



# Ohio Department of Veterans Services

★ *Monthly Update* ★

January 2013



Ohio is marking Vietnam Veterans Day in 2013 with a special commemoration from March 26 - 29. The traveling Vietnam Memorial Wall is coming to Columbus, as well as panel discussions on veterans experiences and special ceremonies. Find out more, and how you can get involved, in this month's issue.

## Questions about veterans benefits?

Call 1-877-OHIOVET  
(1-877-644-6838)

*Welcome to the twenty-second edition of the Ohio Department of Veterans Services e-newsletter! The newsletter is a key source of information about issues of interest to our community of veterans in Ohio.*

We thank you for your service to our country. Because you're a veteran, you've earned a number of benefits that you may not be aware of. Most of these benefits originate at the federal level with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Based on the time you served, you may be eligible for compensation for injuries, health care, educational assistance, home loans or many other benefits. There are also a number of state benefits available to Ohio veterans, to include the Ohio Veterans Bonus as well as direct financial assistance from the county to veterans in need.

The place to find out what you've earned and to apply is your county veterans service office. You can locate yours in the interactive map on our department home page, [www.ohiovet.gov](http://www.ohiovet.gov), or by calling 1-877-OHIO-VET (1-877-644-6838).

We will continue to provide you this newsletter each month. We hope it's of value to you and your family.

## **Vietnam Commemoration to be Held in March...**

With the stroke of his pen on Senate Bill 134 last year, Governor John Kasich signed Vietnam Veterans Day into law. March 26-29 of this year marks the first state-level commemoration of Vietnam Veterans Day in Ohio. Local veterans' organizations and communities are encouraged to hold their own events during this time.

The March 26-29 state commemoration is planned around the theme of finally welcoming home and honoring those who served, and remembering those who didn't make it back. Events will be held at the Ohio Historical Society and at the Statehouse. The highlight of the four-day commemoration is the hosting of the traveling Vietnam Memorial Wall by the Ohio Historical Society. A formal dinner is planned for the Statehouse, along with an opening ceremony at the Ohio Historical Society and a closing ceremony at the Statehouse. There will also be a final memorial ceremony at the Wall to close out the commemoration.



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Another key component of the commemoration is education. Panel discussions will be held at the Ohio Historical Society for the first three days of the event to focus on the experiences of veterans provide a perspective on the war and its aftermath.

The Ohio Department of Veterans Services' web site contains a special section with a schedule of events and other details of the commemoration. The special section also contains information on how to volunteer to support the commemoration. Volunteers are needed to help reach out to veterans And veteran organizations, staff the events, greet veterans, provide services to veterans and their families who are in attendance, and several other functions.



The special web section for the commemoration is at:

[http://dvs.ohio.gov/home/vietnam\\_veterans\\_commemoration.aspx](http://dvs.ohio.gov/home/vietnam_veterans_commemoration.aspx)

## **Veterans and Jobs in Ohio...**

**News:** By now you've probably heard that Walmart is launching a national effort to hire veterans. A news release from the company says that, "Beginning Memorial Day, Walmart will offer a job to any honorably discharged veteran in his or her first 12 months off active duty. Most of these jobs will be in Walmart stores and clubs, and some will be in distribution centers and the Home Office." Walmart joins a number of U.S. national companies, including GM, GE Aviation, Home Depot, Verizon, and Chase, who have announced initiatives to hire veterans. A number of companies in local areas are also following suit.

**"Hiring Our Heroes" Job Fairs Upcoming:** The U.S. Chamber of Commerce's "Hiring Our Heroes" program is bringing two large hiring fairs to southern and southwestern Ohio over the next two months, the first in Portsmouth on February 21, and the second in Dayton on March 26.

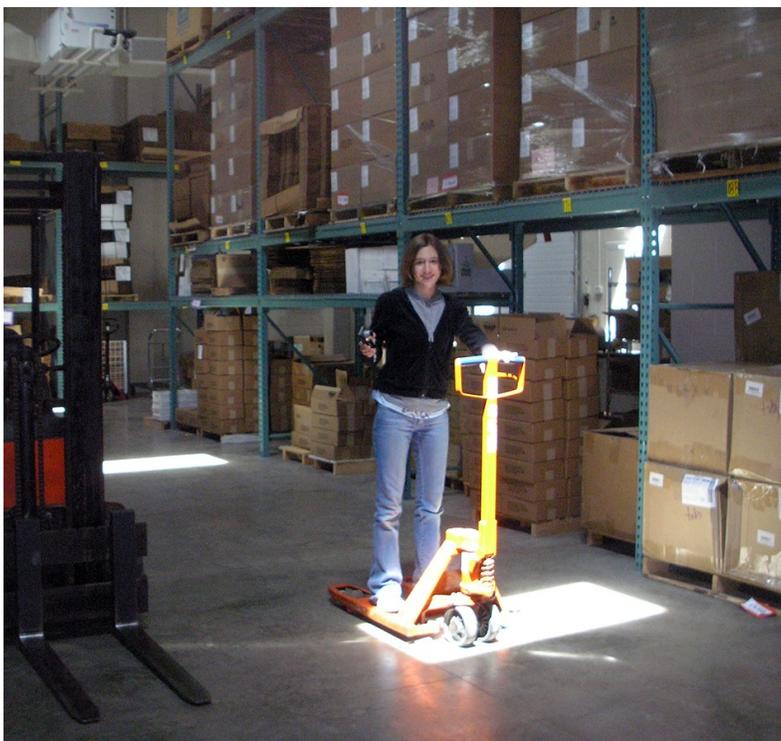


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The Portsmouth job fair will be held from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on February 21 at American Legion Post 471, 950 Gallia St., 45662. Dayton's job fair will be from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Dayton Marriott, 1414 S. Patterson Blvd., 45409. Both events will feature a number of both national and local employers, and are open to veterans, active duty, Guard and Reserve members, and military spouses. For additional information and links to register for each event, see:

<http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/events?page=1>



**Jobs as a Mission:** All of these developments make it an urgent priority for veterans to take advantage of the good will and actively seek employment. If you're a veteran who's looking for a job, treat the job search as your new mission. Plan the work you need to do to accomplish this mission, and then work your plan. There's also some tools to help; read on for more....

**Be Prepared for Interviews, and Know Your Skills:** Before you attend any job fair or visit any employer, remember these common tips:

- Have a current resume;
- Have a cover letter that's geared to the type of job being sought;
- Present a professional appearance, e.g., suit & tie, or dress/skirt or pantsuit.

To prepare an effective resume, you have to be able to translate military experience to civilian experience. The Army and the Navy have developed online "cool" web sites that help veterans translate their military skills into terms civilian employers can understand. The sites, which stand for "credentialing opportunities online," allow a veteran to select their military skill code and then see the types of jobs their training and experience translates to, as well as any certifications that are needed. There is no Air Force, Marine, or Coast Guard "cool" site. However, the Air Force does offer similar resources in its Community College of the Air Force site, at the Credentialing and Education Research Tool (CERT) page; Marine skills are similar to those found in the Army and Air Force; and Coast Guard skills are similar to those found in the Navy.



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The “cool” sites are below:

<https://www.cool.army.mil/index.htm>

<https://www.cool.navy.mil/overview.htm>

<https://augateway.maxwell.af.mil/ccaf/certifications/programs/>

## **Online Job Assistance:**

“Ohio Means Jobs” is the state’s job web site which has a real advantage for veterans by getting them to the front of the line for available jobs. The site is the result of a partnership between Ohio and Monster.com, and is on the web at [Ohiomeansjobs.com](http://Ohiomeansjobs.com).

Once on the site –

at <https://ohiomeansjobs.com/omj/> – veterans should go to the “Job Seekers” area, and that’s where the opportunities open up.

First, veterans need to post their resume and indicate that they *are* a veteran. What this does is present veterans’ resumes first for any job that matches the qualifications they’ve posted in their resume. The resume should be reviewed every month and electronically “updated” – whether any additional information is added or not – to keep it refreshed and at the front of the line for jobs.



This site has a searchable data base of thousands of jobs across Ohio, with private business, federal, state and local government, and schools. While it’s still advisable to check local ads in the places you’d like to be, the Monster.com system will capture the majority of employment ads throughout the state.

There’s also a military widget on [Ohiomeansjobs.com](http://Ohiomeansjobs.com) that will automatically links to additional information for veterans. This includes resources to help build a resume by translating military experience to civilian terms. It also includes links to veteran-friendly employers – companies that have made a commitment to hire veterans – as well as other resources:

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



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**In-Person Job Assistance:** If you want to start a face-to-face job search, there's employment assistance available not far home. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (JFS) is in an active partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor to operate Job Centers in each county, usually centrally located in the county seat; contact information is easily accessible by searching online or in the phone book.

While the Job Centers are open to all residents, but are also staffed with counselors who specifically assist veterans. Their primary clients are veterans with barriers to employment, of which long-term unemployment definitely qualifies. Counselors can assist with skills translation and resume preparation. The Job Centers also have resources to assist disabled veterans with qualifying for, finding and keeping meaningful employment.

Periodically, the Job Centers work with local partners to host regional job fairs across the state, which we'll tell you about here and in our social media.

**Job Assistance from the Ohio Guard and AMVETS:** The Ohio National Guard knows the importance of full-time jobs for part-time soldiers. To help, they've joined forces with AMVETS to find employment for Guard men and women who are looking.

The Guard has partnered with AMVETS to create the web site below. It features statewide job postings for veterans:

<http://ohiovetscan.com/>

The Guard is also actively working with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (JFS) to help soldiers returning from deployments in a program is known as "Battlefront to Homefront." The Guard is surveying soldiers in deployed units before they return home to determine how many need employment when they get back. JFS Job Center Counselors are then contacting these soldiers when they return home to work with them and help them find work.

**VRAP is Still Out There for Eligible Veterans:** The second phase of the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) is underway, and veterans who are eligible should not delay in signing up.

VRAP is intended to get unemployed veterans aged 35-60 re-trained and re-employed in high-demand occupations nationwide. VRAP is part of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011. The program offers up to 12 months of job training assistance under the Montgomery G.I. Bill at the rate of \$1,473 per month.



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A second phase of the VRAP program began with the new federal fiscal year on October 1, 2012 and continues through March 31, 2014, but is open to only 54,000 eligible veterans – including those who were too late to be accepted for the first phase. The program's success so far is an indication that any veteran who is thinking about applying should take action quickly to do so.

The first phase began in May 2012 and was open to 45,000 veterans, a number exceeded prior to the September 30 deadline. Applications pending at that time are being considered for the second phase.

**Please note** that applications must be made online through the VA's eBenefits program. A web tool will assist veterans in working through this.

For more information, see: <http://benefits.va.gov/vow/education.htm>

[https://veteransbonus.ohio.gov/odvs\\_web/](https://veteransbonus.ohio.gov/odvs_web/), or visit any county veterans service office (see [www.ohiovet.gov](http://www.ohiovet.gov) for an interactive map of the county offices).

Veterans can apply for these benefits at their local Veterans Service Office in their home county. To find out the location, see the Ohio map and select the appropriate county at: <http://dvs.ohio.gov/>



## Missing in America Project Moves Forward with Federal Help...

A national effort to locate and identify the remains of unclaimed veterans, and then provide them a dignified burial, took a major step forward on January 10 when President Barack Obama signed the Dignified Burial and Other Veterans Benefits Improvements Act.

The new law is a major boost to the five-year-old Missing in America Project, a volunteer initiative supported by the American Legion. The project began in response to reports in several states of an unknown number of veterans' ashes and remains lying abandoned and unclaimed at funeral homes or other entities. Without a next of kin identified, these remains could stay at a funeral home indefinitely and not be laid to rest.

Ohio U.S. Congressman Pat Tiberi had introduced the Missing in America bill in the U.S. House in 2009.



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Congressman Steve Stivers was a co-sponsor. The bill passed both the U.S. House and U.S. Senate in December, with support from Senator Rob Portman of Ohio.

The new law requires the Secretary of Veterans Affairs – who directs the VA – to assist the Missing in America Project, veterans service organizations and other volunteer groups, to determine if unidentified remains located by these groups are in fact the remains of veterans. Once veterans are identified, the Secretary must determine if there is a next of kin or other resources that could cover the costs of the burial. If there are no available resources, then the VA will fund the cost of the burial of these veterans, if they are otherwise eligible, in a national cemetery.

ODVS Director Tom Moe testified in support of this legislation, at the invitation of Congressman Tiberi, before the U.S. House Veterans' Affairs Committee in March 2011.

"As a former member of the military who was Missing in Action in Vietnam, this bill reminds me of my own family's challenge of having to deal with the uncertainty of my whereabouts and fate. Once I was identified as a Prisoner of War, my country made every effort to return me and my fellow comrades to our families," Director Moe, a retired Air Force fighter pilot who was held captive for over five years during the Vietnam War, said in his testimony.

"Just as our Nation is committed to finding and rescuing our troops who go Missing in Action, I hope that you will join me and Representatives Tiberi and Stivers to find and honor those who are still missing—but in our own homeland, America," he said.

Ohio had already enacted a law in 2010 that is similar to the new federal legislation. To date, the remains of 17 veterans have been interred in two separate ceremonies at the Dayton National Cemetery, and 13 have been interred in one ceremony at the Rittman National Cemetery.

## **Burn Pits Info to be Gathered by VA...**

The Dignified Burial and Other Veterans Benefits Improvements Act also mandates action on an issue that has been of great concern to veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan – the affects of exposure to the smoke from "burn pits" at U.S. bases, where garbage of all types is dumped and burned.





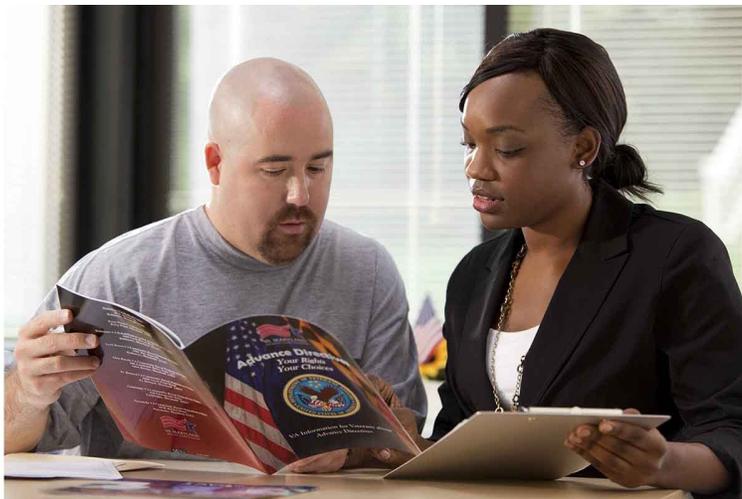
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The law requires the VA to establish a registry of military and veterans who it says may have been exposed to the smoke from burn pits. The VA is currently in the process of establishing the registry and will publish details on how to sign up. The agency is currently conducting a number of health studies related to the burn pits, and plans to monitor the effect of these exposures and keep veterans advised of the studies and appropriate treatment.

According to the VA, exposure to airborne toxins from burn pits may affect the skin, eyes, respiration, cardiovascular system, gastrointestinal tract and internal organs. The VA advises anyone concerned about possible exposure to consult their health care professional or environmental health coordinator at the nearest VA medical center. For more information, see:

<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/burnpits/index.asp>



## **VA Moves Ahead with Paperless Claims Processing...**

The VA announced this month that its effort to transition to paperless claims processing is well underway and on track to eliminate its claims backlog by 2015.

So far, the VA has implemented its new software system at 18 regional offices, including Cleveland, and is on track to get it in place at the remaining 38 regional offices by the end of this year.

Called the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS), this software system allows VA claims processors to:

- establish veterans' claims entirely in a digital environment as "e-folders,"
- receive, store, and view veterans' submitted claim documents electronically,
- identify and track the evidence VA needs from beneficiaries and other outside sources,
- quickly direct claims electronically among regional offices to better match VA's workload with available workforce capacity.



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This system also enables claims processors to access online rules-based calculators and drop-down menus that are designed to enhance claims decision accuracy and standardization.

To find out more about VBMS, read the VA news release at:

<http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2418>

## **Dr. King's Legacy...**

Many ceremonies are being held across Ohio and the nation this month in honor of the January 15 birthday of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., culminating in the federal holiday that marks his birth, which is held this year on January 21.

He was a tireless advocate during his life for social and economic justice for all races and against the Vietnam War, positions that won him both friends and foes across the political spectrum. Although his 39 years on earth were ended by an assassin's bullet on April 4, 1968, there is no denying his larger-than-life impact on American life and values.

His influence helped bring the country forward toward equal treatment and respect for all races, spurring laws to strengthen civil rights and increase opportunity. These efforts led to him being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. Dr. King's oratorical skills are legend, and are among the most-quoted in America.

Perhaps his greatest legacy is echoed in the words of a dream that he recounted in a speech at the Lincoln Memorial during a "March on Washington" for human rights in August 1963. Its most memorable line is a lesson for all generations – that people be judged not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.

