

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Joint VA/DOL Program Launches to Retrain 99,000 Unemployed Veterans
Online Site Opens May 15 for Veterans to Apply for Education Benefits

WASHINGTON – Starting May 15, unemployed Veterans between the ages of 35 and 60 can now apply for new benefits to cover education costs for up to one year through a joint Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Labor (DOL) program that focuses on retraining 99,000 Veterans for high-demand jobs.

“This important tool will help those who served our country receive the education and training they need to find meaningful employment in a high-demand field,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “Veterans are disciplined, hardworking, goal-oriented team members who can play a vital role in helping businesses and the economy grow.”

“Our veterans have made this nation stronger through their service, and they deserve our continued support,” said Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis. “This new program will help unemployed veterans expand their skills and compete for good jobs,” she added.

As part of a provision of the Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, the Veteran Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) allows qualifying Veterans to receive up to 12 months of assistance equal to the full-time Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty rate, currently \$1,473 per month.

Veterans can apply on a first-come, first-serve basis for VRAP beginning on May 15, 2012, for programs that begin on or after July 1, 2012. Assistance under this benefit program ends on March 31, 2014.

To complete an application, a Veteran will need to know his or her direct deposit information (bank routing number and account number), the name and location of his or her school, the program the Veteran wishes to pursue, and the applicable high-demand occupation.

To qualify Veterans must:

- Be 35-60 years old, unemployed on the day of application, and not dishonorably discharged;
- Start education or training after July 1, 2012, in a VA-approved program of education offered by a community college or technical school leading to an associate degree, non-college degree or a certificate for a high-demand occupation as defined by the DOL;
- Not be eligible for any other VA education benefit program (e.g. Post-9/11 GI Bill, Montgomery GI Bill, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment);
- Not be enrolled in a federal or state job training program within the last 180 days;
- Not receive VA compensation at the 100% rate due to individual unemployability (IU).

Upon completion, the Labor Department will engage with participants within 30 days after their training to help them find good jobs that utilize their newly learned skills.

“We are working diligently with our partners around the country to ensure our Veterans have access to all the benefits and services to which they are entitled—especially when it comes to those unemployed,” added Under Secretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey.

“This is a true example of interagency collaboration and we are committed to the full and speedy implementation of this program to ensure the success of our veterans in the civilian labor market,” said Ismael “Junior” Ortiz, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Veterans Employment Training Service.

For more information on VOW, VRAP, high demand occupations, and how to apply, Veterans may go to the website at www.benefits.va.gov/VOW, or call VA’s Call Centers toll free at 1-800-827-1000, Veterans may also access the VRAP application online at <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov> through eBenefits, a joint project between the Department of Defense and VA.

Veterans are also encouraged to visit the nearly 3,000 One-Stop Career Centers across the nation for assistance from staff, Local Veterans’ Employment Representatives (LVERS), and Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists. To find the center near you visit www.servicelocator.org.

For more information about the Department of Labor’s Veterans programs, go to <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>