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Media Contact: Dawn Dovre, 605-773-3094

New Benefits for Unemployed Veterans

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation announces unemployed veterans may qualify for additional education, vocational rehabilitation and employment benefits through the Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act of 2011.

This Act provides seamless transition for service members, expands education and training opportunities for veterans, and provides tax credits for employers who hire veterans with service-connected disabilities.

“The Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) offers 12 months of retraining assistance to unemployed veterans who meet certain criteria,” said State Labor and Regulation Secretary Pam Roberts. “The program will train the veteran for a high demand occupation.”

Nationwide, the VRAP is limited to 45,000 participants from July 1, 2012, through September 30, 2012, and to 54,000 participants from October 1, 2012, through March 31, 2014.

Veterans who previously completed a VA vocational rehabilitation program and have used the initial 26 weeks of unemployment benefits may qualify for an additional 12 months of VA vocational rehabilitation benefits.

“Veterans can apply for the additional benefits now, and the education or training may begin June 1, 2012,” said Secretary Roberts.

VA may offer incentive payments to encourage employers to hire and train program participants. An employer may be reimbursed up to one-half the annual salary of the participant for six months or longer.

To apply or learn more about retraining assistance, vocational rehabilitation and employer incentives, contact a South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation local office. An office directory is available at www.sdjobs.org.

More information on the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 is available at <http://benefits.va.gov/vow/index.htm>.