

## **THE VOW TO HIRE HEROES ACT OF 2011**

The VOW to Hire Heroes Act became law on November 21, 2011. The legislation was passed to assist those who have served our country in the armed forces to obtain the assistance and training to help them pursue employment. The bill assists current service members separating from military service transition their skills into civilian employment opportunities and assists unemployed veterans by providing additional training opportunities and tax incentives.

**Veterans Retraining Assistance Program** - The VOW Act authorizes a Veterans Retraining Assistance Program in order to provide training assistance to unemployed Veterans of past eras. Participants may receive up to 12 months of assistance at the full-time payment rate under the Montgomery GI Bill-Active Duty program. To qualify, a Veteran must:

- Be between the ages of 35 and 60
- Be unemployed (special consideration for Veterans who have been unemployed for over 26 weeks)
- Have an other than dishonorable discharge
- Not be eligible for any other VA education benefit program
- Not be in receipt of compensation due to unemployability
- Not be enrolled in a federal or state job training program

The program is limited to 45,000 participants during fiscal year 2012 and to 54,000 participants from October 1, 2012, through March 31, 2014. Participants must be enrolled in a VA-approved program of education offered by a community college or technical school. Applications will be submitted through the Department of Labor and benefits paid by the VA. The Department of Labor will provide employment assistance to every veteran who participates upon completion of the program.

**Vocational Rehabilitation Services** - The VOW Act allows veterans who have completed a Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (VR&E) rehabilitation program and who have exhausted their unemployment benefits 12 months of an additional rehabilitation program under VR&E.

**Improving the Transition Assistance Program** - The VOW Act strengthens current transitional programs for veterans entering the civilian job market by requiring most members of the Armed Forces to participate in the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) while moving to civilian life. TAP will prepare them with career counseling, resume and interview guidance, and realistic evaluations of the labor market in the career fields they hope to enter.

**Tax Credits for Hiring Unemployed Veterans** - The VOW Act provides tax credits to employers who hire veterans who have been unemployed for more than 6 months: \$5,600 for veterans and \$9,600 for disabled veterans.

**Transitioning to Civil Service** - The VOW Act allows transitioning service members to apply and compete for federal jobs while still finishing their service. Prior to this act, service members had to wait for separation from the military to apply for federal jobs, which can often take many months to obtain.

**Translating Military Skills to Civilian Employment** - The VOW Act mandates a Department of Labor review of the different skills service members learn in various sectors of the military and what career training or certifications would translate well into obtaining employment in the civilian sector.