



# Ohio Department of Veterans Services

★ *Monthly Update* ★

December 2011

May this season bring joy and blessings to you and your family!



**Questions about veterans benefits?**

Call 1-877-OHIOVET  
(1-877-644-6838)

*Welcome to the ninth edition of the Ohio Department of Veterans Services e-newsletter! The newsletter is a key source of information about issues of interest to our community of veterans in Ohio.*

We thank you for your service to our country. Because you're a veteran, you've earned a number of benefits that you may not be aware of. Most of these benefits originate at the federal level with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Based on the time you served, you may be eligible for compensation for injuries, health care, educational assistance, home loans or many other benefits. There are also a number of state benefits available to Ohio veterans, to include the Ohio Veterans Bonus as well as direct financial assistance from the county to veterans in need.

The place to find out what you've earned and to apply is your county veterans service office. You can locate yours in the interactive map on our department home page, [dvs.ohio.gov](http://dvs.ohio.gov), or by calling 1-877-OHIO-VET (1-877-644-6838).

We will continue to provide you this newsletter each month. We hope it's of value to you and your family.

## **Veteran Employment in Ohio...**

Many people believe that the problems many of us experience in our lives can be at least partially cured by a job. But even though we as veterans know that we have much to offer potential employers, no one ever said getting there was going to be easy...it can be a tough mission to accomplish. However, both the federal government and Ohio have ways to help get it done.

On the federal front:

President Barack Obama last month signed the Vow to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, which passed both houses of Congress with bipartisan support. The bill provides tax credits to companies that hire veterans and job training through the G.I. Bill for pre-9/11 veterans.

The Department of Labor, as many of you know, partners with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services to operate job centers in each county; while the job centers are open to all residents, they also contain veteran counselors. The job centers are also launching a new initiative called the "Gold Card"



# Ohio Department of Veterans Services

★ *Monthly Update* ★

for OEF/OIF veterans. The “Gold Card” essentially puts veterans of the recent wars at the head of the line for services, and provides them counseling, information, referral to job openings and follow-up assistance. The web site for the “Gold Card,” below, also contains a resource to help translate military to civilian experience:

<http://www.dol.gov/vets/goldcard.html>

The National Resource Directory has developed a veterans job bank of vacancies nationwide for use by both veterans and employers seeking veterans to hire. This is part of the “Joining Forces” initiative sponsored by First Lady Michelle Obama:

<https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/jobSearch/index>

Information on federal jobs for veterans is at:

<http://www.fedshirevets.gov/>

On the state front:

The Ohio National Guard has partnered with AMVETS to create a site with job postings for veterans:

<http://ohiovetscan.com/>

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services provides a site with resources to help translate experience that also includes links to veteran-friendly employers as well as other resources, such as resume assistance:

<http://my.ohiomeansjobs.monster.com/VetCenter/InfoCenter.aspx>

Finally, are you ready for that job search?





# Ohio Department of Veterans Services

★ *Monthly Update* ★

Whatever type of employment you're looking for, there are some common tips to remember:

- Do you have a current resume?
- Do you have a cover letter that's geared to the type of job you're looking for?
- Do you go to an interview or a job fair and present a professional appearance, e.g., suit and tie, or dress/skirt or pantsuit?

## Going to School...

Hand in hand with employment information is information on education. Getting a degree or a training certification in your desired field is the pathway to getting a higher-paying job or to getting promoted in the job you currently hold.

The Post-9/11 G.I. Bill offers the best financial incentives for veterans' education since World War II. Besides traditional degrees, the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill also includes vocational training that wasn't covered under previous programs. Learn more at:

<http://www.gibill.va.gov/>

Where you go to school is also important, particularly if you're choosing a specialized field. But you don't have to look any farther than Ohio's public colleges and universities. These institutions offer hundreds of academic disciplines, many that can lead directly to a lucrative career. The state has initiated several measures in recent years to make it easier for veterans to get an education here, whether they're Ohio residents or not, such as in-state tuition rates for all veterans, Veterans Administration (VA)-certified counselors at financial aid offices, and student organizations to serve veterans on campus. The Board of Regents site will tell you more; check it out below, or search out information online for the Ohio public college or university you're interested in:

<http://www.ohiohighered.org/veterans>





# Ohio Department of Veterans Services

★ *Monthly Update* ★

## Got Your Ohio Veterans Bonus?...

So far, nearly 50,000 Ohio veterans, resident service members and families have been paid over \$41 million through the Ohio Veterans Bonus program. It's Ohio's way of saying thanks for the service they've given.

While we risk sounding like a broken record repeating this information, we believe it's of the utmost importance to keep it in the front of everyone's mind. Why? Because there's always someone who's put it off, or another who wouldn't take the time unless their family motivated them, or someone else who may not have heard about it unless they hear it from another veteran, or their friend or family. Remember, we've got more people becoming eligible all the time, as our men and women come back home after completing their terms of service, and as National Guard and Reserve units return from deployments.

So, please take a look at the information below. If you're eligible, take the time to apply! If you've gotten your bonus, then please pass this information along to other veterans so that they can get theirs! Remember, the citizens of Ohio overwhelmingly voted for this bonus to show their appreciation for the military who defends them.

To be eligible for the bonus, you must be –

An Ohio resident who served honorably in the military for more than 90 days of active duty during the period Aug. 2, 1990 through March 3, 1991, or since Oct. 7, 2001.

The bonus is \$100 a month to veterans who served during the eligible periods in the Persian Gulf theater, or in the Iraq or Afghanistan theaters, up to a maximum of \$1,000. For veterans who served in other parts of the world during these times, the payment is \$50 a month up to a \$500 maximum. Veterans who were medically discharged as a result of combat service can receive \$1,000, regardless of how much time they spent in theater, 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-theater service can receive a bonus of \$5,000 plus whatever the service member was eligible for, up to a total of \$6,500.

Application instructions and a list of the documentation required is at:

[https://veteransbonus.ohio.gov/odvs\\_web/Default.aspx](https://veteransbonus.ohio.gov/odvs_web/Default.aspx).

For more information, call 1-877-OHIO-VET (1-877-644-6838) or visit your County Veterans Service Office. To find your local office, see the Ohio map at: <http://dvs.ohio.gov/>



# Ohio Department of Veterans Services

★ *Monthly Update* ★

## Wreaths to Honor Veterans...

Saturday, December 10, saw volunteers all across America, including at several locations in Ohio, place holiday wreaths on the tombstones of veterans.

It was part of a national effort by a group called "Wreaths Across America," a non-profit organization which has organized the volunteer wreath-laying every December since 2006. The initiative actually got its start in 1992, when Maine businessman Morrill Worcester, of the Worcester Wreath Company, decided to decorate graves at Arlington National Cemetery. The company later founded "Wreaths Across America" and sends wreaths all over the country for placement at veterans' and local cemeteries by the Civil Air Patrol and other volunteers.

This year, the Worcester Company sent 100,000 wreaths for placement at Arlington National Cemetery (pictured).



## Situation Improves for Homeless Veterans...

Last month, we reported to you the good news that the VA is constructing a total of 310 permanent and transitional housing units at the Chillicothe VA medical center campus and the Dayton VA medical center campus, as part of a nationwide effort to provide more than 1,000 units across the country.

This month, we're even more pleased to report that, according to the VA, the number of homeless veterans in the U.S. has declined 12 percent between January 2010 and January 2011. This trend has been mirrored in Ohio.

Based on media reports, it's likely that this is due to a combination of increased outreach by the VA as well as by county veterans service offices and non-profit organizations. Individuals from these agencies have worked tirelessly to find homeless veterans and connect them to job training, health care and other services that can keep them from becoming homeless in the first place. In some Ohio counties, non-profits have partnered with veterans service offices to construct housing for homeless veterans.

In addition, the VA is offering \$100 million in grants to community organizations – an increase of \$60 million over last year – to help prevent veteran homelessness. Organizations that receive a grant through this program can use the money to help veterans pay emergency bills, receive counseling, and help with child care or other life issues that may cause them to become homeless.



# Ohio Department of Veterans Services

★ *Monthly Update* ★

## One War Ends...

Thursday, December 15, 2011, saw the casing of the colors of U.S. Forces – Iraq and the end of the Iraq War.

We can all rejoice that this war has come to a conclusion. We can also take enormous pride in the thousands of Ohio men and women, active, Guard and Reserve, who have answered the call to defend our nation and fought in Iraq to help preserve our freedom – many of whom fought there for more than one tour. We are proud, too, of the families who supported them before and after their times at war.



We also don't need to be reminded of the cost of this war to Ohio, to the families of the 188 men and women who we lost there in the years from 2003 to 2011. We are also aware of the physical and emotional costs to them and their families of the hundreds of Ohioans who suffered injuries in Iraq, many life-changing.

We must remember, as well, that more than 2,000 Ohioans are deployed now with the Ohio Army National Guard's 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, many of whom will join the fight in Afghanistan or serve in other countries in that region. They, like many of their brothers and sisters in all branches of service, active or reserve component, have served multiple overseas tours since 2001, and many have served repeat combat tours.

While we give thanks for the end of one war, we know that there are tough times ahead before we can successfully end the war on terror.

And while we also know that many of our veterans are struggling with jobs and health issues, we can take comfort that there are many in our state and nation who are working hard to help in concrete ways.

## 70 Years After Pearl Harbor...

Wednesday, December 7, 2011, marked the 70th anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The surprise attack occurred at 7:55 a.m. on what that year was a Sunday. The anniversary reminded us of the horror of that day, and the lives lost.



# Ohio Department of Veterans Services

★ *Monthly Update* ★

A group of Pearl Harbor veterans in their 90's travelled to Ohio for the formal observance, and reported that this is the last year they will meet. Many veterans of that Day of Infamy are still with us in Ohio, and shared recollections that we saw in many of our newspapers and on local TV stations. The day threw the generation that had just endured the Great Depression into a world war... but one that they, and the rest of America, and the people of other free nations joined together in an unprecedented way and did what needed to be done to win.



Certainly, 9/11 has much in common with December 7. But a new generation of Americans also stepped up to serve, and continues to serve for a longer period than World War II to fight the wars we've been engaged in for over 10 years. It's been tough on the new generation, to be sure, but though the task remains, much success has been achieved.

We can be grateful for both generations, and reminded that when united, no matter what the problems, Americans will always prevail.

## 'Tis the Season...

On Sunday, December 25, much of our country will celebrate Christmas. We also join together this month to celebrate Hanukkah and Kwanzaa. It's always a happy and blessed time of presents, parties, family, friends and traditions.

Our military families will celebrate, but many without their loved ones. We can take some comfort, though, in knowing that wherever our men and women serve, they will pause for at least a short time to mark the joys and blessings of the season.

Enjoy time with those you love and value this month, and if you can't be together, hold them close in your hearts.

For all of us, take a few minutes between unwrapping presents or taking sips of egg nog to remember the men and the women who serve in our Armed Forces and guarantee us the freedom to celebrate the season in the way we choose.

*Happy Holidays!*