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Upcoming Events!

- 2010 Spring Conference: March 19-21 - Virginia Beach Resort, Va Beach \$85
- Memorial Day 2010 : Monday May 31
- 2010 State Convention: July 8-11 - Sheraton Richmond West, Richmond \$99
- 2010 Fall Conference: October 29-31 Holiday Inn, Hampton \$74
- 2011 State Convention July 14-17 Roanoke Plaza Hotel & Holiday Inn, Roanoke

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Useful Tips For Vets Seeking Fed Jobs

By Lily Whiteman | <http://www.FederalTimes.com>

Given the Obama administration's launch of a new program to boost veteran hiring at federal agencies, here are some tips to help members of the military and veterans make the transition: Surf these Web sites: the Veteran's Employment Resource Center at USAJobs.gov; the intelligence community's careers page at intelligence.gov; the CIA's careers page for military transitioners at www.cia.gov; the Homeland Security Department's veterans outreach page at www.dhs.gov; Defense Department opportunities for veterans at www.dodvets.com and www.godefense.com; and the Defense Logistics Agency's information for prospective employees at www.hr.dla.mil.

Explore all options. Most agencies - including those in the Defense, intelligence and Foreign Service communities - sponsor dynamic, well-paying internships and training programs that fast-track young professionals into management. However, most of these programs are only announced on agency Web sites, not on USAJobs.gov. For example, the Army Material Command's Fellows Program is announced under civilian careers at www.amc.army.mil, and many Defense Department programs are announced at dodvets.com.

Prove that you wielded responsibility. Identify in your applications your final rank, the number of people under your command, and the positive feedback you received, including promotions, medals, honors and positive annual evaluations. Also, prominently cite your past or current security clearances in your applications and interviews. Such clearances may increase the number of jobs for which you qualify and boost your salary offers.



Describe your generic, transferable skills. Discuss in your applications the challenges you faced in the military and what you learned by conquering them. For example, describe how your experience as a combat infantry leader sharpened your leadership skills, enhanced your decision-making skills, taught you how to allocate assignments to team members based on their skills, increased your adaptability to changing circumstances, and improved your ability to effectively communicate with people of diverse backgrounds. Other selling points include technical expertise, self-discipline, experience handling confidential information, attention to detail, international experience, knowledge of geographic regions, language skills and an ability to excel in high-pressure situations.

Translate your military experience into civilian terms. Remember that hiring managers are only impressed by applications they understand. So define technical terms, titles and acronyms that will stump civilians or avoid using them altogether. Also, explain the importance of your work to your unit. Confirm your application's effectiveness by testing it on civilians.

Here is an excerpt from the rejected resume of a veteran who ignored these principles: "I prepared Mission Need Statements (MNS) and Capstone Requirements Documents (CRDs) that were mandated when Joint Strike Fighters or IMDs were introduced. The audience for these documents was the Flag-level officers in the J1, J2 and J3 Directorates."

Submit all required documents. Many veterans sabotage their applications by neglecting to submit or failing to label documents proving their military service or disability, or by failing to bring such documents to career fairs.]

Negotiate your salary. The most important question in salary negotiations is usually, "Is this offer negotiable?" Just asking for a better offer is frequently all it takes. The time to initiate salary negotiations is after you receive an offer and before you respond to it; once you accept a job, you lose your leverage. If the human resources' contact for your target job is unwilling to negotiate your salary, ratchet your request up to your target job's hiring manager. Support your request with an explanation of how your education or military experience exceeds the basic qualifications for your target job.

But even more importantly, remember that your target agency will probably base its salary offer on your military salary. You should explain how your military salary underestimates your true income by excluding bonuses, overtime pay, or benefits such as housing allowances and child care. And if accepting the job offer would require you to move to a location that would increase your cost of living, say so.

By using these techniques, one of my clients who transitioned from a military weapons specialist to a federal weapons analyst increased his salary offer by more than \$25,000. Also, request reimbursement for moving expenses and tuition, and support for continuing education, if appropriate.

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Is Happy New Year an Americanism Activity?

John Kokernak, Department Americanism Chairman

You betcha! Just ask a hockey mom! What could be more American than celebrating the ending of great year like 2009 and welcoming in a New Year like 2010?

The reflection on all the great things that were done by the American Legion Family gives us the opportunity write down the key facts and figures of what we have accomplished so we can have a head start on gathering the data we need to complete the Consolidated Post Report (CPR), Americanism Report, Children and Youth Report and Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Report. Please don't overlook all the great things you have done since the summer supporting our veterans, their families and our communities.

As part of celebrating the New Year, I get excited in anticipation of the great things that are in the planning stages, but will be amazing us soon enough. We will be having the sounds of marching feet with the Regional JROTC Drill Team Competitions and sound of plunking cardboard with the Junior Shooting



Sports Program Regional competitions. We have our American Legion High School Oratorical Contest winners at the post level that will soon be competing at the District and Regional levels. We have posts planning and scheduling interviews for young men to attend American Legion Boys State. The coaches are starting to fill out their team information in the new Online Registration system for American Legion Baseball. And that's just to name a few!

Now that's Americanism and I can't wait. The future is bright with these outstanding young men and women participating in our programs. So it is definitely going to be a great year!

I want to personally thank everyone for all you do everyday to support our veterans, their families, and our communities. You are the ones that make these programs happen and you are the faces of the American Legion!

May God Bless you and your families and I want to wish you all a very happy and prosperous New Year!

John Kokernak
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Virginia Legion Riders Assist Florida Ride2Recovery

On December 10, ALR Chapter 10 members Dennis Flury, JR Dye, and Tom Wahl departed Manassas for Tampa, Florida. After two days of travel in the cold weather, they arrived at the hotel in Tampa to a warm welcome from their Ride2Recovery friends.

For the uninitiated, Ride2Recovery is a program which helps our wounded warriors define challenging goals for themselves and gives them the tools to meet their goals. They typically ride their bicycles between 60 - 70 miles per day over five days on these "Challenge" rides. Participation helps build self confidence by helping them prove to themselves that they can overcome the difficulties their injuries present to accomplish things they thought were impossible.

On the morning of December 12, the Manassas Riders found Florida Riders, and a lone FL State Trooper to escort 180 cyclists off of McDill AFB and out of Tampa. Both were glad to have Riders who were experienced with R2R available to assist. Over the next few days, the Florida Riders came up to speed with five of them completing the entire unique mission alongside these wounded warriors and their fellow Riders. The route went through Spring Hill, Wildwood, Ocala, Gainesville, St. Augustine, and finished in Jacksonville.

The Post 10 team worked closely with FL Auxiliary Department President Mary Kelly-Perkins who was primarily responsible for organizing the Legion Family's involvement with this event, and interacted with many FL Riders, National, Department, and District officers from both the Legion and Auxiliary, local law enforcement, and of course the R2R cyclists. Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Gary Roughead joined the ride on the last day as a cyclist and was under the care of Dennis and Tom, while JR provided his photographer with a two-wheeled platform from which to take pictures.

The ride home was in very difficult weather conditions, but all returned safely. Post 10 provided financial support for this successful mission.

As an escort mission for motorcyclists, this kind of riding is very different than a parade or Patriot Guard mission. It is challenging and difficult work which can be hard on motorcycles, especially in warmer weather. In May 2010 the R2R cyclists will return to Virginia as they ride from Washington DC to Virginia Beach through Manassas, Fredericksburg, Richmond, Williamsburg, Hampton, and Norfolk. Any Virginia Riders interested in helping should try to attend the Department Spring Conference in March and may contact Tom Wahl via e-mail: tom@4wahls.net.

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Quick Guide To Resources for Veterans in Virginia

Courtesy of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services
www.VirginiaforVeterans.com

You've made a personal sacrifice in the service of your country and the Commonwealth. Now, it's our honor to serve you. This booklet is designed to give you quick access to resources located in and around the Commonwealth of Virginia. Here is a link to the booklet for your use courtesy of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services:

<http://www.dvs.virginia.gov/downloads/quickguide.pdf>

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XEROX IS DOING SOMETHING COOL!

If you go to this web site, <http://www.LetsSayThanks.com> you can pick out a thank you card and Xerox will print it and it will be sent to a soldier that is currently serving in Iraq. You can't pick out who gets it, but it will go to a member of the armed services.

How AMAZING it would be if we could get everyone we know to send one!!! It is FREE and it only takes a second.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if the soldiers received a bunch of these? Whether you are for or against the war, our soldiers over there need to know we are behind them.

This takes just 10 seconds and it's a wonderful way to say thank you. Please take the time and please take the time to pass it on for others to do. We can never say enough thank you's.

Thanks for taking to time to support our military!

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VA Secretary The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki **A Holiday Message**

On Christmas Eve, 1776, General George Washington met with his war council in Buckingham, Pennsylvania, to finalize what he hoped would be a "brilliant stroke," a turning point in America's War for Independence—the crossing of the ice-clogged, storm-swept Delaware River, culminating in a surprise attack on Trenton, New Jersey. Nothing less than the future of this newly-declared republic rested on its successful outcome.

The challenges were overwhelming. Many of General Washington's troops were ill, low on food, poorly clothed, and suffering through one of the bitterest winters on record. Outnumbered and pressed to the limits of human endurance, the American Army was not fit to take on the professional British Army and its Hessian allies, warmly encamped across the Delaware. So remote and unthinkable was such audacity that complacency and lowered guards gave rise to opportunity.

As General Nathaniel Greene described him, Washington ". . . never appeared to so much advantage as in the hour of distress." That would have aptly described the entire Continental Army that Christmas Eve. Within 24 hours, at midnight on the 25th of December, 1776, Washington executed the crossing of the Delaware, and the rest is history: Washington's "brilliant stroke" tipped the scales in the War for Independence.

From that Christmas of 1776, American men and women in uniform have spent many Christmases on battlefields in Europe, Africa, throughout the Pacific; on the Korean Peninsula and in Vietnam; and from Kuwait to Iraq and Afghanistan.



This season, we gather with our families and friends in a Nation free to celebrate in the custom of our choosing, by whatever name or tradition it is known, thanks to the long and unbroken line of patriots whose courage and sacrifice continue to secure the blessings of freedom and liberty upon our grateful Nation.

To our 23 million Veterans, to our 298,000 VA employees, and to our men and women of the Armed Forces so far from home, we send best wishes for a joyous Holiday Season and heartfelt thanks for the selflessness of your service.

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VA To Survey Veteran Households

WASHINGTON - Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has launched a national survey of Veterans, active duty service members, activated National Guard and reserve members, and family members and survivors to learn if they are aware of VA services.

"By hearing directly from Veterans and their family members, we gain valuable information to help us serve them better. We hope those who receive the survey will respond to it," Secretary Shinseki said.

In addition to assessing awareness levels, the National Survey of Veterans will collect important health care, benefits, employment, and demographic information that VA will use to inform policy decisions and improve benefits. Recognizing a broader client base than just Veterans, this is the first time VA has included others, such as Veteran family members, in its survey population.

VA is mailing out survey "screeners" to more than 130,000 households to identify potential survey participants. The screener asks if anyone in the household is a member of one of the identified survey groups - Veterans, family members and survivors, active duty, Guard or Reserve members. Eligible survey participants then may be requested to participate in a full-length survey.

Participants will be able to select a preferred survey method: through U.S. mail, telephone or a password-protected Internet address. VA expects approximately 10,000 Veterans to complete the full-length survey.

This is the sixth VA National Survey of Veterans since 1978. The information collected will help VA in its efforts to design and conduct outreach to Veterans. In addition, it will provide a clearer picture of the Veteran population's characteristics to help evaluate existing programs and policies and measure their impact.

The data collection is expected to be finished by the end of February and the final report released by December 2010.

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TRICARE Program for Gray Area Reservists On Its Way

December 17, 2009 No. 09-76

FALLS CHURCH, Va. - A new program will offer "gray area" reservists the opportunity to purchase TRICARE health care coverage.

While qualified members of the Selected Reserve may purchase premium-based coverage under TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS), retired National Guard and Reserve personnel did not have TRICARE health coverage options until they reached age 60.

Under a provision of the National Defense Authorization Act for 2010, that's all changed.



The new provision will allow certain members of the Retired Reserve who are not yet age 60 ("gray-area" retirees), to purchase TRICARE Standard (and Extra) coverage. TRICARE Extra simply means beneficiaries have lower out of pocket costs if they use a network provider.

"We're working hard to coordinate all the details of eligibility, coverage and costs, and expedite implementation of this important program," said Rear Adm. Christine Hunter, deputy director of the TRICARE Management Activity. "This is a major benefit program with implementation on the same magnitude as TRS. It will require detailed design, development and testing, but qualified retired reservists should be able to purchase coverage by late summer or early fall of 2010."

While the health care benefit provided for gray-area retirees will be TRICARE Standard and Extra - similar to TRS - the new program will differ from TRS in its qualifications, premiums, copayment rates and catastrophic cap requirements. The program is tentatively called TRICARE Retired Reserve.

The new statute requires premium rates to equal the full cost of the coverage. That is the major difference contrasted with TRS, where the statute provides that Selected Reserve members pay only 28 percent of the cost of the coverage. Premiums for the new gray area retiree program will be announced after program rules are published in the Federal Register.

This new program offers an important health coverage option for Reserve and National Guard members who served their country honorably before hanging up their uniforms at retirement, said Hunter. For more information about TRICARE benefits go to <http://www.tricare.mil>.

About TRICARE Management Activity and the Military Health System:

TRICARE Management Activity, the Defense Department activity that administers the health care plan for the uniformed services, retirees and their families, serves more than 9.5 million eligible beneficiaries worldwide in the Military Health System (MHS). The mission of the MHS is to enhance Department of Defense and national security by providing health support for the full range of military operations. The MHS provides quality medical care through a network of providers, military treatment facilities, medical clinics and dental clinics worldwide. For more about the MHS go to www.health.mil.

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Why a Department E-Newsletter?

Rand Cordle, President, Corande Publishing & SAL

The short answer to this question is that your Department E-newsletter carries with it important benefits for the Department of Virginia and Virginia Legionnaires.

- Your monthly department e-newsletter costs the department nothing regardless of the number of subscribers. It is published and distributed completely free of charge by Corande Publishing. By comparison, three issues of the traditional print Virginia Legionnaire newsletters costs your Department tens of thousands of dollars per year in printing and postage. If over time the Department could reduce the number of print newsletters required, much of those funds could be diverted to programs.
- With 10,000 e-newsletter subscribers, The Virginia Department could begin to raise funds through corporate sponsors who would gladly pay for the opportunity to offer subscribers promotions and advertising in each issue of the e-Newsletter.

As an SAL member of the Department of Virginia, I encourage you to share your subscription to the Virginia Legionnaire e-Newsletter with fellow legionnaires, SAL and auxiliary; and encourage them to join you in subscribing to our e-newsletter for the benefit of our cause. Let's hit that 10,000 subscriber level and start enjoying the benefits!

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