

PRESS RELEASE

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STATE LABOR DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES JOINT PROJECT TO ASSIST NEW VETERANS IN FINDING EMPLOYMENT

DENVER – This morning, the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment announced an unprecedented joint venture with ESGR, the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, an organization that is part of the Department of Defense. Together, the two organizations are planning to hold a series of job fairs at National Guard Armories across Colorado.

At the formal launch of the partnership, Department of Labor and Employment Executive Director Donald J. Mares was joined by Major General H. Michael Edwards, the Adjutant General with the Colorado Department of Military and Veterans Affairs; Josh McDaniel, Acting Director of the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training Service with the U.S. Department of Labor; and Richard E Young, Chair of the Colorado Committee of Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve.

Together they explained the need for this unique coordination of efforts. "It's all about making a connection between veterans and employers," says Josh McDaniel of the U.S. Department of Labor, "and to that end, we are pledging our support in carrying out these job fairs across the state and to expand the network of veteran employment services. We will increase our engagement with employers and help service members transition seamlessly into meaningful employment."

"America's newest veterans have been facing serious employment challenges for several years and unemployment with this group continues to grow," says Donald J. Mares. "According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2007 the average unemployment rate for Iraq and Afghanistan-era veterans was 6.1 percent. By 2008, that rate had risen to 7.3 percent. In 2009, it was up to 10.2

percent. In March of this year, the unemployment rate for new veterans had reached a disturbing 14.7 percent.”

Mares adds that the unemployment rate for Reserve and National Guardsmen, who often leave behind civilian jobs when they deploy, has more than quadrupled since 2007. That group now has an unemployment rate of 13.8 percent, very close to that of veterans recently discharged from the military.

The statistics underscore the obstacles that veterans are facing as they separate from the military and try to make the transition to coming home and finding work. And they underscore the need to find new and innovative ways to enhance outreach activities to returning veterans.

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Attached: Photo of the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding, establishing a coordination of services that will make these forthcoming job fairs possible. At the table, left to right, are Josh McDaniel of the Veterans Employment and Training Service with the U.S. Department of Labor; Major General H. Michael Edwards of the Colorado Department of Military and Veterans Affairs; and Donald J. Mares, Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment.

