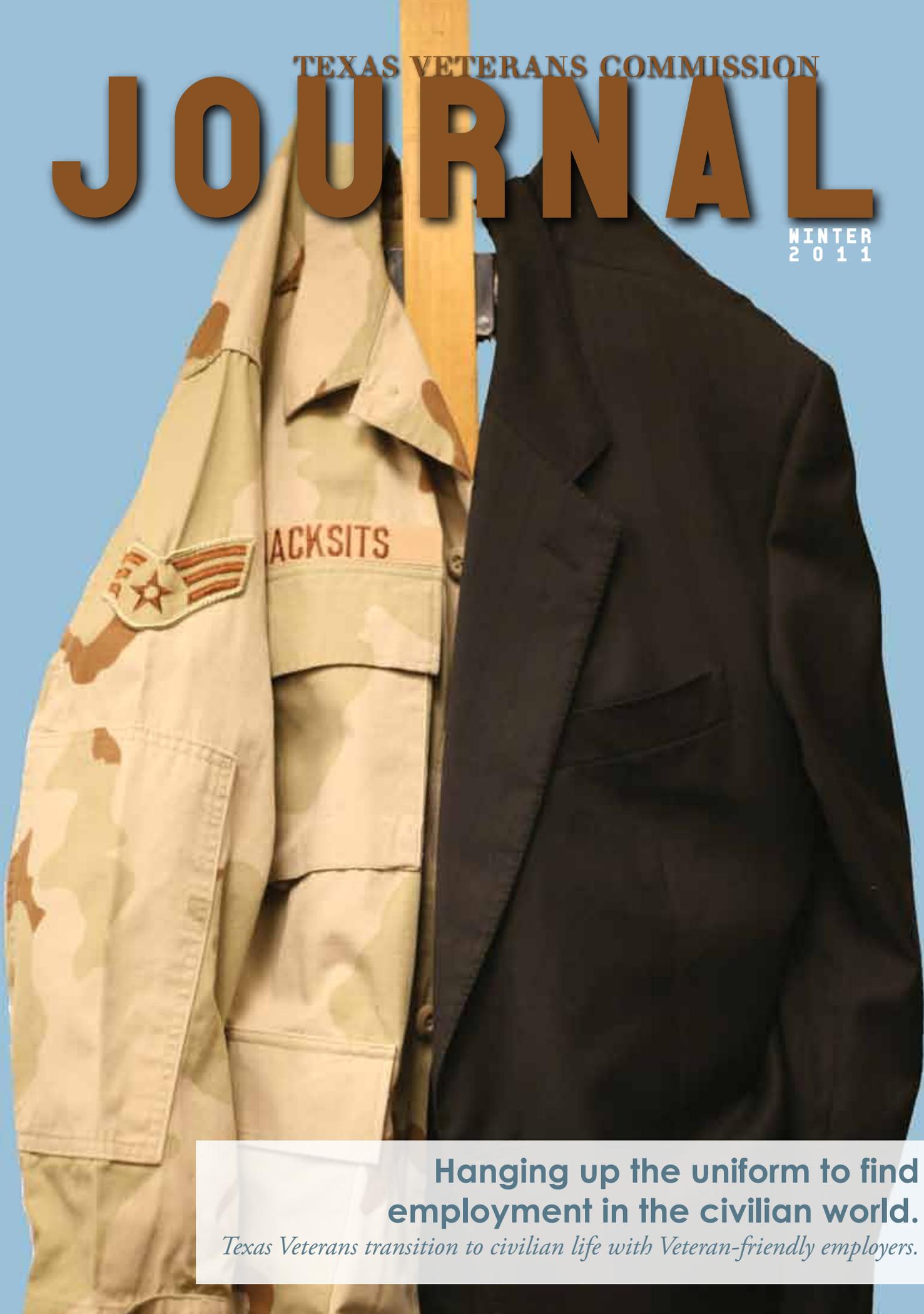


TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION

JOURNAL

WINTER
2011



**Hanging up the uniform to find
employment in the civilian world.**

Texas Veterans transition to civilian life with Veteran-friendly employers.



TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION

CUT LOOSE

JOURNAL

U.S. Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal technicians with Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit 11, Detachment 15, perform a static line water drop out of a C-2A Greyhound carrier-onboard-delivery aircraft over San Diego, Calif., on Dec. 8, 2010. Explosive Ordnance Disposal personnel are trained in explosives, diving and parachuting. DoD photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class David A. Brandenburg, U.S. Navy.

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As we enter the 82nd Legislative Session, we do so with the knowledge and conviction that our programs and people are second to none in the delivery of services and benefits to the Veterans of this great state. As the newly appointed Chair of the Texas Veterans Commission, I intend to couple my knowledge of this fact with my experience to secure the resources necessary for the Texas Veterans Commission to continue its noble and worthwhile mission.

After serving as a Major and Naval Aviator in the United States Marine Corps, I joined Delta Airlines and completed 32 years of service. During that time it was my pleasure to serve in the Air Line Pilots Association and represent pilots at the local and national levels.

Throughout my career I benefited from my military training and experience. When Governor George W. Bush appointed me the Commissioner Representing Labor on the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) in 1997, I seized upon the opportunity to raise awareness of the issues affecting veterans. These efforts resulted in the creation of a world-class workforce development system with over 290 Workforce Centers and satellite offices established across the state and simultaneously brought to light veterans' issues at both national and state levels.

Our success at TWC led to my appointment as the Chairman of the President's National Hire Veterans Committee by Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao. The President's National Hire Veterans Committee was charged with establishing a national program to furnish information to employers about the benefits of hiring Veterans. The key message to employers revolved around the exceptional training and skills of veterans and disabled veterans, and the advantages afforded employers by hiring veterans with such training and skills. Connecting Veterans with employers through participation in One-Stop Career Centers, America's Job Bank, and other means increased the overall number of Veterans hired. I am extremely proud of the work performed by this committee in promoting the message to the nation's employers that "hiring a veteran is not good will, it's just good business."

It is this experience in addressing the issues affecting veterans that led to my appointment to the Texas Veterans Commission in 2007. For the legislature to effectively address the needs of the state's Veterans it must be aware of the great deeds performed by each of you in the Texas Veterans Commission. It is no accident that we lead the nation in areas of VA claims advocacy, employment services, education and grants to providers delivering services to Veterans. As your Chair I will work relentlessly to communicate the benefit of these works.

Thank you all for your continued service to the state and its Veterans,

T.P. O'Mahoney
Chair, Texas Veterans Commission



**TEXAS VETERANS
COMMISSION**

The Texas Veterans Commission is the State agency serving the needs of our veterans and their families. Its purpose is to serve Texas veterans, their dependents or survivors in all matters pertaining to veterans' benefits and rights. The Texas Veterans Commission administers four programs: (1) Claims Representation & Counseling, (2) Veterans Employment Services, (3) Veterans Education, and (4) Fund for Veterans' Assistance. Through these programs, TVC helps obtain State and federal veterans' benefits, such as compensation, pension, death benefits, employment assistance, educational assistance, hospitalization and outpatient care, as well as numerous other benefits and privileges.



HIR



ING HEROES

Story by Bonnie Fletcher, Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

Angela Kohl, a human resource recruiter for CenterPoint Energy, is always on the lookout for the right employee with valuable work skills. When on the hunt, she reaches out to the military community to find extremely qualified and skilled employees.

Kohl is not alone. A growing number of Texas employers are making a special effort to recruit job candidates with military experience. They find that Veterans bring a diverse combination of training, analytical skills and real-world experience to the workplace, making them an invaluable resource for businesses in every industry.

Military Friendly Employer

CenterPoint Energy, www.centerpointenergy.com, with headquarters located in Houston, Texas, is a domestic energy delivery company that specifically targets Veterans for employment. CenterPoint Energy has a long tradition of being a military friendly employer, and in February 2009 the company established a military recruiting initiative focused on hiring service members transitioning from active duty to civilian life. They see the importance of

military service and recognize the skills and experience of a service member as valuable assets to their company's success.

When Kohl launched the CenterPoint Energy Military Initiative for recruiting Veterans, she went straight to the source to partner with military installations. This enabled her to speak directly to service members who were beginning their transition from the military and advise them of the company's employment opportunities. Her next step was to expand recruiting efforts to military job fairs and local Veteran service offices.

Why Veterans?

America's armed forces master state-of-art technologies including the most advanced information, medical and communications systems in the world. They run the world's most complex operations, distributing supplies to thousands of locations and moving tons of equipment around the globe.

Military service members have unique experience that brings a vast array of skills to the workplace. Veterans have the ability to adapt to different situations and know the importance of

“Centerpoint Energy has an active military recruitment program. Veterans have the skills, enthusiasm and



team work and communication.

CenterPoint Energy finds that Veterans are especially qualified for jobs in logistics as well as physically demanding field positions - with apprenticeship position salaries starting around \$20.00 per hour. Recently separated Veterans are often willing to take physically demanding jobs as a majority have served in Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom where they operated in harsh physical environments. CenterPoint Energy believes this experience has led to the decrease in their turnover rate since the beginning of the military recruiting initiative.

“These individuals are mentally and physically conditioned,” Kohl said. “They bring the skill set that we are looking for as far as their technical ability, the level of dedication, and their leadership. So it made sense to target Veterans. What we were missing they filled in.”

Serving Those Who Serve

CenterPoint Energy currently has 8,810 employees with 15% of that number being

Above: CenterPoint Energy employee Jason Fabre receives a promotion in the U.S. Army.

At Right: Army Veteran Jason Fabre works in his office at CenterPoint Energy.

Photos provided by Angela Kohl, Human Resource Recruiter CenterPoint Energy



Recruiting initiative for one reason: diverse, quality and can-do attitude we look for in employees.”

David McClanahan, president and CEO of Centerpoint

Veterans, Reservists or National Guard. Since Reservists and National Guard members continue to be deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, CenterPoint Energy has specific policies that support the Reservists or National Guard soldiers during this process. These policies include paid time off for required annual training and emergency call ups, “make whole” pay which pays the difference between the employee’s salary and their active duty pay, reemployment of Veterans and continuation of health benefits.

Jason Fabre, an Army MSG Reservist of 18 years, came upon CenterPoint Energy in 2000 at a job fair at the university he was attending. He found that his military background not only allowed him to secure a managerial position in a speedy manner but gave him the extra confidence going into the position knowing he had prior experience of leading subordinates.

“I came in as a professional,” said Fabre. “Compared to my peers I didn’t have previous supervisory experience with CenterPoint Energy, however, I had management experience with the Army, which gave me an advantage over my peers.”

Once with the company Fabre noticed the strong support system that came with the position. When he deployed to Iraq twice, CenterPoint Energy not only held his exact office and position, but acted as a support system for his family whom he had to leave behind. Considering Fabre and his family had no close relatives in Houston, the CenterPoint Energy team stepped up and supported his family with any and all needs when Fabre was gone. Whether it was changing light bulbs in the house, or mowing the grass, the support from fellow employees allowed him to have a sense of calmness knowing his family was receiving special care while he was away.

“We’ll take care of you,” Kohl says of the dedication of CenterPoint Energy employees. “The main thing is for you to go off and do what you need to do. As a company we will support you.”

This is a prime example of why G.I. Jobs places CenterPoint Energy in the Top 100 Military Friendly Employers list every year.

They are also considered a top military friendly employer because also they work closely with Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), a Department of Defense organization.

Texas Veterans Commission Helps

The process in which CenterPoint Energy seeks out Veterans begins as soon as Kohl receives an open job posting. She immediately reaches out to her military community contacts to make them aware of the opportunity. Kohl receives a large amount of resumes from Texas Veterans Commission, which is one of many agencies that CenterPoint Energy partners with to find Veteran candidates.

Navy Veteran Kevin Smith, Business Outreach Coordinator with the Texas Veterans Commission, works directly with Kohl when looking to fill her positions. Smith personally reviews and screens all resumes and then sends over all qualified applicants to Kohl. Kohl notes Smith as being “very quick and on the ball,” which shows his dedication to helping Veterans find employment.

“We’ve hired a large number of applicants from the Texas Veterans Commission and have always been extremely pleased with the level of candidates that are sent over from them,” said Kohl about working with Smith.

Texas Veterans Commission helps employers by serving as the link between companies needing quality employees and Texas Veterans who are seeking employment. A dedicated staff of over 190 employment counselors matches employers with a diverse pool of highly-qualified Veteran job seekers.

Centerpoint Energy

CenterPoint Energy Inc. is a domestic energy delivery company that includes electric transmission and distribution, natural gas distribution, interstate natural gas pipelines, field services and competitive natural gas sales and services.

If you are a Veteran, National Guard member, or Reservist and interested in more information about CenterPoint Energy career opportunities, please check out their website at <http://www.centerpointenergy.com/careers/>. Upcoming military job fairs they are attending are also posted on their website.

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit program provides a federal income tax credit (up to \$4,800 per person hired) serving as an incentive for private, for-profit employers to hire Veterans.

Story and Photos by Marlene Hall, Texas Veterans Commission, Plano

Celebrating SERVICE

On Veterans Day Nov. 11, 2010, many events were held across Texas and the United States to honor Veterans.

One event in Bonham, Texas, was held at the Clyde W. Cospers Texas State Veterans Home, which opened in 2001. The home is one of seven across the state that provide top-quality care for those who have served our nation. Each home provides skilled long-term nursing care, comprehensive rehabilitation programs, special diets, recreational activities, social services, a library, and a certified, secured Alzheimer's unit with its own secured outdoor courtyard.

Members of the community as well as the residents of the Clyde Cospers Home came out to enjoy the celebration. Close to 100 residents came escorted by family members or caretakers. Some walked, some came in wheelchairs, and some were rolled out in their beds, but all came with pride having served their country either by direct military service or by their spouse's service.

Retired Brigadier General Ron White,

director of the Texas State Veterans Home Program at the Texas Veterans Land Board, was the keynote speaker for the event.

White is a Veteran of the U.S. Air Force. During the Vietnam War, he was shot down over enemy territory and managed to escape and evade his would-be captors. White reminded all in attendance about the importance of honoring the sacrifice that all Veterans have made for our country.

The Veterans home in Bonham was one of the first four Veterans homes built after passage of the enabling legislation in 1997. The home is named after Army 2nd Lt. Clyde W. Cospers who gave his life to avoid crashing his B-17 bomber into an English village in November 1943 during World War II. For his actions that day, he was honored with the Silver Star, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal and the Purple Heart.

The residents of the Veterans home participated in the ceremony. John McQuagge, a resident of Clyde W. Cospers State Veter-

ans Home, sat in his wheelchair to lead the Pledge of Allegiance. Attendees enjoyed his participation and took a moment to reflect on the true meaning of the words.

Residents at the Clyde W. Cospers Texas State Veterans Home were each honored with a recognition pin during the program. Active duty servicemembers and Boy Scout Troup 911 pinned each resident assisted by the Junior Beta Club of Ector High School in Ector, Texas.

Bonham community residents participated in the event providing music, songs, and prayer. The program concluded with TAPS performed in echo form with three trumpets spread out over the Clyde Cospers's 12 acres, giving all of us time to remember the ones that have served, those serving now, and those that will someday proudly serve this wonderful country.



Residents of Clyde W. Coper Texas State Veterans Home in Bonham, Texas, enjoy Veterans Day festivities on Nov. 11, 2010. The Veterans home is one of seven in Texas and houses around 100 residents.

Claims Representation and Counseling helps Texas Veterans receive VA Benefits

By Lisa Waddell,
Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

The Texas Veterans Commission is the state agency whose honor it is to ensure Texas Veterans receive all the benefits to which their service entitles them. Texas consistently ranks among the top five states in VA Claims, Employment Services and Education benefits.

We are not the VA. However, we have more than 75 claims counselors across the state located in VA facilities that provide one-on-one assistance to Veterans and their families during every aspect of the VA claims process. Services include the initial filing of a claim; compiling additional evidence or documentation required by VA; appealing a VA decision; and if necessary, providing representation at a VA hearing.

When necessary, the Texas Veterans Commission acts as a liaison between the Veteran and VA medical facilities to ensure Veterans are receiving all the medical care they are entitled to. We maintain referral information for other state and federal agencies where claimants might be eligible for additional benefits.

The Texas Veterans Commission also provides training for Veterans County Service Officers (VCSOs) in Texas and offers a mentoring program for VCSOs who meet the qualifications and wish to become accredited with Texas Veterans Commission.

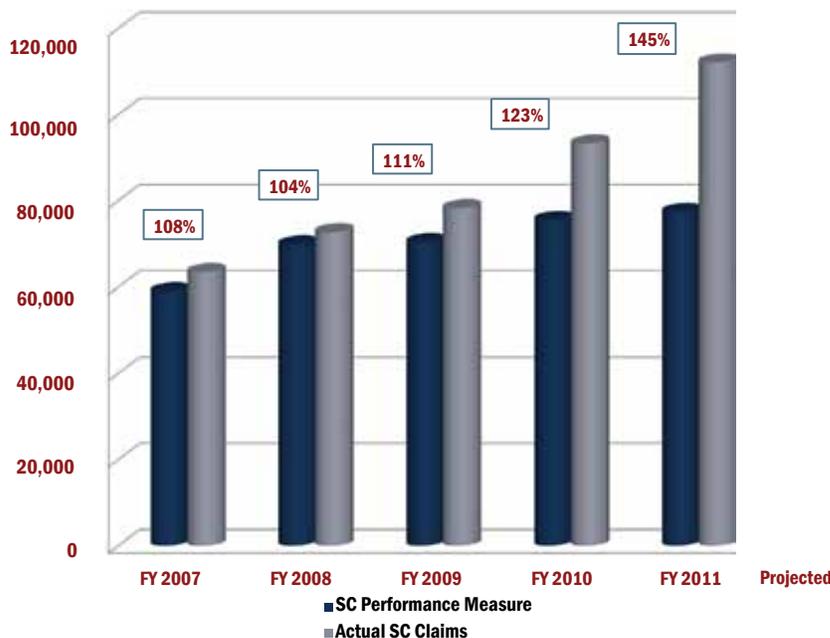
BACKLOGGED CLAIMS INITIATIVE

Between January and December 2010, the Texas Veterans Commission Claims Processing Assistance Team, funded by the Office of the Governor, expedited **claims** in the VA backlog for over **13,348 Texas Veterans and their families.**

BY THE NUMBERS

- Texas is **#1** among all states in total compensation and pension payments made to Veterans. Veterans that the Texas Veterans Commission represents will receive **\$2.3 billion** in payments this year.
- Texas also ranks **#1** among the seven most populous Veteran states in **per capita payments of monetary benefits from the VA.**
- During FY 2010, Texas Veterans Commission counselors filed **107,230 monetary claims and 20,746 appeals.**

Actual Service Connected Claims Filed Compared to Performance Measures



On the Job Training Programs benefit employers as well as Veterans

By Sarah Tillman,
Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

Annually thousands of men and women separate from military service in Texas. Many of these Veterans are eligible for GI Bill educational and training benefits. Most people automatically think of GI Bill benefits in relation to a college education. But the educational benefits may also be used for training in the workplace.

Under the On the Job Training (OJT) and Apprenticeship programs, newly-hired or promoted individuals eligible for Montgomery GI Bill educational benefits (Chapters 30, 35, and 1606) can receive a monthly check of up to \$1,069 while earning a wage and learning work processes, methodologies, equipment, company/agency policies, and skills under the direct supervision of a skilled trainer.

Currently, hundreds of Texas employers are participating in OJT (training programs six to 24 months in length) and Apprenticeship (training programs more than two years with at least 144 hours of related technical instruction) programs to train Veterans for positions such as police officer, firefighter, classroom teacher, budget analyst, supply management specialist, funeral director, plumber, electrician, scuba diving instructor and cabinetmaker.

Cameron Process Analytics is an approved training facility in Alvin, Texas, through the OJT program. Steve Smith, Business Unit Manager for Cameron Process Analytics, said

he would recommend becoming an approved training facility to any company considering applying.

“This is a highly rewarding experience to all involved,” Mr. Smith said. “And what business people often call a ‘win-win’ situation. The caliber of the candidates you have to select from is without equal. You will be rewarded by having an employee who on day one is highly motivated and likely to remain with you for years to come.”

In fact, of the Veterans that have been hired by Cameron Process Analytics since 1993, 80 percent are still with the company.

By hiring and training Veterans, employers can develop a motivated, loyal and productive team. In addition, by participating in the OJT and Apprenticeship programs, employers benefit in the following ways:

- **Recruitment:** Approved programs attract excellence to any business, industry, or agency by directing mature, well-disciplined employees that have positive work habits to your company.
- **Retention:** Entry-level employees receiving monthly subsistence checks from the OJT or Apprenticeship programs are less likely to look for another job just for a marginal salary increase.
- **Company-directed training:** Employers direct the training, thereby ensuring the eligible employee becomes familiar with work processes, methodologies, equipment and policies and procedures.

- **Community Enhancements:** Establishments with approved programs are supplying an important service to the Veterans in their communities by providing training. National studies show that for every VA dollar paid to Texas Veterans nearly three dollars come back directly benefiting the State’s economy.

“Employees who are ex-military understand chain of command, are highly dependable, accustomed to change, are generally self-directed and understand the importance of completing the task at hand on time,” Mr. Smith said.

Veterans and VA-eligible people who qualify for GI Bill benefits under Chapter 30, 35 or 1606 and who have been recently hired or promoted to a job that requires new skills should check with their supervisor, training officer or human resources manager to determine if their employer is currently approved for OJT or Apprenticeship programs.

If the employer or training program is not approved, employers may contact the Texas Veterans Commission at (877) 898-3833 or vetsed@tvc.state.tx.us to begin the approval process. Texas Veterans Commission staff will review the employer’s application and train them on certification processes. Employers and Veterans should be aware that not all occupations can be approved.

Some of the employers who participate in the OJT program in Texas:

- Austin Police Department
- Comanche Peak Nuclear Power Plant
- Texas Highway Patrol
- U.S. Border Patrol
- Union Pacific Railroad
- Local Fire Departments
- Cummins Southern Plains
- Texas Military Forces
- Federal Correctional Institutions
- FBI
- IRS
- Lindsey Contractors, Inc.
- BMW of Dallas

Award winner helps Veterans in and out of office

By Joe Hamrick,
Texas Veterans Commission, Tyler

When homeless, disabled Veteran, Clark Martin, lost his transportation, Twyla Lewis picked him up daily at the bus stop so he could keep his job at Experience Works.

“I can remember Clark thanking me for helping him and he said ‘Nobody has ever helped me as much as you have, you are truly a good friend,’” said Lewis.

As a result of her dedication to Veterans, Lewis was recognized as one of the six Workforce Professional Award Winners at the recent Texas Veterans Commission 67th Annual Training Conference in Austin, Texas.

“Helping Veterans was always important to me and I was surprised to win an award because I really didn’t know I was doing anything special, it was just a family tradition,” said Lewis, wife and daughter of U.S. Navy Veterans. “My father was a Korean War Veteran in the U.S. Navy, so respect and concern for Veterans comes naturally for me.”

In the one year Lewis was employed in the Employment Services Unit at the Gilmer Workforce office, she worked with 36 Veterans, providing 363 job search actions on their behalves. She was able to get 28 of them hired and back to work.

She also created resume files by skill sets for Veterans. When an employer would call in a new job order, she could instantly e-mail appropriate Veteran resumes. Employers were impressed and Veterans got jobs.

In addition, she took it upon herself to train the Gilmer office staff on Veterans Priority of services. Veterans in and around the Gilmer area have clearly benefited from Lewis’ dedication.

Her efforts on behalf of Veterans have not been confined to her of-

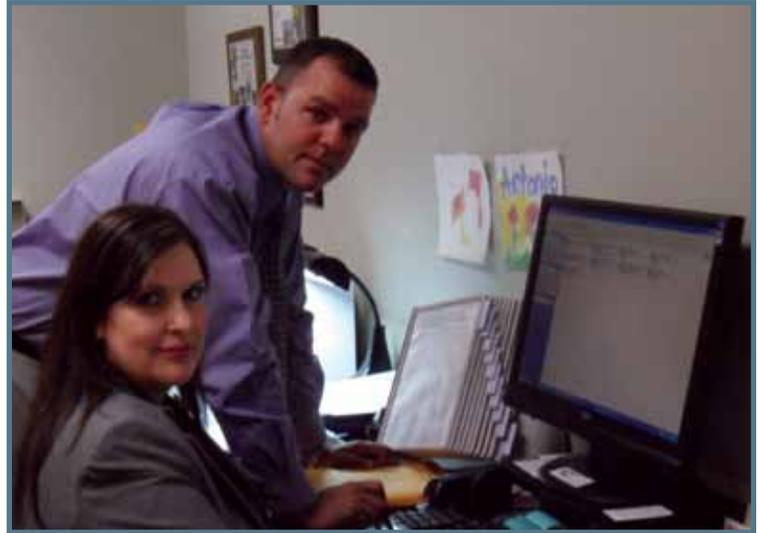


Photo provided by Joe Hamrick, Texas Veterans Commission, Tyler

Twyla Lewis works with Daniel Head, who is a Texas Veterans Commission Employment Representative and also nominated her for the Workforce Professional Award, at their office. She was one of six award winners at the Texas Veterans Commission 67th Annual Training Conference held in Austin, Texas.

She helped with fundraisers for American Legion Post 281 and also helped with Operation Appreciation, a local, non-profit organization which sent 500 boxes of Girl Scout cookies to Veterans deployed overseas.

Annual Job Fair connects employers and Veterans

By Ramon Pina,
Texas Veterans Commission, San Antonio



Photo by Ramon Pina, Texas Veterans Commission, San Antonio

Veteran Employment Representative Jerry Bennett explains to a Veteran job seeker that the Texas Veterans Commission provides Veteran Employment Services for the State of Texas in conjunction with a completed WorkInTexas application, and also provides Disability claims and Education assistance.

Matching prospective employers to qualified Veteran candidates is more important than ever in these tough economic times. One of the largest gatherings of prospective employers in the state of Texas is the San Antonio Military Community Job Fair.

The job fair is organized by a group that includes a devoted community based committee and sponsors from Randolph AFB, Lackland AFB, Brook City Base Transition and Career Focus Programs, US Department of Labor/VETS, Fort Sam Houston Army Career and Alumni Program and Family Readiness Program, Disabled American Veterans and the Texas Veterans Commission. Major employers from the federal government, state government and private sector attend this job fair because they know they are going to meet with talented and quality candidates to fulfill their employment needs.

Veterans seeking employment recognize the

San Antonio Military Community Job Fair as a great opportunity to meet many prospective employers in a single day and potentially secure employment with a top-notch employer.

The Texas Veterans Commission is vital and integral to the success of the job fair. At one end of the spectrum Veteran Employment Representatives provide significant support to employers and at the other end of the spectrum they provide job search information to Veterans.

From its inception in 1994 both Veteran job seekers and employers have benefited from the annual job fair. As long as community-based organizations, employers and veteran organizations continue to work together to help Veterans find employment and other related needs, the San Antonio Military Community Job Fair will have continued success for many years to come.

Further budget cuts looming to state government

By Rick Svatora
Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

Texas legislators have gathered in Austin for the 82nd Legislative Session and face one of the greatest budget challenges to the state in over 20 years. Depending upon who you ask the state is facing a projected budget deficit that ranges from \$12 billion to \$27 billion. If the legislature moves forward with its current solution to the deficit they will slash the Texas Veterans Commission budget, and thereby veteran services, by 20%!

State agencies have already cut spending for the current budget, trimming five percent off of what was authorized during the 2009 session. Where does this leave Veterans served by the Texas Veterans Commission?

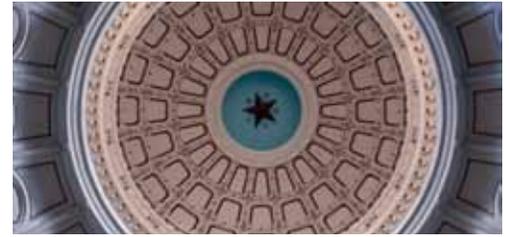
In January 2010, the Texas Veterans Commission responded to a letter from the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the Texas House and trimmed spending from the 2010 fiscal year budget by \$367,000. Cuts stopped short of personnel reductions that would have a direct impact on Veterans.

In December 2010, a similar letter asked for an additional two-and-a-half percent reduction from the FY 2011 budget. The Texas Veterans Commission is currently determining where to make these further reductions. Because administrative costs at the Texas Veterans Commission are below 10 percent, there's little

room for cuts that would not have a direct impact on Veterans. Add on additional cuts of up to 20 percent for the coming biennium, and there would almost certainly be a marked drop off in the quality and extent of assistance received by 1.7 million Texas Veterans.

Because nearly three-quarters of the Texas Veterans Commission's General Revenue, the part of the agency budget that is funded by the state, goes to Claims Representation and Counseling, additional cuts would fall disproportionately on Veterans seeking assistance with their Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) claims. Each Texas Veterans Commission counselor processes, on average, over 1,300 cases each year. For every dollar spent on Claims counselors, \$456 is generated in federal benefits to Texas Veterans. That resulted in over \$2 billion paid from the VA to veterans and their families represented by the Texas Veterans Commission in FY 2010. Spending those funds then stimulates the local and state economies. On average, Veterans using Texas Veterans Commission can receive as much as \$6,200 more in benefits each year than filing on their own.

Cutting the number of counselors not only reduces the ability of Veterans to have their claims expedited and lowers their benefits, it also impacts state sales tax revenue. By helping to bring VA benefits into Texas, each Texas Veterans Commission counselor also helps



generate an estimated \$720,102 in state sales tax revenue; a \$16 return for every tax dollar spent on counselor salaries.

But there's a silver lining. Legislators are wary of cuts to Veterans benefits and understand that cutting deeply into Veterans' services takes mostly muscle, not fat, from our state government. Demand for services won't decline, either, as thousands of men and women in uniform return from Iraq and Afghanistan. Some of those forces are likely to suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or major depression. Thirty-five percent of service members may have suffered Traumatic Brain Injuries.

Tough decisions are ahead for legislators, and the Texas Veterans Commission is committed to serving Veterans in the most effective, most efficient method possible. The Texas Veterans Commission has been through tough times before, including the Great Depression, and will continue its commitment to assist Veterans and their families in meeting their needs now and in the future.

VA processes first claims for new Agent Orange presumptives *New Program Speeds Approval for Vietnam Veterans*

By Lisa Waddell
Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has decided more than 28,000 claims in the first six weeks of processing disability compensation applications from Vietnam Veterans with diseases related to exposure to the herbicide Agent Orange.

"With new technology and ongoing improvements, we are quickly removing roadblocks to processing benefits," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki in a press release. "We are also conducting significant outreach to Vietnam Veterans to encourage them to submit their completed application for this long-awaited benefit."

On October 30, 2010, VA began adjudicat-

ing claims for three new conditions recently added to the list of diseases presumptively associated with exposure to certain herbicide agents: hairy cell and other B-cell leukemias, Parkinson's disease, and ischemic heart disease.

"If a Vietnam Veteran has a heart condition, even if their doctor hasn't used the term 'ischemic heart disease', the Veteran should submit an application," says J.R. Richman, Director of Claims Representation and Counseling for the Texas Veterans Commission. "Most heart conditions have some element of ischemia in them."

When filing claims for Agent Orange presumptive conditions, as with all VA compensation claims, Richman says that representation is critical because much of the VA's decision process is subjective.

"Eligibility requirements are general. Each case is unique and there can be a variety of factors that affect eligibility. It's important to work with a representative who knows the process," he adds.

When Claims counselors work with Veterans to complete the application paperwork they make sure all relevant information is included and the paperwork meets the VA's requirements. This ensures that the claims are decided in the shortest time possible with the best results.

Information about all Agent Orange presumptive conditions and Claims office locations can be found at www.TexasVeteransCommission.org.

New Years Message from VCSOAT President, Tim Vasquez

A new year has begun and with that 2011 begins with State Legislature sessions heavily underway. Many of you may know that this legislature has many important tasks to complete but none is bigger than the fiscal deficit they will have to manage and cuts in funding that will occur. I have been in contact with our leaders at the Texas Veterans Commission and what lays ahead for them with funding or lack of funding.

Unfortunately education and training funds have been reduced and we are currently working out the details of how to best provide Spring training. The Texas Veterans Commission and I will be notifying you all very soon on what has been worked out so that County Service Officer training can be fulfilled.

The economic downturn is also affecting County Veterans Service Offices in several counties throughout the state and I have seen CSO office staffing reductions, offices closed, and county funding reduced. This only hurts the Veteran population we all serve and their needs have not lessened and the outreach is still as important. I suggest that if you can please extend your service area to those counties that have elected to close their offices. There are methods in place on how to provide services to other counties while also being fair to the Veterans of the county you work in. My county office for example has Interlocal agreements with six other counties and allows for over 13,000 Veterans to seek services through my office. Remember it is the local taxpayers that make up your county budget and the Veterans in your county have also paid for that service in more ways than one. The Texas Veterans Commission offices may also have offices in the immediate area to assist the Veterans that may not have



services readily available in their county. Please let's all work together in ensuring that the Veterans have an office to work with and don't go underserved.

In September 2010 we saw the departure of long standing Texas Veterans Commission Executive Director James Nier and Deputy Executive Director Charles Buerchinger. For those of you who were able to attend the 67th Annual Training Conference in Austin, we got to say farewell to Mr. Nier and welcome new Executive Director, Colonel Thomas Palladino. I, among many other CSOs, am grateful to the leadership and dedication Mr. Nier provided to the Veterans and to the County and State Veterans offices. Col. Palladino has hit the ground running and is working diligently to insure the Texas Veterans Commission, the CSOs, and the Veterans of Texas are taken care of. I look forward in continuing the working relationship with Mr. Palladino throughout

the year and assisting whenever possible.

In closing, I ask to please continue to provide me your thoughts and concerns as we continue to press forward with the many tasks that are ahead. As the president of the VCSOAT, it brings me much pleasure that we can all work together and continue to make Texas #1 in the nation when it comes to serving Veterans and providing benefits.

Signed,
 Tim L. Vasquez
 President
 Veterans County Service Officers Association of Texas

County Service Officers receive awards at Fall Conference



Photo provided by Vincent Morrison, Harris County Service Officer

Rolondria Webb, Liberty County Assistant County Service Officer, receives a commendation from Vincent Morrison, Harris County Service Officer.



Photo provided by Vincent Morrison, Harris County Service Officer

Dan Singletary, Nacogdoches County Veterans Service Officer, receives a commendation from Vincent Morrison, Harris County Service Officer.



Photo provided by Vincent Morrison, Harris County Service Officer

Karen Thompson, Montgomery County Assistant County Service Officer, receives a commendation from Vincent Morrison, Harris County Service Officer.

New Commissioner appointments for the Texas Veterans Commission

By Lisa Waddell,
Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

Governor Rick Perry announced in December the appointment of a new chair of the Commission and two new commissioners. The new chair, Commissioner T.P O'Mahoney, has served on the Commission since May 2007, most recently in the role of vice-chair. James H. Scott and Richard McLeon join the Commission after exemplary service in the U.S. military and industry.

Commissioner O'Mahoney holds a bachelor of science in management from New York Tech, Old Westbury, New York and served in the United States Marine Corps receiving an honorable discharge with the rank of Major. Commissioner O'Mahoney was originally appointed to the Texas Veterans Commission in 2007.

Richard McLeon lives in Victoria, Texas and has worked in all areas of management, administration and finance in the non-profit electric cooperative industry for over 17 years holding the positions of Assistant General Manager and Chief Financial Officer.

Commissioner McLeon enlisted in 1983 and served in the US Army and Army Reserves receiving an Honorable Discharge in 1996 as a Staff Sergeant. He served in Operation Desert Storm with the 327th and 91st Chemical

Companies, 24th Infantry (M), XVIII Airborne Corps as a Decontamination Squad Leader and Chemical Reconnaissance NCOIC. He has a Bachelor of Science from Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas and an MBA from Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas.

James H. Scott retired from the U.S. Air Force as a Colonel in January 1996 with 35 years of military service. At the time of his retirement he was the Commander of the Defense Commissary Agency Midwest Region at Kelly AFB in Texas. He was responsible for 45 DOD Commissary Stores geographically located from Minot AFB, North Dakota to the Naval Air Station in Corpus Christi, Texas.

From 1972 to 1995, Commissioner Scott held numerous key staff and command assignments both overseas and within the United States:

- Director-Cadet Store Division-USAF Academy, Colorado
- Command Services Officer-HQs Military Airlift Command- Scott AFB, Illinois
- Commander-Services Squadron-Lackland



Commissioner Richard McLeon



Commissioner James H. Scott

AFB, Texas

- Inspector General-HQs-Air Force Commissary Service-Kelly AFB, San Antonio, Texas
- Commander-HQs-Air Force Commissary Service Pacific-Hickam AFB, Hawaii.

Commissioner Scott joined USAA's Executive Management Group in 1996 going on to become Vice President and Chief of Corporate Procurement. He retired from USAA in 2001.

He received a Bachelor of Science (Business Administration) and MBA from Golden Gate University, San Francisco, California.

For more information about the Texas Veterans Commission visit www.tvc.state.tx.us.

Commissioner John McKinney passes

Rachel Howell,
Texas Veterans Commission, Austin

Commissioner John Baylor McKinney, LTC, USA (Retired), died peacefully on Jan. 15, 2011, with his wife by his side. He was born on Jan. 10, 1940, in Spokane, Washington, to Gerald Baylor Van Vranken, Captain, USA (Dental), of Walla Walla, Washington, and Ruby Estelle Thompson of Galveston, Texas.

John B. McKinney spent 27 years on active duty with the United States Army, entering the service on Nov. 13, 1961. He received a commission through the Army ROTC program at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City. Assigned initially to the Artillery branch, he completed officer basic training at Fort Bliss, Texas; when the Artillery branch split in 1968, he was assigned to the Air Defense Artillery

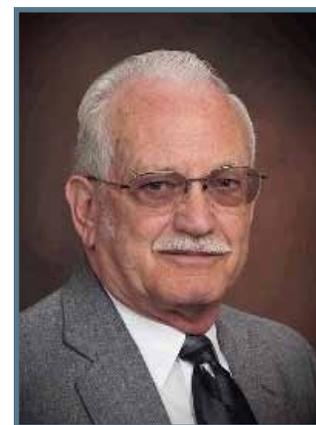
branch. He retired Nov. 31, 1988, as a lieutenant colonel.

Following retirement from active duty, McKinney attended the El Paso County Sheriff's Training Academy and was commissioned in May 1989 as a Reserve Deputy Sheriff with the El Paso County Sheriff's Department. Continuing peace officer training he was subsequently awarded an Intermediate Peace Officer Certificate, an Advanced Peace Officers Certificate and an Instructor License. He left the El Paso County Sheriff's Department in January 1991 and was commissioned a Reserve Deputy Constable with the El Paso County Precinct 2 Constable's Department later the same month. He "retired" from the constable's department in December 2005 as the Chief Deputy.

McKinney had also been active in the American Legion since 1989 at the local, state and

national levels.

He is survived by his wife Yolanda Garcia McKinney and step-daughter Letitita Marie (George) Riley of San Antonio, Texas, and daughters Rayett (Joe) Porchia of Osceola, Arkansas, Marlett and Lynett McKinney (James Belanger) of Salt Lake City, Utah, six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.





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