

**Witness Testimony of Chris Burton, The Home Depot
House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity oversight field hearing
on "Texas' Innovative Approaches to Jobs and Employment for Veterans."
November 6, 2013**

Chairman Flores, Ranking Member Takano, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of The Home Depot about our commitment to veterans, especially in Texas. As the world's largest home improvement retailer, we employ more than 300,000 associates: 35,000 of them veterans, thousands more that are military spouses, and at any given time have approximately 1,500 reservists who are currently serving on active duty while working at The Home Depot.

Since our founding in 1978, The Home Depot's dedication to quality and excellence has been the foundation of our success. We recognize and respect this same spirit of determination in the members of our U.S. military community and seek to support our soldiers and their families in every way possible.

Veterans work in every part of our organization – from the president of our Western Division, who is a former enlisted Marine, to store managers, logistics and IT professionals, to store employees who are experts in every kind of trade you can imagine. The Home Depot believes that veterans are one of the most talented applicant pools from which you can recruit. I know this first hand as a U.S. Marine veteran and now Store Manager at The Home Depot here in Waco. I came to The Home Depot 27 years ago—my anniversary is actually tomorrow—during a six year tour as an active duty Marine reservist. I worked as a sales associate in the lumber department and directly benefitted from the support Home Depot provided as my unit was activated multiple times to support Operation Desert Storm. I've had the opportunity throughout my Home Depot career to give back by helping my employees prepare themselves and their families for deployment, especially during the Iraq War and our current operation in Afghanistan. I have also hosted several military related job fairs.

In the military, men and women gain valuable skills that are transferrable to the civilian workforce. Unfortunately, it can be difficult to translate those skills into civilian terminology. That's why we created our new military skills translator, available at www.homedepotmilitary.com. The online program allows applicants to enter their service, pay grade, and military job title, translates that experience into civilian skills, and allows the applicant to add those items to a refined search to view available jobs at The Home Depot.

Our newest military-friendly hiring program is an online social network community for job seekers called HomeTown, available at www.homedepotcommunity.com. Military job seekers can attend live chats, read and comment on military-related articles, participate in webinars, and interact with Home Depot employees.

Another way we have engaged veterans is through our Civilian Career Workshops. On October 27, 2012, Home Depot stores across the country hosted these events which were designed to help service members and veterans understand how to successfully navigate the transition into the civilian workforce, whether with The Home Depot or any other employer. These workshops

included sessions focused on job search strategies, resume optimization, and interviewing techniques. Throughout the 100 plus workshops we were able to engage as many as 5,000 participants across the nation. In Texas, events were held in Selma, Killeen, Lake Worth, and El Paso.

We participate in nearly one hundred veterans-focused career fairs across the country each year. In partnership with Recruit Military, our most recent job fairs in Texas were held in San Antonio, Dallas, and Houston.

Finally, we recently committed to The White House's Joining Forces initiative to increase our veterans hiring by 10 percent, or 55,000 new veterans, over the next five years.

Our commitment to veterans doesn't stop with our hiring efforts. Through The Home Depot Foundation, we have pledged \$80 million over five years to address veterans' housing needs to ensure that every veteran and their family has a safe place to call home. In addition, through Team Depot, our associate-led volunteer force, our employees are volunteering their time and skills to repair and remodel veterans' homes and facilities. In Texas so far this year, we have invested nearly \$900,000 in grants to renovate more than one hundred veterans' housing units and to complete rehab and repair projects for nonprofit facilities that serve veterans in Austin, Dallas, El Paso, Houston and San Antonio.

All of these efforts are possible because we operate a business that succeeds when customers come into our stores to invest in improvements to their homes. Therefore, we urge Congress to support efforts that promote a strong economy and housing market. We also encourage the support of veteran hiring organizations that we are partnered with such as Operation Career Front—a partnership between the U.S. Departments of Defense, Labor, and Veterans Affairs—GI Jobs, and the Military Spouse Employment Program.

On behalf of The Home Depot, I am honored to testify today and appreciate your work in supporting our nation's veterans.

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Chris Burton is a Store Manager at The Home Depot in Waco, Texas. He has nearly three decades of experience working for the company in various roles from sales associate in the lumber department to working as Store Manager for the last ten years. He has worked in three different Texas markets: Austin, Houston, and Dallas-Fort Worth. Chris came to the Home Depot during a six year tour as an active duty Marine reservist and, after witnessing the support he received from The Home Depot during his service, has worked in various capacities to support Home Depot employees who are veterans. Some examples include supporting his employees as they prepare their families and themselves for deployment especially during both the Iraq war and Afghanistan operation, helping with various military focused job fairs, and facilitating the Killeen Mission Transition workshop in 2012 to help service members and veterans successfully navigate the transition into the civilian workforce. Chris lives in Waco with his wife and two children.

House Rule XI clause 2(g)(5) statement:

I have not received any federal grants in the past two years.

Chris Burton, The Home Depot