

Governor Crist Calls on Florida Businesses to ‘Hire the Best – Hire a Vet’

TALLAHASSEE -- Governor Charlie Crist has proclaimed November 2009 as Hire a Veteran Month in Florida. The Governor’s proclamation reaffirms Florida’s commitment to the men and women who serve in our nation’s Armed Forces in times of war and peace.

“By recognizing our veterans, we honor not only their military service but also the contributions they bring to the workforce,” said Governor Crist. “In addition to the tremendous value our veterans provide their employers, a newly expanded federal tax credit for companies that hire our veterans offers a financial incentive to foster new businesses and help existing businesses grow.”

Work Opportunity Tax Credit

The Recovery Act-expanded Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) allows employers hiring unemployed veterans and other eligible workers to receive up to \$2,400 or more in tax savings for each eligible worker added to the payroll this year and next. More information on WOTC, including all the eligibility requirements and the forms employers need to apply for certification, is available online at:

<http://www.floridajobs.org/workforce/WOTC.html>

“As one of Florida’s top 10 employers in hiring veterans over the past year, we at the Agency for Workforce Innovation truly understand and appreciate the training, leadership, maturity and dedication our veterans contribute to the workplace,” said Agency Director Cynthia R. Lorenzo. “Through our wide array of programs and services to support families and help reinvigorate our economy, we are committed to connecting these highly-skilled men and women with Florida’s employers.”

Florida has more than 1.7 million veterans, including more than 970,000 under the age of 65. Hire a Veteran Month is coordinated by the Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs, the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI), Workforce Florida, Inc. (WFI) and the state’s 24 Regional Workforce Boards.

“The Governor’s proclamation is designed to remind employers, not just in November but year-round, of the unmatched economic resource provided by our state’s veterans,” said Department of Veterans’ Affairs Executive Director LeRoy Collins Jr. “Entering the workforce with proven skills and integrity, veterans are an employer’s best bet. Hire the Best – Hire a Vet.”

Resources for Veterans and Employers

The Department of Veterans' Affairs, AWI and WFI collaboratively oversee the Florida Vets First initiative, which includes an interactive Web site, www.FloridaVetsFirst.com, a resource for information and links to employment and training assistance as well as other services. Florida's workforce partners are also committed to bringing employers and veterans together using the full network of available services including the Employ Florida Marketplace (EFM), accessible online at www.employflorida.com. Employers can search the EFM database for veterans who may be qualified for available job openings and contact them directly.

Employers are encouraged to contact their local One-Stop Career Center to receive assistance in connecting with and recruiting veterans. The 90 One-Stop Career Centers around the state offer a wealth of resources including specialized Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs) and Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) staff who can provide relevant veteran applicant referrals. Last year Florida's One-Stop Career Centers served more than 100,000 veterans, more than 10,000 of whom had recently separated from the Armed Forces. To find a local One-Stop Career Center, please visit <http://www.floridajobs.org/onestop/onestopdir/index.htm>

More than 5,000 of Florida's returning veterans and eligible family members have enrolled in colleges and universities this year utilizing the newly enacted Post 9/11 GI Bill, an increase of nearly 30 percent over last year. These veterans will transition into the workforce with additional skills in a variety of areas. Florida's Post 9/11 GI Bill Web site can be found at www.service2scholars.org

Under Florida law, public employers including state government entities, universities, school districts and utilities are required to give preference to veterans and eligible spouses in the hiring process. The U.S. Department of Labor also provides a comprehensive list of reasons why hiring a veteran makes good business sense at <http://hirevetsfirst.dol.gov/10reasons.asp?format=txt>, including veterans' integrity, efficient performance under pressure, teamwork and triumph over adversity.

For additional information about programs and services available to veterans and their families, please visit the Agency for Workforce Innovation's veterans services Web page at <http://www.floridajobs.org/workforce/veterans.html>

Hire A Veteran Month

WHEREAS, the State of Florida is home to more than 1.7 million veterans and has the second largest population of veterans in the nation; and

WHEREAS, the men and women of the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, National Guard, and Coast Guard have responded immediately and effectively when called to defend our nation's security at home and abroad; and

WHEREAS, today's veterans offer Florida's businesses the benefits of competent skills, education, leadership, maturity, and dedication learned in military service; and

WHEREAS, Florida's Regional Workforce Boards oversee 89 One-Stop Career Centers throughout the State, staffed with 129 Veterans Employment representatives dedicated to helping veterans and eligible spouses obtain employment; and

WHEREAS, these Veterans Employment representatives served more than 100,000 veterans last year, more than 10,000 of whom were recently separated from the Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, the Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008, known as the Post 9/11 GI Bill, is the most comprehensive educational benefits package for veterans since the original GI Bill was signed into law in 1944, and combines this educational opportunity with Florida's Veteran Employment Services to afford our heroes a seamless transition into civilian employment; and

WHEREAS, Florida understands the value of employing veterans and eligible spouses, and requires that these citizens are given preference in the hiring process of public employers including state government entities, utilities, universities, and school districts; and

WHEREAS, Florida's veterans are responsible for an annual infusion of more than 10 billion federal dollars into the state's economy through retirement pay, compensation and pensions, and medical care;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Charlie Crist, Governor of the State of Florida, do hereby extend greetings and best wishes to all observing November 2009 as Hire a Veteran Month in an effort to increase Florida's leadership as a veteran-friendly state and promote the availability of Florida's talented, well-trained veterans to Florida's employers, and encourage Florida's employers to Hire the Best – Hire a Vet.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Florida to be affixed at Tallahassee, the Capitol, this 29th day of October, in the year two thousand nine.

Charlie Crist
Governor