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VA Launches Campaign to Increase Veterans' Economic Potential

DALLAS — Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald, with leaders from national and local Veterans service organizations, corporate employers and government agencies, announced the launch of the Veterans Economic Communities Initiative, an effort focused in a total of 50 U.S. cities to promote economic success for Veterans.

The initiative is part of MyVA, which is dedicated to making Veterans the center of all we do.

“The best way to get things done for Veterans is to involve partners from both the public and private sectors – national to local,” said McDonald. “If history has shown us anything, it’s that all you have to do is give Veterans an opportunity and they will go beyond anything you could ever envision. Community leaders understand the purpose of MyVA and will find innovative ways to support it.”

The goal of the VEI is to increase education and employment opportunities for America’s Veterans by bringing together local and national employers to coordinate services for Veterans, Servicemembers and military families.

With the sacred commitment of making customer service for Veterans the focal point, VA will look to communities around the country to help make the VA the best federal agency.

“MyVA will work State by state, community by community, person by person,” said McDonald. “We want to expand our reach and collaboration in communities where Veterans live.”

The Veterans Economic Communities Initiative launch event was hosted in Dallas. Secretary McDonald and Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings provided remarks, during the event. Campaign partners also participated in panel discussions on public-private partnerships.

Representatives from major corporations such as Hilton and TriWest joined Secretary McDonald in pledging their commitment to furthering Veteran economic opportunities.

The Veterans Economic Communities Initiative includes a VA Economic Liaison in each community who will expand and encourage collaboration among private and public organizations that offer resources related to education, training and employment. Through strategic partnerships, and by offering Veterans innovative forms of learning and employment opportunities, these communities will help Veterans gain competitive career skills and knowledge in locally in-demand fields.

Campaign partners include the departments of Defense and Labor, the Small Business Administration and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, in addition to regional and national nonprofits, businesses and educators. The first 25 communities were chosen based on local Veteran unemployment rates, Veteran population and the projected increase in Veteran population.

Communities participating in the Veterans Economic Communities Initiative include:

Atlanta, Georgia; El Paso, Texas; Las Vegas, Nevada; New York, New York; San Antonio, Texas; Chicago, Illinois; Honolulu, Hawaii; Los Angeles, California; Norfolk, Virginia; San Diego, California; Cincinnati, Ohio; Houston, Texas; Louisville, Kentucky; Phoenix, Arizona; Seattle, Washington; Colorado Springs, Colorado; Jacksonville, Florida; Miami, Florida; Richmond, Virginia; St. Louis, Missouri; Dallas, Texas; Kansas City, Missouri; Nashville, Tennessee; Riverside, California; Washington, DC

Under the Veterans Economic Communities Initiative, communities will develop scalable, sustainable models over the next two years that include:

Resources and education for employers on hiring and supporting Veterans.

- Employment summits to connect talented job seekers with local employers who have immediate hiring needs.
- Policy academies where experts generate ideas, form partnerships and make policy recommendations that will help lower the unemployment rate and increase economic opportunities among Veterans and their families.
- Learning or resource hubs to help connect Veterans to economic opportunities including entrepreneurship, credentialing and skills building.

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