

Helping put veterans to work

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Monday's article "Vets' next battle: finding a new job" draws much-needed attention to the growing difficulty that returning veterans face as they try to find a job. The O'Malley-Brown administration recognizes the high value of veterans' military training and experience to Maryland's economy as well as the unique challenges veterans face in obtaining employment and has dedicated significant resources to helping veterans with job placement and training.

The Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation's 34 local One-Stop Career Centers across Maryland have veterans' employment representatives who provide assistance specific to experience and needs and specialists who provide additional support to disabled veterans. These specialists also work with employers to assist with recruiting and hiring veterans. Additionally, veterans are given priority when referred to job orders placed on the Maryland Workforce Exchange, Maryland's on-line job listing site.

Gov. Martin O'Malley's new Skills2Compete Maryland initiative, announced last month, brings together government agencies and other stakeholders around the goal of increasing the skills of Maryland workers to prepare them for middle and high-skill jobs. As part of this effort, the state is enhancing outreach and services to veterans and other populations under-represented in the workforce.

DLLR, in partnership with the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs, is connecting veterans with apprenticeships through the Helmets to Hardhats program by identifying and matching military skills with the skill requirements of the construction trades. One ongoing program, operated by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in Montgomery County, was featured in a report by the Pentagon Channel last month for its work in providing training in "green construction" skills to veterans.

Earlier this year, a partnership led by the Governor's Workforce Investment Board received a \$5.8 million federal grant to implement training programs for green jobs that will place special emphasis on providing opportunities for veterans and reservists.

The high unemployment rate among veterans is not only a disservice to the men and women who have devoted so much to the service of this country but is also a disservice to our state by failing to utilize a highly trained segment of the work force. The technical skills, leadership and discipline that veterans have gained through their military training and experience make them an invaluable resource for employers. Capitalizing on these skills will not only provide the jobs that veterans need to support their families and advance their careers, but will strengthen Maryland's workforce.

The O'Malley-Brown administration is committed to the idea that there is no spare Marylander, and we continue to work to make certain our veterans are receiving all the assistance and every benefit that they have earned.

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