

VETS Manual Series, Volume XIII
Outreach, Media, & Public Relations Guide

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13.1 Overview

If the Veterans Employment & Training Service (VETS) is to be successful in maximizing employment opportunities and protecting the reemployment rights of veterans, Reservists, Guard members and other eligible persons, and in assisting employers to meet the challenges of the labor market, VETS must engage in outreach and media relations efforts to leverage support from the public, and always be an enthusiastic and reliable partner with its stakeholders. VETS staff members at every level need to communicate to the public who we are and what we do as an agency.

Within this Guide, VETS staff members will find an assortment of standardized messages and tools that have been used by various VETS staff in the implementation of effective outreach and public relations plans. The guide provides templates and “best practices” examples of various types of presentations that can be replicated by state VETS staff members using their own state-specific information.

This Guide is organized around descriptive overviews of each VETS program and area of responsibility. For each program there are descriptions of some promotional strategies, and for some programs, lists of specific stakeholders. It provides tips for dealing with the public information media, including guidance from the DOL Office of Public Affairs (OPA) for dealing with various media representatives and entities and creating public service announcements (PSA) and other media.

This Guide is intended to be exemplary, not prescriptive or comprehensive, of the sorts of outreach and public relations efforts that can and should be carried out by VETS staff members to further the likelihood of the agency’s succeeding in its mission.

VETS is a uniquely capable DOL agency, as it is the only DOL agency with a mission that includes both enforcement responsibilities and administration of employability development and referral programs.

13.2 Outreach to Congressional Members’ Home Offices

Every Member of the U.S. Congress, whether a Representative or Senator, has a constituent service operation carried out by staff persons located in the Member’s home office(s). Depending on the size of the district or size of the state, and the seniority of a particular Representative or Senator, there may be more than one local office maintained by the Member to provide liaison with constituents.

The VETS agency and each Member have mutual interests in maintaining an effective, service-oriented relationship. Individual veterans, Reservists, Guard members or other covered persons entitled to services or protections

under the statutes enforced by VETS or programs operated by VETS' grantees and other service delivery partners may contact his or her Representative and/or Senator either to inquire about a needed service, or to complain about a service provider and to request assistance. Congressional Members and their local constituent services staff persons are always Stakeholders with respect to VETS programs and services.

If the Member's staff persons have been well-informed by VETS staff who serve that area of the state regarding the scope of VETS' responsibilities and how to contact VETS for assistance, there is an improved likelihood that an appropriate, expeditious referral on behalf of the inquiring veteran, Reservist, Guard member or other covered person will be made.

On the other hand, if Congressional Members' home office staff persons are not well-informed about VETS programs and staff members who serve their respective areas, there is a high probability that a referral or inquiry will be made to the wrong agency, perhaps to the Department of Veterans Affairs or to the ESGR, wasting everybody's time and perhaps jeopardizing the rights or entitlements of individual veterans, Reservists, Guard members or other eligible persons.

Helping Congressional Members' staff persons responsible for constituent services do their jobs effectively and efficiently is a win-win-win situation, for the client, for the Member, and for VETS. Maintaining effective liaison with Congressional Members' home office staff persons must be a non-partisan effort, and of course, Hatch Act violations must be avoided. (For a summary of Hatch Act principles, see <http://labornet.dol.gov/me/hr/ethics/political-activity-hatch-act.htm>).

DVETs should maintain up-to-date contact information for all Congressional Members' home office staff persons who are responsible for constituent services, and should periodically initiate contact with those persons regardless whether inquiries or complaints have emanated from those offices, to keep them up to date regarding VETS programs and contact information. A sample letter is included among the exhibits at the end of this volume.

13.3 Compliance Programs

13.3.1 Uniformed Services Employment & Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)

The Department of Labor provides assistance to all individuals protected by the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), 38 U.S.C §§ 4301-4335, including private sector, State, Federal and Postal Service employees.

USERRA became law in 1994, but its protections date back to a set of laws from the 1940s called the Veterans Reemployment Rights Act.

The current USERRA Federal Regulations were first proposed in September 20, 2004, and the final USERRA Regulations, 20 C.F.R. Part 1002, were published on December 19, 2005. The regulations are written in "plain-English" in a question-and-answer format that covers all aspects of USERRA as it relates to private employers and state and local governments, to further clarify the law.

On October 10, 2008, the President signed into law Public Law 110-389, the "Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 2008", which included a number of changes to the manner in which VETS administers its USERRA program. These changes include specified timeframes in which all efforts by VETS to investigate and attempt to resolve a USERRA complaint must be completed. It also establishes specific time limits with regard to case referrals from DOL/VETS to the Department of Justice (DOJ) or the Office of Special Counsel (OSC).

USERRA establishes the cumulative length of time that an individual may be absent from work for military duty and retain reemployment rights to five years. There are important exceptions to the five-year limit, including initial enlistments lasting more than five years, periodic National Guard and Reserve training duty, and involuntary active duty extensions and recalls, especially during a time of national emergency. USERRA clearly establishes that reemployment protection does not depend on the timing, frequency, duration, or nature of an individual's service as long as the basic eligibility criteria are met.

USERRA provides special protections for covered persons who become disabled while on active duty, requiring their civilian employers to make reasonable efforts to accommodate the disability. Service members convalescing from injuries received during service or training may have up to two years from the date of completion of service to return to their jobs or apply for reemployment.

USERRA provides that returning service-members are reemployed in the job that they would have attained had they not been absent for military service (i.e., the "escalator" principle), with the same seniority, status, and pay, as well as other rights and benefits that normally accrue by seniority. USERRA also requires that reasonable efforts (such as training or retraining) be made to enable returning service members to refresh or upgrade their skills to help them qualify for reemployment. The law clearly provides for alternative reemployment positions if the service member cannot qualify for the "escalator" position. USERRA also provides that while an individual is performing military service, he or she is deemed to be on a furlough or leave of absence and is entitled to the non-seniority rights accorded other individuals on non-military leaves of absence.

Health and pension plan coverage for service members is provided for by USERRA. Individuals performing military duty of more than 30 days may elect to continue employer-sponsored health care insurance for up to 24 months; however, they may be required to pay *up to* 102 percent of the full premium. For military service of less than 31 days, health care insurance coverage must be provided as if the service member had remained employed. USERRA clarifies pension plan coverage by making explicit that all pension plans are protected.

The period an individual has to make application for reemployment or report back to work after military service is based on time spent on military duty. For service of less than 31 days, the service member must return at the beginning of the next regularly scheduled work period on the first full day after release from service, taking into account safe travel home plus an eight-hour rest period. For service of more than 30 days but less than 181 days, the service member must submit an application for reemployment within 14 days of release from service. For service of more than 180 days, an application for reemployment must be submitted within 90 days of release from service.

USERRA also requires that service members provide advance written or verbal notice to their employers for all military duty unless giving notice is impossible, unreasonable, or precluded by military necessity. An employee should provide notice as far in advance as is reasonable under the circumstances. Additionally, service members are able (but are not required) to use accrued vacation or annual leave while performing military duty.

If attempts at a negotiated settlement of a protected individual's claim are unsuccessful following an investigation, the service member may have his or her claim referred to the Department of Justice for consideration of representation in the appropriate District Court, at no cost to the claimant. Federal and Postal Service employees may have their claims referred to the Office of Special Counsel for consideration of representation before the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB). If violations under USERRA are shown to be willful, the court may penalize the employer by awarding to the claimant a sum for liquidated damages equal to the amount of lost wages and benefits awarded to the claimant. Individuals who pursue their own claims in court or before the MSPB may be awarded reasonable attorney and expert witness fees if they prevail.

Employees of intelligence agencies who are members of the classes of protected individuals under USERRA are supposed to be provided claims assistance by their respective agencies' Inspectors General.

13.3.1.1 Strategies to Promote Compliance with USERRA

Outreach to employers is more important than ever today. Understanding the USERRA statute is vital to the interests of both employers and the citizen soldiers who work for them. As the federal agency that enforces the USERRA

statute and also administers employment and training grant programs and promotes priority of service for veterans, Reservists, Guard members and other covered persons, VETS is uniquely capable of assisting employers in meeting their workforce needs in a challenging economy.

VETS staff members are encouraged to provide USERRA educational forums to employers and employer groups. Partnerships with other DOL agencies that are involved in providing public information and technical assistance to employers, such as the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), are encouraged as efficient and effective means of providing assistance to employers and promoting compliance with the law.

Unlike the other "compliance" agencies in the USDOL, which only enforce laws for the protection of individuals, in addition to information and technical assistance regarding USERRA, VETS staff members can (and should) create opportunities to present to employers "full spectrum" information about the various employment and training programs applicable to Reservists, Guard members, veterans and other persons offered by the DOL, and how those programs can help the employers fulfill their workforce needs.

VETS of course also has to work to ensure that veterans, Reservists and National Guard members know and understand their reemployment rights is a major responsibility for VETS staff members. By establishing a solid, active partnership with stakeholders such as your State's Adjutant General and the Department of Defense-sponsored Employer Support of the Guard and Reserves (ESGR) representatives, and being actively involved in mobilization and demobilization briefings that take place in each state, a well-rounded plan for informing service members can be realized.

VETS staff members should strive to establish a reputation as the USERRA subject matter experts who fairly treat both protected individuals and employers with an unbiased approach to enforcement of the statute. Through strong public relations efforts, VETS staff members can build effective coalitions within the business and service member communities, and create a positive image for the agency in the eyes of the public.

13.3.1.2 USERRA Stakeholders

- Employers
- Veterans
- Reservists
- Guard members
- ESGR volunteers

- Reservists' and National Guard members' families
- Veterans Service Organizations
- Reservist and National Guard associations
- Unions
- Governors, Mayors, and County Executives

13.3.2 Veterans Preference (VP) in Federal Employment

In recognition of the sacrifices made by those serving in the Armed Forces, Congress enacted laws to prevent veterans seeking Federal employment from being penalized because of time spent in military service. By law, veterans who are disabled or who served on active duty in the Armed Forces during certain specified periods or in military campaigns are generally entitled to preference over non-veterans both in Federal hiring practices and in retention during reductions in force.

Preference applies in hiring for virtually all jobs, whether in the competitive or excepted service and provides a uniform method by which special consideration is given to qualified veterans. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) administers entitlement to veterans' preference in Federal employment under title 5, United States Code, and oversees other statutory employment requirements in title 5 and 38. Veterans' Preference laws do not, however, guarantee veterans a job, nor give preference to veterans in internal agency actions such as promotion, transfer, reassignment or reinstatement.

The Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA) of 1998 provides that a veteran or other preference eligible person who believes that his or her rights under any law or regulation related to veterans' preference have been violated may file a written complaint with the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS). If a person believes his or her eligibility for preference in the Federal government is not being extended for the purposes of hiring or a Reduction in Force (RIF), that person may file a complaint, in writing, to VETS, within 60 days of the alleged violation. If VETS finds the case to have merit, the VETS agency's responsibility is to try to negotiate a positive settlement on behalf of the claimant.

If resolution cannot be achieved within 60 days, the claimant may appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB), at which time VETS ceases all investigative activity. Even if VETS determines the complaint to be without merit, the claimant still retains the right to appeal to the MSPB following receipt of the no-merit determination.

13.3.2.1 Strategies to Promote VP

As is implied above, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is the federal agency charged with the responsibility to promulgate the rules and guidelines for Veterans Preference in federal employment.

One way in which VETS promotes the usage and application of veterans preference is through maintenance on the DOL web site of the VP e-law advisor, at www.dol.gov/elaws/vetspref.htm. VETS staff members in the field offices can and should include mention of that e-law advisor feature on the web site whenever an opportunity arises or can be created. Newspapers often can use very brief articles to fill out small spaces in columns, e.g., a simple two-sentence paragraph such as "Veterans are entitled to preference in Federal hiring. Any vet who thinks he or she was not properly treated can log onto www.dol.gov/elaws/vetspref.htm."

13.3.2.2 VP Stakeholders

- Federal agencies
- Veterans
- Reservists and National Guard members
- Veterans specialists in One Stop service centers
- VETS grantees staff

13.3.3 Federal Contractors Program (FCP)

In accordance with Title 38, United States Code, Section 4212(d), the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) collects and compiles data on the Federal Contractor Program Veterans' Employment Report (VETS-100 Report) from Federal contractors and subcontractors who have Federal contracts that meet the threshold amount of \$100,000. The VETS-100 reporting cycle begins annually on August 1 and ends September 30.

The Jobs for Veterans Act (JVA; P.L. 107-288, enacted November 2, 2002), raised the VETS-100 reporting threshold from \$25,000 to \$100,000 for contracts awarded on or after December 1, 2003, and established the categories of veterans for which affirmative actions by Federal contractors are required to be taken: disabled veterans, other protected veterans, Armed Forces service medal veterans, and recently separated veterans. In addition to reporting the numbers of persons in each of those categories hired each reporting year, Federal contractors and subcontractors must report the total number of all current employees in each job category and at each hiring location.

13.3.3.1 Strategies to Promote the Federal Contractor Program

One of the key requirements of the Federal Contractor Program is that employers subject to the law must list their job openings with the local state workforce agency job bank to facilitate referrals of veterans targeted by the law. (See http://www.dol.gov/dol/allcfr/vets/Title_41/Part_61-250/toc.htm for specifics regarding this aspect of the program.)

The DOL Good Faith Initiative for Veterans' Employment (G-FIVE) Initiative (see <http://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/faqs/dir282faqs.htm>) is a special effort by the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs to promote affirmative action for veterans by giving recognition to companies' good faith efforts and best practices to employ and advance veterans. It is also intended to reaffirm OFCCP's commitment to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act, 38 U.S.C. §4212 (VEVRAA). G-FIVE creates an incentive for federal contractors and subcontractors to increase their employment of and affirmative action for veterans, and strengthens partnerships between OFCCP and other agencies and veterans groups.

Establishing collaborative relationships with the OFCCP representative(s) and local veterans program specialists in your state to make the G-FIVE Initiative a well-coordinated and well-publicized process culminating in recognition of companies deserving of public acclaim for their veterans employment records could be a highly productive public relations effort.

13.3.3.2 Stakeholders

- State Workforce agency local offices
- OFCCP representatives
- WIA board members
- Federal contractors and sub-contractors

13.4 Employment and Training Programs

13.4.1 Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program Highlights

The State's Workforce Development Centers (aka One-Stop Career Centers) offer specialized employment and training services exclusively to eligible veterans under the Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program. Under this grant program, funds are allocated to State Workforce Agencies to support two types of staff positions:

Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists. These staff members provide intensive services to meet the employment needs of disabled veterans and other eligible veterans, with the maximum emphasis

directed toward serving those who are economically or educationally disadvantaged, including homeless veterans, and veterans with barriers to employment.

Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs). These staff members conduct outreach to employers and engage in advocacy efforts with employer representatives to increase employment opportunities for veterans, encourage the hiring of disabled veterans, and generally assist veterans to gain and retain employment.

The Priority of Service concept. The Department of Labor (DOL) has finalized new regulations implementing "priority of service" for veterans and eligible spouses, as provided by the Jobs for Veterans Act (JVA), and as specified by the Veterans' Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act of 2006. Covered veterans must be given priority of service by all "qualified job training programs," defined as "any workforce preparation, development or delivery program or service that is directly funded, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor." (See <http://www.dol.gov/vets/E8-30166.pdf> for the actual Regulations.)

13.4.1.1 Strategies to Promote JVA

The DVOP and LVER staff members employed under the JVSG are the key players in all of the employment and training programs administered by VETS. One of the primary expectations to be fulfilled by VETS staff is to promote effective linkages (networking) of the DVOP and LVER staff with staff of all of the other programs and initiatives that VETS is involved in, e.g., the HVRP and/or VWIP grantees, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program staff, REALifelines program staff, military transition program staff (TAP), and so on. VETS staff may have to act as "go betweens" to pave or smooth the way for establishing viable, effective working relationships among those agencies and organizations. VETS staff are encouraged to become aware of the respective entities' goals and objectives, identify commonalities and/or ways in which they can complement each other's efforts, and strive to help them see the "win-win" possibilities of alliances on behalf of veterans and other covered persons. Overcoming "turf" barriers to seamless services may be a VETS staff member's greatest accomplishment.

In most states, the JVS Grantee has its own public information office, so direct involvement by VETS staff in such efforts may not be critical. However, VETS staff may be uniquely suited to bring opportunities for public recognition to the JVSG; for example, many veterans service organizations at the state level conduct annual awards programs to honor and publicize extraordinary performance on behalf of veterans. The VETS staff member might be instrumental in forging effective relationships between the VSO(s) and the JVS Grantee.

13.4.1.2 JVA Stakeholders

- Army Career & Alumni Program
- Air Force Family Readiness Center
- Air National Guard
- Army National Guard
- U.S. Army Reserve
- DVA's Voc Rehab & Employment Program Staff
- State Workforce Agency
- Navy Fleet and Marine Corps Family Support Centers
- State Workforce Investment Boards
- Regular military post, National Guard, and Reserve transition coordinators
- Military Community Support Organizations (e.g., MWR, Military Spouse Networks, etc.)
- Chambers of Commerce
- HVRP grantees
- VWIP grantees
- REALifelines program contacts

13.4.2 Transition Assistance Program

Although experience shows that veterans generally enjoy a favorable employment rate in the nation's job market, many veterans find it difficult to compete successfully in the labor market within the first four years following separation from the military. The TAP addresses many barriers to success and alleviates many employment related difficulties.

Title 38 U.S.C., Chapter 58, §§ 1142 and 1144 established a partnership among the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Homeland Security, and VETS to give employment and training information to armed forces members and their spouses within 24 months of retirement and 12 months before separation.

TAP helps service members and their spouses make the initial transition from military service to the civilian workplace with less difficulty and at less overall cost to the government.

TAP consists of comprehensive 2.5-day workshops at selected military installations worldwide. Professionally-trained workshop facilitators from the State Employment Services, Department of Labor contractors, or VETS' staff conduct the workshops.

Workshop attendees learn about job searches, career decision-making, current occupational and labor market conditions, résumé and cover letter preparation, and interviewing techniques. Participants are also provided with an evaluation of their employability relative to the civilian job market and receive information on the most current veterans' benefits.

Service members leaving the military with a service-connected disability are offered the Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP). DTAP includes the normal three-day TAP workshop plus additional hours of individual instruction to help determine job readiness and address the special needs of disabled veterans.

Modified TAP workshops are a condensed version of the standard 2.5-day TAP and may only address certain components of the program, such as résumé writing and interviewing skills. Since the presentation is condensed, these can be conducted outside of the forums where they are traditionally held, e.g., at a Reserve or National Guard center.

13.4.2.1 Strategies to Promote TAP

Successful Transition Assistance Programs require an effective collaboration among VETS staff, TAP facilitators, the military transition officer/transition services manager and the host site.

It is important that VETS staff develop positive relationships with the military's transition services managers and ensure that TAP facilitators are well trained. Effective presenters are essential to providing a program that will achieve a high level of participation.

The core outcome for participants is that they leave the military with the necessary knowledge of today's workforce along with the skills to translate their military work/life experience into a highly marketable asset, which will make the transition from active military duty to a satisfying civilian career a success.

By partnering with outside (civilian industry) subject matter experts and keeping up-to-date on labor market trends, VETS staff have a unique opportunity to influence public awareness of the benefits to hiring veterans. This can be achieved through informal "meet and greet" type functions where

transitioning service members can meet and learn about local employers and corporations with multiple employment locations.

In addition to partnering with the transition professionals and base commanders at regular military posts, VETS staff should promote TAP to their State's Adjutant General to address Reservists and/or active National Guard service members who may be retiring and/or separating but who are unable to attend a TAP site due to their duty locations. Use of National, regional and local statistics regarding TAP can be beneficial when promoting the opportunity to provide mini-TAP classes to these non-traditional venues.

Other venues to promote TAP — both participation in the workshops and hiring of TAP graduates — are at various statewide workforce summits, attendance at state workforce development boards, Chamber of Commerce events, etc.

13.4.2.2 TAP Stakeholders

- Military Transition Service Centers
- State Workforce Agency/JVS Grantee
- Corporate and local employers
- Chambers of Commerce

13.4.3 Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (VR&E)

The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program and the Department of Labor (DOL), Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) concur that the successful readjustment of veterans with disabilities into the civilian workforce is a mutual responsibility and concern. In order to advance, improve and expand the employment opportunities for veterans with disabilities, in August 1995 the first Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the agencies was signed.

The focus of the joint effort is to assist eligible veterans, particularly service-connected disabled (SCD) veterans who have improved their job readiness by participation in a program of vocational rehabilitation under 38 United States Code (38 U.S.C.), Chapter 31, obtain gainful employment.

Beginning as early as possible in the rehabilitation process, including orientation and initial labor market analysis, VETS and VA VR&E agree to improve employment outcomes for all vocational rehabilitation program participants by enabling local representatives from both parties to take a team approach to job development and placement activities.

Members of each employment team will include the VA VR&E Case Manager, VA Employment Coordinator or Employment Specialist, a Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist or One-Stop Career Center (OSCC) staff person and the VA VR&E participant. All VA VR&E participants will be advised of the benefits of registering for employment assistance and will be encouraged to register with their State Workforce Agency (SWA).

To promote these efforts, the participants and local representatives from both organizations are required to establish and maintain an effective mechanism for referral and service delivery.

The specific roles and responsibilities for the service delivery partners are described in the Technical Assistance Guide (TAG) dated September 2008, which can be found in Attachment 3 to VPL 01-09 in the VPL Directory at www.dol.gov/vets/vpls/VPLDirectory.htm.

13.4.3.1 VR&E Strategies

A unified team approach and partnership between the DVA VR&E, VETS, and SWA staff members is fundamental to a seamless, positive experience for Chapter 31 veterans as they move through evaluation, training, job search, and employment. A true partnership capitalizes on the strengths of the involved agencies and fosters the ideals of exemplary customer service.

This joint effort should focus collaborative efforts on getting the “word” out about the program and assist in establishing an effective partnership between the two agencies involved in the actual delivery of services. Only through effective communication and coordinated efforts from all agencies involved will it ensure these disabled veterans receive the most comprehensive, efficient, caring and professional service possible.

13.4.3.2 VR&E Stakeholders

- State Workforce Agency (particularly DVOP staff)
- VA VR&E staff
- VETS Staff
- State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency
- Employers

13.4.4 Recovery and Employment Assistance Lifelines (REALifelines)

This initiative began in late 2004 as a joint project of the U.S. Department of Labor, the Bethesda Naval Medical Center and the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. The objective is to create a seamless, comprehensive and

personalized assistance network to provide individualized job training, counseling and employment services to each individual veteran (or soon-to-be veteran) who was seriously injured in the War on Terrorism.

In addition, job training and employment services will also be made available to spouses in families that have suffered an active duty casualty, as well as to family members who have temporarily left their jobs to be with their loved ones during recovery.

A key part of REALifelines are the services available at the Department of Labor's nationwide network of One Stop Career Centers that Regional Coordinators located at the military's Major Treatment Facilities can connect the service members to, through VETS staff in the service member/veteran's home state. Regional Coordinators would refer the service member to the VETS staff in the REALifelines (RLL) candidates' home state for further assistance.

13.4.4.1 Strategies to Promote REALifelines

To ensure that a seamless transition occurs for the REALifelines (RLL) candidates, VETS staff in each state should develop a cooperative connection between VETS staff, the RLL Coordinator and the veteran prior to the veteran returning to their stateside home.

State DVOP/LVER staff should be made aware of the REALifelines initiative and be involved from the beginning in whatever assistance may be necessary to facilitate the best possible transition for each RLL participant.

If your state has a Warrior Transition Battalion (WTB) and/or Unit, this may be accomplished by co-locating a DVOP at the WTB.

If the military posts in your state are using the traditional "Medical Hold Company" as a transitory unit for service members pending medical board evaluations, then VETS staff should establish a relationship with the "warrior transition" services team.

Education about RLL shouldn't stop with the medical and transition staff; it should expand to the Veterans Administration Hospitals and state DVOPs and LVERs. In doing so, VETS can ensure that seriously injured and wounded service members have access to additional resources and those resources are aware of RLL as they make the transition from active military service to positively contributing members of society.

13.4.4.2 RLL Stakeholders

- Major Treatment Facilities
- Warrior Transition Battalion and Units

- DVOP/LVER
- State Commission on Veterans' Affairs
- State Vocational Rehabilitation
- Veterans' Benefits Administration (VR&E)
- Warrior Internship Network (WIN)
- HVRP/VWIP Grantees

13.4.5 Veterans Workforce Investment Program (VWIP)

The statutory intent of the Workforce Investment Act, P.L. 105-220, Section 168, Veterans Workforce Investment Programs (VWIP), is to support employment and training programs, through grants or contracts, to meet the needs of veterans with service-connected disabilities, veterans who have significant barriers to employment, veterans who served on active duty in the armed forces during a war or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized, and recently separated veterans.

The VWIP program is administered by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training (OASVET). The annual funding for VWIP is authorized by legislation and derived as a percentage of the total annual Workforce Investment authorization. Most of the appropriated funds are used to support grants awarded to eligible entities through a competitive, Solicitation of Grant Applications (SGA) process. The period of performance for these grant funds run on a fiscal year with two (2) optional years of additional funding available, depending upon: Congressional appropriations, the agency's decision to exercise the optional year(s) of funding, and satisfactory grantee performance. Eligible entities include: state and local governments; private and not-for-profit organizations including community based and faith based organizations.

VWIP focuses on two objectives: (1) services to assist in reintegrating eligible veterans into meaningful employment within the labor force; and (2) to stimulate the development of effective service delivery systems that will address the complex employability problems facing eligible veterans

These programs can provide for, but are not limited to, training (formal classroom or on-the-job training), retraining, job placement assistance, and support services, including testing and counseling. Grantees may choose to supplement the core training by offering other services that also enhance the employability of participants. These programs complement services generally provided by States through mainstream Workforce Investment Act program operators under Title 1, and the Wagner-Peyser Act.

Veterans may also be eligible for services under other WIA titles, which authorize assistance to economically disadvantaged or dislocated workers with employment, training, and other workforce development services. VWIP allows for specialized employment, training and educational resources to be tailored to meet the needs of the specific target populations of veterans served. In many programs, minority, female, economically disadvantaged, homeless and/or disabled veterans can be targeted to receive these specialized resources. Projects that enhance direct veterans' training-related services, that emphasize service to sub-categories of the eligible veterans target groups, and demonstration or research projects that are considered unique or innovative receive priority consideration.

13.4.5.1 Strategies to Promote VWIP

The initial steps to promoting anything is to understand the product, recognize the value and know which audience could benefit the most from the product. VWIP grants are competitively awarded, so it is especially important that VETS staff at the state level actively promote awareness of the VWIP grant program so that when a Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA) is announced by the National Office, potential grant operators are prepared to apply.

The audience in this case would be those agencies that are eligible to apply for the funding and already have an established infrastructure to be able to serve the veteran population.

By understanding which agencies within your state currently provide similar services, identifying any potential gaps in services and recognizing the level of need, such as the size of the veteran population, you then can begin to identify potential grantees.

As VETS staff attend various veteran and employment related events throughout the year, talk to the organizations in attendance about the program and provide them with the informational brochures. Maintain contact throughout the year to provide updates and notifications regarding the SGA.

Note: Once the Solicitation of Grant Applications has been announced, VETS can no longer have any involvement with applicants, beyond basic information regarding accessing the SGA online. Each region has two members serving on the Competitive Grants Expert Team (CGET) who represent their regions as subject matter experts. Questions regarding these grants can be addressed through the GOTR at the state level and/or the CGET team members in your region.

13.4.5.2 VWIP Stakeholders

- State Workforce Agencies

- Non-Profit Social Service Agencies
- Faith-Based Organizations
- Educational Organizations/Entities
- Veteran Service Organizations

13.4.6 Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP)

The purpose of the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) is to assist in reintegrating homeless veterans into meaningful employment within the labor force and to stimulate the development of effective service delivery systems to address the complex problems facing homeless veterans.

HVRP was initially authorized under Section 738 of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act in July 1987. It is currently authorized under Title 38 U.S.C. Section 2021, as added by Section 5 of Public Law 107-95, the Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Assistance Act of 2001. Funds are awarded on a competitive basis to eligible applicants such as: State and local Workforce Investment Boards, public agencies, for-profit/commercial entities, and non-profit organizations, including faith based and community based organizations.

Grantees provide an array of services utilizing a case management approach that directly assists homeless veterans as well as provide critical linkages for a variety of supportive services available in their local communities. The program is "employment focused" and veterans receive the employment and training services they need in order to re-enter the labor force. Job placement, training, job development, career counseling, and resume preparation are among the services that are provided. Supportive services such as clothing, provision of or referral to temporary, transitional, and permanent housing, referral to medical and substance abuse treatment, and transportation assistance may also be provided to meet the needs of this target group.

Since its inception, HVRP has featured an outreach component using veterans who themselves have experienced homelessness. In recent years, this successful technique was modified to allow the programs to utilize formerly homeless veterans in various other positions where there is direct client contact such as counseling, peer coaching, intake, and follow-up services.

A unique feature of the HVRP is support of "Stand Down" events. A "stand down" is a local community event held usually for 1 to 3 days, where a variety of services and referrals for services are provided on-site to homeless veterans – mostly an all volunteer effort. It is an outreach effort that provides a "safe haven" for homeless veterans to be able to seek services and receive basic health and hygiene products.

Funding for these events are up to \$10,000 and grantees are expected to allocate a portion of their grant funding for such events. In addition to HVRP grantees, other organizations may apply for these funds as a separate and stand-alone event.

13.4.6.1 Strategies to Promote HVRP

Similar strategies used for promoting the VWIP grants are applicable for promoting the opportunities that may become available through the HVRP and individual Stand-Down Events grants.

The audience may be slightly different since the emphasis is on helping homeless veterans get and retain jobs and while the primary focus remains employment, the goal is to enhance self-sufficiency. This is accomplished through many linkages and coordination with various veterans' services programs and organizations.

In order to successfully promote this program, it is essential for each DVET to have a solid understanding of their state's current veteran homeless population, barriers, available resources and organizations/service agencies that currently provide similar services to homeless persons in general.

13.4.6.2 HVRP Stakeholders

- State Workforce Agencies
- Workforce Investment Boards
- Veterans service organizations
- Faith Based Agencies
- Department of Veterans Affairs
- Housing and Urban Development
- Health and Human Services
- City or County Agencies
- Private Non-Profit Agencies

13.5 *Other Initiatives*

13.5.1 America's Heroes at Work

America's Heroes at Work is a U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) project that focuses on the employment challenges of returning service members living with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and/or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

(PTSD). The project equips employers and the workforce development system with the tools they need to help returning service members affected by TBI and/or PTSD succeed in the workplace - particularly service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

America's Heroes at Work is managed jointly by DOL's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) and Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) in collaboration with other federal agencies engaged in TBI and PTSD programs, including the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Health and Human Services and Education, the Small Business Administration, the Social Security Administration and others.

(See the web site at www.americasheroesatwork.gov).

13.6 Office of Public Affairs (OPA)

The purpose of this chapter is to assist you in your efforts to publicize the many noteworthy things that the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) does for veterans, National Guard members and reservists in your area.

This chapter explains how the Department of Labor (DOL), regional Offices of Public Affairs (OPA), can assist you. It also provides useful information when dealing with the media, drafting press releases and speeches, preparing for interviews with the media, and coordinating community outreach.

There are several [appendices](#) at the conclusion of this Volume with templates and examples for your use.

OPA national office is the final authority for approval and issuance of news releases for DOL agencies, including VETS. While VETS staffs are highly encouraged to draft releases for programs and events, the releases shall not be issued to the media by your office. It is required that the draft release be submitted to the appropriate OPA regional office so the draft release can go through the DOL press release clearance process, receive final approval from the OPA national office, and be issued by the OPA regional office. All draft releases should be sent to your OPA regional office two weeks before they need to be issued. This will help ensure that final OPA NO approval is secured in time to meet your deadlines.

Please contact the appropriate OPA regional office (listed below) for assistance with all public affairs matters.

Region I — Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, Puerto Rico, and Virgin Islands

Office of Public Affairs
U.S. Department of Labor

JFK Federal Building, Room E-120
Boston, MA 02203
(617) 565-2072

Region III — Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia

Office of Public Affairs
U.S. Department of Labor
170 S. Independence Mall West, Suite 633 East
Philadelphia, PA 19106-3305
(215) 861-5100

Region IV - Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee

Office of Public Affairs
U.S. Department of Labor
Atlanta Federal Center
61 Forsyth St. SW., Suite 6B75
Atlanta, GA 30303
(404) 562-2080

Region V — Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin

Office of Public Affairs
U.S. Department of Labor
230 S. Dearborn St., Room 3192
Chicago, IL 60604
(312) 353-6976

Region VI — Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas

Office of Public Affairs
U.S. Department of Labor
525 Griffin St., Room 734
Dallas, TX 75202
(972) 850-4708

Region VIII — Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming

Office of Public Affairs
U.S. Department of Labor
1999 Broadway, Suite 1640
Denver, CO 80202-5716
(303) 844-1300

Region IX — Arizona, California, Nevada and Hawaii (including the outer Pacific islands)

Office of Public Affairs
U.S. Department of Labor
90 7th Street, Suite 2-650
San Francisco, Calif. 94103
(415) 625-2630 or (415) 625-2631

Region X — Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington

Office of Public Affairs
U.S. Department of Labor
1111 Third Ave., Suite 930
Seattle, WA 98101
(206) 553-7620

13.6.1 Media and Public Relations

Public affairs involves the open dissemination of information to the media and public about an issue or activity. OPA encourages an active approach to public affairs, characterized by announcing an event or addressing an issue through media advisories; news releases; personal contacts; news conferences; or other forms of public presentation. Public affairs also involves an appropriate response to media inquiries. The following are public affairs practices of VETS.

13.6.2 Working with OPA

OPA national office is responsible for formulating and implementing public affairs policies, guidelines and standards regulating all aspects of DOL public affairs activities. Information on OPA can be found at the following website: <http://labornet.dol.gov/workplaceresources/policies/DLMS/DLMS05/dlms5-0500.htm>

VETS, in cooperation with the OPA national office Director for VETS, is responsible for independently planning, developing and implementing a full range of public affairs activities in support of its programs in the most effective manner possible.

How can the OPA regional office assist you?

Radio, TV and Newspaper Interviews. The VETS regional office shall be informed in advance when a DVET has been requested or scheduled to appear on radio or television, or interviewed by a newspaper or electronic media. Such appearances must be approved by the VETS regional office.

All radio and TV scripts prepared by VETS must be cleared by OPA.

Speeches, Testimonies and Statements. All speeches, testimonies and statements to be issued to the media shall be submitted to the OPA regional office for clearance. The VETS regional office shall be copied on all submissions.

The OPA regional staff will review and coordinate distribution with the originating office.

Spokespersons. The OPA Regional Director for Public Affairs or the public affairs specialist, as their alternate, is the voice of the Department to regional media representatives as well as national and international media representatives that contact VETS or OPA for VETS information.

Advice and Guidance. The OPA regional staff will provide advice and guidance to VETS regional staff and DVETs on matters of public information, policy development and program coordination with public information implications. The OPA regional staff will keep the VETS regional staff informed of public and media reactions to VETS programs and policies.

News Releases. DVETs will provide the OPA regional staff with information to permit localization of national stories and give enough lead time to allow for simultaneous national and regional issuances. The OPA regional staff will clear and transmit this information to VETS regional staff and DVETs. VETS regional news releases will be prepared and issued by OPA regional offices.

Draft News Releases Initiated by DVETs. Draft news releases should be accurate, concise, direct, and informative and avoid technical language. The lead paragraph should summarize the news. News impact and high standards of quality in style, grammar, conciseness and proper focus are primary criteria. Draft news releases shall be submitted to the VETS regional office for review and approval, prior to forwarding to OPA regional staff for clearance.

Interviews. The best way to sell most things is face-to-face. People trust and value local contacts, community, and neighborhood individuals. There is no one at the VETS national office or region who is more important to the success of our programs than you.

We have a story to tell. Young men and women from your community are coming home having done extraordinary things, and they're bringing with them the qualities that every employer hopes to find when they look for new employees. The editors of local papers will probably be willing to listen, or have a reporter listen to you talk about people from their community returning from doing a remarkable job for our country, who are now looking to do a remarkable job in their community.

Editors are busy, so be prepared to make your pitch very succinctly. Before you make a call, prepare. You already have material indicating not only how important it is for employers to hire veterans, but also the value to

employers who do so. Once you've called the local media and they've indicated an interest in doing a story on returning veterans and the kinds of skills they bring to employers, it's time for the interview. What you've accomplished so far is that you've created an interview opportunity for yourself and now it's time to make the most of it. The materials you've collected preparing for an interview will provide solid answers to the questions you'll encounter. You believe in your product, so now all you have to do is relax, be yourself and make the point that veterans are an employer's best bet.

Select a few points to return to throughout the interview. Establish and repeat three or four items that bring home your point. Identify the points you feel most comfortable making or you most strongly believe. You can't go wrong by stressing the incredible technical training today's service members receive, their remarkable ability to perform under pressure, their leadership skills and integrity, and their proven ability to work as a team, while understanding and respecting organizational structure and procedures.

It's also important that you stick to the issue. You may be asked questions outside the scope of your responsibilities, or to give your opinion on politics or the conflict from which the veterans are returning. You can indicate that the important thing is that we recognize that the young men and women leaving the service have done a remarkable job and are remarkable people, absolutely the best kind of people to hire. Do not comment on other issues.

Daily newspapers often have larger readerships. Community and weekly papers are also excellent sources to mine. Many weeklies feature a columnist looking for material. Consider calling that columnist and ask them to help you tell the community about why it's a good idea to hire veterans. The hook in that pitch is that we're talking about veterans who are their friends and neighbors, returning to the community.

You also have opportunities to speak before business and professional groups. You can use a newspaper business calendar to advertise your speech and to send out the messages. If you're not familiar with the business calendar, you'll normally find it near the back of the business section. Most newspapers also publish directions on how to make submissions to the calendar, but if not, simply call the paper and ask. Submit your materials as far in advance of the event as possible. Many larger dailies require that submissions be made anywhere from two weeks to a month in advance of the event. Also call the call the paper and invite reporters to cover your speech, if the hosting organization has no objection. [Appendix I](#) provides media samples.

Digital Photography. Digital cameras allow you to enhance your article by submitting photographs to illuminate or illustrate the main points of your article. Be sure when you first talk to the editor or reporter that you mention

the availability of your own photographs, and inquire whether or not they wish to receive digital copy.

To prepare to take photos that get published, pay special attention to the photos that appear in periodicals that you think might be interested in articles about veterans. Try to emulate those photos when you attend an event (e.g., a veteran service organization's job fair, a stand down, or a visit to a REALifelines participant's counseling site by a DVOP staffer), or visit a place of service (e.g., a Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Project center or a JVSG One-Stop office).

13.7 *Dealing with the media*

Contact the OPA regional staff for assistance with all public affairs issues.

13.7.1 Media Inquiries

Responses to all media calls or opportunities should first be discussed by VETS staff members with the staff members of the OPA regional office prior to any discussion with the media. VETS personnel receiving calls from media should determine what questions or issues the reporter would like to discuss, and then advise the reporter that they will receive a return call. (See [Section 13.6.2](#))

There are three types of media inquiries that you may encounter: general, opportunity and investigative.

General inquiries are initiated by reporters looking to fill out a somewhat related story, or as personal background. For example, a reporter doing a piece on an individual who happens to be a veteran might want to know the unemployment rate among veterans or whether there might be job benefits that the individual could qualify for. Ask the OPA region staff to insure that consistent answers are provided and to determine if similar inquiries may have been made recently, a fact that might indicate the inquiry is something more than just general. This ensures message alignment.

Opportunity inquiries are those from reporters or broadcast producers looking for an informed guest or interview subject to discuss, in general, the VETS laws and programs. These media inquiries could be generated from VETS/OPA nationally or from a regionally-distributed news release. Often these inquiries, or invitations to appear, may be generated as a result of the excellent work you're doing in your community. They are clearly non-confrontational and you likely know who provided your name to the reporter and why the reporter is interested in having you as a guest. The OPA regional staff appreciates knowing of these opportunities as it may provide OPA with regional or national interview targets in the future. It also provides OPA with the opportunity to discuss interview topics and share knowledge (i.e., learn from you) about the program you are going to discuss.

Investigative inquiries can be trickier, but may also provide excellent opportunities to clarify and correct mistaken notions about your work, and about the outstanding accomplishments of VETS. In rare cases, the inquiry comes as a result of a complainant who filed with VETS but is not satisfied with, or does not understand the outcome. On occasion, inquiries are initiated with the reporter by individuals who do not know to contact VETS for assistance. There are other cases where local job training programs or other service providers are being examined and veterans may be receiving training, or where political issues may be the driving force. In any case, OPA may already have knowledge which can be shared with you and needs to know if potentially negative press might be suspected. Decisions that will be discussed include who will respond, what legal issues are involved and how those issues dictate a particular response, and what course of action besides dealing with the individual reporter should be initiated.

13.7.2 Working with Radio and Television

Radio and television offer similar opportunities but require different approaches. For the most part, radio is an easier sell both for interview programming and for public service announcements. Radio, particularly with talk or news formats, has considerably more time to fill and your chances of finding interview opportunities is increased.

Approach the target radio station's public service director and provide him with public service announcements (PSAs) that can be read by on air personalities during the day. In smaller markets, you may find that the public service director will double in the programming area and may offer you an opportunity to be interviewed. Before making a call, you'll want to prepare in the same manner you prepare for print media.

It's more likely that the public service director does not double as the program director. You can still ask the public service director what programming area at the station might be willing to interview you on the subject of hiring returning veterans. The public service director may refer you directly to a producer, or more than likely will suggest you call the programming director.

Calling the program director is much like calling the news editor at your local daily paper. The program director will know where your story is likely to fit and can suggest the best show for your appearance, as well as put you in touch with the producer for that show.

An advantage you have in appearing as a radio guest is that you have the opportunity to listen to the show prior to appearing. This will give you an idea of what type of questioning to expect, and how to handle questions that might lead you away from the main points you want to make. Once again, you'll want to define a few key points you intend to make and return to those points as often as possible.

Television, even in the smaller markets, is a more difficult medium to penetrate. Television offers the same kinds of opportunities, primarily public service announcements and locally programmed talk shows. As in radio, you'll want to make your first call to the public service director and determine what format they prefer for PSAs. In television, as in radio, you'll find some public service directors who are happy to take typed submissions from you so that their in-house talent can read them, or sometimes they will run short spots on a scrolling screen they may call a community calendar. This is a much more common practice in smaller markets.

Again, ask the public service director if there might be interview opportunities for you on any local programming. As in radio, you may be referred to the programming director or directly to a producer. In both cases, don't forget to get in touch with the news director. You'll want to be certain that the news director is on your list for newsworthy events, such as the mayor proclaiming October or November as the city or town's Hire Vets month.

13.8 *Community and Media Relations*

13.8.1 Media outreach

It is important that the general public understand what VETS has to offer and has accomplished. Reaching out to the general public through the media provides the opportunity to establish VETS as a major 'brand'. The importance of this is that any new products, Congressional created or VETS initiated, are placed under the umbrella of this existing brand. This greatly enhances the ability to build market awareness and acceptability since the brand – that is, VETS – is well established and respected. VETS is itself a product of the larger brand known as DOL, but for the purposes of the various communities you serve, establishing VETS as the key brand is more important.

Whether you decide to reach out to media for a specific campaign, or whether there is a specific community that you feel needs education on the value of hiring veterans and the services you provide, the challenge will always be to let community members know the facts about veterans and VETS programs.

In all cases, it is imperative that VETS offices inform regional OPA when they contemplate talking with media or when they plan to have information published or broadcast. This will benefit VETS because these clips will be sent to the OPA national office for use in a news clip package submitted to the Secretary and department leadership. Good news is appreciated.

13.8.2 The Special Event Campaign– Creating the News

The media suggestions and tips offered in this section are all tools you may want to include in a larger endeavor, described as special event marketing. You have compelling products to market, but a little local packaging of those products will allow them to go further than the one-size-fits-all packaging that comes out of the VETS national office or regional office.

Governors and legislative bodies often declare a week or a day or a month as one thing or another, and it's seldom that we hear about them. This occurs in big cities as well, when the mayor issues a proclamation, and even in smaller ones. The problem is not with the idea that a political leader is asking citizens to honor some event, person, or idea. The problem is with the idea that a proclamation alone will garner attention. It probably won't.

A proclamation can be a center piece for a local media campaign, particularly in a smaller market and lead to positive results. Convincing the mayor to participate with a proclamation is only the beginning. Convincing the mayor and others to take that proclamation and give it meaning is the make-or-break piece for this special event.

This section suggests ideas that may get the ball rolling. You know the communities you serve better than anyone. Your own ideas will undoubtedly be the best.

When the Mayor agrees to sign, that's when to begin your planning. Hopefully, you build a media and civic event around the signing itself.

Imagine the Mayor seated at his desk, pen poised, flanked by representatives from local veterans groups like Employer Support of the Guard and Reserves (ESGR), the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and members of the employer community, and perhaps the local Chamber of Commerce president. This would be an excellent photo op for the local newspaper, and if you have television stations located in the community, it could be a great story for them also. This is particularly true if you have troops recently returning. Guardsmen or Reservists just back from overseas is an excellent reason for a community to get together to say thanks, and what better way than by having the community rally together to see that these friends and neighbors find work?

When you pitch the idea of a mayoral proclamation to his staff or directly to the Mayor, present the entire package. Make certain it's understood how significant this proclamation can be, and that this is an event that everyone in the community will understand and appreciate.

The Commander of the local VFW, or American Legion post, or both; the Chamber president; or head of the local manufacturing association; and similar dignitaries, could be a part of the signing ceremony. The mayor and his staff will probably be the best sources for suggestions on who to invite,

and asking their assistance will give them ownership in the project. The conversation you have with the mayor's staff about putting on the media event also gives you an opportunity to take it a step further. Would the Streets Commissioner agree to place signs and bumper stickers on municipal property, announcing the event? Will contractors, garbage disposal services for example, agree to come on board to get the word out? Let your imagination go on this one! There are as many excellent ways to get the message out without the media as there are departments in the city. This kind of campaign is commonly called guerrilla marketing, and it works.

13.8.3 Achieving coverage at the event

[Appendix I](#) has several sample draft news releases and media advisories, including one media advisory that can be used to invite media to cover your proclamation signing event. The best way to get the attention your event deserves is to hand deliver the media advisory to the decision makers in the media who will send reporters to cover the story. At the local newspaper, you'll want to see the city editor or, if they have one, the city government beat reporter. At radio or television stations, you'll want to get your material directly to the assignment editor.

If all else fails, you can certainly fax or e-mail the story to the local media, and then follow-up with telephone calls to be certain media is aware of the event.

If you're able to talk face-to-face with a decision maker at the local newspaper or broadcast outlet, offer them the chance to participate in a more active manner. Covering the proclamation signing is a onetime event, but can they work with you to develop activities that will keep the message alive during the entire month? Perhaps the daily paper will provide space for a simple VETS message on the business page every day. Radio or television stations might be interested in running a short public service announcement that mentions the value of hiring veterans, such as the sample PSA in this kit. Make the offer and you may be pleasantly surprised at the result.

13.8.4 Speaking Engagements

You're more than likely very familiar with the rubber chicken circuit and have likely addressed most or all of the influential groups in your area at one time or another. If you haven't lately, though, the month during the Mayor's proclamation is an excellent time to get yourself on the speaking agenda at monthly meetings of these groups. While veterans' organizations and employer groups such as chambers of commerce are naturals for this pitch, don't neglect organizations like the Rotary, Elks or Lions.

Think of these speaking engagements as more than just an opportunity to address the people in attendance. Will their leadership agree to post signs and informational material in their offices? Would their members be willing

to display bumper stickers or other supportive material as part of the wider community effort? Let your imagination go, and knowing the community the way you do, you're certain to hit upon the best way to take your message beyond the group you're addressing.

Speaking engagements are also an opportunity for media involvement. As soon as you accept a speaking engagement, ask the organization if they object to having their meeting listed in the business calendar of the local newspaper. A sample of this type of announcement is in [Appendix 3](#). Be warned, however, that most business calendars require materials to be submitted at least two weeks prior to the event. If the organization you're addressing has no objection, feel free to invite media to cover your remarks. The chances of such coverage are not very good; however, it's still worth mentioning to the news desk or assignment editor.

13.8.5 Promotional Items

Think of it...giant lettering on village water towers that says **HIRE VETS**. How about every municipal vehicle in the city's fleet with a bumper sticker that says **HIRE VETS**? What about a billboard on the outskirts of town that says something like:

Acme Corporation of Bloomington Hires the Best:

HIRE VETS!

There are many good ideas on promotional items for promoting the various programs that VETS provides. Don't stop with your Mayoral Proclamation and public service announcements, but brainstorm how you can partner with your community; employer clients and with public officials (County Officials, Mayor and perhaps the Governor). Doing so will help you add to that list.

13.9 Veterans Service Organizations

The national Veterans' Service Organizations (VSO) such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, the DAV, and AMVETS among many others can provide the DVET with an effective and efficient means to "get the word out" about the agency's programs and agenda.

The U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs compiles a yearly Directory of Veterans Service Organizations, which can be viewed at <http://www1.va.gov/vso/>.

Viable marketing can be initiated through the Veterans' Service Organizations. Contact with the Department headquarters of each VSO within a state will greatly enhance the visibility and general understanding of the issues directly affecting the veterans of any state.

Some VSOs also publish a yearly directory of veterans' service providers at the state level as well. This provides another avenue to have VETS points-of-contact listed with those in the veteran community.

13.10 Sponsorship and Co-Sponsorship of Outside Organizations

A question that frequently arises is whether the Department may co-sponsor conferences and other events with non-governmental entities. However meritorious these events or organizations may be, Department employees must be very cautious about lending the Department's name or seal to such an event or entity. DVETs should consult with the VETS regional staff prior to entering into any such arrangements. The VETS regional office is responsible for consulting with OPA or Solicitor's Office as necessary.

Appendix 1 Written “Spotlight” Sample

(These sorts of articles can be tailored for printing in trade show brochures/booklets, conference/training pamphlets, and/or organizational newsletters.)

Since the onset of military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, over 1.6 million members of the active duty military have served in these two theaters. In addition, many of the nation’s National Guard units and Reservists have also been called to active duty in support of the Global War on Terror and have served in these theaters or elsewhere.

In fact, the Department of Defense (DOD) reports that over 600,000 National Guard and Reserve mobilizations have occurred since September 11, 2001. This represents the largest deployment of the National Guard in the past half-century.

These deployments create significant challenges for service members and employers. The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA) is a law intended to provide guidance to employers on the reemployment rights of the men and women who leave their jobs while serving as members of our active military, National Guard and Reserve. USERRA protects the public and private sector civilian job rights and benefits of veterans and members of the armed forces, including National Guard and Reserve members. The law prohibits employer discrimination due to military obligations and provides reemployment rights to returning service members. The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (VETS) not only investigates complaints by service members and veterans, it also administers a comprehensive outreach, education, and technical assistance program here in the United States and around the world.

In addition to USERRA, DOL’s VETS can assist in linking employers with qualified applicants. Through grants provided to states, VETS provides comprehensive job training and employment programs to eligible veterans. Under this grant program, funds are allocated to State Workforce Agencies in direct proportion to the number of veterans seeking employment within each state. Additionally, the Department’s HireVetsFirst campaign works directly with employers to assist in meeting their employment demands with qualified veterans.

Please be sure to stop by DOL’s information table at the *(input event name)* to learn more about USERRA and how you can take advantage of other employment programs. To learn more about VETS visit their web site at www.dol.gov/vets or contact the VETS Director for the state of *(input state and contact information)*.

Appendix 2 Sample Proclamation

Village, Town or City Seal

Mayoral Proclamation

PROCLAMATION

Whereas, whenever called upon to defend our nations security at home or abroad, the men and women who serve in the U.S. Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force and Coast Guard have responded immediately and effectively, placing the national interests above their own; and

Whereas, of the more than 48 million of these citizen soldiers who have served the United States of America, more than a million have made the ultimate sacrifice by giving their lives, and another 1.5 million have been wounded; and,

Whereas, today our men and women in uniform daily put their lives at risk, seeking to secure the blessings of freedom and liberty for oppressed people around the globe; and,

Whereas, in 1944 when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the G.I. Bill into law, he observed that more than anything else American serviceman and women want "the assurance of satisfactory employment upon their return to civilian life, and,

Whereas, today's veterans desire the same economic opportunities as their forebears, and bring to the modern workplace the benefits of skills, education, leadership, maturity and dedication learned in military service;

Now, Therefore, I, _____, Governor of _____, do hereby proclaim
(Month, Day) 20__, as

"Hire a Veteran Month"

Throughout the State of _____, and encourage all state businesses to provide employment opportunities to those who have served in the Armed Forces.

Appendix 3 Calendar of Events Submission

Actually just another form of a news release, this kind of submission usually has a very specific rule attached to it...most newspapers or broadcast outlets have an advance receipt requirement that they strictly adhere to. Don't expect to show up a day or even a week before the Calendar is published and have your notice included. Find out how far in advance the information is needed.

SAMPLE SUBMISSION TO NEWSPAPER OR TELEVISION CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Your submission should be typed on office letterhead in the following manner:

(Letterhead Logo, etc.)

CONTACT: (Your name) (today's date)

TELEPHONE: (Your number)

Submission to Events Calendar

Jobs for Returning Veterans Highlights November Chamber of Commerce Meeting

WATSEKA, III. – (YOUR NAME), Local Veterans' Employment Representative in (town), will address the November meeting of the Watseka Chamber of Commerce on Nov. 22, 2004 at 7:00 p.m., (address). (YOUR LAST NAME) will describe the qualities returning veterans bring to the workplace and advise attendees of how to locate and add veterans to their workforce. Mayor (NAME) has declared November as "Hire a Veteran" month for Watseka. For more information on the chamber meeting, call xxx-xxx-xxxx.

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The sample above is the appropriate length that newspapers will use in their calendar columns. Some papers may actually use the submission as a news story in itself, and that's even better.

Most papers require a submission to their calendar to be made at least two weeks in advance, so once you've accepted a speaking engagement, it's time to get the announcement to the paper immediately. You'll also want to be certain that the group you're speaking before has no objection to you issuing a calendar announcement.

Appendix 4 News Releases

Following are sample releases that may be used for specific types of events. Each sample ends with general instructions on how best to convince media to use your release.

SAMPLE 1:

Your release should be typed on office letterhead in the following manner:

(Letterhead Logo, etc.)

CONTACT: (Your name) (today's date)

TELEPHONE: (Your number)

Mayor Proclaims November

'Hire Vets First' Month

DANVILLE, III. – Mayor (Full Name) signed a proclamation today declaring November as 'Hire Vets First' month in Danville, urging all businesses in the city to consider the advantages of filling vacancies with qualified military veterans.

"We're asking employers to consider that these are our friends and neighbors, or the children of our friends and neighbors, who have proven themselves through the tough job they accomplished in protecting our country," Mayor (LAST NAME) said. "They bring a myriad of skills to the workplace, and more than that, they bring a record of loyalty, dedication and dependability to employers wise enough to understand the value of those qualities."

(YOUR NAME), local veterans employment and training representative (or your accurate title) at the Illinois (OFFICE NAME) in Danville, said that his office is ready to assist employers who are looking for qualified candidates for employment. "Today's military personnel receive training in a wide variety of skills and have a working knowledge of the very latest equipment and computerized machinery found in most any workplace. Add that knowledge to the qualities described by Mayor (last name), and you can understand the wisdom of hiring our veterans."

(YOUR LAST NAME) can be contacted by calling xxx-xxx-xxxx. His office can provide qualified candidates for job openings at no cost.

Note: This news release can be handed out at the actual signing ceremony. If you're aware of media that did not attend the ceremony, hand-deliver the release to their office. Obviously, you'll want to clear this release with the Mayor prior to issuing, or the Mayor may choose to create and issue his or her own.

SAMPLE 2:

Your release should be typed on office letterhead in the same manner as in sample:

Jobs for Returning Veterans Highlights November Chamber of Commerce Meeting

WATSEKA, III. – (YOUR NAME), Local Veterans' Employment Representative in (town), told local Chamber of Commerce members last night that hiring veterans' is not only the right thing to do, but also the smart thing to do for their businesses.

Speaking at the Chamber's regularly scheduled meeting, (YOUR LAST NAME) said, "These people have learned cutting edge skills in every occupation imaginable, and have proven themselves to be the most reliable and loyal people any employer could wish to find. Hiring veterans just makes good business sense."

Chamber President (NAME) asked (YOUR LAST NAME) to address Chamber members because "we're always looking for ways to help our membership find the best ways of doing business, and that includes finding the best workers. It has always occurred to me that veterans fit the bill."

(YOUR NAME) said that veterans who returned from previous wars have proven themselves to be the best hires, regardless of their training. "But these new veterans, returning home from duty all over the world, are probably the best trained soldiers the world has ever seen. This is particularly true," he said, "when you talk about skills that are valuable in the civilian world of work."

(YOUR NAME) said that employers interested in learning more about hiring veterans or who would like to place a job order at no cost should contact (LOCAL ONE-STOP ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER, OR OTHER APPROPRIATE INFO).

Note: This type of news release can be prepared in advance of your speaking engagement and hand-carried to the local newspaper the day of your speech for publication the next morning. Ask to see the Metro News editor and hand them the news release, asking them if it's possible to place it in the paper the day following your speech.

SAMPLE 3:

Your release should be typed on office letterhead in the same manner as in sample:

Employment Official Says Local Labor Pool Contains Some of the Best Talent Ever

DANVILLE, III. – Local Veterans' Employment Representative (YOUR NAME) said today that many of the available workers at the Danville One-Stop Employment Office are possibly the best qualified for immediate hire that the office has ever had.

"What we have here are people who have recently separated from the military after having received some of the very best training in the world," (YOUR LAST NAME) said. "They're people with a proven track record of reliability and loyalty, people you can put on the job and watch them go."

(YOUR LAST NAME) said that among veterans available for immediate hire are people with skilled training in auto mechanics, electronics, machine shop skills, and more. (YOU WOULD LIST THE SKILL SETS YOUR PEOPLE HAVE ON HAND IN THE PREVIOUS SENTENCE.) He added that many of these veterans have returned from duty stations around the world and bring a sense of maturity to the workplace that employers require.

"It was most encouraging for all of us in the community when the Mayor proclaimed this month as 'Hire A Vet' month," (YOUR LAST NAME) said. "I know the people of (TOWN NAME) share the belief that returning veterans have proven themselves as quality people and deserve the jobs we have to offer."

(YOUR LAST NAME) can be reached at (THE ONE-STOP OFFICE ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER.)

Note: This type of news release is best suited for small dailies or weeklies. In most cases, a daily newspaper would rather interview you to extract this kind of story, but smaller ones or weeklies may not have staff available. You can take a copy of this release to your local paper and ask to speak to the assignment editor. Tell the editor you'd like their help in publicizing the kinds of workers you have available and suggest that you would be willing to do an interview on the subject or that they can use the news release you've just handed the editor.

Appendix 5 Public Service Announcements

Sample Letter

September 27, 2005

Dear Television Executive:

The purpose of this letter is to ask you to air a public service announcement which encourages employers to hire veterans.

As part of a national campaign, Governor _____ and the Department of Workforce Development have launched the *Hire Vets First* campaign, with a message targeted to employers. Governor _____ knows that veterans are a tremendous resource to our state's workforce and has recorded two television public service announcements and two radio announcements to show his support of our veterans.

In _____, we currently have over 500,000 veterans who are either actively employed or looking for work. We know that veterans bring to the modern workplace skills, education, leadership, maturity and dedication learned in military service. In addition, veterans consistently demonstrate the ability to learn new skills and concepts.

Two major employers, _____ and _____ have also participated in these PSAs, highlighting their positive experiences with hiring and retaining veterans.

Governor _____ and the Department of Workforce Development urge you to air these television public service messages as frequently as possible between now and mid November. Holiday season hiring is an excellent time to prompt employers to consider veterans in their employee recruitment efforts.

We appreciate your assistance to get the word out, and sincerely hope that you too consider hiring veterans first when employment opportunities arise within your organization.

Best regards,

Director, VETS

Appendix 6 Sample Audio Announcements

The following are sample Public Service Announcements (PSA) are most likely to be used if you hand-deliver them to the radio or television station you are targeting. Ask to meet with the public service director at the station to discuss your PSA's. At radio stations in particular, ask the public service director if their on-air talent could actually read the announcement(s) live during their regular broadcast. Your PSA should be typed on office letterhead in the following manner:

(Letterhead Logo, etc.)

CONTACT: (Your name)

(today's date)

TELEPHONE: (Your number)

WORDS: 26

(SAMPLE 1)

HIRE VETS FIRST

TEN SECOND PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

ANNOUNCER: If you're an employer looking for a quality worker, consider this: Veterans have proven themselves to be dedicated, loyal and responsible. The rest is easy.

(SAMPLE 2)

Your PSA should be typed on office letterhead in the same manner as above:

HIRE VETS FIRST

FIFTEEN SECOND PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

ANNOUNCER: Returning veterans bring home a record of dedication, loyalty and responsibility...And skills that save employers training costs in the work place. If you're an employer looking for a quality worker, Hire Vets First.

(SAMPLE 3)

Your PSA should be typed on office letterhead in the same manner as above:

HIRE VETS FIRST

THIRTY SECOND PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

ANNOUNCER: They're your friends and neighbors, and the sons and daughters of your friends and neighbors. They've been away doing a terrific job and now they're looking for

another one. Returning veterans bring home a record of dedication, loyalty and responsibility...and skills that save employers training costs in the workplace. If you're an employer looking for a quality worker, Hire Vets First. For qualified candidates for your workplace, call your local area Workforce Development Center at XXX-XXXX.

Appendix 7 Best Practice Example

For Immediate Release:

Governor Declares November Hire a Veteran Month

New Website to promote skills, leadership of Vets

Madison – Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle today proclaimed the month of November "Hire a Veteran Month" in Wisconsin to draw attention to the vast contributions that veterans of the United States armed forces have made and continue to make to the workforce.

"The honorable men and women who have risked their lives to defend our country deserve a decent job when their duty to country is complete. It is my hope that any employer, given a chance, would consider a veteran for employment," Governor Doyle said.

In 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the G.I. Bill into law. At that time he observed that more than anything else American servicemen and women wanted the assurance of satisfactory employment upon their return to civilian life. Today's veterans desire the same economic opportunities as their forebears, and bring to the modern workplace the benefits of skills, education, leadership, maturity and dedication learned in military service.

More than 48 million citizen soldiers have served the United States of America, more than a million of them have made the ultimate sacrifice by giving their lives, and another 1.5 million have been wounded.

More information about these programs can be found [here](#) on the Department of Labor Internet site or by typing <http://www.dol.gov/vets/welcome.html> into your Internet explorer address bar.

Appendix 8 Sample Letter to Congressional Member's Home Office

FORMAL BUSINESS LETTER FORMAT, ADDRESSED TO THE ATTN OF THE AIDE (by name)
IN THE HOME OFFICE

Dear _____:

My purpose for writing to you is to help you provide the best possible service to Congressman _____'s (or Senator _____'s) constituents who are military veterans, Reservists, National Guard members, or family members of those citizens.

My employer, the U.S. Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service (USDOL VETS), is a unique agency that is dedicated to assisting those persons to succeed in the civilian labor market, and to assisting private and public sector employers to meet their human resource challenges in today's labor market. VETS is the only agency in the Department of Labor with a mission that includes both statutory enforcement responsibilities and employment and training program services, which enables me and my colleagues to provide a broad spectrum of assistance, not only to the clients listed above, but also to people such as yourself who also have service obligations.

You and I have a mutual interest; that is, ensuring that the veterans, Reservists, Guard members, and their dependents who reside in our State are directed to the right source(s) for assistance, without delay or misdirection, when they seek assistance with an employment or job-training related problem.

My agency is responsible for assisting protected individuals (mainly Reservists and Guard members) with their reemployment rights when they return to the civilian sector following a tour of active duty. My agency also is responsible for ensuring that veterans (including many Reservists and Guard members who went on active duty during war time periods) receive priority for services by job placement and job training service providers run by the State and/or local government entities that are funded in whole or in part by the Department of Labor. In addition, my agency also administers certain grant programs that make available specialized staff (e.g., Disabled Veterans Outreach Program specialists and Local Veterans Employment Representatives) and services to veterans in many locations throughout the state. You can find more information about the VETS at www.dol.gov/vets.

I hope that you will contact me, and/or my staff member(s) whose address(es) and areas of responsibility are shown below, whenever you have a question related to an employment or reemployment issue. I personally guarantee that you and/or your constituent will receive a prompt and informed response.

Sincerely,

DVET signature block

Appendix 9 References and Resources

VPL Directory: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/vpls/VPLDirectory.htm>

[Veterans' Employment and Training Service \(VETS\)](#)

[USERRA Operations Manual](#)

[Veterans Preference](#) & Federal Contractors Program (FCP)

[Transition Assistance Program \(TAP\)](#)

[Jobs for Veterans State Grants](#)

[Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment \(VR&E\)](#)

[Recovery and Employment Assistance Lifelines \(REALifelines\)](#)

[Competitive Grants:](#)

[America's Heroes at Work](#)

Hire a Hero: www.hireahero.org

- END -