In the Matter of:

Interagency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development

June 9, 2016
Public Meeting

Condensed Transcript with Word Index

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U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE ON
VETERANS SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

PUBLIC MEETING

THURSDAY, JUNE 9, 2016
9:00 A.M.

Recorded by: Jen Metcalf-Razzino, CER

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C O N T E N T S

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P R O C E E D I N G S
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(Meeting called to order, 9:07 a.m.)
MR. KRAMER: Okay, well, let's get started. A reminder to sort of -- the members of the Task Force and the rest of the folks here in the room, these proceedings are transcribed for permanent record. So, if at any time you're asked to identify yourself, spell your name, do any of that, please cooperate with the stenographer so that she can keep up without developing cramps in her hands.

My name is Doug Kramer. I'm the Deputy Administrator here at the Small Business Administration. As I explained to Barb on the way down, I am significantly under the weather this morning, which is disappointing because this is one of four decent days we've had in DC all year, weather-wise. It shouldn't be too much of a problem for me with this morning's meeting, but it is a long meeting, so if at some point I get up and leave for a few minutes to collect myself, it's not because of anything you've said; it's more where I'm coming from this morning.

I'm going to provide just a 10,000-foot overview of where I think we are and what we're going

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to try and do today before I turn it over to Barb to help me run the meeting. And that is really to say this is the fourth one of these quarterly meetings that I have been able to chair since I was confirmed almost exactly a year ago as Deputy Administrator at SBA. And early in that tenure, when I sat down with Barb and the folks her on her team, we identified a number of things that needed to be done with regard to the task force, and I'm very happy to report that a lot of that has been accomplished successfully.

We were significantly in arrears with regard to the required annual reporting that we needed to do. We were as many as three years behind on that. I'm happy to report that the final and current report is now back in our hands after an interagency clearance process that it has emerged from in sufficient form that it should be able to go forward.

I am committing to everybody in this room on the record that we will finalize our review here at SBA within the next month and get that published by the middle of July, at which point we will be caught up and then we can start the process for, you know, the 2016 report.

In addition to that, the membership of the Task Force was not where it should be. We had fallen

1 (Pages 1 to 4)

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1   behind on making sure that we had sufficient VSO
2   participation on the Task Force. We rectified that,
3   and I think almost immediately recognized the value
4   that our current crop of VSO representatives, in
5   particular, have brought to the Task Force. So, we
6   very much appreciate that.
7   So, with the technical stuff done, that
8   doesn't get anybody a job or doesn't help anybody open
9   a business. So, now we get to turn the business of
10   continuing to make sure that we are creating a
11   conducive business environment for veterans to open
12   small businesses, to succeed in growing small
13   businesses. And that's where I think we get to one of
14   the more important things that we will do as a group,
15   and that is addressing and now revising the existing
16   recommendations that this Task Force has created and
17   worked from.
18   Over the course of the last couple of months,
19   with the cooperation -- the good cooperation -- of a
20   lot of you, we have looked at the 19 existing
21   recommendations, and we have made recommendations about
22   the recommendations as to whether or not they should
23   continue and whether they should be revised or whether
24   they should be tabled for the time being. This isn't
25   necessarily a determination that issues are no longer

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1   important or issues have been successfully completed
2   and never have to be addressed again. It's more an
3   evaluation of where is the best strategic use of our
4   time and effort over the next year or so.
5   So, today, I think we will look at the
6   existing recommendations, sort of try to finalize the
7   judgments that have been made about those, and then
8   sort of set the table for what happens next. And I
9   think between now and the next quarterly meeting, as
10   Barb will talk about, we will sort of assess where we
11   are with the existing recommendations and then have a
12   conversation over the next couple of months about what
13   new recommendations we'll put in and we'll sort of
14   advance those efforts.
15   So, that's what we're going to try and do
16   today, as well as have comments from most of you and
17   some time for public comments as well. But with that,
18   I appreciate your presence here today. Do we want to
19   go around the room and take roll and have people
20   identify themselves, and then we'll catch up on that as
21   folks come in. But why don't we take the roll and then
22   after that I'll let Barb sort of lead us from there.
23   So, Amanda, do you want to start, and then
24   we'll just go around the room.
25   MS. BAINTON: Amanda Bainton, the Military

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1   Officers Association of America.
2   MR. MATHENY: Bill Matheny from the Department
3   of Labor.
4   MR. LENEY: Tom Leney, Department of Veterans
5   Affairs.
6   MR. KIDALOV: Max Kidalov, Naval Postgraduate
7   School.
8   MR. CRITELLI: Jamie Critelli, Farmer Veteran
9   Coalition.
10   MR. BACCAM: Lanon Baccam, USDA.
11   MR. KLINGELHOFER: Victor Klingelhofer,
12   Vietnam Veterans of America.
13   MR. FERRARO: Eric Ferraro from the General
14   Services Administration.
15   MR. KRAMER: And I think those are all the
16   members. Members of the public who are here in
17   attendance, if you make remarks later, we'll have you
18   identify yourself as you make remarks. Are there any
19   other members on the phone or anybody else on the phone
20   that hasn't previously identified themselves?
21   (No response.)
22   MR. KRAMER: Okay. Hearing none, I'll turn it
23   over to Barb.
24   MS. CARSON: Thank you, Deputy Administrator
25   Kramer, both for the introduction and teeing up what

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1   we're going to discuss today and also for your enduring
2   support of our work. You really have brought us a long
3   way.
4   I'm going to take a moment and go over some of
5   the work that my office -- a great team -- has been
6   doing, the Office of Veterans Business Development. As
7   a quick refresher, we do work to empower veterans
8   through our training to build their capacity,
9   introducing them to opportunities through access to
10   capital and federal procurement. And, so, we've done a
11   lot recently, and I want to share some updates with you
12   and then make sure that we synthesize and synchronize
13   what we're doing with your agencies and your equities,
14   please.
15   The first one is the Veterans Business
16   Outreach Center. We received -- this rarely happens --
17   a larger appropriation than we had anticipated, and we
18   quickly turned to and identified areas where the VBOCs
19   -- there was a gap in service. And we now had a chance
20   to address that. So, we found six places where we
21   needed more service for those transitioning service
22   members and their families. We -- and happen to have
23   high veteran population as well, and we placed new
24   Veteran Business Outreach Centers there. They will all
25   open on July 1st, and I will go over those locations on

2 (Pages 5 to 8)

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1   a separate slide shortly.
2   We also lost one, so New York and New Jersey
3   had a Veteran Business Outreach Center, and that one is
4   currently open for competition if you know of great
5   folks working with veteran entrepreneurs that would be
6   eligible, please let us know. And that is open until
7   July 3rd.
8   Moving to Boots to Business, another training
9   program that you have heard me brief on before, a quick
10   update. Here, the first ever outcome survey is
11   complete. The analysis is done. We have not yet
12   released the report. We're making the final edits and
13   making it pretty, but I can tell you that it's
14   encouraging. With a high level of confidence, we can
15   tell you that about 35 percent of people who have taken
16   Boots to Business have established a business. And
17   that's rather high for what we had expected to see.
18   We learned a lot more about what kinds of
19   things they did after, where else did they connect to
20   get further assistance, what's the age, what's the
21   demographic. So, I look forward to sharing that in
22   more detail with you in our September meeting. And
23   I'll send that out in advance to our members and also
24   post it on our website so anyone can see it, but we
25   will go over it in the next meeting.

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1   Thus far, 42,000 service members and military
2   family members have attended Boots to Business. This
3   is the most significant increase in outreach to
4   veterans that SBA has ever had, and I'm grateful for
5   the support that we've received through our transition
6   assistance partners.
7   And, finally, I wanted to remind you that your
8   communities and your folks are always connecting with
9   us on the ground locally, and that's important.
10   Diversity of what aspiring entrepreneurs hear is very
11   valuable to us. We, therefore, grant, not just to the
12   Veteran Business Outreach Centers, but to women's
13   business centers, small business development centers,
14   SCORE, and we leverage our district offices. We let
15   two instructors -- we reimburse them to teach so that
16   they can hear different perspectives as they evaluate
17   whether small business ownership is a vocation that
18   they would choose.
19   And then next is Reboot, Boots to Business
20   curriculum for those who have already transitioned out
21   of the military and are civilians. Or, it works better
22   with their schedule. Whatever it may be, they can
23   attend Reboot. And I'll give you an update on those
24   numbers shortly.
25   We're in our final year of supporting a woman

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1   veteran training program known as V-WISE, Veteran Women
2   Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship. In the next
3   12 months, you'll see programs in San Antonio, Phoenix,
4   and Savannah. I definitely would like our interagency
5   partners to be aware of that, and let me know how we
6   can connect with you locally in those places to reach
7   women veterans and female military spouses.
8   We have just concluded the last year in a
9   grant for service-disabled training. You've heard me
10   talk about entrepreneurship boot camp for veterans with
11   disabilities and intensive programs for service-
12   disabled vets that were onsite. We have opened up this
13   opportunity It's currently open through June 19th to
14   organizations that are currently providing
15   entrepreneurship training to service-disabled veterans.
16   I would also love for you to put that out
17   through your networks. The maximum grant amount is
18   $150,000; minimum $50,000. And the total award
19   possible is $300,000. We will award that and make the
20   announcement by August.
21   And, finally, Veterans Institute for
22   Procurement, that has been of interest to this group.
23   We are entering the final program year with them. Huge
24   development just a couple of months ago was the first
25   ever new curriculum, VIP Start. We had been doing the

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1   standard VIP, which we call now VIP Grow, that was for
2   existing businesses that already have revenue, past
3   performance, and a certain number of employees.
4   VIP Start is still -- you can't be just coming
5   off the street thinking about a business plan and
6   you're going to go into federal contracting first.
7   It's not that. If you've at least been a sub; you've
8   got revenue; and this is your full-time vocation.
9   You're not doing it as a side gig.
10   The feedback was incredible. I obviously
11   won't have performance results on it for a year to see
12   what was a meaningful difference for these businesses,
13   but we feel strongly enough that it was a good start
14   that in this final program year of this grant we will
15   have one more Start program, two of the Grow, and the
16   first ever VIP International. It will not be just
17   OCONUS contracting. It's going to be about exporting,
18   as well, and how to work overseas.
19   We have obviously as veterans some -- many of
20   us have experience living overseas, working in
21   different cultures. Those are important qualities to
22   bring to this kind of business. So, if anyone has
23   input and you would like to say what goes into the VIP
24   International curriculum, I'm happy to take that on
25   because we want to learn from you some best practices

3 (Pages 9 to 12)

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1   or things you wish that folks who contract with you
2   OCONUS would want to know.
3   Next slide. I'm going to dive into Boots to
4   Business. You do have these slides in front of you,
5   and members on the line, we can send this to you so
6   that you can see it. I'm not -- it's a tough chart to
7   read, but I just want to tell you we're on track as we
8   anticipated, that Boots to Business continues to grow.
9   Boots to Business Reboot in communities, we've had
10   significant activity in the last part of the calendar
11   year, a little slower right after the holidays, and
12   we're picking up at high speed through the summer.
13   Virtual curriculum, thanks to the support of
14   Department of Defense, is also available for those who
15   cannot attend a brick-and-mortar class. Though we
16   highly recommend it, I'm pleased that we have a virtual
17   option. Next slide.
18   The eight-week attendance. Briefly, the
19   eight-week is a follow-on to the two-day course. It is
20   at least 10 hours a week. It's intensive, college-
21   level course. One could argue that transition is not
22   the time that one would undertake an endeavor, so two
23   messages on that. One, you can take it anytime after
24   you've graduated. And, second, that transition is now
25   open at any point in a service person's career, and

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1   they can take it early, and so can spouses.
2   The graduation rate is around 50 percent,
3   which is outstanding for a massively open online
4   course. Next slide.
5   A little more on Reboot. You can see we've
6   served over 1,200 as of the -- April of this year in 91
7   courses. It kind of mirrors the attendance rates that
8   we see for Boots to Business, just under 20, which
9   makes for a great discussion. And, also, we've learned
10   it's fantastic for bringing in community folks that are
11   already running businesses, local banks, and if there's
12   a veteran that's going to stay in the area, this is a
13   really meaningful connection to make, some networking
14   in addition to education. Very pleased.
15   The American Legion has partnered with us for
16   several of these, and I look forward to continuing
17   that. Davy Leghorn happens to be representing them
18   today. I'll tell you we've got Guam and American Samoa
19   coming up this summer, and we definitely want to engage
20   your chapters there. Next slide.
21   Here we are on where we needed to serve more
22   service members becoming civilians and their military
23   spouses. Hawaii will also cover Guam and the islands
24   and territories in that area. MiraCosta College is
25   south, close to Camp Pendleton. Cochise College is in

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1   Southern Arizona, next to Fort Huachuca, where there's
2   a lot of cyber and drone potential, already some VCs
3   from up in Phoenix and other incubators are interested
4   in traveling south and working with this VBOC.
5   The University of Texas at Arlington, as many
6   of you know, this is a dense population for veterans
7   and service members and active duty installations. We
8   feel a lot better knowing that now we have two Veteran
9   Business Outreach Centers in Texas.
10   Georgia Southern University will help us serve
11   Georgia. A lot of activity there. And the Center for
12   Women in Enterprise, it's a women's business center,
13   will be collocated. They don't serve just women. The
14   name is misleading. They serve all, and there will be
15   a separate Veteran Business Outreach Center.
16   It says Rhode Island. That is where the
17   sponsoring organization is located; however, we expect
18   that they will have more than one location in New
19   England.
20   And, finally, I already mentioned that they'll
21   be up and running on July 1st. If you'd like any of
22   your local folks to be invited to these grand openings
23   so we can make the connection early, I think that would
24   be a fantastic thing for us to do. Next slide.
25   Coverage map of all that we have in place

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1   right now. And as I said, we'll be adding one for New
2   York and New Jersey shortly. Next slide.
3   I wanted to highlight that the Veteran
4   Business Outreach Centers, we have learned so much
5   about their performance, the consistency that we have
6   across the field, and places where we don't have that.
7   So, we are working to standardize our programs a bit,
8   make sure that one veteran will -- a veteran can get
9   the same service, no matter which Veteran Business
10   Outreach Center they go to, especially when they're
11   such a mobile population. And they may touch one first
12   at their active duty installation and then go home.
13   And we also wanted to refocus on public law's
14   intent for this. It was to serve transitioning service
15   members and their families; therefore, we have made it,
16   in their grant, mandatory that they will serve at 100
17   percent of the Boots to Business given within the state
18   they're located and half for all outside their state.
19   As I said earlier in the presentation, we
20   value diversity, and they -- we reimburse to have at
21   least two instructors for every module so we'll
22   continue to get Small Business Development Center,
23   SCORE, woman's business centers and business owners in
24   their next to the VBOC, but they really need to be
25   involved in this program.

4 (Pages 13 to 16)

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1   They'll also be leading Boots to Business
2   Reboot and continuing whatever the special thing was
3   that made them attractive to us to partner with them.
4   Each of them has a speciality that they're really good
5   at. Some are in the auto industry and supply chain;
6   others are fantastic at federal procurement; others are
7   well connected within their states and their states are
8   fantastic for small business and have incentives. So,
9   we don't want to lose that special, unique quality, but
10   they'll do a little less of that and focus first on
11   transition.
12   And, finally, the performance measures, we
13   should be clear about exactly how we'll know we're
14   successful. I want to see that they're -- that
15   businesses have worked with a VBOC are getting capital
16   infusion, either debt or equity, that they are
17   acquiring contracts, whether it's federal, state,
18   local, or private sector, and that they're creating or
19   retaining jobs.
20   Finally, as I mentioned, I want consistent
21   quality across the Veteran Business Outreach Center
22   program. Like the other resource partners at SBA, they
23   should have offerings that are consistent. And, so, we
24   are finding out what are the best offerings there, and
25   we will provide them across the board and really build

18

1   our VBOC as a community instead of independent
2   operators as they have been in the past. Next slide.
3   I'm going to touch a little bit on
4   contracting. And later in the presentation today, Ken
5   Dodds will be joining us, but I did want you to know
6   I'm grateful for our colleagues in advocacy and
7   government contracting and business development. Many
8   discussions over the last three months on what more we
9   can do for the service-disabled veteran small business
10   program and veterans in general. Thanks in great part
11   to Max Kidalov and your presentation last meeting, it
12   drove some great discussion. I won't say it's all in
13   the same place, but we know we're really working
14   through what we would want different and why.
15   And -- thank you. And on capital, we are
16   putting money in, that there will be at least two
17   accelerators that are focused on veteran businesses in
18   this SBA's Accelerator Prize Competition that will be
19   released this summer, and we're excited about that. We
20   want veterans to be in all the things that SBA is
21   doing, and this is -- I'm grateful to our leadership
22   for recognizing that and putting some power behind it.
23   We'll talk about lending in a moment as well. Next
24   slide.
25   Last year was incredible. If we -- we

19

1   increased our 7(a) lending by 100 percent between 14 to
2   15 for veteran-owned small business. I thought we'd be
3   lucky to stay steady. Well, we've done more than that.
4   We've grown even this year. So, you can see in both
5   units of loans, the number of loans we've put out and
6   also in dollars, we are ahead. This is through Quarter
7   2 of Fiscal 16. I have more detailed slides that I can
8   share with you, but that for now is my good new story.
9   Next slide.
10   And, finally, we're going to move, as Deputy
11   Administrator Kramer mentioned, into recommendations.
12   Sure. Sorry, I didn't take a break. I'll
13   breathe for a moment. Do we have any questions or
14   comments on the updates so far?
15   (No response.)
16   MS. CARSON: Okay, good, because this is the
17   meat of this meeting. This is why we're here. I am
18   incredibly grateful to our partners and members here on
19   this Task Force. The subcommittees hadn't met in my
20   tenure here at SBA. You have put in more time, and
21   your talent and attention to the work before us than
22   ever before. And it has made a significant difference.
23   You really helped us visualize now where have we been
24   successful, what is left to do. And that's the
25   discussion we're going to have this morning.

20

1   Deputy Administrator Kramer, is there anything
2   you would like to say before we dive in?
3   MR. KRAMER: Yeah, let me just do this. So, I
4   would like just for the meeting to be, you know, fairly
5   interactive and for you all to think about what your
6   agencies or your groups are focused on, what you hope
7   to -- either what you've done, what you hope to do, and
8   talk about that in terms of the recommendations that
9   this group might set up as sort of a guiding principle.
10   To which I'm saying I would not be surprised
11   if we go over in this section, for those of you who are
12   watching the agenda closely, and that the time that we
13   have set aside later for individual check-ins as we go
14   around the room. My sense is that after we've had a
15   robust conversation on this, there may not be much need
16   for that. That might just be a clean-up session, and
17   we can borrow from that time to have a good
18   conversation on the recommendations. So, please don't
19   be shy. Feel free to bring sort of everything to the
20   table in the context of talking about these
21   recommendations.
22   MS. CARSON: All right. We'll start from the
23   top. We did have 18 original recommendations and I
24   believe 42 sub-recommendations that were very specific
25   about what we meant with those broad 18. And you can

21

1   see the broad categories here are access to capital is
2   first, then counseling and training, then government
3   contracting, and finally other or research. We've made
4   significant strides in access to capital and training,
5   a little more work to do on both government contracting
6   and the research that we need to make better decisions
7   about how to serve veteran business going forward.
8   Next slide.
9   So, as I said, the subcommittee did meet via
10   email quite often and on the phone twice since the last
11   meeting to discuss how we would assess these
12   recommendations and decide which ones we could double
13   down and put more effort into and which ones may be
14   ready and ripe for closeout.
15   And here's how we decided whether we would
16   recommend closure of a recommendation. Was there a
17   public law that now is in place and addresses the
18   recommendation? Or regulatory implementation? Was a
19   program created and funded that addresses it? Or an
20   agency policy that is enduring? Or an in-practice
21   program, something that we could say is ongoing but
22   exists. Next slide.
23   From the top, and for those who are here from
24   the public, you're welcome to -- I believe we have some
25   slides on the side, and if you need anything afterward,

22

1   I'm happy to send it to you. We will also post this,
2   along with the transcript, on our website so that you
3   can review it. And please don't feel, as Deputy
4   Administrator Kramer said, that this finishes the
5   discussion forever. If you weren't here today, you
6   don't have something to say, no, we'll be doing this,
7   we'll be talking about it in September again. Not
8   quite as much detail then.
9   So, recommendation number one was leverage new
10   and existing lending commitments to increase access to
11   capital for veterans and service-disabled veteran-owned
12   small businesses. This was primarily SBA's, and we
13   have achieved this through a lending pledge, the
14   Veterans Advantage lending program, which is primarily
15   fee relief, as we've seen marked improvement in access
16   to capital, at least in the larger dollar amounts
17   beyond the microloan level. So, we recommend closure.
18   Are there any comments at this time on that
19   one?
20   (No response.)
21   MS. CARSON: Recommendation number two was
22   increased contracting opportunities for veteran-owned
23   small business through the SBA's Office of Surety
24   Guarantees. We have addressed it. We're doing more
25   outreach about the availability of that program and the

23

1   applicability of the program to veteran businesses. It
2   will continue. It's in place. Therefore, we recommend
3   closure. Comments on recommendation two?
4   (No response.)
5   MS. CARSON: Okay, recommendation three,
6   increase awareness, access, and utilization of
7   microloans in the veteran-owned small business
8   community. This has been an area that SBA continues to
9   pay attention to and needs to do more work upon, not
10   just for veterans, but for all portfolios. It's
11   something that I've already had multiple discussions,
12   the last one just yesterday with the Office of Capital
13   Access on what we can do, how fast, and the followup
14   meeting is next week.
15   We do have lenders who are very interested in
16   helping us address this, specifically for veterans, and
17   we are trying to more closely align and become aware of
18   additional organizations that are already doing this
19   out in their communities and making sure that we find
20   ways to work with them. Recommend keeping it open.
21   MR. KRAMER: So, I'm going to step in very
22   briefly here. I'm going to assume that Barb has done
23   her homework and a lot of these recommendations will
24   not necessarily bring about -- although feel free if
25   you have an objection and want to take a different

24

1   opinion. What I'd also encourage you to do, because if
2   you look at the numbers up front -- Barb sort of gave
3   away the ending, there are a good number of these
4   recommendations that we don't expect will continue, but
5   we do expect that we'll come up with new
6   recommendations to take their place. And like I
7   suggested, I think sometime between now and September
8   we will mold those into shape.
9   So, as we're talking about any of these
10   recommendations, if they -- even if you don't want to
11   object to us -- the recommendation to close it or keep
12   it open, if there is something that is tangentially
13   sort of related to that that comes to mind that you do
14   want to put on the table for us to talk about as maybe
15   what one of the new recommendations would be, feel free
16   to interject that as well, even if you're not
17   specifically objecting to the recommendation about the
18   existing recommendation, nothing that holds together.
19   We'll check it in the transcript later.
20   MS. CARSON: For number four, you'll see -- I
21   forgot to mention this one of the other options that we
22   had, where we recommend closure but perhaps a pivot,
23   that the topic itself broadly still needs attention,
24   however, the sub-recommendations have been addressed
25   appropriately and are, therefore, eligible to be

6 (Pages 21 to 24)

25

1   closed. That's the case with recommendation four,
2   development of government-wide tools and information to
3   support buying activities based on market research
4   sources, industry statistics, supplier base
5   requirements, and success stories.
6   The subcommittee has recommended that we do
7   more work on the development of those tools and
8   training on how to use those systems and outreach so
9   that businesses are aware that they exist and could be
10 useful to them. Any comments from the subcommittee
11 members?
12   Okay. If you have a question, please come to
13 the table with a microphone, or there's a microphone
14 near you.
15   MR. WYNN: Good morning. Joe Wynn, VET-Force.
16 I was just going to ask what were the government-wide
17 tools that were referenced, since you're closing this?
18 There were some government-wide tools. Do you have a
19 list of them or something like that?
20   MS. CARSON: GSA or one of my OSDBUs, would
21 you like to speak? Thank you.
22   MR. FERRARO: Sure.
23   MS. CARSON: Thank you.
24   MR. FERRARO: This is an area GSA is very
25 involved in, and I was going to mention that later, but

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1   a good example of that is the Vets GWAC, the
2   government-wide contract that's a specific set-aside
3   for service-disabled small business.
4   Another tool that we actually just recently
5   fielded is a forecasting tool that sits on top of our
6   federal business opportunities or based on input from
7   all the -- from the agencies that are participating.
8   So, we've put a number in place over the years, and
9   we're continuing to do more in this particular area for
10 -- in the contracting area. I'm not sure -- I could
11 probably -- I'm not from the small business office, but
12 I can, you know, provide what we've done specifically,
13 but I think the Vets 2 and there's a new RFP out for
14 that is a good example of a government-wide acquisition
15 vehicle.
16   MS. CARSON: I have a few more as well. Thank
17 you very much for that. I didn't mean to put you on
18 the spot.
19   MR. FERRARO: No, that's fine.
20   MS. CARSON: I'm going to read them. The GC,
21 which is government contracting, classroom portal
22 covers almost every topic that you could want on
23 SBA.gov, and that is available. The SBA buying
24 opportunity tool, the mentor-protégé program. We're
25 about to do a new pilot for that, so that isn't

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1   necessarily a tool, but it's a program that's going to
2   make quite a difference for veteran business.
3   Within DOD, and our representative can
4   absolutely speak if I've missed anything, but the
5   MaxPrac methodology was a tool generated to help small
6   business market overview and assist in market research.
7   Also, the Market Research Center of Excellence and
8   Better Buying Power for DOD.
9   So, DOD, did I miss anything that you'd want
10 to bring forward?
11   MR. JACKSON: No, ma'am, you covered it.
12   MS. CARSON: Thanks. Anything for VA you'd
13 want us to hit on?
14   MR. LENEY: I don't want to speak for DOD, but
15 we're working with DOD. We've invested and partnered
16 with them on the development of a market research tool
17 that -- I will defer to my DOD colleague to talk about
18 when that might be completed.
19   MR. JACKSON: Yeah, so, just as Mr. Leney just
20 stated, this is Shannon Jackson, yes, we are rolling
21 out the Market Research Center of Excellence to come up
22 here in the next couple of months. This will help,
23 one, DOD have better oversight on the different
24 socioeconomic categories, where we're performing well
25 at, where we need help at, and then look at some of the

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1   things, opportunities to help increase -- to increase
2   opportunities for the small business community. So,
3   this is one of the big initiatives of the Better Buying
4   Power 3.0 that DOD will be rolling out in partnership
5   with the VA.
6   MS. CARSON: Thank you.
7   MR. FERRARO: Let me add a couple of things as
8   well from a GSA government-wide perspective, and I
9   can't speak for -- of course for Office of Federal
10 Procurement Policy, but big initiatives since the start
11 of this Task Force are our Acquisition Gateway, which
12 is open to the public, which provides a lot of
13 information for -- it's primarily geared towards
14 government folks, but it's also a good source of
15 information.
16   And the shift to category management I think
17 addresses the supplier-based requirements and industry
18 -- it's more geared internal to where the Government is
19 actually spending and in that sense, but I think that's
20 a type of tool that is helping the Government buy
21 smarter and it can get better data to see where there's
22 areas of -- that can be expanded to service-disabled
23 and veteran-owned businesses.
24   MR. KRAMER: And, again, to sort of put this
25 in context, I think the understanding coming out of our

7 (Pages 25 to 28)

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1   work on this is that with this recommendation, coupled
2   with that there are some very big, broad-based tools
3   that we've come up with, the need at this point is not
4   to develop new ones but to make sure these are
5   sustainable, that we're doing training on them, that
6   we're making sure people are aware of what's already
7   available, and that's really where the opportunity is
8   right now.
9   So, our sense is that when we start drafting
10   new recommendations this will evolve more into a
11   training and outreach effort on those programs.
12   MS. CARSON: Thank you. Moving to
13   recommendation number five, maximize the impact of
14   recent funding to increase small business lending by
15   strengthening coordination between the Department of
16   Treasury and the SBA district offices. We do have a
17   Treasury representative on the line. We do recommend
18   that this is closed. The SSBCI funds were allocated
19   several years ago and have continued to be expended.
20   Is there anything else you would like to add, Treasury?
21   (No response.)
22   MS. CARSON: Okay, we'll move on if there are
23   no comments from anyone in the room for closure of
24   number five.
25   For six, increase and augment entrepreneurship

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1   and technical assistance programs offered to veterans.
2   We just spent the first about 10 minutes of the -- this
3   program talking about those entrepreneurial development
4   programs from SBA, and we also have many efforts across
5   agencies to provide through mostly OSDBU offices other
6   training programs.
7   Our VSOs are also partnered with us, who
8   happen -- many of those members are here today, so we
9   do believe that this is an ongoing activity. It has --
10   it's in law and it's in practice, and we believe it can
11   be closed. It's something we will continue to develop
12   and improve upon, but we have met the intent.
13   MR. KRAMER: This is one, and we can maybe put
14   a pin in here and come back to it later, but this
15   strikes me as one where I think I am comfortable and I
16   think our recommendation here suggests that we are
17   comfortable with sort of where Boots to Business is,
18   where Reboot is, all of that.
19   But I think when we think about the specific
20   support we are providing, whether it's a question about
21   VBOCs, whether it's a question about how we coordinate
22   on an interagency to make sure that we're providing
23   those resources, I mean, I think all you have to do is
24   look at the map at the VBOCs and realize that, you
25   know, we provide nationwide coverage but it's not

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1   always right next door where it needs to be.
2   So, I might sort of put a mark that us
3   thinking about where this need evolves to with our next
4   recommendation would be a good item for discussion as
5   we go forward, that the way we wrote this
6   recommendation I think we've done, but I think there's
7   a larger need out here in this area, so...
8   MR. LENEY: Doug, just one additional comment.
9   I think this has been a great success story by SBA, and
10   I know at least from the VA perspective our approach
11   has been to collaborate with the SBA to enable you guys
12   to do what you do very well. And I would just point
13   out to our non-governmental partners here on the
14   interagency task force, the key element to this is
15   going to be funding.
16   This is a -- and I can say this because I'm
17   not part of the program, but I'm certainly -- my
18   agency's a beneficiary of the program and the veterans
19   we support are beneficiaries, but this is a program
20   that's just worthy of expansion. And the only way it
21   gets expanded is if the SBA gets more funds for it.
22   And I would argue that rather than other
23   agencies trying to do what the SBA does well badly that
24   we continue to focus these kinds of development
25   programs in the SBA, in the VBOCs, because it works.

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1   And I get that a lot as I travel around the country and
2   talk to veteran small businesses, and we have -- it's
3   caused us -- this partnership has caused us to refocus
4   on access, not be spending resources trying to
5   replicate poorly what you guys are doing.
6   So, I would give a shout out to SBA, but this
7   is the kind of thing, I wonder if VIP is going to
8   survive; I wonder if the VBOCs are going to survive;
9   and we've all -- those of us who've been inside the
10   Beltway for a while realize that there's lot of great
11   programs that wither and die because they're not the
12   latest and greatest thing. So, for what it's worth.
13   MS. CARSON: Thank you for that. Moving to
14   seven, really specific recommendation, improve
15   information to exiting service members and their
16   spouses by revising Transition Assistance Program to
17   include information on entrepreneurship and business
18   ownership resources. We believe that is in practice,
19   in law, and this recommendation can be closed.
20   For recommendation eight, another that we
21   propose closure and perhaps a pivot and look forward to
22   input on what that pivot might be. Ease the navigation
23   and create or leverage an existing web portal that
24   allows veterans to access entrepreneurship resources
25   from across the Government. This was originally done

8 (Pages 29 to 32)

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1   with BusinessUSA. There are other portals that exist.
2   There's much discussion over whether there should be
3   one door or there's no wrong door for, you know, any
4   topic that you may have related to an activity. So,
5   this one, we believe that we've met the intent through
6   BusinessUSA but are looking for more input on what
7   would be best going forward.
8   Hearing nothing, I'll move on to
9   recommendation nine. The text got smaller, good luck.
10   Find and reduce barriers that impede service-disabled
11   veteran-owned small businesses from contracting with
12   the U.S. Government. We believe that this, especially
13   after the presentation last month and other conditions,
14   that we'd like to keep this open.
15   For recommendation ten, reduce regulatory
16   burdens by offering comment to agencies as they conduct
17   their regulatory look-back analysis under Executive
18   Order 13563, which is called "Improving Regulation and
19   Regulatory Review." We propose closing this, however,
20   a pivot, and I'll turn to our representative from OMB
21   for comment.
22   MR. BLUM: Thanks, Barb. This -- the
23   recommendation, which I think of the suite that we have
24   is the one that's probably the most directly focused on
25   our regulatory activities at large is obviously one

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1   that the Task Force needs to continue to be paying
2   close attention to because regulations, as we all know,
3   are one way in which we can create unintended barriers
4   to entry.
5   The executive order that's identified here is
6   designed to ensure that agencies on an ongoing basis as
7   part of their regulatory programs are continually
8   evaluating their regulations that they're responsible
9   for to make sure that they are necessary and effective
10   and efficient.
11   So, in suggesting that we close this, I think
12   really what we're wanting to do is to try to maybe
13   tailor this more specifically to a suite of actions
14   that can focus and maybe this, by the way, dovetails
15   with number nine, in ways that we can reduce barriers
16   to entry, simplify processes, increase access for new
17   entrants and perhaps even broaden the conversation.
18   So one, we want to maintain the regulatory
19   discussion. And one thing that I mentioned, I believe
20   to the Task Force before but worth mentioning is OMB
21   has worked with the Federal Acquisition Regulatory
22   Council to require that at the beginning of each of the
23   preambles to new rules, in addition to the regulatory
24   flexibility analysis that's required by law to make
25   sure that we're looking at alternatives for small

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1   businesses, we're also specifically speaking to any
2   sort of considerations that we're taking if we're going
3   to apply new requirements to commercial item
4   acquisitions, COTS acquisitions, or small acquisitions
5   under the simplified acquisition threshold.
6   Those are three spaces where small businesses
7   play a very significant role, and we want to make sure
8   that there is complete transparency and understanding
9   if we're going to, you know, apply new requirements in
10   that space. Oftentimes, they're congressionally
11   mandated, but many times they're not, and we recognize
12   that we need to be clear and make sure that we're
13   engaging with the public in a more regular basis in
14   those conversations. So, that may be one way in which
15   we can, you know, think of a recommendation where we
16   can -- times provide input to the FAR Council more
17   directly.
18   On the legislative front, I've many times
19   mentioned our interest in looking at opportunities for
20   process simplification, reducing barriers, and I'm
21   happy to say that not only -- I think last time I told
22   you the administration submitted a suite of acquisition
23   reform proposals to Congress, which included raising
24   the SAT to $500,000, creating on a pilot basis an
25   innovation set-aside that would allow new entrants to

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1   come in and be able to sell to the Government without
2   having to compete in a full and open competition
3   against well established companies, provided that they
4   had some new innovative products or services that would
5   meet government needs. And Senator Carper has proposed
6   an amendment for incorporation into the Senate NDAA
7   with those and several other proposals.
8   So, I know we've discussed these, and I'm
9   hoping that we will do more of that in engaging with
10   Congress. I think at times that the fact that Congress
11   hasn't acted is probably because we hadn't been
12   proactive enough in making recommendations.
13   A third on the innovation side, I mentioned
14   that we issued a guidance document to encourage
15   agencies to identify acquisition innovation advocates
16   and to establish labs with the idea of creating
17   pathways for contracting officers to feel empowered to
18   use new and innovative practices that may be
19   streamlined, easier to reach small businesses and other
20   businesses offering innovative solutions.
21   SBA has stood up an idea lab that was very
22   actively engaged in substantial transformation of the
23   SBAOne program, which as you all know is used to help
24   support certification and other representation
25   requirements that small businesses have to make in some

9 (Pages 33 to 36)

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1   of those programs and using new practices like Agile
2   Acquisition and whatnot was able to get a minimum -- a
3   viable product on the street to meet the agencies'
4   needs in a much shorter period of time, maybe half the
5   time that they otherwise would have if they had gone
6   through a traditional practice. I believe the work was
7   awarded to a small business. HHS had a similar result,
8   so I think there's a space in the innovation -- in
9   innovation land.
10   And, finally, in communications, because we
11   all often find that just the lack of us being
12   responsive to the community itself creates a very big
13   barrier to entry and discourages companies from wanting
14   to participate for understandable reasons. We started
15   the Acquisition 360, which was the first interactive
16   process for us getting feedback on a regular basis from
17   contractors.
18   So, while we will continue and it's important
19   for us to look at the performance of the contractor, we
20   also want to have them evaluate us, and this is also
21   not just to awardees but also those that haven't
22   received award. So, I think there are a lot of
23   initiatives that our office has been working closely
24   with GSA, DOD, VA, other agencies that we can work more
25   closely into a recommendation with a pivot in this

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1   space.
2   MR. KRAMER: I'll push you on a little bit of
3   that now, though, but as we look forward to the pivot,
4   any sort of initial thoughts of, you know, you talked
5   about sort of doing a more focused -- you know, being
6   in certain areas. You certainly mentioned some ideas
7   that could be a subject of that focus or whatever with
8   some of the agile development and acquisition
9   practices, you know, we've had experience with here.
10   Anything in particular that you think is really top of
11   the list or the top two or three things on that list
12   that might be worth the interagency push that this Task
13   Force could advocate?
14   MR. BLUM: I think -- you know, again, I'm
15   very much interested in my colleagues' thoughts on
16   this, but, you know, maybe something around the
17   emergent technology space. I'm not trying to -- this
18   would dovetail with, like, SBR and STTR, but we have,
19   for example, in the cyberspace and in digital
20   acquisition, every agency is trying to improve their
21   capacity to be able to -- as part of a 21st Century
22   government, be able to perform, you know, digital and
23   provide digital services to citizens and similarly to
24   be able to get rapid access to emerging technologies
25   that we need to be, you know, fighting or cyber

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1   problems.
2   Both of those spaces, over and over again, any
3   agency I've spoken to, not only do they talk about the
4   need to be able to do this better, but they've also
5   talked about the fact that there are small businesses
6   out there that can provide a lot of these types of
7   technologies.
8   And, so, while I'm not being 100 percent
9   responsive, I think if we can create something in this
10   space of emerging technologies that ties to digital,
11   that ties to emerging technologies, it also gives us an
12   opportunity to be very specific around showing how the
13   activities are helping the Government meet priorities
14   that the administration and the taxpayers know we need
15   to get accomplished.
16   MR. KRAMER: Right, I think that's absolutely
17   perfect. And then one of the things we should be
18   thinking about, I think the next round of
19   recommendations should have sort of -- continue to have
20   some of the systemic, you know, wide-ranging, you know,
21   changing programs, but also some very narrow focused
22   ones. And I think, you know, the more I've had
23   conversations specifically about, you know, the
24   cyberspace, because there's clearly going to be a
25   sustained economic opportunity in that space,

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1   especially in relation to the Federal Government.
2   There is also -- there are also a lot of
3   people coming out of service that have been working in
4   that space and have acquired some good expertise in
5   that space.
6   Now, how do we certify that expertise so it is
7   acknowledged and given credit in the private sector and
8   maybe also then in contracting actions, you know, and
9   how we can create a fast track, which would really
10   benefit an agency -- we need all the cyber expertise
11   and IT expertise we can get in this building. And, so,
12   the more that we could, you know, verify the ability,
13   have that certified from their service, create a fast
14   track for those people either as employees or as
15   contractors to work with us, create something like
16   that, that's -- I can't say the word win on enough
17   sides of that issue to describe how well that would
18   work.
19   So, you know, as we think about the next
20   recommendations, identifying opportunities like that,
21   which really would require the sort of interagency
22   approach, you know, we would have to work with you all
23   on the contracting side of it, our friends at DOD would
24   have to work with us probably on the certification side
25   of that, you know, along with VA. So, I take that as a

10 (Pages 37 to 40)

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1   very good point and an example of something we might
2   work on today and over the course of the next couple of
3   months.
4   MR. FERRARO: And GSA recognizes that as well
5   across the board for small businesses, and we're
6   working on several programs in conjunction with OMB to
7   speed up that process and piloting it in our IT area as
8   an example.
9   MR. BLUM: You guys have been doing a lot of
10   work in FedRAMP, for example, and getting those
11   businesses certified. And the whole nature of supply
12   chain risk management, you know, small businesses are
13   part of that and, you know, how they can, you know,
14   engage more effectively and not be fearful of the fact
15   of getting excluded because of the fact that it seems
16   to complicated is a great space for us to deal with
17   that.
18   MR. FERRARO: The other issue, and it may just
19   be confusion on my part, that I think is wroth in this
20   regulatory area is the whole idea of the certification
21   of a veteran-owned business and service-disabled
22   business. I get a lot of questions from ex-service
23   members or how do I certify and things along those
24   lines. So, I think it may just be a lack of
25   information or it may be -- it would be nice if there

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1   was one policy or rule across the board.
2   MR. KRAMER: I'm trying to cultivate
3   conversation here. I'm not going to allow people
4   jumping three recommendations ahead; however, so we'll
5   get to that -- we'll get to that with recommendation
6   14.
7   MR. JACKSON: From DOD's perspective, one of
8   the initiatives that OSBP has put in place as a result
9   of one of the GAO deals is we have like, you know, for
10   the small businesses, we've developed a quick fact
11   sheet for the small business community to look at and
12   at least prepare themselves for the cyber requirements
13   and actually doing business with DOD.
14   So, it is on our business.defense site, a
15   quick reference or a fact -- two-page fact sheet, just
16   for information for the small business community. So,
17   that's one of the things that DOD is really trying to
18   push, as well. So, just an insert there.
19   MS. CARSON: Thank you for that contribution
20   and robust discussion. It really gives us a positive
21   way forward. Moving to recommendation 11, coordinate
22   and centralize information on veteran and service-
23   disabled veteran-owned small business contracting
24   opportunities across the Federal Government. We
25   believe that that one still needs attention.

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1   Recommendation 12, produce an agency-led
2   assessment of veteran-owned small business achievements
3   and contracting goals to increase veteran-owned small
4   business utilization in prime contracting. Also, we
5   believe that one continues to need attention.
6   Recommendation 13, increase collaboration on
7   federal contracting opportunities between national
8   veterans' advocacy groups and SBA's Office of Veteran
9   Business Development. Although we have done work here,
10   there's more to do. We can never have a large enough
11   table, and so we'd like to keep this one open.
12   Recommendation 14, we recommend a closure but
13   a pivot on developing a streamlined, efficient, and
14   clear certification process to be used by veterans and
15   service-disabled veteran-owned business in federal
16   procurement.
17   MR. FERRARO: Here's where I'll chime in. We
18   have centralized across the Federal Government, and
19   it's the system that I own in my current role at GSA,
20   System for Award Management, SAM. And through OMB's
21   urging, we're expanding that to be on just contracting
22   and the grants community is starting to use SAM as the
23   authoritative source for entity information.
24   And the confusion I see is because I own SAM
25   and when I get questions from veterans, I send them to

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1   SAM and say, oh, it's a self-certification, this is all
2   you need to do, you know, check the block, et cetera.
3   But then it's a different process with different
4   agencies, and I'm not familiar with that. Those are an
5   additional certification, I think, specifically for the
6   VA that I'm aware of, and there may be others that I'm
7   not aware of. No? Well, maybe it's misinformation on
8   my part, then.
9   MR. KRAMER: You're not wrong.
10   MR. FERRARO: I'm not wrong, oh, okay. And,
11   so -- and that's what I tell folks. I said, you know,
12   or folks being the veterans that are asking me
13   questions. So, I think that's an area that we should
14   either streamline or standardize or trust the veterans
15   to do the right thing and just do away with it.
16   But there's entire industries out there, and
17   I'm not trying to take away from small businesses, but
18   there are small businesses that help other small
19   businesses get a certification, which kind of troubles
20   me a little bit because I deal with that on the SAM
21   side of the house where there's businesses out there
22   that help businesses register in SAM and try and take
23   money that they don't really need to. It's free, but
24   if it's too difficult where you need somebody to help
25   you with it, then we on the Federal Government -- we're

11 (Pages 41 to 44)

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1   doing something wrong.
2   MR. KRAMER: And I think this is one that
3   could really benefit, again, from the interagency
4   approach because I think there is -- you know, this is
5   sort of an area that is still in its, you know, if not
6   infancy, adolescence, where I think there is a desire
7   to be able to certify, even if, you know, the service-
8   disabled, which is a statutorily created program, I
9   mean, that -- there's clearly that, but in this other
10   space of giving veterans potentially that
11   certification, which would be an advantage to them, in
12   a way that is true to preventing any sort of fraud with
13   that, but at the same time not being an up-front burden
14   for them and a wall them to climb, as you sort of
15   spelled out. And that's really one of the things we
16   address all the time.
17   When we -- when I got here, our 8(a) program
18   generally, which deals with all sorts of disadvantage
19   folks, not just service-disabled, is one way you can
20   look at those programs, you know, it was taking people
21   two years, and a lot of them had to pay $20,000 to an
22   outside consultant to get into the program, and that's
23   crazy, because the whole purpose of the program is to
24   take people who need a helping hand.
25   And, so, we have to -- but at the same time,

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1   if people abuse that program, boy, you get some bad IG
2   findings, a bad GAO report, a bad newspaper article.
3   So, we -- I think this is something that would very
4   much benefit from all of us having a conversation of
5   where do we get to that point of comfort that we are
6   creating a program that has integrity as more and more
7   agencies might have an interest in doing this but not
8   creating that burden and then meeting everybody's needs
9   in that regard. So, I very much agree, as well, that I
10   think a pivot here and a good conversation about that
11   would be -- would be helpful to everyone, yeah.
12   MR. WYNN: Joe Wynn again, VET-Force. You
13   know, I have some comments on some of the
14   recommendations, but I'll wait until you get to the
15   end, but on this one in particular, I just really am
16   not understanding why this would be closed because some
17   of the comments you just made and also this -- I think
18   -- first of all, these recommendations came from 2012,
19   2013, okay, and we still are having issues with the VA
20   verification and also people trying to self-certify,
21   trying to get clarity on which one they should do,
22   certain agencies, should they look at the VA, should
23   they not look at the VA. So, I really don't understand
24   why this is being recommended as being closed.
25   MR. KRAMER: To be clear, I think the

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1   recommendation here is to pivot. I think the
2   recommendation is to close this specific one but to
3   pivot -- basically to rework it because we think that
4   as you sort of pointed out it's a recommendation that
5   was written in 2012. There are sort of different
6   questions, and maybe we have moved from the infancy to
7   the adolescence. So, I think we are generally in
8   agreement that we still need, on an interagency basis,
9   to talk about this, and we plan to do that.
10   MR. LENEY: I'd reinforce that, Doug, because
11   I think in 2012 we were in a very different place. I
12   would argue that there is a streamlined, efficient, and
13   clear verification process within the VA. It only
14   applies to the VA, so you're correct, Eric. I think
15   the pivot that we're suggesting is a fundamental policy
16   determination of whether or not the Federal Government
17   adopts some kind of a verification program so that all
18   veterans in all agencies that are doing business are on
19   the same footing.
20   We have 8,600 SDVOSBs and VOSBs in our
21   program. About 2,000 of them do business with the VA.
22   What that indicates to us in our conversations with
23   veterans is there's a large numbers of veterans who
24   feel a utility to being -- to being able to demonstrate
25   that they've been through a rigorous process that

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1   demonstrates that they are, in fact, owned and
2   controlled by veterans and they're a real SDVOSB or
3   VOSB.
4   In our agency, that's important because last
5   year we did $3.7 billion set-aside to veteran-owned
6   small businesses. And as I look at status protests and
7   I look at responses from veterans, there is a growing
8   sense of a double standard. The -- I don't believe
9   self-certification is a viable option because of the
10   risks to the community from those who would argue that
11   there are substantial elements to the community that
12   are not legitimate.
13   One of the advantages of a rigorous program,
14   which we have, is that we can state with great
15   confidence that the 8,600 firms who are in the program
16   are, in fact, legitimate.
17   But I will tell you so far in this fiscal year
18   we received over 400 allegations of fraud against
19   veteran-owned small businesses in our program. We
20   investigate them all. Over the course of the last
21   three years, we've done over 2,000 unannounced audits
22   of VOSBs in the program, which is a very high
23   percentage of those businesses.
24   We've invested millions of dollars in making
25   sure that the people who are -- the firms that are in

12 (Pages 45 to 48)

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1   that program are legitimate and can be confident and we
2   can be confident as we talk to contracting officers and
3   program managers and other prime contractors who want
4   to use these businesses that they are, in fact,
5   legitimate.
6   My concern, and why I argue for the pivot, I
7   agree with you, Joe, that we should not close this, but
8   there's sort of a fundamental decision that I think
9   this Task Force is a good place to address it, is do we
10   get serious about not only the veteran-owned small
11   business community but the other communities like 8(a)
12   and women, et cetera, so that if we are going to
13   provide economic benefit, particularly procurement
14   preference to these firms, and we say with confidence
15   that they're the real deal.
16   When I took this job in 2011, you know, I was
17   facing an IG report from the VA that argued that we had
18   two-and-a-half billion dollars in fraud in the SDVOSB
19   program. My view, that that report was inaccurate, and
20   over the course of the last four years, I can state
21   with great confidence that we don't have that kind of
22   fraud, but it takes an investment.
23   And one has to ask, particularly for those
24   firms that have been denied and are found to be
25   ineligible in our program, who are doing business with

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1   other agencies of the Federal Government on a self-
2   certification basis when the regulations that govern
3   the SBA program and the VA program are essentially the
4   same, that maybe there is a problem that this
5   interagency task force ought to look at, and I think I
6   would look forward to collaborating with GSA, how do we
7   -- how do we make this, you know, the same across
8   government.
9   MR. KRAMER: So, obviously, I think we're all
10   in agreement this will be a very robust discussion over
11   the next several months. Victor, I'll let you go in a
12   minute.
13   I just want to add two things for food for
14   thought between now and the next meeting for folks who
15   may not deal with this every day as some of us do. The
16   first is to realize that, you know, the real challenge
17   in this is not so much to determine if someone was a
18   vet or not, because that can often be looked up on a
19   computer.
20   The question is often what role is that
21   certified vet playing in the organization. Are they
22   just sort of a prop? Do they really have control? Do
23   they really see the profit? Or are they just someone
24   that an existing business who has no ties to service
25   are using as a proxy? So, that's really what you're

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1   trying to figure out here. The other is pretty easy.
2   And then it becomes this -- you know, you
3   might sit through more of these before we're done than
4   you'd like to, but there's a bit of a chicken-and-an-
5   egg risk analysis. And that's -- you know, that's what
6   I have seen a lot of our programs, and we will have to
7   bring to this one, as well.
8   I will say my experience, coming from outside
9   government to inside the government, at least at this
10   agency, is we had a lot of government officials working
11   in this space who were very, very risk-averse, because
12   if the one IG report came down or the one news story
13   came down, there would be a bit of a witch hunt for who
14   signed off on that company and why did they do it, and
15   that's the only time that those folks got attention.
16   And it was negative attention, so they did everything
17   they could to avoid being the focus of that attention.
18   And that's where we ended up with in a lot of
19   our 8(a) reviews 18 months having to wait for the
20   certification, mounds of paper that people would have
21   to pull together and all of that, so we'd have to find
22   the right balance between what can we do up front in a
23   way that allows the small business to get up and
24   running but gives us confidence that we're not going to
25   end up with -- you know, we don't want to end up with

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1   the $2 billion in alleged fraud that actually turns out
2   to be correct, you know, that gives us comfort on that,
3   but then also realizes that there will be both a before
4   and after on this, that you do the investigations, you
5   do the audits on the back side.
6   You know, the gate may not hold everyone back
7   without, you know, taking too long. And, so, there's
8   just an operational question there that I think is very
9   ripe for discussion and a lot of consistency across the
10   Federal Government. So, I very much look forward to
11   dealing with this.
12   So, Victor, did you want to chime in on this?
13   MR. KLINGELHOFER: Yes. Victor Klingelhofer
14   for VVA. I certainly agree with what you and Tom just
15   discussed here. You know, I also -- when we discussed
16   this in the subcommittee, closing this and pivoting it,
17   I was very much in favor of that because I think we
18   need to look government-wide at the entire
19   certification process for a couple of reasons. And
20   possibly not only for SDVs but, you know, government-
21   wide.
22   I have seen more and more of these
23   organizations helping people get certified for $20,
24   $30,000. I mean, I remember seeing one, it was on a
25   GSA Schedule contract, where someone charged $120,000

13 (Pages 49 to 52)

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1   to a company to get on schedule and they didn't. We
2   actually had to help them get on Schedule later.
3   And there is a lot of confusion as to exactly
4   how companies need to self-certify, what they need to
5   do, and I think that the SBA's efforts in the 8(a)
6   program are excellent, what you've done in -- over the
7   last 10 years, 12 years to really speed that up and
8   make it more accurate. It is very good, and I'd like
9   to see that --
10   MR. KRAMER: Actually, it's about the last 8
11   to 12 months. So, Jackie Robinson, who is up in that
12   office, has really transformed it on a dime. I mean, I
13   think there was a lot of good work going on before
14   that, but she's done a really amazing job that I think
15   is going to have impact across the agency.
16   MR. KLINGELHOFER: No, I agree, and I really
17   look forward to -- where I'm going with all of this is
18   the pivoting, meetings that we will have here to
19   refocus what needs to be done. Thank you.
20   MR. KIDALOV: Max Kidalov from the Naval
21   Postgraduate School. So, I'd like to offer a couple
22   of comments on the certification issue. I would like
23   to -- for the committee and for you to consider that
24   perhaps the -- of course the integrity and the
25   consistency pieces are important, but also there is

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1   another very important piece, which is the branding.
2   And the branding piece becomes very, very important.
3   So, yesterday, for example, we heard some
4   presentations in the Advisory Council about, for
5   instance, branding related to agriculture;
6   specifically, veterans involved in agriculture. And
7   there are different -- there's different value in that.
8   And I believe that there is value in having a brand.
9   And that is something that would be valuable, I think,
10   for veterans. It would also be a very good community -
11   - community outreach mechanism for this office and for
12   the entire -- for the entire program.
13   In terms of the alignment between the disabled
14   -- service-disabled veteran program and some others, so
15   I heard Victor bringing up the 8(a), there are some
16   very interesting regulatory history that's also, I
17   believe, addressed in our report, and that history goes
18   to when the original rulemaking was done by the SBA,
19   that the criteria for the controls were borrowed by
20   reference from the 8(a) program. However, there was
21   this dichotomy introduced. There was on the one hand a
22   comment that this would not be done at the time as a
23   business development program, yet the business
24   development standards were imported.
25   My suggestion would be, of course, as I have

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1   suggested before in terms of reforming the program
2   towards business development, that perhaps we think
3   about this holistically and try to align the standards
4   to the need and with the idea that we are -- you know,
5   we're going to align the control and all the other
6   elements to the actual need of the veterans in terms of
7   -- in terms of the growth.
8   And, finally, on the consistency as between
9   the SBA and the VA, from my time on The Hill, I do know
10   that the VA program was created sort of out of
11   frustration by Congress at the time with perhaps the
12   slow process and some of the other issues. And
13   basically it was created as a pilot, if you will, for
14   the VA to do this.
15   My suggestion is now we've got a lot of
16   experience. This would be a good time to review and
17   see which standard is better. I mean, there is --
18   there's a lot of judicial decisions on this. There's
19   practical knowledge. There's, you know -- and I
20   believe we could come up with something, a uniform
21   process that perhaps that would be tailored to the
22   need, there would be some branding, the controls would
23   reflect the actual need of the veteran, and, you know,
24   if they're at the development stage, there will be one
25   set of controls; and if they're more the, you know,

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1   more of at the graduated stage, then it will be a
2   different set, things like that. Thank you, sir.
3   MR. KRAMER: All right, thanks. No, I think
4   it's very clear this is a robust area, not only for --
5   with need and interagency cooperation but also some
6   potential good ideas on this one. So, we'll highlight
7   this one and then maybe move on to the other
8   recommendations and see where we land.
9   MS. CARSON: We will move on to recommendation
10   15, and this is the area where we had other priority
11   recommendations: vest the GI Bill benefit as a
12   property right, allowing veterans to use funds both for
13   education and small business creation activities such
14   as counseling and business financing. There has been
15   no movement on this one. We don't know that there will
16   be in the imminent future. So, I would recommend
17   keeping it open at this time. Any comments?
18   MR. LENEY: I will defer to my colleague from
19   VBA, but a concern -- well, let me let Cheryl comment
20   on this, and then I can maybe reinforce her statements.
21   MS. FLOHR: Hi, this is Cheryl Flohr from VBA.
22   Unfortunately, I feel at a disadvantage. I've been
23   asking around for a copy of the recommendations. This
24   is my first time joining this meeting, and if I heard
25   the recommendation, it's very hard to hear people who

14 (Pages 53 to 56)

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1   are in the room, by the way, had to do with utilization
2   of the GI Bill. And I would have to defer to a
3   colleague in our education service, and I did not hear
4   anyone from education service either on the phone or in
5   the room.
6   MR. LENEY: So, given Cheryl's statement, I
7   will add to this, having worked with VBA, the
8   undersecretary -- or deputy undersecretary Curt Coy.
9   There is utilization of the GI Bill for training
10   programs that are approved training programs for
11   veteran entrepreneurs and business. The concern that
12   the VA has on this is the utilization of the GI Bill
13   for startup activities and business activities.
14   Barb mentioned earlier a program in the SBA to
15   fund the capacity to start up a business. I recall
16   many years ago there was a program whereby you could
17   use your GI Bill to take courses in computer
18   construction. And as an output of the course, you
19   ended up with a computer.
20   Back in the days, Heathkit was a big computer
21   maker. And one of the concerns that came up from that
22   program is that people weren't really getting educated
23   on constructing computers. What they'd do -- what they
24   did was they were using the GI Bill to buy -- have the
25   Government buy them computers. So, there's a concern

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1   that we don't turn an education program into a grant
2   program that could come back and bite us.
3   An example that was raised when we did this,
4   looked at this a couple of years ago was, you know, a
5   person wants to start a small business, wants to buy an
6   F150 pickup truck as an element of his business and
7   that we then fund that purchase as part of the startup
8   of the business, and I could conceive of a way -- and
9   I'm sure Victor could do so very quickly on how you
10   could justify the purchase of an F150 as essential to
11   your business -- and then the business goes out of
12   business subsequent of the receipt of the funds to buy
13   the F150 pickup truck, and then the Government is faced
14   with no reports and IGAO and IG reports that whereby we
15   have abuse of the program.
16   Now, as you said, Doug, Government people tend
17   to be a little bit risk-averse. And I only say -- I
18   give these examples not to assert that veterans would,
19   as a group, would do this, but there is a history of
20   this kind of thing in business startup. So, that's why
21   when you say there's no movement, we think this one
22   actually -- we moved on it because the GI Bill is
23   utilized on the education and there isn't a whole lot
24   of energy in the VA to try to take over an SBA program
25   on funding startups to education.

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1   MS. CARSON: And when I meant no movement, I
2   meant the proposed legislation that has come out of the
3   Senate Small Business Committee, and it has not gone
4   further at this point, and that legislation did propose
5   a pilot; it didn't say to do it full and open. And it
6   also addressed in the provisions how one would evaluate
7   the milestones where funding was appropriate. In a
8   future brief this morning, we're going to hear that
9   this is one of the things that the GI Bill did in the
10   era after World War II. And, so, it would not be the
11   first time that this had been exercised.
12   And there are other conditions such as there
13   are service members and family members who are not
14   going to use the GI Bill benefit. There have been
15   generous programs such as tuition assistance and higher
16   requirements to enter service that have changed what a
17   service member's education may look like at this time.
18   I do understand the concerns. I'm very
19   interested in this possibility, and if it did go
20   forward, that legislation, again, it would only be a
21   pilot to test whether this is a good idea or not. It
22   was 200 businesses over a period of time, and if we
23   were able to do this, the portion that VA would do is
24   control the disbursement of the GI Bill. It would be
25   SBA's current resources which would be the Advisory

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1   Committee on Veteran Business Affairs, along with
2   Veteran Business Outreach Centers, to advise those
3   businesses selected for the pilot to understand and
4   establish milestones for funding.
5   MR. FERRARO: I -- oh, sorry. I agree with
6   everything that was just said, but I don't see that
7   this is an action for the Task Force. And, so, keeping
8   it open, maybe there's --
9   (Brief pause.)
10   MS. CARSON: We're going to stand by for a
11   moment. Okay, go ahead.
12   MR. FERRARO: So, but for the Task Force
13   recommendations, I think it may be, you know, take it
14   off the table, so to speak, in some format.
15   MR. KRAMER: Okay, what we'll do -- I think --
16   so, I think what we're hearing in the room is actually
17   with the recommendation potentially close this. If
18   other folks have thoughts about that, let us know, but
19   I think we'll move in that direction as we sort of
20   finalize this before the next meeting, but I think that
21   makes since, Eric.
22   MS. CARSON: Okay, so recommendation 15 will
23   look different. We propose closure because of where
24   that activity could take place, the control.
25   Moving to recommendation 16, this one is a

15 (Pages 57 to 60)

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1   keep open but pivot: research and direct policy
2   efforts around current veteran macroeconomic issues by
3   conducting a more in-depth analysis of veteran
4   unemployment, employment, and self-employment. Any
5   comments here?
6   MR. METHENY: So, Bill Metheny from Department
7   of Labor. I think we've talked a couple times about
8   the age of the recommendations that we've been working
9   through. So, if this is a few years old, it's helpful
10   to understand where we've been and come to. Since
11   2011, the veteran unemployment rate has dropped from
12   9.9 percent to its current 3.4 percent, which is
13   amazing. It's a full percentage point below non-
14   veterans. So, that's important to know.
15   I would also highlight that 2011 is when my VA
16   colleague started his work. I'm not sure it's cause-
17   effect that we've seen such improvement, maybe just
18   correlation.
19   MR. LENEY: Totally cause and effect.
20   MR. METHENY: Cause and effect. So, where we
21   were in 2011 and '12 in veterans' employment and self-
22   employment is different. And I think our highlights at
23   the beginning of the meeting show all the programs and
24   the progress we're making. So, I think that it's
25   helpful to keep this open, and I think our pivot might

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1   want to be towards focusing exactly what it is -- the
2   questions that we're looking for. Our data in the
3   Department of Labor obviously comes from the Bureau of
4   Labor Statistics. The question is what other data
5   sources are out there that can inform our research and
6   programmatic recommendations.
7   One of the key economists at the Bureau of
8   Labor Statistics is going to be on detail with the
9   Department of Labor Vets to look at that question and
10   what data's available, what does the data tell us, and
11   where are the gaps that other data fields might be able
12   to fill in for us. So, perhaps in addition to defining
13   what our research questions are, the next step for the
14   subgroup to work on is identifying where those other
15   databases are and how we can make those linkages.
16   So, all that's to say concur with open, concur
17   with pivot, but I wanted to give you the why.
18   MS. CARSON: Thank you so much. We're going
19   to check in with folks on the phone. We have made an
20   adjustment to the volume. Can you hear more clearly?
21   MS. FLOHR: It is better, yes, thank you.
22   MS. CARSON: Thanks.
23   UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I agree, it's better.
24   MR. JACKSON: Yes.
25   MS. CARSON: Thanks for the feedback.

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1   Moving to recommendation 17: explore revision
2   to unemployment compensation for ex-service members to
3   support small business creation.
4   MR. METHENY: So, Bill Metheny again from DOL.
5   This is an interesting one to look at because at first
6   blush it seems to indicate that veterans who are going
7   through training programs to become self-employed might
8   be ineligible for their unemployment benefits in those
9   programs. It turns out that there are a number of ways
10   that veterans can receive unemployment benefits while
11   going through a variety of programs.
12   One of the themes that we all live with is the
13   difference between federal policy and state
14   implementation. So, unemployment is a state-driven
15   event, and each state has their own rules for what
16   people -- the qualification and what the benefits are.
17   The unique parts about unemployment insurance when we
18   get into UCX, there are some helpful things for
19   veterans, but it would be important to know that seven
20   states have already developed what are called self-
21   employment assistance programs that are designed to
22   train veterans and they get their full benefits while
23   going through it.
24   Two other categories that we kind of mentioned
25   in our recommendation are state-approved training

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1   programs, as well as Veterans Administration-approved
2   programs. Again, those are sort of state by state on
3   whether being in those programs disqualifies you from
4   benefits, but in most cases, the states have allowances
5   for approved programs in this area and being able to
6   continue with their unemployment benefits.
7   So, what I think our recommendation might be
8   for the next step would be to put together -- what
9   seems to be missing is the information and the
10   awareness of those sorts of things. And, so, maybe
11   what we'd do is start off with a fact sheet that we can
12   put together that sort of spells out what's going on
13   and what the benefits are and where to find the
14   specifics, depending on who you are and what you're
15   trying to do and see if that fact sheet is something
16   that is a useful educational tool. And if there are
17   gaps there, then we can pursue shortages.
18   MR. WYNN: Joe Wynn, VET-Force. Yeah, I
19   appreciate the comments just made by the representative
20   from the Department of Labor about the programs
21   supported by -- that could be supported by the use
22   of -- while you're still on unemployment. And I also
23   think it ties in also with recommendations 16 and 15
24   with regard to building access and opportunity to self-
25   employment.

16 (Pages 61 to 64)

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1   What we're finding when we work through the
2   state employment agencies, they are -- they are
3   allowing funding for people to be trained for
4   occupational skills to increase their opportunity for
5   employment. And, so, as such, that's probably why some
6   states are allowing folks to receive unemployment
7   benefits if they're being trained, even for self-
8   employment.
9   With that being said, it seems like it would
10   also be relevant to keep on the table the possibility
11   of using your GI Bill benefits for self-employment
12   because as we know now from the work that's been being
13   done with the SBA, with the TAP program, transition
14   assistance, as such, entrepreneurship is a learning
15   activity. You can go through training.
16   So, if we view GI Bill benefits, the education
17   perspective of that, to learn how to run a business,
18   then why, in fact, couldn't a veteran use their
19   benefits for training and education to learn how to run
20   a business? It just goes hand in hand. So, I would
21   hope that you guys would keep this open.
22   And, also, I think it's important, not only
23   with recommendation 15 to keep it open, but this
24   interagency task force, in making these
25   recommendations, I know it's supposed to go up the

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1   chain to the President, maybe Congress or some folks,
2   hopefully maybe they'll look at it and see that if
3   you're endorsing support of such a concept and idea,
4   maybe they would give it a little more consideration.
5   So, I hope that you won't totally take that off the
6   table.
7   MR. KRAMER: Well, thank you for that. Did we
8   -- did you talk about 18? Did we get to 18?
9   MS. CARSON: No.
10   MR. KRAMER: Why don't we do 18 real quick,
11   just to make sure there are no comments on that, and
12   then we'll make sure that we can stay on -- on sort of
13   schedule here.
14   MS. CARSON: So, 18 is examine the
15   establishment of a new small business procurement
16   initiative for firms whose total workforce is comprised
17   of at least 35 percent or more veterans. And we
18   proposed closure. I believe the notes are here. The
19   new set-aside program exists. No further action at
20   this time that we could identify. Are there any
21   comments?
22   MR. LENEY: I apologize. In our work group
23   discussions, perhaps not being very articulate on this,
24   but I suggest that we might consider pivoting this as
25   opposed to closing it. We have examined this one, and

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1   I don't -- we don't have any issue with the notion of a
2   procurement initiative that requires funding or a new
3   category or anything like that, but the VA has piloted
4   an initiative whereby we give evaluation -- we utilize
5   veteran employment as an evaluation factor in
6   procurements, which doesn't cost the Government any --
7   you know, it doesn't require a program; it doesn't
8   require funding. We've actually piloted on one of our
9   biggest procurements that we have done recently, and I
10   would suggest that this might be worthy of an
11   interagency engagement to pivot in thinking about
12   policy but in a different context.
13   The other thing that we discovered was rather
14   than trying to set a standard, which is difficult and
15   would put some burden on Department of Labor that the
16   simple approach of using competition -- in our pilot,
17   what we did was we had businesses certify, as we do
18   reps and certs and other things, their veteran
19   employment of full-time employees, and then it becomes
20   a competitive factor. If I employ 35 percent and you
21   employ 30 percent, I have an advantage. And we now
22   built into this contract the ability to go back and
23   check.
24   So, I would just -- I'm not -- I think that
25   one of the things as we talk about veteran

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1   entrepreneurs that one of at least our interests is
2   veteran employment, and particularly for those firms
3   that are receiving procurement preferences, we believe
4   that they have a particular obligation to pay it
5   forward, and so I would suggest we pivot this as
6   opposed to closing it.
7   MR. KRAMER: And I think I agree with that. I
8   think part of the motivation for potentially closing
9   this was that it may not have been the best use of our
10   resources based on the likelihood that it's something
11   we could get done in the short term as opposed to, for
12   example, just going back a few minutes to the
13   discussion of the vet certification issue.
14   Although it strikes me as we pivot this, if we
15   could construct it in a way where it is complementary
16   then in the discussions we will have about the
17   certification of the veteran-owned businesses and how
18   those two, you know, could go hand in hand. It doesn't
19   seem as much of a waste of our time and attention if we
20   can do those sort of jointly.
21   MR. LENEY: And there has been action on The
22   Hill, both in the SBAC and the HVAC, looking at
23   legislative proposals. And, again, I apologize because
24   when we had the earlier discussions we were focused on,
25   you know, programs with money, as opposed to this

17 (Pages 65 to 68)

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1   different approach.
2   MR. BLUM: If I could also just jump in very
3   quickly, I think part of the discussion initially is
4   when this was originally proposed by the Task Force
5   some years ago they were looking at it, could we model
6   something like we do for HUBZones where there's a
7   mandatory requirement and a mandatory set-aside
8   requirement.
9   And I think that quickly we realized that that
10   would require legislation. But as you said, there are
11   alternative ways in which we can create -- you know,
12   make it part of the evaluation process, and I would
13   just also add that's at the front end. At the back
14   end, you could also look at -- and as part of
15   evaluating a contractor's performance, you know, their
16   adherence to the various compliance requirements.
17   And, in fact, there is a case at the FAR
18   Council open to clarify when you're looking at a
19   contractor's performance, one category would be their,
20   you know, adherence to the various compliance
21   requirements in a contract.
22   MR. KRAMER: And I'll sort of put out for food
23   for thought, this is -- I get a little bit excited
24   about the potential with things like this because I
25   think with the sort of automation we're trying to do

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1   here, this sort of thing, which I think would have
2   looked like a bureaucratic nightmare even five years
3   ago, when we talk about HUBZone -- and HUBZone, for
4   those of you who don't know, tries to spur economic
5   growth in economically depressed areas.
6   And, so, one of the requirements is that
7   people hire people who live in that area and to make
8   sure that they're really creating roots -- has become
9   so much easier with simple things like Google Maps.
10   And we can have people, instead of sending us a list,
11   enter their information online, give the addresses of
12   their employees, which you can confirm through various
13   public records, and then plot on Google Maps that make
14   sure that you've got enough people falling within that.
15   And I think this sort of thing, as well, with
16   sort of records that are publicly available with, you
17   know, the ability to verify in those automated ways, I
18   think makes it much more streamlined than a
19   bureaucratic nightmare it would have been a while ago.
20   So, with that, let me -- this has been a very
21   good conversation. If I wanted nothing else today, I
22   wanted us to have a good conversation that would be a
23   springboard for coming up with the next group of
24   recommendations, which as was mentioned before, really
25   become a centerpiece of the annual report that we do

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1   send up to the President out of this Task Force. And,
2   so, I want to make sure that we get that right in this
3   meeting and the next. And I think over the next couple
4   of months, as we discuss not only how we pivot some of
5   these but how we consider some new recommendations that
6   go around, I think we've laid a really good groundwork
7   for that.
8   So, that took us a little bit over that part
9   of the meeting, but I thought it was time well spent,
10   and we will sort of power through the rest of the
11   meeting and make sure we get there.
12   What we're going to do next is have our
13   presentation on Agri-business policy, and I'll sort of
14   introduce that here in a second. But then after that,
15   immediately after that, we will have time for
16   additional sort of open public comment on any subject,
17   not just the subjects that we put on the agenda. And
18   then, finally, we will go around the room for any sort
19   of additional sort of quick check-ins on top of what
20   folks have already said from members of the Task Force.
21   So, we're very happy today to have Lanon
22   BACCAM -- did I get that right? -- who is Deputy
23   Undersecretary over at Ag for Farm and Foreign
24   Agricultural Services, who's going to, as Barb sort of
25   previewed before, talk to us a little bit today about

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1   specific opportunities for veteran-owned small
2   businesses in the agri-business sector and agri-
3   business policy.
4   So, Lanon.
5   MR. BACCAM: Administrator Kramer, thank you
6   very much. SBA, thank you for the opportunity to be
7   here. And thank you for focusing on agriculture as a
8   business opportunity for veterans, because we believe
9   at USDA this is an area that is growing. We're seeing
10   a lot of interest in it, but we also know with 17
11   percent of the population coming from rural America and
12   40 percent of our military being represented by rural
13   Americans, there is a clear linkage between veterans
14   and agriculture.
15   So, we want to make sure at the USDA that we
16   provide them with tools and resources to assist them if
17   they want to get back to these rural communities and
18   they are interested in farming and ranching. And
19   beyond farming and ranching, as well, because the ag
20   industry is very large and many of the jobs that are
21   available in rural America and in the ag industry can
22   be transferred directly from their time in service from
23   the military occupational specialties that they have
24   and they learn and the leadership skills, we know that
25   these veterans are a good fit for jobs in rural

18 (Pages 69 to 72)

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1 America.
2 　　For the programs that we have at USDA, we
3 break it down into a few parts, and I'll focus
4 primarily on the programs that would help them to get
5 into farming and ranching. And, obviously, getting
6 into farming and ranching is a business. If you are a
7 new and beginning farmer, you're an entrepreneur as
8 well, and I've heard somebody say agri-preneur, and I
9 thought that was pretty neat.
10 　　So, getting into farming and ranching we know
11 is difficult. And what we hear from veterans is there
12 is -- there are challenges from access to capital,
13 access to land, access to training, and USDA will help
14 each step along the way. We have loan programs at the
15 USDA for -- operating loans, for example, to help them
16 purchase their equipment, their seed, their feed, their
17 cattle, whatever it is that they need for the inputs
18 into an agricultural operation.
19 　　We also have loan programs that assist with
20 acquiring land so we can help veterans purchase land to
21 start their operation, but as we know, there are many
22 ways to start farming without even owning land. You
23 can just rent the land.
24 　　There are microloan programs we have at USDA
25 for the folks who are new and beginning because we know

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1 that not everyone's going to come into the business at
2 the same level, not everyone's going to need to utilize
3 the full scope of and the levels of loan programs we
4 have, so the microloan program is a more streamlined
5 product that's easier to qualify for for veterans. And
6 so we have these microloan programs to assist those
7 folks who are just starting up.
8 　　We know that farming and ranching is a risky
9 business. Once you have the investments that you made
10 into your equipment, your land, your operating
11 expenses, you start an operation, you get up and
12 running, you want to manage those risks. And, so, at
13 USDA, we administer the crop insurance program to help
14 manage those risks. We have the non-insured crop
15 disaster assistance program and many other products to
16 help veterans manage those risks because it is a
17 tremendous investment that they make into farming and
18 ranching, if they choose to go down that route.
19 　　So, we can get the veterans into the business
20 of farming and ranching. We can help them manage their
21 risks, but we can also, more importantly, help them
22 with the value-added production. So, this is the
23 business side of USDA, and I'm just touching very
24 quickly on just a few of the spots at USDA for -- where
25 we have assistance, but in our Rural Development

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1 Office, we have a value-added producer grant that
2 basically helps producers expand their ventures and
3 increase their return on their ag. -- ag. commodities
4 through value-added products.
5 　　So, for example, a veteran in Southwest Texas
6 who grows green chiles, he has a window where he can
7 grow his green chiles, but as soon as they turn red, he
8 sells them for cents on the bushel, and that's not
9 ideal. So, basically, he used a value-added producer
10 grant from USDA to turn his green chiles into -- or his
11 red chiles into chipotle sauce, and now he can sell
12 them worldwide. So, we do have programs at USDA to
13 assist on the business side of the farming and ranching
14 aspect, as well.
15 　　To get this all done, though, a lot of
16 veterans who are serving currently, they are used to
17 getting a lot of training for the skills that they
18 learn. And, so, at USDA, we recognize that, we
19 understand that. And through several of our different
20 agencies, our National Institute for Food and
21 Agriculture, we have the Beginning Farmer/Rancher
22 Development Program. This is a $20 million program
23 every single year that has a 5 percent set-aside that
24 goes to organizations that all or in part assist
25 veterans. And it helps them with technical training;

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1 it helps them with understanding and learning about
2 USDA programs and how to apply for them.
3 　　There's also funding for AgrAbility.
4 AgrAbility is an organization that has existed for a
5 couple of decades, and they have primarily focused on
6 assisting peoples with disabilities -- physical
7 disabilities -- get into farming and ranching. And
8 more recently, they have brought on a full-time veteran
9 farmer coordinator to focus on the veterans in farming
10 because there is a lot of interest from those veterans
11 who do have disabilities and then want to get into
12 farming or ranching.
13 　　We also at the USDA fund an organization that
14 runs a program for us called Armed to Farm. Armed to
15 Farm is an educational, classroom-based training
16 program that couples with in-field experience. So, the
17 veterans can actually see and hear and read about the
18 business planning, financial management aspect of it,
19 as well as go out in the field and see multiple
20 different operations and understand more fully what
21 farming and ranching is. And this is not just for
22 veterans. This is open to their spouses as well.
23 　　And the last major funding arm we have is
24 through our Office of Advocacy and Outreach, our 2501
25 program does many of the same things as the beginning

19 (Pages 73 to 76)

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1   Farmer/Rancher Development Program does, a training
2   aspect, the education aspect on our programs. And this
3   is a $10 million-a-year program.
4   In the last two years, 2013 and 2014, we have
5   done over 50 percent of our funds going to
6   organizations that all or in part assist veterans.
7   So, for the small business aspect of this, the
8   USDA is fully invested in making sure that veterans who
9   are interested or anyone in particular who's interested
10   in farming and ranching has the opportunity to get into
11   it because we know that it is a difficult -- a
12   difficult field to get into. And we want to make sure
13   that we can help those who want to get into it.
14   And there's particularly a few reasons why one
15   -- the average age of an American farmer is 58 years
16   old. And, so, it's getting older every single year,
17   and we need to get a new generation of farmers to
18   assist with providing food for our country and our
19   world for the next generation.
20   So, that's one of the major reasons why, but
21   we also know, as I mentioned earlier, that a lot of
22   veterans come from rural American, and many of them are
23   going back, and we want to make sure that we are there
24   to help them, and I know there are likely ways and for
25   the interagency group here there's probably ways that

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1   you guys can think of of leveraging our tools and
2   resources in combination with what you guys can do to
3   make sure that we give these veterans a good
4   opportunity to utilize all of our tools and resources
5   across the Federal Government. And we are working to
6   do that.
7   Thank you.
8   MS. CARSON: Are there any questions for Lanan
9   at this time?
10   (No response.)
11   MS. CARSON: I'm going to wait for the next
12   presentation, and then I have a few food for thought
13   things that we at SBA have been working with Jaime Wood
14   in our office as the point person on it on finding
15   potential for us to empower the work of USDA and non-
16   profits in this space. There may be some for you that
17   I could suggest that you look into. Thanks.
18   MR. CRITELLI: Good morning. My name is Jamie
19   Critelli, representing Farmer Veteran Coalition today.
20   I'd like to -- I would like to thank Deputy
21   Administrator Kramer and the SBA for the opportunity to
22   speak here today.
23   I would like to continue with Undersecretary
24   Baccam's comments on agriculture and how it affects
25   veterans as well. I feel, in a way, uniquely qualified

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1   to speak here today. I'm a veteran myself. I've
2   worked with the Farmer Veteran Coalition in the past.
3   I've got a farming business that I started from scratch
4   some five years ago that has achieved a nice scale.
5   Okay, so, today I have a short presentation.
6   I will keep it short. And I want you to take away two
7   themes from this.
8   One is the scope of the ag problems facing
9   America today and the outlook for that in the years
10   ahead, and then also the notion that -- and especially
11   in light of the mission of this Task Force, that the
12   whole is worth more than the sum of its parts.
13   And there's a lot of gaps that exist today,
14   but there are some very low-cost or no-cost fixes that
15   could be employed in order to cover this and to have a
16   much broader benefit. And I think in line with what
17   Undersecretary Baccam said, we -- the veteran
18   population could be engaged to become this next wave of
19   entrants into the field of agriculture. So, next
20   slide, please.
21   I'm going to talk a little bit about the GI
22   Bill. We're going to start with that, and we're going
23   to come back to that at the very end. And the reason
24   is as you look into the history of the GI Bill, it's
25   been around for over 70 years, but because of some

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1   critical missteps that happened at the end of World War
2   I, that is why it was -- it absolutely needed to be
3   introduced during the middle of World War II.
4   And there are some historical perspectives on
5   what we've done, which I will highlight. One thing I
6   would like you to just think about as I go into this,
7   to give you an idea of the scale of the problem
8   affecting agriculture today, you need to understand
9   that there are 100,000 fewer farmers this year than
10   last year. And that pace is going to continue for the
11   next nine years. We're going to have a million fewer
12   farmers, okay?
13   Now, how many farmers do we have to begin
14   with? You know, we're talking around 1 percent of the
15   population. So, to lose a third of your farmers in a
16   decade is incredible. Plus, we know that they are
17   aging.
18   The other issue to consider is while the
19   number of farmers is decreasing, the amount of arable
20   land to farm in this country is also decreasing. Okay?
21   We lose 5 million acres every three years. In 1990,
22   something like 20 percent of the land in this country
23   was arable. And now we're less than 15 percent. We're
24   reaching epic proportions. And if that wasn't bad
25   enough, every day on this planet we got almost a

20 (Pages 77 to 80)

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1   quarter-million new mouths to feed. Every day. And
2   everybody's looking to America to feed them somehow.
3   So, just -- if you just think of a triangle
4   and you got your farmers on one end and our land on the
5   other and the mouths to feed, pretty soon, you end up
6   with this straight line or some weird, weird shape.
7   Just -- it's just something to think about. Okay.
8   Now, with respect to the original GI Bill, I
9   think at the onset, it was a very noble venture. And
10   what has happened over the years is different
11   departments of the Government have been formed, and
12   things have been part-and-parceled out. And that's
13   fine. I think different departments can take deeper
14   dives into this and adjust their programs, but what is
15   lost in this process is the full picture, the full
16   oversight.
17   And over the years, as the needs of the
18   country have changed, we have removed things such as
19   guaranteed loans for businesses. We have removed
20   things such as free land for farms. I mean, obviously,
21   the frontier closed over 100 years ago. There's no
22   land available anymore, but at one time it was there
23   and there was a need for it to be there.
24   And I would also argue that when it was --
25   when it was brought forward in 1944, when you consider

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1   something like 20 percent of the population was going
2   to be a returning vet, they needed to do something to
3   engage these people. And with the criticality of
4   agriculture today, I would argue the same holds true.
5   We have a need to feed the country. It should be
6   something under consideration.
7   Okay, so my point in this is just we can have
8   more programs; we could have -- we could have more
9   agencies touching programs; but we just don't want to
10   lose sight of the full picture, what is the full
11   picture of support we're offering to veterans entering
12   agriculture. So, next slide.
13   Due to time considerations, I'm going to skim
14   through some of this, but it just provides some
15   historical perspective going back 2,000 years, all the
16   way to the Roman Empire, on how land grants were made
17   available to pensioned soldiers. It was a way of
18   giving them a little bit of respite for their efforts,
19   but also it gave them a critical role to fulfill in
20   society. Okay, next slide.
21   Okay, I did mention 100,000 farmers a year
22   retiring; average age is 58 years old and increasing,
23   soon to be 59. There are about 20 million veterans in
24   the country, and a lot do come from rural America. It
25   would be nice to bring them back to rural America, but

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1   as I go forward in the slides, one of the key things
2   that's missing is there has to be a way for them to
3   support themselves in rural America. And there are
4   some gaps in programming, which I will address. Okay,
5   next slide, please.
6   We've become quite spoiled in my generation,
7   previous generations. We do still enjoy practically
8   the cheapest food in the world, best quality, a very
9   small portion of an individual's wallet is spent on
10   this food, but that trend is starting to change.
11   We're starting to see that fresh vegetables
12   and fruits cost more and more because we have problems
13   with the labor source in this country. Anybody that's
14   been to the supermarket lately will start to see that
15   meat, for example, is now starting to come from
16   Australia and New Zealand, from Canada. You can't find
17   oatmeal that's made in this country anymore. It all
18   comes from Canada, for example. Look at your boxes of
19   Quaker, Quaker Oats. Just things to consider. And
20   there's a lot of -- there's a lot of direct benefits to
21   having your own food supply, but there's also some nice
22   ones that are a little more indirect, a little more
23   nontangible, such as national security.
24   Bottom line, I said it at the beginning and
25   I'll continue to state it, that America will need --

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1   America will need more farmers in future years to feed
2   themselves, and if we can get some of these gaps filled
3   in interagency programming, we may just be able to get
4   the veteran population engaged in the future to do just
5   that. So, next slide, please.
6   With that in mind, over the past years, I have
7   worked with the Farmer Veteran Coalition. I still work
8   within the New York State Chapter, but last year I
9   worked at the national level with them, and I was
10   tapped to lead development of a white paper to discuss
11   these very issues: why were veterans having such a
12   hard time entering agriculture?
13   And, so, in order to do that -- next slide --
14   I engaged a small team of about 15 people across the
15   country, thought leaders, small business owners,
16   university professors, people that worked with the
17   state departments of labor, state veteran affairs
18   organizations. And we really dug down deep into
19   tangible examples of where people have had problems but
20   also we used it more as a springboard to come up with
21   potential solutions for these problems.
22   To date, this paper has been shared with four
23   Senators and ten Representatives. I can't recall all
24   ten Representatives, but the Senators were Senator Pat
25   Roberts, Senator Blumenthal from Connecticut, and the

21 (Pages 81 to 84)

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1 two Senators from New York.
2   At that time, in discussions with most of
3 these people, the challenges that we still face today
4 were addressed then, you know, that there is no magical
5 pot of money; that we would have to do more with less;
6 that we would have to really focus on things that were
7 low-cost or no-cost. And that is really what we tried
8 to highlight in the white paper. I'm going to take you
9 through some of those recommendations here in a minute.
10 Next slide, please.
11   Just bear in mind, though, as we did this,
12 these were some of the constraints that we had.
13 Veterans may be disabled or not, and that's important
14 to remember because farming is a touch business. The
15 veteran may have dependents to support. There may not
16 be any other source of income. And that's important
17 because as I dig into the recommendations, you'll see
18 it takes about three years to achieve a funding source
19 to purchase a farm.
20   And, finally, at the bottom here, I don't know
21 of a single veteran farmer out there who isn't working
22 some sort of other job because of the seasonality of
23 farming itself or because of the cash infusions
24 required into agriculture during certain months of the
25 year. So, if you do have off-farm income and you do

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1 unexpectedly lose that job, then you're going to have a
2 problem, not just sustaining your family, but now
3 you're not going to be able to sustain your business at
4 all. So, okay, next slide.
5   There are three more slides here. As we go
6 through these, I just want you to bear in mind that I
7 think there's a very fine line that we cross or that we
8 have to manage, which is ensuring due diligence as a
9 government but also the impression of deterrents that
10 we're giving to people trying to enter agriculture.
11   Okay, let me -- in the interest of time, I
12 just will -- we will skip these last three slides, and
13 I want to just highlight some policy changes that were
14 recommended in this white paper, okay? And I'm going
15 to it department by department. And I am hopeful that
16 some of these may work their way into the Task Force
17 over time.
18   So, the first would be for the Department of
19 Labor, and this is around the definition of an
20 apprenticeship, the requirement for workman's
21 compensation, and the definition of unemployment when
22 you own a business. And it's very particular within
23 agriculture. So, everybody would agree that it makes
24 no sense to just throw money at a problem. It makes no
25 sense to throw money at a veteran and say go buy a

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1 farm.
2   What Farmer Veteran Coalition advocates, what
3 the Entrepreneurial Bootcamp for Veterans and a lot of
4 other organizations advocate is that you provide some
5 training, and then once somebody is trained, then it's
6 the right time to make that step into purchasing a
7 farm.
8   But if you're trying to learn how to farm, you
9 have to be able to learn from somebody who's doing it
10 now. And here's where it gets tricky. If you go to
11 find a farmer and ask him to be your mentor, then
12 you're actually being an apprentice. And if that's the
13 case, then that farmer either needs to -- the farmer
14 basically needs to pay you to be learning from him, and
15 that farmer needs to provide workman's compensation on
16 you. And it becomes an employment-type relationship.
17   Within the Department of Agriculture, one of
18 the things that we recommend is a review of the three-
19 year time frame it takes to get a USDA loan if you own
20 a farm. There is one year of that that's waiverable
21 for military experience, which is nice, and we
22 recognize that the loans that come out of the USDA are
23 a much different pot of money than the much faster
24 process that the SBA uses. But in reality for a lot of
25 veterans entering agriculture, the USDA loans are

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1 happening because the USDA is serving as a lender of
2 last resort. But there is no such program, such as the
3 Patriot Express, which exists -- or used to exist
4 within the SBA, which is a very fast turnaround.
5   Within the Department of Veterans Affairs, for
6 any -- we would like to see the GI Bill expanded, at no
7 cost, but to cover ag internships and to provide a
8 stipend in the same way as happens today for people
9 that sit at home and attend an online university. The
10 hours in farming are quite long, and it precludes a lot
11 of veterans from being able to work enough outside of
12 agriculture learning their trade in order to feed their
13 families.
14   Finally, for the Department of Veterans
15 Affairs, we would like to see an update to the
16 occupational net computer compute system used by
17 vocational rehabilitation and education to allow for
18 careers within agriculture. And there are some
19 specifics on that within the report.
20   Finally, for the Department of Commerce,
21 specifically the SBA, we would like to see the SBA
22 being able to lend into the ag sector directly. And,
23 finally, the microloan program is great, and it is very
24 fast, but it doesn't -- it doesn't approach the scale
25 needed for loans to enter agriculture.

22 (Pages 85 to 88)

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1   You know, I mentioned this triangle at the
2 beginning of having farmers and land and mouths to
3 feed, and I think if we can actually work on a
4 different triangle, which is sort of the funding
5 aspect, the education aspect, and the access of land,
6 we may just be able to approach the scale of the
7 problem, approach the same scale of addressing the
8 problem as we did after World War II.
9   Thank you for your time.
10   MS. CARSON: Thank you, Jamie. Are there
11 questions at this time or comments?
12   Go ahead.
13   MR. KIDALOV: I'd like to offer some comments
14 very quickly. Thank you so much. I'm just very
15 impressed by everything that you guys said today and
16 your statements yesterday that I heard on this issue.
17 I wanted to make a quick comment about the access to
18 land. It turns out that there is this very interesting
19 statutory authority that is available to the Department
20 of Defense -- 10 USC 2684(a).
21   10 USC 2684(a) provides -- gives the Secretary
22 the authority to basically enter into agreements with
23 state and local governments and also different
24 conservation organizations. And they provide
25 agricultural conservation easements to prevent

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1 encroachments on areas around military installations.
2   And, so, for example, in Monterey County,
3 there are -- there is an ag land trust. And that ag
4 land trust holds some of these easements and they do
5 end up -- so they protect the land around military
6 installations from encroachments, they use it for
7 agriculture. And I believe that they use it for -- I
8 believe they use it for wine -- you know, grape
9 farming. I also believe they use it for -- you know,
10 for almond nut farming and I see -- I see Mike over
11 there nodding, nodding with his head.
12   So, I would volunteer folks that I know I can
13 call on at least to try and see maybe if that would be
14 of interest to have them come over and maybe do some
15 kind of a brief on how this program works and then
16 seeing if the Department and then working with the DOD
17 small business programs, seeing if there would be
18 interest in DOD supporting and having some kind --
19 maybe, you know, maybe either, you know, for some kind
20 of either rulemaking or agreement or something to use
21 that authority to help veterans gain access to land for
22 agriculture.
23   MS. CARSON: Thank you.
24   Shannon, I think you're still on the line. If
25 I could ask you to take note of that and find

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1 potentially the right connection point.
2   And, Lanan, did you have a comment?
3   MR. BACCAM: Just -- yes, quickly. Lanan
4 Baccam with the USDA. I have spoken with the folks in
5 the REPI program at DOD. They came over; they gave me
6 a briefing on it. I've spoken with Joan Knott with the
7 Conservation Land Trust down in -- near Fort Hood,
8 Texas, where they have the largest REPI program
9 currently, that was just awarded just a few months ago.
10   We are currently in coordination with them to
11 see where there are overlaps with ag easements and USDA
12 programs and our Conservation Reserve Program to see
13 where we can't find land that we can transfer over to
14 veterans to start farming and ranching. So, we are
15 definitely working on that.
16   MR. KIDALOV: Fantastic.
17   MS. CARSON: I thank you again for the briefs,
18 and I did want to mention for those that are in the
19 room and those on the phone as well that Michael
20 O'Gorman, who is the founder of the Farmer Veteran
21 Coalition, is with us today and gave an outstanding
22 brief yesterday. I would like to share that with you.
23 We will send it out after this meeting, along with the
24 other documents that you've seen today, because it does
25 talk about some of the therapeutic benefits, not just

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1 economic, of farming for veterans.
2   And one of the things that we would like to
3 see in the interagency are SBA definitely agrees with
4 the assertions that you must be a good businessperson
5 as well as a farmer to be successful. They're not
6 independent. And SBA does have a role in providing
7 capacity there. We do include farm and agriculture
8 practitioners in our Boots to Business classes in
9 several locations already, looking to expand that in
10 coordination with USDA, on what service members hear
11 before they leave active duty about opportunities in
12 agriculture.
13   And there's a lot of tech in it now. It is
14 not what you might have thought of with the rolling
15 hills or flat lands of Nebraska and Iowa where Lanan
16 and I are most familiar. So, there's urban farming,
17 for example. There are lower barrier to entries in
18 dollars and technique that are available, too, in some
19 sectors. So, we are committed to learning more and
20 supporting you, absolutely interested in whether DOD's
21 SkillBridge program for apprenticeship, if there is
22 something that can be examined for the agriculture
23 industry in the near future. Thanks.
24   MR. KRAMER: Very good. Well, at this time in
25 the agenda, we wanted to have a dedicated spot, as I

23 (Pages 89 to 92)

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1   mentioned before, just for public comments for anybody
2   who's participating either here in the room or on the
3   phone, sort of outside the agenda but just wanted to
4   bring to the attention of the Task Force anything that
5   you would like us to consider going forward.
6   So, I think we do have at least one hand mic.
7   And, again, just as a reminder, if you can identify
8   yourself both by name and affiliation so we can make
9   sure we've got that on the record.
10   MS. ARTIS: Hi, my name is Laurie Sayles
11   Artis. I'm also a member of VET-Force, and I'm
12   president and CEO of Civility Management Solutions.
13   And I just really want to applaud what I heard today.
14   I served in the United States Marine Corps, and there
15   were many rural guys, to the point I was like a foreign
16   object, you know, a woman that's black, you know, so
17   they were definitely from rural parts of the country;
18   however, I totally agree with what you're saying
19   regarding what -- the GI Bill, and I really hope that
20   you all keep that on the table and open because I
21   joined the Marine Corps as an entrepreneur.
22   If I had known that those things were optional
23   for the GI Bill, it would have made a big difference in
24   as far as some of the choices I made when I served.
25   And I think for certain it would apply to the rural

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1   community, so thank you.
2   MR. KRAMER: Very good. Thank you for that.
3   Other individuals that wish to make a
4   statement?
5   MR. WYNN: Joe Wynn, VET-Force. I just want
6   to say again also I had an opportunity to attend the
7   SBA Veterans Advisory Committee meeting yesterday as
8   well, and I want to commend and appreciate the report,
9   Barbara, that you presented and the materials. And as
10   such, I just wanted to say some of the information that
11   you talked about with regard to the recommendations,
12   are there plans to, you know, kind of present or
13   release the information that supported the decisions
14   with regard to those that were closed so we'll kind of
15   have a record of that?
16   And also, you know, since these were
17   recommendations based upon the reports from previous
18   years, is there sort of like an itemized list of what's
19   been being done toward even those that are open up to
20   this point?
21   MS. CARSON: We have both the transcripts that
22   describe the activity that we have undertaken, which
23   are burdensome to read, so I don't highly recommend
24   that as a source, and that is why it is important that
25   the annual reports will soon be published as well.

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1   That's where the record is of what we have done, why we
2   think we have achieved some things.
3   And as Deputy Administrator Kramer said, we
4   are turning that over for clearance in the next couple
5   of weeks, and it will be public. So, these documents
6   that you've seen today will also be online, posted with
7   the transcript for review. I will try to address our
8   concern that, you know, I know the report would be --
9   that's one place to get it, but you'd like to see it
10   consolidated and address the recommendations. I'll see
11   what we can produce for you. Thanks.
12   MR. PHIPPS: Michael Phipps, the Advisory
13   Committee -- I'm the Chairman of the Advisory Committee
14   on Veteran Business Affairs, and we have our committee
15   the day before. Some of you were at that -- some of
16   you recognize me; some of you guys I've already talked
17   to numerous times. I was just going to reiterate a
18   little bit what Joe said on a summary of the
19   recommendations.
20   One of the things that we're doing on our
21   committee, and I think Davy is going to touch upon
22   this, is trying to line up our goals. We have a lot of
23   interlocking goals here that could be feeding on each
24   other with the work that we do and the work that you
25   guys do, so we're going to be taking that step forward

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1   in the coming meetings to kind of lock -- do some of
2   those goals together. So, I'm just going to hit on a
3   little bit of what Joe said.
4   MR. KRAMER: Great, thank you. Anything else
5   from folks in attendance? Go ahead, sir.
6   MR. O'GORMAN: Yeah, I'm Michael O'Gorman, the
7   Director of the Farmer Veteran Coalition, so I
8   appreciate very much bringing up agriculture today and
9   yesterday and Jamie and Lanan's presentation.
10   And I want to reiterate what Max proposed and
11   what Lanan said is happening, that we are working very
12   closely with the Compatible Land Trust. We just got a
13   competitive grant from the DOD to protect -- help
14   protect a lot of farmland around Fort Hood. As soon as
15   the water recedes, we will be going down to look at it,
16   and at least it was under a lot of water last week when
17   we -- when we met and spoke about it.
18   But there is a lot of farmland around a lot of
19   bases that needs to be preserved in order to maintain
20   the efficiency of the bases, and agriculture is a great
21   way. It's also a great opportunity for beginning
22   farmers to get on that land in an affordable way with
23   long-term leases and to be able to grow and sell
24   produce that they can get into the bases and feed the
25   military families and military personnel. So, thank

24 (Pages 93 to 96)

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1 you.
2   MR. KRAMER: Anybody else? Anybody on the
3 phone?
4   (No response.)
5   MR. KRAMER: Okay, not hearing any, but we
6 still have some time. So, at this point, let me go
7 around, and maybe rather than calling people off the
8 list, we'll just go around the room so people have an
9 expectation when they're going to come up and can
10 prepare emotionally and substantively. Or just
11 individual check-ins, again, I'd ask everybody, you
12 know, I think we had a good conversation before.
13   I think a lot of issues got out, so to the
14 extent you just want to provide an update of what
15 issues you're working on, what your priorities are and
16 all of that, we'll just go around the room and hear
17 from the members on that.
18   So, Amanda.
19   MS. BANTON: Amanda with the Military Officers
20 Association of America. Not a lot of time to
21 emotionally prepare, but I just want to point -- just
22 some common observations and where I think -- what I'm
23 going to take back to our organization.
24   I think going through all of these
25 recommendations and seeing how many are closed, I just

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1 want to say hats off to SBA and all the agencies here
2 for putting together -- well, obviously nothing's
3 perfect and there's still more to do, a lot has been
4 accomplished, and I think it's really important to
5 acknowledge that, so thank you for that.
6   And what I'm seeing as the underlying theme
7 here is really an awareness issue, and that's something
8 I plan to bring back to our organization. I didn't
9 know about a lot of the programs that a lot of agencies
10 had available or any initiative -- a lot of initiatives
11 but not as many, and I've been in this space for seven
12 years. So, I think what's important to me and our
13 organization is making sure that the transitioning
14 group that we assist and our members in the military
15 community that we work with are aware of all of these
16 things that are available to them and making it easy
17 for them to access that.
18   Aside from that, some of the other -- the only
19 thing I'm working on with the organization, not on the
20 legislative side, but we are hosting an event at the
21 Air and Space Museum on June 30th. We have close to a
22 thousand people who have registered, but there's an
23 entrepreneurship focus, and over half of the people who
24 have registered for this event have elected to attend
25 and explore our entrepreneurship session, which further

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1 validates that this is very important and just really
2 proud to be a part of it. So, thank you.
3   MR. KRAMER: That's great, and let us know if
4 we can provide any support for that program as well.
5 We'd be happy to do that.
6   MS. BANTON: You're all invited. We'd love to
7 have you. I appreciate that.
8   MR. METHENY: Bill Metheny from the Department
9 of Labor Vets. I already highlighted the great
10 unemployment numbers and the direction that that's
11 going for our veterans, so that was great news. In
12 Vets specifically, we're part of a great team of trying
13 to help transitioning service members as they're
14 leaving the service.
15   And, so, one of the things that's happened in
16 the last quarter is that curriculum that's part of --
17 designed and developed by an interagency task force,
18 the new curriculum has been updated and just rolled out
19 in the last month and a half. And, so, it includes
20 information about small business and entrepreneurship
21 and how to get more information. So, that's out there.
22   Another nice part about that is it comes
23 out -- the employment part comes out in a big honking
24 workbook that is handed out to everybody that goes
25 through it. It's also online as a PDF, which is great

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1 if you want to live by PDF, but one of the things that
2 we're working on now is a partnership with Amazon, and
3 it's going to come out in Kindle format so that it can
4 be downloaded for free in a e-reader format that's
5 familiar for everybody and you don't have to be online
6 to be able to get that once you downloaded it. So,
7 that's just on the transition part. A very recent
8 rollout.
9   We recognize that it's hard -- too hard for
10 veterans to take their -- the skills that they've
11 accumulated in the military and apply them towards
12 accreditation and certification once they get out. And
13 it -- and, so, what we've just completed is an 18-month
14 study through the National Governors Association that
15 just was rolled out in the last couple of weeks that
16 looked at some pilot states on how we can smooth those
17 processes out to get those licenses and certifications.
18 So, we took a few key skillsets that are common to all
19 services. The six states tried them out, and in the
20 report that's released, you'll find not only some best
21 practices, some hurdles, but also some costs that are
22 associated with that. So, that's online as well.
23   In the last month and a half, early May, we
24 rolled out Veterans.gov. Veterans.gov is a great
25 website if you are a veteran looking for employment.

25 (Pages 97 to 100)

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1 It's -- that's one button. One button is if you're an
2 employer looking for a veteran. And then another
3 button is I want to work for myself. That's right up
4 front. There's a map on there that says I want to know
5 what's available to me in this state because that's
6 home for me in Montana, Nebraska, wherever. So, you
7 click on that and you get the single link to that
8 state's -- what that state says is here's where we want
9 you to see to find out about employment in our state.
10 So, that's Veterans.gov, brand new, just about a month
11 old, getting great feedback there so far.
12   And then the last part that I'd highlight are
13 some other partnerships that we're engaged pretty
14 heavily in with the Veterans Administration, one of
15 which we were talking moments ago about the VR&E
16 Program, Veterans -- Vocational Rehabilitation and
17 Employment Program. So, we're already partnered and
18 have updated MOAs with the VA that links in the VR&E
19 Program with what the DOL does and what the states do
20 in terms of employment services. But what we realized
21 is we were not crystal clear to say every single
22 enrolled VR&E Chapter 31 veteran needs to go through
23 that process.
24   So, we're updating our language to say 100
25 percent needs to get the full benefits. So what that

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1 means is once enrolled, part of the process right up
2 front is they get enrolled to a state employment person
3 that helps them with the labor market information, that
4 then helps them to define with their VA counselor
5 exactly what program they're going to go into because
6 there's a job or a market indicator that says that's
7 going to be worthwhile training.
8   Then they go through the training on the back
9 side. Once they've completed that training and they're
10 coming out of whatever that program is, they get linked
11 back in with the employment folks to say now let's make
12 it real and get you into a job. So, 100 percent
13 referral is one of the big changes that we're updating
14 our language and our policies right now to do.
15   And then, lastly, great work by the VA's My VA
16 Community team. And if you've not heard of CVEBs
17 before, Community Veterans Engagement Boards are these
18 entities that started off in 25 communities and cities
19 around the country, went to 50, going to 100. And
20 those are these umbrellas where all things veterans can
21 start linking in. What we're doing as we're partnering
22 into that effort is we are linking not only the US DOL
23 folks into those boards but also those state employment
24 teams that live and operate and know those communities.
25 So, that's a new one that's still underway, working

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1 towards that 100 percent -- or 100 cities with the VA.
2 And we think that's going to pay lots of dividends.
3   And I think it's a pretty broad open
4 invitation for others that want to do that. And, so,
5 whether it's the small business community or whatever,
6 I think we all would be interested in that. So, if you
7 go to My VA Communities and look up CVEBs, you'll start
8 to find out where they are and points of contact and so
9 on. So, those are some of the things just in the last
10 quarter since we've met that are going on, and I think
11 we're making great progress and there's lots of energy
12 around these. Thank you.
13   MR. KRAMER: Thanks, Bill.
14   MR. LENEY: Bill, thank you for giving my
15 report.
16   MR. METHENY: Oh, sorry.
17   MR. LENEY: No, no. No, I want to reinforce
18 what Bill said about the CVEBs, and we are now working
19 to make sure we include veteran entrepreneurs and the
20 veteran small business community in each of these
21 veterans boards. They have been more focused to date
22 on the veteran employment because that we see as a high
23 potential for ROI.
24   The only other thing I'd mention is we have
25 talked as one of the Task Force recommendations about

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1 the veteran entrepreneur resource -- information
2 resources and BusinessUSA. I would just offer up to
3 all of our members of the Task Force and those who are
4 here, one of the challenges that we found, we have --
5 we developed the veteran entrepreneurship portal; we
6 then partnered with BusinessUSA to make sure we were
7 using a single effort. That partnership has borne a
8 lot of fruit. BusinessUSA has really enabled us to
9 take it to the next level.
10   Our big challenge is sustainment and keeping
11 it fresh with the programs that are out there. There's
12 a lot of stuff going on. We invested a considerable
13 amount of time and resources in trying to find out
14 what's going on, but listening here, I've been taking
15 notes to go back and identify those things that are now
16 happening that we have not yet collected in the portal.
17   So, we don't have a great solution for sort of
18 keeping it up to date, except that we're now going to
19 be putting on our website a place where people can
20 identify, hey, I saw this program; here it is; we get
21 it on to BusinessUSA. Otherwise, it becomes less and
22 less useful. So, I would just alert everybody to that
23 opportunity and solicit input.
24   The only other thing I have is just a very
25 tactical note. The chief acquisition officer of the VA

26 (Pages 101 to 104)

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1   has committed in our annual national veteran small
2   business engagement. Last year, we brought about 350
3   VA program officers and contracting officers. This
4   year, we're sort of going all in. We'll be bringing
5   1,200 VA staff to Minneapolis to engage with veteran
6   small businesses. We are going to be -- we've just
7   gotten permission to do that, and we're bringing about
8   1,000 contracting officers from across the VA. So,
9   this is sort of an all-in effort.
10   The challenge will be I would really like to
11   have more veteran-owned small businesses there than VA
12   staff. So, because it -- you know, when we do these
13   access events, and that's been our focus as we partner
14   with the SBA on the development side, you know, let
15   them focus there, that, you know, the contracting
16   officers and program managers have got to get a return
17   on investment. And we're using that as a major market
18   research effort, but I just -- in an era of declining
19   programs, you know, Secretary McDonald has really said,
20   okay, let's really take this -- you know, take a shot
21   at taking this to the next level.
22   MR. BLUM: Matthew Blum at the Office of
23   Federal Procurement Policy. I mentioned earlier the
24   positive developments on legislation, and I have
25   fingers crossed that Congress will act on some of these

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1   simplification proposals and also that our acquisition
2   innovation advocates at the agencies are now starting
3   to gather in our council, and which by the way, we want
4   to make sure that our small business directors and
5   OSDBUs are linked up with them since there's a lot of
6   synergies in the work that I think they do, both to,
7   you know, help contracting officers with market
8   research and identifying promising businesses.
9   Just one additional point on the regulatory
10   front. There is a rule that GSA put together that's
11   currently at ORIA and will probably be released soon
12   that addresses the way that the GSA and the Federal
13   Supply Service price their pricing policies for the GSA
14   schedules. And I mention this because, as we know,
15   that program is responsible for somewhere between 7 and
16   10 percent of annual spending, so it's basically the
17   largest gateway in the country for selling commercial
18   goods and services. And it has been identified
19   repeatedly, the pricing policies, as amongst the most
20   onerous and cost-prohibitive for businesses that want
21   to do -- sell to the Government.
22   GSA has taken this very seriously, and they've
23   looked very carefully at these current practices, which
24   require contractors that want to participate to provide
25   detailed disclosures of their commercial sales

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1   practices and then to track during the life of their
2   contracts what sales discounts they're giving to like
3   commercial customers and provide these on to the
4   Government.
5   They had issued a proposed rule back in the
6   spring of 2015, and as I mentioned, there's now a final
7   rule that's at ORIA that we expect to release soon.
8   And I hope to be able to just discuss further with the
9   Task Force in the next session, but suffice it to say I
10   think that you'll see a lot of discussion and a lot of
11   relief -- burden relief being provided to all
12   businesses, including the 80 percent to small
13   businesses that make up this program.
14   MR. KRAMER: Thanks.
15   MR. KIDALOV: Thank you.
16   MR. JACKSON: Okay, from DOD, just a couple
17   quick highlights. One currently in our small -- SDVOB
18   performance, we're running about 2.6 percent with about
19     $4-point billion already, including overseas
20   procurement. DOD is on track to achieve that goal for
21   FY16.
22   Another major accomplishment was the new DOD
23   4205, which really codifies the role and authorities of
24   the responsibilities of OSBP, puts us in a better
25   position to assist or better serve the veteran-owned

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1   small business community.
2   Also, again, our push to develop our
3   workforce, again to train. We are on track to roll out
4   a career field in FY16 at the end or FY17, which will
5   be another huge accomplishment for DOD and a lot of the
6   courses are focused on how to do better in identifying
7   those areas in which to improve, supporting the small
8   business community. So, again, those are a couple of
9   highlights from the DOD side. Thank you.
10   MR. KIDALOV: Thank you. Thank you, Shannon.
11   I'd like to just give a brief update about
12   some activities related to NPS. So, yesterday, I was
13   pleased to appear before the Advisory Committee on
14   Veterans Business Development at the invitation of the
15   SBA and the chairman of the committee, Chairman Phipps.
16   And I appreciate Barb Carson and the chairman for
17   inviting me. And the topic of the appearance was to
18   discuss the implementation and the various authorities
19   that might exist with implementation of a service-
20   disabled veteran-owned small business program.
21   So, as you may know, in the research that I've
22   done that was done at NPS, we've recommended creation
23   of such a business development program for service-
24   disabled veterans. And, so, the presentation yesterday
25   discussed five possible ways to do this. An executive

27 (Pages 105 to 108)

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1   order with subsequent regulatory amendments; standalone
2   regulatory amendments by the SBN, the FAR Council, with
3   or without a delegation of presidential power, the 3
4   USC 301 delegation; agency-specific policies and
5   strategic plans under the Executive Order 13-360, which
6   exists right now -- that was something also discussed
7   in the report; the operational merger of the disabled
8   veteran program into the 8(a) by virtue of folks just
9   applying; and then our legislative branch proposal to
10   actually request Congress to create such a program.
11   And, so, the presentation addresses all of
12   that. It is part of the -- it is part of the record.
13   My recommendations were that the executive order and
14   the SBA regulation would be the strongest. Executive
15   order would be the strongest. SBA regulations would
16   also be available under the Fox decision of the United
17   States Supreme Court. An agency is able to reconsider
18   and come up with a new policy and reform its prior
19   policy.
20   So, I would -- I would offer these materials
21   for further information and would be happy to answer
22   any questions. If there are any questions from the
23   deputy, and then --
24   MR. KRAMER: I don't think that I have any,
25   although we'll follow up with everybody and let them

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1   know the easiest way to make the materials available.
2   MR. KIDALOV: Okay. And then, also, I would
3   like to mention some issues about continued focus on
4   research -- research and advocacy related to veterans.
5   So, this may -- I have learned recently this may
6   possibly be my last meeting of the Task Force, for
7   which I would like to express my gratitude to the
8   Administrator and the Deputy Administrator for serving.
9   The reason for it is that the Naval
10   Postgraduate School apparently decided to cancel the
11   government contracts law professorship and reestablish
12   it to specifically do research against -- advocating
13   against service-disabled veterans and against small
14   businesses. Now, they recruited, specifically went out
15   to recruit an academic, and I'll just quote some of the
16   -- who has lobbied against the veterans programs,
17   including the service-disabled veteran program,
18   testified before Congress.
19   I'll just give some quotes. For example, my
20   research will seek to diminish emphasis on small
21   business and similar divide the buyer redistribution
22   participation rates. In testimony before the House
23   Small Business Committee, that academic said that
24   creating a program for disabled veterans would cater to
25   special interest groups and would be unrealistic and

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1   fiscally irresponsible, again calling the disabled
2   veterans special interest groups, arguing that giving
3   them recovery contracts would reduce the value for
4   money received and customer satisfaction, arguing
5   that small business programs are selfish interests and
6   just -- and that they create clunky inefficiencies and
7   that -- and my -- and one notable comment is that
8   creating -- this is in prepared -- in prepared
9   testimony to Congress, that creating a program for
10   service-disabled veterans would appear comical, looking
11   through objective lens of foreign government officials
12   and calling these -- and calling small business
13   programs -- calling them a greatest threat to
14   procurement reform.
15   I will -- I will be happy to provide more
16   detailed information, including the -- any kind of
17   identifying information through the SBA, not on -- not
18   at this time. But my -- now, all of these -- all of
19   these priorities to do this kind of research, this kind
20   of advocacy, goes against the stated policy of the
21   Department of Defense to support service-disabled
22   veterans. It also goes against the stated policy of
23   the Department of the Navy. Nobody abolished these
24   policies, and yet the Naval Postgraduate School appears
25   to be committed to investing money and resources and

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1   providing a platform for this kind of advocacy.
2   I would recommend that the Task Force under --
3   and the Small Business Administration undertake a
4   request from the Secretary of the Navy to confirm that,
5   in fact, the Navy would not be -- the Naval
6   Postgraduate School would not be sponsoring research
7   that -- or advocacy or instruction that demeans
8   service-disabled veterans, that argues that these
9   programs are illegitimate, and that undermines them and
10   that instead the Naval Postgraduate School would
11   continue research in support of small business programs
12   and would expand it and would expand it in its
13   instructional and research and service and advocacy
14   curricula.
15   MR. KRAMER: Okay.
16   MR. KIDALOV: Thank you very much.
17   MR. KRAMER: Well, Max, if this does, in fact,
18   turn out to be your final meeting, I very much want to
19   express my gratitude for the contributions you've made,
20   not only in these meetings but clearly what you've
21   brought in from outside the meetings.
22   And, you know, you provided a reminder again
23   today that as much as everybody, you know, in this room
24   and on this line may take it as a given the value of
25   the focus of small businesses with regard to innovation

28 (Pages 109 to 112)

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1   and economic growth and opportunity, it's not always a
2   vision that's shared across this town or across this
3   country. And, so, we will remain diligent, sort of
4   keeping an eye on how these things progress. But thank
5   you. If this does turn out to be your last meeting,
6   thanks for your contribution.
7   MR. KIDALOV: Thank you, sir.
8   MR. KRAMER: Okay, thanks.
9   MR. DODDS: Okay, thank you. I'm going to
10   give you an update on government contracting from SBA's
11   perspective. I'm not -- can I go to the first slide?
12   My name is Ken Dodds from the Small Business
13   Administration, the Office of Procurement Policy,
14   Planning and Liaison.
15   So, since we last met, we announced how the
16   Government did in FY15 in government contracting, and
17   we did very well. It was a very good year. Third year
18   in a row where we met the small business goal, 25
19   percent; doubled the SDB goal with the highest ever;
20   met the women-owned small business goal for the first
21   time ever, over 5 percent; and then the highest ever
22   service-disabled veteran-owned percentage at 3.9.
23   And I don't know if they handed this out, but
24   so we gave out score cards to all the agencies. It
25   kind of breaks down, you know, how we grade them.

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1   Right now, it's about 80 percent is prime contracting;
2   10 percent is subcontracting; and 10 percent are these
3   other success factors. So, we had a great FY15.
4   Since we last met, we have issued a final rule
5   on limitations on subcontracting and teaming. This is
6   based on the NDA of 2013. We publish it on May 31st,
7   and it will be effective June 30th, and it basically
8   allows you to team together as a prime/sub relationship
9   to meet the limitations on subcontracting. And it also
10   allows firms to joint venture together and qualify as
11   small, as long as each entity is small.
12   You know, previously, the rule was if you
13   tried to joint venture we would combine you and you'd
14   have to meet the size standard collectively. So, we've
15   -- we're trying to help small businesses team as
16   contracts get, you know, bigger and harder to get on.
17   The second thing or major rule that you're
18   interested in is the mentor/protégé rule. We were
19   given authority to create a mentor/protégé program for
20   all small businesses. We issued a proposed rule, and
21   we have comments, and we're very, very, very, very
22   close to issuing the rule as a final rule. I predict
23   that it will be issued by the end of this month as a
24   final rule. We'll have -- it's usually a 30-day
25   effective date, which would put it into July.

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1   And then the big question is when are we going
2   to start accepting applications as an agency. You
3   know, trying to stand up a program in the fourth
4   quarter of a fiscal year when a lot is going on is
5   difficult. You're not allowed to use the limitation or
6   the exemption from affiliation to joint venture unless
7   you've been approved. And, so, you know, we have to
8   figure out whether it makes sense to even take those in
9   the fourth quarter or, you know, maybe October 1 or
10   roll it out in some limited fashion. So, that's what's
11   next to come. But the first step is issuing that final
12   rule, which I think we'll do by the end of the fiscal
13   year.
14   And then the third rule that we're going to
15   try to get out this summer or late fall is -- involves
16   subcontracting. And it allows agencies to set goals
17   for large business primes at every tier and then report
18   on that for their individual subcontracting plan. So,
19   right now, you know, on a subcontractor plan, you only
20   report on how you're doing at the first tier, but under
21   this -- once we finalize this rule and get it in the
22   FAR and ESRS, the idea is that you're going to set
23   goals at both the first tier and at lower tiers and
24   report up and so forth.
25   So, those are the three kind of updates since

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1   we last met. I don't know if there's any questions.
2   I'll be happy to take them.
3   All right, thanks.
4   MR. KLINGELHOFER: Victor Klingelhofer, VVA.
5   Essentially, we are very interested in the future of
6   the recommendations, the new recommendations to be put
7   in, the refocused recommendations to be -- how they're
8   changed. There are four basic areas that we really
9   think need to be highlighted and continue to be
10   highlighted, not that these haven't already.
11   The first and probably foremost is the entire
12   certification issue. So much confusion still on the
13   part of small businesses as to what they have to do,
14   how they have to do it, and I mean, frankly, the
15   information is there and I often don't understand quite
16   why they can't find it, but I think that we need to
17   continue that.
18   And as Tom and others have discussed, we also
19   have to look at the possibility of making a government-
20   wide certification process for the veteran-owned small
21   businesses -- I'm sorry, the service-disabled veteran-
22   owned small businesses. That, I think, needs to be our
23   -- one of our highest goals.
24   Next, we're very interested in also examining
25   the -- how the reporting procedures are used. One of

29 (Pages 113 to 116)

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1   the things that we are concerned about are the number
2   of contracts and types of contracts that are exempted
3   from the reporting procedures. You know, there are,
4   you know, broad categories of contracts that aren't
5   even taken into account, and we believe that, one, they
6   should be taken into account, and, two, because they're
7   being taken into account more veterans will have the
8   ability to participate in those programs.
9   Oh. And interestingly enough, something came
10   up recently that I saw, and I'm not even quite sure
11   where this would fit in, but probably in the
12   subcontracting, increasing the subcontracting programs,
13   because I had heard that recently that one of the
14   problems that DOE is having in meeting its contracting
15   goals is the fact that they have so many GOCO
16   facilities, and none of the awards from the GOCO
17   contractors are counted toward their -- toward the
18   overall contracting goal, for the 3 percent goal.
19   Next, we also want to continue looking at and
20   see what we can do with regard to roadblocks to veteran
21   businesses, for example, the strategic sourcing. We
22   continue to think that that needs to be examined more
23   carefully and bundling of contracts in general. I know
24   that there's always -- people are always talking about
25   bundled contracts and how we need to look at it, and

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1   somehow nothing seems to be actually happening there.
2   And then, finally, and I really appreciate
3   what both Bill and Tom said about the CVB program. We
4   also think that it's important to try to see what we
5   can do to reduce duplication of efforts between the
6   various agencies so that dollars are spent better in --
7   and they're working toward in a collaborative manner.
8   And the CVEB program really seems to be doing that, and
9   maybe that needs to be looked at so that we can enhance
10   partnerships between the agencies.
11   MR. FERRARO: Good morning. This is Eric
12   Ferraro from GSA. Just a couple of highlights from the
13   last meeting. Based on the number of questions I was
14   getting from small -- from veterans, we decided I would
15   answer them right away, of course, and then pass them
16   to my small business office. So, our small business
17   office has decided -- jointly, we've decided to set up
18   a -- office hours, or we'll calling it a veterans
19   virtual coaching session, so we'll have a scheduled
20   time each month for folks that just chat in questions
21   or email in questions or get online and answer
22   questions. And, hopefully, that's just another conduit
23   to get information out and it's a set time where if the
24   veterans or veteran businesses are interested, they can
25   call in and ask.

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1   Also, a shameless plug for our -- one of the
2   tools that we talked about, the GWAC for VETS2.
3   There's a RFP closes -- a request for proposal that
4   closes June 20th. So, if there's IT services --
5   service-disabled veterans business, that's a Government
6   set-aside specifically for that.
7   And, also, so far this year, we've spent -- or
8   excuse me, awarded over 100 -- about $120 million to
9   veteran-owned businesses, which is a little over 5
10   percent of our business and about 3.5 percent to
11   service-disabled veterans, which is about $78 million.
12   MR. LEGHORN: This is Davy Leghorn with the
13   Legion. Today, I'm wearing two hats. I'm going to be
14   briefing the Interagency Task Force on some of the
15   stuff that the Advisory Committee is doing, as well as
16   some of the stuff that the Legion is doing. So, if you
17   could just help.
18   So, over the course of last year, the Advisory
19   Committee has seen substantial growth in membership
20   revitalization. We were unfortunate that we lost our
21   former chairman and longest serving member of the
22   committee, Ed Fielder. I think his term had expired.
23   Is that -- oh, never mind, he's still on, okay.
24   We did elect a new chairman, Michael Phipps,
25   who you guys have met. He's been working with the OVBD

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1   team to increase the small business issues that the
2   committee will take on in FY16. To increase the
3   coverage over these issues that I just passed around,
4   the members will take on individual topics and conduct
5   a little bit of homework and research on our own.
6   As you can see, some of the topics are very
7   traditional and align directly with the Task Force
8   recommendations, stuff like finance, outreach, and
9   resources. They're relevant and important. They're
10   always going to be there. But we're also taking some
11   nontraditional tracks in terms of looking at veteran
12   farmers, import and export, and the Advisory
13   Committee's outreach to the public in what we do and
14   all the good information that we get. We don't want to
15   get siloed; we want to be able to share that. It's
16   just a matter of finding the right platform.
17   A summary of yesterday's meetings, we -- Mr.
18   Dodds had presented on the status of the mentor/protégé
19   final rule. We had a brief on SBA's veterans business
20   development programs and progress and the report on the
21   first cohort. We also heard from a few of our farmer
22   veterans advocates, and in light of the Farm Act that
23   included multiple provisions to increase veterans and
24   ag programs, there is interest in the inclusion of USDA
25   at the veterans small business table.

30 (Pages 117 to 120)

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1   We also heard from Kathy Douquet, who is the
2   Executive President of Blue Star Families. She
3   unveiled some research that she did or her organization
4   did on the plight of mil spouses and I believe
5   entrepreneurial and unemployment issues. What we got
6   out of it is that we might be doing a disservice to
7   them and the veterans by lumping them together and
8   trying to kill two birds with one stone. The notion
9   was raised that perhaps we should address these
10 entities separately. The Advisory Committee has not
11 made a decision on what to do. It was just -- I just
12 want to present that it was brought up.
13   Switching gears, in terms of the Legion
14 programs and services, we just hosted a Boots to
15 Business Reboot session in New Jersey, very successful.
16 We're going to do it again in a couple months. They're
17 being hosted at American Legion posts. Two months from
18 now, we will be having our national convention in
19 Cincinnati, Ohio. We will be hosting a Reboot session
20 there as well.
21   What's different from the one that we do
22 nationally is that it will not be an American Legion
23 post, and we will try to bring a lot more of the
24 resource partners into a room in an expo-like session.
25 And we will also have the Dun & Bradstreet consortium

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1   of, you know, top 50 international law firms who will
2   be donating their time to address one-on-one questions,
3   as long as they're kept broad and nonspecific, you
4   know, for conflict of interest reasons.
5   And thank you. That's it.
6   MR. KRAMER: Great. Tim from Treasury, are
7   you still on the line? Did you have a report?
8   MR. COLON: I am, thanks. Yeah, I'll give a
9   quick update. Primarily the two programs that we have
10 at Treasury, the State Small Business Credit Initiative
11 and the SBLF, unfortunately our funding for our program
12 ends in September 2017, but I think we've done a lot of
13 work with SBA at the local levels to partner to try to
14 get programs that are going that will be sustainable
15 after our federal funding has -- has ended, but there
16 still will be recycling of federal dollars going out.
17 So, that's what we're hopeful at this point.
18   The other thing that I wanted to bring up,
19 next year, hopefully, we're going to be doing a final
20 data crunch of the program, and so we'll be able to
21 kind of track what the veteran participation was. It
22 wasn't required for states to track that by the statute
23 or anything, but we were working with some states that
24 had some better ability, and they were able to track
25 some of that. So, we hope to have that to probably

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1   report to you next year.
2   MR. KRAMER: Okay, thank you very much. I
3   think Barb has another brief update, and then I've got
4   some brief closing remarks and we can all get out of
5   here.
6   MS. CARSON: I'll make it quick. I forgot to
7   bring this up, and I did -- thank you, Davy, for
8   introducing it. The Blue Star Families look at
9   military spouse unemployment and interest in
10 entrepreneurship, so I'm just quickly going to give you
11 some facts, and there may be things to do with it.
12   Before I say anything on that, however, I did
13 want to remind us all that as we look at these
14 recommendations, we are -- there's a great focus on
15 procurement. Some agencies that are represented here,
16 that is their primary focus; however, that's only --
17 that's less than 10 percent of the veteran
18 entrepreneurs and small business owners in the United
19 States.
20   So, I will also be interested in thinking
21 about a representation on this Task Force. If your
22 agency is so large that you have different bureaus or
23 administrations where there are other equities for
24 veteran economic opportunity or policy that perhaps we
25 find a way to wrap those in. And looking at the

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1   military spouse is one of those areas that I could draw
2   that picture for you.
3   So, the all-volunteer force, when it began,
4   one income was generally enough for a family. That is
5   no longer the case for most of us in the United States,
6   and it's especially challenging for military families
7   that relocate rather frequently. And my voice will get
8   -- you know, this is meaningful to me as continuing to
9   serve as a Reservist, and I'm also a military spouse
10 for 19 years, and I had a business in Okinawa. This is
11 where it all comes together for me, so thanks for
12 letting me have just 90 more seconds.
13   The unemployment rate for military spouses is
14 about one and a half times what it is for the civilian
15 equivalent person with education. Ninety percent of
16 military spouses are women. It varies every weekend
17 after a marriage, you know, but there are about 564,000
18 military spouses at this time, and the impact to the
19 economy of having these spouses underemployed or
20 unemployed is about -- it's between $710 million and $1
21 billion. I'd like to see that refined. With a little
22 help from Labor, we're working at triangulating to
23 fully understand that.
24   On one different slide of this study -- and
25 it's not just one study, this is Bureau of Labor

31 (Pages 121 to 124)

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1   Statistics and other sources, as well -- these spouses
2   want to be entrepreneurs. We see them attending Boots
3   to Business when services are amenable to making those
4   seats available for them. One in four says that that's
5   what they would want to do.
6   Many of them face barriers in license and
7   credentialing when they move. They lose things.
8   Business formation also, they have questions. So, we
9   really do think there is a difference, that we do need
10   to look at the military spouse employment and self-
11   employment as a separate entity than veteran because
12   they have different -- they have a different statute,
13   laws, policies around them. Some agencies can't do
14   more, but some can, and they might just not be
15   exercising it fully at this time.
16   And I also would encourage those 90 percent of
17   those spouses who are women that there are women-owned
18   small business activities and certifications that would
19   benefit them. The Department of Labor has training for
20   displaced workers, which military spouses are in most
21   cases when they are forced to move along with their
22   service member.
23   So, these are things that I will bring up in
24   the future, but I look forward to our further
25   discussion on where we go with recommendations and

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1   who's listening to our meetings and participating.
2   Thanks.
3   MR. KRAMER: Well, I'd just like to share a
4   few thoughts here as we close. The first is just an
5   observation that, you know, although we will continue
6   to talk about the frustrations, needs for coordination,
7   all of that, there are some very big numbers happening
8   out there in this space that for all the time you spend
9   in Washington and the Government and where people
10   either trump up big numbers out of things that aren't
11   really meaningful or, on the other hand, you know, sort
12   of cut down big meaningful numbers by talking about the
13   ways that the perfect is the enemy of the good.
14   I mean, I think we can see that over the last
15   couple of years we have seen really transformative
16   changes in the vets unemployment numbers. We have seen
17   really significant increases in the amount of funding
18   that we are guaranteeing that are going to vets
19   entrepreneurs. And as Ken sort of outlined there,
20   we've seen very significant and steady now achievement
21   when it comes to government contracting going to all
22   small businesses but specifically to service-disabled
23   veteran-owned businesses.
24   These are not trifles. I mean, these are
25   really the pillars on which you would build economic

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1   opportunity for veterans. You know, employment, access
2   to capital for business initiation, and then the
3   availability of customer in the form of government
4   contracts. So, by no means should we rest on our
5   laurels, but at the same time, we should recognize the
6   -- you know, what is out there, the trend lines that
7   are happening, and try to use that momentum to make
8   them even better and get rid of some of the blemishes
9   that might still be on those accomplishments.
10   So, as we look forward to the next meeting,
11   which will be in September -- I don't know that we have
12   a date yet on the calendar -- it is September, right?
13   Yeah.
14   There are two things I'd like to leave you all
15   with between now and then. The first is a bit of the
16   undercurrent, although maybe not an overt one, issue;
17   then, will be the issue of sustainability and
18   transition. My days are certainly numbered, and after
19   that meeting, I will be on a sort of a quick dissent,
20   probably out of my role here. And I think the last
21   time we had that sort of a gap the Task Force sort of
22   paid for that.
23   And, so, I will do what I can on my part to
24   make sure that leadership continues at SBA, but I think
25   the best way that we accomplish that is by putting real

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1   sort of programs and real sort of efforts in place that
2   just are self-sustaining by that point. And that's the
3   recommendations. The recommendations need to be
4   thoughtful; the recommendations need to be fresh; the
5   recommendations need to be meaningful.
6   And I think if between now and then we can put
7   in place a new group of 15 to 20 recommendations that
8   we all sort of believe in and understand, that is the
9   best engine we can do or we can put in place to make
10   sure that this thing sustains itself.
11   And my last point, my best point is something
12   that Barb preempted because she always has these ideas
13   earlier and better than I do, but that is that we need
14   to open the aperture a bit. We will sit in this
15   meeting and talk about Government programs all day,
16   because that's our stock and trade and that's what we
17   do, and that's important. The extent to which we are
18   doing certification programs or contracting programs
19   and all of that are very important, but that is not the
20   full extent here.
21   But that's the limit of our universe to some
22   extent by exposure or whatever, and so I would call
23   upon all members of the Task Force to bring to bear
24   your experiences -- and this especially goes to our
25   partners from outside government -- to really think

32 (Pages 125 to 128)

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1 about what is the experience for vets who are trying to
2 start businesses; what are the obstacles that they are
3 encountering. And if that's all you bring, we can come
4 up with a recommendation out of that. We can look to
5 target that.
6   But what I think -- where our blind spot is is
7 we do not have the number of conversations that you all
8 have with vets who are out there trying to do this and
9 what their frustrations are and what their obstacles
10 are. And some of those will involve government
11 programs, and we can try and fix that. Some of those
12 may have nothing to do, at least as a first order, with
13 the Government, but there may be things that we can do
14 to try to address that.
15   So, I would ask all of us aggressively to be
16 looking for those opportunities when you're having
17 those engagements, those conversations, and bring
18 those, not just back to this table in three months, but
19 to the conversations that we'll have in between. I
20 mean, I know that a couple of the members alone
21 identified that in that period they are going to be
22 having very flagship sort of programs, and so really
23 use those as an opportunity to cultivate resources that
24 we can then work from.
25   So, that's the task. That is what we will be

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1 doing. And, hopefully, three months from now, as with
2 the success we have had all along the way the last
3 couple of meetings, we can be here in three months with
4 a pretty good list of recommendations that we will
5 launch forward from there.
6   So, that's it. Thank you all for your time
7 and your participation, and we will be in touch.
8   (Whereupon, at 12:00 p.m., the meeting was
9 adjourned.)
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