



DOL News Brief

December 9, 2010

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Homeless Veterans by 2015

End homelessness among veterans by 2015. That was the message of the National Forum on Homelessness Among Veterans held earlier



this week in Arlington, Va. Secretary Solis delivered opening remarks at the two-day forum sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs and United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. "America has an obligation to the many mothers and fathers, daughters and sons, who've put their lives on the line for each and every one of us. They've answered their call to duty and now it's time for us to answer ours," urged Secretary Solis to an audience of more than 400 from the VA system and community-based organizations. Forum participants explored strategies for eliminating homelessness completely for the more than 100,000 veterans struggling to make ends meet without a home. DOL's Veterans' Employment and Training Service and Employment and Training Administration also participated in the forum, sharing best practices from department programs that serve homeless veterans and their families.

- [View the Slideshow](#)
- [Read the Secretary's Remarks](#)

What's Hot

House Votes on, But Fails to Pass, Mine Safety Bill

The U.S. House of Representatives voted Wednesday on the Robert C. Byrd Mine Safety Protection Act of 2010. The bill, named for the late senator and mine safety advocate from West Virginia, would increase enforcement powers for the Mine Safety and Health Administration, enabling the agency, for example, to more easily shut down mines with serious compliance problems. The measure, however, with a vote of 214-193, failed to capture the necessary two-thirds majority. Secretary Solis expressed her disappointment, saying, "This commonsense legislation, championed by Chairman George Miller of the Education and Labor Committee, would be an important step forward in strengthening safety laws for our nation's miners." She remains optimistic, however. "Despite the outcome of today's vote in the House, it is important to note that a majority of the members showed they have run out of patience with those mine operators who refuse to take the safety and health of miners seriously," said Solis.

- [Read the Secretary's Statement](#)

For a Future, a DREAM

"No investment yields as great a return as the one we make in people."

That's how Secretary Solis explained her relentless support for the Development, Relief, and Education for Minors (DREAM) Act. In advance of Congressional action on the measure, Solis joined President Obama and other members of the administration in calling for its passage. A majority of House members voted in favor of the bill on Wednesday night, and the Senate may take it up as early as Saturday. The DREAM Act would provide a process by which certain students and members of the military — who excelled through hard work and demonstrated their positive contributions to the nation — can obtain conditional nonimmigrant status and, after a period of time, lawful permanent residence.

- [Read the Secretary's Statement](#)
- [Read the Secretary's Statement – en español](#)
- [See How Members of the House voted on the DREAM Act](#)

"You're Watching DOL"



You know something very special is going on when "The Maestro" (also known as former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan) and

New York Times columnist and Pulitzer Prize winning author Thomas Friedman pop in the Labor Department's HQ for a visit. And last Friday was indeed special, as the CNBC morning news program "Squawk Box" broadcasted live from the Frances Perkins Building's Labor Hall of Fame. Surrounded by artifacts and displays

National News

Bipartisan Framework to Extend UI and Help Middle-Class Families

Earlier this week, President Obama laid out a framework for a bipartisan agreement that would extend Unemployment Insurance and keep the taxes paid by middle-class families from increasing. The proposal provides a critical extension of unemployment benefits through the end of 2011. Without it, by the end of December, 2 million men and women would see their unemployment benefits come to an end. Over the next year, their ranks would increase to more than 7 million people. The framework also avoids a

honoring some of the greatest labor leaders and worker advocates in American history, CNBC anchors Becky Quick, Carl Quintanilla and Joe Kernen conducted interviews and reported the day's business news. Secretary Solis joined for an early morning interview, and CNBC Washington correspondent Hampton Pearson provided a detailed report on how DOL employees ensure the integrity of market-moving economic data when it is released.

- [View the Slideshow](#)
- [Watch Secretary Solis' Interview](#)
- [Watch Hampton Pearson's Interview](#)

Experts on the Job

What will it take to get good, high-paying jobs growing in the U.S.?

That question was poised to Secretary Solis and a panel of experts during a



fascinating discussion last week sponsored by The Hamilton Project and the Center for American Progress. Joining Solis and moderator John Podesta, president and CEO of CAP, were former Congressman Richard Gephardt, president and CEO of Gephardt Group Government Affairs; Penny Pritzker, chairman of the board, TransUnion and Pritzker Realty Group; and Michael Spence, nobel laureate and professor emeritus in economics at Stanford University. The panel explored the deep structural issues in the labor market that have been developing over the last three decades; and, as the economy begins to recover, what policymakers must do to ensure that the U.S. remains economically competitive in a rapidly changing global economy.

- [Watch the Video](#)
- [View the Slideshow](#)

ILAB Reports on the Horizon

Next week, Secretary Solis will unveil three new reports on international child labor and forced labor around the world. The reports, developed by the department's Bureau of International Labor Affairs, are in accordance with the Trade and Development Act of 2000, Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2005 and Executive Order 13126 of 1999. Stay tuned next week for the release of the reports and join us for a live webcast of the press conference.

- [View the Live Webcast](#)

The Greenspan Perspective

\$3,000 tax increase for the typical working family and includes measures for jump-starting growth and spurring private sector job creation, including an important payroll tax cut that will help more than 155 million workers and provide nearly \$120 billion in tax relief next year. "In the midst of political rhetoric, it can be far too easy to lose sight of the fact that this economy belongs to all of us — whatever our income or employment status. The president understands that, and he is leading the way on a difficult but important compromise," said Secretary Solis. "I urge federal legislators to support this agreement, not just because it is the right thing to do for those who are desperately looking for work this holiday season, but because it is the right thing to do for everyone in America."

- [Read the Secretary's Statement](#)
- [Watch the Latest "White House White Board"](#)

DOL Working For You

Army Vet Pioneers Joint Job Corps/VETS Program



Twenty-two year old Army veteran Kiersten Coats is one of the scores of pioneers in a new demonstration program — co-sponsored by DOL's Employment and Training Administration's Job Corps program and the Veterans' Employment and Training Service — designed to help service personnel transition from the military to civilian life. A student at the Earl C. Clements Job Corps Center in Morganfield, Ky., Coats is studying electrical work, carpentry and landscaping with an eye towards graduating soon with a certificate in facilities maintenance. Coats said the program "is a continual

learning experience" helping her to acquire new skills for the job market. The program provides an accelerated, customized curriculum developed specifically for veterans who are counseled in job searching, resume drafting, and job interviewing skills. They are then assigned to a career transition counselor who assists with job placement or enrollment in higher education. Besides Clements, the new program is offered at Atterbury Job Corps Center in Edinburgh, Ind., and the Excelsior Springs Job Corps Center in Excelsior Springs, Mo.

EBSA Advisor Lays Down the Law, Recovers \$127,000 in Back Claims

Although Employee Benefits Security Administration intern Lois La Londe was faced with an upcoming bar exam, she put aside studying to help an elderly woman whose union sponsored health plan denied payment for medical claims after a botched surgery. The plan insisted that the participant seek redress of her claims by consulting an attorney and filing a lawsuit. But an attorney advised against legal action, which left the woman with mounting medical bills. Enter La Londe, who helped the woman fulfill certain legal requirements that satisfied the plan's language and led to the woman recovering \$127,000 in back claims. "The plan was more cooperative and sympathetic" once EBSA got involved said La Londe, who not only passed the bar but applied for and was recently hired as a DOL Benefits Advisor in New York. "It makes me feel great that we can assist people," she said.



News You Can Use

OSHA Extends Comment Period on Noise Interpretation

Responding to business groups and other stakeholders, the Occupational



After his appearance on CNBC's "Squawk Box" — which broadcasted live from the Labor Department last Friday, Dr. Alan Greenspan, 13th

Chairman of the Federal Reserve, met with staff of the department's Office of Unemployment Insurance. Hosted by Assistant Secretary for Employment and Training Jane Oates, Greenspan provided his insights, and asked for those of the UI staff, on the impact of the unemployment insurance program during the recent recession and ongoing recovery. He also discussed current events and the extension of unemployment benefits.

- [View the Slideshow](#)

Green Scene:

SF Job Corps Center Awarded Best Green Community Project

A one-acre farm at California's Treasure Island Job Corps Center was recently recognized by the San Francisco Mayor's Office as Best Green



Community Project for demonstrating a marked impact on water conservation, storm water reduction, waste reduction, renewable energy and energy efficiency. The farm, funded through the Recovery Act, serves as an outdoor classroom for Job Corps students. It adds a new dimension to the center's well-respected culinary programs, affording many students their first opportunity to plant and harvest herbs and vegetables. Students also learn to incorporate seasonal produce into their menus and speak intelligently about the origins of foods they use.

Making Construction Jobs Safer



Bringing about a significant reduction in the number of injuries and deaths in the construction industry is a major goal in the Department of Labor's

six-year Strategic Plan, Assistant Secretary for Occupational Safety and Health, Dr. David Michaels, told an advisory panel this week. Speaking to the Advisory Committee for Construction Safety and Health, he highlighted steps the agency is taking to prevent worker

Safety and Health Administration is extending by 90 days the official comment period on its proposed interpretation of "feasible administrative or engineering controls" for occupational noise. Interested parties are encouraged to submit comments by March 21, 2011. The agency also announced that it will hold a stakeholder meeting before the end of the comment period to listen to concerns from businesses and workers. "We're very eager to get input from those parties who would be affected by this proposed interpretation," said Dr. David Michaels, assistant secretary of labor for occupational safety and health. "Easily applied administrative or engineering controls can and must be used to protect workers. There are plenty of employers out there who play by the rules and want to do the right thing, and we're hopeful we can work with them to craft a policy that's good for all."

- [Read the News Release](#)

Campaign for Disability Employment Announces New Outreach Tools

The Campaign for Disability Employment — funded by DOL's Office of Disability Employment Policy — announced a series of new products that are designed to promote positive employment outcomes for people with disabilities. Among the new products is a website featuring practical ideas and resources that are designed to engage employers, people with disabilities, and the general public. Also available are video public service announcements including the Campaign's "I Can" PSA and winner of the What Can You Do? video contest, "Meet Sue." All of the Campaign for Disability Employment's outreach tools are available either for order or download.

- [Read the News Release](#)
- [Learn More](#)

Recovery Highlights

Training Institute Helps Grantees Stay on Track

The department works every day to ensure that grant-funded programs lead to jobs for participants. This week, more than 500 grantees funded through the Recovery Act joined DOL staff in Leesburg, Va., for a technical assistance institute. Co-hosted by the National Governors Association, the three days of workshops allowed grantees to affirm what it takes to operate a successful program that places workers in jobs, or what steps to take to get a program on track. Assistant Secretary of Labor for the Employment and Training Administration Jane Oates joined the group on Wednesday, and told grantees that successful programs are those that are preparing participants for jobs that are in demand by employers today.

Spotlight on States: Idaho

Workers Receive Job Placement and Re-Employment Support

Earlier this week, the department provided a \$709,864 National Emergency Grant increment to continue to provide re-employment and retraining services to workers affected by the closing of Dell Inc.'s call center in Twin Falls, Idaho. "These workers will continue to receive career guidance, job placement assistance, skills training and other re-employment services that will help them as they seek out good jobs in promising industries," said Secretary Solis. "There is no doubt that the job market remains challenging, but we will make every effort to ensure that these Idahoans seeking employment are receiving the help they deserve."

- [Read the News Release](#)

deaths and injuries. This includes outreach to Spanish-speaking workers, a new cranes and derricks standard, increased residential roofing protections, and finalizing rules to protect workers from electrocution and being caught in confined spaces. In addition to new rules and stepped-up enforcement, Michaels also highlighted training programs and cooperative efforts that will make construction sites safer places to work, including OSHA's partnership with local building inspectors that effectively expands the agency's eyes and ears. Additionally, implementing a standard requiring businesses to set in place an injury and illness prevention program would engage employers with their workers to find and fix hazards before an employee is injured or killed, or an OSHA inspector pays a visit.

OFCCP: Employer of the Year

The Wisconsin Council of the Blind and Visually Impaired recently named the department's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs



Midwest Region their "Employer of the Year," during an awards ceremony in Milwaukee. The award is given to an employer who has made a difference in the lives of people who have a vision disability. The OFCCP Milwaukee District Office hired William Meeker, who was born with retinitis pigmentosa, as a compliance officer 21 years ago. "My co-workers have always been very supportive of me," said Meeker. "The key for me was training, because I lost my sight from a progressive disease, I had to learn blindness skills and living skills as an adult."

Wage Theft Awareness Day



DOL's Denver regional agencies, including the Wage and Hour Division, Occupational Safety and Health Administration and Women's Bureau, along with Secretary's Regional Representative Dusti Gurule, participated in "Wage Theft Day of Action and Awareness," on Nov. 18.

"Today marked the launching point for increased coordination and partnership among the Department of Labor, the Colorado Department of Labor & Employment and the many community partners and stakeholders throughout the state of Colorado," said Gurule (pictured). "Secretary Solis has mandated that we work together to expand outreach efforts to empower and inform vulnerable workers that can make the difference

DOL in Action

DOL Finds Multiple Violations at Michigan Blueberry Farms



Labor Department investigators have assessed \$78,040 in civil money penalties against 17 blueberry growers and nine farm labor contractors in several Western Michigan counties for migrant housing and child labor law violations. Additionally, the growers were ordered to pay \$27,874 in back wages to hand-harvest workers for wage and overtime

violations. "Some of the migrant housing conditions we found during our investigations were deplorable," said James Smith, district director of the Wage and Hour Division's Detroit office. "Among the violations were dilapidated building structures, overcrowding, lack of hot water for bathing and rooms infested by insects. These conditions certainly violated the law, as well as common decency."

- [Read the News Release](#)

Database to Recruit Workers with Disabilities

DOL's Office for Disability Employment Policy and the Department of Defense launched the 2011 Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities database earlier this week. This resource is intended to assist federal and private-sector employers in identifying workers with disabilities. The more than 2,200 candidates in this year's database represent all academic backgrounds and are seeking summer or full-time employment. Students have been interviewed by recruiters from various federal agencies and recruiters can search for candidates who meet their hiring needs. "This database is filled with talented students who are highly motivated to prove their skills in the workplace," said ODEP Assistant Secretary Kathy Martinez.

- [Read the News Release](#)

OSHA Fines US Minerals Facility in Illinois \$396,000 for 28 Violations

The U.S. Labor Department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration has cited U.S. Minerals LLC with willfully exposing workers to dangerously high levels of hazardous dust, and not providing adequate breathing protection and training for workers at its facility in Coffeen, Ill. The company, headquartered in Dyer, Ind., has been issued a total of 28 health and safety citations with proposed penalties of \$396,000. "This is the fourth U.S. Minerals facility where very serious violations were cited in the past three months, clearly indicating these problems are widespread and systemic," said Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA Dr. David Michaels.

- [Read the News Release](#)

DOL Recovers Nearly \$339,000 and Debars NY Contractor

The Labor Department has recovered nearly \$339,000 in back wages for 27 workers employed as electricians by Sant-Tec Electric Inc., a company incorporated in both New York and New Jersey. An investigation by the department's Wage and Hour Division revealed that the company and its officials had violated wage and benefit requirements of the Davis-Bacon and Related Acts and the Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act on three federally-funded housing construction projects in New York City. In addition to paying the back wages, Sant-Tec Electric, President Manuel Montesino and Human Resources Manager Olga Pena will be debarred from working on future federally-funded contracts for a period of three years.

- [Read the News Release](#)

between their becoming victims of wage theft and their helping others in their workplace understand the protections of the law."

Upcoming Deadlines & Events

OFCCP — 12 Reasons Why Contractors Get in Trouble

- [December 21 — Richmond, VA](#)

OFCCP — ABCs of "Understanding the AAP Requirements"

- [December 15 — Philadelphia, PA](#)
- [December 16 — Los Angeles, CA](#)

OFCCP — Compliance Assistance Seminar for Construction Contractors

- [December 14 — Richmond, VA](#)
- [December 16 — Mountainside, NJ](#)

OFCCP — Compliance Assistance Seminar for Supply and Service Contractors

- [December 14 — Mountainside, NJ](#)
- [December 15 — Nashville, TN](#)
- [December 22 — Nashville, TN](#)
- [December 28 — Mountainside, NJ](#)
- [December 29 — Nashville, TN](#)

OFCCP — EEO Obligations of Construction Contractors

- [December 16 — Baltimore, MD](#)

OFCCP — How to Compile an Affirmative Action Program and Support Data for a Compliance Review

- [December 28 — Richmond, VA](#)

OSHA — Advisory Committee on Construction Safety and Health Meeting

- [December 10 — Washington, DC](#)

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- In this week's newsletter: Ending Homeless Vets by 2015; American DREAM; DOL in Action; and much more <http://s.dol.gov/B> 2 days ago
- @NASWAORG Thinking about #R2R2010, what do you think? 2 days ago

WHD Recovers More Than \$209,000 for 29 Workers

An HR services company based in Novato, Calif., has paid \$209,176 in back wages to 29 workers following an investigation by DOL's Wage and Hour Division that found employees were misclassified as exempt from overtime pay. Enwisen Inc. had paid the employees on a salary basis when they should have received time and one-half their regular rates for the hours beyond 40 in a week. "We are committed to ensuring that employees who should be paid overtime receive that pay," said George Friday Jr., regional administrator of the Wage and Hour Division office in San Francisco.

"Employers who do not carefully assess whether an employee's duties truly exempt him or her from overtime pay coverage may find a Wage and Hour Division investigator knocking at their door."

- [Read the News Release](#)

\$638,000 Recovered for NJ Computer Programmers

Following a consent order obtained by the Department of Labor, Newark-based Peri Software Solutions Inc. and its owner, Saravanan Periasamy, must pay \$638,449 in back wages and interest to 67 workers for violating the H-1B provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act. The company is also debarred for one year from participating in the H-1B program. The computer consulting company sponsored the H-1B non-immigrant workers to work as programmer analysts across the country.

- [Read the News Release](#)

Help on the Way for Auto Workers in Wisconsin

More than \$2.5 million is going to assist Wisconsinites following the closing of a long-time employer in Kenosha. The department has provided a National Emergency Grant to deliver training and employment services to 448 workers affected by the closure of the Chrysler Kenosha Engine Plant. Awarded to the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, this grant will be operated by the Southeast Wisconsin Workforce Development Board. In August, Chrysler issued a Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act notice announcing the permanent closure of its engine manufacturing facility in Kenosha. The plant closed in October, ending more than 100 years of auto industry employment in the city.

- [Read the News Release](#)

