

Veterans Corner
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Veteran Small-Business Owners

More than 1,000 Veterans who own small businesses and seek to do more contracting with the federal government recently heard Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki extol the importance of small businesses and reaffirm the commitment of the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) to help veterans start or expand their companies.

"If veterans tell us their definition of success, we'll put our capabilities behind them," Shinseki said July 21 at the government-sponsored National Veteran Small Business Conference in Las Vegas.

He said last year VA spent more than \$2 billion with Veteran-owned small businesses – 15% of its procurement dollars, up to 5% from the previous year. Of that amount, \$1.6 billion – or 12% of VA's purchasing – was spend with service-disabled Veteran-owned businesses.

For more information about the Department's services to the owners of small businesses is available on the internet at www.va.gov/oamm.

POST 9/11 GI Bill

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that VA has received more than 25,000 claims for education benefits during the first two weeks that Veterans and service members could apply online for the new Post 9/11 GI Bill.

The Post 9/11 GI Bill, passed by Congress last year, is the most extensive educational assistance program authorized since the original GI Bill was signed into law in 1944. It provides eligible individuals with tuition payments to assist them in getting a college education.

Additional information about the new program and VA's other educational benefit programs can be obtained by visiting VA's web site or by calling 1-888-GIBILL -1 or 1-888-442-4551.

WWII Merchant Mariners

Bob Filner (D-CA), chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, has announced that the United States House of Representatives approved H.R. 23, the Belated Thank you to the Merchant Mariners of World War II Act of 2009. The bill would establish a Merchant Mariner Equity Compensation Fund and allow qualifying merchant Mariners to receive monthly payments of \$1,000 out of that fund.

This bill establishes in the Treasury the merchant mariner Equity compensation Fund for payments by the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs of a monthly benefit of \$1,000 to each individual who, between December 7, 1941, and December 31, 1946, was a documented member of the U.S. merchant marine (including the Army Transport Service and the Naval Transport Service.)

The bills will next be considered by the Senate Committee of Veterans' Affairs.

Spouse Residency Relief Act

The Senate Veterans Affairs Committee has approved the Military Spouse Residency Relief Act (S. 475, Senator Burr, R-NC), which would let a spouse choose the same state of residency as the service member. If passed, it would reduce some administrative and tax filing difficulties incurred by spouses as they relocate, and let them vote in the same state as their service member.

S. 475 has 37 Senate cosponsors (22 Republicans and 15 Democrats). The House version of the Bill (H.R. 1182, Representative Carter, R-TX) has 97 cosponsors (81 Republicans and 16 Democrats).

OEF/OIF Veterans

Adirondack Bass Club announced today their program "Take a Vet Fishing." The program is open to all returning veterans of both Iraq and Afghanistan and will run from opening fishing season June 20th until late October 2009. A list will be compiled and vet's who wish to go, will be taken in order. Preference will be given to those home on leave, and those who face deployment. As our poster reads, "Welcome Home, and thank you for your service. If you are a returning veteran from Iraq or Afghanistan we would like to offer you a chance to go fishing with us. The Adirondack Bass Club, is the area's premier Bass fishermen, would like to offer you a day on the water at no cost to you. This is your invitation to spend some peaceful time with us, and enjoy the great outdoors." For more information ask your Veterans Service Officer from Warren, Washington or Saratoga County or visit our website, Adirondack Bass Club.com or call Scott Franck at 518-232-3600 or Rich Guyette at 518-745-1285.