

To: State off Alaska House of Representatives
Purpose: Official Letter in Support of HB-46
From: Russell C Black, MBA. SHRM Mat-Su Chapter President

Dear Representatives,

I'm writing this letter to ask for your support of HB-46. This is a no nonsense piece of Legislation that addresses issues of skills gaps currently in the state of Alaska while at the same time providing the necessary venue to provide jobs to our departing service members. Currently we are separating approximately 200 service members per month in the Anchorage area. If we look north to Fairbanks the numbers are approximately 130 per month. Roughly 20% stay in Alaska however, when polled if they would stay in Alaska if they had a job, 80% state they would stay.

A recent survey from the Society of Human resource Managers states:

95 percent of CEOs surveyed by the Business Roundtable, an association of chief executive officers of leading U.S. companies working to promote sound public policy and a thriving U.S. economy, indicated that their companies suffer from skills shortages. We simply are not producing enough highly educated domestic talent – particularly in critical science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields. All of the fastest growing occupations will require at least some background in STEM fields, the government and employers must do more to invest in domestic sources of talent and bring all Americans who want to work into the economy. (SHRM 2015)

While creating home grown STEM backgrounds is critical to putting Americans to work it is also very time consuming i.e. starting with grammar school, progressing to high school and then on to college. The answer to the skills gap, in the short-term, lies with our departing service members. The veterans position on the Work Force Investment Board will serve as an expert to address the current shortages of critical job skills through advising key stake holders of the issue both on and off our military installations.

Other job gaps include critical thinking/problem solving, professionalism/work ethic, leadership and written communication. According to the SHRM 20014 survey of 2988 industries, 50% stated they are having difficulties recruiting for full-time regular positions in the last 12 months. It becomes self evident that a quick win for Government and our service members is to create a veterans position on the Work Force Investment Board who can address these issues and understands how to navigate both private sector and DOD sectors and can bring the right level of expertise to both camps. The primary advantage for the employer are the skills our veterans already possess. In other words our veterans and service members become work force ready when matched with the correct certification.

A current best practice exists between CH2MHill, Northern Industrial Training (NIT), and veterans/service members. CH2MHill agreed to hire veterans who had received certifications from NIT . CH2MHill, stated at a recent breakfast hosted by Association of General Contractors that the time saved bringing service members to full speed in the oil industry has been cut from 5-6 years for the general population to 2-3 years for recently separated service members. Without a veterans position on the Work Force Investment Board these kinds of opportunities are missed. With the position that HB-46 supports, a more systemic approach can be taken to ensure our businesses understand this valuable resource.

While this is only a quick synopsis of the benefits of passing this legislation. The benefits are well worth passing this piece of legislation. If anyone has more specific questions I stand by to answer more pointed questions requiring more in-depth answers.

Sincerely,



Russell C Black, MBA
SHRM Mat-Su Chapter President