

Department of Defense Bloggers Roundtable With Robert L. Gordon III,
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Military Community and Family
Policy (MCFP) Via Teleconference Subject: Military Spouse Employment and
Career Opportunities Time: 10:37 a.m. EDT Date: Thursday, September 29,
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PETTY OFFICER WILLIAM SELBY (Office of the Secretary of Defense
for Public Affairs): Hello. I'd like to welcome you all to the
Department of Defense's Bloggers Roundtable for Thursday, September 29th,
2011. My name is Petty Officer William Selby with the Office of the
Secretary of Defense Public Affairs, and I'll be moderating the call
today.

Today we are honored to have as our guest Mr. Robert L. Gordon
III, deputy assistant secretary of defense, Military Community and Family
Policy, who will discuss the policies, programs and services that expand
the opportunities for military spouses to pursue their education and
career goals. A note to the bloggers on the line: Please remember to
clearly state your name and blog or organization in advance of your
question. Please respect Mr. Gordon's time and keep your questions
succinct and to the point.

And if you are not asking a question, we ask that you place your
phone on mute.

And with that, sir, we would like an opening statement from you.

ROBERT GORDON: Thanks very much. I am just delighted to meet
with all of you again. I just want to let you know how highly I value
our time, first of all, that we spend together to discuss military spouse
employment education. And I do feel, especially with this community,
that it does take a community to ensure that we are creating and
executing programs that are very effective, efficient and also empower
our spouses to be able to consume education and to find jobs and
employment in accordance with their career wishes and their career goals.

So I'm really excited about it. What I'd like to do is very
quickly go over with you the current data for military spouse employment.
And as you all know, we rolled out the Military Spouse Employment Program

in June, early -- June of this year, and here are the updates as of this week.

Currently on our website we've got 54,500 jobs posted for spouses. The number of spouses hired since the 29th of June, when we started MSEP, is 5,000 -- over 5,600 spouses hired.

We have about 50 companies now who are expressing interest in becoming MSEP partners, and that is in addition to the 146 companies who have already submitted applications to become a part of MSEP. And we are currently in the process of vetting those 146 companies. So that makes a total of 210 companies who we're either vetting or who have an interest in joining.

I am happy to say that we will inaugurate 24 new companies this October -- on October 10th -- at a conference. And that will bring the total official MSEP partners to 96. And we could get even more companies before the inauguration. So we're moving very quickly to expand the role of MSEP members.

The other thing I've heard out there is that there's some questions about whether almost all the jobs are entry-level jobs. They are not. Let me give you some data. We had an outside agency, actually, an outside company look at our website, and over 42 percent of the jobs on the website require a college degree.

And in fact, when we looked at job category -- we looked at that data, this is some of the data -- of the 54,000 jobs, over 10,000 of those jobs are in the field of computer and mathematical. We've got jobs for education, for health care, for installation management and repair, 800 jobs in information and technology, jobs in legal, in life, physical and social science, in management, in office and administrative support, 150 jobs in architecture and engineering, building grounds and cleaning maintenance. So you can see it really does run the gamut in terms of the types of jobs also available. And we wanted to do that as well.

Finally, we've got a large -- big company coming in next week, and the company has one of their managing directors focused on employment for the military community. And they're going to sit down with us and talk about their process for hiring our military spouses.

Actually, he's going to talk to me about the military community in general, both veterans, wounded warriors and our military spouses. But we're lasering in with this company on military spouses as well because this company will become an MSEP member on October 10th.

But we want to understand the process by which they are hiring our spouses and so that we can sharpen that process, make it even that much more efficient and then share best practices with other companies.

Finally, I will say, there's just a lot of excitement in the employer sector around our military spouses. I've been receiving calls from chief executive officers who are looking at expanding their operations in the United States and want access to our military spouse

environment. This is other good news: 29 percent of the jobs currently on the MSEP website are overseas, and we've always been interested in expanding the overseas portfolio for portability. So as our service members are deployed with their families overseas, our spouses can retain their employment.

And finally, I'll end with this: For me, for this program, it really is about establishing careers. It's not just about jobs and employment. It's about establishing careers, career opportunities and career choice for our military spouses.

We've got a good start, but we need to continue to sharpen and refine what we do. And what I encourage you to do: Once again, kick the tires. Let's get the word out. Tell me what's not working, so we can fix it, and let's also talk about the things, I think, with our communities that are working as well, so that they can use the website and find jobs.

Thank you very much.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Thank you very much, sir.

And I believe somebody else joined while we -- during your opening statement. Is anybody else there?

Q: Yes. Karen Francis.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Hey, Karen.

Q: Hey.

Q: Hi, Karen.

Q: Hello.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: And we will go to Bryant (sp). You're first on the line.

Q: Thank you. Thank you very much.

I'm wondering what is the advantage or the benefit to the companies that get involved and take part in this. I mean, obviously for the spouse and the families there's another worker in the families. What about the companies? What is that they are getting out of this? And how do they benefit?

MR. GORDON: Well, you know, I tell these companies, when -- the CEOs and the executive vice presidents, you know, what they're getting are military spouses with the kind of core attributes that they need in their employees for the 21st century. We know our spouses are highly educated. We know they are responsible, they're mature. We know that they feel very comfortable in working in very diverse environments. We know they're very adaptive in terms of transitions and deployments and moving around.

We know they love to work and they're very good at working in teams, when you look at what our spouses have to do for our military community in the first place, in terms of just, as we all know, military life. And we know that they work well under pressure and they've got a great work ethic.

So at the end of the day, these companies are getting a highly skilled employee -- potential employee with the kind of core attributes that companies need for 21st century -- for the 21st-century environment: knowledge-based environment, global community. And our spouses are a very good fit for the kinds of jobs and the kinds -- really the kinds of employees that they're looking for. And they're excited about it. You know, at the end of the day, companies look for talent at the end of the day, talented employees who are dedicated, loyal, will work hard and work well with other people. Who better than our military spouses?

Q: OK. Thank you.

Just to be clear though, in addition, are there any financial or tax incentives there?

MR. GORDON: You mean from us to the companies? No.

Q: Yeah.

MR. GORDON: No? I mean --

Q: No -- (inaudible) -- the companies? OK.

MR. GORDON: You know, one of the things here, of course, is when a company becomes part of MSEP they really become a part of a community. They become also part of the community of other companies where they can share best practices and learning.

We are also -- we also have a requirement in our memorandum of understanding that companies will become mentors for new companies so there's a way ahead in terms of, you know, being able to leverage the program to get the very best employees that they can and to better understand the uniqueness of our military community. Perfect example is transitions and deployments and the fact that that is a part of our community so that portability is absolutely essential with a lot of these jobs.

You know, I might add something else here. Remember, this is about Fortune 500-plus employers. The plus means small businesses as well. So we've got a strategy to reach out to small businesses over this next year. We think this will greatly advantage our reserve and guard military spouses who tend to stay in one community and as a result of that will have career opportunities available for them as well.

So we're delighted with what we're learning about what companies need out of the program. And, you know, we offer them, you know, the highest value, in my view, of choice for their next hires.

Q: Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you very much. And -- (coughs) -- I'm sorry -- on to Karen. Q: Oops, let me un-mute. Hi. My question is about telecommuting positions.

MR. GORDON: Yeah, yeah.

Q: I am a virtual assistant, mostly because I live in D.C. and commuting around here just stinks.

But I have friends who are in Germany who are -- who were lucky enough to have an employer that they already had who would, you know, let them go to Germany and do work.

MR. GORDON: Yeah.

Q: Are -- is MCFP encouraging companies --

MR. GORDON: Yes. (Chuckles.) Well, we'll --

Q: Wonderful, because that's -- you know, with everything -- and I'm sitting here with three computers in front of me. With being this connected, you know, it amazes me when people say, well, you know, I can't get to the office. Well, let the office get to you. So is MCFP training these companies and saying really, honestly, she doesn't need to sit outside your office?

MR. GORDON: Well, I don't think it's as much of training as the awareness that those are the types of job that we are looking for for our spouses: portability and telecommuting. We are messaging that -- the Army always had a great vetting process in terms of ensuring these companies are aligned and aware of the uniqueness of our military community. So a top feature of this program is ensuring a goodness of fit in terms of the -- just the uniqueness of military life.

You know, here's the other good news: In a 21st century economy, telecommuting is important in the first place because companies want to reduce costs of transportation. It has been shown that there are certain sorts of jobs where telecommuting is much more -- and I know I'm preaching to the choir here -- much more effective for --

Q: Oh, yeah. If I'm up at 4:00 in the morning, I can just come downstairs and work.

MR. GORDON: Absolutely. And we all know that it -- at that point, it really does depend on your talent. You want highly talented individuals who are very self-aware, self-reliant and, you know, will get up to work every day regardless of where they are and put in 110 percent.

And that's what companies are getting out of our MSEP program. They're getting access to that sort of talent.

So yes, the short answer is yes. We are promoting telecommuting and portability as essential features basically of our -- of the kinds of jobs we're looking for. However, I will tell you, we're not saying that exclusively, because once again, there are, as we all know, brick-and-mortar jobs, other sorts of jobs that our spouses are highly qualified for that we want to make available as well.

Q: How are we overcoming the: Well, she's going to move in a year? How are we overcoming that? Because that always seemed to me to be the biggest problem that when people looked at your resume and said, hmm, Leavenworth, Fort Riley -- oh, you're a military spouse.

MR. GORDON: Yeah.

Q: And then you got that "poof," you know?

MR. GORDON: Right, it is -- it is about the education first. It is about during the vetting process, ensuring companies understand that our spouses might move in a year or two years or three years. But guess what? They're going to move, at the end of the day. So, you know, this portability, telecommuting piece is essential once again.

And again, you know, our active duty spouses, we find that. Guard and Reserve? It all depends. We currently have a number of our Guard and Reserve, as we know, activated and who are defending our country overseas. And so we have some of the same sorts of issues there potentially. But again, we have other Guard and Reserve around our country where we have a little more stability in terms of, you know, the location of our spouses. So we're looking for both, but we are promoting also teleworked portable jobs. Those are the kinds of jobs that there's a better goodness of fit between our spouse community and these employers.

Q: Can I ask one more question?

MR. GORDON: Absolutely.

Q: I didn't know if we had enough room.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. You just opened a large can of worms for me here.

MR. GORDON: OK.

Q: When you're talking about hiring National Guard and reserve spouses, I was one.

MR. GORDON: Yeah.

Q: Are we also teaching these employers that there is -- that they do need to be just a little bit more understanding of R&R; you know, the two-week -- the person might need, want to take two weeks off unexpectedly because of R&R; that since this person is basically a single parent, they need to understand that they're the only ones there for the kid when there is a meltdown at school or, you know, the kid is sick or something? If they're at a brick and mortar job, are we training the employers to understand that type of -- just understand our life a little better?

MR. GORDON: Yeah, it is. And we -- you know, again, what we imported from the Army program is their vetting process in terms of training and education, which is really first class.

You know what I'll do, because I'm sure some of you have that same sort of question, and there's a more global question of what are we training these companies in --

Q: Yes.

MR. GORDON: During our next blog session, I'm going to have one of our staff members join me so that they can walk you through the training and the vetting process so that you-all get a very comfortable feeling that we're covering these sorts of issues in terms of how we are preparing these companies, basically, to understand the nature of our military community with respect to the questions you just had but to more global questions of portability and transitions and deployment and how all that works. I think you'll be very impressed with the vetting and the training process.

So we'll set up a separate session on that.

Q: I appreciate that.

MR. GORDON: Yes.

Q: Because -- having worked for an employer who said, when I told them that my husband was coming home after a year's deployment: Well, will you be in tomorrow?

MR. GORDON: Yes.

Q: (Laughs.)

MR. GORDON: And it's just also to emphasize, you know, pass us those questions early, too, so that -- you know, we're always looking for -- I think we have a really comprehensive vetting and training program. But you know what? You all have great ideas out there, as well. We just want to make sure that we're -- we are continuing to improve it. So those sorts of questions, those sorts of ideas as well, please pass along, and we'll pass that to our team so that we can continue, you know, to sharpen the effectiveness, basically, of that training.

Q: Great. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

MR. GORDON: OK. You bet.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: OK, and Bryant, back around to you.

Q: J.C. (sp).

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Did -- J.C. (sp), did you have a question?

Q: Yes I do.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: OK, go ahead.

MR. GORDON: Good morning. Hi, J.C. (sp). How are you?

Q: Hello. Very nice to talk to you Mr. Gordon.

MR. GORDON: You, as well. Q: I do have a question, and this is a silly one.

MR. GORDON: Sure -- (laughs) -- I like those.

Q: I tried to plug -- when you plug in "military spouse employment career" into Google, nothing comes up.

MR. GORDON: Yeah. Yeah. (Laughs.) So, you know, it's always a trick, as we all know. This is a new program and we know with search engines, of course, key words are very important -- especially with a new program. We know that. We are in the process of, you know, purchasing also other URLs because, you know, we know that everyone doesn't put in msepjobs.com. They might put in, you know, msep.com, msep.org, msep.jobs.net.

So what we're doing, we're continuing to do this. I'm glad you brought this up. And we've got to -- and I've got -- I want to check on this, as well -- is we need to understand better the strategy by which people do their searches and, you know, what keywords are they using --

Q: Right.

MR. GORDON: -- what words are (going together ?), like "military spouse employment."

And we all know there's all sorts of ways to kind of push our website onto the front page of Google. Know that we are thinking about that, that we're doing some things. We still need to get better at it.

But you're right. I mean, with certain sorts of, you know, keywords you put together, MSEP either does or does not come up on that front page. But know that we know that. (Laughter.) And we're working it. (Laughter.)

Q: So just to be clear, what is the best -- when I tell my readers where to go to look for these 54,000 jobs, what's the -- what are the letters you want me to tell them to put in -- www. --

MR. GORDON: (Well, actually ?) -- yeah, let me get back with you so I can give you the right keyword mix.

Q: OK.

MR. GORDON: I'll get with -- back with all of you on that. It's a really good question, and that's a -- that's a great catch. I think if you all can help us actually promote the right keyword mix to get folks to the website right away, I would greatly appreciate that. And I'll get back with you.

Q: Great. Thank you.

MR. GORDON. OK. Thank you. Thank you for that question. It wasn't silly. That's -- you know, in this electronic world, those are the kinds of things you really have to think about, we all know -- I mean, you know, how you get, basically, your -- you know, our military community to the right locations, because people put in different sorts of keywords. We are always competing with other companies, as you know, in terms of just (employment space ?) on the front page of a search engine. It's something that you really got to pay a lot of attention to. But we are very aware of that, and we're working it.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Thank you very much, sir. And Bryant, did you have another question?

Q: Well, I'll just point out, as he was talking, I punched in military spouse employment --

MR. GORDON: Yeah?

Q: -- to Google and it was the very first thing that came up, actually.

MR. GORDON: We're getting there. (Laughter.) We're getting there.

Q: And I put it in quotations, came right up. And then I put it in without quotations, and it came up as the sixth item down. But you were referenced in three or four before then.

MR. GORDON: Yeah.

Q: So apparently it will work. Yes, military spouse employment will get you up there at the top of a --

MR. GORDON: Yeah. Thank you. Thanks for checking that out. You know, I love just-in-time information like that too. (Laughter.) But you know, the -- you know, at the end of the day I think we will be

number one, right. We've got a large community, as we know, as companies also go to this website in addition to our military spouses.

And here's the other thing I would love to promote with you all and with our other media sources. We also want service members to go there so that they're more educated about opportunities for their spouses as well. So it's not just, you know, our military spouse community but it's their spouses too who are, you know, in the military. So it really is messaging so that as you use that collection of keywords that you find -- you know, I would love -- my goal is it's the top one -- number one, not number two, number one. But being on that front webpage, as we all know, above that scroll line, is absolutely essential.

So thanks for that, and we'll continue to work it.

Q: I do have one question, though. I'm not sure you get asked this question very much but I will throw it out there to you.

MR. GORDON: Please. Q: Do you ever get -- has anybody ever considered -- have you ever discussed that in building this program, which is obviously to the advantage of military families and spouses, that in the same communities somebody who is not connected to the military is suddenly at a disadvantage in getting -- going for the same job?

MR. GORDON: Yes, and the answer is no they aren't and here's why. We are leveling the playing field. One thing I talk about a lot is how we make our broader community aware of our military community and the challenges faced.

And we have a long way to go there. You know, as we are all fond of knowing and saying, you know, 1 percent of our population is serving in the military in terms of these wars that we're fighting.

Q: Right.

MR. GORDON: And I think that we have to take on the challenge of making our broader community aware of the challenges that our military community has. Our spouse community -- military spouse community is more highly educated, has a higher unemployment rate, has a 25 percent wage gap between them and their civilian counterparts in terms of jobs. So no one can tell me, basically, as the head of military community and family policy, that we should not take actions to ensure that the playing field is leveled for our military spouses. So when anyone says that we are giving our spouses preferential treatment, that's what I tell them. This is not about preferential treatment, it is leveling the playing field.

Q: Very good. Thank you.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Thank you.

And, Karen (sp), we have -- we have time for another question if you want.

Q: No, I think we've -- I, by the way, went in and just Googled MSEP and you are number six. (Laughter.) There's some Maldives thing there and some other -- yeah.

MR. GORDON: (Chuckles.) Yeah.

Q: Some very strange ones, I have to say. (Laughs.) But it came up great.

MR. GORDON: OK.

Q: The leveling the playing field -- see that's -- my son is also a veteran and he keeps getting asked by his nonveteran friends, well, why the heck should you have first dibs on a job?

Why should you get these extra points for a job?

And he says, I paid for it. You know, Iraq -- I paid for it. So that's a great term for us to use, I think, especially as bloggers.

MR. GORDON: Yeah.

Q: You know, we're not -- we're not saying military spouses are better than anyone else -- even though, you know, we know they are -- but we're saying that we give a lot so we're just leveling the playing field because we have strikes against us because of our resumes and because people are going to look at us and go, you're going to leave. So we unfortunately need something.

I was looking through and I found telecommuting jobs.

MR. GORDON: Yeah.

Q: The one I found kept saying that you have to be able to go into the office if your -- you know, your system isn't working which sort of makes you go, well, I really -- I don't live in Texas, so -- (chuckles) -- I can't do that. But I'm assuming that I'm just not finding it easy enough.

Are people having any trouble with knowing the right words to plug in? Is the search engine broad enough to let us just put in something vague and it'll come up with a whole list? I have -- (inaudible).

MR. GORDON: Well, I'd love to get your ideas there. I mean, we are continuing -- let me say what we're doing. We are coming up already with an MSEP 2.0 engine. And the plan basically -- and it's going to have a lot more robust features. We've got a really good start. I think -- I think the key, and I don't know if I told you all this before, was, you know, three things -- well, four things -- four things.

First is a military spouse designed that -- you know, the website. And, you know, having someone actually come from the community to help design a website I think is absolutely instrumental. And kudos,

basically, to the Army as the executive agent for finding the right designer.

And we really focused on three other things. One was ease of use. And hopefully, you-all are finding that, you know, that you can get around that site very quickly.

The second was speed. We wanted to make sure it was quick. And, you know, there's a lot of data on that site already, just in terms of jobs, but as you can see, you know, in comparison with a lot of other job sites, with lots of other jobs, it's a fast site.

And, you know, the third was really a kind of elegance and a simplicity so that as companies and spouses and others went to the site, that, you know, they would feel comfortable about coming back, that they want to come back because of the other two things -- that it was navigable and that it was fast, as well. And there's a (delight ?) factor -- you know, the selection of colors, as we all know, very important, fonts.

All of those things are important. We're human beings. You know, we are visual beings, as well, in terms of how we behave, especially on the Internet in terms of consuming information and moving from one page to the next and whether we want to come back or not.

So we considered these factors with this first site. That said, we are already going to roll out a Web 2.0. It's an MCFP 2.0 version with a lot more robustness and capability. And you'll see that basically early next year. So we're on a fast track to get that done as well, because we want to build on some initial successes here.

So if you have suggestions like you just said, please send them to us, so as we architect this new site, we can be sure that we've got the best functionality available.

Q: Great. Thank you.

MR. GORDON: You bet.

Q: Are you rolling out something at AUSA?

MR. GORDON: Well, we're rolling out new members. (Laughs.)

Q: I was wondering -- when you said early October, I thought, oh, I know what that is. That's when life here in D.C. comes to a screeching halt except at AUSA. MR. GORDON: And you know what? That's what we're using to roll the new members out. Twenty-four members is going to get us up to 96 MCFP members. We are very excited.

We are very excited. Wait until you see who's on the list: you know, ADP; American Red Cross; Citigroup; DialAmerica, for example; TroopSwap, which is a small company, so we're starting to enter into that space; Johnson Controls -- these are just a few -- Tutor.com; Hitachi. I mean, so you know, these are marquee companies and -- large and small

companies and medium-size as well. We have a medical group that's involved too, so -- actually, two. United Health will be a new member.

So we're very, very aggressive about seeking companies who are a good fit. And the whole idea is to, you know, get the number of jobs available to our spouses to do something about both the unemployment rate and the wage gap. And again, at the end of the day it's about careers, not just jobs and employment.

Q: When can we look forward to, you know, seeing the training that you're giving the companies?

MR. GORDON: You know, we'll set that up as soon as we can. Why don't we do that --

Q: OK because that would be a wonderful thing to be able to tell people, that, you know what, they really are going to understand our lives and our community, because sometimes it -- you know, that is a gap that's -- it's a comfort gap, you know.

MR. GORDON: Yes.

Q: When you walk in as the only military spouse into a company, do you feel isolated and other or --

MR. GORDON: You know, you're right. Yeah, do you feel valued; do you feel that they understand you and what your situation is in terms of the military community.

Q: Exactly.

MR. GORDON: What we'll do is next time we're going to set that up. I would like to formalize this more, too, and have us meet, and we'll figure out what's best for you and best for us, if it's once every other month, once a month, whatever it is. But that way, you can get continuous updates of what we're doing.

I can get continuous feedback on how we can improve. And you know, we can have a number of sessions where we are, you know, really informing you about the guts of the system, how it works, you know, in terms of --

Q: Yeah, because knowing --

MR. GORDON: -- yeah --

Q: -- knowing that it's real and it's not just --

MR. GORDON: Yeah, not -- yeah --

Q: -- you know, pretty balloons. (Chuckles.)

MR. GORDON: Exactly right. Well, you know, the good news is, we have 5,600 hired, which is a good-news story. I think --

Q: That is -- that is wonderful.

MR. GORDON: Yeah. So what we'll do is, we'll do -- the next one let's do on the training piece. I think there's a good one to do on the spider crawl. Basically, NSEP 2.0 will have a new architecture for a search-and-find in terms of alignment between specific skill sets associated with a resume, and what companies are looking for to feed the match process up as well.

So we can do something on the IT piece of the 2.0 version that's coming up too, so you'll know what to expect.

Q: Wonderful. Thank you so much.

MR. GORDON: You bet.

Q: Hey, can I ask one final question?

MR. GORDON: Sure.

Q: Mr. -- (inaudible) -- do you have guesstimate on what is the size of the potential -- what is the unemployment pool of spouses? Any idea? I mean, how many --

MR. GORDON: Yeah. Yes, actually. (Laughs.) So for me, a lot depends on what you think about the unemployment rate. So here's how I think about it. You know, we've got 1.2 million spouses. We have -- 85 percent of whom want to work. That means 1.02 million want to work.

We are using a 26 percent unemployment rate, so if you multiply that by 1.02, you roughly have about 265,000, basically, who are -- want to work, who are either unemployed or underemployed, or want to do something different -- about 265,000.

I then multiply that by a certain factor above 1, because we know that several (spouses ?) might be looking for the same sort of job -

Q: Yup.

MR. GORDON: -- and competing for the same sort of job.

So I used the number of little over 265,000 as to a target that we will want available for military spouse. So -- and that's what's -- that's the number I'm driving to at the end of the day. So I have some very real targets for the first year in terms of the number of jobs that I want up, that I expect to see basically on the website.

Now, here's the good news. It's not just about the jobs on the website, because there will be other jobs that these companies will have that won't be on the website. But as we connect in to their human resources departments, basically those jobs will be available as well.

You know, some of these jobs will be more high-tech in terms of connection; others, as we all know, will be more "high touch."

Q: Yeah.

MR. GORDON: So one of the things that we're doing is partnering of course with the Chamber of Commerce as they do their job fairs around the country. They're doing a hundred job fairs this year. The Chamber of Commerce was just in talking to me a couple of days ago. We are strategizing about the rest of the year in terms of again not self-employment as much as self-career development -- so again, not just jobs, not just employment -- careers, career development as well.

So those are the numbers I'm using: 26 percent unemployment rate, 25 percent wage gap, roughly 265,000 in terms of those spouses underemployed, unemployed or want to work in general, and those are the numbers we're driving towards.

Q: Excellent, thank you.

MR. GORDON: You bet.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: All right, sir.

Well, thank you, everybody, for your questions, for your comments.

Mr. Gordon, if you have a closing comment, you can go ahead with that now.

MR. GORDON: Just a big thank you to you all, again. In this, I think, new economy, new society where we look for transparency and sharing of information, I think the blogger community -- I know the blogger community is absolutely instrumental to that. And so I see you as vital to the work that we do here: getting the word out so that people can make informed choices at the end of the day. And that's why I think it's important for us to have that connection. We talk, you provide the information to your audience, and they're able to make informed choices based on information and knowledge.

And so I just wanted to underscore how important I think our sessions are. (That's why ?) I want to formalize a time that we get together. It could be on a monthly basis, quarterly -- we -- we'll figure it out, what's best for you and best for us. To have this connection so that our military community can make informed choice is vital and important to the kind of work we do. So, thank you again.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Thank you very much, sir.

Today's program will be available online at dodlive.mil, where you'll be able to access a story based on today's call, along with source documents such as the audio file and a print transcript.

Again, thank you again to Mr. Robert L. Gordon III, and to our blogger participants.

This concludes today's call. Please feel free to disconnect at this time.

Q: Thank you.

MR. GORDON: Thanks, everybody.

Q: Thanks. 'Bye.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Thank you.

END.