

CONGRESS UNITES TO HELP UNEMPLOYED VETERANS

Transitioning service members should benefit almost immediately

WASHINGTON (November 17, 2011) — The national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is saluting Congress for its overwhelming passage of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, which merges the best of two separate House and Senate bills with the employer tax breaks proposed by the White House. President Obama is expected to sign the legislation early next week.

"Washington works best when there is common ground," said VFW National Commander Richard L. DeNoyer, a retired Marine and Vietnam combat veteran from Middleton, Mass. "I am proud of House Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Jeff Miller (R-Fla.) and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Patty Murray (D-Wash.) and all their supporters for joining together to help veterans get jobs. I also want to thank the president for his strong support of veterans past and present."

Citing Department of Labor statistics, DeNoyer said the national unemployment rate dropped slightly to 9 percent in October, but the unemployment rate for all Post-9/11 veterans rose almost a half percentage point to 12.1 percent. Far worse is DOL's current population survey of veterans age 18-24; their October unemployment rate was 30.4-percent, a percentage the VFW national commander fears could grow even larger as the wars end and the military services are forced to reduce personnel because of the budget crisis.

"The VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 is a huge victory for veterans," he said. "It requires the Defense Department to focus more on output instead of just recruiting and retention, and it gives our troops another alternative to standing in an unemployment line or reenlisting for another combat tour. The VFW believes separating service members will feel the impact of this legislation almost immediately."

Highlights of the VFW-supported bill include expanding education and training programs, improves reemployment rights for Guard and Reservists, makes attendance mandatory for Transition Assistance Programs, and provides employer tax credits ranging from \$5,600 per veteran hired to \$9,600 for hiring disabled veterans.

In a press release, the House committee chairman praised the veterans' service organization community for standing steadfast in their support of the veterans' employment bills. "Our VSOs deserve the real credit in bringing veteran unemployment to the public's attention and getting this legislation signed into law this year," said Miller.

For bill details, go to <http://veterans.house.gov/vow> and the VFW's Capitol Hill blog at <http://www.vfwonthehill.org/>.