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A Commitment To Those Who Serve

Wednesday, March 21, 2012

Expanding Veterans Haven Program:

The Christie Administration is expanding the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs successful Veterans Haven program to provide access to veterans in the northern part of the state. The Veterans Transitional Housing Program – Veterans Haven – is a facility for homeless veterans. After being medically evaluated at a VA Medical Center, eligible veterans participate in a long-term program focusing on psychological, social and vocational rehabilitation.

The Christie Administration is expanding the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs successful Veterans Haven program to provide access to veterans in the northern part of the state at the recently closed Hagedorn Psychiatric Hospital.

Startup funds totaling \$2.3 million are included in DMAVA's and Human Services' fiscal year 2013 budgets for treatment services.

Federal funding through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs will allow DMAVA to provide housing, health services and social and vocational rehabilitation to approximately 50 homeless veterans.

The Veterans Haven facility in Gloucester County has helped nearly a thousand homeless veterans since opening in 1995.

Three of every four veterans who complete the program remain off the streets for good and return to purposeful lives.

The facility recently underwent a 20,000-square-foot expansion to serve an additional 44 homeless veterans.

Governor Chris Christie: "Now for our treasured veterans, we need to continue to develop innovative ways to serve the neediest of these citizens in New Jersey. In this budget, one innovation has led to an opportunity for our veterans. Our successful veterans haven program provides a great place for homeless vets. After being evaluated at a VA hospital, veterans can join a long-term program focused on social and vocational rehabilitation. The program works."

Helping Veterans Transition To The Workforce:

Furthering the Administration's commitment to New Jersey's military veterans, Governor Christie made available \$195,000 for the Helmets to Hardhats program. The program is designed to honor military personnel, National Guardsmen and reservists by transitioning them into solid, family-sustaining careers in one of the state's fifteen affiliated building and construction trades.

Helmets to Hardhats is a national program to help National Guard, reserve, retired and transitioning active-duty military members connect to quality career and training opportunities in the construction industry.

The New Jersey H2H program is run by the New Jersey Building and Construction Trades Council in partnership with the Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

Since its inception, New Jersey's Helmets to Hardhats Program has helped place more than 275 military veterans into accredited apprenticeship programs within the Building Trades.

Governor Chris Christie: "New Jersey's veterans have served our nation and our state with courage, honor and distinction. Now, we have an opportunity to do our part to help them build a better life for themselves and their families through the Helmets to Hardhats program. I'm proud to renew this vital partnership between the public and private sector that will enable our veterans to acquire the skills they need to secure career opportunities in the building trades that will lead to a promising future."

Providing Assistance To Veterans And Their Families:

Reinforcing his commitment to New Jersey's veterans, National Guard members and their families, Governor Chris Christie signed legislation that creates and enhances assistance tools that provide financial support and peer counseling services.

The New Jersey National Guard State Family Readiness Council Fund: Allows Garden State residents help National Guard members and their families during difficult times by voluntarily contributing to the fund by checking a box on their yearly income tax forms.

As a result of A-2286, National Guard members and their families will get the support they need, especially when a wage earner has temporarily left civilian employment to be placed on active military duty.

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Funds donated by the public will be collected through the state Division of Taxation and then distributed by the New Jersey National Guard Family Readiness Council, a non-profit organization whose main goal is to assist and support the families of deployed New Jersey National Guard members.

In January 2010, the Readiness Council was one of the three organizations recognized by Governor Christie and First Lady Mary Pat Christie for their work and received a \$141,000 donation from contributions generated through the Governor's Inaugural.

Veteran to Veteran Peer Support Program: Through S-1731, an annual appropriation will be designated for the telephone helpline.

The DMAVA currently operates a 24-hour toll free peer support telephone helpline that provides access to a comprehensive network of mental health professionals specializing in post traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury and other emotional and psychological disorders.

The peer counselors are trained in other veterans' issues that range from marriage and family life to substance abuse and stress management. All services are free, confidential and available seven days a week.

Governor Chris Christie: "I believe it is only fitting that we take every opportunity to recognize the sacrifice of these service members and their families and provide whatever assistance we can as a token of our gratitude and appreciation for their service to our state and our country."

Honoring Our Commitment To Those Who Serve:

Honoring our commitment to those brave men and women who have worn our uniform is one of our solemn duties and the Christie Administration has committed to our state's veterans and their families, both on the employment front and in other ways. Since taking office, the Governor has:

Signed legislation that strengthens the support network for military families after the death of a service member.

In January 2011, signed legislation for the Gold Star Families license plate to honor the families of members of the military killed in action for their sacrifice.

Signed legislation for a program that awards high school diplomas to veterans who dropped out to serve in World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

Governor Chris Christie: "These brave men and women who have worn our nation's uniform have courageously and selflessly served to uphold the democratic principles that as Americans we hold so dear. At the same time, we must remember the families of those who made the ultimate sacrifice and did not come home. I am honored to be Governor of a state with so many heroic and honorable men and women who have served with distinction. We are forever grateful for their service, today and every day."

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