



From the office of Texas Workforce Commission

# Commissioner Tom Pauken

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Opinion/Editorial

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## Texas Medical Center Leaders Have a Heart for Veterans

By Tom Pauken

On November 15, job fairs targeting veterans will be held across the state of Texas. Twenty-seven different locations will be hosting events as part of the Hiring Red, White & You! statewide job fair. That day will be the culmination of a joint effort among several state agencies, private employers, and countless staffers. But, it would not have been possible without the hard work of three unassuming men who have a heart for veterans.

Leaders at the Texas Medical Center (TMC) in Houston made it a goal to help our returning veterans make the transition to civilian life and in the process it has become a statewide model for helping veterans find jobs. TMC's President and Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Richard Wainerdi, helped set up a task force from the TMC's member institutions on military hiring. Joining Dr. Wainerdi were Dr. James H. "Red" Duke and Dr. John Holcomb. Both Dick Wainerdi and Red Duke served in the Korean War. John Holcomb is a veteran of the Iraq War.

These three men knew that many veterans possess skills and experience needed in the healthcare field and wanted to do a better job of tapping that talent. The task force examined the job recruitment process, looked for new ways to reach out to veterans, and worked to find ways to translate military skills and training into civilian course credit. As a result, TMC and its member institutions have integrated support for our military into their corporate cultures.

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The task force – entitled Hiring Red White and You! – was so successful that Governor Perry, the Texas Workforce Commission, and the Texas Veterans Commission have partnered with TMC to build on their success by sponsoring job fairs under the same title in cities all over Texas.

As a Texas Workforce Commissioner, I was proud to present the Texas Medical Center with our office's Texas Veterans Employer Award last month for the organization's outstanding work in this area. Employers can learn a lot from TMC. Here are some of the key ways TMC created a veteran-friendly culture:

- Understand the military. Many skills taught in the military translate well in the civilian world. But sometimes the military uses its own terms and titles to describe such skills. TMC updated its resume-scanning programs to recognize military equivalents to civilian job requirements.
- Words matter. One of the most important things an employer can do is state that it is military-friendly and encourages veterans to apply.
- Working together is also important. One of the things that really impressed me about TMC's approach is the way the member institutions are helping each other. It's not uncommon for one institution to refer a veteran to another institution.

TMC works with many veterans organizations, including the Texas Veterans Leadership Program (TVLP). Sadly, the unemployment rate for our returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan exceeds the general unemployment rate. At the Texas Workforce Commission, we created the TVLP, run by veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, to help their fellow veterans make a successful transition to civilian life. It was modeled on a program I initiated in the Reagan Administration called the Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program to help our returning Vietnam Veterans.

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Speaking of President Reagan, he had a sign on his desk at the White House which read: “There is no limit to what a man can do or where he can go if he doesn't mind who gets the credit.” He governed with that adage in mind. As CEO of TMC, Dr. Wainerdi sure has exemplified that principle in his unassuming leadership on behalf of our returning veterans.

I encourage employers across the state of Texas to turn out November 15 for the statewide job fairs for veterans. For more information visit [texasworkforce.org/svcs/vetsvcs/hiring-red-white-you.html](http://texasworkforce.org/svcs/vetsvcs/hiring-red-white-you.html) or email redwhiteandyou@twc.state.tx.us.

*Tom Pauken is the Commissioner Representing Employers at 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 coordination with its network of local workforce development boards, call (512) 463-8556 or visit [www.texasworkforce.org](http://www.texasworkforce.org).*

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