

# VETERANS' REINTEGRATION TASK FORCE

## Draft Statutory Report - 2012

The Veterans' Reintegration Task Force was created in the 2012 General Session by H.B. 162, Veterans' Reintegration Task Force, sponsored by Representative Tim M. Cosgrove and Senator Peter C. Knudsen.

The task force's statutory mission is to study the difficulties encountered by returning service members after deployments, create a statewide action plan for assisting veterans reintegrate, and report to a legislative Interim committee. See attached 2012 legislation, H.B. 162, for detailed information regarding creation, membership, and duties.

At the first 2012 monthly meeting, the task force welcomed additional member appointments as provided for in statute, reviewed the task forces duties, and prioritized its Interim's goals. The task force created three subcommittees, Veterans' Services, Veterans' Needs, and Veterans' Organization's and charged them with the following assignments: identify all state and local government and non-government services for veterans, identify veterans' needs including discussions with veterans' organizations, study employment practices including professional licensing, and study the military training / experience to college credit process.

Over the following monthly meetings, the task force heard recommendations ( see attached ) from each of the subcommittees and discussed what, if any legislation, might be considered for the 2013 General Session. Three pieces of legislation have been proposed to date: Coordination of Services for Veterans, Workforce Services Job Listings, and Reauthorization of the Veterans' Reintegration Task Force.

The task force chairs will report to both the Government Operations Interim Committee and the Political Subdivisions Interim Committee on November 14, 2012 per statutory requirement. The last meeting of the task force for 2012 will be on November 30, 2012 for final consideration of its 2012 legislative recommendations. This report will be amended to reflect any changes in recommendations at that meeting and a copy will be sent to the Interim reporting committees.

### **Subcommittee's Draft Combined-Response Report To the Task Force\***

The following draft, combined-response report is based on recommendations from Task Force subcommittee members and other Veterans.

The Utah Department of Veterans Affairs (UDVA)- This is the only state agency that is solely dedicated to assisting veterans in all aspects of obtaining Benefits and Services earned due to military service. The lead state agency for veterans issues, UDVA, provides outreach services to veterans to make them aware of the resources that are available and assists veterans in applying

for the benefits that they have earned. In addition, the UDVA outreach workers also provide information on employment opportunities through the Utah Veterans and Military Employment Coalition. The staff support for UDVA is limited and UDVA does not have funding for a formal public affairs/relations officer even though much of what they do is outreach and education.

Utah Department of Workforce Services (UDWS) - A multi-faceted agency that is required to serve the entire state population. However, the agency's service to veterans is fragmented and split between several competing priorities. As UDWS' income stream is derived from different areas, they necessarily divide resources in order to meet the differing requirements and priorities.

Utah Department of Health and Utah Department of Human Services - Both agencies serve the entire state population and do not have veterans' needs as a primary concern.

Higher Education - The state is a huge beneficiary of the monies that veterans bring as a result of their service (GI Bill). Institutions of higher learning provide a tremendous opportunity for transitioning service members to civilian careers but these institutions, both internally and between institutions, are not coordinated within the state when it comes to providing uniform service to veterans. Each has their own priorities and values with regards to veterans.

Overall, the conclusion to be drawn is that veterans are a side business for all state agencies but one, the Utah Department of Veterans Affairs. If Utah veterans are to receive the services they have earned then state resources need to be consolidated under one office. Currently, the services provided to veterans is fragmented and lacks meaningful collaboration. To a great degree, state agencies provide an uncoordinated approach to supporting veterans, functioning in silos that create inefficiencies resulting in increased tax burdens to the taxpayer.

## **RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTIONS**

### **Organizational**

- Create a Veterans Services Advisory Council chaired by the executive director of the UDVA.
- Utah Disabled Veterans Outreach Program and UDWS's Local Veterans Employment Representatives should come under the management (and funding) of Utah Department of Veterans Affairs (UDVA).
- County Commissioners should be encouraged to implement the North Dakota model of providing Certified Veterans Service Officers in each county.

- The Legislature should consider a more thorough evaluation of services by UDWS and UDVA and consider moving, or enhancing services, programs, and functions to UDVA to create a more collaborative and holistic approach to serving our veterans.

### **State of Utah Higher Education**

- Reevaluation of American College of Education (ACE) College credits for veterans.
- Establish Veterans Centers at each state institution of higher learning (universities, colleges, community colleges, and applied technology colleges) with a veteran population over 50 students
- Hire Veterans Administration Work Study Students, (Federally funded, SLCC has 10) for the College Veteran Centers to assist with coordination of tutors, enrollment etc. They could supplement state funded enrollment staff. Large institutions with 3 - 4 employees could have two additional positions filled with VA Work Study students.
- Create a full-time veteran's program manager at each college to assist and coordinate the transfer of military (ACE) credits to college credits and to manage the Veterans Center.
- The largest barrier to employment for veterans and their families is an education.

### **Department of Workforce Services**

- When jobs are listed, registered veterans receive a 24-hour notice priority before the job posting is made public.
- **All** State and local government entities and contractors receiving state funds should be required to post jobs with the Department of Workforce Services.
- Introduce selected parts of the U.S. Department of Defense, Military One Source Continuing Education curriculum, into an annual program covering employee training.
- 360 referrals to local VA Veterans Centers as an additional pathway to employment.
- Provide outreach assistance including establishing Job Clubs and employment workshops at the newly created Veteran Centers located at institutions of higher learning by using existing labor market information and job search networks.
- Reevaluation of "*Utah's Occupational Star Ratings*" for training purposes to better serve Veterans and spouses. The Star Rating systems evaluates which job categories offer the best chance of employment and growth for the future. Five Stars is the highest rating for job category.

## **State Vocation Rehabilitation**

- Training is to be coordinated with the Department of Workforce Services “*Utah’s Occupational Star Ratings.*”

## **Utah Department of Health**

- Introduce of portions of Military One Source CE curriculum into employee training, and annual sustainment training.

## **Rural Outreach**

- Additional outreach in rural areas (Utah Veterans Nursing homes, Veteran Centers and employment offices, etc.)

## **Law Enforcement/Legal Services**

- Introduce portions of Military One Source CE curriculum into academy training, sustainment training.

\* The information above is taken from draft subcommittee reports and the final, approved report will be at the last task force's meeting on November 30, 2012.