

**From:** March, Joseph H.  
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Veterans Employment Act press conference.jpg

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Veterans Employment Act of 2010 answers American Legion's call for action**

Washington (April 20, 2010) -- Less than a week after The American Legion urged Congress to give jobless veterans the "proper training and tools" they need to gain employment, three U.S. senators introduced a new bill today that will help America's veterans get back into the civilian work force.

The Veterans Employment Act of 2010 was unveiled at a press conference today in front of the U.S. Capitol by its three sponsors: Sens. Patty Murray, D-Wash.; Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn.; and Mark Begich, D-Alaska.

"This bill appears to be a legislative home run because it touches all the bases in addressing key challenges faced by our unemployed veterans," said Peter Gaytan, executive director for The American Legion here.

"Senator Murray and her colleagues are focused on critical areas that will also provide help for those veterans who are entrepreneurs. For instance, the bill's Veterans Business Center Program will prove to be a valuable asset. And, once this legislation is passed, The American Legion looks forward to participating in the semi-annual Veterans Entrepreneurial Development Summit," Gaytan said.

Mark Walker, one of several Legionnaires at the press conference, testified April 15 before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, calling upon its members to step up congressional action to provide more employment opportunities to veterans – especially those returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"This bill contains several provisions that The American Legion has been advocating for some time," Walker said. "It will expand GI Bill education benefits to include apprenticeship and training programs, so that veterans can get the licenses and certificates they need for new careers. It also calls for small-business training and counseling, and creates pilot programs to help veterans market their military training more effectively in the civilian sector.

"These are some of the same issues that I just testified on last week before a congressional subcommittee," Walker said. "Veterans deserve all the job opportunities we can give them – in health care, IT, green jobs – so they can take care of themselves and their families. And The American Legion is going to continue its dialogue with Congress to ensure that employment for veterans remains a high priority."

Murray's bill also addresses training requirements for two Dept. of Labor job categories: disabled veterans' outreach program specialist (DVOP) and local veterans' employment representative (LVER).

"As a former DVOP in North Dakota, I am fully aware of the important role these positions can be in helping veterans overcome employment barriers and become more marketable," said Steve Robertson, legislative director for The American Legion.

"Veterans have so many transferable skills that most potential employers need – solid work ethic, self-discipline, reliability, mission-oriented and team players," he said.

According to a news release from Murray's office, the new bill is the "first legislation that takes a comprehensive approach to addressing skyrocketing veterans unemployment rates. The bill includes a series of proposals that improve training, skills transition, education, and small business assistance programs."

Current Dept. of Labor statistics indicate that veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan are among the hardest hit of unemployed Americans, with an alarming jobless rate of 14.7 percent. Among younger veterans (18 to 24 years old), the 2009 unemployment rate was 21.1 percent.

Photo Outline:

Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., announces her new bill, the Veterans Employment Act of 2010, at a Washington press conference April 20. Standing behind her are several veterans, including three members of The American Legion (with caps): Mark Walker, Dean Stoline and Jeff Steele. Walker testified before a House subcommittee on April 15, urging Congress to give unemployed veterans the “proper training and tools” to get jobs in the civilian sector. (Photo by Craig Roberts)

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