



May 2013



Veteran Newsletter



Ohio's recent casualties and their Gold Star families were honored by both Governor John R. Kasich and the General Assembly on May 21 in a highly emotional day at the Ohio Statehouse. Read more on pages 1, 2.

Welcome to 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.

Ohio's Fallen and Gold Star Families Honored This Month...

Ohio's recently-fallen military service members and their families were honored on May 21 at the Governor's Wreath-Laying Ceremony in the Statehouse Atrium. The Ohio General Assembly also provided honors at a Joint Session in the House Chambers immediately preceding the wreath-laying. The events were charged with emotion on a day when 12 Ohioans were honored for making the ultimate sacrifice for freedom.

Governor John R. Kasich met privately with families prior to both ceremonies. He presented each with an engraved case, bearing an Ohio flag, in honor of their loved one.

Have questions about veterans benefits? Call 1-877-OHIOVET (1-877-644-6838)



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The General Assembly awarded each fallen service member's next-of-kin the Ohio Medal of Distinction, in the name of those lost.

During the Wreath-Laying Ceremony, Governor Kasich spoke emotionally of how the families told him that their loved one had died doing what they wanted to do, and of how the family's faith has sustained them since.

Gold Star brother Josh White also spoke at the ceremony. Josh, a detective with the Maryland State Police from Hagerstown, Maryland, lost his sister, 1LT Ashley White-Stumpf, in October 2011 in Afghanistan. He spoke movingly of how hard Ashley worked to fulfill her dreams of military service, her courage in the face of difficult circumstances overseas, and her family's legacy of pride despite their loss.

Video (<http://www.ohiochannel.org/MediaLibrary/Media.aspx?fileId=139015>) and photos (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ohioveteransservices/sets/72157633599889930>) of the Wreath-Laying Ceremony can be viewed online.

Time Running Out for Gulf War Era Veterans to Collect Ohio Veterans Bonus.....

If you served on active duty in 1991 during the time of the Persian Gulf War, time is rapidly slipping away to apply for the tax-free Ohio Veterans Bonus.

The deadline for applications for veterans of the Gulf War era is December 31, 2013.

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 the same law that authorized the Bonus resulted in a December 31, 2014 application deadline for Iraq War veterans. 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,



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and for Iraq, from March 19, 2003 to December 31, 2011. Payment can also be received for 90 days or more of active duty service, not for training, anywhere in the world during these periods. However, 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.

Gulf War era veterans should waste no time applying – December 31 will be here before you know it.

Anyone needing more information or who wants 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/

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.



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Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame is Looking for Deserving Veterans By June 30...

Nominations are due Sunday, June 30 for this year's class of the Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame.

The Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame does not recognize veterans for their military rank or deeds. Rather, its purpose is to honor Ohio veterans who, after their military service, put their skills and abilities to work in their local communities – and by their continued service and positive accomplishments, inspired their fellow citizens.

There are currently 443 members of the Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame. They include the six Ohio military veterans who were elected President of the United States, all Medal of Honor recipients from Ohio, astronauts, government officials, police officers, community leaders, and veterans' advocates.

The Hall of Fame Executive Committee, made up of veterans, serves as advisors for the Hall of Fame and selects not more than 20 inductees annually from nominations provided by all citizens of Ohio. Men and women chosen for induction into the Hall come from all eras, all branches of service and all walks of life. The members of the Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame are honored in a permanent display on the second floor of the Riffe Center in downtown Columbus.

Additional information, nomination guidelines and forms, as well stories of past inductees, are available at:

http://dvs.ohio.gov/veterans_hall_of_fame.aspx





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VA Aims to Reduce Backlog, Provide Additional Services to Women Veterans....

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is getting aggressive in its goal of eliminating the claims backlog by 2015. The VA announced on April 19 that it has implemented a new strategy to speed up approval of compensation claims that have waited one year or longer.

Effective as of the announcement, VA claims raters will make provisional rating decisions on claims in the inventory which are one year old or older, based on the evidence currently available with the claim. This will enable veterans who receive a favorable rating to begin collecting compensation benefits more quickly. Veterans will then have up to a year to submit additional evidence for consideration before the VA issues a final decision.

The VA announced another backlog-reduction initiative on May 15. The agency has mandated overtime through the end of fiscal year 2013 (through Sept. 30, 2013) for claims processors in its 56 regional benefits offices. The overtime hours are aimed at helping to reduce the backlog by targeting high-priority claims for homeless veterans and those claiming financial hardship, the terminally ill, former Prisoners of War, Medal of Honor recipients, and veterans who file Fully Developed Claims. The VA considers a claim to be Fully Developed when it contains all available supporting evidence, such as private treatment records and notice of federal treatment records, the first time it is submitted, and the veteran certifies that they have no additional evidence.



In other VA news, the agency opened up a new hotline on April 23 – 1-855-VA-WOMEN – specifically to receive and respond to questions from veterans, their families and caregivers about VA services and resources available to women veterans.

The hotline is staffed by VA employees who are knowledgeable about benefits and health care services available to women veterans. Callers can be linked to additional information or, in more urgent circumstances, referred to homeless and mental health services.

The women's hotline is particularly timely since women make up nearly 15 percent of today's active duty military and 18 percent of National Guard and Reserve forces. Since 2000, the number of women using VA health care more than doubled, from nearly 160,000 in 2000 to more than 354,000 in 2012.



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CERT Offers Veterans a Chance to Continue to Serve...

Veterans who have given years to military service also have much to offer in the way of community service, particularly in times of natural disasters.

Ohio veterans can become key players in community support by becoming a volunteer for their Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). CERTs exist to augment first responders. In the event of a major disaster, the first responders who provide critical fire and medical services will likely not be able to meet the demand for these services. The numbers of potential victims, communication failures and road blockages could prevent emergency services from reaching the people they serve. At this point, people will need to rely on each other for help both for life saving as well as life sustaining needs.

Many veterans already possess these skills from military training, and all veterans have skills in leadership and organization, as well as the desire to serve. CERT provides a way to continue to do that after the uniform is hung up.

CERT is active in many Ohio counties, and is looking for new members. Find out more at:

<http://www.citizencorps.gov/cc/CertIndex.do?reportsForState&cert&state=OH>

Veterans and Jobs in Ohio...

Please read below for the latest information on jobs for Ohio veterans. If you're in search of employment, even if you've read much of this information before, it's still a valuable guide. Please share this information with other veterans.

Companies Stepping Up to the Plate: In recent weeks, other companies have announced initiatives to hire veterans, nationally as well as in Ohio. They include AT&T, Chase Bank, and Ohio's insurance companies. In addition, job training that could lead to employment is being offered through Stark State College and Eastern Gateway Community College (both specifically targeted to shale jobs), Cincinnati State College for industrial jobs, and Siemens Corporation for engineering manufacturing jobs. Find out more at individual company or school web sites.





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For a Job Fair, or any Employment Event, 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.



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:

You can also look for jobs online. “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/omi/>, 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.



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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. The link is below:

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

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.





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Memorial Day Honors Heroes...

Those who have served in the military will tell you that there are heroes in every generation. Many were recognized with formal decorations for bravery in combat. Others were simply the person next to their buddies who never quit, who put himself above everyone else, or the person who carried the pride of their family into a foreign land.

Memorial Day is the last Monday in May, set aside each year to honor all of America's heroes who were never able to make it home – to remember those who gave, in the words of Abraham Lincoln in the Gettysburg Address, their "last full measure of devotion" for our freedom. It's not by accident that America today remains a strong and free nation. The way of life we're privileged to enjoy as Americans has been bought and paid for, many times over, with the blood of those who have stepped forward to defend us.

May we never forget that. And may the heroes of all generations rest in peace, sustained and honored by the eternal thanks of a grateful nation.

