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) is addressing that issue in a number of ways. Two examples of this are the Texas Veterans Leadership Program and the College Credit for Heroes initiative.

Texas is leading the way in assisting returning veterans by developing programs that will put that military experience back to work in the civilian world. Thanks to the College Credit for Heroes program, the knowledge and skills acquired by military service members are being recognized; and colleges increasingly are awarding veterans college credits for their military experience, allowing them to more easily re-enter the workforce.

As part of this initiative, Houston Community College has streamlined the credit hours needed for veterans to attain the surgical technology certification so that veterans who had that military training and experience no longer have to get 37 hours in credits to be able to take the certification test. They can sit for the exam; and if they pass, they can go right to work in that field.

In addition, Central Texas College has completed a database available to other community colleges and veterans which enables returning veterans to get college credit for their military experience and training—and not have to start all over again from square one.

Seven community colleges currently participate in the College Credit for Heroes program. As this initiative develops, the colleges will provide models for awarding college credit by evaluating military training, including testing and prior learning assessments. Hopefully, other Texas colleges will use this data to award credit hours for the valuable training so many of our soldiers have received while in the military.

Also, TWC's Texas Veterans Leadership Program (TVLP)—which is run by returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan—helps their fellow veterans make a successful transition to civilian life. So far, TVLP has served more than 8,000 returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. Most of those have received direct assistance from TVLP veteran representatives, ranging from finding employment to receiving help in getting their educational and health benefits.

These young men and women have answered our country's call under very difficult circumstances, and they deserve our full support in making a successful transition to the civilian world. Texas is the number one state in the nation for business. Let's also strive to be the number one state in the U.S. in welcoming home our returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan the right way by putting that experience to work.

*Tom Pauken is the chairman of the Texas Workforce Commission and author of Bringing America Home*

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*The Texas Workforce Commission is a state agency dedicated to helping Texas employers, workers and communities prosper economically. For details on TWC and the programs it offers in unison with its network of local workforce development boards, call 512- 463-8942 or visit [www.texasworkforce.org](http://www.texasworkforce.org).*