

A Path to Employment for Veterans with Disabilities



Introduction

State legislatures have enacted a variety of policies to help veterans find and sustain civilian employment after discharge from the military. Many of these initiatives are designed to ease the path into employment for veterans with disabilities. Veterans with disabilities can encounter various obstacles in finding and keeping jobs, such as translation of military education and training, a lack of understanding or knowledge of disability-related rights and responsibilities, and mistaken assumptions regarding their abilities and disposition. Employers and policymakers at all levels of government often play a role in facilitating this population's path into the labor market.

Significant progress has been made at the state level in recent years to lower barriers and find better approaches to employing people with disabilities. One such effort is the [“Work Matters: A Framework for States on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities,”](#) which is among collaborations undertaken as part of the State Exchange on Employment and Disability, a unique state-federal initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy.

This report focuses on state employment policies and programs for veterans with disabilities, many of which supplement and enhance efforts by the federal government. The report provides background and context on demographics and employment for veterans with disabilities, followed by a number of state policy options to support those entering or remaining a part of the civilian workforce. The policies include both those applicable to all military veterans and those specific to veterans with disabilities.

Policies include:

- Veteran Employment Preference
- Career Development and Job Placement
- Employer Certification and Recognition
- Apprenticeships and On-the-Job Training
- Employer Tax Credits
- Occupational Licensing
- Career-Specific Programs
- Veteran-Owned Businesses
- Preventing Employment Discrimination
- Female Veteran Programs
- Paid Sick Leave
- Transportation Access

Demographics

According to the latest data from the U.S. Census Bureau, **18.2 million** veterans live in the United States today, making up 7.3% of the population. Almost one-third of these veterans have a service-connected disability.

Veterans are predominantly male, though the number of female veterans has been rising since the 1980s. Veterans are also older than nonveterans, reflecting the characteristics of those who served during World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam era, all of whom are now over 55 years old. Roughly 40% of veterans today served during the first Gulf War era (August 1990 through August 2001) or in military engagements since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. Thirty-five percent served during the Vietnam War.

Veterans are more likely to have a disability than nonveterans. In 2018, **4.7 million** veterans, or 25%, had a service-connected disability, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. That number is 41% for post-9/11 veterans. Among all veterans with a disability, 29% had a rating of less than 30%, while 41% had a rating of 60% or higher. Disability ratings above 60% are more common among recent veterans.



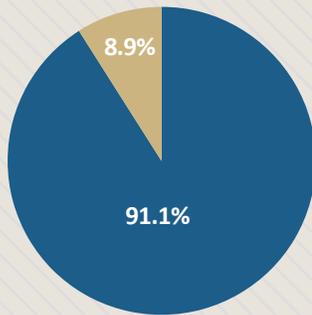
What Are Service-Connected Disability Ratings?

When an active duty service member acquires a disability or aggravates an existing disability, they become eligible for disability compensation, a tax-free monetary benefit provided by the [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#). The benefit amount is dependent upon a “service-connected disability rating”—a percentage assigned to specific medical conditions intended to reflect the extent to which a service member’s ability to work is impaired. These **ratings** range from 0% to 100% and round off to the nearest 10, with higher percentages correlating to more severe conditions. Service-connected disability ratings are calculated by individual caseworkers assigned to each claim. In 2018, the **10 most common** service-connected disabilities among new compensation recipients were, in order: tinnitus, limitation of flexion (knee), hearing loss, lumbosacral or cervical strain, limitation of motion of the arm, scars, limitation of motion of the ankle, post-traumatic stress disorder, migraine and paralysis of the sciatic nerve.

Veterans live in **every state** and community in the nation. Three states—California, Florida and Texas—have more than 1 million veterans. Another nine states have more than 500,000—Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Washington. Veterans make up 10% or more of the adult population in five states—Alaska (12.5%), Virginia (10.8%), Montana (10.6%), Wyoming (10.5%) and Maine (10.3%).

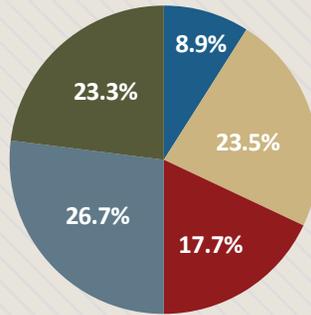
Who Are Our Veterans?

The nation's 18.2 million veterans make up 7.3% of the population



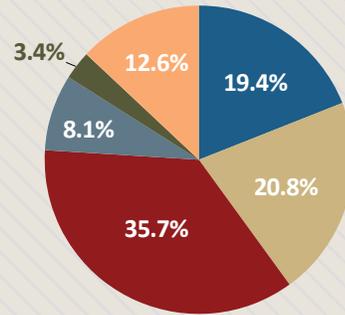
Their gender

Male veterans	16,584,495
Female veterans	1,620,110



How old they are

18-34 years	1,613,209
35-54 years	4,286,489
55-64 years	3,217,918
65-74 years	4,853,847
75+ years	4,233,142



When they served

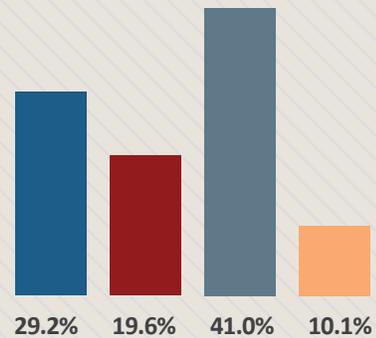
Gulf War I*	3,524,844
Gulf War II**	3,786,051
Vietnam Era	6,499,806
Korean War	1,472,721
World War II	614,532
Peacetime	

* (2001-present) ** (1990-2001)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey

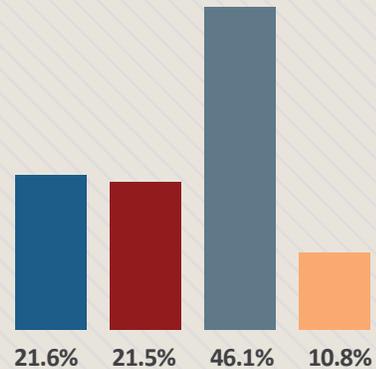
Veterans with a service-connected disability: 4,741,000 (24.8%)

Less than 30% disability rating	1,386,000
30% to 50% disability rating	931,000
60% or higher disability rating	1,945,000
Disability rating not reported	479,000



Gulf war era II (2001 to present) veterans with a service-connected disability: 1,710,000 (40.9%)

Less than 30% disability rating	369,000
30% to 50% disability rating	368,000
60% or higher disability rating	789,000
Disability rating not reported	185,000

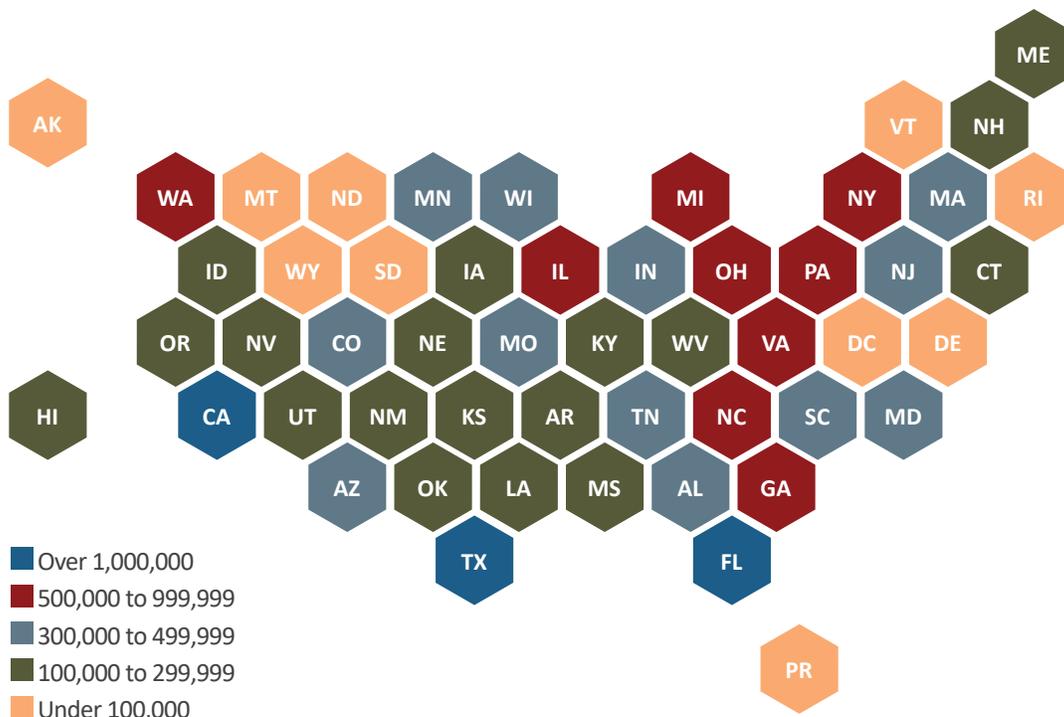


Note: BLS percentages based on total veteran population of 19,151,000, slightly higher than American Community Survey. Gulf War era II data based on total population of 4,184,000.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics



Total Veteran Population by State



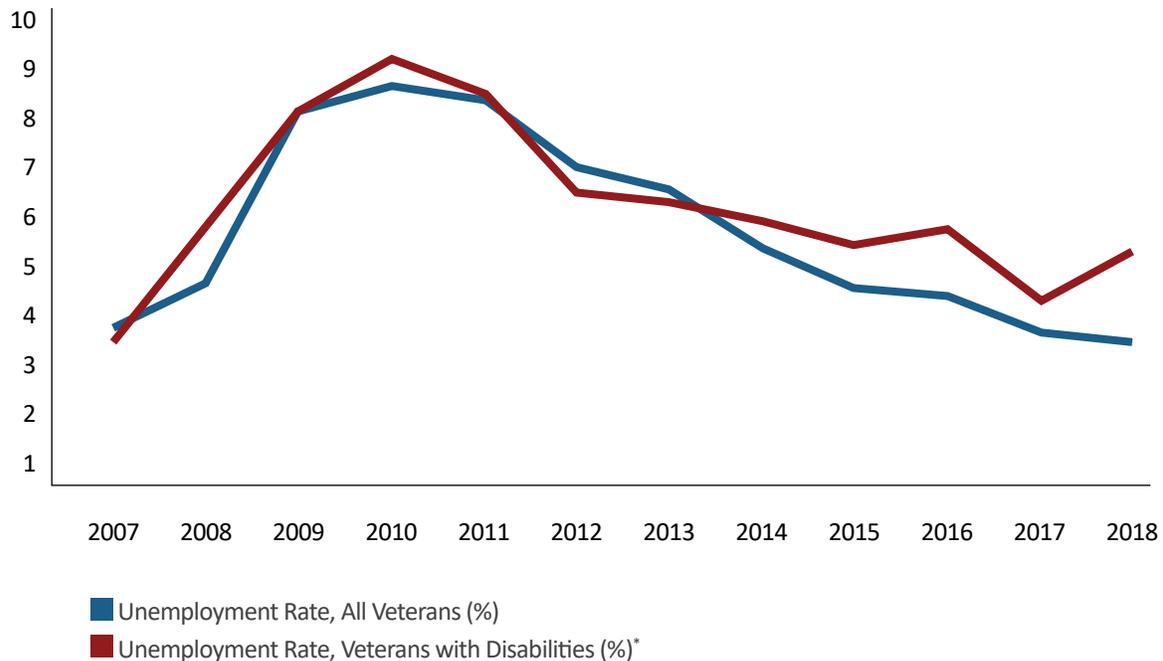
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey

Employment Context

Almost all veterans age 25 and older have [graduated](#) from high school, and more than one-third completed at least some college or received an associate degree. A slightly smaller share of veterans than nonveterans held a bachelor's degree or higher.

The veteran unemployment rate peaked in 2010 at 8.7%, ranging up to 12% for post-9/11 veterans. By contrast, the veteran unemployment rate in 2018 was 3.5%, lower than the general population rate of 3.9%. But at 5.7%, unemployment for veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan remains higher, as does the unemployment rate for veterans with disabilities at 5.2%.

Veteran Unemployment Rate



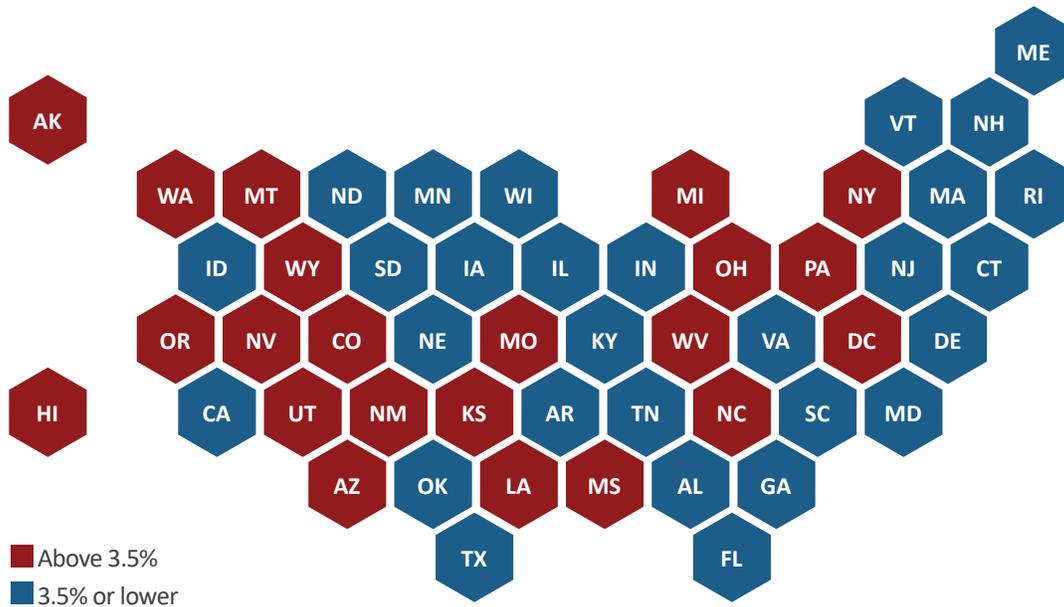
*Data not available for 2008

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, veterans with a service-connected disability rating of less than 30% were more likely to be in the labor force (with 56.3% employed) than those with a rating of 60% or higher (of which 40% are employed).

Veteran unemployment rates also vary across the country. Iowa had the lowest veteran unemployment rate (1.4%) in 2018, and the District of Columbia had the highest (6.5%).

Unemployment Rate by State, All Veterans



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Regardless of when they served, many veterans with a service-connected disability work in the public sector. In 2018, 1 in 3 employed veterans with a service-connected disability worked in federal, state or local government, compared with 1 in 5 veterans with no disability.

Occupation	Veterans with a service-connected disability	Veterans without a service-connected disability	Nonveterans
Private Sector	61.6%	73.0%	80.0%
Public Sector	32.0%	18.4%	12.7%
Self-employed, unincorporated, and unpaid family workers	5.2%	6.6%	5.7%

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

With unemployment decreasing for veterans overall, there are rising concerns about underemployment. In a [2017 survey](#) conducted by Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, 37% of employed participants considered themselves underemployed.

State Policy Options

States have demonstrated a strong commitment to easing transitions into employment for veterans and creating policies to sustain such employment. While many laws apply broadly to veterans, others recognize the unique challenges that veterans with disabilities face in the labor market and target approaches to this population.

Veteran Employment Preference

Preference policies provide a uniform method by which special consideration is given to qualified candidates seeking employment. Veterans' preference laws recognize the sacrifice and value of those who have served in the armed forces by helping position them more competitively in the hiring process. While all states provide some form of preference to veterans applying for a public position, private employer preference is relatively new.

PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

All 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam and Puerto Rico award preference to veterans in hiring for public positions. This is typically achieved by adding points to examination scores that determine the ranking of candidates. It can also take the form of interview requirements, veteran-only positions and hiring goals.

For positions that require an examination, at least 37 states, the District of Columbia and Guam have procedures to prefer veterans with disabilities over veterans and nonveterans. In **New Jersey**, veterans with disabilities are given the highest preference for civil service employment. Eligible candidates who pass an examination are placed at the top of open competitive employment lists, ahead of veterans and nonveterans, regardless of their scores. In order to qualify for the state's disabled veteran preference, the veteran must (1) have served on active duty during a qualifying war era, (2) received an honorable discharge, and (3) have a disability rating of at least 10%. The amount of active duty service required varies by war era. Some require only one day of service resulting in injury or disability, while others require 90 days or more. This preference also applies to the spouse of a disabled veteran, the surviving spouse of a disabled veteran, the surviving spouse of any veteran who died in service, and the parent of any veteran who died in service.

At least 11 bills were introduced in the New Jersey Legislature in the 2018-2019 session to amend the veteran preference law as it relates to veterans with disabilities. Two bills would expand eligibility by eliminating the requirement of service during a qualifying war era. Several others would provide additional points on an examination for candidates who do not meet other requirements, due to the date or location of service or discharge status. Legislation was also introduced to simplify the application process, giving veterans extra time to submit evidence of disability status.

In some states, veterans with disabilities may be considered for employment without having to compete or take an examination. This is the case in **Minnesota**, where eligible veterans must have a disability rating of 30% or greater. **Oklahoma** provides a similar exemption, with the caveat that veterans complete a one-year probationary period before acquiring permanent employee status.

Texas has taken a multi-pronged approach to increase employment of veterans in state government. The Texas [Military Veterans' Full Employment Act](#) of 2015 sets a minimum 20% veteran hiring goal for each state agency. To meet this goal, the law requires that employers interview a certain number of qualified veterans for each open position—one veteran when the total number of applicants interviewed is six or less, and 20% veterans when more than six interviews are planned. Agencies may also designate certain positions as veteran-only and hire a veteran from within the agency without advertising the position. In addition, state agencies of a certain size must designate an employee to serve as a veteran's liaison.

At least six other states—**Kansas, Maine, Minnesota, Nevada, Oregon** and **Tennessee**—have an interview requirement for veteran candidates. **Nevada's** law requires employers to interview every veteran with a service-connected disability who is qualified for a particular position.

Wisconsin has a hiring goal specific to veterans with disabilities. AB 441, enacted in 2016, established the Council on Veteran Employment and an initiative to increase the number of veterans and veterans with disabilities employed in state government. The council helps both large and small agencies achieve a 1% hiring goal for veterans with disabilities—7% to 9% for veterans overall—depending on the size of the agency.

PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT

While all states grant some form of employment preference to veterans in the public sector, private employers had been hesitant to favor veterans due to long-standing federal laws that prohibit discrimination in hiring. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits veterans' preference in employment as unlawfully discriminatory due to the potential disparate impact on women. However, Section 11 of the act allows special rights or preferences to be granted to veterans if they are authorized under federal, state or local law.

A total of 39 states have enacted legislation allowing private employers to give preference to veterans in hiring, promotion and retention decisions. Of these, 15 states extend the preference to the spouse of a disabled veteran or to the surviving spouse of a deceased veteran.

Washington was the first state to pass a private veterans preference law in 2011 with HB 1432. The law applies to honorably discharged veterans, surviving spouses, and spouses of veterans who have a service-connected permanent and total disability, stating clearly that such preferences are voluntary. Other state laws contain similar language, varying slightly in which individuals are covered by the preference. Alaska HB 2, passed in 2018, authorizes employers to grant preference in hiring to veterans and members of the National Guard.

At least five states—**Arkansas, Kentucky, Nebraska, Ohio** and **Texas**—maintain a registry of employers that have adopted a veterans preference policy. Veterans in Texas can view an [online list](#) of more than 130 employers separated by locality.

Private Sector Veteran Hiring Initiatives

In addition to states enacting policies to support veteran hiring and promotion, many [private sector](#) companies have established their own internal employment preference policies or hiring initiatives for veterans. Examples include: Google, Starbucks, JPMorgan Chase & Co., Walmart, The Walt Disney Company, Ryder, Booz Allen Hamilton, Hormel Foods, Accenture, First Data Corp., Comcast NBC Universal, Verizon and BAE Systems.

Many companies, such as CACI International Inc. and Waste Management, have also launched targeted [hiring initiatives](#) aimed at veterans with disabilities. Through outreach and partnerships with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and organizations including the [Wounded Warrior Project](#), these firms actively recruit and hire veterans with service-connected disabilities and provide assistance, such as resume and interview help, to those transitioning into the civilian workforce. For employers looking to hire, the Disabled Veterans of America's "[Guide to Hiring and Retaining Veterans with Disabilities](#)" helps navigate the often-unclear terrain of recruiting, hiring and retaining such veterans.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce also started [Hiring Our Heroes](#) in 2011. The initiative helps veterans, transitioning service members and military spouses find meaningful work. To date, more than 31,000 veterans and military spouses have found jobs through Hiring Our Heroes events, and more than 2,000 companies have committed to hire 710,000 people.

Career Development and Job Placement

States conduct a variety of programs to prepare veterans to enter or reenter the civilian workforce through personalized assistance and sharing of resources at the local, state and federal levels.

In **Tennessee**, veterans with disabilities can take advantage of [one-on-one services](#) provided by the Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Staff members help veterans develop a plan of action for long-term employment, which includes career guidance. These specialized services are intended only for veterans who served on active duty for more than 180 days—or were discharged, or released, because of a service-connected disability—and were not dishonorably discharged. In addition, the department offers all veterans priority access to new job listings, resume assistance and interview coaching.

The **California** Transition Assistance Program ([CaTAP](#)), created by 2014 AB 1509, builds on the DoD's transition program by providing state-specific information and resources so veterans can maximize their benefits. Launched in 2017, CaTAP offers support and assistance to veterans of all eras as their needs change over time. The program is divided into the following four pathways: core curriculum, education, employment and entrepreneurship. The [employment pathway](#) prepares veterans to enter or reenter the civilian workforce through training on a variety of topics, from choosing a career to evaluating a job offer. In addition to personal marketing, job search and interview techniques, veterans also learn about state and federal jobs and apprenticeships. With support from the California [Governor's Military Council](#), CaTAP is currently offered at more than 20 military installations in the state.

A similar program in **Virginia** reached nearly [57,000](#) transitioning service members and spouses in 2018. The Virginia Transition Assistance Program ([VTAP](#)) provides peer-to-peer support to new veterans and their families and makes referrals to address specific needs, mainly about employment, education and entrepreneurship. VTAP offers networking events, hiring events, resume reviews and an electronic newsletter of job postings.

In **Colorado**, the Veterans Service-to-Career program is designed to expand on services provided under federal law, in this case at workforce centers. The program allows non-profit organizations to partner with the centers to provide veterans and spouses with skills training, internships and job placement. Workforce centers that apply for funds must specify how services will be tailored to particular subgroups of eligible participants, including veterans with disabilities, veterans experiencing addiction and Vietnam veterans who served more than 100 days. The law requires centers to report on participation by such subgroups and success measured through gainful employment and skills training. The program began as a pilot in 2016 and was made permanent by the legislature in 2018 with HB 1343.

The **Nevada** Veterans Advocate (NVA) program casts a wider net by empowering citizens, not necessarily with military experience, to educate veterans in their community about earned benefits and opportunities. This extends the ability of Veteran Service Officers to reach a population of over 225,000 veterans, particularly in rural areas. Prospective advocates must complete a free course either online or at an in-person workshop. The course covers 20 topics, including several that impact employment for disabled veterans. Those who complete the course receive a certificate and participate in local events sponsored by the Department of Veterans Services. In 2017, the department [reported](#) 310 certified advocates and over 700 enrolled in the course.

States have also created online portals veterans can use to access a range of benefits and services, including employment opportunities, in one location. The Alabama Veterans Network ([AlaVetNet](#)) was established in 2013 and rechartered by the governor in 2017. The network is a partnership of 19 state agencies



and several nonprofit veteran groups. Its searchable database of resources is organized by need and location, allowing users to quickly identify service providers in their region.

Employer Certification and Recognition

Employer certification programs facilitate the exchange of information between the state and employers, with the goal of linking veterans with businesses looking to hire.

Virginia was one of the first states to adopt this approach. In 2013, the General Assembly passed SB 829, establishing a program that came to be known as Virginia Values Veterans (V3). The V3 Program is a free training and certification program for employers to help them implement best practices in recruiting, hiring and retaining veteran employees. To date, almost **40,000** veterans in Virginia have been hired by 800 V3 certified companies.

North Carolina is also focusing on the demand side of the employment equation with its **NC4ME** program. NC4ME, which stands for North Carolina for Military Employment, is a public-private partnership created by the governor in 2015. Its members include workforce offices, veteran service organizations and military installations. Together, they leverage resources and technology to connect veterans with a coalition of employers who are trained and ready to hire military talent. In addition, the official state labor exchange system, **NCWorks Online**, has several features for veterans, including a 24-hour “Vet Hold” on each new job posting, meaning only veterans can apply within the first 24 hours.

Other states are attempting to recognize employers that hire veterans. In 2017, the **Texas** Workforce Commission, the Texas Veterans Commission and the governor’s office initiated the **We Hire Vets** program to recognize employers whose workforce includes at least 10% military veterans. Similar programs exist in at least three other states—**Michigan**, **Nevada** and **Utah**.

Apprenticeships and On-the-Job Training

At least 13 states—**Colorado**, **Florida**, **Maine**, **Michigan**, **Minnesota**, **Missouri**, **Montana**, **North Carolina**, **Oregon**, **Texas**, **Virginia**, **Washington** and **Wisconsin**—have programs that help veterans gain internships, apprenticeships and training. States have employed a variety of approaches, including direct training funding, promotion of existing apprenticeship programs, tax credits for employers, and industry-specific incentives.

Washington specifically assists veterans with disabilities through an internship program in the Department of Transportation. The program, created by 2007 SB 5242, assists veterans with disabilities by matching them with appropriate jobs within the department that use their military skill sets, or that would teach them new skills. The jobs may include, but are not limited to, engineering, construction trades, logistics and project planning.

At least eight states considered legislation in 2019 that would increase focus on apprenticeships, internships and other training activities. Legislation in three states—**Florida**, **New York** and **Oregon**—addressed the needs of veterans with disabilities.

In **New York**, SB 386 (pending) would establish the Giving Internships for Disabled Veterans Not Fully Employed Program. It would award a specified percentage of available internships in the assembly’s youth participation program and the Senate’s student program to eligible honorably discharged veterans with service-connected disabilities.

Failed HB 2825 in **Oregon** would have set up the Oregon Educational and Workforce Development Bridge Loan Program in the Department of Veterans’ Affairs. This would conduct outreach and provide forgivable loans to veterans and disabled veterans who are eligible to receive federal educational aid or other financial assistance that is temporarily unavailable. The veterans must be enrolled in an approved course of study, professional training, workforce development program or apprenticeship in connection with an institution of higher education.

Legislation failed in **Florida** that would have created a task force to examine, among other things, increased

recruitment of veterans and individuals with disabilities into registered pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs and subsequent placement opportunities.

Employer Tax Credits

Employer incentives are another way states can increase employment of veterans with disabilities. At least 11 states—**Alabama, Alaska, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Montana, New York, Utah, Washington** and **West Virginia**—currently provide an income tax credit to private employers that hire one or more veterans. Employers typically may claim the tax credit for the first and second taxable year in which they employ one or more qualified veterans. Credits range from \$1,000 to \$15,000 for each veteran hired. Some states limit the duration of the tax credit, as evidenced by the five states and the District of Columbia where credits have expired in recent years.

Three states—**Alaska, New York** and **West Virginia**—offer a larger tax credit to employers who hire veterans with disabilities. Each state calculates the tax credit differently. In **New York**, employers who hire a veteran with disabilities may claim 15% of total wages paid during his or her first year of employment, up to \$15,000. Employers who hire a veteran who is not disabled can claim 10% of wages up to \$5,000. In **Alaska**, employers may claim an additional \$1,000 (\$3,000 total) for each disabled veteran hired, provided he or she was discharged in the past 10 years. A veteran who is not disabled must be hired within two years of discharge for the employer to claim a tax credit. Finally, **West Virginia** calculates the tax credit based on the employee's disability rating. The credit is equal to the percentage of an employee's disability multiplied by the first \$5,000 in wages earned.

In 2019, legislation was introduced in at least six states regarding employer tax credits, most of which would provide an additional credit for disabled veterans.

In addition to state incentives described above, the federal [Work Opportunity Tax Credit \(WOTC\)](#) is available to private employers and certain nonprofit organizations. The WOTC incentivizes hiring of individuals in nine target groups, including veterans with disabilities, who have faced significant barriers to employment. Employers can receive between \$2,400 and \$9,600 in tax credits for hiring a veteran with disabilities, provided he or she was hired within one year of discharge or release from active duty or was unemployed for at least six months in the year ending on the hiring date. The [Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes Act](#) of 2015 (the PATH Act) extended the WOTC for a five-year period ending Dec. 31, 2019.

Occupational Licensing

Despite significant legislation on the subject, many states still struggle with occupational licensing regulations that do not account for a veteran's training, education and experience. Failing to recognize this experience can lead veterans to incur additional costs to obtain a license or discourage them from entering the workforce altogether. Policy options to address these barriers to employment include consistent recognition of military skills, fee waivers, expedited review and exemption from licensure.

CONSISTENT RECOGNITION OF MILITARY SKILLS

While many state laws direct licensing boards to recognize military training, education and experience toward meeting requirements for licensure, boards are often left with considerable discretion to interpret a veteran's transcript and determine whether their experience is "substantially equivalent" to state standards.

Maine added flexibility to its licensing system in 2017. HB 1096 grants the director of the Office of Professional and Occupational Regulation the authority to modify licensing requirements of boards on a case-by-case basis for military applicants. In a similar oversight measure, **Washington** lawmakers added a reporting requirement in 2017. SB 5359 requires several agencies to file reports to the Legislature and Washington State Military Transition Council. They must also appear annually before the joint committee on veterans' and military affairs to report on implementation of occupational licensing laws for veterans and military spouses.

FEE WAIVERS

The total cost of licensure is composed of exam fees, application fees, initial licensure fees, background check fees and sometimes other miscellaneous fees as outlined in statute. At least five states—**Florida, Michigan, Nebraska, Nevada** and **Wisconsin**—have enacted legislation to waive some of these fees for veteran applicants.

Nebraska enacted Legislative Bill 112 in 2019. This waives fees for initial credentials for low-income individuals, military families and young workers, except for the cost of fingerprinting and a criminal background check. The law defines military families to include active duty service members, military spouses, honorably discharged veterans, spouses of such veterans, and un-remarried surviving spouses of deceased service members.

EXPEDITED REVIEW

It can take time for license applications to be reviewed and approved. At least 10 states—**California, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, Tennessee** and **Texas**—have enacted legislation requiring licensing agencies and boards to expedite the process for veterans.

In **Kansas** and **Kentucky**, boards must process applications within 60 and 30 days, respectively, for veterans who hold an equivalent license in another state, the District of Columbia or any territory. **Maryland** law requires each health occupations board to issue a license to a qualified veteran within 15 days of receiving the application.

LICENSING EXEMPTION

Some states are taking licensing reform a step further by exempting military members and spouses from licensure requirements. In 2018, Utah passed SB 227, which allows active duty service members and their spouses to practice a number of occupations in the state without requiring a distinct license in Utah, as long as they hold a current license in good standing in another state and pay all applicable fees. The law does not apply to veterans.

Arkansas enacted similar legislation in 2019, expanding the scope to include veterans. SB 564 requires licensing entities to grant automatic licenses to active duty service members, returning veterans and military spouses who hold a valid license in another jurisdiction. The law's definition of veteran includes several different discharge classifications, excluding only those with a dishonorable discharge.

Career-Specific Programs

Several states have enacted legislation creating a path for veterans, including veterans with disabilities, to enter certain professions, often those to which a military skill set is regarded as most applicable or where critical needs exist. These include agriculture, health care and cybersecurity.

AGRICULTURE

The average age of the American farmer is increasing, and states and the federal government hope that military veterans can help reverse the trend. Not only is farming a source of income in rural areas, it can also have therapeutic value for veterans struggling with post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury. At least five states—**Connecticut, Massachusetts, South Carolina, West Virginia** and **Wisconsin**—have a dedicated program to support veterans entering a career in agriculture.



West Virginia was the first state to do so, establishing the [Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture](#) Program in 2014. In passing HB 469, lawmakers recognized the importance of agriculture to the state's economy and its benefits to the health and welfare of returning veterans, particularly those with service-connected disabilities. The program offers education and training, as well as financial assistance to purchase equipment and materials. In addition to traditional farming, the program also supports veterans interested in bee-keeping, aquaculture, fiber-providing animals and various niche crops.

West Virginia is also one of at least 20 states that have partnered with the [Farmer Veteran Coalition](#) to promote their Homegrown by Heroes label, which informs consumers that agricultural products were produced by veterans.

HEALTH CARE

Many active service members are health care specialists. Despite a wealth of knowledge and experience, some have difficulty obtaining comparable licenses when they return home. **Virginia** launched the Military Medic and Corpsmen (MMAC) Program in July 2016 to address this challenge. The program, created by HBI 825, provides a path to employment for recently discharged veterans who served as Army combat medics, Navy/Coast Guard corpsman or Air Force medical technicians. Qualified veterans can practice and perform skills under physician supervision at hospitals across the commonwealth while they obtain civilian medical credentials. For those veterans who are not MMAC-qualified, the program can open doors to other non-clinical employment opportunities in the health care field, including information technology and management. In 2018, the program [hired](#) 32 medically trained veterans for work in partner health care systems and assisted 21 veterans by other means. **Louisiana** established a similar program through HB 185 in 2017.

At least seven states—**Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, New Jersey** and **Ohio**—have made it easier for returning veterans to be licensed as emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics. For example, **Ohio** lawmakers created an expedited veterans' paramedic certification program in 2015 for applicants with military training.

Another 17 states—**Alabama, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia** and **Wyoming**—have joined a multi-state compact for the Emergency Medical Services profession, known by the acronym [REPLICA](#). The compact includes provisions related to licensing for veterans, service members and their spouses.

In addition, **Maine** established the Health Care Employment for Military Veterans Program with 2018 HB 921. The law requires the state Department of Labor to create a "military-to-civilian crosswalk" that compares the training and experience required to perform military health occupational specialties with the state requirements for similar civilian occupations. The information contained in the crosswalk will aid occupational licensing boards and postsecondary education institutions as they identify gaps and work to reduce barriers to entry.

CYBERSECURITY

Cybersecurity is a fast-growing, lucrative field with urgent demand for many of the skills developed in the military. Four states—**Florida, Massachusetts, North Carolina** and **Virginia**—have enacted legislation to encourage employment of veterans in this field.

In 2016, **North Carolina** lawmakers set aside \$500,000 to fund a two-year cybersecurity apprenticeship program for honorably discharged veterans who have at least a 10% disability rating. The program is a collaboration involving the state Department of Information Technology and other state agencies, the private sector and several educational institutions. Participants receive a salary and benefits over two years, culminating in an examination for professional certification.

North Carolina is also a partner in [CyberVetsUSA](#), along with Maryland and Virginia. The industry-led initiative provides [free training](#), certification and career resources to veterans, transitioning service members, National Guard and Reservists, and their spouses. Over 300 veterans [completed](#) the program in 2018.

In addition, **Florida** veterans can fill entry-level cybersecurity analyst positions in as little as eight weeks through the program named [New Skills for a New Fight](#). The program is offered through Cyber Florida, created by 2014 HB 1501, with support from JPMorgan Chase.

Veteran-Owned Businesses

A number of states assist veterans and veterans with disabilities in their pursuit of business enterprises. **Missouri** enacted a loan guarantee program for veteran-owned businesses in 2018. [HB 1503](#) provides direct state-guaranteed small business loans to Missouri military veteran entrepreneurs. A “boots-to-business” program must be completed upon receipt of such a loan. **Illinois** enacted similar legislation in 2016 with SB 324.

An example of a program that promotes the business goals of veterans with disabilities is in **California**. The state Department of General Services operates the [Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise Program](#). Started in 1989, its goal is to award 3% of all state contracts to businesses owned by certified disabled veterans. According to the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) website, “The program facilitates the integration of disabled veterans into California’s entrepreneurial economy because of their incomparable sacrifices made when they answered their Country’s call.” The underlying [statute](#) requires the California Department of Veterans Affairs to promote the program and track results through a program advocate.

Through HB 161 (2017), **Kentucky** requires executive branch agencies to promote and publicize opportunities for service-disabled veteran-owned businesses to contract for goods and services, including active engagement with veterans’ organizations on such opportunities. Agencies using their small purchase authority are required to solicit at least one quote from a service-disabled veteran-owned vendor or business unless there are none that can provide the particular product or service. The Office of Procurement Services must provide state agencies with information on how to locate service-disabled veteran-owned vendors and businesses. Success is measured through an online reporting system and with annual reports to the Legislative Research Commission.

Preventing Employment Discrimination

Many returning veterans face a subtle form of discrimination as they search for employment. Employers may be hesitant to hire a veteran because of fears of post-traumatic stress, anger management or acclimation to corporate culture.

One protection important to people with disabilities, including veterans with disabilities, is equal employment opportunity (nondiscrimination) protection. In 1990, Congress enacted the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Title I of the ADA protects individuals with disabilities from discrimination on the basis of disability. Most states have enacted laws similar to the ADA. These protections policies help ensure that individuals with disabilities are able to access and succeed in the workplace.

At least six states—**California, Connecticut, Indiana, Louisiana, New Jersey** and **Washington**—have enacted legislation making it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against a prospective employee based on the individual’s status as a veteran.

One form of discrimination is the failure to provide reasonable accommodations. According to the [ADA National Network](#), “A reasonable accommodation is any change to the application or hiring process, to the job, to the way the job is done, or the work environment that allows a person with a disability who is qualified for the job to perform the essential functions of that job and enjoy equal employment opportunities.” Studies by the Job Accommodation

Network (JAN) have found that 58% of all accommodations cost nothing to implement, with the cost of those that do averaging \$500.



In the public sector, at least two states—**Massachusetts** and **Minnesota**—operate a centralized accommodation fund (CAF). Minnesota passed its legislation after an extensive study of the issue. At least two states—**Alaska** and **Vermont**—provide centralized expertise on accommodations for use by agencies. **Oklahoma** authorizes telework as a reasonable accommodation. Examples of accommodations are numerous, but might include reserved parking, equipment adjustments and a flexible work schedule.

Female Veteran Programs

Almost 10% of veterans in the U.S. today are women. Women are the fastest growing cohort of the veteran community and projections show they will make up 20% of the total veteran population in the next 30 years.

The challenges of transitioning from military to civilian life affect women differently than men, including the issues of employment, housing and health care. Recognizing this, at least 12 states—**California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oregon** and **Texas**—and **Puerto Rico** have established a female veteran program or division or have named a female veterans coordinator to oversee state benefits and services. For example, the **Indiana** General Assembly enacted SB 354 in 2014, creating the Hoosier Women Veterans Program within the state Department of Veterans Affairs. The program assesses the needs of female veterans, reviews programs and other initiatives designed to meet these needs, and improves awareness of state and federal benefits.

Paid Sick Leave

At least five states—**Arkansas, California, Florida, Illinois** and **Minnesota**—allow veterans employed by the state to take a period of paid leave to attend scheduled medical appointments and receive treatment for a service-connected disability. This helps a veteran with a disability to keep a job when ongoing medical treatment is needed. For example, **California** law entitles each state employee with a military service-connected disability rated at 30% or more to an additional 96 hours of paid sick leave to undergo medical treatment, including mental health treatment, related to the disability.

The law applies to veterans as well as members of the National Guard or federal military reserves who are called to active duty and sustain an injury as a result of their service. The credit is applied on the effective date of the employee's disability rating decision or on the first day he or she begins, or returns to, employment after active duty. It remains available for use for the following 12 months. Other states allow between 32 and 48 hours of leave, with no qualification as to disability rating.

Transportation Access

States play a vital role in providing veterans with disabilities employment supports such as access to transportation and technology. Such policy options ensure that physical spaces, services and technologies facilitate equal access to work opportunities, including information and communication technology and employment-related transportation. A recent [study](#) by the Mineta National Transit Research Consortium found that lack of transportation is a significant obstacle for reintegrating veterans in “finding gainful employment, stable housing, and continuing education opportunities.” Prior work by NCSL, “[A Mission to Serve: State Activities to Help Military Veterans Access Transportation](#),” identifies a range of transportation services and benefits provided to veterans by states. These include direct funding and provision of transportation services, as well as exemptions from transportation-related fees, taxes, fares and tolls.

Conclusion

This report highlights the many policy initiatives state legislatures and state agencies are adopting that specifically focus on the employment of veterans with disabilities and their families. A host of other services, benefits and opportunities are also available to veterans generally and to people with disabilities generally. Additional services, approaches and state policy options to assist persons with disabilities are detailed in the “[Work Matters](#)” report mentioned in the introduction and referenced below.

As a nation, we are indebted to each and every service member for his or her service in the armed forces. As they return to civilian life, many lawmakers are working to help repay the debt through policy choices that ease the way into meaningful employment.

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REFERENCES FOR FURTHER READING

- ["Work Matters: A Framework for States on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities,"](#) December 2016
- ["Barriers to Work: Improving Access to Licensed Occupations for Veterans and Military Spouses,"](#) July 2018
- Disabled Veterans of America, [The Veteran Advantage: DAV Guide to Hiring & Retaining Veterans with Disabilities](#)
- U.S. Department of Labor, [Veterans' Employment & Training Service](#)
- U.S. Department of Labor, [Work Opportunity Tax Credit](#)
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, [Employment Situation of Veterans—2018](#)
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, [Veterans Benefits Administration, Compensation](#)
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, [Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment](#)
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, [National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics](#)
- Syracuse University, [Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Workforce Readiness Research Series](#)
- Society for Human Resource Management, [Military Employment Resource Page](#)

Appendix. State Statute Citations by Policy Option

Disabled Veteran Employment Preference - Public

State	Statute Citation
Alabama	Ala. Code §§40-18-320 et seq.
Alaska	Alaska Stat. §39.25.150; Alaska Stat. §39.25.159
Arizona	Ariz. Rev. Stat. §§38-491 et seq.
Arkansas	Ark. Stat. Ann. §§21-3-301 et seq.
Colorado	Colo. Const. Art. XII, §15; Colo. Rev. Stat. §§29-5.5-101 et seq.
Connecticut	Conn. Gen. Stat. §5-224; Conn. Gen. Stat. §7-415
Delaware	29 Del. Code Ann. §5935
District of Columbia	D.C. Code Ann. §1-607.03
Florida	Fla. Stat. §110.2135; Fla. Stat. §§295.065 et seq.
Georgia	Ga. Code §§45-2-20 et seq.
Idaho	Idaho Code §§65-501 et seq.
Illinois	Ill. Rev. Stat. ch. 15, §310/10b.7; §410/10b.7; §510/9b.5 Ill. Rev. Stat. ch. 20, §415/8b.7 Ill. Rev. Stat. ch. 55, §5/3-14021 Ill. Rev. Stat. ch. 65, §5/10-1-16 Ill. Rev. Stat. ch. 110, §70-36g Ill. Rev. Stat. ch. 330, §55/0.01 et seq.
Iowa	Iowa Code §8A.413; Iowa Code §35C.1; Iowa Code §400.10
Kentucky	Ky. Rev. Stat. §18a.150
Louisiana	La. Rev. Stat. Ann. 33, §2416
Maine	Me. Rev. Stat. Ann. tit. 5, §§7051 et seq.
Massachusetts	Mass. Gen. Laws Ann. ch. 31, §3; §26 Mass. Gen. Laws Ann. ch. 41, §112 Mass. Gen. Laws Ann. ch. 149, §26
Minnesota	Minn. Stat. §§43A.11 et seq.; Minn. Stat. §§197.447 et seq.
Missouri	Mo. Const. Art. IV, §19; Mo. Rev. Stat. §36.220; Mo. Rev. Stat. §285.237
Montana	Mont. Code Ann. §10-2-402; Mont. Code Ann. §§39-29-101 et seq.; Mont. Code Ann. §49-2-405
Nebraska	Neb. Rev. Stat. §23-2529; Neb. Rev. Stat. §§48-225 et seq.
Nevada	Nev. Rev. Stat. §281.060; Nev. Rev. Stat. §284.260
New Hampshire	N.H. Rev. Stat. §282-A:115; N.H. Rev. Stat. §§283:1 et seq.
New Jersey	N.J. Rev. Stat. §§11A:5-1 et seq.
New Mexico	N.M. Stat. Ann. §10-9-13.2; N.M. Stat. Ann. §20-4-9
New York	N.Y. Civil Service Law §85
North Dakota	N.D. Cent. Code §§37-19.1-01 et seq.
Oklahoma	Okla. Stat. tit. 72, §403
Oregon	Ore. Rev. Stat. §§408.225 et seq.
South Carolina	S.C. Code Ann. §1-1-550

State	Statute Citation
South Dakota	S.D. Codified Laws Ann. §§3-3-1 et seq.
Texas	Tex. Gov't Code Ann. §§657.001 et seq.
Utah	Utah Code Ann. §§71-10-1 et seq.
Virginia	Va. Code §2.2-2903; Va. Code §15.2-1509
Washington	Wash. Rev. Code §41.04.010; Wash. Rev. Code §§73.16.005 et seq.
West Virginia	W. Va. Code §6-13-1; W. Va. Code §§9A-4-1 et seq.
Wisconsin	Wis. Stat. §230.16
Wyoming	Wyo. Rev. Stat. §19-14-102
Guam	4 Guam Code Ann. §4104

Interview Requirement, Public Employment

State	Statute Citation
Kansas	Kan. Stat. Ann. §73-201
Maine	Me. Rev. Stat. Ann. tit. 5, §7054-B
Minnesota	Minn. Stat. §43A.11
Nevada	Nev. Rev. Stat. §284.265
Oregon	Ore. Rev. Stat. §408.237
Tennessee	Tenn. Code Ann. §8-30-307

Veterans Employment Preference - Private

State	Statute Citation
Alabama	Ala. Code §§25-1-50 et seq.
Alaska	Alaska Stat. §23.88.010
Arizona	Ariz. Rev. Stat. Ann. §23-495.01
Arkansas	Ark. Stat. Ann. §11-15-103
Florida	Fla. Stat. §295.188
Georgia	Ga. Code §34-1-8
Idaho	Idaho Code §65-513
Illinois	Ill. Rev. Stat. ch. 330, §56/15
Indiana	Ind. Code §10-17-15-5
Iowa	Iowa Code §35.3
Kansas	Kan. Stat. Ann. §73-231
Kentucky	Ky. Rev. Stat. §40.345
Louisiana	La. Rev. Stat. Ann. §23:1001
Maine	Me. Rev. Stat. Ann. tit. 26, §878
Maryland	Md. Labor and Employment Code Ann. §3-714
Massachusetts	Mass. Gen. Laws Ann. ch. 149, §443/4
Michigan	Mich. Comp. Laws §35.1202
Minnesota	Minn. Stat. §197.4551
Missouri	Mo. Rev. Stat. §285.250

State	Statute Citation
Montana	Mont. Code Ann. §39-29-203
Nebraska	Neb. Rev. Stat. §48-238
Nevada	Nev. Rev. Stat. §613.385
New Hampshire	N.H. Rev. Stat. Ann. §275-G:2
New Jersey	N.J. Rev. Stat. §38A-3-12
North Carolina	N.C. Gen. Stat. §95-28.4
North Dakota	N.D. Cent. Code §37-19.1-05
Ohio	Ohio Rev. Code Ann. §5903.15
Oklahoma	Okla. Stat. tit. 40, §801
Oregon	Or. Rev. Stat. §408.497
Pennsylvania	Pa. Cons. Stat. tit. 51, §7203
Rhode Island	R.I. Gen. Laws §30-21-14
South Carolina	S.C. Code Ann. §1-13-80
Tennessee	Tenn. Code Ann. §50-1-107
Texas	Tex. Lab. Code Ann. §23.002
Utah	Utah Code Ann. §34-50-103
Virginia	Va. Code §40.1-27.2
Washington	Wash. Rev. Code §73.16.110
West Virginia	W. Va. Code §5-11-9a
Wyoming	Wyo. Stat. §19-14-111

Career Development and Job Placement

State	Statute Citation
Alabama	2017 Executive Order 712
California	Cal. Military and Veterans Code §90
Colorado	Colo. Rev. Stat. §§8-14.3-201.5 et seq.

Employer Certification and Recognition

State	Statute Citation
Virginia	Va. Code §2.2-2001.2

Apprenticeships and On-the-Job Training

State	Statute Citation
Colorado	Colo. Rev. Stat. §§8-14.3-201 et seq.
Florida	2018 House Bill 29
Maine	Me. Rev. Stat. Ann. tit. 26, §§2131 et seq.
Michigan	2017 House Bill 4323
Minnesota	2017 Senate Bill 1456
Missouri	Mo. Rev. Stat. §620.515

State	Statute Citation
Montana	Mont. Code Ann. §36-6-109
North Carolina	2016 House Bill 1030
Oregon	Or. Rev. Stat. §406
Texas	Tex. Gov't Code Ann. §434.302
Virginia	Va. Code §2.2-2001.4
Washington	Wash. Rev. Code §47.01.430
Wisconsin	Wis. Stat. §45.437

Employer Tax Credits

State	Statute Citation
Alabama	Ala. Code §§40-18-320 et seq.
Alaska	Alaska Stat. §43.20.048
Delaware	Del. Code Ann. tit. 30, §20A-102
Maryland	Md. Tax-General Code §10-743
Massachusetts	Mass. Gen. Laws Ann. ch. 63, §38GG
Mississippi	Miss. Code §27-7-22.38
Montana	Mont. Code Ann. §39-6-109
New York	N.Y. Tax Law §210-B; N.Y. Tax Law §606; N.Y. Tax Law §1511
Utah	Utah Code Ann. §59-7-614.9; Utah Code Ann. §59-10-1031
Washington	Wash. Rev. Code §82.04.4498; Wash. Rev. Code §82.16.0499
West Virginia	W. Va. Code §§21A-2C-1 et seq.

* Credits have expired in five states—Connecticut, Illinois, New Mexico, Vermont and Wisconsin—and the District of Columbia.

Occupational Licensing

State	Statute Citation
Arkansas	Ark. Stat. Ann. §17-1-106
California	Cal. Business and Professions Code §115.4
Florida	Fla. Stat. §455.213; Fla. Stat. §456.013; Fla. Stat. §493.6202; Fla. Stat. §493.6302; Fla. Stat. §493.6107
Iowa	Iowa Code §272C.4
Kansas	Kan. Stat. Ann. §48-3406
Kentucky	Ky. Rev. Stat. §12.245
Maine	Me. Rev. Stat. Ann. tit. 10, §8003
Maryland	Md. Health Occupations Code Ann. §1-704
Michigan	Mich. Comp. Laws §333.16323
Nebraska	Neb. Rev. Stat. §§38-101 et seq.
Nevada	Nev. Rev. Stat. §391.040
New Mexico	N.M. Stat. Ann. §61-1-34
Ohio	Ohio Rev. Code Ann. §5903.04
Rhode Island	R.I. Gen. Laws §5-87-1

State	Statute Citation
Tennessee	Tenn. Code Ann. §68-1-101
Texas	Tex. Occupations Code §55.005
Utah	Utah Code Ann. §4-1-111; §13-1-12; §53-9-122; §53-11-125; §53E-6-204; §61-1-32
Washington	Wash. Rev. Code §73.04.150
Wisconsin	Wis. Stat. §45.44

Career-Specific Programs

State	Statute Citation
Arkansas	Ark. Stat. Ann. §20-13-214
Connecticut	Conn. Gen. Stat. §22-26I
Florida	Fla. Stat. §1004.444
Illinois	Ill. Rev. Stat. ch. 210, §50/3.50
Indiana	Ind. Code §§16-31-11-1 et seq.
Kentucky	Ky. Rev. Stat. §311A.142
Louisiana	La. Rev. Stat. Ann. §§3661 et seq.
Maine	Me. Rev. Stat. Ann. tit. 26, §2132
Massachusetts	Mass. Gen. Laws Ann. ch.29, §2ZZZZ; Mass. Gen. Laws Ann. ch. 40J, §4H
New Jersey	N.J. Rev. Stat. §26:2K-65
North Carolina	2015 House Bill 1030
Ohio	Ohio Rev. Code Ann. §4765.161
South Carolina	S.C. Code Ann. §46-3-280
West Virginia	W.Va. Code §19-1-11
Wisconsin	Wis. Stat. §93.43
Virginia	Va. Code §2.2-2001.4; 2017 House Bill 1500

Veteran-Owned Businesses

State	Statute Citation
California	Cal. Military and Veterans Code §§999 et seq.
Illinois	Ill. Rev. Stat. ch. 20, §§3501/835-5 et seq.
Missouri	Mo. Rev. Stat. §§30.750 et seq.

Preventing Employment Discrimination

State	Statute Citation
California	Cal. Government Code §12920
Connecticut	Conn. Gen. Stat. §46a-58
Indiana	Ind. Code §22-9-1-2
Louisiana	La. Rev. Stat. Ann. §§2231 et seq.
New Jersey	N.J. Rev. Stat. §10:5-12
Washington	2007 Senate Bill 5123

Female Veteran Programs

State	Statute Citation
California	Cal. Military and Veterans Code §79.1; Cal. Government Code §8245
Connecticut	Conn. Gen. Stat. §27-100g
Hawaii	2016 House Bill 2489
Illinois	Ill. Rev. Stat. ch. 20, §2805/1.2
Indiana	Ind. Code §§10-17-14-1 et seq.
Kentucky	Ky. Rev. Stat. §40.600
Maine	Me. Rev. Stat. Ann. tit. 37-B, §508
Nevada	Nev. Rev. Stat. AB 241, §§5.3 et seq.
New Jersey	N.J. Rev. Stat. §§38A:3-38
New York	N.Y. Executive Law §361-b
Oregon	Or. Rev. Stat. §406.075
Texas	Tex. Government Code Ann. §§434.201 et seq.
Puerto Rico	2018 Senate Bill 866

Paid Sick Leave

State	Statute Citation
Arkansas	Ark. Stat. Ann. §21-4-105
California	Cal. Gov't. Code §19859
Florida	Fla. Stat. §110.119
Illinois	Ill. Rev. Stat. ch. 20, §415/8b.20
Minnesota	Minn. Stat. §43A.184

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