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# **Minnesota State Government Efforts to Employ and Support Veterans**

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**Submitted to the Minnesota Legislature by  
Minnesota Management & Budget**

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# Introduction

Minnesota's workforce is comprised of veterans in both the public and private sectors. To assess Minnesota's efforts as an employer of veterans, the 2009 Legislature directed the Commissioner of Minnesota Management & Budget to annually collect veteran employment data from each cabinet-level state agency. In addition, Executive Order 10-13 instructs state agencies to report their veteran focused recruitment and retention activities which demonstrate their support and commitment to being a Veteran Friendly employer. This report fulfills Article 3, Section 22 of Chapter 94 from Session Laws of 2009 to provide a report to and any additional data deemed important by the commissioner.

Minnesota Management & Budget would like to acknowledge and thank the executive branch agencies for their support and for providing information on their recruitment and retention activities to be included in report.

# Executive Summary

Article 3, Section 22 of Chapter 94 from the Session Laws of 2009 directs the Commissioner of Minnesota Management & Budget to annually collect data from each cabinet-level agency the number of veterans in state government and veteran data at various points in the state recruitment and selection process. In addition, Executive Order 10-13 instructs state agencies to submit to MMB their veteran focused recruitment and retention efforts demonstrating their support and commitment to veterans.

In July of 2009, a law was passed which required state agencies to interview the top five Recently Separated Veterans (RSV) who apply for and meet the minimum qualifications of a vacant position. The goal of this bill was to give more veterans an opportunity to be seen and interviewed by hiring supervisors in state agencies. In addition, language was added to the veteran preference statute. Under this law, eligible veterans may not be involuntarily terminated from employment, except as permitted by statute. Employers must notify the veteran of their proposed termination and inform the veteran of their right to contest the termination in a formal hearing.

State law requires that the number of veterans among the state government workforce be reported to the legislature every year. Employees are not legally required to provide this information. To assure more accurate reporting, state employees were asked in late 2010 to update their veteran status in the state payroll system. According to the data, 11% of the state government employees indicated they were veterans. By comparison, 7% of Minnesota's labor force between the ages of 18 and 64 are veterans.

As of July 2009, session law requires that the top five recently separated veterans who meet the minimum qualifications for a position and claim veterans preference must be granted an interview for the position by the hiring authority. In fiscal year 2010, 76% of veteran applicants who met the minimum qualification for positions were interviewed. This is an increase of 5% from fiscal year 2008 when 71% of veteran applicants were interviewed.

To promote the state as a Veteran Friendly employer and to increase opportunities for veterans in state government, state agencies conducted veteran focused recruitment and retention activities; provide reintegration education and guidance; built partnerships with veteran organizations and advocates; provided support to their deployed military employees; and retained job classifications whose sole purpose is supporting veterans and in some cases must be filled by veterans. In addition, the Minnesota Department of Veteran Affairs provides services to ensure that Minnesota's veterans, their dependents and survivors receive the full measure of benefits and services to which they are entitled.

# Veteran Focused Legislation

The veteran legislation listed below provides ranking and interview preference, employment benefits and protections to eligible veterans of the military service.

## **43A.11 Veteran's Preference**

- **Subd. 7. Ranking of veterans**

Applicants who meet the minimum qualifications for a vacant position and claim veterans preference shall be listed in the applicant pool **ahead** of all other applicants.

- **Subd. 7. Recently Separated Veteran Interview Law**

Each recently separated veteran who meets minimum qualifications for a vacant position and has claimed a veterans or disabled veterans preference must be considered for the position. **The top five recently separated veterans must be granted an interview for the position by the hiring authority.**

## **M.S. 197.455 and 197.46 Veteran's Preference Hearing Statute**

- Summary: Under this law, eligible veterans may not be involuntarily terminated from employment, except as permitted by statute. Employers must notify the veteran of their proposed termination and inform the veteran of their right to contest the termination in a formal hearing. The veteran has 60 days to petition for a hearing over their proposed termination. Terminations may not be effected until after the veteran has exercised their right to a hearing or the 60 day timeline to petition has expired. Veterans remain in payroll status during the 60 day period. Consistent with the statute, if the veteran chooses to appeal the termination decision, compensation continues until a final determination is made.

## **Executive Order 10-13 - Supporting the Selection and Employment of Veterans**

- This executive order directs state departments and associated agencies, boards, and commissions to continuously review and revise policies and procedures, and conduct increased outreach in order to engage and employ veterans as part of their hiring or selection process.

# Veteran Employment Data

The state employee data in Table 1 is from a slice file (snapshot of state employee data on a particular day) dated December 31, 2010 collected from the state payroll system. The veteran information in Table 2 includes applicant data from fiscal year 2010 (July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010).

## Two situations that may impact the data are:

- Hiring Restrictions - Effective February 2008, Governor Pawlenty announced that agencies are only able to fill critical and essential positions; this has resulted in fewer state jobs being announced and filled, and therefore would have had some impact on the number of veteran's being hired.
- State Employee Veteran Status and Voluntary Disclosure - Prior to the 2009 legislative reporting requirement, there was no statutory requirement to track the veteran status of an applicant after being hired to state employment. In July 2009, legislation passed requiring that the number of veterans among the state government workforce be reported to the legislature every year. All state employees were asked to update their veteran status in the state payroll system. Disclosure of an employee's veteran status is voluntary and based on self-identification. Employees are encouraged, but not required to disclose their veteran status. As a result, some employees who are veterans may have opted not to self-identify, reducing the accuracy of this data.

Table 1 (below) shows the distribution of veterans in cabinet-level agencies.

- 11% of cabinet-level agency employees self-identified as veterans.
- 7% of Minnesota's labor force between the ages of 18 and 64 are veterans. Labor force means employed or available and actively seeking employment. Source: By the Numbers: A Snapshot of Minnesota Veterans, Minnesota Economic TRENDS June 2009, DEED website.

**TABLE 1**  
**Veterans in the State of Minnesota Government Workforce**

<b>Agency Name</b>	<b>COLUMN 1</b>	<b>COLUMN 2</b>	<b>COLUMN 3</b>
	<b>Number of employees employed in FT positions</b>	<b>Number of employees self-identified as Veterans</b>	<b>Number of FT positions filled in FY 2010</b>
Administration Dept	449	52	51
Agriculture Dept	392	33	107
Bureau of Mediation Services	11	2	1
Commerce Dept	318	40	52
Corrections Dept	4,125	599	442
Education Department	388	11	48
Employ & Econ Development Dept	1,709	168	415
Health Department	1,329	52	257
Housing Finance Agency	203	13	12
Human Rights Dept	33	2	2
Human Services Dept	4,766	340	561
Iron Range Resources & Rehab	56	4	1
Labor & Industry Department	429	37	36
Military Affairs Dept	264	86	61
Minnesota Management & Budget	307	25	101
Natural Resources Dept	2,197	176	241
Office of Enterprise Tech	308	35	22
Office of Higher Education	65	2	10
Pollution Control Agency	863	56	51
Public Safety Dept	1,936	221	212
Revenue Dept	1,452	83	389
Transportation Dept	4,660	689	740
Veterans Affairs Dept	503	109	49
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>26,763</b>	<b>2,835</b>	<b>3,861</b>

**Column 1** - the total number of persons employed in full-time positions listed by the state agency. *Rule 3900.400 definition of full-time employee is an employee who is normally scheduled to work 80 hours in a biweekly period. December 31, 2010*

**Column 2** - the total number of employees identified in Column 1 who are veterans. *Disclosure of an employee's veteran status is voluntary and based on self-identification. Employees are encouraged, but not required to disclose their veteran status. December 31, 2010*

**Column 3** - the total number of vacant full-time positions in the agency filled by hiring or appointment for fiscal year 2010. *Includes Unlimited (an appointment for which there is no specified maximum duration) and Limited (e.g. temporary, emergency, seasonal, trainee, provisional).*

Table 2, below, shows veteran applicant data obtained from the state applicant tracking system. It reflects the tracking activity of veteran applicants in filled requisitions (*job vacancies*). Key points are:

- 76% of veteran applicants who met the minimum qualifications for positions were interviewed in FY2010. This is a 5% increase from the FY2008 data when 71% of veteran applicants who meet the minimum qualification were interviewed.
- The interview rate of veteran applicants who met the minimum qualifications for positions was 76% compared to 69% of non-veteran applicants who met the minimum qualification for a position were interviewed.
- 4% of veterans who met the minimum qualifications were hired and 4% of non veterans who met the minimum qualifications were hired.

Additional information from the 2009 Study of Veteran Employment in State Government indicates the population of veterans is aging and there is a decrease of available veterans in the labor force, despite the influx of veterans from more recent military engagements.

The 2007 Minnesota Census indicates for every **one** veteran in the 18 to 34 age range, there are approximately **eight** veterans in the 55 to 74 age range. In the 55 to 74 age range people are typically approaching retirement or currently retired.

In FY 2008, for every **one** state employee who is a veteran in the 18 to 34 age range, there are approximately **eight** state employees who are veterans in the 55 to 74 age range. This mirrors the 2007 Minnesota Census. Veterans in both state employment and veterans in the Minnesota population are aging. Neither public nor private sector employers will be able to replace veterans one for one.

**TABLE 2**  
**Veteran Applicants for State Government Employment**  
**Fiscal Year 2010**

	<b>COLUMN 1</b>	<b>COLUMN 2</b>	<b>COLUMN 3</b>	<b>COLUMN 4</b>	<b>COLUMN 5</b>	<b>COLUMN 6</b>	<b>COLUMN 7</b>	<b>COLUMN 8</b>
<b>Agency Name</b>	<b>FT Positions Filled</b>	<b>Total App Received</b>	<b>Veteran Applicant</b>	<b>Veterans meeting MQ's</b>	<b>Veterans Interview</b>	<b>Veterans Offered Jobs</b>	<b>Veterans Hired</b>	<b>Veteran Letter</b>
Administration Dept	34	2,412	159	83	60	2	2	0
Agriculture Dept	104	2,100	214	93	93	11	11	0
Commerce Dept	22	2,168	133	110	47	3	3	108
Corrections Dept	257	6,806	820	519	493	39	36	191
Education Dept	39	3,900	202	45	18	1	1	0
DEED	141	7,316	747	611	236	16	16	172
Health Department	190	11,448	621	264	250	13	13	424
Housing Finance	3	290	29	21	12	1	0	4
Human Rights Dept	1	268	19	19	14	0	0	0
Human Services Dept	348	14,134	932	365	275	18	17	599
Iron Range Resources	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Labor & Industry Dept	33	1,134	96	25	17	1	1	0
Office of Higher Educ	1	176	10	10	10	0	0	0
Military Affairs Dept	26	1,388	358	186	166	9	9	315
Mn Mgmt & Budget	31	2,378	158	71	34	1	1	0
Natural Resources	150	4,553	424	78	52	3	2	163
Offc of Enterprise Tech	17	1,706	154	70	39	3	3	0
Pollution Control	11	355	22	10	10	0	0	3
Public Safety Dept	160	14,869	1,141	574	343	12	12	738
Revenue Dept	350	6,253	345	221	175	12	12	0
Transportation Dept	488	24,372	3,527	1,790	1,556	66	66	1,048
Veteran Affairs	33	2,275	733	231	175	12	12	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2,440</b>	<b>110,305</b>	<b>10,844</b>	<b>5,396</b>	<b>4,075</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>3,765</b>

**Column 1** - the total number of vacant full-time positions in the agency filled during fiscal year 2010. *This is only unlimited positions (an appointment for which there is no specified maximum duration).*

**Column 2** - the total number of applications received for the positions identified in Column 1

**Column 3** - the total number of applicants identified in Column 2 who indicated veterans preference status

**Column 4** - the total number of veteran applications identified in Column 3 who meet the minimum qualifications (MQ's)

**Column 5** - the total number of veteran applicants identified in Column 4 who were interviewed

**Column 6** - the total number of veteran applicants identified in Column 5 who were offered employment

**Column 7** - the total number of veteran applicants identified in Column 6 who were hired into the open positions of employment in the agency

**Column 8** - the total number of veteran applicants identified in Column 7 who were sent a rejection letter. *43A.11 Subd. 9 states if a member of the finalist pool who claimed veteran's preference is rejected, the agency must notify the finalist in writing of the reasons for the rejection. **Important Note:** If the agency generated the rejection letter from a system other than the state's application tracking database (e.g. word processing or email system), the letter would not be tracked in the state's applicant tracking database and would not be counted in Column 8.*

# Veteran Focused Initiatives, Program and Services

The following section includes initiatives which have statewide impact and involved collaboration between state agencies or collaboration with veteran organizations/advocates, legislature, and private companies. It also includes programs and services specifically for veterans.

## Minnesota GI Bill Program

The Minnesota GI Bill Program provides postsecondary financial assistance to eligible Minnesota veterans and service members who have served after September 11, 2001. Benefits extend to spouse and child of deceased or permanent disabled eligible Minnesota veterans and service members who have served after September 11, 2001. Full-time undergraduate or graduate students may be eligible to receive up to \$1,000 per semester or term and part-time students may be eligible to receive up to \$500 per semester or term. This is available to Veterans statewide.

## Veterans Education Transfer System

This new MnSCU online service is available to help veterans and members of the armed forces identify whether their military training can count for college credits in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. This service is believed to be the first of its kind in the country. In the past, veterans have often found it difficult to know whether the training they receive in the military can count for college credit. This site helps veterans build on the excellent training they receive in the military by awarding appropriate credits and allowing them to complete a college program more quickly.

The transfer system can identify awardable credits for military training in four large occupational areas – law enforcement, diesel and truck mechanics, administrative and human resource assistants, and paramedics. More occupational areas, such as health care, will be added to the system as they are reviewed and deemed appropriate for transfer.

For more information <http://www.mnscu.edu/media/newsreleases/current/article.php?id=172>

## MnSCU Veterans Upward Bound (VUB)

MnSCU Veterans Upward Bound at Minneapolis Community and Technical College. This program prepares veterans for college. The program offers free college prep courses and study skills. Veterans also receive career, personal, and financial aid counseling, enrollment assistance, GED preparation, and one-on-one tutoring. A VA benefits counselor is on staff to assist veterans in applying for educational benefits. The program provides all books and supplies to students at no cost. Veterans with a service-connected disability might be eligible for additional benefits. <http://www.minneapolis.edu/trioprograms/veteransupwardbound/>

## **DEED Veteran Workforce Programs / Veterans Employment Services**

Minnesota veterans are eligible for a number of workforce services. First, for many federal workforce programs, veterans that meet eligibility criteria are given first priority in enrollment. In particular, veterans leaving active duty who no longer have a civilian job or have a job that is now below their skill levels are eligible for the Dislocated Worker program. Those leaving active duty in the National Guard or Armed Forces Reserves are also eligible if they no longer have jobs upon their return or their jobs are no longer appropriate because their skills have increased or the pay is significantly less than their active duty military pay.

Second, any veteran can meet with a Veterans Employment Services representative for a preliminary assessment and referrals to other services. Veterans who have barriers to employment and service members who have returned from Iraq or Afghanistan may receive additional individualized assistance. The individualized assistance may include help with résumés, interviewing skills, networking techniques, referrals to other veterans' services, and assistance connecting with employers.

Third, service members returning from active duty may participate in three-day workshops for information on resources available to them. They can also receive help converting active-duty experience and skills into licensures or certification. Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor Workforce Programs Evaluation Report, February 2010.

### **Minnesota Stand Down Events**

DEED participates in four Stand Down events per year throughout the state. Minnesota Stand Down serves homeless and near-homeless veterans by helping these former soldiers get their lives back on track. Hundreds of volunteers work at the event to provide services such as medical, dental, eye and psychological exams and treatments; job training; legal aid; federal and state tax counseling; social security eligibility information; substance abuse counseling; and food and shelter. The idea is to bring many services to one location and make them more accessible to all veterans who otherwise may not seek out services or take advantage of benefits due to them.

### **Veteran Legislation**

MMB, MVDA, DEED, Governor's office, and the Minnesota Legislature worked together on veteran focused legislation. This includes the veterans interview law, veteran preference hearings, and annual veteran reporting requirements.

### **Affordable Homes Program**

The Department of Corrections Institution Community Work Crew/Affordable Homes Program (ICWC/AHP) is working with a non-profit agency in Duluth to complete the renovation of two buildings to provide office space for the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV) and 16 units of permanent and transitional supportive housing.

## **Military Tax Related Benefits**

The Minnesota Department of Revenue has credits and tax relief for current, retired and disabled military. Credit and tax relief include:

- Military Spouses Residency Relief Act
- Credit for military service in a combat zone
- Tax credit for past military service
- Tax debt relief for deceased active duty military
- Market Value Exclusion on Homesteads of Disabled Veterans

For more information: <http://taxes.state.mn.us/Pages/index.aspx>

## **Transition Assistance Program (TAP)**

This program is designed for service members leaving the military. DEED Veteran Employment staff facilitate this three day workshop focusing on transition from military life back to the civilian workforce.

## **Minnesota Health Care Program**

This program helps pay for medical or nursing home care. Military families eligible for Minnesota Care may be able to get coverage without a premium for up to 12 months. The premium can be waived if a family member completed a military tour of duty within two years of being approved for coverage. This benefit is available to members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, National Guard and Reserves. For more information go to: <http://www.dhs.state.mn.us>

## **Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Licensing**

The DNR provides special privileges to veterans as it applies to hunting licenses, firearms safety training, fishing licenses, cross country ski passes, state park vehicle permits and the Minnesota Conservation Volunteer magazine. For example: free deer license, hunt small game without a license, free annual Minnesota State Park permit. Specific details on those privileges are available on the DNR Internet <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/licenses/military/index.html>

## **Waiver of Commercial Driver's License**

Veterans may be eligible for a waiver of a commercial driver's license based on their military experience. The Department of Transportation encourages veterans to contact their County Veteran Service Officer to obtain the necessary documentation.

## **Motorcycle Rider Training Course**

All branches of the military require troops to have completed an approved rider training course before they may bring a motorcycle on military property. Minnesota Department of Public Safety currently provides reduced cost training for MN Army National Guard troops (\$140 tuition versus \$160 for general public) through an interagency agreement with MnSCU. In addition, we have provided technical assistance to the MN Air National Guard. This year the program trained 137 MN Army National Guard troops.

## **Veteran Resource Centers**

A Veteran Resource Center is located on each MnSCU campus. This resource is made possible by a partnership between MnSCU and the Minnesota Department of Veteran Affairs. The veteran resource center is a one stop center to help students, who have or are currently serving in the military, with their transition to college. The center and its staff provide information and assistance regarding state and federal benefits, enrollment, placement testing, financial aid, online orientation, tuition and application waivers, military and academic transcripts, and much more. It is also a place where veterans know they can be themselves with people who have had similar experiences and where their families are welcomed. The center is often visited by Higher Education Veteran Representatives, DEED Veteran Representatives, MDVA Representatives, and County Veteran Services Officers.

## **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)**

The Minnesota Department of Revenue has 300 sites across Minnesota which offers veterans (and other selected groups) free assistance with filing their state income and property tax returns.

# State Resources Dedicated to Veteran Support

The state also has veteran focused positions whose purpose is to support veterans as they reintegrate back into civilian life and the workforce. These positions are typically employed at the Minnesota Department of Veteran Affairs (MDVA), Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) and MnSCU. In addition, many state agencies have web sites dedicated to veteran information and services.

## **Disabled Veterans Outreach Representatives Senior Veterans Employment Representatives**

The responsibilities of the 35 Disabled Veterans Outreach Representative (DVOP) and Senior Veterans Employment Representative (SrVER) positions include:

- Identify veterans interested in working for DEED, and other state agencies.
- Recruit veterans for all state jobs and promote the state at various job fairs.
- Promote Minnesota as a “Veteran Friendly” employer at state and national conferences.
- Coach veterans on the state hiring process and online employment tools. This is accomplished through one-on-one meetings and group presentations at the Minnesota Workforce Centers.
- Outreach to veteran organizations and advocates such as the County Veteran Service Officer (CVSO), VFW, American Legions, and Disabled American Veterans to promote state employment.
- Outreach to veteran-focused minority and disability organizations.
- Assist with any housing or health issues, or other specific needs to assist veterans and their families.

In addition, DEED has approximately 37 staff dedicated to promoting the hiring of veterans to employers (required by the Department of Labor’s Wagner-Peyser Act). This employment service program matches employers with out of work applicants and requires veterans be provided "priority of service."

## **Higher Education Veteran Program Coordinators**

The purpose of these 14 positions at the Department of Veterans Affairs is to connect Veterans, military members and their families with the educational benefits and resources available to help them succeed at the MnSCU campuses. This is accomplished by providing on-campus Veterans Resource Centers and comprehensive information about benefits and resources that support the unique needs of these students. The 56 campus Veterans Resource Centers served over 4,300 individual each year.

Coordinators work with the MnSCU system colleges to:

- Provide a welcoming environment for students to interact with other students who are veterans or family members of veterans.
- Facilitate communication between departments and staff who regularly interact with veterans.
- The Centers have, or can locate, information about Veterans' services, military education benefits and financial resources, scholarships, Veteran and family support activities and other items of interest to Veterans, family members or community members.
- Provide training for campus staff related to veteran issues.
- Obtain feedback from veterans and work to remove barriers to services.
- Provide Veterans Friendly policies and procedures.
- Organize and provide training on Veterans issues
- Refer individuals to appropriate community services providers such as [County Veteran Service Officer](#), [Minnesota Workforce Centers](#), and other entities.
- Meet with guard units and their families prior to deployment and provide information about education benefits they earn while deployed and education benefits for spouses and family members.

### **Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Staff (MDVA)**

The mission of the entire agency's workforce is charged with supporting veterans and their families. Some of these classifications include: Veterans Assistance Coordinators and Veterans Claims Representatives. The agency also has employees with the responsibility to reach out and assist veterans in need. This is accomplished by going to the homes of the veteran, relatives and friends. In addition there is an agency division who mission is serving American Indians who are part of native tribes and are eligible for veteran's benefits. Division staff assists them with the application process to obtain these benefits. The MDVA is in the process of creating a new managerial position which will oversee and coordinate efforts for Veterans Employment and Women's Programs.

### **State Agency Human Resource and Labor Relation Staff**

State agency human resources and labor relations staff must be knowledgeable about applicable veteran laws to ensure agency compliance. For example: veterans preference, veteran interview law, veterans preference hearings, FMLA and military personnel, and USERRA.

### **Minnesota State Colleges and University System (MnSCU)**

Each MnSCU campus has a Certifying Official (CO) who helps veterans with their benefit paperwork and registration process. Certifying Officials also insure that the veterans education programs are certified and the soldier is entitled for benefits for those courses. Certifying Officials are assisted in their work by other staff working in the Admissions Offices.

There are also staff available to veteran students who will work with them and provide information about the Montgomery GI Bill, Post 9/11 , Reserve Education Assistance Program Selected Reserve, Vocational Rehabilitation, Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program, Veteran Educational Assistance Program, Minnesota GI Bill, Federal Tuition Assistance, and Military Transcript Evaluation

## **Veteran Focused Web Sites**

[MyMilitaryEducation.org](http://MyMilitaryEducation.org) The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and Minnesota Online have a web site to serve the unique higher education needs of veterans, military members and their families. Information about education benefits and other related issues is available from a team of experienced advisors and counselors. The Web site offers a "FAQ" bank with over 150 questions and seven-day-a-week access to customer service staff through a toll-free phone line and online chat.

[Minnesota Veteran One Stop Website](#) The Minnesota Veteran One Stop Website was developed to provide Minnesota Veterans, their families and employers a one stop location for information or links available for veterans

[Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

[Minnesota Department of Military Affairs](#)

[Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, veterans programs](#)

Minnesota Department of Revenue

[http://taxes.state.mn.us/individ/pages/residency\\_and\\_filing\\_status\\_members\\_of\\_military.aspx](http://taxes.state.mn.us/individ/pages/residency_and_filing_status_members_of_military.aspx)

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/licenses/military/index.html>

Veteran Information at the State of Minnesota Career Web site

<http://www.careers.state.mn.us/vets>

Minnesota Management & Budget - Information for State Employees who are Veterans

<http://www.mmb.state.mn.us/military-res>

Minnesota Department of Transportation - Veterans Preference Program

<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/civilrights/veterans/index.html>

# Recruitment, Partnerships and Outreach Activities

State agencies and MnSCU have been proactive in their veteran focused recruitment, partnerships and outreach activities. Representatives of state agencies attend key veteran job fairs and conferences; build relationships with veteran organizations and advocates who in turn, promote state employment to their veteran clients. In addition, Minnesota Management & Budget provides recruitment and educational outreach on behalf of all state agencies. This is accomplished through communication and coordination of recruitment events to state agencies. The goal of these efforts is to promote the state as a Veteran Friendly employer and increase employment opportunities for veterans.

## Recruitment

State agencies attended or conducted the following veteran focused activities:

- **“Hire Vets First” Veterans Career Fairs**  
This career fair is the largest single day recruiting event in the country with over 100 businesses and 1500 veterans participating. Numerous state agencies attend the event to promote their agency and the state as a Veteran Friendly employer. This event is sponsored by the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED).
- **Camp Ripley Biennial Open House**  
Every other year Camp Ripley holds an open house inviting the public to come in and see what Camp Ripley is all about. The purpose of the open house is to provide the community, military service members and veterans an opportunity to view different aspects of operations and training conducted at the Camp Ripley. State agency staff attended the open house to show their support and share information with the over 2,000 people in attendance.
- **The Military.com Career Expo**  
Military.com hosts the largest Veteran Job Board and sponsors numerous career expos across the county giving employers and veterans an opportunity to meet face to face to discuss job opportunities.
- **Veteran Networking Job Club**  
Attend the MN Workforce Center’s Veteran Networking Job Club as guest speaker to promote the state as a Veteran Friendly employer by explaining the state hiring process; demonstrating the military skills translator tool; identifying the benefits of working for the state; and clarifying veterans preference and interview statutes.

- Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Workshop**  
 Minnesota Management & Budget is an on-going presenter at this three day workshop for veterans transitioning back to the civilian workforce. MMB promotes the state as a Veteran Friendly employer by explaining the state hiring process; demonstrating the military skills translator tool; identifying the benefits of working for the state; and clarifying veterans preference and interview statutes.
- Statewide “Beyond the Yellow Ribbon” Community Events**  
 State agencies recruit at various yellow ribbon community and reintegration events around the state. This comprehensive program connects service members and their families with community support, training, services and resources.
- Recruitment Tool**  
 According to some of the collective bargaining agreements, state agencies have discretionary latitude when hiring someone from the United States Armed Forces to grant length of service credit resulting in higher vacation accrual rates. This can be an effective recruitment tool.

### **Targeted Veteran Advertising**

State agencies advertise their job announcements at the following events and venues including, but not limited to:

- DEED Veterans Employment Office
- Minnesota Army and Air National Guard
- Disabled Veterans Rest Camp
- Veterans for Peace, Minnesota
- Duluth Veteran Center
- St Paul Veterans Resource Center
- Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans
- Minnesota Department of Veteran Affairs
- Veteran Journal Magazine
- Northland College Military Veteran services
- Minnesota Military Resources Website
- Army ROTC
- Minnesota National Guard
- GI Jobs Magazine
- Minnesota Veterans Homes
- Military.com
- Navy and Marine Reserves
- DFL Veterans Caucus

# Retention and Reintegration Support and Training

Reintegration guidance and support is a key factor in successfully returning veterans to work. Comprehensive reintegration programs provide a supportive environment which encourages the veteran to remain within state employment. It is also important for deployed employees to know they are remembered and supported while on active duty.

## Typical agency support activities include the following:

- Meet with the employee prior to deployment to discuss how the agency will stay connected to the employee and the employee's family while deployed.
- Encourage returning "active duty" employees to share their military experiences with co-workers and answer questions at brown bag sessions.
- Conduct "Welcome Back to Work" recognition events for deployed employees upon return. Appreciation awards given for special recognize to veteran employees.
- Provide on-going meetings with returning deployed employees.
- Develop individualized soldier "return to work" plans or supplementary training for smooth transition back to work.
- Support and grant additional time off for reintegration.
- Assign mentors or buddies to returning deployed employees.
- Agency employees and co-workers are informed about deployed employees through agency newsletters and intranet sites that highlight the soldier.
- Minnesota Department of Public Safety works with the military and the Office of Enterprise Technology to set up video conferencing for applicants to participate in the state hiring process. In addition, they utilize the military to proxy fitness testing. Troopers on active duty outside of Minnesota also use video conferencing for promotional oral interviews.
- The State Patrol escorts returning deployed state troopers from the airport when resources allow.
- Communication from agency commissioners to employees in recognition of Memorial Day and Veteran Day Events.
- Provide information and resources about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and other related materials such as the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to both supervisors and returning veterans.
- Hold employment positions for deployed employees and provide strong encouragement to return after deployment.

## Agency efforts to support soldiers and their families include:

- Provide on-going communication between employees and deployed employees and their families through emails, letters, and photos.
- Create opportunities for family members to communicate with deployed employees using video conferencing such as Skype.

- Sent deployed employees care packages which include personal products, holiday presents, knitted caps, photos, and letters.
- Co-workers support deployed soldier's families by volunteering to babysit, provide handyman services, and stock firewood.
- Agency HR staff serve as a resource for deployed employees and their families to answer questions pertaining to payroll, benefits, insurance, while the family is separated
- The MN Zoo hosts an annual Military Family Weekend event allowing military service members and their families' free admission to the zoo.
- The Department of Corrections Sentence to Service Program provided hundreds of hours of volunteer work in cooperation with Camp Ripley staff to provide fuel wood for families of deployed soldiers.
- DEED staff provides veteran services information for veterans and their families at Workforce Centers around the state.
- Rochester Community and Technical College (RCTC) Fund for the Family Program volunteers provides meals, child care, snow removal, and lawn care for families of deployed employees.

## Training

Many agencies provide or participate in training for state employees, managers, supervisors regarding the reintegration of deployed employees. Agency human resources staff both conduct and attend training to ensure the appropriate state employees are knowledgeable of applicable veteran laws and are in compliance with these laws.

- Minnesota Department of Transportation developed a 22-minute training DVD titled "We All Serve Fort Minnesota." The presentation covers the military aspects of the Family and Medical Leave Act; the Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Program; the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve organization; the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) and more. The presentation also includes portraits of a Mn/DOT employee whose son is on duty in Iraq and one employee who is a member of the Minnesota National Guard. The DVD was sent to each MnDOT district and to anyone who requested it. The DVD's title "We All Serve Fort Minnesota" builds on the concept that although Minnesota has no active duty military installations, all Minnesotans can offer support to military families. It is also available on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8sIqeUUPSjI>.
- Provide reintegration training to both leadership staff and returning deployed employees such as: individualized "return to work" plans and training for smooth transition back into the workforce.
- Provide USERRA training to managers and supervisors. This federal law outlines the rights and benefits awarded veteran employees and the responsibilities of the employer. This act affects employment, reemployment, and retention in employment.

- Provide “How to Comply with New FMLA Rules Affecting Deployed State Employees and Military Family Members” training for human resource staff, state managers and supervisors.
- Agencies bring in subject matter experts from the Mn Department of Veteran Affairs and the Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Services, and U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs for staff training.
- Minnesota Management & Budget provides training and information to state supervisors, managers, and human resources staff regarding veterans preference, veteran interview law, and veteran preference hearings
- MnSCU campuses provide training for staff and faculty on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Reintegration, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), The Emotional effects of Deployment Cycles, and How to be a Veteran Friendly School. In addition, campuses provide Suicide Prevention Training for counselors and Veteran Coordinators.

## Conclusion

For every one veteran in the Minnesota labor force in the 18 to 34 age range, eight are in the 55 to 74 age range (2007 Mn Census data). This trend is echoed in veteran employment in state government. Both public and private sector employers are impacted by the large numbers of employees approaching retirement.

In July of 2009, a law was passed which required state agencies to interview the top five Recently Separated Veterans (RSV) who apply and meet the minimum qualifications for a vacant position. The goal of this bill was to give more veterans an opportunity to be seen and interviewed by hiring supervisors. In fiscal year 2010, 76% of veteran applicants who met the minimum qualification for positions were interviewed. This is an increase from fiscal year 2008 when 71% of veteran applicants were interviewed.

Executive branch state agencies and MnSCU are committed to upholding the state as a Veteran Friendly employer through their veteran focused recruitment and retention activities, building on-going relationships with veteran organizations and advocates, supporting deployed soldiers and their families, retaining veteran focused positions, providing reintegration training, and championing statewide initiative for veterans.

# Appendix

## Cabinet Level Statutory Reporting Requirements Article 3, Sec. 22 of Chapter 94 from Session Laws of 2009

### Sec. 22. REPORTING REQUIRED.

(a) The commissioner of Minnesota Management & Budget must collect the following data annually from each cabinet-level state agency, with the exception of the Metropolitan Council, and must report those data, by agency, by the second week of each legislative session, beginning in 2011, to the chairs and leading minority members of each of the house of representatives and senate committees having responsibility for veterans policy and finance issues:

- (1) the total number of persons employed in full-time positions by the state agency;
  - (2) the total number of employees identified in clause (1) who are veterans;
  - (3) the total number of vacant full-time positions in the agency filled by hiring or appointment during the designated fiscal year;
  - (4) the total number of applications received for the positions identified in clause (3);
  - (5) the total number of applications identified in clause (4) for which veterans preference was elected by the applicant;
  - (6) the total number of applications identified in clause (5) for which the veteran applicant was judged by the hiring authority as meeting minimum requirements for the open positions of employment;
  - (7) the total number of veteran applicants identified in clause (6) who were interviewed by the hiring authority for the open positions of employment in the agency;
  - (8) the total number of veteran applicants identified in clause (7) who were selected for and offered employment within the open positions of employment in the agency;
  - (9) the total number of veteran applicants identified in clause (8) who were hired into the open positions of employment in the agency;
  - (10) the total number of veteran applicants identified in clause (6) who were sent a rejection letter, in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, section 43A.11, subdivision 9; and (11) any other data or information deemed important by the commissioner of administration and reflecting on the efforts of the subject agency to recruit and hire veterans.
- (b) The data must reflect one full fiscal year or one full calendar year, as determined by the commissioner of Minnesota Management & Budget. (c) The term "veteran" has the meaning given in Minnesota Statutes, section 197.447.