

## VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 –

The law amends the Internal Revenue Code to: (1) increase the amount of wages eligible for the work opportunity tax credit for veterans who are hired after being unemployed for six months or more during the one-year period ending on the hiring date (\$14,000 of first-year wages) or disabled veterans who are either hired within one year after discharge from active duty (\$12,000 of first-year wages) or who are hired after being unemployed for six months or more during the one-year period ending on the hiring date (\$24,000 of first-year wages), and (2) allow tax-exempt organizations to claim the lesser of the amount of the work opportunity tax credit for hiring veterans or the amount of the payroll taxes paid by such organizations during the calendar year. Extends through 2012 such credit with respect to such veterans. Provides a credit against payroll taxes for qualified tax-exempt organizations employing such veterans.

The VA is directed to establish and commence a program of retraining assistance for veterans who: (1) are at least 35 but not more than 60 years of age, (2) were last discharged from active-duty service under conditions other than dishonorable, (3) are unemployed, (4) are not eligible for educational assistance under other VA programs, (5) are not in receipt of compensation for a service-connected disability rated total due to unemployability, (6) were not enrolled in any federal or state job training program at any time during the 180-day period ending on the date of application for assistance, and (7) applies for such assistance by October 1, 2013. Entitles each eligible veteran to up to 12 months of job training assistance toward a high-demand occupation. Requires the Secretary of Labor to contact each such veteran within 30 days after completion or termination of such training or assistance in order to facilitate employment. Requires: (1) such Secretaries to enter into a joint agreement to carry out such assistance, and (2) the VA Secretary to report to Congress on assistance provided. Provides funding. Terminates assistance authority on March 31, 2014.

The Departments of Defense (DOD) and Homeland Security (DHS) are to require the participation of members of the Armed Forces (members) being separated from active duty, and their spouses, in DOD's transition assistance program (TAP). Allows the Department to waive the participation requirement with respect to: (1) such groups or classifications of members for whom participation is not, and would not be, of assistance since such members are unlikely to face major readjustment, health care, employment, or other challenges associated with transition to civilian life; and (2) individual members possessing specialized skills who are needed to support a unit's imminent deployment. It requires the VA to contract with appropriate contractors to provide TAP functions at all locations where TAP is being carried out, and (2) such contractors to provide members being separated from active duty, and their spouses, with appropriate TAP services. Requires such contracts to be entered into within two years after the enactment of this Act. Authorizes the Departments of Labor, VA, DHS, and DOD, in carrying out TAP, to contract with private entities that have experience with instructing members on relevant topics on job training and job searching, including academic readiness and educational opportunities. Authorizes the DOD and DHS, as part of TAP, to permit an eligible member to participate in an apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship program that provides them with the education, training, and services necessary to transition to meaningful employment.

Amends the Wounded Warrior Act to extend through 2014 the authority of the VA to provide the same rehabilitation and vocational benefits to members with severe injuries or illnesses as are provided to veterans. Expands the authority of the VA to make payments to employers to provide on-job training to veterans to include veterans who have not been rehabilitated to the point of employability.

Entitles certain veterans with service-connected disabilities who have exhausted their rights to unemployment benefits to participation in an additional VA rehabilitation program. Limits the duration of such a program to 12 months. Makes the 12-year period of eligibility for a VA rehabilitation program inapplicable under such additional program.

Directs the VA to award grants to up to three nonprofit organizations under a two-year collaborative veterans' training, mentoring, and placement program for eligible veterans seeking employment.

Treats an individual as a veteran, a disabled veteran, or a preference eligible for purposes of appointments to federal competitive service positions if the individual meets all other qualifications except for the requirement of discharge or release from active duty under honorable conditions, as long as such individual submits to the federal officer making the appointment a certification that he or she is expected to be discharged or released under honorable conditions within 120 days after submission of the certification.

Authorizes the DOD to establish a two-year pilot program to assess the feasibility and advisability of providing to members on terminal leave work experience with civilian employees and contractors of DOD to facilitate the transition of such members from military service to employment in the civilian labor market.

Includes the terms, conditions, or privileges of employment within the benefits and rights of employment for purposes of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act.

Extends through FY2016 the current \$90 limit on VA pension paid to veterans residing in nursing homes when their nursing costs are paid through title XIX (Medicaid) of the Social Security Act.

Limits VA payments for ambulance services to the lesser of the actual charges or the rates permitted under title XVIII (Medicare) of the Social Security Act.

Extends through FY2016 VA authority to charge a loan fee for certain subsequent housing loans made to veterans.