Reservists called up in support of NATO’s Operation Allied Force in the Balkans won’t have to worry about resuming their civilian jobs once they return. The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) ensures that their jobs will be waiting for them.

USERRA provides that servicemembers, reservists and National Guard members returning to civilian employment after a period of active duty must be reemployed in their same job or a similar one with the status, pay, and benefits they would have attained had they never been absent for military service. The law also protects pension rights and health benefits. It covers every employer in the country, regardless of size, in the public and private sectors.

“The men and women on freedom’s watch, far from home and loved ones, deserve our admiration and support,” said Secretary of Labor Alexis M. Herman. “I believe that the department has the responsibility to make every employer covered by this important law understand and voluntarily comply with it.”

The reemployment rights law guarantees that veterans, reservists, and members of the National Guard will not suffer employment discrimination or be denied reemployment rights because of their military active duty or training obligations. The law covers all the uniformed services, including the Public Health Service. The law prohibits an employer from discriminating in employment or taking any adverse employment action against a person because of their past, present or future military obligations. The ban on discrimination is broad, extending to most areas of employment, including hiring, promotion, reemployment, termination and benefits.

Not all of the law’s requirements fall on employers. To be guaranteed reemployment rights under the law, a person must have received an honorable discharge from active duty.

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USERRA Protects Jobs During Operation Allied Force

NVTI Pilots Veterans’ Preference/USERRA Course

NVTI recently piloted a new course for VETS staff in Veterans’ Preference and Anti-Discrimination Issues. With the passage of the Veterans’ Employment and Opportunity Act of 1998, additional investigative duties have been given to the VETS staff in order to deal with veterans’ preference complaints within the federal government. This four and a half-day course will cover two distinct areas. The first part of the class will be devoted to understanding the law. During the pilot, NVTI instructor Vaune Shelbourn covered the new statute in detail and training consultant Cassandra Jordan discussed the Federal Hiring Process.

Part two of the course is a comprehensive training in the Uniform Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act’s (USERRA) most difficult-to-prove cases. These cases are the discrimination against guard, reservists, veterans and uniformed service members in obtaining, retaining and promotion in employment situations. Identification of the “motivating factor” and theories of discrimination as they apply to USERRA will also be reviewed.

The new course was piloted June 21-25 in Denver and was the first of six classes offered this year.
Last month I appeared before the House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Benefits to testify about funding for our Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program under the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. I have conflicting feelings when I talk about homeless veterans. I am sad that the problem persists and that these talented people are not able to enjoy hearth and home as most of us do. I am also glad that our program can, in some small measure, enable excellent service providers to help veterans regain their dignity, get the skills they need to find and keep and good job, and rejoin the mainstream of our growing economy.

VETS is asking for $5 million in HVRP funds for fiscal year 2000, an increase of $2 million over the current year. This would enable us to help 3,500 homeless veterans into jobs. While the raw numbers say we are only helping a small percentage of the estimated 275,000 homeless veterans, I say we are getting benefits for our investment far beyond individual veteran being assisted.

First, our service providers use VETS’ modest grants to leverage funding from other state, local, non-profit, and business community sources. This strengthens the public/private partnership which must be at the core of any successful program. Second, the HVRP program is a critical extension of VETS’ training programs because our grant money is used to help homeless veterans acquire the skills they need to find and hold good jobs. Secretary Herman has often said that we don’t have a worker shortage, but that we have a skills shortage.

Last, but not least, these programs are important because they work. Homeless veterans get quality services for less than $1,300 per placement.

I find it intolerable that in a country where thousands of high skilled and good paying jobs go unfilled, tens of thousands of veterans sleep in doorways and on the streets every night. Homeless veterans seek only a level playing field on which to compete and show what they can do in the marketplace. I am heartened that the Administration supports a five-year reauthorization of the HVRP program beyond 2000. That would give stability and continuity to a good program. It would also give hope to veterans who feel overwhelmed by life’s demands and overlooked by a society enjoying unprecedented prosperity.

Funding programs to help homeless veterans is an integral part of VETS’ strategic plan. Let’s make our goal “no new homeless veterans” in the 21st century. Working together, we can make this goal a reality.
Grant Helps New England Veterans Get Telecom Jobs

Recently separated, economically disadvantaged, and other veterans in New England will be trained and placed in apprenticeship programs for jobs in the telecommunications and utility construction industry through a $99,950 pilot program grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to the PowerComm Foundation.

The PowerComm Foundation, located in Springfield, MA, will target qualified veterans and place them in apprenticeship training programs approved by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW). Veterans completing the apprenticeship program will receive job placement assistance with IBEW Locals 103 and 104 in Massachusetts, Local 42 in Connecticut, and Locals 567 and 119 in Maine.

“These training programs will provide certification and licensure requirements needed for these veterans to qualify for good jobs in a growing industry,” said Espiridion “Al” Borrego, assistant secretary of labor for employment and training services.

“Veterans in this program will have the chance to work hands-on in these fields and get paid while they are learning.”

The grant will enable PowerComm to market the program to eligible veterans, interview and assess applicants, provide classroom and on-the-job training, and place successful participants in jobs. Forty veterans are expected to go through the program during the first year.

Funding for the grant comes from discretionary money available to the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans’ Employment and Training Services under Title IV-C of the Job Training and Partnership Act (JTPA). More than $7 million in JTPA grants are awarded annually by VETS, most of it on a competitive basis.

PRO VET Provides Qualified Veterans for Tennessee Electronics Firms

Skilled and experienced electronic technicians can be hard to find but they are essential personnel if you’re an industrial contracting company providing full maintenance service to a high tech company opening a new facility. That’s why Joule Technical Services turned to a pilot program being tested in by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Veterans’ Employment and Training Service and the Tennessee Department of Employment Security to help fill its personnel needs.

The program, known as PRO VET (Providing Reemployment Opportunities for Veterans) helps match transitioning service members with experience in computer maintenance with job openings in companies like Joule, which is providing Hewlett Packard’s new distribution plant in Memphis with total maintenance services. PRO VET employment specialists at Fort Campbell

ed and the Memphis Naval Base work individually with transitioning service members who want to remain in Tennessee and use their electronic skills learned in the military to enhance their civilian employment potential.

PRO VET representatives analyze the veterans’ resume and match them to available job openings provided by employers throughout the state.

“I hired three veterans through PRO VET,” said John Cincotta, a recruiting executive for Joule. “Veterans bring discipline and a strong work ethic to their jobs. Within two days they had a solid grasp of their responsibilities. I’m very pleased and would use PRO VET to fill future hiring needs.” (Contact: 1-800-621-0621).

The jobs weren’t entry level and neither was the pay. All three PRO VET hires started at least $15 per hour and have

Education and Training Grant Helps Homeless Veterans in Western New York

Homeless, disabled, and other economically disadvantaged veterans in western New York State will continue to get individually tailored education and training assistance from the Western New York (WNY) Veterans Housing Coalition thanks, in part, to a $99,650 grant from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Veterans’ Employment and Training Service.

The Coalition will use the money to inform eligible veterans in Erie and Niagara counties about its services, conduct intake and individual assessment services, and provide specialized training, job placement and follow-up services through its computer-supported Employment Resource Center. Up to 53 veterans will get transitional housing and 200 more will get a variety of other employment services, including assistance in starting their own businesses.

Located in Buffalo, the Coalition works closely with other community organizations, including the Buffalo and Erie County Private Industry Council (PIC), the Department of Veterans Affairs Western New York Health Care Network, D’Youville College, and local veterans service organizations, to provide a broad spectrum of services to the almost 7,000 homeless veterans in the area. Established in 1987, the Coalition now maintains 108 residential and 11 veterans transitional housing program units throughout Buffalo.

Funding for the grant comes from discretionary money available to the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans’ Employment and Training Services under Title IV-C of the Job Training and Partnership Act (JTPA). More than $7 million in JTPA grants are awarded annually by VETS, most of it on a competitive basis.
Veterans’ Service Organizations

. . . Champion of the Veteran

A large part of the job for the LVER/DVOP is to work with the Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs). However, the VSOs are more than “just part of the job,” they are the greatest allies in the LVER/DVOPs’ efforts to serve their clients. Thanks to the millions of the volunteer hours provided by these organizations and their auxiliaries, as well as their generous donations to disaster relief, Stand Downs, community and youth functions, veterans and non-veterans alike benefit from aid they might not otherwise receive. NVTI would like to take this opportunity to recognize the contributions of the major organizations and to encourage veterans representatives to work with their local chapters. In future issues of the VETSNET, we will be spotlighting other veteran service organizations to keep our readers informed of the possible resources available in the field and to recognize their efforts on behalf of our mutual clients, the veterans.

THE AMERICAN LEGION

Members of the American Expeditionary Force in Paris founded the largest veterans group, The American Legion, after WWI. Within a few months of its inception, it was charted by Congress in 1919 as a “patriotic, mutual-help, war-time veterans organization.” The Legion was responsible for the creation of the Veterans Administration in 1930 and the GI Bill of Rights in 1944. It currently has about 3 million members and a million auxiliary members affiliated with 15,000 Legion posts worldwide. Dedicated to veteran, community and national interests, the Legion promotes and rewards Americanism; provides financial, immunization and intervention programs for young people; lobbies on veterans’ issues; and advocates for veterans benefits. The Indianapolis-based organization publishes the American Legion Magazine and maintains a website at http://www.legion.org/.

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS (DAV)

The “official voice of America’s service-connected disabled veterans” is the DAV, which was founded in 1920 to help the 300,000 wounded, sick and disabled returning WWI veterans merge back into the civilian life. Chartered in 1932, the DAV currently boasts 1,069,000 members, 260 National Service Officers and 68 offices across America. To serve the disabled, the DAV provides free transportation to VA facilities; donates vans to VA hospitals; and has an Older Veterans Assistance Program, DAV Hospital Entertainment Program, and Voluntary Service Program at VA hospitals. In addition, the DAV also petitions Congress, assists in filing discrimination complaints with federal agencies and contributes to TAP classes. Made up entirely by disabled veterans, the DAV is based in Cold Springs, Kentucky. Their publication, the DAV Magazine, is published bi-monthly and they maintain a website at http://www.dav.org/.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS (VFW)

In 1914, when three pre-existing associations merged, the VFW was formed. From their earliest beginnings in 1899, the organization’s mission is to “insure national security through maximum military strength, speed the rehabilitation of disabled and needy veterans, assist widows, orphans and dependents of veterans, and promote Americanism.” With a membership of 2.1 million and more than 15,750 service officers, the VFW advocates for veterans’ benefits; tracks, lobbies and advises Congress on veterans’ issues; monitors veteran’s preference; and researches foreign affairs and national security issues. The VFW also sponsors and supports community and youth activities. Their publication, the VFW Magazine is published monthly and they maintain a website at http://www.vfw.org/.
VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA (VVA)

The VVA is the only national Vietnam veterans’ organization chartered by Congress. Founded in 1978 with a small grant from PVA, the organization now boasts 50,000 members and 525 local chapters throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Guam. The VVA’s purpose is to aid the readjustment of Vietnam-era veterans to civilian life by “promoting and supporting the full range of issues important to Vietnam veterans, to create a new identity for this generation of veterans, and to change public perception of Vietnam veterans.” The VVA works to achieve this goal by lobbying Congress, mobilizing its constituents and working with the media. They are also active in the community by supporting shelters, education projects, prevention campaigns and youth sponsorship. The VVA Veteran is their bi-monthly newspaper and their website is located at http://www.vva.org/.

AMVETS

Conceived during the turbulent years of WWII, AMVETS is the result of several veterans clubs organized throughout the United States. These clubs, formed to promote world peace, preserve the American way of life and help the veteran to help himself, came together in 1944 to form the American Veterans of WWII. In 1947, the Senate Judiciary Committee declared AMVETS to be “organized along sound lines and for worthy purposes.” President Harry S Truman signed their charter shortly thereafter. In 1984, President Ronald Reagan signed an amendment to their charter, opening the organization to anyone who is currently serving or has honorably served in the United States Armed Forces. AMVETS promotes Americanism, awards scholarships, supports youth leadership, educates on drug and alcohol abuse, and provides educational loan options in their communities. Their publication is the National AMVET and their website is located at http://www.amvets.org/.

GOOD NEWS

• Good luck on the Tri-County Veterans Stand Down 1999 to be held in Colville, Washington in September 24-26. According to Warren Wegis, vice-chairman of the Tri-County Stand Down 1999, the eastern half of the Pacific Northwest has the largest population of veterans per capita in the United States. “By word of mouth and the hard work of a good public relations team and committed volunteers, we expect attendance between 1,000 and 1,500 veterans.

• Washington State announced that it will be holding two more job fairs this year. The “Hire-A-Vet Job Fair 1999” will be held on June 25th in Tacoma and “The Veterans of the 20th Century Job Fair 1999” will be held on November 18th at McChord Air Force Base. Good initiative!

• LVER Harry Komprood received the IAPES Veterans Award for 1990 for the state of North Dakota and the Veterans Award from the SBA of North Dakota. Great job, Harry!

• The Vice President’s Hammer Award for Outstanding Service was awarded to OBES Vocational Rehabilitation Service in Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati as well as the DOL/VETS of Ohio. Outstanding!

• Congrats to Carl Price for his promotion to Certifying Officer trainee in Manchester, New Hampshire. He is also selected to receive the National IAPES award for Veterans Employment Representative of the Year for 1999. Excellent!

• Philadelphia, Pennsylvania LVER Tyrone Dancy was recently awarded the Workforce Development and Safety PRIDE Award. He hosts and produces a weekly radio show for veterans, wrote a book entitled “War Aftermath Depose” and co-produces “Letters from the Attic”—stories about African American war veterans. Awesome efforts, Tyrone!

• Three cheers for LVER Michael E. McNelis, Reverend Ben King, and the Southwest Mississippi chapter of IAPES, who raised money for the Oklahoma tornado victims. The funds were used to buy food and supplies.

• Thumbs up to Hopkinsville’s Bill McDonald who was recognized as Kentucky DAV’s LVER of the Year. Congrats, Bill!

• Congratulations to Pierce County, Washington Job Service for their receipt of eight major state awards in 1998: Don Patton – DAV DVOP of the Year; McChord Outstation—DAV Best Office; Pierce County/Lakewood Job Service Center—VFW Best Office; John Lake—VFW DVOP of the Year and VFW National Distinguished Service Award; Carl Tyson—Washington American Legion DVOP of the Year; Jim Greene—Washington Vietnam Veterans of America DVOP Presidential Award, and Washington VA Certificate of Excellence. Way to go!

• Kudos to DVOP Al Lara of Manteca, See Good News, continued on page 8
From the NVTI Director...  

Steve Chapman

Getting Results Through Learning is a handbook designed to help federal managers “build a smarter workforce and keep it that way.” The handbook suggests that this is best done by introducing and maintaining a climate for learning in every government organization. You can access the handbook through this web site: https://www.amsc.belvoir.army.mil/hrdc/handbook/toc.htm

The title intrigued me because I believe learning is the single most important element to improving productivity in the workplace. I am also in agreement with what Vice President Gore said in his cover letter to the publication, “workers want to make a difference.”

Veterans’ Employment and Training Services (VETS) asked that I provide feedback to them on how the concepts presented in this handbook apply to the training, technical assistance and support provided to veterans employment and training service providers through NVTI. I invite each of you to also review the information in the handbook and provide me with your thoughts on how NVTI can/should help establish and maintain a climate of learning with you. My e-mail address is schapman@nvti.cudenver.edu

Here are some of my reactions. I agree with the book’s assertion that as we enter into the new millennium we are all going to need to be knowledgeable, flexible, efficient, and resilient in order to fulfill VETS’ mission. VETS’ mission and program objectives can be found in the introduction to their strategic plan. A copy of this plan is on their web site at: http://www.dol.gov/dol/vets/public/strategic/strategic.pdf. Note: your comments on the plan are encouraged.

Both federal and state employees working for the veteran will need continuous learning to stay in touch with technological advancements, program changes and the problems faced by unemployed veterans. NVTI is committed to working on developing more efficient and effective ways to deliver continuous learning in your workplace and at our training sessions. Working together we can manage our limited resources in the best way to achieve our common objectives.

Download a copy of the publication, study it and let me hear from you. I am most interested in hearing your ideas on the difference between “training” and “learning.” The handbook offers the following: “Training is something that is done to your, or that you do for someone else. Training implies that something already known is to be transferred to someone else. Learning, by contrast, implies a process of self-directed exploration and discovery, in search of something not yet known, something yet to be found.”

Can NVTI be a training institute that facilitates learning?

News From the Hill

Democrat Representative Bob Filner from California is sponsoring a bill to designate November 10th as “Veterans Educate Today’s Students (V.E.T.S.) Day.” If passed, the bill would encourage community leaders to organize events where veterans could interact with students. “This legislation will bring the stories of our veterans’ service to their country to a generation of students firsthand,” said Filner. “I believe strongly in the power of each individual’s story to inspire, and I am confident that the students who hear our veterans’ stories will develop a greater appreciation of the price that we must all be willing to pay for our liberty.”

Representative Evans also called for the rejection of the 2000 budget resolution reached at by House-Senator Conference Committee, referring to it as a “wolf in sheep’s clothing.” The agreement, which would cut discretionary spending by $1.4 billion in FY 2001, would definitely affect veterans’ health care. “This budget resolution is a blueprint for destroying veterans’ benefits and programs. This budget resolution must be rejected.”

Democrat Representative Lane Evans from Illinois commented that he was “deeply troubled” by the VA’s report that the “adverse reproductive outcomes” of women who served in Vietnam are likely to be a result of their military service. Evans censored VA and DoD for their sluggishness in dealing with Vietnam veterans’ health problems. “It is profoundly disturbing that VA cannot correct its chronic problems with timeliness and communication risks to the right people at the right time.” Evans has requested a meeting with VA to address the problem.

Former Chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, G.V. “Sonny” Montgomery, is calling for the update of the Montgomery GI Bill that bears his name. Because the cost of higher education has soared since 1985, he is afraid the Bill will become “a hollow program with little value as a readjustment benefit or recruitment tool.” He praised H.R. 1182—Servicemembers Educational Opportunity Act of 1999—and H.R. 1071—Montgomery GI Bill Improvement Act—introduced by Democrat Lane Evans of Illinois. Republican Bob Stump said, “We want [students and parents] to consider military service as their first option for academic advancement, not their last.”
OPM INFORMATION SHEETS:
Two documents are available from the Office of Personnel Management. One is Man-Day Tours (aka active duty in support or ADS) which concerns reservists placed on short-term tours and veterans’ preference. The other is Veterans’ Preference for Service in Bosnia which explains medal eligibility and veterans’ preference for members who participated in missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Order yours today!

REGIONAL CONTACTS FOR WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT: This two-page document lists phone numbers and e-mail addresses of regional contacts for WIA. Get those networking contacts lined up. Call for this resource!

WOMEN BUSINESS OWNERS:
From DOL’s Women’s Bureau, comes a seven-page document analyzing women-owned businesses, including trends and profits. Keep those women veteran clients in mind and request this resource now!

Call Toll-Free
(800) 451-5759
Ask for the Resource Center

Sources/Resources advertised materials are available only through VETS NET. Please do not re-advertise or publicize the toll-free telephone number in other publications as we may be unable to provide materials to those readers. Thanks for your help!

WEB REVIEW

If you have questions about the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), then www.usworkforce.org is the place to find your answers. This Gateway to Information on WIA website not only has information on the act itself, but also has training modules to help you implement it in your state, city and town.

The site offers a “Plain English” version of the act, slide-shows to educate your field staff, planning guides, House-Senate reports, policy-related information, and Q & A. Also included are taskforce and regional contact information, as well as discussions of the one-stop operating system. For your convenience, most downloadable resources are available in both PDF and WordPerfect formats. Give it a look!

The Website Review is an opinion expressed by VETS NET contributors and is not an endorsement of products, services or information contained in any website. We encourage readers to form their own judgements about any website mentioned here.

USERRA, continued from page 1

An employer must be notified, verbally or in writing in advance of any military service unless time or national security prevents it. And a person must return to work within a specified time, depending on the duration of the absence. An employer may be excused from reemploying a returning servicemember if business circumstances have changed so much that it would be impossible or unreasonable to comply with.

VETS provides technical assistance to employers and reservists to help them understand their rights and responsibilities under the law. VETS staff are also charged with investigating complaints from reservists who believe that their rights have been violated. To learn about the more important aspects of the law, log on to http://www.dol.gov/dol/vets.

PRO VET, continued from page 3

reported being very satisfied with their jobs. One applicant learned about PRO VET, received an individual evaluation and interview, and got a job offer all within a week.

“I knew the type of skills that Joule was looking for,” said Dale Warf, the PRO VET representative at Memphis Naval Base. “Each of the applicants was a highly skilled technician and I just matched the needs of the employer with some qualified veterans.”

(Contact: (901) 874-5556).

PRO VET is also being pilot tested in North Carolina, concentrating on manufacturing skills. Information about PRO VET is provided to transitioning service members at Transition Assistance Program (TAP) workshops held at certain military installations in the two states. For more information, contact Richard Ritchie, state director of veterans employment and training in Tennessee, at (615) 736-7680.
Good News, continued from page 5

California for his efforts behind the Veterans Mental Health and Vocational Awareness Campaign. Lara has won the support of many veterans organizations and important officials in his bid to remove the stigma from mental illness in general and veterans’ mental illness in particular. Keep up your amazing efforts, Al!

• NVTI salutes DVOP Linda Amos of Fayetteville, North Carolina for her recent receipt of the state IAPES DVOP of the Year Award for Outstanding Services to Veterans, as well as Fayetteville’s receipt of the State Award for Services to Veterans. Way to go, Linda and the whole Fayetteville office!

• A round of applause for Montgomery, Alabama DVOP Bill Kilgore who received Service to People with Disabilities and DVOP of the Year awards from the Alabama chapter or IAPES. Nice work, Bill!

• Hats off to VA North Texas Health Care System (VANTHCS) which recently held a symposium titled, “Preparing Women Veterans for the New Millennium,” that addressed health, legal, financial, and occupational issues. The conference, led by Women Veterans Service Coordinator Allison Green, was “designed to help VA be more sensitive to the growing number of women veterans.” How worthwhile!

• Congratulations to Fallon LVER Linda Barron who was presented with the Nevada Department of DAV LVER of the Year award. Great work, Linda!

• Raise your glasses to Dover, New Hampshire’s Wentworth-Douglass Hospital. They won the 1999 American Legion Employer of the Year Award for Hiring Older Workers. Out of 885 employees, 143 of them are older (ages 55 and up) workers. Congrats!

• Two thumbs up to DVOP James F. Doner of Yuma as Arizona’s DAV DVOP of the Year. Other winners included Boeing, Inc., as the DAV’s Large Employer of the Year and Lockheed Martin as Small Employer of the Year. Kudos!

WOTC Expires
As of June 30, 1999 the work Opportunity Tax Credit program ended. WOTC provided employers with federal tax credits as incentive for hiring members of target groups who have traditionally had difficulty in finding jobs.