

Colleagues,

Many of you were instrumental in helping us get the word out (*thank you*), I thought it might be useful to give you a brief update. The law that enacted the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) was signed on November 21, 2011 giving up to 99,000 unemployed Veterans who do not have any VA educational benefits an additional 12 months of Montgomery GI Bill benefits (\$1,564/month) for training towards a high demand occupation. We began accepting applications on May 15, 2012, less than 6 months after enactment. Every Veteran who is given a Certificate of Eligibility is contacted by our partners in the Department of Labor to assist them with their employment goals.

As of late this week, we have received over 94,000 applications, and have approved 77,000 Certificates of Eligibility - all good news. However, just over 27,000 of those eligible have begun using their benefit. I have two 'asks'.

- Please *continue to get the word out* on this wonderful program, we continually update our website www.benefits.va.gov/VOW.
- Encourage those Veterans who have *been accepted to use their benefit*, or *turn them in* if they do not plan to use them.

Please help us get that word out. We do not want any of the 99,000 slots to go unused. The program is only two years long. By law we can only accept applications until September 30, 2013, and the last payment can be made through March 31, 2014. VRAP participants that do not enroll in school by March of this year will not be able to receive a full 12 months of training. The urgency should be conveyed- apply, use the benefit as soon as feasible, or, notify us to cancel the Certificate of Eligibility so that another Vet can potentially use the benefit.

Thank you,

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VA Core Values: Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, Excellence (“I CARE”)

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