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## Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno Calls Hurricane Sandy Recovery Jobs a "Second Call to Duty" for New Jersey's Unemployed Veterans

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"Hiring Our Heroes" Employment Fair Helps Out-of-Work Vets Find Jobs

**Trenton, NJ** – Describing Hurricane Sandy recovery jobs as a "second call to duty", Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno encouraged New Jersey's unemployed military veterans attending today's "Hiring Our Heroes" employment fair in Toms River to consider jobs to help restore towns hardest hit by last month's storm.

The employment fair was the latest in an ongoing partnership between the Christie Administration and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's "Hiring Our Heroes" campaign to link active duty military, National Guard reserve members and military spouses to jobs. The fair was held at the George P. Vanderveer American Legion Post 129 in Toms River.

"New Jersey's men and women in uniform who courageously and selflessly served our nation in the Armed Forces are the very people our state needs now to begin what will be a long journey to restore our towns and communities," said Lt. Governor Guadagno. "Despite the difficulty ahead, our veterans are uniquely prepared to face and tackle this challenge with complete determination and resolve."

The U.S. Department of Labor recently approved a \$15.6 million National Emergency Grant to fund Governor Chris Christie's plan to hire unemployed New Jersey residents to assist with Hurricane Sandy clean-up and recovery efforts. The funding will give temporary jobs to unemployed residents through local government agencies that need to restore public lands and infrastructure.

The Christie Administration first partnered with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in September in launching what the Chamber said was the largest "Hiring Our Heroes" job fair in the nation. Held at the Sun National Bank Center in Trenton, more than 700 veterans met with more than 120 employers ranging from large companies in the Garden State to small businesses and government agencies.

"We've partnered with the U.S. Chamber before, and we'll continue working with them and all of those who help employ our neighbors, family members and friends who served our country and are looking for work," said LWD Commissioner Harold J. Wirths. "Our returning military personnel shouldn't have to fight the battle of unemployment when they come home. My department will continue to provide them with employment resources to find a job, improve their skills or discover a new career."

Today's job fair in Toms River brought about 100 veterans, spouses and their families together with 30 employers. Also in attendance with several local, state and federal officials was New Jersey Department of Military and Veteran Affairs Brigadier General Michael L. Cuniff; Carmen Venticinque, AUS, COL (Ret) NJESGR, chair emeritus; Gene O'Grady, state commander of the American Legion of New Jersey; Kevin Schmiegel, executive director of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce; Rich Gato, commander of American Legion Post 129, Toms River; and Commander Bob Looby, past state commander of the American Legion of New Jersey.

Veteran representatives from the Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs were also on hand to provide information and assistance to veterans.

In March 2011, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Chamber Foundation launched "Hiring Our Heroes," a sustained grassroots campaign to help veterans and military spouses find meaningful employment in hundreds of communities across America. To date, the effort has resulted in more than 320 hiring fairs being hosted in 49 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia, with more than 10,400 people being placed into jobs.

Among the other sponsors of the "Hiring Our Heroes" job fair in Toms River were the federal Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), the U.S. Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL VETS); and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Participation in the event by Christie Administration officials is a continuation of its commitment to support New Jersey's veterans. In his Fiscal Year 2013 budget, Governor Christie expanded the highly effective Veterans Haven program to serve veterans in the northern part of the state at the site of Hagedorn Psychiatric Hospital.

Governor Christie also signed various pieces of legislation to assist veterans, including:

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Strengthening the support network for military families after the death of a service member

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

Honoring Gold Star Families with a special license plate for families of members of the military killed in action for their sacrifice

Establishing the New Jersey National Guard State Family Readiness Council Fund

Ensuring funding for the Veteran to Veteran Peer Support Program telephone helpline

Funding programs such as the Helmets to Hardhats effort through which the New Jersey Building and Construction Trades Council tries to put veterans back to work through apprenticeship programs.

In April the Christie Administration launched Operation: Hire a Jersey Hero at a symposium at Prudential Financial's headquarters in Newark. The event focused on connecting employers who want to hire veterans with the state and federal agencies that can introduce them to former military people who need jobs and connect employers to incentive programs available to train veterans for civilian work.

In May, Operation: Hire a Jersey Hero continued when 350 veterans, along with spouses of active military service people, had an opportunity to attend a job fair on board the USS New Jersey in Camden, where 50 employers had a combined 2,800 available positions to offer the participating veterans.

In addition, First Lady Mary Pat Christie initiated the Heart of a Hero Scholarship through her New Jersey Heroes program to help military service members pursue a post-secondary education or vocational training. In August, she announced ten recipients of the Scholarship who received \$10,000 each to assist in making their higher education and career goals a reality.

The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, which organized the Newark employer event and the New Jersey Battleship job fair, has served more than 16,000 veterans this past year at its 34 One-Stop Career Centers throughout the state.

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