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Attachments:

American Legion offers help for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans in employment crisis

WASHINGTON (March 12, 2010) - The American Legion is tackling a problem suffered by an alarming number of military veterans: unemployment.

A report just released by the Dept. of Labor says that last year's unemployment rate for young veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars was 21.1 percent. Meanwhile, the jobless rate among non-veterans in the same 18-to-24 age range was 16.6 percent.

"The American Legion has been aware of this situation for some time," said Joe Sharpe, director of The American Legion's Economic Division in Washington, "and we are addressing it with frequent, well-attended job fairs and business workshops for veterans.

"The unemployment problem among some of the younger vets is being exacerbated by substance abuse and homelessness. We are working hard to help solve those problems, too," Sharpe said.

Homelessness, a natural consequence of unemployment, was the topic of a recent day-long workshop held Feb. 26 by The American Legion as part of its 50th annual Washington Conference. Workshop panelists included officials from the departments of Labor, Veterans Affairs, and Housing and Urban Development. They cited unemployment and substance abuse among veterans as contributors to homelessness.

During its Washington Conference, the Legion also sponsored a job fair and small business workshop, attended by about 200 veterans.

"Given today's economic realities, the unemployment challenge among young veterans is especially difficult," concluded Sharpe, "but we are doing everything we can to help our country's most deserving job-seekers meet it."

The American Legion maintains an online Career Center to disseminate employment information to veterans. It can be accessed at www.legion.org/careers <<http://www.legion.org/careers>>.

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