

Duckworth Reiterates Need to Pass Her Bipartisan Bill To Codify Boots to Business Program, Support Entrepreneurship Among Veterans

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, combat Veteran and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) once again pushed to better support Veterans, servicemembers and military

families as they transition from military service to civilian life by reiterating the need to codify the highly popular and successful “Boots to Business” (B2B) program, a small business education and training program that has already served more than 194,000 participants since its inception. During today’s Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship (SBE) Committee hearing, Duckworth underscored the importance of passing her bipartisan legislation, the [*Veteran Entrepreneurship Training \(VET\) Act*](#), which would codify the B2B program into law for five years and prevent the possibility of future budget cuts or program deactivation. Full video of Senator Duckworth’s remarks can be found using this link [here](#).

“I’ve long supported the Boots to Business Program because of its successful track record helping servicemembers, Veterans and military spouses build critical small business development skills that prepare them for professional success after military service,” said Duckworth. “Today’s hearing makes it as clear as ever that we must cement the B2B program into law so we can continue to help these individuals start successful small businesses—which keeps local economies flourishing across the country—and help them build strong careers long after hanging up their uniform. After the Small Business Committee passed my *VET Act* to do just that earlier this year, it’s time to bring this legislation before the Senate for a full vote and get this done to support Veteran entrepreneurs.”

“There are few people on the planet that are bigger evangelists for your legislation than me,” said Dr. Mike Haynie—Director of Syracuse University’s Institute for Veterans and Military Families which administers the B2B program—to Senator Duckworth in his testimony. “When I started doing this work, there was no pathway out of the military for business ownership. As a matter of fact, servicemembers transitioning from military to civilian life were discouraged from pursuing entrepreneurship. Regularizing ‘Boots to Business’ will signal to Department of Defense that this is not something year in and year out could go away. It’s a commitment of the country to the program, and I think that would make all the difference.”

Reintroducing the bipartisan [*VET Act of 2023*](#) was the first action Senator Duckworth made the 118th Congress. In July, the legislation was successfully passed out of the Senate Small Business Committee by a unanimous voice vote. It also successfully passed out of the Senate Small Business Committee in last year on a bipartisan basis. In June 2023, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a House companion measure—introduced by U.S. Representatives Brad Schneider (D-IL-10) and Roger Williams (R-TX-25)—by a unanimous vote of 407 to 0.

The SBA offers the B2B program through the U.S. Department of Defense’s (DOD) Transition Assistance Program, and it is primarily a two-day, in-person course offered at approximately 180 installations that provides an introductory understanding of small

business ownership. As part of the program, individuals learn to develop business plans, identify sources of capital and navigate new business and contracting opportunities. After completing the initial two-day course, participants have the option to continue their business learning through an eight-week, online course led by professors from accredited universities.

If you are interested in participating in the B2B program at SBA, eligible individuals can begin the process of signing up for classes [here](#), and the program brochure can be found [here](#).