



EAGLE NEWS

The official Newsletter of The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA) Central Minnesota Chapter 115

October 2007 thru January 2008

Minnesota Military Retiree Information

1. Currently there are 16,539 Retired Veterans living in Minnesota.
2. Minnesota's total of 16,539 retirees (2006 Data) was ranked 33rd in the Nation with a 0.84 % rating. We have only increase .02% in the past six years. For our states size, industries and job market, we should have at least four times the retirees our a little over 3%.
3. According to the data Retirees bring \$21,575,000 into the state's economy each month. This is over \$259 million per year! Most of this income is spent on items that have a sales tax. The sales tax brings extra tax dollars into the state's general fund. An increase to 3+% would bring one half billion dollars or more into the state's economy. At 6% sales tax that would mean
- 30 million dollars more into the states general fund.
4. Minnesota is currently falling behind our neighboring states by more than 25 million dollars each year in retiree pension incomes. In 2001 we only lagged Wisconsin by 9.6 million each year. The difference between our states has increase each year for the past six years! The information used above came from the DOD web site. www.dod.mil/actuary.com
5. Military Retirees are well educated with most having at least a B.A. Degree. Many have continued their education beyond the minimum requirements and have a Masters or Doctorate Degree.
6. Minnesota is facing a shortage of qualified workers at all levels. This shortage is approaching the critical stage. Shortages will affect our industry's ability to grow and remain competitive in today's world economy. New industries will not locate here if we can not show that Minnesota has the workers to fill their requirements. Military Retirees have the education, advanced technical skills and leadership that is needed to help fill these critical shortages and keep us competitive in the future.
7. Military Retirees bring their own medical insurance. (Tri-Care and or Medicare) Additional Medical Insurance can be purchased by the Retiree through Veteran's Organizations at no cost to the state.

SBP Annuitants Will Received Maximum Amount in April 2008

Beginning April 1, 2008, there will no long be a Social Security Offset and Survivor Benefit Plan annuitants will receive the maximum 55 percent of the annuity base. This will mark the final stage of a four-year phase-out that was part of congressionally mandated Social Security Offset Legislation (Public Law 108-374) and implemented by the Defense Finance and Accounting Service

The final phase re-computation should be reflected in the annuitant's April account statement and May 1 payment. The first incremental change occurred October 1, 2005, when any annuitant receiving SBP at less than 40 percent of the base annuity had his or her annuity increased to 40 percent. Th3e phase-out has resulted in thousands of survivors getting more money from their SBP annuities.

GOVERNOR PAWLENTY ANNOUNCES 35 INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT VETERANS AND THE MILITARY

~ \$51 million package includes military income and pension tax exemption ~

Saint Paul (November 12, Building on his foundation of support for military families and veterans, Governor Pawlenty today announced 35 initiatives to provide additional services and assistance for those who have courageously served in the nation's armed forces and for Minnesotans now on active duty. The \$51 million package will be presented to the legislature when it convenes in February, 2008.

"We need to say 'thank you' to our veterans not just with our words, but by our actions," Governor Pawlenty said. "We must continue to show our gratitude for the more than 400,000 veterans who make Minnesota their home. I again look forward to bipartisan legislative support for these initiatives." The Governor's package includes 15 new initiatives and 20 proposals to continue or expand existing programs and services for veterans and military personnel. A combination of on-going

and one-time funds are proposed to finance the initiatives. The Governor's 2008 Military and Veterans Support Package includes proposals to expand and enhance veterans services, address tax issues, provide additional educational benefits, and advance initiatives focused on businesses that employ veterans **100% Exemption from State Income Tax for Military Pay and Pensions**

To reward their service, help recruit future soldiers, and to encourage veterans to make Minnesota their home, Governor Pawlenty proposes to fully exempt military income and pensions from state income tax. Minnesota soldiers and veterans would be allowed to subtract 100 percent of their pay for military service, military pensions and retirement payments when computing state income tax. These payments are currently considered taxable income. Current

members of the military, military retirees and survivors of military retirees will be allowed to claim the exemption. It also covers the pay of all active duty service members who claim Minnesota as their state of residence. Voice: (651) 296-3391 or (800) 657-3717 ♦ Fax: (651) 296-0056 ♦ TDD: (651) 296-0075 or (800) 657-3598 Web site: <http://www.governor.state.mn.us> An Equal Opportunity Employer **22**

Minnesota's tax law previously provided for a military pension exclusion for veterans of up to \$11,000. This exclusion was repealed in 1987. Forty-two other states currently have some degree of tax exemption for military pensions. The exemption will be phased-in over a four year period and is expected to save veterans and military members \$6.3 million in taxes in the first year (FY 2009) and approximately

\$25 million annually (FY 2012) when fully phased-in.

Military and Veteran Services

LinkVET linkage line funding - The LinkVet linkage line is a toll-free number which veterans can use to connect with veteran services officers that can help veterans and their families with an array of services such as benefits. This funding will continue the operation of the vital toll-free hotline service, including program software, crisis connection contract, staffing, and training. (\$220K)

Funding for state veterans case workers - The case managers will provide comprehensive individual assistance to veterans and will coordinate services for veterans, military members and their families. (\$500K)

"Support Our Troops" license plate - This successful license plate sales program supports services for veterans and military families. Unfortunately, spending resulting from sales is currently capped at \$338,000 annually. The Governor proposes to eliminate the cap so that all funds generated by the license plates can be spent on veterans programs.

State "Navigators" - This team of people will coordinate state agency programs and activities to support and assist soldiers and their families during the reintegration process and beyond. (\$300K)

State Soldier Assistance Program supplemental funding - Additional cash assistance will be provided to this essential program, which provides assistance to soldiers in need by making emergency payments for housing, utilities, and other personal needs. (\$2.5M)

Veteran Claims Office - Funding would be increased for outreach and training to improve services and benefits to veterans. This includes adding a female Veterans Service Officer/Coordinator. (\$250K)

County Veterans Services Office training coordinator - New positions will be created to focus on CVSO training, coordination, and grant oversight. These roles will help create performance standards and accountability for our statewide system. (\$250K)

The Veterans Assistance Offices on Campus Program - This program will be expanded to ensure veterans, military members, and their families have access to higher education financial aid and benefits. It would increase the number of Campus Representatives for broader assistance statewide. It will also keep the My MilitaryEducation.org website and the accompanying toll-free call center operational. (\$715K)

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)/Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) outreach and education - Existing federal screening programs will be promoted for veterans and a follow-up study about future mental health needs of returning veterans with PTSD and TBI will be conducted. (\$250K one time)

Veteran Affairs marketing - The Governor proposes to enhance the existing statewide marketing plan in order to further raise awareness regarding benefits and services available for veterans and their families. (\$100K)

CVSO grant increase - The Governor proposes to build upon his successful initiative to provide additional funds to county veterans service offices. These competitive grants from the state can be used by counties for a variety of purposes, such as reducing homelessness, reintegration of combat veterans and emergency assistance. (\$500K)
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Funding for the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV) - This nonprofit organization that has been helping veterans and their families affected by homelessness in Minnesota for over 14 years will receive additional funding. (\$250K)

The "Proud to be a Veteran" license plate program - The funds collected for this plate will be expanded to include motorcycles and the law will be amended to allow for funds to be used for future veteran memorial programming.

Secure land for a new state veteran's cemetery in Northern Minnesota Duluth-area - The federal government will pay for the planning/design and construction costs. The state will be responsible for securing the land and the cemetery's ongoing maintenance and upkeep.

Employer Focused Initiatives

State enhancement of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve program - The Governor proposes a state match that creates an employer recognition program for spouses of military members similar to the current recognition for employers of members of the military. (FY08- \$75K, \$35K ongoing)

Unemployment Insurance costs incurred by employers - Funds from the Unemployment Insurance pool would be redistributed from within the pool to

businesses that employ deployed soldiers, in order to pay unemployment insurance costs for the soldiers' long-term replacements.

State contracting for businesses owned by members of the military - Businesses owned by veterans would be included as a preferred group by the state in awarding state contracts. (FY 08-09 \$356K \$179K ongoing)

Service Member Civil Relief Act rules - A federal program that governs the legal protections of military members concerning termination of residential leases, automobile leases, evictions from leased housing, installment contracts, interest rates, court proceedings, enforcement of obligations, liabilities, and taxes will be applied to veteran and/or spouse-owned small businesses.

Protection of Reservist owned businesses during mobilization - This protection includes a delay on any lawsuits directed at businesses owned by active duty members of the military until 6 months after the end of mobilization.

The Veteran's Business Assistance Program - Minnesota's small businesses would be allowed to qualify for assistance if they have sustained economic injury because an owner or essential employee has been called to active duty as a military reservist. (\$1 million)

Spouse protection under Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) - This provision would allow similar protections under USERRA for spouses of service members, including discrimination, benefits and time off.

Hiring/training incentive for businesses that employ veterans - An initiative for employers that allows for a reimbursement of up to 50% of the first \$10,000 in salary or training expenses will provide veterans with on-the-job training. Minnesota reserve and guard members would be eligible, as would other recent members of the military to encourage relocation to Minnesota. (\$1 million)

Additional Proposals

Tuition Reimbursement Program would be expanded to allow spouses to use up to 12 semester hours of unused service member benefits for each year of service. (FY10 - \$392K, FY11 - \$441K, FY12 - \$490K, FY13 - \$539K, then level.)

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Medic Qualifications Bonus of \$1000 for National Guard medics who meet recertification requirements. This provides for a larger pool of qualified EMTs throughout Minnesota. (\$135K annual)

Expand current law property tax exclusion for homesteads of disabled veterans.

Out-of-state service by National Guard members would be treated in the same manner as other Military Reservists regarding an exemption from state income taxation. (\$120K)

Deferment of any special assessment for deployed service members until six months after they return from deployment.

Military Voting Package to provide the essential components to facilitate absentee military voting in elections.

Power of Attorney law amended to promote more restrictive powers and requiring accounting of records.

Veteran Sentencing Education through an outreach and information model focusing on use of treatment and probation where appropriate. The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs will host forums on alternative sentencing for county attorneys, judges and legislators. (\$200K)

Establish a Camp Ripley Land Fund to manage timber and provide for increased use of the land by military

forces while more historically recreating the ecosystems.

Amend the Brevet promotion statute to waive the 10 year service requirement for those killed in action, or those who died during the course of serving on State Active Duty. I

Increase charitable gambling contributions to Veteran Service Organizations through a simplification of charitable gambling rules and reducing redundant auditing requirements.

Earlier this year, Governor Pawlenty signed the Agriculture and Veterans Omnibus Bill to support members of the military. Provisions included:

Veteran Affairs communication and outreach - \$3.4 million.

State Reintegration initiative - \$1.5 million

Increase County Veterans Service Officers grants - \$1.5 million

Armory maintenance program - \$2 million

General Support appropriation increase - \$560,000

Special assessments - \$185,000

Higher Education offices - \$900,000

State Soldier Assistance Program - \$2 million

Department of Veteran Affairs administration - \$500,000

Veteran organization funding - \$500,000

State veteran cemetery - \$150,000

Starbase Minnesota- \$175,000

Depleted Uranium health screening - \$200,000

Honor Guard reimbursement- \$260,000

World War II State Capitol Memorial dedication - \$250,000

Veterans counseling and toll-free telephone hotline- \$80,000

Department of Veteran Affairs technology upgrades - \$200,000

Governor Pawlenty's previous initiatives that have been enacted include:

100% tuition reimbursement for members of the National Guard, college credit for military training and experience, and in-state tuition rates for all veterans.

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"Support our Troops" license plates.

Legislation protecting families from protestors at military funerals.

Appointment of a Military and Veterans Support Governor's Cabinet.

Veterans Summit attended by more than 700 participants.

The Yellow Ribbon Task Force using inter-agency work groups to focus on returning veteran issues.

Increase of \$2 million for State Soldiers Assistance Program.

One stop website for veterans programs.

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www.trea.org

FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULE

February 9, 2008
May 10, 2008

August 23, 2008 following AFRAP at Fort Ripley, MN. Details to follow in July newsletter & on Chapter website.

November 8, 2008

All meetings are held on Saturdays at 1100 hours at the VFW Memorial Complex, 7350 Quaday, Otsego, Minnesota. Phone 763-241-5225. Spouses & guests are always invited to attend!

From I-94 in Rogers: Go north on highway 101 towards Elk River to CR 37. Turn Left at the light. Second road on the Left is Quaday Ave NE and turn Right.. You will see several brown buildings which are the VFW Sport complex on your Right..

From Highway 10 in Elk River: From Elk River take Hwy 101 South towards Rogers to CR 37. Turn Right. Second road on Right will be Quaday. Turn Right. . You will see several brown buildings which are the VFW Sport complex on your Right.

The Chapter 115 "Eagle News" is scheduled to be published quarterly in January, April, July and October. Send news to dennisvictoria@usfamily.net.



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TREA Chapter 115 Central Minnesota Minutes of 3 November 2007

Chapter President, Ralph Donais, brought the meeting to order at 1100 hours at the VFW Memorial Complex, 7350 Quaday AVE. NE, Otsego, MN. The Pledge of Allegiance was given. Individuals introduced themselves around the tables. A quorum was present. The minutes of the chapter meeting of 26 August 2007 were reviewed. **Motion** by Dave Hammer, **second** by Mark Davidson to approve the minutes as published in the July, August, September 2007 chapter newsletter. **Motion carried.** The Treasurer's Report was reviewed and there were no discrepancies and was filed with the Chapter minutes. Ralph Donais started a discussion about legislative issues. The discussion pertained mainly to local (State) issues. Ralph noted that he and Rick Erickson attend the MAG (Military Action Group) monthly meetings at the state capitol. The MAG is opened to issues to be presented to the state legislature. It was noted that the military retiree pay tax exemption would be an issue again this year. Mark Davidson led a discussion about the chapter membership. The

chapter currently has 291 members. Mark told the members that he has sent out 75 to 80 letters to potential members. There were no Chaplain's or Metrovets reports. Rick Erickson led a discussion about TRICARE, SBP and TRICARE for Life. It was noted that Federal Legislation is pending for the TRICARE allowable to be the same as that for Medicare. Ralph Donais gave his President's Report: Ralph and Dennis Rock attended the National TREA Convention in Charlotte, NC from 11 through 16 September. It was noted that for a change, some items to be voted upon, were voted down by the body. Also, Ralph unsuccessfully ran for a national position.

Unfinished Business: The current chapter officers were voted in by acclamation.

New Business: Ralph led a discussion about the frequency and cost of the chapter newsletter. **Motion** by Jim Gray, **second** by Dave Hammer that the chapter newsletter be sent only twice a year (February and chapter president's choice) to all TREA members in the state. **Motion carried.** **Motion** by Mark Davidson, **second**

by Rick Erickson that the chapter hosts another AFRAD at Camp Ripley, MN in 2008. **Motion carried.** Ralph led a short discussion about a chapter fund raiser next summer. The discussion was about having the outside booth at the Cub in Elk River again. **Motion** by Mark Davidson, **second** by Dave Hammer that the UVLC dues of \$100.00 be paid. **Motion carried.** Dave Hammer led a discussion about the internet site. It was suggested that if anyone has "good news" from any or the war zones, they should e-mail it to either Ralph or Dave so it can be posted on the web site. Dave mentioned that the chapter newsletter is now on-line. Ralph led a discussion about having chapter meetings at other locations. The group did not come to any conclusions.

Good of the Order: Ralph officially presented to Mark Davidson the awards of TREA member of the year and the TREA 2nd runner up for TREA membership.

Motion by Dave Hammer, **second** by Mark Davidson to adjourn the meeting. Ralph adjourned the meeting at 1200 hours.

IF your mailing label contains incorrect information, or if you are not receiving the Chapter e-mail announcements, notify Mark Davidson at ldavidson77@msn.com