

Illinois Pilot Programs Help Military Drivers, Medics

Transfer Experience to Civilian Workforce

CHICAGO, IL (September 10, 2010) – Today Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) and Teamsters Joint Council 25 unveiled the nation’s first programs to help veterans more easily transfer their advanced military skills to the civilian workforce in Chicago.

For the first time, veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserve and National Guard will be able to find gainful employment opportunities through no-cost training in the commercial transportation and health care industries. Two new certification programs—Heroes to Healthcare and the Illinois Teamsters’ commercial driver’s license (CDL) training program—are designed to help veterans surmount obstacles to finding work when they return home. Such programs are especially important in the nation’s tough economic climate, which has left nearly 9 percent of veterans unemployed.

“When we allow our heroes to come home from war only to find themselves jobless, we are not only failing them but we are squandering the entire investment we have made in their training,” said Rep. Schakowsky. “Thanks to the U.S. military, they have marketable skills that should not be wasted. Helmets to Hardhats, the Teamsters’ Military CDL Program and Heroes to Healthcare are closing the loop by building on their military training and putting our vets to work.”

The new programs will allow Illinois to continue to serve as a national model for assistance of military veterans, reservists and national guardsmen. Helmets to Hardhats, for example, which helps veterans find work in the construction trades, has worked with the Teamsters to train more than 40,000 men and women since 2003.

“Veterans have long been faced with steep barriers to re-entering the workforce after deployment,” said John T. Coli, President of Joint Council 25. “The Teamsters will forever be dedicated to helping these selfless men and women use their advanced skills to secure good-paying jobs in our affiliated trades and industries.”

Though taxpayers regularly spend billions of dollars to train men and women in the military, veterans have been unable to transfer their skills to meet civilian certification requirements in many applicable industries. Heroes to Healthcare and the CDL training program are designed to address these challenges on local, state and federal levels.

“Due to state-by-state regulations, a military driver’s CDL is not transferable to a civilian CDL,” said Lt. Gen. Jack C. Stultz, Chief of the Army Reserve and Commanding General of the U.S. Army Reserve Command. “This is an impediment to employment for veterans and serves to devalue their military experience. We applaud the Teamsters for their efforts in providing the necessary certification programs to define more opportunities for our veterans.”

“The Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA) is honored to work hand-in-hand with labor, employers and Gov. Pat Quinn to make sure that all Illinois veterans have access to quality jobs throughout our state,” said IDVA Director Dan Grant. “Without Helmets to Hardhats, these partnerships would not be as strong as they are today. This program is a model for the entire country.”

New Veterans Training Opportunities in Illinois

Teamsters’ Military CDL Licensing

For the first time, veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserve and National Guard will have the opportunity to obtain their certified Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) at the Teamsters Joint Council 25 & Joint Council 65 Training Center with a paid benefit from their GI Bill. A 200-hour course is now officially available to the Illinois Reserve, National Guard and veterans community. Currently the Military CDL does not transfer into the civilian sector due to state-by-state regulations. Obtaining the new license while they are active will give veterans more employment opportunities and better define their experience for the civilian workforce.

Heroes to Healthcare

www.heroes2healthcare.org

Certification from the military to the civilian sector is a difficult transition. Medics who have honorably served their country are challenged by obstacles of transitioning their military skills into the civilian sector. Heroes to Healthcare provides veterans a chance to secure careers in the health care industry and transition their military occupational skills into its specific fields. USAF National Guard Military Certified Medical Technician Collin Carson has recently been challenged in this process. As a military certified medical technician, Collin has been unable to utilize his advanced skills to meet civilian certification requirements.

Helmetts to Hardhats

www.helmetstohardhats.org

Helmetts to Hardhats is the national program assisting active military men and women who wish to transition their military occupational skills into the civilian sector with gainful career opportunities in the building and construction trades.