



For Immediate Release  
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## **Iraq War Veterans Can Claim Ohio Veterans Bonus**

COLUMBUS – Veterans who served in Iraq have taken advantage of the Ohio Veterans Bonus in increasing numbers this year, but time is rapidly running out to claim this benefit – the deadline for those who served in Iraq is Dec. 31, 2014.

Through Sept. 30, the Ohio Veterans Bonus program has paid 83, 399 total claims, amounting to more than \$67.4 million. While some claims are for multiple periods of eligibility, claims for Iraq service represent 23,876 of this total, the most of any period. The Bonus team is approving an average of more than 160 applications each week.

The eligible period of the Ohio Veterans Bonus for service in the country of Iraq is from March 19, 2003 through Dec. 31, 2011. The deadline of Dec. 31, 2014, is for applications made for this service.

No deadline has been announced for the Ohio Veterans Bonus for those who served in Afghanistan, or anywhere else in the world, since Oct. 7, 2001.

“We’re grateful that so many Iraq veterans have taken advantage of the opportunity to get the Ohio Veterans Bonus, but we don’t want to leave anyone behind on this,” said Ohio Department of Veterans Services Director Tim Gorrell. “Other veterans, county veteran service offices, and the veterans’ organizations have been great about getting the word out. But everybody in Ohio is close in some way to veterans – someone in their family is serving, or a neighbor or friend has someone in the military. So I’m asking everybody to reach out – to the veterans they know, and to the active military from Ohio they know who are serving outside the state or overseas – and make sure they know about the Bonus.”

The Ohio Veterans Bonus is open to veterans who served anywhere in the world during the time of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The amount of the Bonus is higher for those who served in Iraq or Afghanistan. It is also open to the next of kin of those who were killed in action or died of disease as a result of in-country service. The Bonus is not subject to federal or state taxes, and can be used for any purpose.

The specific criteria for award of the Ohio Veterans Bonus is service in the Armed Forces, anywhere in the world, of more than 90 days active duty, not for training, during the periods of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. For Iraq, the eligible period is from March 19, 2003 through Dec. 31, 2011; for Afghanistan, it is from Oct. 7, 2001 through a date to be determined by the President. Eligible veterans must have been Ohio residents at the time of their entry into the service, and must be Ohio residents at the time they apply.

The bonus pays \$100 a month to veterans who served in Iraq or Afghanistan, up to a maximum of \$1,000. For veterans who served elsewhere, the payment is \$50 a month up to a \$500 maximum. Veterans medically discharged due to injuries sustained in-country can receive \$1,000, plus up to \$500 for months of service elsewhere.

Family members of those killed in action or who died from disease as a result of their in-country service can receive a bonus of \$5,000 plus whatever the service member was eligible for, up to a total of \$6,500.

Veterans needing more information or to request an application can call toll-free to 1-877-OHIO VET (1-877-644-6838) option 2, visit [www.veteransbonus.ohio.gov](http://www.veteransbonus.ohio.gov) , or visit any county veterans service office (see [www.dvs.ohio.gov](http://www.dvs.ohio.gov) for an interactive map of the county offices). The Department has advertised the program extensively statewide through public service announcements on television and radio, newspaper and online ads, social media, at veterans' events, and through partnerships with veterans service organizations and other agencies. Post cards reminding Iraq veterans of the end of the Bonus were sent in June and July to veterans whose birth dates matched the likely age range of Iraq veterans.

Ohio voters approved the Ohio Veterans Bonus by an overwhelming margin in November 2009. The law implementing the Bonus set a deadline for Persian Gulf War era veterans of Dec. 31, 2013. This same law set the deadline for Iraq War veterans as the third year following a date determined by the President as the end of the conflict. This date was set as the termination date of the Iraq Campaign Medal, which was Dec. 31, 2011, making the deadline for Bonus applications for service in Iraq Dec. 31, 2014. The clock will not start on a deadline for Afghanistan veterans until the President determines a date for the war's end.

The Ohio Veterans Bonus continues a tradition of bonuses to reward Ohio veterans that dates back to the Civil War; however, these other war bonuses are now closed.