

# State of Minnesota's Efforts to Employ and Support Veterans

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Submitted to the Minnesota Legislature

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## Introduction

The state of Minnesota seeks and values the unique skills of those who have served or are serving in the military. We actively recruit, hire, and develop veterans and service members because we know the important contributions they bring to the workplace. This report provides the state's efforts during fiscal year 2017 to recruit and employ veterans.

The data reported here is collected as required by the Minnesota Legislature. In addition, [Executive Order 10-13](#) instructs state agencies to report their veteran-focused recruitment and retention activities. Self-identification of veteran status is voluntary and employees are not legally required to provide this information.

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

## Executive Summary

The Commissioner of Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) is required by Minnesota law (Article 3, Section 22 of Chapter 94) to annually collect data on the number of veterans in cabinet-level state agencies and veteran information 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 making Minnesota a more military- and veteran-friendly state.

Recently, MMB kicked off a statewide campaign to acknowledge, support, and extend appreciation to our veterans, service members, employees, and fallen heroes throughout the month of November 2017. Activities were planned as a part of the state's efforts to acknowledge current veterans and active service members currently working for the state, and also to recruit more veterans and active service members to consider state employment.

According to fiscal year 2017 data, approximately 8.3 percent of the state government full-time employees in cabinet-level agencies self-identified as veterans. By comparison, 7.3 percent of Minnesota's population over the ages of 18 are veterans (US Census, 2016 American Community Survey). Cabinet-level agencies hired 413 (7.5 percent) veterans into full-time unlimited positions in fiscal year 2017. Note, employees are not required to self-identify their veteran status.

Veterans are not a protected group under Minnesota law, however the state continually monitors and recruits this group. The state achieved its eight percent goal for percent of veterans in the State of Minnesota workforce. (The goal was based on U.S. Census statewide demographics.) Ten percent of all state employees are veterans. Our analysis shows that the number of veterans in state government will continue to decrease if the percent of veteran applicants and new hires does not increase to at least 13 percent.

In fiscal year 2017:

- Seven percent of all applicants were veterans.
- Almost nine percent of all hires were veterans.
- Ten percent of all state employees are veterans.

To promote the state as a veteran-friendly employer and to increase opportunities for veterans in state government during fiscal year 2017, state agencies:

- Conducted veteran-focused recruitment and retention activities.
- Provided reintegration education and guidance.
- Built partnerships with veteran organizations and advocates.
- Provided support to deployed military employees.
- Retained job classifications whose sole purpose is supporting veterans and in some cases must be filled by veterans.

The Department of Administration's Office of Equity in Procurement was established to improve the state's spending with targeted business to make Minnesota state government more accessible to all Minnesotans.

Using proven strategies the office along with the Governor’s diversity and inclusion initiative resulted in an increase in veteran owned business spending by 275 percent, from \$1,824,015 to \$6,839,966.

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. In addition, the Minnesota Department of Military Affairs provides support to the Minnesota National Guard members.

## **Veteran Employment Data**

The state employee data in the following tables is collected from the state’s personnel and payroll system. These tables represent a snapshot of state employee data as of June 30, 2017. The veteran data is collected from the state’s applicant tracking system and is applicant data from fiscal year 2017 (July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017).

The numerical data in this report is from the cabinet-level agencies in the executive branch as required by statute. The cabinet-level agencies account for over 95 percent of state employees. The data in Tables 1-5 do not include the legislative branch, judicial branch, Minnesota State, or the retirement agencies.

### **State Employee Veteran Status and Voluntary Disclosure**

State law requires that the number of veterans among the state government cabinet-level agency workforce be reported to the Legislature every year. Identification of veteran status is voluntary and employees are not legally required to provide this information. To obtain veteran status from state employees, the “Self Service” webpage is available for state employees to update their veteran status at any time. Employees are encouraged, but are not required to disclose their veteran status. As a result, some employees who are veterans may have opted not to self-identify, impacting the accuracy of this data.

# Veterans in State of Minnesota Government Workforce – Table 1

Table 1 shows the distribution of veterans in executive branch cabinet-level agencies. Key points:

- Eight percent (approximately) of State of Minnesota government cabinet-level agency employees self-identified as veterans.
- 4.4 percent of Minnesota’s civilian labor force between the ages of 18 and 64 are veterans. Labor force means employed or available and actively seeking employment. Source: U.S. Census, 2016 American Community Survey.

**Table 1 Veterans in the State of Minnesota Government Workforce Cabinet-Level Agencies FY2017**

Cabinet-Level Agency	Number of Employees in Full-Time Positions	Number of Full-Time Employees Who Self-Identified as Veterans	Number of Full-Time Positions Hired in FY 2017	Number of Full-Time Veterans Positions Hired in FY 2017
Administration	490	36	82	5
Agriculture	448	17	124	6
Bureau of Mediation Services	12	2	4	1
Commerce	350	19	63	1
Corrections	4,207	555	497	60
Education	377	8	54	1
Employment & Economic	1,300	88	162	10
Health	1,417	37	262	8
Housing Finance Agency	242	8	24	0
Human Rights	42	5	24	3
Human Services	5,142	278	1,327	73
Iron Range Resources & Rehab.	52	2	60	1
Labor & Industry	422	38	45	3
Military Affairs	360	132	102	50
MN Management & Budget	236	6	44	0
Natural Resources	2,298	120	555	33
Office of Higher Education	62	1	19	1
Office of MN.IT Services	2,209	185	256	22
Pollution Control Agency	842	30	89	6
Public Safety	1,908	248	213	23
Revenue	1,371	54	249	8
Transportation	4,729	467	895	81
Veterans Affairs	715	104	331	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>29,231</b>	<b>2,440</b>	<b>5,481</b>	<b>412</b>

**Column 2** - 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.

**Column 3** - total number of employees identified in Column 2 who self-identified as veterans. Disclosure of an employee’s veteran status is voluntary and based on self-identification. Employees are encouraged, but are not required to disclose their veteran status.

**Column 4** - total number of vacant full-time positions in the agency filled by hiring or appointment for fiscal year 2017. Includes Unlimited (an appointment for which there is no specified maximum duration) and Limited (e.g. temporary, emergency, seasonal, trainee, and provisional).

**Column 5**- total number of full-time hires who indicated veteran status in FY 2017.

## Veteran Applicants for State Government Employment – Table 2

Table 2 shows a summary of veteran job applicants, interviewing, and hiring in fiscal year 2017. Key points:

- About 7 percent of applicants for state employment are veterans.
- About 11 percent of the full-time jobs filled in FY 2017 were filled by veterans.

**Table 2 Veteran Applicants for State Government Employment in Cabinet-Level Agencies, FY 2017**

Cabinet-Level Agency	Full-Time Positions Filled	Total Applications Received	Veteran Applications	Veterans Hired
Administration	74	631	68	3
Agriculture	91	583	21	0
Bureau of Mediation Services	2	5	0	0
Commerce	65	551	48	0
Corrections	543	10,686	350	37
Education	69	926	77	0
Employment & Economic Develop	182	1,597	133	1
Health	320	2,360	182	2
Housing Finance Agency	44	287	26	0
Human Rights	18	422	36	0
Human Services	1,040	10,320	692	8
Iron Range Resources & Rehab.	9	32	3	0
Labor & Industry	63	649	74	0
Military Affairs	41	153	70	1
MN Management & Budget	54	709	231	3
Natural Resources	653	2,598	687	14
Office of Higher Education	15	117	45	0
Office of MN.IT Services	383	2,737	1,133	15
Pollution Control Agency	96	1,089	294	5
Public Safety	194	2,942	1,260	15
Revenue	245	1,683	506	18
Transportation	655	2,503	690	14
Veterans Affairs	318	828	324	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,174</b>	<b>239,674</b>	<b>17,059</b>	<b>607</b>

**Column 2** - the total number of vacant full-time positions in the agency filled during fiscal year 2017. Only unlimited positions (an appointment for which there is no specified max duration) in cabinet agencies.

**Column 3** - the total number of applications received for positions identified in Column 2. This includes all agencies, boards and commissions.

**Column 4** - the total number of applicants identified in Column 3 who indicated veterans' preference status. This includes all agencies, boards and commissions.

**Column 5** - the total number of veterans hired under veteran's preference in cabinet agencies.

## A. All Applicants Compliance Tracking

Veterans are not a protected group under Minnesota statute, however the state continually monitors and recruits this group. The U.S. Census indicates that eight percent of the Minnesota workforce self-identify as veterans. For the State of Minnesota to reflect its demographics, the state identified a goal of eight percent for the state workforce. Veterans represent 10 percent of all state employees (8.3 percent of cabinet-level agencies). In FY 2017 almost nine percent of all hires were veterans. The representation of veterans is not in a sustainable cycle. This means the representation of veterans will continue to decrease if its representation of veteran applicants and new hires does not increase to a minimum 13 percent.

**Chart 1 All Veteran Applicants, Hires, Employees compared to FY 2017 Goal**

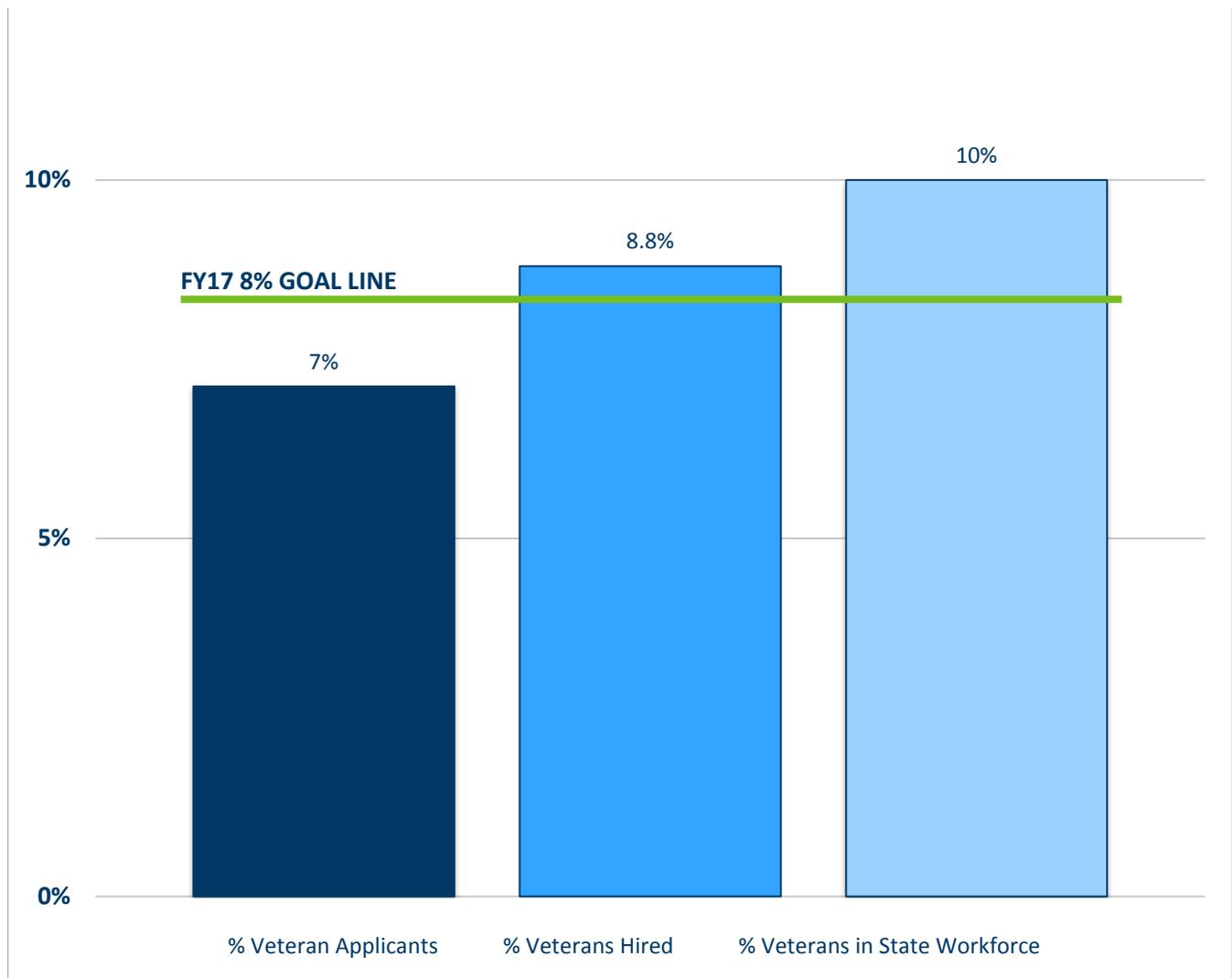


Chart 1 includes all agencies boards and commissions

## B. Veterans Hired in State Government

Table 3 shows a summary of veterans hired for positions in state government cabinet-level agencies between fiscal years 2010-2017. Key points:

- Since fiscal year 2010 the cabinet-level agencies have hired over 2500 veterans into unlimited positions (an unlimited employee is an employee who is appointed with no definite ending date).
- About nine percent of new hires are veterans as of fiscal year 2017.

**Table 3 Veterans Hired in State of Minnesota Government at Cabinet-Level Agencies Fiscal Year 2010-17**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Number of Full-Time Vacancies Filled</b>	<b>Number of Veterans Hired</b>	<b>% Veterans in State Workforce</b>
2010	2,440	217	8.9%
2011	2,500	251	10%
2012	3,458	321	9.3%
2013	3,741	331	8.8%
2014	4,402	359	8.2%
2015	3,807	314	8.2%
2016	4,177	374	9%
2017	6,871	607	8.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>31,396</b>	<b>2,774</b>	<b>8.8%</b>

# Veteran-Focused Initiatives, Programs, and Services

## Statewide Veteran Programs and Services

The following section includes programs available to Minnesota veterans. Many of the services listed involve collaboration between state or federal agencies and the Legislature, veteran advocacy organizations, and private companies.

### Commanders Task Force

The Minnesota Commanders Task Force is comprised of elected Commanders and Adjutants of nine congressionally-chartered Veterans Service Organizations in the state of Minnesota. The key functions of this group include developing a united veterans legislative agenda and actively advocating for it before the state and elected officials, serving as a non-partisan advisory group to the commissioner of Veterans Affairs, the governor and legislators on veteran issues in the state, and working to form Veteran Service Organization partnerships in program development.

### Department of Natural Resources Licensing

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources provides special privileges to veterans for hunting licenses, firearm safety training, fishing licenses, state park vehicle permits, and the Minnesota Conservation Volunteer magazine. For example: free deer hunting licenses; hunt small game without license privileges; and free annual Minnesota state park permits.

### Department of Natural Resources-Specific Programs

The Department of Natural Resources created "Nature, it's good for you" an outdoor treatment/therapy program for veterans returning from active duty. Activities include veteran hunting and fishing appreciation and mentorship events.

The Department of Natural Resources also provided cell phones for employees who are deployed and their family members to stay in contact during deployment.

### Military Service; Retirement Pension and Pay

To the extent included in federal taxable income, compensation received from a pension or other retirement pay from the federal government for service in the military, as computed under United States Code, title 10, sections 1401 to 1414, 1447 to 1455, and 12733, is a subtraction. The subtraction must not include any amount used to claim the credit allowed under section 290.0677.

### Military Tax Related Benefits

The Minnesota Department of Revenue provides tax credits and tax relief for current, retired, and disabled military service members. Credit and tax relief includes the Active-duty military pay subtraction, 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, and market value exclusion on homesteads of disabled veterans.

## **Minnesota Association of County Veterans Service Officers**

The Minnesota Association of County Veterans Service Officers works collaboratively with the Minnesota Department of Veteran Affairs and nationally chartered veterans service organizations in promoting the interests and welfare of veterans, their families, and survivors. Their focus is to enhance the quality of their lives through advising, counseling, claims assistance, education, advocacy, and special programs. All services aim to ensure that veterans, their families, and survivors receive all of the benefits and services so well deserved for the hardships they have endured.

## **Minnesota GI Bill**

The Minnesota GI Bill program provides postsecondary educational assistance to eligible Minnesota Veterans, non-veterans who served in the military and eligible spouses and children. Full-time undergraduate or graduate students may be eligible to receive up to \$1,000 per semester and part-time students can receive up to \$500 per semester (up to \$3,000 per academic year and \$10,000 per lifetime). Eligible veterans may also receive [OJT and Apprenticeship funds](#) up to \$2,000 per fiscal year for either program.

## **Office of Equity in Procurement and the Governor's Diversity and Inclusion Efforts**

The Department of Administration's Office of Equity in Procurement was established to improve the state's spending with targeted business to make Minnesota state government more accessible to all Minnesotans. The Governor's diversity and inclusion initiative used proven strategies to increase in veteran owned business spending by 275 percent, from \$1,824,015 to \$6,839,966. The State of Minnesota took several strategies to make Minnesota government more accessible including:

1. Improving the tracking of targeted businesses.
2. Tracking sub-contractor diversity to provide stronger goals for sub-contracting partners.
3. Streamlining the certification process to ensure targeted businesses meet the criteria for targeted spending
4. Training for purchasing agents to look for practical ways to include diverse businesses in their supply chain; more opportunities for targeted businesses
5. Enhancing outreach efforts.

## **On Your feet!**

On your feet! provides support to veterans after completing a prison sentence. The goal is to see that veterans make a smooth transition into their community after incarceration. Small groups of volunteers provide intensive support and accountability to veterans.

## **StandDown Minnesota**

The Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans holds StandDown events that serve homeless and near-homeless veterans by providing services to help these former soldiers get their lives back on track. Hundreds of volunteers

work at the events 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 goal is to bring many services to one location and make them more accessible to all veterans who otherwise may not seek out services.

### **Transition Resource Fairs**

The Minnesota Department of Corrections hosts onsite facility transition fairs for veteran offenders. The transition fair presents opportunities for offenders with 18 months or less to serve. The goal is to provide contacts and resources for offenders in housing, halfway houses, transportation, employment, training and support, and a variety of community resources among the exhibitors. Hundreds of offenders at the host facility are invited to attend. These events are designed to provide veteran offenders who are transitioning back into the community with as many valuable resources to assist them with successful reentry. Resources are provided in conjunction with other state agencies such as Department of Human Services who advertises a three week work readiness training for people with criminal histories.

### **Transition Coalition**

The Minnesota Department of Corrections partners with nonprofit agencies to provide support for veteran offenders re-entering the community after incarceration and treatment. The coalition produces an electronic newsletter which contains information related to facility transition fairs, training announcements, grants and contract requests for proposals and other reentry program networking opportunities.

### **Veterans Employment Services**

Veterans Employment Representatives are located at the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development's Workforce Centers around the state and are available to work one-on-one with service members in their job search. The individualized assistance includes help with resumes, interviewing skills, networking techniques, referrals to other veteran services, and assistance connecting with employers.

### **Veterans Business Program**

Minnesota Department of Transportation's Veterans Business Program provides verified veteran-owned small businesses with increased access to state contracting opportunities.

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

The Minnesota Department of Revenue provides free assistance with filing their state income and property tax returns. Veterans (and other selected groups) can access this service from over 300 sites across Minnesota.

### **Veteran and Service Members Appreciation Month (VSAM)**

A statewide campaign to acknowledge, support and extend appreciation to our veterans, service members, employees, and fallen heroes throughout the month of November. VSAM activities were planned as a part of the state's efforts to acknowledge current veterans and active service members currently working for the state, and also to recruit more veterans and active service members to consider a job with the state. VSAM activities include: a governor's proclamation; volunteer days at multiple sites throughout the state; and agency poster

campaign; a community breakfast; a veteran's day ceremony; a military spirit week; an appreciation week; and a challenge coin ceremony and challenge coin distribution. All of this work was geared to be an extension of the governor's commitment toward increasing diversity and inclusion for the state employee population, which includes veterans.

## **State Resources Dedicated to Veteran Support**

The state also has veteran-focused positions responsible for supporting veterans as they reintegrate back into civilian life and the workforce. These positions are typically employed at the Minnesota Department of Veteran Affairs, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, Minnesota Department of Military Affairs, and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. In addition, all state agencies have personnel that assist veterans, many agencies also have websites dedicated to veteran information, resources, and services.

### **Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Staff**

The mission of this entire agency's workforce is charged with assisting Minnesota's veterans and their families to obtain their rightful benefits and services. Some of the veteran specific classifications include: Veterans Assistance Coordinators and Veterans Claims Representatives.

The agency also has employees who conduct outreach activities and assist veterans in need. This is accomplished by going to the homes of veterans, relatives, and friends. In addition, there is a division whose mission is to serve American Indians who are part of native tribes and are eligible for veteran's benefits. Division staff assist them with the application process to obtain these benefits.

### **Minnesota Department of Military Affairs**

The Minnesota Department of Military Affairs is also known as the Minnesota National Guard. The agency provides leadership, resources, and support to the Nation Guard. The Minnesota National Guard has more than 11,000 soldiers and over 2,000 airmen. More than 400 National Guard soldiers and Airmen are deployed to multiple locations.

### **Attorney General's Veterans Assistance Unit**

The Minnesota Attorney General's Office provides assistance to veterans and service members. If a veteran, service member, or a member of their family is experiencing difficulty with veteran's benefits, TRICARE benefits, credit issues, home mortgage, identity theft, or another consumer related matter, this can help. Contact 651-296-3353 or 1-800-657-3787 for free information about voluntary mediation services to help resolve problems.

### **Veterans Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans Outreach Representatives**

The responsibilities of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development's Veterans Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans Outreach Representative positions include:

- Identify veterans interested in working for 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.
- Outreach to veteran organizations and advocates such as the County Veteran Service Officer, VFW, American Legions, and Disabled American Veterans to promote state employment.
- Outreach to veteran-focused minority and disability organizations.
- Assist veterans and their families with housing, health, or other issues.

## Higher Education Veteran Program Coordinators

Help connect veterans with educational benefits and resources to be successful in college. Onsite assistance is given to military members and their families at colleges and universities. The idea is to assist veterans in removing barriers to enrollment and access to benefits.

Coordinators work with the Minnesota State campuses 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.
- Provide information about veteran services, military education benefits and financial resources, scholarships, and veteran and family support activities.
- Provide training for campus staff related to veteran issues and concerns.
- Obtain feedback from veterans and work to remove barriers to services.
- Provide veteran-friendly policies and procedures.
- Organize and provide training on veterans issues.
- Meet with guard units and their families prior to deployment and provide information about education benefits they earn while deployed.

## State Agency Human Resource and Labor Relations Staff

State agency human resources and labor relations staff must be knowledgeable about applicable veteran laws to ensure agency compliance. This includes laws related to veteran's preference, noncompetitive appointments of certain disabled veterans, veteran's preference hearings, FMLA and military personnel, and Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA).

# Recruitment, Partnerships, and Outreach Activities

State agencies and Minnesota State are proactive in their veteran-focused recruitment, partnerships, and outreach activities. Representatives of state agencies attend key veteran job fairs and conferences, and build relationships with veteran organizations and advocates, who in turn, promote state employment to their veteran clients. The goal of these efforts is to promote the state as a veteran-friendly employer and increase employment opportunities for veterans in state government.

## 1. Recruitment

In fiscal year 2017, state agencies engaged in the following veteran-focused recruitment activities:

### Hire our Heroes Job Fair

Event includes job seeker workshops on interview skills, resume writing, and prepping short introductions. They also include workshops, training, and seminars for human resources staff and military personnel. The primary targets are service members, veterans, reservists, guardsmen, military spouses, and Recently Separated Veterans.

### Veteran Networking Job Club

The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development hosts seven Veteran Networking Job Clubs at their workforce centers. These groups meet regularly to discuss veteran employment efforts, provide support, share job leads and improve job seeking skills.

### 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.

### Veterans’ Support Group presentations

Employee-veterans and recruiters from the Minnesota Department of Corrections gave presentations at workforce centers in the metro area about their careers in Corrections.

### Interview Accommodations

State agencies follow the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Right Act (USERRA) guidelines to provide job interviews to deployed soldiers using a variety of telecommunication tools.

### “Hire Vets First” Veterans Career Fair

This annual career fair is the largest single day recruiting event in the Midwest with 140 businesses and over 1,000 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.

### **The Military.com Career Expo**

Military.com hosts a large job board for veterans and military-friendly employers and sponsors numerous career expos across the country giving employers and veterans an opportunity to meet face to face to discuss job opportunities.

### **Twin Cities Business 2017 Veterans Forum**

The Twin Cities Business 2017 Veterans Forum is a panel discussion that explores why so many veterans are still unemployed, what's being done about it, and why veterans perform better than most other employees once they're hired.

### **Veterans CONNECT Virtual Job Fair**

Virtual Job Fair is the leading online recruitment exhibition. It's designed to bring employers and job seekers together to exchange valuable information for recruitment purposes and to explore potential fits.

## **2. Partnerships**

### **Examples of organizations that state agencies work with to support veterans:**

- American Gulf War Veterans Association
- American Legion
- Army National Guard
- Beyond the Yellow Ribbon
- County Serves Veteran Officers (CSVO)
- DEED Disabled Veterans Outreach Representatives
- DEED Veterans Employment Representatives
- Disabled American Veterans (DAV)
- Employment Action Centers
- Goodwill Easter Seals Military Services
- Higher Education Veterans Programs Campus Coordinators
- Local Chambers of Commerce
- Lions Club
- MN Assistance Council for Veterans (MAVC)
- MN Attorney General's Veterans Assistance Unit
- MN Community Advisors on Recruitment and Retention Solutions (MnCARRS)
- MN Department of Military Affairs
- MN Department of Veterans Affairs
- MN Rotary Clubs
- MN VA Hospitals
- Serviceman's Club
- Student Veterans of America (SVA)
- US Department of Veteran Affairs
- Vietnam Veterans of America
- Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
- VITAL Program

### **3. Outreach**

#### **Helping Women Veterans Find Careers**

These Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development Veterans Employment Representative at the Ramsey County-St. Paul Work Force Center is intensely networking to help female veterans in the metro area get back on their feet. The Minnesota Department of Veteran Affairs and the Minneapolis American Indian Center are working together to assist female veterans to navigate through the many programs and services available to them.

#### **Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans**

The Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV) is a nonprofit organization that assists veterans experiencing homelessness or other life crises with transitional and permanent housing. They work with the Department of Corrections' Sentencing to Serve Program, a program that allows carefully selected non-violent offenders to work on community improvement projects. The Sentencing to Serve crews assists with lawn care and snow shoveling at resident housing for veterans and their families in both the Twin Cities and Duluth areas.

#### **Minnesota Department of Military Affairs**

The Director of Military Outreach from Military Affairs and the Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Deployment Cycle Support Team partner on the following initiatives:

- Identify and track unemployed veterans and connect them with local, state, and federal resources to assist the veteran with employment.
- Share best practices of veteran recruitment strategies with employers.
- Connect veterans with higher education resources.
- Provide training to veterans in resume writing, interviewing, and networking.
- Promote the use of Workforce Centers and Veteran Employment Representatives.
- Conduct outreach to local Rotary Clubs, Chamber of Commerce, and other business organizations to promote veteran employment.

# Targeted Veteran Advertising

## Helmets to Hardhats

This online resource allows employers to both post opportunities and also to view the resumes of veterans registered with the site.

## Veteran Specific Posters

The Minnesota Department of Corrections created recruitment posters which target veterans for employment. These posters are placed at Workforce Centers and locations where the National Guard conduct drills.

## Job Promotion

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

- [AbilityLinks](#)
- [Army ROTC](#)
- [BeyondTheYellowRibbon.org](#)
- [County Veteran Service Officer \(CVSO\)](#)
- [Career One Stop](#)
- [Disabled American Veterans \(DAV\)](#)
- [DEED Veterans Employment Office](#)
- [Disabled Veterans Rest Camp](#)
- [Duluth Veteran Center](#)
- [Employer Partnership of the Armed Forces](#)
- [Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve](#)
- [Employment Action Center \(EAC\)](#)
- [GI Jobs Magazine](#)
- [Goodwill Easter Seals Military Services](#)
- [Higher Education Veteran Resource Centers](#)
- [JobsinMinneapolis.com](#)
- [Military.com](#)
- [MilitaryVetJobs.com](#)
- [MinnesotaDiversity.com](#)
- [MinnesotaJobs.com](#)
- [MinnesotaWorks.net](#)
- [MN Assistance Council for Veterans](#)
- [MN Army and Air National Guard](#)
- [MN Department of Veteran Affairs \(MDVA\)\\*](#)
- [MN DFL Veterans Caucus](#)
- [MNSCU CAREERwise Education](#)
- [Navy and Marine Reserves](#)
- [National Association of Veterans Upward Bound \(NAVUB\)](#)
- [Northland College Military Veteran Services](#)
- [TalentLEAD](#)
- [Veteran Journal Magazine](#)
- [Veterans of Foreign Wars \(VFW\)](#)
- [US Department of Veteran Affairs](#)
- [Wounded Warriors](#)
- [Indeed](#)
- [MN.IT Resources](#)
- [Minnesota Department of Education Veteran Resources for Military Families](#)
- [MN Board of AELSLAGID](#)

**\*Most cited resource by state agencies.**

## Retention, 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:

- Pre-deployment:
  - Meet with the employees to discuss how the agency can best stay connected with them and their families.
  - Ask the employee to designate a representative who can legally interact with the state agency on their behalf.
  - Discussion on benefits, human resources policies, leave time, etc.
  - FMLA training.
- During deployment:
  - Hold positions for deployed employees.
  - Encourage employees to return to their positions after deployment.
  - Ensure agency employees informed about their deployed co-workers using agency newsletter and intranet sites when given privacy authorization.
- Post-deployment:
  - Conduct “Welcome Back” recognition events for deployed employees upon return.
  - Give appreciation awards for special recognition to veteran employees.
  - Develop individualized soldier return to work plans or supplementary training for smooth transition back to work.
  - Grant additional time off for reintegration, if requested.
  - Provide information and resources about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and other related programs such as the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to both supervisors and returning veterans.

State agencies shared accounts of their support for their deployed employee and their families. The following are examples of those state agencies’ support efforts:

- Provide lawn mowing and snow removal at supportive housing for veterans.
- Collect donations of food, gifts, and gift cards for the families of deployed employees to assist with living expenses and to provide for them during the holiday season.
- Send deployed employees care packages including holiday gifts, homemade knitted caps, personal products, and letters with photos.
- DNR Licensing – special privileges for veterans.
- 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 Minnesota Zoo hosts an annual Military Family Week event providing special discounts for military personnel and their families.

## Training

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

Training included:

- Reintegration training for leadership staff and the returning deployed employees regarding smooth transitions back into the civilian workforce.
- Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Act (USERRA) training to outline the responsibilities of the employer and the rights and benefits awarded to veteran employees.
- Specific applications of the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to deployed state employees and military family members.
- Post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, and suicide prevention sessions for veteran counselors and coordinators at Minnesota State campuses.
- Recently separated veteran interview law training.
- Minnesota Veterans' Preference Act (VPA).
- Recently Separated Veteran Interview Law.
- Noncompetitive Appointment of Certain Disabled veterans and Veteran Preference Act Training.
- Emotional Effects of Deployment Cycles.
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder/Traumatic Brain Injury.
- Suicide prevention training for veterans by counselors and coordinators.
- Resilience, Risk Reduction, and Suicide Prevention (R3SP).

## Veteran-Focused Legislation

Each year MMB works to ensure state agencies are informed of and practice Minnesota's veteran-focused state laws. MMB communicates new or updated legislation and agencies are expected to adjust agency policies and practices to support the legislation. Reviewing these policies annually provides an opportunity to check in on the progress of our veteran-focused initiatives. Following are the changes we monitored in fiscal year 2017.

### MS 197.46

The Veterans Preference Act was amended to change the time period for a veteran to request a termination hearing from 60 to 30 days. It also provides for an arbitrator to preside over the hearing rather than a three person panel. Finally, it clarifies the situations in which the veteran may be entitled to attorney fees.

### New Legislation 2017

#### State Government Finance Bill: Chapter 4—S.F., 2017 1st Special Session

A set of laws, policies, and projects related to Veterans in Minnesota that were enacted during the 2017 Legislative Session. The Governor approved all of the following:

- Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) Agency Funding: Approximately \$150 million was appropriated for agency operations: Central office, Programs and Services, and Veterans Health Care/Veterans Homes.
- New Minnesota Veterans Cemetery - Duluth Operations: An increase of \$1 million to MDVA funding for operations of the new state Veteran's cemetery in Duluth. This will be the third state operated Veterans cemetery after Little Falls and Preston.
- Minnesota GI Bill Expanded Uses: Eligible recipients may now use the MN GI Bill to pay for items such as testing, licensure and certifications. In addition, changes to the timing and permissible per-year total expenditures for apprenticeship and on-the-job training will allow increased flexibility for recipients.
- Veterans Journey Home: One-time grant funding of \$700,000 to be used to support the development of new or rehabilitated affordable housing dedicated for low-to-moderate income Veterans and their families.
- Veterans Defense Project: One-time grant funding of \$500,000 which must be used to support, through education and outreach, Veterans who are involved with the criminal justice system. Grant funds to be administered by the Minnesota Humanities Center.
- Veterans Benefits Services Notification ('Disclosure Statement'): Minnesota now requires that private providers of Veterans benefits services include language in their representation agreements and advertising that informs Veterans of existing Veteran benefit service assistance offered at no charge through VSO's, CVSO's and MDVA. Does not preclude those private providers from representing those seeking Veterans Benefits services or otherwise limit their ability to continue to provide services.

## **Legacy Finance Bill: H.F. 707, 2017 Regular Session**

A set of laws, policies, and projects related to Veterans in Minnesota that were enacted during the 2017 Legislative Session. The Governor approved all of the following:

- Medal of Honor Memorial: \$250,000 to aid in the construction of a memorial to Minnesota Medal of Honor recipients on the grounds of the capitol. The funds will be available once matching funds have been raised through non-state donations.
- Veterans Voices: \$200,000 to the Minnesota Humanities Center for their Veterans focused programming.
- Vietnam: Minnesota Remembers: \$650,000 grant to Twin Cities Public Television to produce content telling the stories of Minnesota's Vietnam Veterans.
- Camp Legionville: \$222,000 for programming for youth, veterans, and the public related to Minnesota's cultural, historical, and recreational activities.
- Big Marine Lake Veterans Rest Camp: \$278,000 to develop and build a welcome center that supports the mission, programs and safety of the Veterans Rest Camp in Big Marine Lake.
- Rice County Veterans Memorial: \$30,000 complete the Rice County Veterans Memorial in Faribault. This is in addition to the \$30,000 from the bonding bill.
- Waseca County Veterans Memorial: \$50,000 to Waseca County to complete the Waseca County Veterans Memorial.

## **Jobs and Economic Growth Bill: Chapter 94 -- S.F. 1456, 2017 Regular Session**

Helmets to Hardhats: \$400,000 from the workforce development fund for grants to the Construction Careers Foundation.

## **Environment and Natural Resources Bill: Chapter 93 -- S.F. 844, 2017 Regular Session**

Disabled Veterans State Park Permit: A Veteran with proof any level of service-connected disability shall be issued a free annual park permit. Bear Hunt Raffle: If there is a limit for bear hunting permits in a certain area, first preference must be given to a resident of a Minnesota Veterans Home to obtain a permit.

## **Higher Education Bill: Chapter 89 -- S.F. 943, 2017 Regular Session**

Veterans-to-Agriculture: \$350,000 of renewed funding for a pilot program to facilitate the entrance of Veterans into careers related to agriculture and food production, processing, and distribution through intensive four to eight week academic trainings.

## **Tax Bill: Chapter 1 – H.F. 1, 2017 1ST Special Session**

Disabled Veteran Homestead Market Value Exclusion: Eliminated annual application; added the permissibility of retroactive application for surviving spouses/Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) recipients of eligible Veterans. Veterans' Service Organization Property Taxes: Reduced class rate to one percent.

## **Omnibus Capital Investment (Bonding) Bill: Chapter 8 -- H.F. 5, 2017 1st Special Session**

MVH-Minneapolis Historic Truss Bridge Repairs: \$7.851 million to repair the bridge that spans Minnehaha Creek and gives access to the campus at the Minnesota Veterans Home – Minneapolis. MDVA Asset preservation: \$5 million to repair critical infrastructure projects at Minnesota Veterans Homes throughout the state. Rice County Veterans Memorial: Another \$30,000 to aid non-state funding to finish a memorial in Faribault. This is in addition to the \$30,000 in money (mentioned above) from the Legacy bill.

## **Existing State Legislation that Supports Veterans**

### **MS 290.0132: Subd. 21. Military service pension; retirement pay**

This law provides detailed instructions on subtractions from individual federal income. Military service pension or retirement pay included in federal taxable income, compensation received from a pension or other retirement pay from the federal government for service in the military, is a subtraction. The subtraction must not include any amount used to claim the credit allowed under section [290.0677](#).

### **M.S. 1.05 Waiver of Immunity for Violations of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights (USERRA) Subd. 5.**

The Waiver of Immunity for Violations of Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights (USERRA) allows a current, former, or prospective state employee who is a veteran to file a civil suit against the state for alleged violations of USERRA.

### **M.S. 43A.09 Recruitment**

State Personnel Management: Recruitment statute requires MMB, in cooperation with appointing authorities of all state agencies, to emphasize recruitment of veterans in addition to protected group members to “assist state agencies in meeting affirmative action goals to achieve a balanced workforce.”

### **M.S. 43A.11 Veterans’ Preference**

The Minnesota Veterans’ Preference statute requires notification to state applicants that they may elect to use veterans’ preference. It requires that applicants who meet the minimum qualifications for a vacant position and claim disabled veterans’ preference be listed in the applicant pool ahead of all other applicants, and those claiming non-disabled veterans’ preference be listed ahead of non-veterans. It also provides this preference to spouses of deceased veterans or of disabled veterans who because of disability are unable to qualify. It also requires that 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, and requires that the top five recently separated veterans must be granted an interview for the position. Finally, it requires appointing authorities who reject a finalist who has claimed veterans’ preference to notify the finalist of the reasons for rejection.

### **M.S.43A.111 Noncompetitive Appointment of Certain Disabled Veterans**

The Noncompetitive Appointment of Certain Disabled Veterans statute allows state agencies to make noncompetitive appointments to classified positions for qualified disabled veterans with a verified service connected disability rating of at least 30 percent.

### **M.S. 43A.183 Military Pay Differential**

The Military Pay Differential Entitles eligible state employees in the reserve forces who report for active service to receive pay in the amount of the difference between their state salary and their military pay for up to four years, plus any additional time the employee may be legally required to serve.

### **M.S. 192.26 Paid Military Leave**

The Minnesota Paid Military Leave Statute explains that public employees are permitted to take a paid leave of absence for up to 15 days per calendar year for military duty. Public employers must allow employees called to active duty to choose when during the calendar year to take their 15 days of paid military leave.

### **M.S. 192.261 Military Leave of Absence**

The Minnesota Military Leave of Absence statute requires public employers to allow an employee to take a military leave of absence of up to four years without pay, plus any additional time the employee is legally required to serve, with rights to employment reinstatement. The provision applies to employees who take leave to engage in active military service during war or other declared emergency, “during convalescence for an injury or disease incurred during active service”, to engage in an initial period of active duty for training of not less than three consecutive months, or to perform active duty for training or inactive duty training.

### **M.S. 197.455 and 197.46 Veterans’ Preference Hearings**

Under the Minnesota Veterans’ Preference hearings, 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 before an arbitrator. The veteran has 30 days to petition for a hearing. Terminations may not be effected until after the veteran has exercised their right to a hearing or the 30 day timeline to petition has expired. Veterans remain in payroll status during the 30 day period. If the veteran chooses to appeal the termination decision, compensation continues until a final determination is made.

### **M.S. 364.03 Relation of Conviction to Employment or Occupation Subd.3.**

Under Minnesota Statute regarding the conviction to employment Persons cannot be disqualified from employment or pursuing, practicing, or engaging in occupations requiring licensure solely due to prior criminal convictions, unless the crime or crimes directly relate to the employment position or occupation licensure area. If the crime directly relates to the employment position or occupational licensure area, the person cannot be disqualified if he or she can show evidence of rehabilitation and present fitness to perform the duties. Evidence of rehabilitation includes United States Department of Defense form DD-214, a document indicating honorable discharge or separation under honorable conditions from military service.

## **M.S. 626.8517**

Minnesota's Statute on eligibility for reciprocity examination based on relevant military experience makes persons with relevant military experience eligible to take the peace officer licensure reciprocity examination. Persons in active duty service may take the peace officer exam, but are not eligible to become licensed peace officers until honorably discharged from military service.

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

Executive Order 10-13 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.