



From the Acting Director Rodrigo Garcia

It is an honor to be serving my fellow military veterans and their families, the great State of Illinois and **Governor Pat Quinn** as the newly appointed Acting Director for the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs. Having previously served you IDVA's Assistant Director for the past three years, I am well-prepared and ready to tackle the issues important to our community. We are grateful to my esteemed colleague **Erica Borggren** for her nearly three years of leadership, innovation and commitment to her fellow veterans, and wish her well in her new position as **Acting Secretary for the Illinois Department of Transportation**.

Given the dynamic needs of the veteran community and the complex veterans' landscape across Illinois, I think it's imperative to constantly evaluate our progress, measure the impact of our efficacy, and ensure we are complying with all of the rules, regulations and requirements in the delivery of programs and services to our Illinois veterans. As a result, I intend to fully evaluate all of our programs, resources and services to ensure we are able to continue to deliver the same high standard of service you have previously received. Now, with me as the new "quarterback", it's a good time to focus on the basics, solid play-making, while still looking for opportunities to advance our objectives and retaining the positive energy of a great team.

In the coming months, IDVA will continue to focus on issues important not only our veteran community, but also to me and to Governor Quinn.

Employment - We are going to continue to partner with the **Illinois Department of Employment Security**, the **U.S. Chamber of Commerce**, **Illinois Joining Forces** and others to empower our Illinois veterans in finding careers - meaningful jobs with good pay, benefits and stability. We'll do this through **Hiring Our Heroes** events, job training and certification efforts and a wide range of innovative programs and outreach efforts - from tax credits for businesses who hire veterans to recruiting veteran-friendly employers via the **Illinois Hires Heroes Consortium** to ensuring that your military experience counts toward state licensing and academic credit.

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Entrepreneurship and Veteran-Owned Businesses - Studies and experience show that veterans are great entrepreneurs and with every veteran-owned business, there's a multiplying factor and a related increase in jobs. The IDVA will be focusing on showcasing business opportunities for veterans via our **Mission: Veterans 2 Entrepreneurs** events and informing veteran-owned businesses of the state's contracting preference for veterans, and continuing to support programs designed for women veterans through our program partnership with the **Women's Business Development Center**.

Engagement and Outreach - With all that we've been doing, I want to focus part of my time to widen our engagement efforts with veterans' organizations, not-for-profit organizations, fellow governmental agencies and Illinois veterans and their families. I've asked our **Veteran Service Officers** state-wide to promptly respond to veteran queries within one-to-two business days, and we're striving to be more engaged on a wider front by launching new connectivity tools for our technology-equipped veterans. We owe you this level of engagement. What do we need from you? Help other veterans reach us by getting them to **Stand Up and Be Counted** - it's easy and it's the start of helping them.

In closing, I am honored to have been appointed to a position where I have the ability to assist and support my fellow Illinois citizens. With supporters like **Governor Pat Quinn**, who is sincerely dedicated to helping our veterans thrive, we can make a difference. It's what we learned in service, and have carried forward to our civilian life. Thank you for your time.

Getting Veterans to Work

Robert McCormick Foundation Makes Impact

Results matter. Job-hunting veterans and family members know that. So do philanthropy and non-profit organizations that are looking for focused, mission-oriented and dedicated employees to help with a wide range of challenges. At the **July 30 Hiring Our Heroes Hiring Event**, 172 veterans and family members attended, 698 resumes were accepted, 87 interviews were conducted on-site, and 26 veterans received employment offers by the end of the day - and the event may still yield additional opportunities in the coming weeks!

Core to the success of this hiring event (and many other veteran-facing initiatives in Illinois) was the leadership, support and efforts of the **Robert R McCormick Foundation**. An vauded partner in this and other initiatives, the McCormick Foundation made resources and personnel available to help Illinois veterans not only become acquainted with philanthropy but also better navigate the non-profit employment environment. We applaud their innovative efforts and unyielding commitment to military veterans.

Next, the IDVA team will be working closely with our great partners at the **Illinois Department of Employment Security** and the **US Chamber of Commerce's Hiring Our Heroes Hiring Fairs** - state-wide - to increase the number of veterans securing careers with growing companies. By only inviting business with open positions, instituting pre-screening/pre-matching processes for interested candidates and offering on-site interviews, our partners seek to make a difference! Look for us at the coming Hiring Fairs in **Peoria** (8/8), **Chicago** (9/18), and **Aurora** (9/30) - if you're a veteran looking for your next opportunity.

2014 Illinois Discharged

Servicemember Task Force Report

In 2007, the State of Illinois, under the auspices of the IDVA, created the **Illinois Discharged Servicemember Task Force (DSTF)** to investigate the re-entry process for veterans who return to civilian life after military service. In order to accomplish this, the DSTF brings veteran advocates and community leaders together to analyze major challenges and develop policy recommendations.

As a result, we are pleased to present the **2014 Annual Report of the Illinois Discharged Servicemember Task Force**. The report is full of actionable policy recommendations - from legislative ideas, to policy adjustments, to partnership identification - that can help all of us serve Illinois' veterans and their families better. It is our hope that through this report you will learn more not only about the challenges our veterans face, but also how you can help.

This year's report also summarizes the progress this agency and our many partners have made on implementing the recommendations from previous years' reports. We are heartened to see - and be part of - this Task Force producing not just words but action to support those who have served.

As opposed to exclusively concentrating on fiscal matters and budgetary proposals, DSTF has focused on opportunities to leverage existing resources, build greater collaboration among veteran-serving organizations, and identify practical, cost-minimal solutions to optimize service delivery to veterans and their families. Implementation of these recommendations was not only spearheaded by IDVA, but also the **Office of Governor Pat Quinn**, the **General Assembly**, the **Illinois Department of Employment Security**, the **Illinois Housing Development Authority**, **Illinois Joining Forces**, and other partner agencies and organizations in the areas of employment, education, homelessness and housing, prosthetics, behavioral health, economic vitality, and women veterans.

As always, thank you for being a part of the collective effort to support and empower the Illinois veteran community. **To read the complete 2014 DSTF report, Visit**

www2.illinois.gov/veterans/news/Pages/AdvisoryGroupandReports.aspx

Our Illinois Veterans' Home - Anna will celebrate its **20th Anniversary** on Monday, Aug. 25th with events at the Home for residents and visitors. For more information, contact: **Christy Butler** at (618)833-6302.

The IDVA Chicago office is actively seeking a motivated, qualified student veteran as a **VA Work-Study Staffer** starting as early as **August 15, 2014**.

This dynamic position is an exceptional opportunity for a motivated and talented veteran to obtain hands-on, high-level policy and project management experience working with IDVA senior executive staff and other state agency leadership. The individual will play a key role in program management, crafting public policy, assisting with veteran outreach and communications, public event planning, and much more.

Applicant must be a veteran eligible for VA Work-Study (enrolled for at least ¾ of the time) in an approved college or program.

Visit www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/workstudy.asp for eligibility and application details or contact Max Dulberger (max.dulberger@illinois.gov) with resume and interest in the opportunity. For those with quick questions, please call Max at (312) 814-5538.

News for Illinois Veteran-Owned Businesses

Through the **Veterans Business Program (VBP)**, Illinois agencies and public universities are encouraged to spend at least 3% of their procurement budgets with certified veteran-owned businesses. This equates to \$300 million in state contracts - a huge opportunity for veteran business owners in Illinois!

There have been some big milestones this year with the development of administrative rules, templates and Procurement Bulletin changes to further implement goals for veterans. As such, we highly encourage all veteran-owned businesses to learn how to certify in Illinois and start capitalizing on this opportunity.

In partnership with other state agencies, **IDVA** is working to grow the pool of eligible veteran-owned businesses, so that agency procurement officers can begin providing preference to veteran-owned businesses while still ensuring competitive bidding. To encourage veteran business owners to certify and bring other resources to bear, we have hosted **Mission: Veterans 2 Entrepreneurs** seminars, directly mailed nearly 1,000 -



businesses, and worked with various chambers of commerce and business organizations to get the word out.

For more information on resources for veteran entrepreneurs, or to join our mailing list for veteran-owned businesses mailings and updates, please email **Max.Dulberger@illinois.gov**.

Illinois businesses with annual gross sales under \$75 million that are 51% owned by one or more qualified service-disabled veterans or qualified veterans living in Illinois are eligible for these programs

Your IDVA Calendar

Aug. 8	Hiring Our Heroes Hiring Fair - Peoria, IL
Aug. 10	Veterans' Day at the Illinois State Fair -Springfield, IL
Aug 20-22	4th Annual Valor Games Midwest - Chicago, IL
Aug. 24	Veterans Day at the DuQuoin State Fair - DuQuoin, IL Illinois Veteran of the Month - Sheriff Michael Hoelscher
Aug. 25	Illinois Veterans' Home - Anna 20th Anniversary - Anna, IL
Sept. 1	Labor Day - State Offices Closed
Sept. 11	Patriot Day
Sept. 18	Hiring Our Heroes Hiring Fair & Workshop - Chicago, IL
Sept. 30	Hiring Our Heroes Hiring Fair & Workshop - Aurora, IL

Events Subject to Change

This newsletter is produced by the **Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs**, and helps keep our veterans and their families informed about IDVA activities, events and programs to empower veterans and their families to thrive. The IDVA does this by assisting them in navigating the system of federal state and local resources and benefits; by providing long-term health care for eligible veterans in our Veterans' Homes; and by partnering with other agencies and non-profits to help veterans address education, mental health, housing, employment, and other challenges.