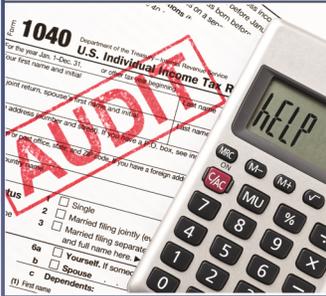




# Ohio Department of Veterans Services

★ *Monthly Update* ★

February 2013



*Welcome to the twenty-third 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](http://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.

## **Sequestration Concerns...**

Much has been written and broadcast about the effect on people and programs of sequestration, an automatic series of federal budget cuts due to take effect March 1 due to Congress' inability to reach an agreement on debt reduction.

The potential effect on the Department of Defense has been reported as very severe, but the good news for most veterans is that the Department of Veterans Affairs (the VA) escapes the looming budget ax.

It was reported last year when the sequestration issue first arose, and was recently affirmed by President Barack Obama, that veterans benefits will be exempt from the automatic cuts. This means that the programs administered by the VA, from health care, disability compensation, pension, education, and home loans will be unaffected if sequestration is implemented.

Tax time is once again upon us. Filing help is available for veterans at two sites in Central Ohio and at other volunteer tax-preparer sites statewide. There's also volunteer help available for serving military. For a run-down on how to find it, see page 10.

## **Questions about veterans benefits?**

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



# Ohio Department of Veterans Services

★ *Monthly Update* ★

But for veterans retired from a career of military service who use TRICARE health insurance, sequestration could have a negative impact in the coming months. The automatic budget cuts could force a delay in payments to health care providers, which could in turn result in a denial of service from the provider.

Actively serving military, their families, and military civilian employees will feel the greatest impact of sequestration. Although military pay, including subsistence and moving costs, is exempt, military leaders have said

that the cuts will force the curtailment of tuition assistance and family support programs, as well as accelerate the personnel cuts of the already-underway military service drawdowns. Training will also be cut, forcing longer deployments for units scheduled to deploy later this year and next year. The largest immediate cut, though, will be felt by civilians, who face the loss of roughly 20 percent of their annual income due to a reported 22 furlough days.



Regardless of how the March sequestration crisis turns out, however, continuing federal fiscal pressures could ultimately force serious consideration of changes to military retirement benefits and veterans' programs.

## **Veterans and Jobs in Ohio...**

**“Hiring Our Heroes” Job Fair:** The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is hosting a “Hiring Our Heroes” hiring fair in Dayton on March 26.

The fair takes place from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Dayton Marriott, 1414 S. Patterson Blvd., Dayton, OH 45409. It features a number of both national and local employers, and are open to veterans, active duty, Guard and Reserve members, and military spouses. For additional information and links to register for the event, see:

<http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/events?page=1>



# Ohio Department of Veterans Services

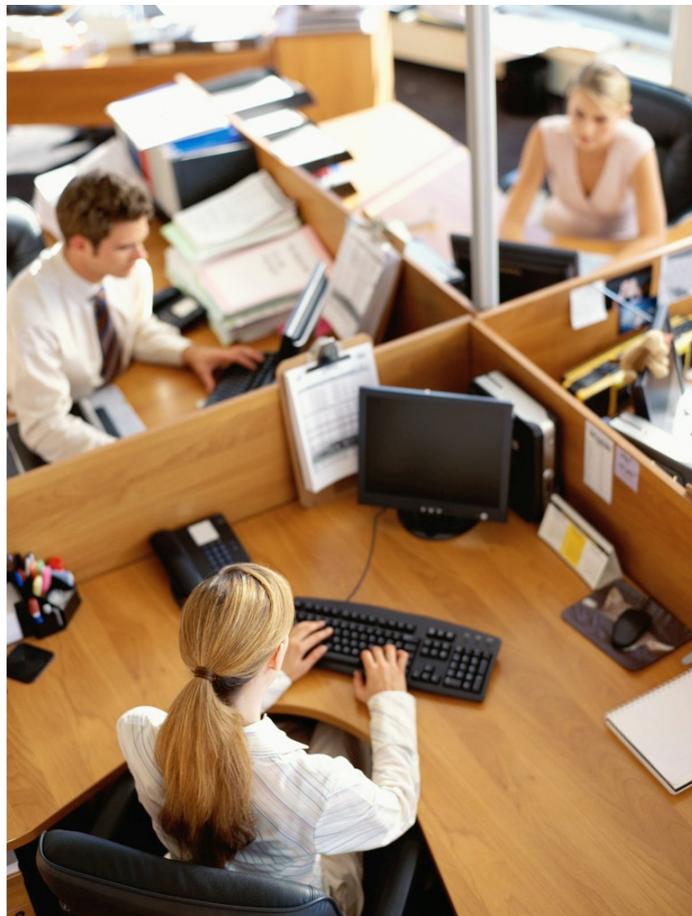
★ *Monthly Update* ★

**Jobs as a Mission:** Veterans today can benefit from a tremendous amount of good will on the part of businesses who are seeking to hire veterans. This includes national companies with outlets in Ohio such as AT&T, Chase, GE Aviation, GM, Home Depot, Verizon, Walmart, and Xerox, as well as many local companies.

But veterans must be prepared to take the employment “high ground.” It’s a mission to be accomplished, so seek out and use the tools available to find work – a job isn’t likely to fall into the lap of someone who’s sitting back and waiting for someone to visit them and make an offer.

With that in mind, we’re providing a description of the many tools we’ve mentioned as well as some helpful tips for your job search. Read on...

**Be Prepared for Interviews, and Know Your Skills:** Before you attend any job fair or visit any employer, remember these common tips:



- 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.

To prepare an effective resume, you have to be able to translate military experience to civilian experience. 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 in 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.



# Ohio Department of Veterans Services

★ *Monthly Update* ★

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/>

## Online Job Assistance:

“Ohio Means Jobs” is the state’s primary job web site, listing the vast majority of both private sector and public jobs which are open in Ohio. But the real key to this site for veterans is that it get you to the front of the line to be considered for the available jobs.

This site is a partnership between Ohio and Monster.com. Once on the site – at <https://ohiomeansjobs.com/omj/>, or simply type in “Ohiomeansjobs.com” – go to the “Job Seekers” area to find the opportunities for veterans.



But first, 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 that will automatically links 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>



# Ohio Department of Veterans Services

★ *Monthly Update* ★

**In-Person Job Assistance:** If you want to start a face-to-face job search, there's employment assistance available not far home. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (JFS) 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.

While the Job Centers are open to all residents, but are also staffed with counselors who specifically assist veterans. Their primary clients are veterans with barriers to employment, of which long-term unemployment definitely qualifies. Counselors can also assist with skills translation and resume preparation. The Job Centers also have resources to assist disabled veterans with qualifying for, finding and keeping meaningful employment.

Periodically, the Job Centers work with local partners to host regional job fairs across the state, which we'll tell you about here and in our social media.

**Job Assistance from the Ohio Guard:** The Ohio National Guard knows the importance of full-time jobs for part-time soldiers. To help, they've entered into a public/private partnership to create a site that features statewide job postings for veterans:

<http://ohiovetscan.com/>

The Guard is also actively working with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (JFS) to help soldiers returning from deployments in a program is known as "Battlefront to Homefront." The Guard is surveying soldiers in deployed units before they return home to determine how many need employment when they get back. JFS Job Center Counselors are then contacting these soldiers when they return home to work with them and help them find work.

**VRAP Still Open:** Veterans aged 35-60 and in need of work have the opportunity to be re-trained and re-employed in high-demand occupations nationwide through the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP). VRAP is part of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011. It offers up to 12 months of job training assistance under the Montgomery G.I. Bill at a recently-increased rate of \$1,564 per month in occupations ranging from management to business and financial, health care, maintenance, and transportation.

The VRAP program entered its second phase with the beginning of the new federal fiscal year on October 1, 2012 and will continue through March 31, 2014. However, this second phase is open to only 54,000 eligible veterans – including those who were too late to be accepted for the first phase. The program's success so far is an indication that any veteran who is thinking about applying should take action quickly to do so.



# Ohio Department of Veterans Services

★ *Monthly Update* ★

The first phase began in May 2012 and was open to 45,000 veterans. This number was exceeded prior to the September 30 deadline. Applications pending at that time are being considered for the second phase.

**Please note** that applications must be made online through the VA's eBenefits program. A web tool will assist veterans in working through this.

For more information, see: <http://benefits.va.gov/vow/education.htm>

## Vietnam Commemoration Coming Soon...

Preparations are in full swing for the commemoration of Vietnam Veterans Day in Ohio from March 26-29. This year is the first state-level commemoration of the day enacted by the Ohio General Assembly and signed by Governor John Kasich last year. Local veterans' organizations and communities are encouraged to hold their own events during this time.

The state commemoration also marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of America's role in the Vietnam War. The theme of the commemoration, expressed in the logo, is to finally welcome home and honor all those who served there, and to remember those who didn't make it back. Events will be held at the Ohio History Center at Interstate 71 and 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue and at the Statehouse.



The highlight of the four-day commemoration is the hosting of the traveling Vietnam Memorial Wall, known as the The Wall That Heals from Washington, D.C., at the Ohio History Center. A formal dinner will be held at the Statehouse, along with an opening ceremony at the Ohio History Center and a closing ceremony at the Statehouse. There will also be a final memorial ceremony at the Wall to close out the commemoration.

Another key component of the commemoration is education. Panel discussions will be held at the Ohio Historical Society for the first three days of the event. Separate panels will focus on the experiences of veterans, the suffering and endurance of prisoners of war, the roles played by female veterans, and a perspective on the war and its aftermath.



# Ohio Department of Veterans Services

★ *Monthly Update* ★



All events are open to veterans and the public. The Ohio Department of Veterans Services' web site contains a special section with a schedule of events and other details of the commemoration.

The special section also contains information on how to volunteer to support the commemoration. Volunteers are needed to help reach out to veterans and veteran organizations, staff the events, greet veterans, provide services to veterans and their families who are in attendance, and several other functions.

The special web section for the commemoration is at:

[http://dvs.ohio.gov/home/vietnam\\_veterans\\_commemoration.aspx](http://dvs.ohio.gov/home/vietnam_veterans_commemoration.aspx)

## Deadlines on the Horizon for Ohio Veterans Bonus...

The Ohio Veterans Bonus has been a highly successful thank you from the people of Ohio to veterans of the Persian Gulf, Iraq and Afghanistan eras. But Persian Gulf veterans may miss out on this tax-free payment unless they take action by December 31, 2013. The same is true for Iraq veterans by December 31, 2014.

The law that implemented the Ohio Veterans Bonus set a deadline of December 31, 2013 for Persian Gulf War era veterans to apply. Other provisions of this same law resulted in a December 31, 2014 application deadline for Iraq War veterans. This is because the law set the deadline for Iraq War era veterans as the third year following a date determined by the President





# Ohio Department of Veterans Services

★ *Monthly Update* ★

as the end of the conflict. Tentatively, this date is the termination date of the Iraq Campaign Medal, which was December 31, 2011 – making the deadline for Bonus application for service in Iraq December 31, 2014. No deadline has yet been announced for the Afghanistan War.

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 to December 31, 2011. Payment can also be received for active duty service anywhere in the world during these periods, but the Bonus 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.

More than 61,000 Ohio veterans and family members have received over \$51 million in payments from the Ohio Veterans Bonus.

If you're a veteran of another era but know someone who qualifies, or a family member or friend of someone who does, talk to them about the Bonus and tell them to be sure and take the time to apply. Many veterans won't take it seriously unless they hear it from someone else who served, or from someone in their family.

Anyone needing more information or who want to apply can call toll-free to 1-877-OHIO VET (1-877-644-6838) option 2, or see:

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

Veterans can also apply for the Bonus at their local Veterans Service Office in their home county. To find the location of your county office, see the Ohio map and select the appropriate county at:

<http://dvs.ohio.gov/>

Your County Veterans Service Office can also help you determine what other federal and state benefits you're eligible for and help you apply for them.



# Ohio Department of Veterans Services

★ *Monthly Update* ★

## VA to Open New Mental Health Facilities in Northeast Ohio to Help Homeless Vets...

The public is cordially invited to the Grand Opening of two new VA Community Resource and Referral Centers designed to help homeless veterans struggling with mental health issues.

Set for Wednesday, March 6, the openings are a twin morning and afternoon event at two different locations.

The Akron Community Resource and Referral Center (CRRC) will hold its grand opening at 9 a.m. at 111 East Voris Street, Akron, OH 44311.

The Cleveland CRCC and Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center (PRCC) will be held at 1:30 p.m. at 7000 Euclid Avenue, Suite 202, Cleveland, OH 44103.



Both centers were developed in a collaboration between the VA Healthcare System of Ohio, the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA, and local community services to end and prevent veteran homelessness. The Akron center will offer assistance and referrals. The Cleveland center goes a step farther to help homeless veterans develop skills, support systems, and wellness strategies to improve their quality of life and keep them off the streets.

Anyone interested in attending one or both of the Grand Openings should RSVP by February 27 to Muriel Robinson at (216) 791-3800, ext. 4016 or [Muriel.Robinson@va.gov](mailto:Muriel.Robinson@va.gov).

## Tax Time and Help Available for both Veterans and Serving Military...

We may want to avoid them, but as the old saying goes, the only two sure things in life are death and taxes. But there's help available for veterans and military service members to make getting through the 2013 tax filing season a bit more bearable.



# Ohio Department of Veterans Services

★ *Monthly Update* ★

Central Ohio veterans and families can get direct filing help on Saturday, March 2 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Columbus Downtown High School, 364 S. 4<sup>th</sup> St. The help is courtesy of volunteers from J.P. Morgan Chase in partnership with the Tax Time coalition. Veterans whose household income in 2012 was \$60,000 or less are eligible.

Eligible veterans can also get free tax help through April 12 at American Legion Post 430, 3227 E. Livingston Ave., Columbus. Veterans with household incomes of \$60,000 or less in 2012 qualify for this service. Call 2-1-1 to make an appointment for tax help from IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) preparers.

VITA sites throughout Ohio serve eligible veterans and other eligible Ohioans who seek free help preparing their tax returns. Veterans and others 60 years and older can also receive free help at sites statewide operated by volunteers from the IRS Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) program. The VITA income restrictions also apply to TCE.

A tool at <http://irs.treasury.gov/freetaxprep/> locates and lists local VITA/TCE site addresses, hours and appointment contact information.

Many military service members can receive free tax help from the Ohio Society of CPAs. The Society's "Operation CPA" is open to any Ohio resident serving in the armed forces outside Ohio or deployed overseas. Spouses and family members of qualified military personnel may also use this service. For information or help, call the Ohio Society of CPAs at (888)959-1212 or e-mail [cpanswers@ohio-cpa.com](mailto:cpanswers@ohio-cpa.com).

Finally, it's helpful for everyone to know that Ohio offers a number of tax advantages to military personnel and certain veterans. Military income from service 30 or more days outside Ohio is not taxed by the state. Military retirement and survivor benefits are exempt from Ohio taxation. The Ohio Veterans Bonus is state- and federal tax-free. For more information, visit the Military section of the Ohio Department of Taxation website at: [http://www.tax.ohio.gov/ohio\\_individual/individual/military\\_tax\\_provisions.aspx](http://www.tax.ohio.gov/ohio_individual/individual/military_tax_provisions.aspx).