

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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September 18, 2015

Robert A. McDonald
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20402

Dear Secretary McDonald:

I write today concerning the termination of funding from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Center for Innovation and Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service to the Iowa Consortium of Veteran Excellence (ICOVE) at the University of Iowa.

As a military parent, I have experienced first-hand just how much our nation's veterans have given to our country. Our service men and women make significant sacrifices to serve our nation and face countless hardships as they return home to civilian life. It is our duty to assist them in every way that we can as they navigate this transition.

The University of Iowa is consistently recognized as one of the best schools in the nation for veterans. As a part of their commitment to our nation's veterans, they created the Iowa Consortium of Veteran Excellence. In partnership with the Iowa City VA, ICOVE helps student veterans transition into the college environment and provides a suite of services during their college experience to help prepare them for graduation and employment. These services include mentorship opportunities with fellow veterans on campus, career counseling and development, academic advising, as well as mental and physical health supports. The program provides assistance to all veterans, but puts a special focus on those with disabilities.

The ICOVE program is unique in that it provides services throughout the entire transition from military to education and beyond into employment. The University of Iowa was to serve as the flagship institution for the program with the intention of developing best practices and guidelines that could then be put into place on additional college campuses. However, despite the promising successes of ICOVE in its first two years, they were recently informed that the pilot would not be extended beyond the initial two-year term.

At a time when so many young people are returning home and struggling to transition into the workforce, we should encourage innovative solutions like ICOVE. I am disheartened that the Department is cutting off funding of this vital program and preventing it from serving Iowa's student veteran population.

I request an explanation as to why this funding was terminated. Unless the Department can show a compelling rationale for eliminating funding for an initiative that clearly appears to be helping veterans on the ground in Iowa, funding should be restored immediately.

Please promptly respond with the rationale behind the termination of this funding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dave Loebsack". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dave Loebsack
Iowa's Second District