

VA officials set to verify veteran small businesses

1/3/2011 - **WASHINGTON (AFNS)** -- To further advocate for veterans, VA officials have announced that companies identifying themselves as small businesses or veteran-owned businesses to gain priority for some Department of Veterans Affairs contracts now must provide documentation verifying their status within 90 days of receiving notice from the agency.

"VA is committed to doing business with, as well as supporting and protecting, veteran-owned small businesses," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "Although the verification process may initially be a challenge to some small business owners and to VA, it's a necessary step to eliminate misrepresentation by firms trying to receive contracts that should go to service-disabled and other veteran-owned vendors."

The Veterans Benefits Act of 2010, signed by the president Oct. 13, expanded VA's requirement to verify the status of businesses claiming veterans preference to compete for VA contracts by being listed in VA's VetBiz.gov "Vendor Information Pages" database. Company officials will have to submit an application to substantiate their status as owned and controlled by veterans, service-disabled veterans or eligible surviving spouses. Only companies that submit the information will be listed in the VIP database.

The law requires VA representatives to notify currently listed businesses that within 90 days of the veteran-owned business receiving the notice they must submit certain business documents. VA officials sent notices to more than 13,000 listed businesses by email and mail Dec. 10 and 11. Other companies, wanting to be listed in the database and considered for future set-aside VA contracts, also have to submit application packages. VA officials will work on those verifications after the existing listings are verified.

The department plans to post additional information at www.VetBiz.gov in early February informing applicants how to submit their documents electronically. In the meantime, VA's notice to currently listed businesses encourages them to submit their information on CD-ROM.

Priority processing will be given to those veteran-owned firms that are in line to receive a set-aside contract from VA, those that already conduct business with VA, and those that have already filed an application for verification.

For more information, visit the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization's website at www.va.gov/OSDBU/veteran/verification.asp or the main page at www.va.gov/osdbu.

