



Ohio Department of Veterans Services

★ *Monthly Update* ★

June 2012



The annual Governor's Wreath-Laying Ceremony was held at Veterans' Plaza of the Statehouse on May 25. Governor John Kasich, Lieutenant Governor Mary Taylor, Ohio Adjutant General Major General Deborah Ashenhurst and Ohio Department of Veterans Services Director Tom Moe placed a wreath at the Plaza in commemoration of the 23 Ohioans killed in action in the past year. Gold Star father John Snow provided the keynote address.

Questions about veterans benefits?

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

Welcome to the fifteenth 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, www.ohiovet.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.

Two Huge Job Events in June...

Veterans in Ohio have two major job events open to them this month, and there's still time to register. Both are occurring at roughly the same time – in Detroit from June 26-28 in conjunction with the VA's conference there, and on June 29 in Cleveland, hosted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

First Event – VA Hiring Fair in Detroit...

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (the VA) is sponsoring a major job event in Detroit later this month, from June 26-28.

The Veterans Hiring Fair is being held in conjunction with the Veterans Small Business Conference from June 26-29. Both are at the Cobo Center in downtown Detroit.



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This conference also features a Veteran Open House, where attendees can visit various displays to learn about the many federal and state benefits available for veterans.

The Veterans Hiring Fair includes thousands of public and private job positions that are open in Michigan, the surrounding states including Ohio, and nationwide. Some of the employers represented are the VA, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of the Treasury, Chrysler, McKesson, GM, Toyota, and Service Brands International.

The fair will also provide assistance in resume building, In career coaching, and in building a federal resume. There are already more than 8,000 confirmed job openings for the Detroit fair. The VA ran a similar event in Baltimore earlier this year, which resulted in 2,600 interviews and more than 500 on-the-spot job offers for veterans. To learn more, search for positions matching a particular skill set, or find resources for tailoring a resume for federal positions, register at:

http://vaforvets.va.gov/veterans/aboutva/hiringevents/Pages/EVENT_Detroit_June2012.aspx

The National Veterans Small Business Conference provides the opportunity for veteran business owners to learn how to do business with the federal and state governments, meet with procurement decision-makers, and expand knowledge through more than 200 available training and business requirement sessions. Registration information is at:

www.nationalveteransconference.com

The third event at the conference is the Veteran Open House, which is a series of exhibits from federal and state agencies, as well as private organizations, designed to make veterans aware of the benefits they have earned, and advice on how to apply for them. More information on this particular event is at:

http://www.nationalveteransconference.com/veteran_open_house

...with special help available for veterans 35 and older:

A major component of the hiring fair is an active outreach by the VA to veterans 35-60 who are eligible for the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP).





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At the Veteran Open House, the VA will give VRAP presentations several times a day to let veterans know about the program, how to apply, and answers to the most questions. Veterans are encouraged to stop by to learn more about this new program. The VA began accepting applications May 15 for this new job training program.

Last year, Congress passed the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, which included VRAP for unemployed veterans of the Gulf War era and older, specifically veterans who are 35 to 60 years old. It offers up to 12 months of job training assistance under the Montgomery G.I. Bill at the rate of \$1,473 per month. The program begins July 1, but the VA is accepting applications for job training beginning May 15.

Please note that applications must be made online through the VA's eBenefits program. A web tool will assist veterans in working through this, but it is recommended to get an early start on the process. For more information, see:

<http://benefits.va.gov/vow/education.htm>

Second Event – Hiring Our Heroes in Cleveland...

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is hosting the Hiring Our Heroes Job Fair that comes to Cleveland on June 29.



The fair will be held from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Wolstein Center at Cleveland State University. It's open to active duty military, National Guard and Reserve members, and spouses. A number of local private and public sector employers will be on hand and conducting interviews. Many of these events have already been held in cities across the country, including Columbus in March. It's part of a nationwide effort by the Chamber to partner with local entities and encourage the business community to hire veterans.

Employers attending this event include the Cleveland Clinic, CVS, the Defense Finance and Accounting Service, Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, Key Bank, Lowes, Republic Steel, and Verizon.

Besides the Chamber, other Ohio and local sponsors include the Greater Cleveland Partnership and MAGNET, the Cuyahoga County Veterans Service Commission, the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services, the Ohio Department of Veterans Services, Cleveland State University, AMVETS, the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL VETS), the Ohio Committee of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), and NBC News.



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Advanced registration is strongly encouraged. For more information, see:
<http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/cleveland-oh>

Ohio Means Jobs for Veterans...

The state of Ohio is certainly very active on its own in finding jobs for veterans. In fact, one of the greatest job aids available is only one mouse click away.

It's "Ohio Means Jobs," the state's job web site which has a real advantage for veterans by getting them to the front of the line for available jobs. It's the enhanced state jobs web site that puts veterans at the front of the line. The site is a joint venture between Ohio and Monster.com; take a look at it below, and then learn more about how it works for veterans:

<https://ohiomeansjobs.com/omj/>

Once on the site, veterans should go to the "Job Seekers" area, and a world of opportunity opens up. Veterans need to post their resume and indicate that they are a veteran. What this does is present veterans' resumes first for any job that matches the qualifications they've posted in their resume. The resume should be reviewed every month and electronically "updated" – whether any additional information is added or not – to keep it refreshed and at the front of the line for jobs.

This site has a searchable data base of thousands of jobs across Ohio, with private business, federal, state and local government, and schools. While it's still advisable to check local ads in the places in Ohio you'd like to be, the Monster.com system will capture the great majority of employment ads from throughout the state.

There's also a military widget on [Ohiomeansjobs.com](https://ohiomeansjobs.com) that will automatically link to additional information for veterans. This includes resources to help build a resume by translating military experience to civilian terms. It also includes links to veteran-friendly employers – companies that have made a commitment to hire veterans – as well as other resources:
<http://my.ohiomeansjobs.monster.com/VetCenter/InfoCenter.aspx>





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Recently, the military has gotten active in one of the biggest challenges veterans seeking employment face – translating what they did in the military into terms civilians can understand. The Army and the Navy have developed online “cool” web sites that help veterans translate their military skills into terms civilian employers can understand. The sites, which stand for “credentialing opportunities online,” allow a veteran to select their military skill code and then see the types of jobs their training and experience translates to, as well as any certifications that are needed. There is no Air Force, Marine, or Coast Guard “cool” site. However, the Air Force does offer similar resources on its Community College of the Air Force site, at the Credentialing and Education Research Tool (CERT) page; Marine skills are similar to those found in the Army and Air Force; and Coast Guard skills are similar to those found in the Navy.

The “cool” sites are below:

<https://www.cool.army.mil/index.htm>

<https://www.cool.navy.mil/overview.htm>

<https://augateway.maxwell.af.mil/ccaf/certifications/programs/>



And don't forget that the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services is in an active partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor to operate Job Centers in each county, usually centrally located in the county seat; contact information is easily accessible by searching online or in the phone book. The Job Centers are open to all residents, but are also staffed with counselors who specifically assist veterans. Periodically, the Job Centers work with local partners to host regional job fairs across the state, which we'll tell you about here.

The Ohio National Guard is also heavily involved in the issue of veteran employment. The Guard has partnered with AMVETS to create this web site, which features job postings for veterans:

<http://ohiovetscan.com/>

Veterans should always remember to treat finding a job like another mission in the military – know what your responsibilities are and prepare yourself.



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Are you physically prepared for a job search/hiring event? Whatever type of employment is being sought, there are some common tips to remember:

- Have a current resume;
- Have a cover letter that's geared to the type of job being sought;
- Present a professional appearance, e.g., suit and tie, or dress/skirt or pantsuit.

Persian Gulf War Era Vets Need to Apply for Ohio Veterans Bonus...

The clock is ticking for veterans of the Persian Gulf War era – they've got to get their applications in by December 31, 2013, to be able to receive the Ohio Veterans Bonus.

"December 2013 might seem like a long time away, but as the old saying goes, it will be here before you know it, so we want to spread the word now," Ohio Department of Veterans Services Director Tom Moe said. "We know that the military services were a lot larger during the time of the Gulf War, and since service anywhere in the world during the eligible time qualifies, we believe we've got a lot more who should be getting the bonus.

"If you're a veteran of that era, take the time to apply, it's a very simple process," Director Moe continued. "We also ask that our veterans of other eras, and our families, let everyone they know who served in the Persian Gulf era to get busy and apply before it's too late."

Based on estimates from the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs, the Ohio Department of Veterans Services believes roughly 75,000 Ohio-resident Persian Gulf War era are eligible. So far, a total of 8,174 of these veterans have received the bonus.

In total, from August 2010 through April 2012, the Ohio Veterans Bonus has paid over \$47.1 million to 56,327 Ohio resident service members and veterans, of all qualifying time periods, and eligible families. To date, the largest single group of veterans to receive the bonus are those who served in Iraq, amounting to 19,284 recipients.





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The Ohio Veterans Bonus is available to veterans who served more than 90 days active duty, not for training, during the periods of the Persian Gulf War and the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. For the Persian Gulf, the eligible period is from August 2, 1990 through March 3, 1991; for Afghanistan, from October 7, 2001 through a date to be determined by the President, and for Iraq, from March 19, 2003 and also through a to-be-determined date. Payment can be received for active duty service anywhere in the world during these periods, but is higher for veterans who served in the Persian Gulf or in Afghanistan or Iraq. Eligible veterans must have been Ohio residents at the time of their entry into the service, and must be Ohio residents currently.

The bonus pays \$100 a month to veterans who served in the Persian Gulf theater, or in the countries of Afghanistan or Iraq, 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 combat 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-theater 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 who want to apply can call toll-free to 1-877-OHIO VET (1-877-644-6838) option 2, visit: https://veteransbonus.ohio.gov/odvs_web/, or visit any county veterans service office (see www.ohiovet.gov for an interactive map of the county offices).

Ohio Veterans Homes Offer Great Opportunity for Veterans in Need of Care...



Do you know a veteran who is no longer able to live on their own? Or do you know a veteran who is capable of living independently but still has medical care issues?

The Ohio Veterans Homes has a place for them.

These facilities are state-operated nursing homes for eligible Ohio veterans. To qualify for admission, veterans must have served during a declared war or military conflict, must have been honorably discharged from the U.S. military and must have been Ohio residents for at least one year during his or her lifetime. The veteran must be infirm or disabled and incapable of earning a living.



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The Ohio Veterans Home - Sandusky is a 427-bed nursing home facility. Two levels of care are offered: standard care for those veterans in need of any intermediate level of care, and special care for veterans with Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia.

Sandusky also maintains 293 independent living beds in a domiciliary setting in what is known as the "Dom." The "Dom" provides shelter, food and necessary medical care to eligible veterans who are able to access their own care, meaning they do not need the nursing services provided elsewhere in the veterans' home. It is in a separate wing of the Sandusky complex. Each resident has their own room, with cable access, and a shared bath.

The Ohio Veterans Home - Georgetown offers 168 beds for nursing home care, including a 21-bed hospice unit. The types of care offered here mirror the Sandusky home, with standard care for any intermediate level of care, and special care for veterans suffering from Alzheimer's disease and other dementia.

Traditionally, the Ohio Veterans Homes have achieved excellent ratings on inspections conducted by both the Ohio Department of Health and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as above average ratings on family member satisfaction in an annual survey conducted by the Ohio Department of Aging.

For information on admission to the homes, see:
http://dvs.ohio.gov/veterans_homes.aspx

VA Getting a Leg Up on Agent Orange, Other Claims...

The VA announced this month that nearly 230,000 claims have already been processed for the three newest Agent-Orange related conditions through June 2012, including over 150,000 claims required to be processed under the *Nehmer* court decision related to Agent Orange claims. All these claims are part of the more than 1 million disability claims the VA processed in each of the last two years.

The good news for those with pending non-Agent Orange claims is that the near completion of the complex *Nehmer* claims is allowing the VA to redirect 1,200 employees who were dedicated to those claims back into the business of addressing the current backlog of other disability claims. "I am proud of our VA employees who worked hard to complete these Agent Orange claims, putting over \$3.6 billion into the hands of our Vietnam veterans and their survivors," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "We completed all of the Agent Orange *Nehmer* claims for living Veterans, and are now focusing on the fewer than 500 remaining that will benefit survivors."



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The three newest categories of Agent Orange claims stemmed from VA's 2010 amendment of its regulations to add ischemic heart disease, hairy cell and other chronic B-cell leukemias, and Parkinson's disease to the list of diseases presumed to be related to exposure to the herbicide used in Southeast Asia.

In addition to redirecting the 1,200 disability rating staff employees, the VA has developed a comprehensive transformation plan to achieve in 2015 Secretary Shinseki's goal of completing claims within 125 days at 98 percent accuracy. The plan is built on more than 40 designed, tested, and measured people, processing, and technology initiatives. The VA is now beginning the nationwide rollout of its new operating model and electronic processing system, known as the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS). All regional offices will be operating under the new model and using the new processing system by the end of 2013.



Veterans potentially eligible for Agent Orange claims include those who were exposed based on duty or visitation in Vietnam or on its inland waterways between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975; exposed along the demilitarized zone in Korea between April 1, 1968, and August 31, 1971; or exposed due to herbicide tests and storage at military bases within and outside of the United States.

Additional information about Agent Orange is on the VA's web site at:

<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/>

If you, or any veteran, believe you may have a claim related to Agent Orange, visit your county veterans service office to begin the claims process. Find yours by calling 1-877-OHIO-VET (1-877-644-6838) or locating your county on the map at:

www.ohiovet.gov

The VA has also established a web site, www.fastrack.va.gov, to assist veterans in filing claims.



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Departments of Aging and Veterans Services Announce War Era Story Project...

Ohio Department of Aging Director Bonnie Kantor-Burman and Ohio Department of Veterans Services Director Thomas N. Moe today announced the launch of the departments' joint War Era Story Project. The agencies are seeking stories by the people who lived them - from veterans of World War II, to the men, women and children who held steady on the home front.

"We want to continue to help our elders tell their personal tales of sacrifice, perseverance and recovery during some of the most challenging and influential times in our nation's history," said Bonnie Kantor-Burman, director of the Department of Aging. "Whether they fought in the war, raised a family or grew up during the tumultuous 1940s here at home, our elders can teach us many things about thriving during adversity."

"The Second World War forever changed America; it challenged the nation and the world in ways that today's young people may never experience," added Director Moe. "It remains critical that we learn from the generations that preceded us so that their lessons can help guide us into a prosperous future."

Stories should focus on the story-tellers' experiences during the war and the years that followed, and should be 500 to 1,000 words long. You may include photographs, but please note these cannot be returned.

For more information, see:

<http://aging.ohio.gov/news/pressreleases/2012/20120612.htm>

Wreath-Laying Ceremony Honors Ohio's Fallen...

The annual Governor's Wreath-Laying Ceremony was held at Veterans' Plaza of the Statehouse on May 25, just prior to Memorial Day weekend. Governor John Kasich, Lieutenant Governor Mary Taylor, Ohio Adjutant General Major General Deborah Ashenurst and Ohio Department of Veterans Services Director Tom Moe placed a wreath at the Plaza in commemoration of the 23 Ohioans killed in action in the past year.



Gold Star father John Snow, whose son, Army SPC Jesse Snow, posthumously earned a Silver Star for actions in Afghanistan, delivered a moving address that emphasized healing by remembering fallen



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loved ones and telling their story while continuing to move forward in life. Governor Kasich also provided remarks, saying that the bravery and sacrifice of each fallen service member on behalf of others earned them huge crowns in heaven. The Governor met with the families of the fallen prior to the ceremony.

A flyover by the 180th Fighter Wing of the Air National Guard followed the wreath laying, a three-volley rifle salute, and the playing of Taps. The names of this year's casualties were read as a bell tolled.

A video of the ceremony is at:

<http://www.ohiochannel.org/MediaLibrary/Media.aspx?fileId=134383>

Photos of the event can be viewed at:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ohioveteransservices/7269385582/in/photostream>