

VOW to Hire Heroes Act

VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 Creates New Benefit for Unemployed Veterans

Congress passed, and the President has signed into law, the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011. Included in this new law is the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) for unemployed Veterans. The Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) and the Department of Labor (DoL) are working together to roll out this new program on July 1, 2012. The new program will provide retraining for Veterans hardest hit by current economic conditions.

The VRAP offers 12 months of training assistance to unemployed Veterans. To qualify, a Veteran must:

- Be at least 35 but no more than 60 years old
- Be unemployed (as determined by DoL) with special consideration given to Veterans who have been unemployed for more than 26 weeks
- Have an other than dishonorable discharge
- Not be eligible for any other VA education benefit program (e.g.: the Post-9/11 GI Bill, Montgomery GI Bill, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Assistance)
- Not be in receipt of VA compensation due to unemployability
- Not be enrolled in a federal or state job training program

The program is limited to 45,000 participants during fiscal year 2012, and to 54,000 participants from October 1, 2012, through March 31, 2014.

Participants may receive up to 12 months of assistance at the full-time payment rate under the Montgomery GI Bill–Active Duty program (currently \$1,473 per month). Applications will be submitted through DoL and benefits paid by VA. DoL will provide employment assistance to every Veteran who participates upon completion of their program.

Participants must be enrolled in a VA approved program of education offered by a community college or technical school. The program must lead to an Associate Degree, Non-College Degree, or a Certification, and train the Veteran for a high demand occupation.