

January 2012

Minnesota State Government Efforts to Employ and Support Veterans

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

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Introduction

Minnesota's workforce is comprised of veterans in both the public and private sectors. To assess Minnesota 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 2011.

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

Executive Summary

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

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

State law requires that the number of veterans among the state government 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. To obtain veteran status from state employees, a self-service webpage was launched in October 2010. This webpage allows state employees to update their veteran status at any time.

According to fiscal year 2011 data, 11% 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*).

In fiscal year 2011, cabinet-level agencies hired 251 veterans into full-time unlimited positions. This is an increase of 34 veterans over fiscal year 2010 when cabinet-level agencies hired 217 veterans into full-time unlimited positions.

To promote the state as a Veteran Friendly employer and to increase opportunities for veterans in state government during fiscal year 2011, state agencies conducted veteran focused recruitment and retention activities; provided reintegration education and guidance; build partnerships with veteran organizations and advocates; provide support to their deployed military employees; and retained job classifications whose sole purpose is supporting veterans and in some cases must be filled by veterans. 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

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

43A.11 Veteran's Preference

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Proposed Expansion of Minnesota GI Bill

- Governor Mark Dayton proposed (11/10/2011) expanding the Minnesota GI Bill to provide thousands of Veterans access to new job training. Currently the MN GI Bill applies only to Veterans who served after 9/11 and the families of deceased or qualifying disabled Veterans and the proposal would expand the GI Bill to all Minnesota Veterans.

Veteran Employment Data

The state employee data in **Table 1** is from a slice file (snapshot of state employee data on a particular day) dated December 31, 2010 collected from the state payroll system. The veteran information in **Table 2** includes applicant data from fiscal year 2011 (July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011) collected from the state applicant tracking system. As required in statute, the numerical data in this report is from the cabinet-level agencies in the executive branch. 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.

Three situations which may impact the data are:

- Hiring restrictions were in effect until January 20, 2011. State agencies were only able to fill critical and essential positions; this resulted in fewer state jobs being announced and filled, and therefore would have had some impact on the number of veteran's being hired.
- Prior to July 2009, there was no statutory requirement to collect veteran status for state employees. In October 2010, the state developed and launched a self-service web page which allows state employees to enter and update their veteran at any time. A communication was sent to state employees announcing the self-service website, the purpose of collecting the information and encouraging employees to disclose their veteran status.
- State Employee Veteran Status and Voluntary Disclosure. Disclosure of an employee's veteran status is voluntary and based on self-identification. Employees are encouraged, but not required to disclose their veteran status. As a result, some employees who are veterans may have opted **not** to self-identify, reducing the accuracy of this data.

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:

- 11% of State of Minnesota government cabinet-level agency employees self-identified as veterans.
- 6% 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: State Demographer Office, 2010 American Community Survey.*

The percentage of veterans in the State of Minnesota government cabinet-level agencies workforce is 5% higher than the percentage of veterans in Minnesota's civilian labor force.

TABLE 1**Veterans in the State of Minnesota Government Workforce
December 31, 2010 – State Payroll System**

Cabinet-Level Agency Name	COLUMN 1 Number of employees employed in FT positions	COLUMN 2 Number of employees self- identified as Veterans	COLUMN 3 Number of FT positions filled in FY 2011
Administration Dept	449	52	51
Agriculture Dept	392	33	107
Bureau of Mediation Services	11	2	1
Commerce Dept	318	40	52
Corrections Dept	4125	599	442
Education Department	388	11	48
Employ & Econ Development Dept	1709	168	415
Health Department	1329	52	257
Housing Finance Agency	203	13	12
Human Rights Dept	33	2	2
Human Services Dept	4766	340	561
Iron Range Resources & Rehab	56	4	1
Labor & Industry Department	429	37	36
Military Affairs Dept	264	86	61
Minnesota Management & Budget	307	25	101
Natural Resources Dept	2197	176	241
Office of Enterprise Technology	308	35	22
Office of Higher Education	65	2	10
Pollution Control Agency	863	56	51
Public Safety Dept	1936	221	212
Revenue Dept	1452	83	389
Transportation Dept	4660	689	740
Veterans Affairs Dept	503	109	49
TOTALS	26,763	2,835	3,861

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

Column 2 - the total number of employees identified in Column 1 who 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 31, 2010*

Column 3 - the total number of vacant full-time positions in the agency filled by hiring or appointment for fiscal year 2011. *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 2011 – 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	57	4916	327	173	108	2	2	0
Agriculture Dept	53	2339	143	47	43	2	2	7
Commerce Dept	21	2198	131	101	44	1	1	92
Corrections Dept	304	9812	1040	537	497	39	37	437
Education Dept	49	1964	133	27	19	3	3	0
DEED	107	1380	523	439	192	12	12	58
Health Department	184	8641	501	197	185	12	12	360
Housing Finance	25	1898	89	54	19	0	0	0
Human Rights Dept	2	46	7	2	2	1	1	0
Human Services Dept	416	14488	924	403	376	46	42	595
Iron Range Resources	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Labor & Industry Dept	76	2882	257	74	48	4	4	0
Office of Higher Educ	3	391	20	8	6	1	1	0
Military Affairs Dept	25	756	214	95	91	5	5	136
Mn Mgmt & Budget	22	1992	191	58	38	0	0	0
Natural Resources	301	12883	926	240	168	17	17	353
Offc of Enterprise Tech	36	3447	269	151	101	3	3	1
Pollution Control	15	315	23	10	10	1	1	0
Public Safety Dept	167	15603	1367	778	565	29	29	960
Revenue Dept	260	6533	353	180	144	19	18	5
Transportation Dept	321	14223	1756	780	664	40	40	476
Veteran Affairs	56	3852	876	278	618	21	21	362
TOTALS	2,500	113,589	10,010	4,802	3,598	258	251	3,841

Column 1 - the total number of vacant full-time positions in the agency filled during fiscal year 2011. *This is only unlimited positions (an appointment for which there is no specified maximum duration).*

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

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

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

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

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

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

Column 8 - the total number of veteran applicants identified in Column 7 who were sent a rejection letter.

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

Veterans Hired

Number of veterans hired at the cabinet-level state agencies

Fiscal Year	Number of full time vacancies filled	Number of veterans hired	Percentage of veterans hired based on total number of full time vacancies filled
FY 11	2500	251	10.0%
FY 10	2440	217	8.8%

An increase of 34 veterans hired in fiscal year 2011 compared to fiscal year 2010. (*Full-time, unlimited positions*)

Veteran Focused Initiatives, Program and Services

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

Veterans Small Business Seminars

The purpose of the seminar is to support veterans in starting their own business. Attendees will hear from experts in the field, learn from veteran business owners, network with fellow entrepreneurs, and connect with an experienced mentor. The seminar provides information pertaining to the funding available to start a business, the agencies handling the funding, the process for seeking funding and the educational programs available to help in developing a marketable business plan. These seminars are collaboration between MDVA, DEED, Beyond the Yellow Ribbon, MN Nation Guard, and the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)

The WOTC is a federal tax credit available to all private sector businesses as an incentive to employers to hire workers in certain groups (includes veterans) who consistently experience high rates of unemployment. The tax credit allows employers to reduce their federal tax liability by up to \$9,000 per new hire and applies to temporary, seasonal, part-time and full-time workers. The tax credit is available for new hires with job start dates through December 31, 2011. For more information about this program contact the Minnesota WOTC Unit at the Dept. of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)

Minnesota GI Bill Program

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

Veterans Education Transfer System

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

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

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

MnSCU Veterans Upward Bound (VUB)

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

DEED Veteran Workforce Programs / Veterans Employment Services

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

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

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

Campus Veteran Club

Some of the 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. The clubs make both the campus and the local community more aware of veteran issues.

Minnesota Stand Down Events

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

Veteran Legislation

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

Affordable Homes Program

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

Military Tax Related Benefits

The Minnesota Department of Revenue has 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 designed for service members leaving the military. DEED Veteran Employment staff facilitate this three day workshop focusing on transition from military life back to the civilian workforce. Minnesota Management & Budget staff regularly attend these workshops to promote the state government employment to veterans.

Minnesota Health Care Program

This program helps pay for medical or nursing home care. Military families eligible for Minnesota Care may be able to get coverage without a premium for up to 12 months. The premium can be waived if a family member completed a military tour of duty within two years

of being approved for coverage. This benefit is available to members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, National Guard and Reserves. For more information go to <http://www.dhs.state.mn.us>. Search for Human Services programs available 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; and free annual Minnesota State Park permits. Specific details on those privileges are available on the DNR Internet <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/licenses/military/index.html>

Waiver of Commercial Driver's License

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

Motorcycle Rider Training Course

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

Veteran Resource Centers/Higher Education Veteran Programs

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

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)

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

State Resources Dedicated to Veteran Support

The state also has veteran focused positions 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 (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 and services.

Director of Military Outreach for the Minnesota Department of Military Affairs

This position is shared between the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Military Affairs. The incumbent works as a liaison between the two departments, helping to ensure programs and services provided to service members, veterans and military families work well together and are accessible. The mission of the position is to ease access to resources and support, and to provide best practices to promote veteran recruitment and hiring. This includes: simplifying the use of the information available in the MN Veterans Employment Tools and Network Kit, and provide a “best practices” guide for veteran recruitment and employment.

Disabled Veterans Outreach Representatives Senior Veterans Employment Representatives

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

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

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

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, the Attorney General's Veterans Assistance Unit can help. They may contact (651) 296-3353 or 1-800-657-3787 for free voluntary mediation services to help resolve problems.

Higher Education Veteran Program Coordinators

The purpose of these positions at the Department of Veterans Affairs is to connect veterans, military members and their families with the educational benefits and resources available to help them succeed at the MnSCU campuses. This is accomplished by providing on-campus Veterans Resource Centers and comprehensive information about benefits and resources that support the unique needs of these students. The 62 campus Veterans Resource Centers served 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.
- The Centers have, or can locate, information about Veterans' services, military education benefits and financial resources, scholarships, Veteran and family support activities and other items of interest to Veterans, family members or community members.
- Provide training for campus staff related to veteran issues.
- Obtain feedback from veterans and work to remove barriers to services.
- Provide Veterans Friendly policies and procedures.
- Organize and provide training on Veterans issues
- Refer individuals to appropriate community services providers such as [County Veteran Service Officer](#), [Minnesota Workforce Centers](#), and other entities.
- Meet with guard units and their families prior to deployment and provide information about education benefits they earn while deployed and education benefits for spouses and family members.

Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Staff (MDVA)

The mission of the entire agency's workforce is charged with supporting veterans and their families. Some of these classifications include: Veterans Assistance Coordinators and Veterans Claims Representatives. The agency also has employees with the responsibility to 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 an agency division whose mission is serving American Indians who are part of native tribes and are eligible for veteran's benefits. Division staff assists them with the application process to obtain these benefits. The MDVA is in the

process of creating a new managerial position which will oversee and coordinate efforts for Veterans Employment and Women's Programs.

Minnesota Department of Military Affairs (MDMA)

This agency provides leadership, resources, and support to the National Guard to assist in accomplishing their mission. The department's customer base is approximately 14,000 MN Army and Air National Guard members. Between September 11, 2001 and July 2010, the MN National Guard deployed more than 19,000 Air and Guard members. The department's staff includes 300 employees whose role is to support the guard members. Source: Military Affairs Department Agency Profile – Biennial Budget.

State Agency Human Resource and Labor Relation Staff

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

Minnesota State Colleges and University System (MnSCU)

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

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

Veteran Focused Web Sites

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

[MyMilitary Career](http://MyMilitaryCareer) – MnSCU - Plans and orders are the keys to any successful military engagement. Having a clear, concise and well-rehearsed plan ensures mission success. On the CareerPlan site, veterans can find the tools needed to successfully explore career options.

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

[Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs](#) – We serve Minnesota veterans, their dependents and survivors, in securing benefits provided by federal and state laws.

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

[Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development - Veterans Programs](#)

We provide specialized staff and employment services to help all Minnesota military veterans – including those in the National Guard and Reserves – prepare for, find, and keep a job, no matter their era of service.

[Minnesota Department of Revenue](#) - Credits and tax relief for members of the military.

[Minnesota Department of Natural Resources](#)

This site includes information for military personnel and veterans about hunting and fishing licenses, firearm safety training, etc.

[State of Minnesota Career Web - Veteran Information](#)

The State of Minnesota recognizes the enormous contributions of men and women who have served the country in uniform. While serving our country, you learned an array of valuable skills. Put those skills to work in state employment.

[Minnesota Management & Budget](#) - Information for state employees who are veterans.

[Department of Transportation Veteran Preference Program](#)

Small businesses owned by eligible certified veterans or eligible certified service-disabled veterans will receive preference in the evaluation of their project proposals for state funded project let by Mn/DOT.

[Attorney General's Office](#)

A guide for military service personnel and veterans. Includes information on the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, and state laws on employment, education, discrimination, motor vehicles, and public records.

[Minnesota Board of AELSLADID](#) - This site provides veteran information for reimbursement of exam costs for licensing and certification.

[CareerOneStop](#) - One-stop site for employment, training and financial help after military service. This site allows the veteran to search for civilian jobs using their Military Occupation Code.

[Department of Human Services](#) - Human services programs available for returning veterans.

[Department of Labor and Industry](#) – Apprenticeship Veterans FAQ. Information targeting eligible veterans to use their GI Bill entitlements for participation in a Minnesota registered apprenticeship or on-the-job approved training program.

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

The new veteran resource center provides resources and community for veterans and military families.

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

DCTC operates a Veterans Resource Center on campus to provide support services and program information to U.S. military veterans just returning from active duty or retired from the armed forces for a number of years. The center also puts veterans in contact with other veterans on campus.

[Hennepin Technical College Veteran Resource Center](#)

The VRC purpose is to be a welcome location for veterans to receive assistance with benefits, to relax, and to focus on school. The VRC supports professional development, skill enhancement, and student morale by providing all the resources necessary along their educational path.

[Inver Hills CC Veteran Resource Center](#)

Inver Hills Community College acts as a liaison with the Veterans Administration for individuals who wish to use their veteran benefits to attend the college.

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

Stop by the Veterans Resource Center higher and talk with an education coordinator about anything from education benefits to post-deployment transition issues to transfer credits.

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

Welcome home and thank you for your service to our country. We want to encourage veterans to consider SCSU as an education option because we highly value the qualities of maturity, dedication, persistence, responsibility, and leadership you will bring to our university. These web pages are designed to help you understand the resources available to you at our university.

Recruitment, Partnerships and Outreach Activities

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

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 Rotary Clubs
- Local Chamber of Commerce

- **Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV)**
The Department of Corrections 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 Serve team assists with lawn care and snow shoveling at MACV resident housing for veterans and families in both the Twin Cities and Duluth.

- **MnDOT Community Advisors on Recruitment and Retention Solutions (MnCARRS)**
This group is a comprised of community leaders representing veterans (DEED Veteran Employment Office, Mn Department of Veteran Affairs and U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs), minority communities, women and people with disabilities. The group builds recruitment partnerships between MnDOT and communities underrepresented in MnDOT's workforce. The goal is to assist the agency in recruiting and retaining qualified candidates from a variety of backgrounds, including veterans.

- **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

Inver Hills Community College Veteran Resource Center (IHCC)

- Staff from the VA Medical Center comes to the IHCC each month to assist veterans and their families with health care and medical benefit questions.
- Staff from the St Paul Vets Center come to the INCC Veteran center each month and offers individual and group counseling for Veterans and their families, family counseling for military related issues, bereavement counseling for families who experience an active duty death, military sexual trauma counseling and referral, outreach and education, substance abuse assessment and referral, employment assessment and referral, VA benefits explanation and referral, and screening and referral for medical issues including traumatic brain injury and depression.

Recruitment

State agencies attended or conducted the following veteran focused activities:

- **“Hire Vets First” Veterans Career Fairs**
This career fair is the largest single day recruiting event in the country with over 100 businesses and 1500 veterans participating. Numerous state agencies attend the event to promote their agency and the state as a Veteran Friendly employer. This event is sponsored by the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). The Department of Human Services conducted “on-the-spot” interviews and hired several veterans at the May 2011 career fair.
- **Camp Ripley Biennial Open House**
September 9, 2011, Camp Ripley held an open house inviting the public to come in and see what Camp Ripley is all about. The purpose of the open house is to provide the community, military service members and veterans an opportunity to view different aspects of operations and training conducted at the Camp Ripley. State agency staff attended the open house to show their support and share information with the over 2,000 people in attendance.
- **The Military.com Career Expo**
Military.com hosts the largest Veteran Job Board and sponsors numerous career expos across the county giving employers and veterans an opportunity to meet face to face to discuss job opportunities.
- **Veteran Networking Job Club**
Attend the MN Workforce Center’s Veteran Networking Job Club as guest speaker to promote the state as a Veteran Friendly employer by explaining the state hiring process; demonstrating the military skills translator tool; identifying the benefits of working for the state; and clarifying veterans preference and interview statutes.

- **Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Workshop**
Minnesota Management & Budget is an on-going presenter at this three day workshop for veterans transitioning back to the civilian workforce. MMB promotes the state as a Veteran Friendly employer by explaining the state hiring process; demonstrating the military skills translator tool; identifying the benefits of working for the state; and clarifying veterans preference and interview statutes.
- **Statewide “Beyond the Yellow Ribbon” Community Events**
State agencies recruit at various yellow ribbon community and reintegration events around the state. This comprehensive program connects service members and their families with community support, training, services and resources.
- **Length of Service - Recruitment Tool**
According to some of the collective bargaining agreements, state agencies have discretionary latitude when hiring someone from the United States Armed Forces to grant length of service credit resulting in higher vacation accrual rates. This can be an effective recruitment tool.
- **Minnesotadiversity.com**
This site partners with 160 statewide veterans focused organizations including Minnesota’s County Veteran Service Offices.

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 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.

"I was employed from 2004 to 2007 at the Minnesota Department of Commerce. During that time I was deployed twice to Iraq as an officer with the Minnesota Army National Guard. There are many things to worry about when preparing for, deploying to and returning from a military leave of absence to a combat zone. One thing I never worried about was my civilian employment, including making sure that my benefits worked properly, stopped and started and that my differential pay was always on time and correct. I never once had an issue. The credit for this is given solely to Colleen and Amy in the Department's HR office. The personal care and attention they gave me made my deployment that much easier and is appreciated more than they know."

Tom H., Commerce Department

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 on-going meetings with returning deployed employees.
- Develop individualized soldier "return to work" plans or supplementary training for smooth transition back to work.
- Support and grant additional time off for reintegration.
- Assign mentors or buddies to returning deployed employees.
- Agency employees and co-workers are informed about deployed employees through agency newsletters and intranet sites that highlight the soldier.
- Minnesota Department of Public Safety works with the military and the Office of Enterprise Technology to set up video conferencing for applicants to participate in the state hiring process. In addition, they utilize the military to proxy fitness testing. Troopers on active duty outside of Minnesota also use video conferencing for promotional oral interviews.
- Communication from agency commissioners to employees in recognition of Memorial Day and Veteran Day Events.
- Provide information and resources about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and other related materials such as the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to both supervisors and returning veterans.
- Hold employment positions for deployed employees and provide strong encouragement to return after deployment.

Agency efforts to support soldiers and their families include:

- Provide on-going communication between employees and deployed employees and their families through emails, letters, and photos.
- Create opportunities for family members to communicate with deployed employees using video conferencing such as Skype.
- Send deployed employees care packages which include personal products, holiday presents, knitted caps, photos, and letters.
- Co-workers support deployed soldier's families by volunteering to babysit, provide handyman services, and stock firewood.
- Agency HR staff serve as a resource for deployed employees and their families to answer questions pertaining to payroll, benefits, insurance, while the family is separated.
- Hennepin Technical College holds Veterans Day activities which include: Honor Guard, invite employees/students to share stories and photos of their military experiences, and invite various Veteran support agencies to provide information to employees and students.
- The MN Zoo hosts an annual Military Family Weekend event allowing military service members and their families' free admission to the zoo.
- The Department of Corrections Sentence to Service Program provided hundreds of hours of volunteer work in cooperation with Camp Ripley staff to provide fuel wood for families of deployed soldiers.
- DEED staff provides veteran services information for veterans and their families at Workforce Centers around the state.
- **Inver Hill Community College (IHCC)**
IHCC held a week of activities for veterans and their families. Events included: opening ceremony with comments by student veteran Specialist E-4 Curt Hermanson; the color guard of the Rosemount-based Recruiting and Retention Battalion of the Minnesota National Guard; a reintegration of veterans address by Maj. Gen. Larry Shellito, Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs; a panel of veteran speakers offering reflections and historical context on World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, Operation Iraqi Freedom and the War in Afghanistan.
- **Rochester Community and Technical College (RCTC)**
RCTC Fund for the Family Program volunteers provides meals, child care, snow removal, and lawn care for families of deployed employees. RCTC staff/faculty in collaboration with Operation Minnesota Nice, donated 61 sets of twin-size sheets plus enough cash to help defray mailing costs, to Troops serving in Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan. At the 2nd Annual Halloween Party hosted by RCTC and Beyond the Yellow Ribbon, school athletes were escorts for the costumed children and families which included helping with activities and carving pumpkins together.
- **Stillwater Corrections Facility**
A Stillwater Corrections Lieutenant asked facility staff for help after he saw a post on his son's Facebook page indicating some service members on the USS Green Bay were not receiving care packages. Corrections Lieutenant Doug Johnson, a member of the

facility's Yellow Ribbon Committee, collected more than 50 pounds of candy, fruit snacks, beef jerky, sunflower seeds and more. The AFSCME Union also donated \$1,500, which was used to buy more snacks and pay for shipping. The care packages were shared by the Navy and Marine service members on board the ship. In an email, the ship's command master chief said, *"It is amazing to see how much faces light up around here when they receive 'mail call' and I know this will be extra special to know how you all pulled together for this."*

Training

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

- Minnesota Department of Transportation developed a 22-minute training DVD titled "We All Serve Fort Minnesota." The presentation covers the military aspects of the Family and Medical Leave Act; the Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Program; the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve organization; the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) and more. The presentation also includes portraits of a Mn/DOT employee whose son is on duty in Iraq and one employee who is a member of the Minnesota National Guard. The DVD was sent to each MnDOT district and to anyone who requested it. The DVD's title "We All Serve Fort Minnesota" builds on the concept that although Minnesota has no active duty military installations, all Minnesotans can offer support to military families. It is also available on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8sIqeUUPSjI>.
- Provide reintegration training to both leadership staff and returning deployed employees such as: individualized "return to work" plans and training for smooth transition back into the workforce.
- Provide USERRA training to managers and supervisors. This federal law outlines the rights and benefits awarded veteran employees and the responsibilities of the employer. This act affects employment, reemployment, and retention in employment.
- Provide "How to Comply with New FMLA Rules Affecting Deployed State Employees and Military Family Members" training for human resource staff, state managers and supervisors.
- Agencies bring in subject matter experts from the Mn Department of Veteran Affairs and the Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Services, and U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs for staff training.
- Minnesota Management & Budget provides consultation, training and information to state supervisors, managers, and human resources staff regarding veterans preference, veteran interview law, and veteran preference hearings

- MnSCU campuses provide training for staff and faculty on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Reintegration, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), The Emotional effects of Deployment Cycles, and How to be a Veteran Friendly School. In addition, campuses provide Suicide Prevention Training for counselors and Veteran Coordinators.
- Servicemembers Civil Relief Act Training SCRA (Attorney General) – This act postpones or suspends certain civil obligations to enable service members to devote full attention to duty and relieve stress on the family members of those deployed. For example: outstanding credit card debt, mortgage payments, taxes and terminations of lease.
- Inver Hills Community College organized a faculty learning co-op to discuss curricular resources and ideas on how to integrate veterans' experiences into a wide variety of courses.

Awards and Acknowledgments

GI Jobs Magazine Military Friendly Schools Award

Each year GI Jobs Magazine honors the top 20 percent of colleges, university and trade schools across the nation that are doing the most to embrace American service members and veterans as students. The 2011 Military Friendly Schools list was compiled through extensive research and study of more than 8,000 schools nationwide. The 1,231 schools on this year's list prioritize the recruitment of students with military experience. These schools made the grade by offering scholarships, veteran's 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

- 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
 - Metropolitan State University
 - Minnesota State University, Mankato
 - Normandale Community College
 - North Hennepin Community College
 - Northland Community and Technical College
 - Northwest Technical College
 - Rainy River Community College
 - Ridgewater College
 - Riverland Community College
 - Rochester Community and Technical College
 - Saint Paul College
 - St. Cloud State University
-

Proclaimed Yellow Ribbon Company

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 company's 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.

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

Department of Corrections Stillwater – Patriot Award

Stillwater warden Michelle Smith has received a *Patriot Employer Award* from the Office of the Secretary of Defense – Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR). The award recognizes her support of service member employees. Smith was nominated by a corrections officer Josh Riviere who is serving overseas.

Department of Corrections Shakopee – Patriot Award

Shakopee warden Tracy Beltz received the Patriot Employer Award from the Office of the Secretary of Defense – Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR). The award recognizes her support of service member employees. Corrections officer Maurice Rhodes, a National Guard member, nominated her for the award. The Shakopee facility also received a plaque for support of the guard and reserve.

Conclusion

In July of 2009, a law was passed which required state agencies to interview the top five Recently Separated Veterans (RSV) who apply and meet the minimum qualifications for a vacant position. The goal of this bill was to give more veterans an opportunity to be seen and interviewed by hiring supervisors and ultimately hired in state government.

In fiscal year 2011, the cabinet-level agencies in state government have a higher percentage of veterans in the workforce (11%), compared to percentage of veterans in Minnesota's civilian labor force (6%). In addition, the percentage of veterans hired at the cabinet-level agencies (based on the total number of full-time vacancies filled) increased from 8.8% (FY 2010) to 10% (FY 2011).

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 on-going relationships with veteran organizations and advocates, supporting deployed soldiers and their families, retaining veteran focused positions, providing reintegration training, and championing statewide initiative for veterans.

Appendix

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

Sec. 22. REPORTING REQUIRED.

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

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