



Congresswoman Stephanie Murphy  
Floor Statement  
Floor Speech on Introduction of BATTLE for Servicemembers Act  
*February 6, 2018*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I am introducing a bipartisan bill that seeks to ensure that servicemembers who are leaving the military receive the specific training they need to make a successful transition to civilian life. The *BATTLE for Servicemembers Act* will better prepare servicemembers to attend college, to learn a technical trade, or to start a small business.

The men and women in our all-volunteer military serve and sacrifice for this nation. When they decide to leave the armed forces, it is our nation's moral obligation to take all the steps necessary to help them thrive in the next stage of their lives.

I want to thank the three original cosponsors of this legislation. The first is Congressman Jack Bergman, a retired three-star Marine Corps general who recently visited my central Florida district as part of a program organized by the Bipartisan Policy Center. Congressman Bergman joined me on a visit to the local VA hospital and to a meeting of my veterans' advisory board.

The other original cosponsors are Congressman Carlos Curbelo and Congresswoman Kyrsten Sinema, who are the co-chairs of the Congressional Future Caucus. I am proud to serve as vice-chair of this Caucus, which promotes policies to empower younger generations, including our young men and women in the military.

I also want to thank the outside organizations that have endorsed this bill, namely the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, the Student Veterans of America, and the Millennial Action Project.

Now, let me briefly outline what the bill would do.

Over 200,000 servicemembers are honorably discharged from the military each year. Many of them are under age 25, do not have a bachelor's degree, and leave the military without having secured a civilian job.

Under current law, the Department of Defense is required to ensure that eligible departing servicemembers participate in the Transition Assistance Program, or TAP.

The content of TAP has evolved over the years, and continues to be the subject of vigorous debate in Congress and within DOD. As presently designed, TAP's mandatory core curriculum consists of a three-day employment workshop; six hours of briefings on veterans' benefits; and eight to 10 hours of briefings on topics such as translating military skills to civilian jobs and managing personal finances.

Beyond this mandatory core curriculum, eligible servicemembers are also given the *option* to participate in a more specialized, two-day workshop in one of the following areas: higher education; technical and skills training; or entrepreneurship.

In my view, the core curriculum is necessary, but not sufficient, to enable most departing servicemembers to successfully transition to the civilian world. I believe departing servicemembers should supplement the core curriculum with at least one of the two-day workshops, so they can receive training tailored to their specific personal and professional goals—whether that involves going to school, learning a trade, or starting a business.

The problem is that these two-day workshops, precisely because they are optional, are rarely utilized. According to a report recently released by the Government Accountability Office, fewer than 15 percent of eligible active-duty servicemembers participated in one of the two-day workshops in Fiscal Year 2016, including only 4 percent of eligible Marines.

Requiring transitioning servicemembers to *opt in* to a two-day workshop sends a signal to servicemembers and their commanders that the workshops are unnecessary—thereby discouraging participation.

Therefore, my bill would require DOD to ensure that all eligible servicemembers participate in the core curriculum *and* one of the two-day workshops. As with the core curriculum, participation in the two-day workshop could be waived for certain departing servicemembers, including servicemembers with specialized skills who are needed to support an imminent deployment.

In addition, the bill would allow servicemembers who do not wish to participate to *opt out* of the training. However, the ultimate goal is to ensure that more departing servicemembers receive this targeted training and to boost the current 15 percent participation rate.

There is far more we can do as a country to make certain that our warriors are well-equipped, both practically and emotionally, to deal with the challenges of civilian life. I believe passage of this legislation would be a step in the right direction.

I respectfully ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this bill.

Thank you.