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# Senate

State of Minnesota

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Last fall, the Star Tribune ran an article highlighting the fact that 22.9% of recently returned veterans don't have a job. Only Michigan and Indiana veterans are having a tougher time.

Clearly the best way to get veterans back to work is through broad, sustained economic growth. As we work towards that goal, the state can help in other ways.

We all recognize veterans possess skills beneficial to the workplace and our economy as a whole. Their experience, training and leadership qualities are important to our state and we must do more to make sure those skills are not left on the bench.

This session, we prioritized **making** changes that when taken together, will improve the employment climate for veterans by helping them get a job and once they do – to keep it.

Senator Mike Parry, Chair of the State Government and Veterans Committee and Senator Ted Daley – vice chair of the same committee – worked tirelessly with me on these issues this session and I want to make sure they are recognized for their efforts.

## **SF1689 Veterans Preference in State Hiring**

*Status: Signed into Law (Author: Sen. Al DeKruif)*

The veterans preference in state hiring was strengthened by increasing the credit given to veterans in a competitive open examination rating.

- Nondisabled veteran preference increased from 5 to 10 points on a 100 point hiring scale.
- Disabled veteran preference increased from 10 to 15 points.

Additionally:

- Private sector employees called to emergency military service by any state are granted right to their old job upon return. Currently, Minnesotans are only granted this right if the Minnesota governor declares the emergency.
- State immunity from civil suit was removed where the state fails to provide a returning veteran the same or comparable re-employment upon return from active duty as per the federal Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA.)
- Veterans were added as a group for state agencies to target for employment recruitment.



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## **SF1597 Veterans Preference in Contracting**

*Status: Signed into Law (Author: Sen. Al DeKruif)*

Veterans preferences in DOT contracting was strengthened by:

- Separating veterans from other groups and providing a similarly permissive 6% transportation contracting preference *which cannot be less* than other targeted business groups.
- Preferences were expanded to cover all phases of construction contracting, including professional and technical services.
- Creates a county preference, authorizing but not mandating counties to establish veterans preference programs in contracting.

## **SF 1599 Private Sector Veterans Preference**

*Status: Signed into Law (Author: Sen. Ted Daley)*

SF1599 provides protections and allows – but does not mandate - private sector employers to establish veterans preference hiring programs.

Previous law supported by federal rulings by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission prohibited the private sector from developing programs that might lead to hiring preferences for veterans – except when state law allows.

The EEOC argued that based on the 1964 Civil Rights Act, providing a preference to veterans would constitute discrimination because the overwhelming majority of veterans are male. However, the 1964 CRA also allows states to establish a law to permit veterans preference hiring and the Supreme Court has upheld these state laws. The federal and state governments have preference programs in place. The State of Washington became the first state to allow private preferences last year and Minnesota becomes the second state.

## **SF 2354 Disabled Veterans Absolute Preference**

*Status: Signed into Law (Author: Sen Ted Daley)*

Authorizes state hiring authorities to hire qualified, 30% disabled veteran on a non-competitive basis. This provides a discretionary ‘absolute preference’ for 30% disabled veterans. Minnesota joins a number of other states (New Jersey, Massachusetts, Illinois, Oklahoma and North Dakota, Wisconsin) and the federal government in providing some type of absolute preference for disabled veterans.

## **SF2271 Military Awards**

*Status: Signed into Law (Author: Sen. Al DeKruif)*

The Commander-in-Chief of the Minnesota National Guard was authorized to issue suitable marks of distinction to nonmembers of the military forces of the State for distinguished service or support to the military forces of the State.

## **HF1903 Honor Guard priority removal**

*Status: Signed into Law (Senate Author: Sen. Mike Parry)*

The Commissioner of Veterans Affairs no longer has the authority to prioritize honor guard reimbursement grants based solely on whether a unit benefits from charitable gambling. All local units that qualify for the reimbursement would be treated equally. Previously, honor guard units without charitable gambling received priority.