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News Release

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Unemployed Veterans Requesting Retraining Program to Enhance Job Skills

Strong Pace of Applications Puts VA on Course to Meet its VRAP Goals

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs has approved more than 36,000 applications for the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP), a new training and education program for unemployed Veterans to upgrade their skills for in-demand jobs.

“The tremendous response illustrates how important this program is in providing Veterans the opportunity to find employment in a high-demand field,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.

At the current approval rate, VA expects to fill all 45,000 available slots for the fiscal year 2012 phase of the program before the Sept. 30 deadline, and will continue processing new applications for the 54,000 slots available in fiscal year 2013.

The program, a provision of the Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, which was passed by Congress and signed by the President in November 2011, is managed by VA and the Department of Labor (DOL) and allows qualifying Veterans to receive up to 12 months of education assistance equal to the full-time Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty rate, currently \$1,473 per month.

The goal of VRAP is to train a total of 99,000 Veterans over the next two years in more than 200 job skills that DOL has determined are the most sought-after by employers.

To be eligible for the program, a Veteran must:

- Be 35-60 years old, unemployed on the day of application, and not dishonorably discharged;

- Not be eligible for any other VA education benefit program such as the Post-9/11 GI Bill, Montgomery GI Bill, or Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment;

- Not be enrolled in a federal or state job-training program within the last 180 days; and
- Not receive VA compensation at the 100% rate due to individual unemployability (IU).

Veterans who have been approved for VRAP are encouraged to enroll as soon as possible to start training full-time in a VA-approved program of study offered by a community college or technical school. The program of study must lead to an associate degree, non-college degree, or certificate for a [high-demand occupation](#) as defined by DOL.

Applicants approved for the 2013 phase should enroll full-time in an approved program and start training by April 2013 in order to take full advantage of this benefit before its termination March 31, 2014.

“I’m thrilled that the response to the program has been so strong,” said VA Under Secretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey. “But we need to keep getting the word out to maintain the momentum.”

VA Deputy Under Secretary for Economic Opportunity Curtis Coy acknowledged the program applies to a small segment of the Veteran population that may not have regular interaction with VA or stay informed about Veterans’ benefits and opportunities.

“We ask anyone who knows an unemployed Veteran to tell them about VRAP,” said Coy. “We are counting on the continued help of Veterans Service Organizations and the Department of Labor, as well as the American public, to reach as many eligible Veterans as possible.”

Potential applicants can learn more about VRAP and apply online at www.benefits.va.gov/VOW, or call VA toll-free at 1-800-827-1000. Information about the Department of Labor’s programs for Veterans is available at www.dol.gov/vets. Veterans can also visit the nearly 3,000 One-Stop Career Centers across the nation, listed at www.servicelocator.org, for in-person assistance.

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