

UNION VETERANS

AFL-CIO

On Veterans Day, our nation recognizes and honors the service and sacrifice of our nation's veterans and their families - past and present. It is fitting and proper that we hold these men and women in our hearts, in our prayers, and in our minds for all time. We must continue to be steadfast in demonstrating an unbreakable commitment to our veterans once their service has concluded. That commitment is especially needed with post-military veterans employment and career training opportunities.

As our nation continues to recover from the Great Recession, there are far too many Americans looking for work and that includes over 850,000 unemployed veterans. Today, the jobless rate for post-9/11 veterans is 12.1 percent. Having bravely served and defended our nation, it should be a national outrage that so many of these well-trained, highly skilled, motivated and disciplined veterans have been unable to find a job worthy of their incredible talents. As President Obama recently said, "If you can save a life in Afghanistan, you can save a life in an ambulance. If you can oversee millions of dollars of assets in Iraq, you can help a business balance its books here at home."

Ensuring that our nation's veterans receive the opportunities they have earned has been one of the top priorities for America's Building Trades Unions. Through our involvement and support of the "Helmets to Hardhats" (H2H) program, we have assisted thousands of veterans in gaining career training and employment opportunities in the construction industry and in the skilled trades. In fact, there is a growing movement among construction end-users and contractors to utilize project labor agreements (PLAs) as a vehicle to expedite the entry of veterans into skilled craft apprenticeship training through the H2H program.

There is more that can, and should, be done. The AFL-CIO Union Veterans Council was established to do just that; and we applaud the United States Senate for its recent bipartisan approval of legislation that will help create job opportunities for veterans. The Returning Heroes Tax Credit provides firms that hire unemployed veterans with a maximum credit of \$5,600 per veteran. The Wounded Warriors Tax Credit offers firms that hire veterans with service-connected disabilities a maximum credit of \$9,600 per veteran.

Acknowledging the valuable skills that our nation's veterans have acquired through their training and experience - and to help these men and women translate those skills into gainful civilian employment - is a profound way to honor and reflect upon all veterans - past, present and future.

Assisting our veterans in a time of great need is not a Democratic responsibility or a Republican responsibility, it is an American responsibility.

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In Unity-There is Strength:

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