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By Mark Roberts - ABC-Mass. chapter chairman's message: Working hard to get MAP approval

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Ever since September 11th, 2001, this time of year has a new meaning for most Americans. At no time in the last decade have feelings been stronger than this year, the 10th anniversary of the tragic events of that day.

It would be wrong to think of 9/11 as just a day in time; it was in many ways the day that shaped the last decade. For example, as a result of 9/11, young American men and women have been risking their lives in the battle against terror in Afghanistan.

The war on terror is a very different kind of struggle. It's not like we capture enemy territory and the other side agrees to sign a surrender document. Similarly, this war doesn't lend itself to televised battlefield images and daily casualty counts. These facts make it too easy to forget we're at war and to overlook the sacrifices of those who bear the brunt of the effort - especially when so many of us face our own battles against an unforgiving recession.

But I hope none of us at ABC will forget the men and women who are risking their lives - or those who have already made the ultimate sacrifice - for the rest of us. One way we can help is to provide career opportunities for returning veterans upon their return.

For many months now, ABC's Massachusetts chapter has been working diligently to gain approval of the Merit Apprenticeship Program (MAP). Our main goal with MAP is to put ABC firms on a level playing field with our union counterparts when it comes to competing for public work. But it would also serve as a vehicle not just to provide returning veterans with jobs, but to launch them on careers.

Unfortunately, in the 11th hour, state officials are erecting a series of obstacles in MAP's path, none of which are faced by union apprenticeship programs. But we have come much too far to give in. That's certainly not what all those who risked their lives on 9/11 or in its wake would have us do.

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