

Statement of

**John Shook**

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Committee on Veterans Affairs

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I am pleased and honored to be here before the Committee on Veterans Affairs. My name is John Shook, Regional Director Human Resources, with BNSF Railway.

BNSF is one of America's largest railroads, with about 40,000 employees and 32,000 miles of routes serving 28 western states and two Canadian provinces.

I have over 36 years experience in human resources management, 11 of those with BNSF Railway, and another 25 years of honorable service as a career Air Force officer, serving in over 17 assignments in the United States and overseas.

As requested by this Committee, the purpose of my testimony is to provide information about BNSF's corporate commitment to hiring veterans. I will describe some of the specific steps we have taken to become a military friendly employer as well as explain why we go the extra mile to hire veterans. I will conclude by highlighting a few examples of recognition of BNSF's efforts.

BNSF has a longstanding record of commitment to America's men and women in uniform as well as its citizen soldiers. BNSF recognizes and values the sacrifice made by employees who serve in the National Guard and Reserve. About 400 BNSF employees have been called to active duty since September 11, 2001, in support of the War on Terrorism, and 195 of those employees are currently serving on active duty.

BNSF offers enhanced and extended benefits for those employees called to active duty in the War on Terrorism, including make-whole pay and sustained health-care and other benefits. In addition, we offer fifteen days of make-whole pay for annual training and drill duty.

In February 2006, BNSF renewed its longstanding commitment to those serving in the National Guard and Reserve by becoming the first railroad to sign a Five-

Star Statement of Support with the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR).

BNSF was recently nominated by three employees for the Department of Defense's annual Freedom Award. This prestigious nomination recognizes that BNSF policies and practices, including care packages and welcome-home celebrations, go "above and beyond" in support of our nation's citizen soldiers.

The three nominators are all members of the National Guard who served in combat – they are American heroes.

- Aaron Rossiter, Sergeant, Texas Army National Guard, was hired as a Management Trainee. His training was interrupted when he was deployed to Iraq on short notice.
- Shawn Crystal, BNSF Safety Manager and Master Sergeant with the Tennessee Air National Guard, served in Afghanistan.
- John Fuller, Specialist, California National Guard and a BNSF conductor, is recovering at Walter Reed Army Medical Center from wounds received in combat on September 3, 2005, while serving in Dora, Iraq.

Those who wear our nation's uniforms are mission-focused, highly skilled, motivated, and possess unique experiences and technical knowledge. Military candidates embody the core competencies essential at BNSF: leadership, teamwork and the ability to perform safely in a fast-paced, dynamic environment. The way we see it, the military candidate is a great fit for a career at BNSF Railway.

Our goal is to supplement and strengthen our employee talent base by connecting interested job seekers who are in transition from military to civilian careers. (See Appendix A for details.)

We believe the steps we have taken to become the employer of choice in the military community are showing results:

- In 2004 we hired 350 veterans with an additional 750 veteran hires in 2005.
- Year to date 2006, 20 percent of all hires – over 350 – are veterans with over fifty serving as members of the Guard and Reserve.
- If present trends continue, BNSF is on track to hire more than 1,000 veterans in 2006.
- GI Jobs Magazine has named BNSF one of America's Top 25 Most Military Friendly Employers.

According to BNSF Chairman, President and CEO Matthew K. Rose, "We recognize and appreciate the sacrifice and service not only of the citizen-soldiers who are members of Team BNSF, but of all of America's heroes who have answered the call to serve and defend our country since September 11, 2001."

I would like to thank you for this opportunity to discuss BNSF Railway Company's commitment to its employees serving in the military, and to hiring military veterans. BNSF Railway is honored to be present before this committee.

## Appendix A

### **BNSF Strategies and Activities for Recruiting Veterans**

BNSF Railway Company deploys a number of strategies in an effort to attract military candidates, from posting jobs to online niche job boards such as vetjobs.com, ACAP Online, and Marine for Life to print advertising in best-in-class publications such as *GI Jobs, Military Times / Decision Times* and the Corporate Gray Series.

Our most valuable resource lies in the positive relationships we have with the individual base Transition Assistance Program (TAP) professionals. We work collaboratively with Army Career Alumni Program (ACAP), Marine for Life Home Town Links and the Family Support Centers to facilitate a positive transition experience for military job seekers. Our efforts include:

- military job fairs
- employer day events and job search skills and strategies seminars
- BNSF Career Kit shipments
- weekly HOT JOBS distributions
- individual career counseling sessions

Interested members of the military can learn more about BNSF Railway and apply online at [www.bnsf.com/careers/military](http://www.bnsf.com/careers/military), our dedicated career web page for military candidates. This web page provides links to Frequently Asked Candidate Questions, upcoming military job fairs and much more.