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Attachments:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The American Legion characterizes new Council of Veterans Employment as "a decent start"

WASHINGTON (Nov. 9, 2009) - The American Legion is cheering, with reservations, an Obama administration initiative to provide more federal employment for military veterans. The president will sign an executive order tonight, establishing a *Council on Veterans Employment* and creating allied programs to help veterans get federal jobs.

"For many decades, The American Legion has played a leading role in creating job opportunities for veterans," said Clarence E. Hill, national commander of the nation's largest veterans service organization, "so it is heartening to see our advocacy paying off in such a tangible way. It's a decent start.

"However, there is more to be done," Hill continued. "For instance, we would ask the President to do more to end age discrimination in the hiring of veterans. While age discrimination is technically banned, it is not unusual for National Guard and Reserve servicemembers to lose employment due to time spent away while deployed. After all, employers may downsize and go out of business. When this happens to a middle aged servicemember, re-employment can be especially challenging. Still, the Executive Order certainly has great merit, though we will continue to fight for more such initiatives."

Besides establishing the *Council*, to be chaired by the secretaries of Labor and Veterans Affairs, the president's executive order also creates a Veterans Employment Program office within most federal agencies. These offices will help veterans identify federal employment opportunities, assist with job applications and help veterans move from military life to civilian employment. Additionally, the program will ensure that hiring officials understand how to use tools available to them to increase the number of veterans employed within their agencies.

"In many ways, this executive order replicates and amplifies the work done by the Legion through its long-established veterans job fairs and small business workshops," Hill said. "So we are especially grateful to the president for this worthwhile move."

Hill also reflected on the fact that several months ago, Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano made a personal promise to The American Legion that her agency would redouble its efforts to employ veterans. "It is gratifying to see that this policy has become that of the Obama administration as a whole," Hill said.

About The American Legion

With a current membership of 2.5-million wartime veterans, The American Legion is the nation's largest veterans organization. It was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism, and youth programs. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through more than 14,000 posts across the nation.

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