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Wyden Opening Statement at the Hire More Heroes Act of 2015 Mark-up

Today the committee is marking up the Hire More Heroes Act of 2015, and in the process, directs its attention to a subject matter we can all agree on – helping veterans find jobs and economic opportunity.

Sen. Hatch has worked closely with me and it is our hope there will be a bipartisan markup today. Mr. Chairman, you and I have enjoyed a strong working relationship over the years and I look forward to working together when we can and sorting through our principled disagreements when we must. I thank you for that.

As for today's mark-up, the fact is, Senators do not make changes to laws that are going away. The Affordable Care Act has been a lifeline for millions of Americans, especially those who used to go to bed at night fearing they would be discriminated against because they were sick. It is clear that America will not accept turning back the clock to the days when health care was only for the healthy and wealthy.

Today's mark-up is proof that the security millions rely on is not going to vanish.

I intend to support the legislation today because it acknowledges current law; a veteran enrolled in TRICARE or the VA will never trigger a penalty because that veteran will never receive subsidized coverage on the exchange.

What has motivated Members to come together this morning, is simple: it's our nation's veterans. Given that, I'd be remiss if I didn't point out that the reason we can even be here today is because of our veterans.

I want to highlight how this committee could do more to help our veterans. Here are some better, bipartisan ways to do that going forward.

The most direct way is renewing the EXPIRE Act which contained a number of crucial programs that benefit our veterans.

It would extend the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, which provides a wage tax credit for businesses willing to hire veterans, including those who are unemployed, disabled, or to low-income veterans who qualify for federal assistance.

It would have extended the 20% wage credit for employers who continue to pay military reservists while they are on active duty, and would have provided an expanded 100% match for the first \$20,000 in differential pay.

Finally, the EXPIRE Act would have extended a provision that makes it easier for active military to benefit from the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program.

All of these are the actions that would help veterans in real and tangible ways.

Before closing I want to highlight the efforts of Senators Stabenow, Brown, and all my colleagues who are working hard to promote these and other policies that will help these brave Americans. I pledge to continue supporting them.

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