Employment Development Department
State of California

N E W S R E L E A S E

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Hanford Job Fair Launches Fourth Year of Governor's Initiative Matching Veterans With Employers and Jobs

HANFORD – Governor Schwarzenegger's "Honor a Hero, Hire a Vet" initiative began its fourth year today with a job and resource fair at the Kings County Fairgrounds in Hanford that brought together veterans seeking jobs, employers with openings to fill, and resource agencies offering a wide range of employment services.

The fairs, to be held at 10 locations throughout the state this year, focus on offering recently separated veterans one-stop access to career, training and education opportunities to veterans. Young veterans are particularly in need of assistance. The 2009 California unemployment rate for veterans 18 to 24 years old was 25.9%, far above the 19.8% rate for nonveterans in the same age range, according to data from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics.

In its first three years, the initiative linked 12,000 veterans with hundreds of employers and employment resource agencies. The fairs, funded this year with a $250,000 grant, provide public agencies and private companies not only the opportunity to demonstrate their support of the veterans' community, but also to address their business needs by having access to a large pool of job ready candidates.

"The 'Honor a Hero, Hire a Vet' fairs are now more than ever uniquely important to our brave men and women who are returning from serving overseas" said Victoria Bradshaw, Secretary of the state Labor and Workforce Development Agency (LWDA). "Even though we are starting to see the signs of economic recovery we cannot forget the courageous men and women who have placed their lives on the line to protect our freedoms. We are committed to allocating state resources to match these talented veterans with jobs that will open the way to a bright future."

"One of the very best ways to honor our veterans for their selfless service and sacrifice is to help them find meaningful career-oriented employment," said Secretary Roger L. Brautigan of the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CDVA).

The multi-agency initiative brings together LWDA, CDVA, the Employment Development Department, the Department of Industrial Relations' Division of Apprenticeship Standards, and California Community Colleges. An energetic outreach through television, radio and newspapers has helped to double and even triple the participation of employers, schools, apprenticeship programs and other providers.

California is home to nearly two million veterans, the largest number in the nation. The EDD Workforce Services Offices play a key role of providing veterans with on-going job search services and case management. Veterans bring with them unique work skills and character traits valued by employers. Ninety-five percent of California veterans have high school diplomas and almost half have associate degrees or higher. Many of them have mastered high-tech skills in the military.

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