

**Joint VA/DOL Veterans Retraining Assistance Program Reaches Important Milestone - Over 25,000 Unemployed Veterans Have Applied**  
**Online Site Opened May 15 for Veterans to Apply for Education Benefits**

WASHINGTON - More than 25,000 unemployed Veterans between the ages of 35 and 60 have already applied for new benefits to cover education costs for up to one year through a joint Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Labor (DOL) program that focuses on retraining up to 99,000 Veterans for high-demand jobs.

"This important milestone demonstrates how meaningful this tool will be to help our Nation's unemployed Veterans receive the education and training they need to find rewarding employment in a high-demand career field," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "Veterans realize this is a great opportunity to hone the skills they need to be competitive in the job market, and this program contributes directly to enhancing the strength of our Nation's economy."

Forty-five thousand Veterans can start receiving benefits during the current fiscal year. VA began accepting applications on May 15. A maximum of 54,000 billets will be available for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, 2012.

"No veteran should have to fight for a job at home after fighting to protect our nation," said Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis. "This training program focused on high-demand jobs will help unemployed Veterans expand their skills and compete for good jobs that need them," she added.

As part of a provision of the Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, the Veteran Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) allows qualifying Veterans to receive up to 12 months of assistance equal to the full-time Montgomery GI Bill - Active Duty rate, currently \$1,473 per month.

Veterans can apply now on a first-come, first-serve basis for VRAP. Unemployed Veterans should act quickly and apply online to avoid missing out on this great opportunity. Assistance under this benefit program will end on March 31, 2014.

To complete the application, Veterans must know their direct deposit information (bank routing number and account number), the name and location of the school they will attend, the program they wish to pursue, and the high-demand occupation they are working toward

To qualify Veterans must:

- Be 35-60 years old, unemployed on the day of application, and not dishonorably discharged;
- Start education or training after July 1, 2012, in a VA-approved program of education offered by a community college or technical school leading to an associate degree, non-college degree or a certificate for a high-demand occupation as defined by DOL;
- Not be eligible for any other VA education benefit program, such as Post-9/11 GI Bill, Montgomery GI Bill, or Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment;
- Not be enrolled in a federal or state job-training program within the last 180 days;
- Not receive VA compensation at the 100 percent rate due to individual unemployability.

Upon completion, DOL will contact participants within 30 days after their training to help them find good jobs that use their newly learned skills.

"VA has many partners around the country who are helping us to spread the good news about this unique benefit, which provides our unemployed Veterans with the opportunity to obtain the skills they need to be competitive in the high-demand job market," added Under Secretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey. "It is encouraging that we have reached this milestone; however, there are still nearly 20,000 slots to fill by September 30," said Ismael "Junior" Ortiz, DOL's Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Veterans Employment and Training Service. "It is critical to continue to spread the word about this program to unemployed Veterans or those who may know an unemployed Veteran," Ortiz adds.

For more information on VOW, VRAP, the definition of "high-demand occupations," and how to apply, Veterans may go to the website at [www.benefits.va.gov/VOW](http://www.benefits.va.gov/VOW), or call VA's Call Centers toll free at 1-800-827-1000. Veterans may also access the VRAP application online at <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov> through eBenefits, a joint project of the Department of Defense and VA. Veterans are also encouraged to visit the nearly 3,000 One-Stop Career Centers across the nation for assistance. To find the center near you visit [www.servicelocator.org](http://www.servicelocator.org). For more information about DOL's Veterans programs, go to <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>.