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Study of Veteran Employment in State Government

**Submitted to the Minnesota Legislature by
Minnesota Management & Budget**

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Introduction

Veterans comprise an important segment of Minnesota's workforce in both the public and private sectors. To assess Minnesota's efforts as an employer of veterans, the 2008 Legislature directed the executive branch of state government, including the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU), to report to the Commissioner of Finance on the incidence of employment, recruitment, retention, and retirement of veterans in their nonelected workforce for fiscal year 2008. This report to the Legislature includes an analysis of the data.

The department would like to acknowledge the contribution of time and support provided from professionals at the Minnesota Department of Veteran Affairs, MnSCU, Department of Employment and Economic Development, Department of Administration, and Minnesota Management & Budget. We would also like to thank all the executive branch agencies for their support and contribution of recruitment and retention activities for this report.

Executive Summary

The 2008 Legislature directed the executive branch, including MnSCU, to report on the incidence of employment, recruitment, retention, and retirement of veterans in their nonelected workforce for FY2008. This report analyzes the veteran data submitted by state agencies and MnSCU.

Even before the 2008 reporting directive, Minnesota Management & Budget (MMB) took a systematic, comprehensive and strategic approach to veteran recruitment by attending key job fairs and conferences, and building relationships with and promoting state employment to veteran organizations and advocates. This outreach is done on behalf of all state agencies. In addition, individual state agencies conduct veteran-focused recruitment and retention activities; provide reintegration education and guidance; partner with veteran advocates to design statewide veteran initiatives; and provide support to their deployed military employees.

According to the 1990, 2000 and 2007 Minnesota Census, the veteran population in Minnesota is declining. The state of Minnesota government workforce mirrors that decline over a similar time period. Even with this decline, the percentage of state employees (executive branch) who are veterans is higher than the percentage of veterans in the Minnesota population. The 2007 Minnesota Census shows that for every one veteran in the 18 to 34 age range, there are approximately eight veterans in the 55 to 74 age range. The aging of state employees who are veterans corresponds to the census data. Therefore, as this trend continues, it is not possible for veterans to be replaced in a one for one basis in state government.

As for retention, length of service for veterans in Minnesota state government (executive branch and MnSCU) is higher than the national average. Approximately 67% of state employees who are veterans have 10+ years of state service while 32% of U.S. workers have 10+ years with their current employer (January 2008, Bureau of Labor Statistics).

Finally, state agencies are committed to veteran employment. This is demonstrated by their veteran-focused recruitment and retention activities; promoting the state as a “Veteran Friendly” employer; providing reintegration training and resources; building partnerships with veteran organizations and advocates; retaining jobs whose sole purpose is supporting veterans and in some cases must be filled by veterans. In addition, the state has an agency (Department of Veteran Affairs) committed to ensuring that Minnesota’s veterans, their dependents and survivors receive the full measure of benefits and services to which they are entitled.

Recruitment and Retention Activities

Section 1: Minnesota Management & Budget (MMB)

MMB's role is one of recruitment and educational outreach. This is accomplished through communication and coordination of recruitment events to state agencies. MMB also promotes state employment on behalf of all state agencies. The agency takes a comprehensive and strategic approach by attending key veteran-focused job fairs and conferences, and building relationships with and promoting state employment to veterans and veteran organizations/advocates. In turn, these groups promote state employment to their veteran clients.

Job Fairs, Conferences, Presentations and Committees

MMB is involved in the following on-going events:

- **“Hire Vets First” Veterans Career Fairs**
This career fair is the largest single day recruiting event in the country with over 100 businesses and 1500 veterans participating. MMB represents the state and promotes the state of Minnesota as a “Veteran Friendly” employer.
- **Minnesota Veterans Summit/Beyond the Yellow Ribbon**
This key event provided an opportunity to promote the state to veterans, their families, advocates, and to obtain contact information from numerous veteran organizations.
- **Annual County Veteran Service Officer (CVSO) Conference**
This important annual event is an opportunity to promote the state as a “Veteran Friendly” employer, explain the state hiring process and the benefits of working for the state, and emphasize the variety of career opportunities the state offers. As front line advocates for the veterans, CVSO promote state employment to their veteran clients.
- **Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Committee**
This program is a reminder that the support of soldiers cannot end when they return from deployment and the yellow ribbons are untied. MMB is a member of the employment committee. Members of this committee work in partnership to advance veteran employment initiatives.
- **Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Workshop**
MMB is an on-going presenter promoting state employment at this three day workshop that helps veterans assess their present life situation, set goals, and make career choices.

Partnerships and Outreach

Partnerships are built through on-going communication with veteran organizations and advocates. Educational outreach is accomplished through presentations to promote the state as a “Veteran Friendly” employer, explaining the hiring process and benefits of working for the state, and highlighting state career opportunities. These groups, in turn, promote state employment to their veteran clients. MMB is involved in outreach, and building and maintaining partnerships with the following key groups and contacts:

- **Senior Veteran Employment Representatives (SrVEP) and Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Representatives (DVOP)**

These positions work with and serve Minnesota veterans as they re-integrate back into civilian life and the workforce. Duties include the recruitment of veterans for all state jobs, promote Minnesota as a “Veteran Friendly” employer and participate in various job fairs.

- **Regional Coordinators for the Higher Education Veteran Program**

These positions serve as a resource for veterans and support the success of veterans and their families in higher education at MnSCU campuses across the state.

- **Minnesota Department of Veteran Affairs**

On-going communication and collaboration with this department whose mission is to ensure that Minnesota’s veterans, their dependents and survivors receive the full measure of benefits and services to which they are entitled.

- **County Veteran Service Officer (CVSO)**

These are advocates for veterans at the county level. Their focus is to connect with veterans regarding claims development, advocacy and transition back to civilian life.

Web Resources

MMB has consolidated a broad array of resources and tools to assist state agency staff, state employees who are veterans, and veterans in the general public interested in state employment.

- Military Resources pages on the MMB Internet site include the following information or resources:
 - “Called to Service” information
 - FMLA policy regarding military leave
 - Insurance coverage while on military leave
 - Employee Assistance Program
 - Leave for employees with family members in active duty
 - Web links to the Minnesota National Guard Family Programs, Minnesota Veterans Licensure and Certification Programs, Minnesota Department of Veteran Affairs, DEED-Veteran Services; Air National Guard Family Programs, Army National Guard Family Resources; Military OneSource; Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA); and Veterans Employment and Training Service
- Directory of veteran organizations and resources for state agency recruitment use.
- “Skill Translator” link on the State of Minnesota Employment website. (This is a comprehensive database of occupational skills, knowledge, and abilities that can help the veteran describe their military experience, education, and training in “civilian” terms for resume development.)
- Web links that allow reciprocal ports of entry from the State of Minnesota Employment site and the Minnesota Department of Veteran Administration’s “One Stop Website.”

Recruitment Materials

- Provided over 2,500 state of Minnesota employment brochures for returning Minnesota National Guard soldiers with customized labels with the caption, “*Veterans – put your experience to work at the State.*”

Recruitment and Retention Activities

Section 2: Executive Branch Agencies and MnSCU

Even before the 2008 reporting directive, state agencies and MnSCU have been proactive in their veteran-focused recruitment and retention activities. Representatives attend job fairs, partner with veteran organizations, have positions which advocate for and support veterans and must be filled by veterans, provide reintegration education and guidance to management and state employees, partner with veteran stakeholders to create “Veteran Friendly” statewide employment initiatives, and provide support to their deployed military employees.

Recruitment

Agencies attended or conducted the following recruitment activities:

- **“Hire Vets First” Veterans Career Fair**
This annual key event organized by the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) and is the largest single day event in the country with over 100 businesses and 1500 veterans participating.
- **Minnesota National Guard Job Fairs**
A total of over 2600 veterans attended.
- **Veteran Outreach**
State agencies often have a state employee who is a veteran attend recruitment events to discuss their personal experiences working for the state and promote the state as a “Veteran Friendly” employer.
- **Targeted Media**
Advertise their job announcements in media resources utilized by veterans.
- **Targeted Recruitment**
Conduct veteran targeted recruitment for positions that utilize military skill sets that transfer well to state careers. For example: the Transportation Specialist Job series; Law Enforcement Training Opportunity; Corrections Officers, Boiler Operators/Inspectors, Industrial Hygienists, and Safety Investigators.
- **Utilizing Technology**
Department of Corrections utilized video teleconference to conduct job interviews with deployed soldiers.

Retention and Reintegration Support

Reintegration guidance and support is a key factor in successfully returning veterans to work. Comprehensive reintegration programs provide a supportive environment which encourages the veteran to remain within state employment. These programs include:

- Provide reintegration support such as:
 - individualized soldier “return to work” plans
 - support for additional time off for reintegration
 - supplementary training for a smooth transition
 - mentors assigned to returning veterans
 - check-in meetings
 - meet and greets with co-workers
 - training for managers, supervisors and returning active duty
- Provide information and resources about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other related materials such as the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to both supervisors and returning veterans.
- Encourage returning “active duty” employees to share their military experiences with co-workers and answer questions at brown bag sessions.
- Conduct recognition events for deployed employees and celebration events upon return.
- Department of Corrections prominently displays a military support message in the front entryway of their facilities. The message celebrates the veterans as well as serves as a constant reminder of the staff who are on active duty.
- MnSCU received the Department of Defense’s “Patriotic Employer” award for assisting injured veterans back to work and recognition from the Minnesota National Guard and Reserve for its commitment to support employment of veterans.

Training and Presentations

Many agencies provide or participate in training to support returning veterans – these include:

- Provide reintegration training to both leadership and returning soldiers such as: individualized “return to work” plans; support for additional time off for reintegration; supplementary training for smooth transition; mentors assigned to returning veterans; check-in meetings; and meet and greets with co-workers.
- Provide USERRA training to managers and supervisors. The USERRA law outlines the rights and benefits awarded veteran employees and the responsibilities of the employer. This act affects employment, reemployment, and retention in employment.
- Provide “How to Comply with New FMLA Rules Affecting Military Family Members” training for HR staff and state managers and supervisors.
- Participate in Minnesota National Guard Reintegration Training. The goal of the program is to provide returning veterans with timely information about support resources that are available as they rejoin their families and communities.
 - The Department of Public Safety gave over 30 driving conduct presentations to soldiers. Returning soldiers often engage in high-risk driving behavior and this training helps in adjustment back to civilian driving.
- DEED and MnSCU gave a presentation at the national “Workforce Innovations” conference titled “Veteran Reintegration: Home, Work and School.” Minnesota’s model for reintegration has been adapted by the U.S. Department of Defense as the *gold standard* for the reintegration of returning troops.

Partnerships and Outreach with Veteran Organizations and Advocates

In addition to the statewide efforts at MMB, many agencies also participate in partnerships and outreach, including:

- The “Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Task Force” sub-committees. This program is named as a reminder that the support of soldiers cannot end when they return from deployment and the yellow ribbons are untied.
- Maintain on-going communication with veteran focused organizations and advocates to promote the state as a “Veteran Friendly” employer. Such as: Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Military Order of the Purple Heart, and County Veteran Service Officers (CVSO).

Support to Deployed Soldiers and Their Families

Typical agency efforts to support soldiers and their families include:

- Have meetings with the employee prior to deployment to discuss how the agency will stay connected to the employee and the employee’s family while deployed.
- Have co-workers keep in touch with the deployed soldiers and their families via email, cards or letters. Keep co-workers informed about deployed employees through agencies newsletters and intranet sites that highlight the soldier.
- Send care packages to deployed employees; holiday toys and Easter baskets given to deployed employees’ children; and provide “before deployment” baskets of needed items.
- Provide supervisors with reintegration training for assisting deployed employees in adjusting back to the workplace. Follow-up is provided for months.
- Provide financial assistance to families of deployed employees.
- The Department of Correction facilities sponsored many activities to raise funds for care packages. For example: bake sales, cookbooks, chili cook-offs, silent auctions, sell yellow wrist bands and water bottles or have other fund raisers for care packages.

Stories of Support

A Seeds Program student worker (a “grow your own” personnel training concept at the Minnesota Department of Transportation) was deployed in Iraq for 2 years. As soon as she returned, she was rehired as a student worker. She appreciated Mn/DOT giving her the opportunity to return to her position even though she had been in a temporary student worker classification. MnDOT also provided a mentor (a veteran), supportive literature and resources, and several opportunities for her to share her experiences. MnDOT commended and recognized her for the coverage she received in the Star Tribune on Veterans Day 2007. Her work schedule was adjusted to accommodate personal/academic constraints. She will be graduating with a BS in Civil Engineering “in 2009”.

– Mn/DOT

One of their deployed employees was serving in Iraq with his brother, a non-state employee. The facility employees stayed in contact with both brothers, sends care packages, and keeps in touch with the parents.

– Department of Corrections, Red Wing

A MnSCU employee was called up for active duty for 1 ½ years. His co-workers stayed connected with him through care packages, letters, offering support to his family, and forwarding pictures and updates to campus employees. While he was on active duty it was determined the campus needed a program to assist veteran students with tutorial assistance, answer questions about veteran benefits and assist veterans with their transition to college life. When the employee returned he was appointed to serve as the Director of the Veteran Services Program. He is doing a wonderful job establishing the program and providing service to veteran students.

– Chief HR Officer, North Hennepin CC

Recruitment and Retention Activities

Section 3: “Veteran Friendly” Initiatives with Statewide Impact

The following initiatives have statewide impact and involved collaboration between state agencies or collaboration with veteran organizations/advocates, legislature, and private companies.

- DEED Veteran Employment and MnSCU worked together to grant college credit for military training. This resulted in a Federal Department of Education grant for MnSCU to implement the process.
- DEED worked with the Minnesota Ambulance Association to set up a program for returning combat medics to train as paramedics and ambulance EMT’s. DEED, MnSCU, Department of Labor & Industry (DOLI), Minnesota National Guard, and the Minnesota Ambulance Association worked together to make this possible.
- DEED, Anoka Technical College, DOLI, Minnesota Trucking Association, and Anderson Trucking collaborated to develop an “over the road” apprenticeship program for a commercial driver’s license. This was the first program of its kind in the country.
- DEED and MnSCU gave a presentation at the national “Workforce Innovations” conference titled “Veteran Reintegration: Home, Work and School”. Minnesota’s model for reintegration has been adapted by the U.S. Department of Defense as the “*gold standard*” for the reintegration of returning troops.
- The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs is working with the Yellow Ribbon Commission to encourage veterans to use their GI education benefits for training to match their agency career opportunities.
- The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs is in discussions with legislators and licensing boards to allow returning veterans with medic experience to be given credit for military education/experience towards medical licenses. A representative of the department emphasized veterans benefit from being cared for by other veterans.

- In 2010, Public Safety's hiring process for state troopers will be improved to have more opportunities for deployed soldiers to participate. For example, written exams at proxy centers, video teleconferencing, and consolidating multiple steps of the hiring process into one trip.
- MnSCU received nearly \$1.1 million in federal funds for veteran re-entry education. The re-entry project will provide specifically designed career and education services to military veterans, National Guard members and reservists, as well as enhancing veterans' employment success upon returning to their communities.
- The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and Minnesota Online created a web site (MyMilitaryEducation.org) to serve the unique higher education needs of veterans, military members and their families. Information about education benefits and other related issues is available from a team of experienced advisors and counselors. The Web site offers a "FAQ" bank with over 150 questions and seven-day-a-week access to customer service staff through a toll-free phone line and online chat.
- MnSCU Veterans Upward Bound (VUB) at Minneapolis Community and Technical College. This federally funded program is to prepare veterans for college. The program offers free college prep courses and study skills. Veterans also receive career, personal, and financial aid counseling, enrollment assistance, GED preparation, and one-on-one tutoring. A VA benefits counselor is on staff to assist veterans in applying for educational benefits. The program provides all books and supplies to students at no cost. Veterans with a service-connected disability might be eligible for additional benefits.
<http://www.minneapolis.edu/trioprograms/veteransupwardbound/>

Recruitment and Retention

Section 4: Veteran–Focused State Employment Positions

The state also has veteran-focused positions whose purpose is to support veterans as they re-integrate back into civilian life and the workforce. These positions are typically employed at the Minnesota Department of Veteran Affairs, Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) and MnSCU.

The responsibilities of the 32 Disabled Veterans Outreach Representative (DVOP) and Senior Veterans Employment Representative (SrVER) positions include:

- Identify veterans interested in working for DEED, and other state agencies.
- Recruit veterans for all state jobs and promote the state at various job fairs.
- Promote Minnesota as a “Veteran Friendly” employer at state and national conferences.
- Coach veterans on the state hiring process and online employment tools. This is accomplished through one-on-one meetings and group presentations at the Minnesota Workforce Centers.
- Outreach to veteran organizations and advocates such as the County Veteran Service Officer (CVSO), VFW, American Legions, and Disabled American Veterans to promote state employment.
- Outreach to veteran-focused minority and disability organizations.
- Assist with any housing or health issues, or other specific needs to assist veterans and their families.

The purpose of the Higher Education Veteran Program Coordinators at the Department of Veterans Affairs is to serve as both a support and resource for veterans and their families at the MnSCU campuses. This is accomplished by providing on-campus Veterans Resource Centers and comprehensive information about benefits and resources that support the unique needs of these students. The 56 campus Veterans Resource Centers served 4,300 individual in FY 2008. Coordinators work with colleges to:

- Provide a space for students to interact with other students who are veterans or family members of veterans.
- Facilitate communication between departments and staff who regularly interact with veterans.
- Provide training for campus staff related to veteran issues.
- Obtain feedback from veterans and work to remove barriers to services.
- Provide “Veterans Friendly” policies and procedures.

Data Analysis of Veteran Employment in State Government

Explanation of Data

As outlined in the statutory requirement, the report must include data from June 30, 2008, June 30, 2001 and an earlier date if feasible. In order to obtain the most comprehensive employment data, the following two dates (July 8, 2008 and July 3, 2001) were used. These dates allowed for the entry of fiscal year (FY) end transactions. For historical purpose, the earlier date of October 1, 1996 was selected because state employee data was migrated into the current state payroll system at approximately that time.

Please note the methodological constraints in conducting this data analysis. The employment data is from a slice file (snapshot of state employee data on a particular date) in the state payroll system. The data from the executive branch agencies and the data from MnSCU were obtained from two separate databases. For that reason, the data parameters and dates are not identical, and generally will be discussed separately.

Minnesota Census data was utilized to compile comparatives for this study. In the census the term “labor force” means currently employed or actively seeking work.

Aging and the Decrease in the Number of Veterans

Ages 18 to 54 are typically prime employment ages. The 1990 Minnesota Census indicates there were 504,377 veterans in the labor force. Approximately 52% were in the 18 to 54 age range.

By the 2007 Minnesota Census the number of veterans in the labor force was 405,354. The percentage of veterans in the 18 to 54 age range **decreased** to approximately 32%.

According to the 1990 Minnesota Census, approximately 40% of the veterans were in the 35 to 54 age range, by 2007 that percentage had **decreased** to approximately 26%.

On the top end of the age range, veterans 75 years and older increased from 5% in 1990 to over 21% in 2007. That is almost a quarter of the veteran population in Minnesota.

It is important to note that the 2007 Minnesota Census indicates for every one veteran in the 18 to 34 age range, there are approximately eight veterans in the 55 to 74 age range. In the 55 to 74 age range people are typically approaching retirement or currently retired.

In FY 2008 there are 2,907 state employees who are veterans. For every one state employee who is a veteran in the 18 to 34 age range, there are approximately 8 state employees who are veterans in the 55 to 74 age range. This mirrors the 2007 Minnesota Census. Veterans in both state employment and veterans in the Minnesota population are aging. Both public and private sector employers will not be able to replace veterans one for one.

MN CENSUS Age Ranges	18 to 34	35 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74	75+
1990 age distribution of veterans	12.3%	40.1%	24.0%	18.6%	5.1%
2007 age distribution of veterans	6.1%	25.5%	28.2%	18.7%	21.4%

STATE EMPLOYMENT Age Ranges	18 to 34	35 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74	75+
FY2008 age distribution of veterans	6.6%	41.2%	48.4%	3.5%	.2%

Employment

According to the 1990, 2000 and 2007 Minnesota Census, the veteran population is declining. The state workforce mirrors that decline over a similar time period. However, even with the numbers declining, the percentage of state employees in the executive branch who are veterans is **higher** than the percentage of veterans in the Minnesota labor force at the three similar date points.

State Employment	Oct 1, 1996	July 3, 2001	July 8, 2008
% of state employees who are veterans	17.5%	14.1%	9.4%

Minnesota Census	1990	2000	2007
% of veterans in the MN labor force	11.2%	8.2%	8.7%

The percentage of MnSCU employees who are veterans in July 2001 is 9.1%, a little higher than the 2001 Census data. For June 2008 the percentage of MnSCU employees who are veterans is 6.4%, which is a little lower than the 2007 Census data.

Length of Service

In January 2008, a Bureau of Labor Statistics study indicated 32% of U.S. workers, age 25 and over have 10 or more years of service with their current employer. For FY 2008, 68% of executive branch state employees who are veterans and approximately 67% of MnSCU employees who are veterans have 10 or more years of state service. That is over twice the U.S. percentage.

Length of Service in 2008	Percentage
% of veterans with 10 or more years of state service	68.0%
% of MnSCU veterans with 10 or more years of state service	66.6%
% of U.S. workers age 25 and over with 10 or more years of service with their current employer	32.0%

Retirement

The majority of Vietnam era veterans are currently in the 55 to 65 age range. The number of state employees who are veterans in this age range and retiring from state service continues to increase. In FY 1997, 100 veterans retired from state service, in FY 2001, there were 157 veteran retirements, and in FY 2008 there were 183 veteran retirements. This aging of veterans parallels the aging of veterans in the Minnesota population.

Conclusion

From 1990 to 2007 the Minnesota Census shows that the number of veterans in the Minnesota labor force is decreasing and aging. For every one veteran in the Minnesota labor force in the 18 to 34 age range, eight are in the 55 to 74 age range. This trend is echoed in veteran employment in state government. Both public and private sector employers are impacted by the large numbers of employees approaching retirement.

Executive branch state agencies and MnSCU are committed to upholding the state as a “Veteran Friendly” employer through their veteran focused recruitment and retention activities, building on-going relationships with veteran organizations and advocates, supporting deployed soldiers and their families, retaining veteran -focused positions, providing reintegration training, and championing statewide initiative for veterans.

Appendix

The Statutory Requirement

Passed as part of 2008 Laws of Minnesota, Ch. 297 (The Ag/Vets omnibus policy bill)

Sec. 27. **STUDY OF VETERANS EMPLOYMENT IN STATE GOVERNMENT.**

(a) By October 1, 2008, each appointing authority in the executive branch of state government, including the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, must report to the commissioner of finance on the incidence of employment, recruitment, retention, and retirement of veterans in their nonelected workforce for fiscal year 2008. The report must be made in a manner approved by the commissioner, and for each separate hiring unit must include tabulation by age category and length of state employment in the executive branch, including the state college and university system. Each executive branch appointing authority must also report specific veteran employment data requested by the commissioner as of June 30, 2008, June 30, 2001, and an earlier date if judged feasible by the commissioner. By January 15, 2009, the commissioner must submit a report on the employment of veterans in the executive branch to the chairs of the house and senate policy and finance committees having jurisdiction over veterans affairs. The report must present and analyze the data obtained in this paragraph.