



Dear Veteran:

It is an honor to welcome you home after your service to our country. On behalf of Governor JB Pritzker, myself and the entire State of Illinois, thank you for choosing Illinois as your new home. You have come to a veteran-friendly state with over 600,000 veterans, and the IDVA is here to help you transition and thrive in Illinois.

Within this letter and the enclosed material, you will discover many opportunities and services established for you such as the Illinois Veterans Grant education program, the military series of license plates, hunting and fishing licenses, along with property tax relief for certain disabled veterans. The IDVA Veteran Service Officers (VSO) located across the state are equipped with information on these programs and how to access the benefits you have earned. Additionally, they are specifically trained and licensed by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) to assist you with disability compensation applications. Lastly, and certainly not least, we also have five veterans' homes and one transitional housing center in Illinois. These homes are in Anna, Chicago, LaSalle, Manteno, and Quincy, specifically designed for veterans in need of domiciliary, skilled nursing care or assistance with homelessness.

I highly recommend you connect with an Illinois VSO as early possible. They can also assist you in connecting with the USDVA for care (if eligible). This is of prime importance. I'm pleased to also share that Illinois' companies are looking for veterans to fill their ranks. The opportunities are too numerous to list in this letter, but you can start with any of your favorite hiring sites online. Additionally, many counties have specific offices dedicated to helping veterans find gainful employment.

Lastly, I've enclosed information on the Veterans Crisis Line. I ask that you do two things with it. If you need it, use it. And second, if you see one of your brothers or sisters in need, share it. Just like when you served, your safety rested in the person standing to your left and right. It didn't matter where they came from or what they looked like. If you need to stand by someone's side, be there. If you need someone on yours, call the Veterans Crisis Line and they will stand with you. Veteran suicides will reduce when we leave no one behind. There are two wallet sized cards in this envelope. Keep one, share one. Our Veterans Service Offices will have more. Additional information to locate your nearest Veteran Service Office is also provided below.

Thank you for your service as you return home. IDVA is poised to help you and your family learn about and obtain your earned benefits.

Welcome Home!

Sincerely,

Terry Prince, Navy Veteran and IDVA Acting Director



Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs – One of the best ways to access benefits and resources is to contact your local Veteran Service Officer (VSO) with the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs. Fellow veterans themselves, our VSO's are experts in federal, state, and local veteran benefits. They can help you apply for a number of benefits, many of which are detailed in this correspondence. One of the best ways to access resources is to “Stand Up and Be Counted” by visiting www.veterans.illinois.gov or by calling (800) 437-9824. It is our hope that you will use these resources to advance your future education, career and family goals.

Illinois Joining Forces is a network of over 200 veteran- and military-serving organizations in Illinois – all working together to serve you better to create a “no wrong door” system of support. At www.illinoisjoiningforces.org you'll find a searchable directory of resources from these organizations, with the ability to connect directly with the right one for you – or to request help if you don't find what you need.

Apply Your Military Training toward State Licenses and Academic Credit – Now more than ever, you have the ability to leverage your military training to obtain state licenses or gain a leg-up in employment and job training opportunities. Eligible veterans can apply their military training toward an accelerated *Medical Corpsman to Practical Nurse Program* (see enclosed brochure), opportunities in law enforcement, and various other professional credentials. For more information on licensing and credentialing opportunities, visit: www.veterans.illinois.gov/statelicenses. You can also see how your military training counts toward academic credit at specific schools using Transferology™. Visit www.iTransfer.org/MyCreditsTransfer to learn more.

Employment – The Illinois Department of Employment Security and the Illinois Department of Central Management Services, have dedicated personnel that specialize in provided employment assistance to veterans. For all employment opportunities, the Department of Employment Security can be contact at https://www2.illinois.gov/ides/individuals/Pages/Veteran_Services.aspx and for assistance in employment with the State of Illinois, CMS can be contacted at <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/work/Pages/Vetsopgm.aspx> .

The list of potential benefit by no means is exhausted in this correspondence. Veteran benefits exist for veteran newly discharged and those that served years or even decades ago, in war and peace-time. Some additional benefit topics are; Compensation and Pension, Healthcare, Burial and Survivor benefits, Housing, permits (Fishing and Hunting and Camping under certain disability criteria), Transportation, Military Records and more.

We would love to partner with you in securing all your benefits. The future is bright, and it starts today, contact your local Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs, Veteran Service Officer.