

WASHINGTON, DC - During the organization's Mid-Winter Conference today in Rocky Hill, the Connecticut Association of the American Legion awarded Congressman Joe Courtney its annual 'Certificate of Appreciation'. Congressman Courtney and Anne Evans, Director of the U.S. Department of Commerce's Export Assistance Center (USEAC) in Middletown, were honored today for their support of active and veteran servicemembers. Working jointly, Courtney and Evans created the Military Intern Program at the USEAC.

"For all that they have given us, providing our troops and veterans with the training they need to be successful in their careers post-military is the least we can do," stated Courtney. "I thank the CT Association of the American Legion for this honor and will continue to do all that I can to support forward-thinking opportunities for military men and women." Courtney continued, "The Military Intern Program would not be possible without the support of Anne Evans, who has been a strong supporter of not only our veterans, but also in creating new economic opportunities for Connecticut. Anne deserves our many thanks."

"Our military interns have provided our office and Connecticut's businesses with additional human resources to promote companies globally. The program has prepared our transitioning military with business experience to secure careers in today's globally focused marketplace," stated Evans.

Ledyard resident Chief Electronics Technician Christopher Pantoya has served in the United States Navy as a submariner for 20 years and recently became the first graduate of the six-month Military Intern Program at USEAC.

In a letter to Representative Courtney's office, Pantoya writes, "The military internship program at the Department of Commerce is an invaluable opportunity for transitioning people to learn about private industries. I have spent the last 20 years as an Electronics Technician in the U.S. Navy with steadily progressive positions of responsibility."

Pantoya continued, "By the completion of my 6 month internship, I was able to locate a local Connecticut based company in a growing industry that was seeking someone with my skill sets."

Internship participants conduct a host of duties that range from responding to telephone inquiries concerning international trade to international market research. The value of the internship is centered on the research that the student will perform for the Middletown office staff. Students will research manufacturing and service companies to determine the extent of their international activities, assist companies in locating foreign agents and distributors for their products and services, and pursue foreign sales leads provided by commercial officers at U.S. Embassies abroad.

Congressman Joe Courtney has introduced legislation to help Iraq and Afghanistan veterans find jobs when they return home. **Rep. Courtney and Senator McCain have teamed up to introduce H.R. 3943, the Post-9/11 Troops to Teachers Enhancement Act**

, which will improve the existing program that helps troops become teachers in our nation's schools.

"I believe it is incumbent upon all of us to help those who have sacrificed for our country find meaningful employment after their military service is completed," added Courtney.