



Making the Most of Our Defense Workers

Excerpts from recent speeches by Governor Bill Clinton

We must not forget about the real people whose lives will be turned upside down when defense is cut deeply. The government should look out for its defense workers and the communities they live in. We should insist on advanced notification and help communities plan for a transition from a defense to a domestic economy. 31% of our graduate engineers work for the defense industry. They and other highly skilled workers and technicians are a vital national resource at a time when our technological edge in a world economy must be sharper than ever before. I have called for a new advanced research agency -- a civilian DARPA -- that could help capture for commercial work the brilliance of scientists and engineers who have accomplished wonders on the battlefield.

Likewise, those who have served the nation in uniform cannot be dumped on the job market. We've got to enlist them to help meet our many needs at home. By shifting people from active duty to the National Guard and reserves, offering early retirement options, limiting re-enlistment and slowing the pace of recruitment, we can build down our forces in a gradual way that doesn't abandon people of proven commitment and competence.

Our people in uniform are among the most highly skilled in the areas we need most. We need to transfer those human resources into our workforce and even into our schools, perhaps in part by using reserve centers and closed bases for community-based education and training programs.