

California Department of Veterans Affairs

VETERANS NEWS

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CALIFORNIA'S OPERATION WELCOME HOME Honoring Our Veterans as they Return Home

California's Operation Welcome Home initiative was launched today by the California Department of Veterans Affairs, in cooperation with the Employment Development Department, Labor and Workforce Development Department, and California Volunteers to provide veterans with one-stop shopping efficiency as they search for and apply for the benefits they are entitled to receive.

California has more returning veterans than any other state and in his State of the State Speech today Governor Schwarzenegger committed to making these brave men and women a priority.

"California has more returning veterans than any other state, so our state, as well as the federal government, has a special responsibility," said Governor Schwarzenegger. "We have a fundamental obligation to anyone who has shed or risked blood for this country. Their sacrifice is extraordinary and never fails to inspire me. To all veterans returning from active duty I say, welcome home."

Operation Welcome Home will put more than 300 recent veterans to work identifying and making direct contact with the 30,000 veterans returning to California annually to counsel them about benefits, services and transitional workforce training available to help them enter the workforce and transition successfully from the battle front to the home front.

Specifically, California's Operation Welcome Home establishes nine regional full-time outreach teams that will assist veterans in finding: employment and job training; educational opportunities; housing; mental and physical health care; federal benefits; and support for their families. The regional outreach teams will be funded by \$20 million in Employment Development Department outreach funds and be led by a collaborative effort of staff from the Department of Veterans Affairs, Labor Workforce Development Agency, California Volunteers, and other local, state and federal entities and non-profit organizations

"Building on his record of strengthening employment and economic opportunities for California's veterans, Governor Schwarzenegger has today launched this statewide outreach initiative to

connect each and every returning veteran to the services that can help them transition successfully from the battle front to the home front," said Roger Brautigam, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "A lot of improvements have taken place across all departments in state government but despite these efforts more coordination than ever before is needed to ensure the young combat veteran returning to California after deployment, is aware and connected to benefits and services already made available to them."

California's Operation Welcome Home initiative highlights the Governor's commitment to California's veterans, by committing and targeting an unprecedented amount of resources and services to the State's 2.1 million veterans. More information regarding California's Operation Welcome Home can be found online at www.veterans.ca.gov.

During his tenure as Governor, Schwarzenegger has signed legislation expanding civil service preference points for veterans looking for jobs in state service; increased higher education coordination with the creation of the "Troops to College" initiative; targeted millions of dollars in grants to help newly discharged veterans find new jobs through a variety of career resources initiatives; and connected thousands of veterans to employers through the "honor a hero, hire a vet" job fairs.

Additionally, Governor Schwarzenegger has committed resources to keep the construction of five new veteran homes on track, including those set to open in Fresno and Redding, and successfully lobbied to expand eligibility to the CalVet Home Loan Program to all veterans.

Also launched today is the California Veteran Corps (CalVet Corps), a volunteer network to reinforce the efforts of the full-time regional outreach units. The CalVet Corps volunteers will be trained by the regional coalition staff and serve as liaisons between the program and combat veterans to ensure contact is made three times in the first year of military separation.
www.calvetcorps.ca.gov

While in the military, California's brave men and women receive cutting edge training and high quality skill sets for making them valuable employees for California's diverse economy, yet California's Employment Development Department reports that veterans between the ages of 18 to 24 suffer an unemployment rate that is 50 percent higher than civilian men and women in their age groups. Some challenges addressed in Operation Welcome Home include: Mental health issues (30 percent of veterans deployed to combat zones report having experienced Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); Substance Abuse (66 percent of all homeless veterans abuse alcohol and 51 percent abuse drugs); Suicide prevention (suicide rates among 18 to 24 year old veterans are four times higher than rates of non-veterans of the same age) and; Homelessness (California has approximately 25,000 homeless veterans).