



January 17, 2013

The Honorable Tom Saxhaug, Chair
State Departments & Veterans Division
328 State Capitol
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Mary Murphy, Chair
House Government Finance & Veterans Affairs
443 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Kari Dziedzic, Vice chair
State Departments & Veterans Division
320 State Capitol
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The Honorable Jerry Newton, Vice Chair
House Government Finance & Veterans Affairs
575 State Office Building
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The Honorable Roger C. Chamberlain
Ranking Minority Member
State Departments & Veterans Division
129 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Bob Dettmer
Ranking Minority Member
House Government Finance & Veterans Affairs
279 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Veterans Report

Dear Senators and Representatives:

Article 3, Section 22, of Chapter 94 from the Session Laws of 2009 direct Minnesota Management & Budget to prepare the attached annual report and submit it to the chairs and ranking minority members of each of the Senate and House committees having responsibility for veteran policy and finance issues.

Questions regarding this report may be directed to john.pollard@state.mn.us or 651.201.8039.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Schowalter".

Jim Schowalter
Commissioner

c: Kevin Lundeen, Senate Fiscal Analyst
Bill Marx, House Fiscal Analyst
Eric Nauman, Senate Fiscal Analyst
Helen Roberts, House Fiscal Analyst

January 2013

Minnesota State Government Efforts to Employ and Support Veterans

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

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St. Paul, MN 55155

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Upon request, this document can be made available in alternate formats such as large print or braille or audio tape.

Questions about this report may be directed to (651) 201-8039

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STATE OF MINNESOTA

Office of Governor Mark Dayton

130 State Capitol • 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard • Saint Paul, MN 55155

January, 2013

Members of the Minnesota Legislature:

For more than 150 years, each generation of Minnesotans has answered the call to service in our Armed Forces. Today, more than 20,000 Minnesota men and women serve on active duty in the National Guard, the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, and Reserves. Currently, more than 400,000 veterans call Minnesota home. These heroes have put their lives on the line to make our communities stronger, America safer, and the world a better place. We owe them our thanks.

Minnesota veterans deserve more than our gratitude and support. They have earned the promise of a great education and the opportunity to find meaningful work.

State government has a responsibility to do all we can to help Minnesota veterans fulfill their dreams, and provide a better life for their families. This is why, as Governor, I have committed Minnesota to removing barriers to employment for Minnesota veterans. Our veterans as well as our economy have much to gain from these efforts.

Hiring veterans is one of the best investments a business or organization can make. Minnesota veterans have the skills employers seek, including leadership, intelligence, dedication, and loyalty. Our veterans are resourceful leaders with the capacity to produce results in the most difficult environments. They offer the energy and know-how our economy needs.

Despite Minnesota's economic challenges, my administration has connected thousands of hard-working veterans with meaningful employment over the last two years – in both state government and the private sector. Through new recruitment and retention efforts, strong relationships with veteran organizations and advocates, support for deployed soldiers and their families, a focus on hiring veterans in state government, and reintegration training, we are getting our veterans back to work, one soldier at a time.

We still have more work to do. And as long as I have the privilege of serving as your Governor, I will continue doing everything I can to support our veterans. I ask for your help and your ideas as we work to give all our heroes the promise of freedom and prosperity they have fought so selflessly to defend.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Dayton".

Mark Dayton
Governor

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Introduction

Minnesota's workforce is comprised of veterans in both the public and private sectors. To assess Minnesota state government'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 and any additional data deemed important by the commissioner. This document reports veteran activity for fiscal year 2012.

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

The Commissioner of Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) is required by Article 3, Section 22 of Chapter 94 from the Session Laws of 2009 to annually collect data on the number of veterans in state government and veteran information at various points in the state recruitment and selection process. This is collected from each cabinet-level agency. 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.

There were a number of veteran-related laws affecting state employment in the 2012 legislative session. These are summarized on page 4, but the highlights include:

- In addition to protected groups, all state agencies will emphasize recruitment of veterans in state employment.
- A current, former or prospective state employee, who is a veteran, is allowed to file a civil suit against the state for alleged violations of USERRA.
- The state and other government entities will allow unpaid leave of absence up to four years during convalescence for a medical condition incurred during active service, along with right to employment reinstatement.
- A new law was passed that allows state agencies to appoint certain disabled veterans to permanent state positions on a noncompetitive basis.
- Veterans must respond within 60 calendar days of notice of discharge with information identifying the veteran's representative for the three-person panel.

State law requires that the number of veterans among the state government cabinet-level agency workforce be reported to the legislature every year. Self-identification of veteran status is voluntary and employees are not legally required to provide this information. A self-service webpage is available for state employees to update their veteran status at any time.

According to fiscal year 2012 data, approximately 10% of the state government employees in cabinet-level agencies indicated they were veterans. By comparison, 6% of Minnesota's civilian labor force between the ages of 18 and 64 are veterans (*State Demographer Office, 2010 American Community Survey*).

Cabinet-level agencies hired 321 veterans into full-time unlimited positions in fiscal year 2012. This is an increase of 70 veterans over fiscal year 2011.

To promote the state as a veteran-friendly employer and to increase opportunities for veterans in state government during fiscal year 2012, state agencies conducted veteran-focused recruitment and retention activities; provided reintegration education and guidance; built partnerships with veteran organizations and advocates; provided support to their deployed military employees; and retained job classifications wherein the sole purpose is supporting veterans and in some cases must be filled by veterans. 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-Focused Legislation

New or Amended 2012 Legislation:

M.S. 43A.09 Recruitment

- Summary: Requires MMB, in cooperation with appointing authorities of all state agencies, to emphasize recruitment of veterans in addition to protected groups to “assist state agencies in meeting affirmative action goals to achieve a balanced work force.”

M.S. 1.05 Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights (USERRA)

- Subd. 5. Summary: Allows a current, former or prospective state employee who is a veteran to file a civil suit against the state for alleged violation(s) of USERRA.

M.S. 192.261 Leave of Absence

- Subd. 1. Summary: Requires the state or any political subdivision, municipal corporation, or other public agency of the state to allow an employee “during convalescence for an injury or disease incurred during active service” up to four years unpaid leave of absence to convalesce, along with a right to employment reinstatement.

43A.111 Noncompetitive Appointment of Certain Disabled Veterans

- Summary: Allows agencies to appoint qualified veterans with a verified service connected disability rating of at least 30% to classified positions on a noncompetitive basis.

M.S. 197.46 Veterans Preference Act; Removal Forbidden; Right of Mandamus (Amended)

- Requires that when certain government subdivisions notify an employee who is a veteran of intent to discharge the veteran from employment, the subdivision must state that the veteran has 60 days to identify and provide contact information about the person who will represent the veteran before a three-person board hearing the veteran’s complaint about the discharge. A failure of the veteran to provide the information within 60 days constitutes a waiver of the veteran’s right to the hearing and all other legal remedies available for reinstatement of the veteran’s employment position.

Existing Legislation:

43A.11 Veteran’s Preference

- **Subd. 7. Ranking of veterans**
Applicants who meet the minimum qualifications for a vacant position and claim veteran’s 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 veteran’s or disabled veteran’s 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: 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. 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. 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

- 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 collected from the state's personnel and payroll system. It is a snapshot of state employee data on December 13, 2011 (an approximate mid-point date in fiscal year 2012). The veteran information in **Table 2** is collected from the state's applicant tracking system and is applicant data from fiscal year 2012 (July 1, 2011, to June 30, 2012). 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% of state employees. The data in this report does not include the legislative branch, judicial branch, MnSCU, 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, a self-service webpage is available for state employees to update their veteran status at any time. 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, impacting the accuracy of this data.

Veterans in State of Minnesota Government Workforce - Table 1

Table 1 on the following page shows the distribution of veterans in the State of Minnesota executive branch cabinet-level agencies.

Key points:

- Approximately 10% of State of Minnesota government cabinet-level agency employees self-identified as veterans.
- Minnesota's civilian labor force between the ages of 18 and 64 indicate that 6% are veterans. Labor force means employed or available and actively seeking employment.
Source: State Demographer Office, 2010 American Community Survey.

TABLE 1**Veterans in the State of Minnesota Government Workforce*****December 13, 2011 – State Payroll System**

Cabinet-Level Agency Name	COLUMN 1	COLUMN 2	COLUMN 3
	Number of employees employed in FT positions	Number of employees self- identified as Veterans	Number of FT positions filled in FY 2011
Administration Dept	405	38	85
Agriculture Dept	392	22	107
Bureau of Mediation Services	10	1	1
Commerce Dept	319	30	81
Corrections Dept	4,006	585	799
Education Department	355	13	85
Employ & Econ Development Dept	1,463	121	316
Health Department	1,213	50	211
Housing Finance Agency	220	11	47
Human Rights Dept	32	2	15
Human Services Dept	4,190	266	685
Iron Range Resources & Rehab	54	4	7
Labor & Industry Department	436	41	68
Military Affairs Dept	277	95	80
Minnesota Management & Budget	207	11	56
Natural Resources Dept	2,041	117	580
Office of Enterprise Technology	1,944	183	67
Office of Higher Education	62	1	20
Pollution Control Agency	791	38	90
Public Safety Dept	1,790	217	260
Revenue Dept	1,443	67	573
Transportation Dept	4,410	561	904
Veterans Affairs Dept	517	104	109
TOTALS	26,577	2,578	5,246

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 13, 2011(*an approximate mid-point date in fiscal year 2012)*

Column 2 - the total number of employees identified in Column 1 who self-identified as 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 13, 2011*

Column 3 - the total number of vacant full-time positions in the agency filled by hiring or appointment for fiscal year 2012. *Includes Unlimited (an appointment for which there is no specified maximum duration) and Limited (e.g., temporary, emergency, seasonal, trainee, provisional).*

TABLE 2
Veteran Applicants for State Government Employment
Fiscal Year 2012 – State Applicant Tracking System

	COLUMN 1	COLUMN 2	COLUMN 3	COLUMN 4	COLUMN 5	COLUMN 6	COLUMN 7	COLUMN 8
Cabinet-Level Agency Name	FT Positions Filled	Total App Received	Veteran Applicant	Veterans meeting MQ's	Veterans Interview	Veterans Offered Jobs	Veterans Hired	Veteran Letter *
Administration Dept	52	3496	338	189	144	4	4	0
Agriculture Dept	73	1580	92	31	31	3	3	0
Commerce Dept	33	3020	282	230	177	7	7	67
Corrections Dept	348	10799	1123	562	506	44	44	411
Education Dept	63	4059	233	73	42	4	4	13
DEED	145	8768	933	603	376	17	17	31
Health Department	204	7300	439	175	169	5	5	345
Housing Finance	37	3877	246	200	68	1	1	0
Human Rights Dept	12	982	68	45	14	1	1	0
Human Services Dept	573	25200	1701	534	506	40	40	1401
Iron Range Resources	2	9	1	0	0	0	0	0
Labor & Industry Dept	76	3304	346	93	65	9	9	13
Office of Higher Educ	2	162	7	7	6	0	0	0
Military Affairs Dept	40	2067	622	455	368	18	16	48
Mn Mgmt & Budget	35	2580	170	111	48	4	4	0
Natural Resources	398	15485	876	250	190	21	20	479
Offc of Enterprise Tech	41	2002	228	116	100	4	4	2
Pollution Control	54	2158	138	65	65	1	1	5
Public Safety Dept	191	14461	1131	728	356	19	19	847
Revenue Dept	475	8348	518	353	337	23	23	1
Transportation Dept	528	18116	2061	796	686	72	71	636
Veteran Affairs	76	3588	803	475	417	31	28	417
TOTALS	3,458	141,381	12,356	6,091	4,671	328	321	4,716

Column 1 - the total number of vacant full-time positions in the agency filled during fiscal year 2012. *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 veteran's 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

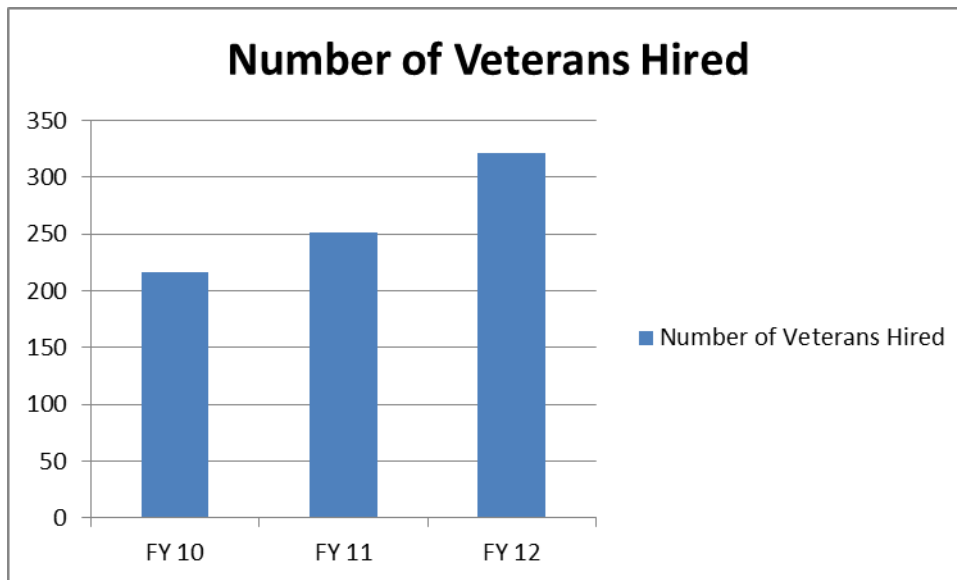
Column 8 - the total number of veteran applicants who were sent a rejection letter.

*43A.11 Subd. 9, 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.*

Veterans Hired in State of Minnesota Government

Number of veterans hired at the cabinet-level state agencies

Fiscal Year	Number of full time vacancies filled	Number of veterans hired	Percentage of full time vacancies filled by veterans
FY 12	3458	321	9.3%
FY 11	2500	251	10.0%
FY 10	2440	217	8.8%



Veteran-Focused Initiatives, Programs and Services

The following section includes programs available to Minnesota veterans. The services involved collaboration between state or federal agencies, or collaboration with veteran organizations/advocates, legislature, and private companies.

The following is a testimonial from a state employee who was a “guardian” on an Honor Flight.

Honor Flight Program

The Honor Flight program is a way of paying a small tribute to those who gave so much—a memorable, safe, and rewarding Tour of Honor. This program ensures that the WWII and Korean Veterans receive a free all-expense-paid trip to the Washington DC mall to view their memorials and to receive the “thank you” that they so deserve.

The Honor Flight that I participated in left from the Staples, MN high school in April 2012 and was organized by the Staples Host Lions. I was very fortunate to accompany my uncle who is a Korean War veteran on this trip along with 19 other veterans and volunteer “guardians” like me.

On the flight home, the veterans were surprised with a re-enactment of the military-style “mail call” announcement. Each veteran was presented with an envelope of letters written to them by friends and family. The staff from DOC wrote approximately 100 letters. What a highlight this was to see the pride and emotion these letters invoked. Those 40 hours were some of the most humbling and delightful hours I have ever spent...saying thank you to those who gave so much.

Upon return to my worksite, I was able to share the DVD collage of photos we had taken and to let our staff know how much their support meant to these Veterans.

- Kelley H. MN Dept. of Corrections-MCF-Willow River/Moose Lake

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 veterans issues in the state; and work to seek and form Veteran Service Organization partnerships in program development.

Dislocated Worker Program for Veterans

In November 2011, DEED's Minnesota Job Skills Partnership approved a \$1.5 million grant for a Veteran Dislocated Worker Program. This is the second and largest grant awarded through the Dislocated Worker program. DEED's Administration set aside budget to ensure that there would be money available for veterans. This program provides both employment services (career counseling, assessment, job placement services, education and training, and job development activities) to veterans. All returning Basic Combat Training (BCT) Soldiers are eligible for this program.

Disaster Relief Grants for Minnesota Veterans and their Families

As a result of flooding this year, the Minnesota Department of Veteran Affairs offered grants to veterans in certain MN counties for assistance funds of up to \$750.00. For more information contact your County Veteran Service Office (CVSO).

Support Programs for Incarcerated Veterans

MN DOC has developed ongoing partnerships to meet the needs of the state's veteran offenders who are being released. Veteran services are among the most impactful partnerships. Connection to veteran services and benefits upon release from a facility is extremely important to the success of the veteran.

- **In-Person Visits** - Veteran Representatives conduct in-person visits with veteran offenders while incarcerated. The representatives assist veterans by determining appropriate benefits and enrollment needs. The DOC and MDVA establish these linkages as early as possible.
- **Transition Resource Fairs at MN DOC correctional facilities** – The Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV) and MDVA, along with other government agencies, community non-profits, trade unions and faith-based organizations, participate in an annual transition resource fair for veteran and non-veteran offenders. Information and resources are provided in a variety of offender needs areas (housing, employment, family support, personal finance, and mental health).
- **Transition Coalitions** – Comprised of various organizations to discuss issues surrounding offenders and offers an opportunity for resource providers and government entities to work together. Veteran organizations such as MACV and DVA attend these meetings. Another benefit is that non-profit and faith-based community organizations learn about veteran's benefits and share this information with their veteran clients. Veteran organizations learn about valuable resources in the community and where there may be gaps in their services to veterans.
- ***On Your Feet!*** –A military veteran run circle process, tailored specifically with incarcerated military veterans in mind. *On Your Feet!* volunteers consist mostly of military veterans, as well as family members or spouses of veterans. A designated group of these volunteers provides support and accountability to the incarcerated veteran during

their first year of release. The group strives to connect the incarcerated military veteran with the programs and opportunities geared specifically for military veterans. This social support is crucial to the reentry process. While the program is in its infancy, it has assisted three veterans with this intensive circle process thus far.

Veteran Business Loan Program

DEED's Minnesota Reservist and Veteran Business Loan Program provides business loans to individual veterans who have returned from active duty and want to start their own business. The program provided outreach to 6,000 veterans returning from active deployment and encouraged use of small business assistance to start or stabilize a business. The program also dedicated \$23,400 to provide financial training scholarships for veterans to increase the likelihood that their businesses will thrive.

Minnesota GI Bill Program

The Minnesota GI Bill Program was established in 2007 to provide postsecondary financial assistance to eligible Minnesota veterans and service members who have served on or 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. Benefits extend to the spouse and child of deceased or permanently disabled eligible Minnesota veterans and service members.

Veterans Education Transfer System

This Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (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 MnSCU system. The transfer system currently identifies awardable credits for military training in four large occupational areas – law enforcement, diesel and truck mechanics, administrative and human resource assistants, and paramedics. For more information <http://www.mnscu.edu/media/newsreleases/current/article.php5?id=172>

MnSCU Veterans Upward Bound (VUB)

This program prepares veterans for college and offers free college prep and study skills courses. Veterans also receive career, personal, and financial aid counseling, enrollment assistance, GED preparation, and one-on-one tutoring. The program provides all books and supplies to students at no cost. <http://www.minneapolis.edu/trioprograms/veteransupwardbound/>

Veteran Workforce Programs / Veterans Employment Services

Veterans Employment Representatives are located at 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.

Campus Veteran Club

Some MnSCU campuses have a Veteran Club. The Veteran Club offers a place for veterans and their family and friends to gather for camaraderie and friendship. One goal is to make both the campus and the local community more aware of veteran issues.

Minnesota Stand-Down Events

These events serve homeless and near-homeless veterans by providing services that 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.

Military Tax-Related Benefits

The Minnesota Department of Revenue has tax credits and tax relief for current, retired and disabled military service members. 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 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 Management & Budget staff regularly attends these workshops to promote employment with the State of Minnesota.

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 [Human Services Programs for Returning Veterans](#)

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 hunting licenses; hunt small game

without a license privileges; and free annual Minnesota State Park permits.
<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 MN Department of Transportation encourages veterans to contact their County Veteran Service Officer (CVSO) to obtain the necessary documentation.

Veteran Resource Centers/Higher Education Veteran Programs

A Veteran Resource Center is located on each MnSCU campus. 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 staff provides 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 can meet with people who have had similar experiences and where their families are welcomed. This resource is a partnership between MnSCU and the Minnesota Department of Veteran Affairs.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)

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

Veterans Business Program - Department of Transportation

MnDOT's Veterans Business Program provides verified veteran-owned small businesses with increased access to state contracting opportunities.
<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/civilrights/veterans.html>

State Resources Dedicated to Veteran Support

The state also has veteran-focused positions responsible for supporting veterans as they reintegrate 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), MN Department of Military Affairs, and MnSCU. In addition, many state agencies have web sites dedicated to veteran information, resources and services.

Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Staff (MDVA)

The mission of this entire agency's workforce is charged with assisting Minnesota's 381,000 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 the veteran, 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 assists them with the application process to obtain these benefits.

Minnesota Department of Military Affairs (MDMA)

This agency provides leadership, resources, and support to the National Guard. The department's customer base is approximately 14,000 MN Army and Air National Guard members. Since 9/11, more than 25,000 service members from the Minnesota National Guard have answered the call to serve in harm's way. The greatest single number of deployed forces – nearly 3,100 Guardsmen and women – was on federal duty at one time in 2011. This is the largest number performing military missions outside of Minnesota at one time in the last decade. The department's staff includes 300 employees whose role is to support the guard members. *Source: Minnesota National Guard 2011 Annual Report and Objectives*

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.

Director of Military Outreach

This position is established in the Department of Military Affairs and partners with the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs. The incumbent works in program development and helps to ensure that programs and services provided to service members, veterans and military families work well together and are accessible. The mission is to improve access to resources and support, and to provide best practices to promote veteran recruitment and hiring.

Staff to Support the Red Bull 34th Division Brigade Combat Team

DEED hired an additional 2.5 veteran employment staff to specifically focus on providing assistance to the 34th Division Brigade Combat Team returning to Minnesota in May 2012. These state employees provided the veterans with intensive job search counseling and referral to state agencies and private businesses wanting to hire veterans. This was in support of a Minnesota Inter-Agency Employment Resource Team sent to Kuwait in March 2012 to work with returning soldiers. *Additional details about this program are in the Recruitment/Outreach section of this report.*

Veterans Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans Outreach Representatives

The responsibilities of the DEED Veterans Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans Outreach Representative (DVOP) 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.
- 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 veterans and their families with any housing, health or other issues.

Higher Education Veteran Program Coordinators

These MDVA positions 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 via on-campus Veterans Resource Centers. The 64 campus Veterans Resource Centers serve over 5,000 individuals 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.
- 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.
- Obtain feedback from veterans and work to remove barriers to services.
- Provide Veteran-Friendly policies and procedures.
- Organize and provide training on veteran 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 Relation Staff

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

Veteran Certifying Officials

Each MnSCU campus has a Certifying Official (CO) who helps veterans with their benefit paperwork and registration process. Certifying Officials also ensure that the veteran education programs are certified and the soldier receives the entitled benefits for those courses.

State Agency Veteran-Focused Web Sites

Many state agencies have web sites dedicated to veteran information, resources and services.

[MN Board of Accountancy](#) – Veterans taking the Uniform CPA exam may be eligible for reimbursement of up to \$2,000.

[Department of Commerce - Resources for Military Families](#) – Provides links to 32 organization and resources that help military families make informed financial decisions.

[Department of Human Rights - The Rights Stuff Forum for Minn Veterans](#) – Provides links to information on a range of state and federal protections for veterans and service members. Also includes viewpoints on the challenges facing our returning service members.

[MyMilitaryEducation.org](#) – Provides available information about education benefits and other related issues from a team of experienced advisors and counselors. The web site offers seven-days-a-week access to customer service staff through a toll-free phone line and online web chat.

[MyMilitary Career](#) – MnSCU CareerPlan site where veterans can find the tools needed to successfully explore career options.

[Minnesota Veteran One-Stop Website](#) – Provides Minnesota veterans, their families and employers a one-stop location for information about benefits, claims, outreach, higher education and veterans homes.

[Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs](#) – Provides information about federal and state veteran benefits.

[Minnesota Department of Military Affairs](#) – Minnesota National Guard Organization

[Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development Veterans Programs](#) – Provides staff information and resources to help all Minnesota military veterans (no matter their era of service) prepare for, find, and keep a job.

[Minnesota Department of Revenue](#) – Provides information about credits and tax relief for members of the military.

[Minnesota Department of Natural Resources](#) – Provides information for military personnel and veterans about hunting and fishing licenses, firearm safety training, etc.

[State of Minnesota Career Web - Veteran Information](#) – Provides information about employment with the State of Minnesota and veteran preference information.

[Minnesota Management & Budget](#) – Provides information for state employees who are veterans.

[Department of Transportation Veteran Preference Program](#) – Provides information for small businesses owners who are veterans regarding preference in the evaluation of their project proposals for state-funded project lead by Mn/DOT.

[Attorney General's Office](#) - A Guide for Military Service Personnel and Veterans
Provides a guide about state laws pertaining to employment, education, discrimination, motor vehicles, and public records.

[Minnesota Board of AELSLADID](#) – Provides reimbursement information of exam costs for licensing and certification.

[Department of Human Services](#) – Information about human services programs available for returning veterans.

[Department of Labor and Industry](#) – Provides an FAQ about apprenticeships for veterans.

[St. Paul Technical College Resource Center - Easing the Transition](#)

[Dakota County Technical College Veteran Resource Center](#)

[Hennepin Technical College Veteran Resource Center](#)

[Inver Hills CC Veteran Resource Center.](#)

[MN State University Mankato Veteran Resource Center](#)

[St. Cloud State University Veteran Resource Center](#)

Recruitment, Partnerships and Outreach Activities

State agencies and MnSCU 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. In addition, MMB provides veteran recruitment and educational outreach on behalf of all state agencies. The goal of these efforts is to promote the state as a Veteran-Friendly employer and increase employment opportunities for veterans in state government.

Veteran Outreach in Kuwait- DEED

The DEED research office staff surveyed National Guard members in Kuwait to assess their employment options after their deployment ended. Approximately 550 out of 2,700 deployed soldiers indicated they would need employment upon return to Minnesota. This is a 20% unemployment rate for the returning soldiers.

DEED Veteran Employment Representatives helped form a multi-agency Employment Resource Team that traveled to Kuwait in March 2012 to provide workshops and job search assistance to the soldiers who would return unemployed. The team conducted workshops for 1,080 soldiers at three Army camps in Kuwait. There were six workshops per day, which included working one-on-one with soldiers on resume development, mock interviews and networking techniques. In addition, the DEED staff promoted employment with the State of Minnesota and provided information about the state hiring process.

Progress: By September 2012, of the 2,700 soldiers returning from Kuwait in May, only 78 (3%) are still unemployed. This was a reduction in unemployment of the soldiers from 20% down to 3% in just four months.

Building Partnerships and Conducting Outreach

Examples of organizations state agencies work with to support veterans:

- Minnesota V.A. Hospitals
- U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs
- Minnesota Department of Veteran Affairs
- DEED Veteran Employment Representatives
- MN Society of Human Resource Mgrs. (SHRM)
- Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Comm.
- Veterans Service Organizations
- County Service Veteran Officers
- Local Chambers of Commerce
- MN Rotary Clubs

- **Leaders in Veteran Employment Seminars**

These seminars are for public and private sector HR professionals, hiring managers, admissions/career counselors, front line supervisors and others who have direct interaction with veterans. The focus is the skills veterans offer and the obstacles and barriers they face. The goal is to recruit, hire and retrain veteran employees. Partnership of MDVA, DEED, MDMA, and Secretary of State Ritchie.

- **Director of Military Outreach / Yellow Ribbon Company Best Practice Seminar**
The Director of Military Outreach facilitated a seminar with Yellow Ribbon Companies to share best practices for recruiting, hiring and retaining veterans.
- **Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV)**
The DOC Sentencing to Service crew partner with the MACV (a non-profit organization that assists MN Veterans with transitional and permanent housing) to assist veterans. The Sentencing to Service team assists with lawn care and snow shoveling at MACV resident housing for veterans and families in both the Twin Cities and Duluth.
- **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 Reps
 - Conduct outreach to Mn Rotary Clubs, Chamber of Commerce, and other business organizations to promote veteran employment

Recruitment

State agencies attended or conducted the following veteran-focused activities:

- **Veteran Specific Posters**
Department of Correction created recruitment posters that target veterans for employment. These posters are placed at WorkForce Centers and locations where National Guard conduct drills.
- **Hiring Our Heroes Job Fair**
Job fairs were held in the Twin Cities and Rochester. These events focused on veteran job seekers, active duty military members, guard and reserve members, and veteran spouses.
- **Northern Minnesota Veterans Job Fair in Detroit Lakes**
Focusing on veterans actively looking for jobs, currently employed, or interested in exploring new careers. Veterans of all eras were encouraged to attend this event.
- **“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 1200 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 DEED.

- **Camp Ripley Biennial Open House**
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 Camp Ripley. State agency staff attends the open house to show their support for veterans and share information with the attendees.
- **The Military.com Career Expo**
Military.com hosts the largest Veteran Job Board and sponsors numerous career expos across the country giving employers and veterans an opportunity to meet face to face to discuss job opportunities.
- **Veteran Networking Job Club**
DEED hosts 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.
- **Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Workshop**
MMB is an ongoing 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 veteran 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.

Targeted Veteran Advertising

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

- DEED Veterans Employment Office
- Disabled Veterans Rest Camp
- Duluth Veteran Center
- MN Assistance Council for Veterans
- Veteran Journal Magazine
- Minnesota Military Resources Website
- Minnesota National Guard
- Minnesota Veterans Homes
- Navy and Marine Reserves
- Employment Action Center (EAC)
- Jobs for Veterans
- Beyond the Yellow Ribbon.org
- Employer Partnership of the Armed Forces
- U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs
- Minnesota Army and Air National Guard
- Veterans for Peace, Minnesota
- St Paul Veterans Resource Center
- MN Department of Veteran Affairs
- Northland College Military Veteran services

- Army ROTC
- GI Jobs Magazine
- Military.com
- DFL Veterans Caucus
- National Association Veterans Upward Bound (NAVUB)
- MN Workforce Centers
- Employer Support of the Guard & Reserve

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 that 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.

We have an employee who has been deployed since 2010. We communicate with our deployed employee every other week and have had several discussions regarding his transition plan for when he returns to work. Minn. Department of Commerce

One of our deployed employees was interviewed while on active duty and was promoted to a supervisory position upon his return from military leave. Minn. Department of Health

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 recognition to veteran employees.
- Provide ongoing 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.
- Inform agency employees and co-workers about deployed employees through agency newsletters and intranet sites that highlight the soldier.
- 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 to work after deployment.

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

- Provided ongoing communication between employees and deployed employees and their families through emails, letters, and photos.
- Provided a \$100.00 gift card to the family of a deployed employee to help with daily living expenses.

- Provided holiday food and gifts to families of deployed employees. Collected clothing and food donations for the family.
- Sent deployed employees care packages that included personal products, holiday presents, knitted caps, photos, and letters.
- Co-workers supported deployed soldier's families by volunteering to babysit, provide house maintenance services, and stock firewood.
- Agency HR staff served 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.

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 knowledge of applicable veteran laws and are in compliance with these laws.

- 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 "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 consultation, training and information to state supervisors, managers, and human resources staff regarding veteran preference, veteran interview law, veteran preference hearings and non-competitive hiring of certain disabled veterans.
- Provide Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), The Emotional effects of Deployment Cycles, and How to be a Veteran Friendly School. In addition, some MnSCU campuses provide Suicide Prevention Training for counselors and Veteran Coordinators.
- 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>.

Awards and Acknowledgments

GI Jobs Magazine Military Friendly Schools Award

Each year, GI Jobs Magazine honors the top 15 percent of colleges, university and trade schools across the nation that are doing the most to embrace America's military students and ensure their success on campus. The 2012 Military Friendly Schools list was compiled through extensive research and study of more than 12,000 schools nationwide. The 1,700 schools on this year's list prioritize the recruitment of students with military experience.

These schools made the grade by offering scholarships, veteran clubs, full-time staff, military credit, and other services to veteran students. This award is a reflection on the dedication of a school's staff and faculty to our country's veterans.

The following MnSCU schools received the GI Jobs Military Friendly Schools Award:

- Alexandria Technical & Community College
- Anoka Technical School
- Anoka-Ramsey Community College
- Bemidji State University
- Central Lakes College
- Century Community College
- Dakota County Technical College
- Hennepin Technical College
- Hibbing Community College
- Inver Hills Community College
- Lake Superior College
- Mesabi Range Community and Technical College
- Minneapolis Community and Technical College
- Minnesota State College – Southeast
- Minnesota State Community and Technical College
- Minnesota State University, Mankato
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College
- Normandale Community College
- North Hennepin Community College
- Northland Community and Technical College
- Northwest Technical College
- Pine Technical College
- Rainy River Community College
- Ridgewater College

- Riverland Community College
 - Rochester Community and Technical College
 - Saint Cloud Technical and Community College
 - Saint Paul College
 - South Central College
 - St. Cloud State University
-

Proclaimed Yellow Ribbon Companies

A Yellow Ribbon Company unites all key areas (recruiting, policy and procedure, training and development, community and employee outreach/support) within a company structure to create a broad network that connects and coordinates these areas throughout the company for the purpose of proactively supporting Veterans and military families.

These companies' efforts demonstrate a public business commitment to supporting military employees and local communities resulting in enhancing their public image and building a stronger, more compassionate workplace. The following schools have been proclaimed as Yellow Ribbon Companies.

- Dakota County Technical College
- Hennepin Technical College
- Inver Hills Community College
- Minnesota State College and Universities
- Rochester Community and Technical College
- South Central College
- St. Cloud State University

Conclusion

There were a number of veteran-related laws affecting state employment in the 2012 legislative session. These are:

- In addition to protected groups, all state agencies will emphasize recruitment of veterans in state employment.
- A current, former or prospective state employee, who is a veteran, is allowed to file a civil suit against the state for alleged violations of USERRA.
- The state and other government entities will allow unpaid leave of absence up to four years during convalescence for a medical condition incurred during active service, along with right to reinstatement.
- A new law was passed that allows state agencies to appoint certain disabled veterans on a noncompetitive basis.
- Veterans must respond within 60 calendar days of notice of discharge with information identifying the veteran's representative for the three- person panel.

According to fiscal year 2012 data, the cabinet-level agencies in state government have a higher percentage of veterans in the workforce (10%), compared to percentage of veterans in Minnesota's civilian labor force (6%) between the ages of 18 and 64. (*State Demographer Office, 2010 American Community Survey*).

In fiscal year 2012, cabinet-level agencies hired 321 veterans into full-time unlimited positions. This is an increase of 70 veterans over fiscal year 2011 when cabinet-level agencies hired 251 veterans into full-time unlimited positions.

This report demonstrates that the 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 ongoing relationships with veteran organizations and advocates, supporting deployed soldiers and their families, retaining veteran-focused positions, providing reintegration training, and championing statewide initiatives 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 veteran 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 veteran 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.