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**Transcript of Webinar**

**Utility Industry Workforce Initiative Webinar Series**

**Opportunities in the Energy Utility Sector for Veterans**

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BRIAN KEATING: Welcome everyone to the "Utility Industry Workforce Initiative Webinar Series: Opportunities in the Energy Utility Sector for Veterans" Webinar. Again, go ahead and introduce yourself in the chat window on your screen.

And without any further ado, I'm going to turn things over to Pam Frugoli. Pam is the O\*NET/CareerOneStop/Competency Assessment Team Lead with the Employment and Training Administration in the U.S. Department of Labor. Pam, take it away.

PAM FRUGOLI: Thank you, Brian, and thank you everyone for joining us today. This webinar is going to be about opportunities in energy for veterans and transitioning service members and it involves several different – with collaboration among four different federal agencies as well as a number of private sector partners and please note them, because all of the private sector partners, several of whom will be presenting today.

We're going to be hearing a video from Deputy Secretary Dr. Elizabeth Sherwood Randall at the United States Department of Energy and a video from Assistant Secretary Mike Michaud at the Veterans Employment and Training Service. Then we'll be hearing from Ann Randazzo, executive director at the Center for Energy Workforce Development; Marion Cain at Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense Readiness; Rick Passarelli, Program Coordinator at the Utility Workers Union of America; Dick Wilson at the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Utility Department; Randy Lazaro under the Department of Veterans Affairs; and Randall Smith from Veterans Employment and Training Services.

Our objectives today for this webinar are to highlight employment opportunities in the energy sector, to highlight employment opportunities in the utilities sector as well as training and education programs to prepare veterans and transitioning service members for that sector and in particular to inform and educate staff at the American Job Centers and who work in the transition assistance program, since they are the first point of contact for transitioning service members and veterans seeking employment in these sectors.

And finally, we also want to highlight apprenticeship programs and their important role in preparing veterans and service members for energy and utility jobs.

This is today's agenda. You'll see we have our speakers talking about the opportunities in energy, why veterans and service members are a focus for this, utility job skills and training programs, labor union apprenticeship programs and the benefits that are available for veterans and service members to obtain education and training in this area and finally resources from the Department of Labor. Now we will go to our video portion.

MR. KEATING: All right, great. And while we queue those up, I just want to remind everyone. Most of you are listening through your computer speakers. For those who opted to dial in on the teleconference, please make sure your computer speakers are turned on and turned up to listen to today's videos. And we're going to play them back to back. So first we're going to hear from Deputy Secretary Sherwood Randall. And here she is. (video)

DR. LIZ RANDALL: Hello. I'm Liz Sherwood Randall, the deputy secretary of the U.S. Department of Energy. Before I begin, I'd like to thank the veterans' coordinators at the American Job Centers. You play a valuable role in connecting our veterans and transitioning service members to employment opportunities at a time in their lives that can prove to be challenging.

Your role as the first point of contact when a service member or a veteran begins to explore opportunities in the civilian world is critical and makes a big difference. Our men and women in uniform are part of the heart, soul and backbone of this nation. Throughout my career, I've been honored to work closely with our military and over the years I've developed a deep admiration for the unflinching dedication and discipline that is evident across all of our services. I've been impressed with our military members' willingness to tackle any task, organized to achieve any goal and get the job done right.

At the Department of Energy, where almost 40 percent of our new hires last year were veterans, we couldn't agree more with President Obama's statement that if you really want to get the job done, hire a veteran. So when it comes time for them to hang up their uniforms and return to civilian ranks, we must all pull together to help make the transition as seamless as possible. That's why four federal agencies, the Departments of Energy, Defense, Veterans' Affairs and Labor have partnered with the utility industry in the utility industry workforce initiative. We are helping to honor our nation's veterans and transitioning service members by working to create pathways into rewarding careers in the vibrant and growing energy industry.

Entering the civilian workforce and figuring out how to transfer the special skills learned in military service to a role in the civilian economy, may require some additional support. What I have heard over and over again from service members is that they are used to getting up every day and performing a no fail mission that makes a difference for our nation and they want to continue to serve their country in civilian life. Jobs in the dynamic energy sector offer these kinds of opportunities and we will need a lot of skilled people in the energy workforce in the very near future.

For example, a recent DOE report on energy sector employment found that energy efficiency employers anticipated 14 percent growth in 2016, which translates to about 260,000 new jobs this year. Solar companies estimate that they will add 30,000 new jobs this year and transmission and distribution companies that are building and operating energy infrastructure expect to add 50,000 new jobs. According to another department assessment, there could be more than 1.5 million new jobs in the energy sector by 2030.

Veterans and transitioning service members are poised and ready to answer this call. Job opportunities include positions in the utility companies that provide the electricity that lights our lives and heats our homes. They provide the kind of high skilled, high wage jobs that lead to lifelong careers. Utilities value employees with strong leadership skills and a focus on solving problems, the very skills taught by our military, which makes them an excellent fit for our veterans. In addition, the industry set up the Center for Energy Workforce Development, which has many programs on veterans outreach and workforce integration. In addition, many utility companies have their own veterans' hiring programs.

With the dramatic growth in the energy industry, the skills our veterans acquire working for utilities will be in high demand for a long time to come. I am confident that this webinar will provide you with valuable information about rewarding opportunities in the utility industry for our transitioning service members and veterans. This will enable you to connect them to the training programs, benefits, jobs and other resources that are available to help prepare them to join this dynamic and growing workforce. I thank you for your time and attention and for your continued support for our veterans and transitioning service members who have given so much to our country. With your efforts, we can give something back to them.

MR. KEATING: All right. Hopefully you enjoyed that video. Also for those of you, hopefully you didn't have trouble watching that. We're also going to be putting the recording – that recording will be in the main recording, which will be available in about two business days. Without any further ado, we're going to turn it over to Assistant Secretary Michaud from the vet's in the U.S. Department of Labor. And here we go. (video)

MIKE MICHAUD: Hello, and thank you so much for participating in this important event. Special thanks to our partner, the Department of Energy, for convening the first ever joint Department of Labor, Department of Energy and Energy Industry Partner webinar.

It is a privilege to partner with the Deputy Secretary Sherwood Randall and to thank her for her leadership. In this webinar, you will learn about the in demand occupations in the energy utility sector from a variety of federal and industry experts, including where the jobs are and the supports and training available to help service members and veterans qualify for and find employment in these positions. The Department of Labor and Vets introduction of veterans.gov as the federal government's go to site for resources that will help connect veterans and their spouses to civilian employment as well as to employers seeking to hire veterans and military spouses.

It is significant part of our – (inaudible). When you go to veterans.gov, and I strongly encourage you to do so, you will see a link to the Department of Energy. Only one short year ago, the U.S. Department of Energy, Secretary Ernest Moniz announced the creation of the Utility Industry Workforce Initiative. This key partnership between the Departments of Energy, Labor, Defense and Veteran's Affairs and five utility trade associations were implemented to recruit and train service members, veterans, military spouses, to qualify for high skilled jobs in the utility industry.

My boss, U.S. Secretary of Labor Tom Perez, said at the time, and I quote, with the utility workforce council, Secretary Moniz and the energy industry are showing bold, innovative leadership and will deploy the resources and expertise of the labor department and the workforce system to help ensure its success. As seen in the recently released quadrennial energy review, investments are needed to modernize the nation's energy infrastructure, creating additional employment opportunities. Projections indicate that by 2030, the energy sector, including transmission, storage and distribution will employ an addition 1.5 million workers. At a time when 200,000 veterans are leaving the military annually, recruiting and training for energy jobs can reduce the skills gap in a critical set of industries.

I appreciate your commitment to resolving the challenges that changing technologies, a rapidly aging energy workforce and training and skilled workforce gaps can create in the energy sector. You're all innovative, hardworking people, so I'm confident that if anyone can help our veterans, transitioning service members and spouses, you all can. Thank you again for all you have done and continue to do on behalf of our service members, veterans, spouses and our American workforce.

MR. KEATING: All right. Great. Hopefully you were able to listen to that. Again, those videos will be in the recording, which will be posted in about two business days. Without any further ado, I'll turn things back to the team.

MS. FRUGOLI: Thank you. So now we'd like to go to Marion Cain from Department of Defense. Are you there, Marion?

MARION CAIN: I am, Pam. I am. And Pam, thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to spend time, to spend a few minutes today talking about the advantages of hiring our veterans. Next slide, please.

We find that – in our opinion, hiring veterans and service members just makes good business sense. I think there's a tremendous business value in hiring veterans. We find that once veterans get out into the workplace, that they are generally accountable. They are used to, during their service, even relatively junior service members are familiar with accounting for millions and millions of dollars of valuable equipment as well as supervising several personnel. We find that they are highly motivated.

They are especially mission-focused and can figure out what they need to do to get the job done. They also are team players as well as they have the ability to lead teams and one of the most important things I hear back from employers, that they are relatively drug free. They have to be drug free to be in the military, so they're used to that, and they are very dependable. They arrive on time. They get the job done. They don't leave before the job is finished.

Next slide, please. I want to talk just a minute about SkillBridge authority. Congress gave this authority to us in 2011. It took us a couple years to get the policies and procedures in place, but we are well organized now and executing major programs. You can see at the bottom, we have quite a few programs across the United States. I think the advantage here for the employer, it gives you a several weeks, if not a month or two, chance to interview your perspective employees to make sure that it's a good fit between the company and the employer. So there's value in that.

We do ask that training must be provided at no or low cost to the training service member and also we don't ask you to guarantee a job, but we ask that there be a high probability of employment. In fact, majority of our SkillBridge training programs that are already out there, we have employment rates of 90 percent or greater for their employers for their graduates to the program.

On our part, participation by the service member is authorized by the first field grade commander in the chain of command. That's usually a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army, the Air Force, Marine Corps or a Commander in the Navy. And service member participation is voluntary and it is based on mission requirements, but we found once programs become established, we usually have as many as two or three applicants for each position that's available.

These programs are very, very popular with our young men and women and we can't get enough of them at our military bases. So just in summary, more than 4500 military personnel have graduated from these programs. At any one time, we have well over a couple hundred in training. We have 27 installations throughout the United States and these programs are growing. Every week we're bringing more programs online.

If you're interested, we have a website with a little bit more information. It's called dodskillbridge.com. Dodskillbridge.com and they'll get you started down the path. Thank you very much.

MS. FRUGOLI: Thank you, Marion. We appreciate that. And next we'd like to welcome Ann Randazzo, Executive Director of the Utility Industry Workforce Initiative for the Center for Workforce Development – Energy Workforce Development. Take it away, Ann.

ANN RANDAZZO: Thanks, Pam. This is Ann Randazzo. I'm the executive director, as she mentioned, for the Center for Energy Workforce Development and for those of you who don't know the center, or CEWD as it is frequently called, I'm going to give you just a minute about who we are and how we came together. The center represents most of the electric and natural gas utilities across the country, including the five major utility trade associations. Those that you saw on that first slide that have been part of the utility industry workforce initiative, the Edison Electric Institute, the American Gas Association, the Nuclear Energy Institute, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and the American Public Power Association along with our utility partners, IBEW and UWA. So we all work together to identify the best ways to get our positions filled with a diverse, qualified workforce for the future.

Our industry is in state of transformational change, but we are at a – (inaudible). We know what we need to do for the future and we know the types of workers that we need to be able – that have the ability to learn and provide the leadership to move our industry forward and a fair percentage of those come from the military. Utilities have always been great military supporters and we have employed the military in many of our jobs. But about four years ago, we came together and said, what can we do better? How can we make this transition from the military easier for veterans who are moving back home and who want to make a difference?

As you heard earlier, that's one of the key pieces and the Deputy Secretary said it so well. Our jobs are jobs that make a difference in the economy, in the environment, and most certainly to the comfort of every individual in the country. So we are looking for veterans. We are actively hiring and we have jobs that fit.

Jobs in the utility industry make up about 519,000 employees. So we are a piece of those numbers that you saw earlier and we are recruiting and hiring every day all across the country. For most of our jobs, and we have jobs in every sector, from communication to supervision, training, management, PR accounting, legal, anything that you can name, we have a job that's related to that.

But 44 percent of our jobs reflect those that keep the lights running and the power going and those are jobs like line workers, technicians, plant field operators, engineers. These are jobs that for the most part require less than an Associate degree of less in order to enter the positions and they're also jobs where we've seen a direct correlation between jobs in all the branches of the military and can be translated to these key jobs or critical jobs as we call them. These jobs are in every state and they cover all kinds of skills.

So how can veterans find out about these great jobs? Well, that was one of the first things that we did. We took a look at how veterans who are able to access information on our jobs and how they would find out where the open jobs are, or if they needed additional training, where they could find it.

So we created Troops to Energy Jobs, and you see the link there, www.troopstoenergyjobs.org. This is a site that makes it easier for veterans to find us and for us to find veterans. And I want to spend a little bit of time going through what's on the site and some of the resources that we've made available to veterans. Again, it's that one stop, much like the American Job Centers where we can directly connect to the transitioning military and veterans who have the skills that we need to fill these critical jobs.

If you take a look at the site, one of the first things that you see is our roadmap. We wanted to, again, make it easier to find out about the jobs and to determine whether or not you have the skills now to enter a job or whether you might need some additional education. So those are the two paths. The first one is ready now. That means I've looked at the information.

I know what I can do and I know that I need to move directly in to or I have the ability to move directly into a career in a utility or an energy job. The other path looks at where you might need more education. Maybe taking the training that you've had in the military, building on that so that you will be prepared to enter some of these great jobs.

Taking a look at the roadmap, the first piece of it that you see is explore and when you're out on the website, all these buttons are interactive. So if you click on that button, what you'll get is information on the jobs. The critical jobs that I mentioned as well as others. It gives you complete information on what the salaries are, what the job responsibilities are. Videos of what a day in the life of a worker in that area might look like, lots of information on how to just kind of explore as well as information on the industry in general and then you can move to translate.

One of the first steps is to identify what are the skills that you currently have and how do they relate to our jobs? So we have created an interactive system so that you can actually pick your military occupation code from any of the branches of service and translate that into not only the critical jobs, but into others. And that translate button gives you lots of information on that.

If, based on that, you see that you need some additional information, we also have a button for getting support. That will give you everything from how to request a joint services transcript to information on education benefits, including the post-9/11 GI Bill, how to identify what kind of resources that you might need and direct links to that.

And then moving to finding a school – I've decided that I need more education, where's the best place to go? CEWD has partnered and the utilities across the country have partnered with schools in almost every state and they are the ones that we have – we know that the programs that they offer relate directly to these critical jobs. The utilities have partnered with them to create the curriculum and they hire from them. So if you click on that link, you'll find the Google Map function where you can identify that school, but it also gives you information on ACE credit, how to take your transcript and apply for additional credit at the school so that it will shorten the time that you have to spend in education.

It also gives you additional information on military friendly schools or student veterans' organizations. And then going back to school, if you click on that link, it gives you tips on how to be successful during that piece of your education. And let me mention this part of this. We also partner with online schools, both Thomas Edison State University and Bismarck State have programs that take credits from the military. Thomas Edison has an incredible system where you can actually enter your joint services transcript and get credit that goes directly to the skills that we need for our jobs.

Once you have the education, moving over to get support for your job search. This is where you can find information on veterans' services organizations and also a direct link to the American Jobs Centers maps with where you can find the veteran reps that can help you there. Prepare, if you click on that button, you get lots of great information on how to translate to civilian resume, how to – interviewing tips and most importantly, a practice test.

We have, in our industry, a pre-employment test and for most of the jobs that you see listed, not the engineers, but the others, you have to take this pre-employment test in order to get the jobs. It is absolutely a high stakes test and for veterans in particular who maybe haven't tested much over the last few years, it's a great idea to prepare for that. So if you click on that link, you can actually take a practice test, time it. And then we have independent self-study on ways that you can identify where you might need to shore up your skills in order to be able to pass that test and move on.

Then the last one is locate and apply. If you click on that button, what you will find is a job site that has every one of our CEWD members have jobs available every day. They're scraped every night. It's real time. All the jobs are there, along with ways that you can identify and actually apply from the website. Go directly to that particular utility.

So some of the other features that you might find on the website that we think will be helpful to this, and again, we did all of this to make it easier for vets to find us. If you click on that green button, that gives you the roadmap that I just went through. If you click up at the top on the registration site, this is a place where veterans can actually go in and register. They can submit a resume. They can identify where they might want to go to work, where's home or where did they want to live and put in information about their particular skills.

We also have the ability for our utility members to register on the other side. So they can put in information about their companies, their military recruiters or a military website that might directly link to information on their company and what they're looking for and it's a way for those companies to identify who is out there and who might be interested in these jobs.

We also have, just in case you get stuck any place along the way, we have a virtual coach. His name is Carl Christopher and he's available to help. He's helped hundreds and actually thousands of veterans since we launched the troops website, to be able to take the next step, whether it's figuring out how to tune that resume up or where to go with a particular company, something that might help them move along the path.

And then the last one is that job posting site. All CEWD member companies have their positions there. It changes every day and I wanted to give you an idea about what that looks like and some of the features that we have there. If you look at the website, this may be familiar to many of you. It kind of follows the standard format but we have a few things that are a little bit different.

If you look, of course, you can put in where you want to go to work and it will filter all the jobs based on that. You might also put in your military occupation code or your Navy rating, whatever happens to be, and it will screen by that. But over on the right side, we have some quick links. One is to be able to filter by hot jobs.

Sometimes with the way these websites filter, if you have just a few words that appear in many different job descriptions or job postings, lots of jobs will come up that may not relate. So what we did is actually look at what do the utilities call these jobs? It may not be line worker, it might be line tech. It might be journeyman. It might be helper. It may be many, many different terms that utilities use.

So we compile all of those and if you click on, for example, line worker, it will take you directly to those job postings by screening out all those other extraneous ones. We have the key jobs here, but you can look for anything in this. Or if you want to look for a particular company, you can see that you can filter by that. If you want to go directly to your military title and see what's available there, you can do that and there are several other job searches there.

So it's a way, again, to make it easier for veterans to find our jobs, to find us and most importantly to identify whether or not they have the skills that are needed. Many times what we do is recommend to veterans that they go here first, find the jobs that relate to their particular skills and then they can identify what do I need to do to add to that? And where am I going to get an education?

Maybe I want to go ahead and enroll in an online course that can help improve my skills and make my chances of getting that job even better. I would encourage you to explore the site. There's lots more information out there. It's very specifically intended to match veterans or transitioning military into these great energy jobs.

So take a look at it and if you have some suggestions or if you have questions, you can either click on the link for the virtual coach or you can get in touch with me. I'm Ann, A-n-n, @CEWD.org. Thank you, Pam. I'll turn it back to you.

MS. FRUGOLI: Thank you, Ann. I appreciate that. Next we're going to learn some details about something that's very dear to the Department of Labor's heart, apprenticeship and training programs. First we'll hear from Rick Passarelli, Program Coordinator at the Utility Workers Union of America and with the Utility Workers Military Assistance Program. Take it away, Rick.

RICK PASSARELLI: Thank you, Pam, and good morning to everybody. Special thanks to the DOL for an opportunity here to be able to present to everybody this morning and early afternoon. So we have a program in Chicago as part of the Utility Workers National Initiative by our president, Mike Langford, that's called UMAP. That's the acronym. It's Utility Workers Military Assistance Program and our program is housed within a training trust called The Power For American Training Trust, which is a multi-employer training trust that we utilize with partners in the utility industry.

So this morning, what we wanted to do was give you a little bit of an example of a program that we have running up in Chicago and the program was developed in 2012 as part of an initiative with meeting with the CEO of the utility company in Chicago who is our signatory employer called People's Gas.

And the idea was hatched by the initiative of trying to get our veterans coming back from Afghanistan, Iraq with skillsets to be able to utilize within the utility industry. So in Chicago, we approached the CEO at that time and had asked him to help us develop a program and to have hires at the end of the day to a training placement program that would be able to employ at People's Gas.

I think everybody on the calls know that utility industry is suffering what we're calling granular workforce right now with the amount of retirement throughout the country and gas, electric, water and nuclear industry to date. So we embarked on one of the largest infrastructure projects in the country right now, in Chicago, that encompasses about 900,000 customers in the city of Chicago and we'll be replacing all the duck tile and cast iron main and transferring somewhere in the neighborhood of 700,000 gas services in the city of Chicago here in the next 20 years.

Some of our partners that we've developed through our private partnerships throughout the years are the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Department of Defense, Soldier for Life, who places a gigantic role in what we do. We just had meetings last week with trying to get everybody re-engaged and we were able to sign a new national MLU with Dixon Center, which is housed under the Easter Seals Workforce and Development program. We utilize all the work from TRADOC and IMCOM as well. These are some of our partners that we work with almost on a daily basis.

This public private partnership has created a need in the infrastructure industry here in Chicago and around the country, so People's Gas again as a signatory employer here in Chicago. To give you an example, in Michigan we run a similar program with Consumer's Energy and in California PG&E is one of our partners that run a hybrid system of what we're running to date. The program to date has $3.5 million in investments through People's Gas alone. Utility Workers Union of America with in county contributions is somewhere in the neighborhood of $400,000 from the labor community and our Chicago Federation of Labor partnership also, who is able to utilize rapid response hours through – (inaudible) – and of course our partners at the City Colleges of Chicago with an initiative from our mayor, Rahm Emanuel, who has asked to revitalize the community college system here in Chicagoland.

It's nothing more important than to get feedback from students that you're able to help and get jobs at the end of what our training and placement program provides, so having said that, we tried to get testimonials from some of our students. You see just a few of the testimonials up there.

We also create surveys with each one of our graduates who are placed at People's Gas, we have about a 97 percent placement rate at People's Gas to date. We've trained over 300 veterans in total and 250 veterans alone are at People's Gas itself. Some other veterans who go through the program find work either at Chicago Police Department or Chicago Fire Department who have applied for those type jobs prior to entering the program.

UMAP's training facility is housed within the Chicago city colleges and Dawson Technical Institute. It was kind of important for us to utilize the initiative that our mayor and the city of Chicago asked to do so. We created this school within the city college system and it's a school within a school at Dawson Technical Institute. And with in-kind contributions now I say totaling over probably $400,000, we were able to build a state of the art facility that our veterans utilize while they're in class. It's a giant practical room that we utilize that teaches them how to set gas meters, regulators and to be a utility worker when they graduate the program.

The next slide kind of illustrates a symposium that we held here in Chicago last year to announce signing of our new agreement. We have a new five year agreement with People's Gas, the employer here in Chicago, with the city colleges and with our UWUA national president so due to that, we're able to have the symposium and have some dignitaries come and view the school.

We held a press conference and were able to utilize some of our partners here to try to get some publicity so that veterans across the country could be notified about the program here in Chicago. To date, our contract allows for us to hire over 350 more veterans into the program throughout the next three and a half years, so we're excited about that opportunity also.

This slide illustrates that by a directive of our national president Mike Langford, in 2012 at a board meeting we challenged each one of our locals across the country to try to get out to their employers. We're talking to some, obviously the largest employers in the country and want our locals at the labor level to be able to set up some meetings with CEOs and those on the HR side of the house to try to showcase the program that we had in Chicago, Michigan and in California and to see if there's any interest on these employers to be able to utilize some of the programs that we have in place today or to build a custom program for that particular employer's needs.

The 2015 extension of the program was very important to us, so now it runs through the year 2020 and as part of that agreement, we also are able to update that space that we have to change for the new technology that's coming up and in the gas industry, everything is changing to polyethylene pipe. So as we start to convert the city of Chicago from cast iron and – (inaudible) – main to the polyethylene pipe, our veteran students are being able to utilize some of the newest of technology in the industry through some in-kind contributions from some of the vendors and suppliers in the gas industry as part of that agreement and that's what our school will be updated with almost on a biyearly basis.

UMAP's custom curriculum that we are able to develop for this particular employer in Chicago, which is People's Gas, again, created a 50 college credit advanced certificate program and some of the classes that you can see in the program itself, the program is six months in duration. The work day is eight hours to mimic a work day out in the field. Our particular employer in Chicago wanted the program to be built with an eight hour work day.

So the first two months of school at the community college, the classes are taught, which we call soft skills. So we develop this curriculum to, again, provide for 50 college credit hours which is well on their way to an Associate's degree and once they finish the second module, which is the eight weeks of soft skill classes, they then go into a four month intensive portion of the school, which is the gas sector training.

Now, the gas sector is taught by three of my retired gas workers who have worked well over 100 years of experience out in the field. The students love that portion of the training, because it's actually hands on, practical portion of the training. We're getting OSHA meter sets, regulators, answering gas leaks as first responders, fires and explosions. So they absolutely have a ball at that time, to be able to utilize that portion of the program. Once they graduate the program itself, after the six months, they serve a one month paid internship. That one month paid internship is able to create what we use as a mentor. So we also create a mentor training program for my members that are out in the field to date.

Each one of those members are assigned a graduating veteran that come out into the field and for four weeks they're evaluated and we're able to use any corrections or pieces we need to revitalize some training shortfalls we may have had. If not, our mentors sign off on the veteran who is ready to go and they're employed at the company at $24.16 an hour with all the benefits that we're able to negotiate through our labor agreements.

Due to our national outreach partners, it's important with all of our federal agencies and we work pretty hard to try to make sure that our flyers and recruitment go out each and every time that our employer is in need, which right now, again, we're holding constant three classes a year. We have a spring, summer and a fall semester, so we're running three cohorts of 25 a year through the program to try to get enough people out into the field. These are – it's veteran dedicated only classes, so these are all veteran classes that are able to graduate from the program itself.

With our United States Army training to placement movement, due to the Department of Defense's instruction details, this also allows us now to work through trying to get on some of the bases of working with garrison commanders and kind of having a captive audience out into the bases and installations themselves. We're able to kind of provide a short synopsis of programs that are available to our veterans who will be getting out of the military in short order and anybody who is willing to relocate or to live in a state where we have programs up and running to date can let their garrison commander know and we try to get them as much information as possible and see if they want to relocate and we get them in the program through our screening process here in Chicago.

Some of our panel experts also, through our American Legion Licensing and Credentialing summits that we've been to, our Soldier for Life Regional Conference, the Rand Cooperation, our Department of Labor and Veterans Conferences that we've been to, partners who have really pushed on the veterans help for us in the labor community is Blue Green Alliance. Our funding partners here in Chicago are the Chicago Federation of Labor, which really does a great job with trying to get some of the recognized issues that we have with our veterans, mainly housing issues.

We've had several veterans come through our program who were homeless to provide housing assistance, through Safe Haven. We provide through Inner Voice food vouchers, gas cards, bus passes, train passes. We try to make it as easy as we can for the veteran to be able to succeed in the program itself and try to use all those supportive services to make sure that we're able to do that for us.

So that concludes my presentation and I'll turn it over to my brother, Dick Wilson.

MS. FRUGOLI: Yes. So next we'll hear from Dick Wilson, who is an international representative with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Utility Department. Take it away, Dick.

DICK WILSON: Thank you. Thanks everyone for joining. I want to talk to you a little bit this afternoon about our outside lineman apprenticeship program. While this is more geared towards going to work for the contractors that support the utility industry, it is a earn while you learn program and it is also one of the quickest ways to get started in the industry. A lot of the brothers and sisters I worked with actually at the utility had started out their careers in this program working for a contractor, got some experience and then are able to go to work anywhere in the United States as a journeyman lineman once they finish the program.

Something to kind of keep in mind about the trade, when we're talking about linemen, is it is a very physically demanding trade. But that's something we see a lot with the veterans that is not an issue for them, you know, with the – (inaudible) – standards of being able to be physically capable of doing the work and ready to have the can do attitude that it takes to work in that trade. These are folks that when we're talking about storm recovery, outages, constructing new lines, getting your lights back on when they go out. This is who does this – kind of the heroes in a lot of the aspects of the utility industry. They're the ones out there working the hours getting customers back on.

When we look at applying for it, and I'll go to the next slide here, has our information. We have – the program is administered through the Electrical Training Alliance. The partnership between our membership and the contractors in the industry, it's a joint apprenticeship committee and when you go in to find out the information as far as for the lineman trade, the best thing I can recommend is calling the 1-800 number. Due to the geographical territory of the programs, a lot of times it's easier to call the 1-800 number and say, hey, I am currently in this location; where is the nearest outside lineman apprenticeship program?

Because through the National Electrical Training Alliance, we also administer the inside, what people would commonly refer to as electricians' apprenticeship program also. So if you go online, you're more apt to find the programs for the inside wiremen, the electrician, than you are the outside construction.

But if you call the 1-800 number and say, hey, I am in Fort Sill, Oklahoma, where is the closest outside apprenticeship training program that I can get into contact with and look at becoming an apprentice, they'll gladly give you that information.

As far as the requirements of the job, everything is on the slides. I won't bore you with that information, but feel free to check out the website, electricaltraininalliance.org if you need more information about the program. Thank you.

MS. FRUGOLI: Thank you, Dick. And now we'd like to hear from Randy Lazaro. He's a veteran's benefit advisor at the Department of Veteran Affairs. Randy?

Randy Lazaro: Thank you, Pam. Good morning, good afternoon everyone and my name is Randy Lazaro and I'm from the Department of Veterans' Affairs Education Service and I'm grateful for this opportunity to be able to talk to you about some of the GI Bill benefits and education training opportunities for our service member veterans and their eligible dependents.

I'm going to start with the first one, which is probably one of the most commonly known GI Bill benefits out there today, the post-9/11 GI Bill, which is really the most extensive, the most comprehensive benefits of all the GI Bill benefits since the original GI Bill was enacted into law back in June 1944. So the post-9/11 GI Bill, chapter 33, that's what we normally would call it, are for those individuals that served at least 90 days of aggregate active duty service after September 10, 2001 and provides 36 months of full time educational and training benefits and the benefits basically lasted 15 years from the date of the – from the very date last discharged of active duty. The post-9/11 GI Bill benefits, it's eligible for them to take training for a college degree, non-college degree certificate and diplomas, vocational technical schools, flight training, apprenticeship – (inaudible) – program and correspondence.

This also has an opportunity for the service member to transfer any of their unused GI Bill benefits to their eligible dependents while they are on active duty. There are three components in relation to the payment as the post-9/11 GI Bill. The first one is the tuition and fee payment that goes directly to the school. The payment basically goes directly to the school if the student is attending a public school, the tuition and fees are covered at 100 percent for the in state rate. If the student is attending a private or foreign school, there's a cap of $21,000 for the year, as you see on the slide.

The second component is the monthly housing allowance that goes directly to the student and it works like the basic allowance for housing for active duty personnel and the way the monthly housing allowance is computed is based on the E-5 or dependents rate of the basic allowance for housing for the service member using the school zip code. Any active duty members that are using the post-9/11 GI Bill are currently not eligible to receive the monthly housing allowance.

The third component is the books stipend. They can receive up to $1000 through the year and it breaks it down really if the person is doing or attending training for OJT for apprenticeship training. It breaks it down to $83 a month for the books.

The second GI Bill benefit chapter is the Montgomery GI Bill Active Duty Chapter 30. It also provides 36 months of benefits and this is for those individuals that went into active duty after June of 1985. The benefit range from that amount that you see on the screen and that really – the dollar amount is basically dictated based on their training time whether the person is full time, half time or three quarter time and it goes directly to the student or the veteran. MGIV or chapter 30 is good for 10 years from date of separation.

The next one is for the eligible dependents, spouses and children – the Survivor and Dependent's Educational Assistance Program, chapter 35. This benefit basically provide 45 months of entitlement if the student is attending a school or apprenticeship training that is considered full time, they will receive the maximum benefit of $1000 and $1021 a month.

For children, the benefit starts from the time that the children start age 18 up to age 26, so spouses or surviving spouses have 10 years from the date the veterans either die or if the veteran died on active duty or the service member died on active duty, then the surviving spouse has 20 years to be able to take advantage of the Survivors and Dependent's Educational Assistance Program or chapter 35.

Some of the resources that are available, the first one is the GI Bill main website. It has expansive information that includes our education toll free number. It is 1-888-442-4551 and please do not get that confused with 1-800 number. It's a 888 number and that's basically the number that is dedicated for education questions that relate to the GI Bill usage and training and opportunity.

Also, the website has information regarding choosing a school or school – the official resources that outline some of the eligible schools and participating employers across the country that are eligible to receive GI Bill funding as well. And it also gives them the opportunity to use the comparison tool and to give them the exact precise dollar amounts for each of those components of the payments for the chapter 33 or what they would receive if they are attending school or if they are part of a training institution in the specific area across the country.

It has also information from additional federal agencies, just like the Federal Trade Commission in relation to choosing your vocational school and choosing the right college for the individual. We also have a section on the main landing page of the GI Bill website that will give you the opportunity to be able to submit your specific question regarding your specific situation and we also maintain a section of FAQs, the frequently asked questions that relate to the GI Bill. And that concludes this section of my presentation. Thank you so much.

MS. FRUGOLI: Thank you for that information on benefits. And now I'm going to turn it over to my colleague here at the Department of Labor, Randall Smith, National Veterans' Employment Manager with the Veterans' Employment and Training Service.

RANDALL SMITH: Good morning and good afternoon everyone. We'll finish up. As a reminder, this line will go dead at exactly 1:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, so if you have questions and you don't get them in, please start typing them in now so that we can get back to you and we certainly will do that.

I want to touch on just a couple things and I'll go to our first slide. Many of you have seen it, and again, thank you for everyone who tuned in, both in the American Job Centers and our partners in private industry. Hopefully you are very much aware of veterans.gov. The webinar today is a direct outreach of that.

While veterans.gov is based on employment for veterans and at the end of the day, finding a job and hiring veterans, we're trying to drive more transitioning service members and veterans and their families and spouses to American Job Centers and we want more employers there also. So we're working every day to do that.

The other part of what we're doing with the webinar, and we'll see as we go forward. Specifically you'll see the big red arrow that points to energy and if you click on that link there, you'll go to the next page here, our next slide, and that will take you to the Department of Energy's page where they have established pages for veterans, service members who are looking for opportunities in the energy industry and today is a great example of how we worked with the utility industry workforce initiative to work not directly with the companies, but through our partnerships with the associations to get those – the companies that are sitting there in Audubon, Iowa, where I'm from, who are hiring folks that this information can all make it to you and we can tie you to that together.

So I encourage you to explore veterans.gov. You'll be able to find our emails on there. That will take you to the energy. It will also take you to partnerships that we're beginning with agriculture, transportation, homeland security. I think we even have a new one on there that I think I'm a little bit behind. AmeriCorps, yeah, AmeriCorps is now on the page. So please look at those.

Now, specifically the last page that I have is we put up our apprenticeship link for here at the Department of Labor. It's no secret that apprenticeships have gotten a great deal of attention and a great deal of grant money as we go.

We work hand in hand, our registered apprenticeships together with the VA and with our private sector partners, this is really intertwined, but we have a specific page at DOL and you'll be able to see the website there up at the top, but the apprenticeship USA toolkit. I'm sure our folks in American Job Centers are probably already aware of this, but we want this out there for your information also.

So with that, I'll leave you with, you know, I'll say veterans.gov once and then I'll say veterans.gov again and if you forgot what I said, I'll say veterans.gov a third time. We want you to use it, link to these folks and give us some feedback how we're doing.

Now, with that, we've got five minutes left if there are any questions and I'd be remiss not thanking Brian and his team for putting the webinar together. We get fantastic support on that and that's greatly appreciated and again, thank you for everyone who joined and if you weren't able to join, then you wouldn't be knowing that I was talking to you, would you?

For those who couldn't join, please forward them the link to the webinar. Now, back to Pam and Brian.

MS. FRUGOLI: All right, Brian, do you want to tell us about the recording and do we have any questions yet from –

MR. KEATING: Sure. Yeah, Pam, if you look in that numbered list, you'll see a few questions that came in. We've got a couple of minutes here, so we can certainly address those if needed. Do want to remind everyone that we are recording today.

Hopefully everyone had a great experience with the videos earlier, but those will be in the recording and that links to all the resources, the slides, the handout and the recording and transcript in about two business days along with any other resources or handouts we make available. That's all available at the link in the chat, so be on the lookout for that. So Pam, I don't know if there's anything just in a couple minutes we want to address in this list of a handful of questions that came in?

MS. FRUGOLI: Well, it says are the energy jobs available to veteran spouses. I mean, yes, they are open to veteran spouses too. We were focusing on specifically how to help veterans identify these jobs and transition to them, but yes, they are open. I don't think – Dick or Rick or Ann, are you going to turn away any spouses who want to work in your – again, in fact these cannot be veteran-only jobs, but this is highlighting the opportunity for veterans.

MS. RANDAZZO: Yeah. These are open jobs. They're open to everybody and we feel that veterans are really competitive for them, so that will help them, but we also know that because utilities are in every state, every county, so if you have someone in the military who is stationed in a particular area, the local utility is a great place to go to find a job and get skills that you can take with you as you transfer from one area to another.

So if a spouse has been working for one utility, then you know that you have the skills to move to that same job or a different job in another utility. We're everywhere, so everywhere you go there will be a utility job available.

MR. KEATING: Thank you, Ann. There's a question number four – well, I'll answer number five, because that one, we're fairly solid on that one. They asked do all veterans have their high school diplomas, GEDs. I don't know that the number is 100 percent, but it can certainly be rounded up to 100 percent if it's not. There's some – we do have some special programs in the military that might give you one percent that don't, but for the most part that's a yes.

Now, for number four, there was a question about southwestern Pennsylvania oil and gas industry and that's probably best to let Ann or Dick or Rich take a look at that one, or we can certainly follow up with you on that.

MS. FRUGOLI: We're almost out of time. We might have to follow up later. Randy, do you know, are VA Chapter 31 benefits eligible for this training? Do we need to get back to that? OK, I think –

MR. KEATING: We'll get back on that one, because we had several types of training here. So you know, if it's with one of the specific union programs, then follow up on that question and let us know specifically, because we can sure get you an answer for that exactly. All right.

MS. FRUGOLI: Thanks everyone.

MR. KEATING: So thank you everyone. We appreciate you tuning in.

(END)