



State of the State 2010: *Honoring Our Veterans as they Return to California*

“California has more returning veterans than any other state, so our state, as well as the federal government, has a special responsibility. You will see that in our agenda. We have a fundamental obligation to anyone who has shed or risked blood for this country...And if you look to the gallery, you will see some Californians wearing the uniform of our country who have just returned from Iraq and Afghanistan. To each of you, I say, welcome home.” (Gov. Schwarzenegger, State of the State Speech, January 6, 2010)

Building On His Record Of Strengthening Employment And Economic Opportunities For California's Veterans, Governor Schwarzenegger Today Launched California's Operation Welcome Home, A Statewide Outreach Initiative To Connect Each And Every Returning Combat Veteran To The Services That Can Help Them Transition Successfully From The Battle Front To The Home Front. Operation Welcome Home will put 300 recent veterans to work identifying and making direct contact with the 30,000 heroes returning to California annually to counsel them about benefits and transitional workforce training available to help them enter the workforce and transition to civilian life.

Governor Schwarzenegger's Operation Welcome Home:

Establishes Nine Regional Full-Time Teams That Will Assist Veterans In Finding: Employment And Job Training; Educational Opportunities; Housing; Mental And Physical Health Care; Federal Benefits; And Support For Their Families. The regional outreach teams will be funded by \$20 million in Employment Development Department outreach funds and be led by a collaborative effort of staff from the Department of Veterans Affairs, Labor Workforce Development Agency, California Volunteers, and other local, state and federal entities and non-profit organizations.

Launches the California Veteran Corps (CalVet Corps), A Volunteer Network To Reinforce The Efforts Of The Full-Time Regional Units. The CalVet Corps volunteers will be trained by the regional coalition staff and serve as liaisons between the program and combat veterans to ensure contact is made three times in the first year of military separation.

While in the military California's brave men and women receive cutting edge training and high quality skill sets for making them valuable employees for California's diverse economy, yet California's Employment Development Department reports that veterans between the ages of 18 to 24 suffer an unemployment rate that is 50 percent higher than civilian men and women in their age groups. Some challenges addressed in Operation Welcome Home include: Mental health issues (30 percent of veterans deployed to combat zones report having experienced Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); Substance Abuse (66 percent of all homeless veterans abuse alcohol and 51 percent abuse drugs); Suicide prevention (suicide rates among 18 to 24 year old veterans are four times higher than rates of non-veterans of the same age) and; Homelessness (California has approximately 25,000 homeless veterans).

Operation Welcome Home Builds On The Governor's Commitment To California's Military Personnel And Veterans. Since Taking Office The Governor Has:

- [Opened employment and education avenues for veterans through statewide job fairs.](#) The Governor directed his Department of Veterans Affairs, Employment Development Department and Labor and Workforce Development Agency to partner with several service organizations to provide 10 regional job and resource fairs throughout the state in 2009. More than 4,000 veterans participated in the "Hire a Hero, Hire a Vet" fairs, which brought together 600 employers and hundreds of service providers, schools and training programs for veterans.

- [Advanced funding for five new veterans' homes in California](#). Under the Governor's leadership new homes have opened in Ventura and Lancaster, and will open in West Los Angeles, Redding and Fresno - marking the largest investment in veterans' homes in California history.
- Created the [California National Guard Education Assistance Award Program](#) (CNG EAAP) which will help up to 1,000 CNG Members cover the majority of fees associated with attending a public or qualifying private institution.
- [Signed legislation](#) that requires employers to allow the spouse of a soldier serving to take up to 10 days of unpaid leave to spend time with their husband or wife while they are home on leave.
- [Protected military personnel from predatory lenders](#). The Governor signed legislation to protect service members and their families from predatory and deceptive lending practices and unlawful financial and investment schemes.
- [Provided greater opportunities in civil service for veterans](#) The Governor signed legislation that allows veterans to qualify for promotional exams even if they are not already in the civil service workforce.
- [Provided \\$900 million to help veterans buy homes](#) The Governor signed legislation that the voters later ratified that allocates \$900 million in General Obligation bonds to fund low-interest rate home loans for veterans.
- [Established the California Veterans Mental Health Services Act of 2006](#) AB 2844 (Assemblyman Nation) and makes changes relating to the provision of mental health services to California veterans. The legislation requires counties to provide mental health services to California veterans in need of services who meet the eligibility requirements. Among other things, the bill also requires counties to consider contracting with community-based veterans' service agencies, where possible, to provide high quality, veteran specific-mental health services.
- [Signed SB 1401 and AB 3083](#) in 2008 that extend mental health services to veterans and assist veterans in getting screened for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury.
- [Signed legislation \(AB 3016\)](#) that provides that contributions made to the California Military Family Relief Fund shall be used to provide financial aid grant to reserve members of the United State Armed Forces who are from California.”
- [Signed legislation in 2009](#) that allows specified units within supportive housing developments funded by the state's Multifamily Housing Program to be restricted to persons with veterans status.
- Additionally, through First Lady Maria Shriver’s [WE Support Program](#), military families have been given better access to resources to help them deal with issues from deployment and relocation to finding employment opportunities.
- Through the leadership of First Lady Maria Shriver, *Operation Bigs* at Camp Pendleton was launched. *Operation Bigs* is the first program of its kind in the nation, providing mentors to children of military families through Big Brothers Big Sisters' School-Based program.