

Supporting Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families

During the shortest legislative session in the history of Iowa, the Legislature passed 19 bills to assist service members, veterans, and their families. The following three bills highlight the continued support.

Mental Health Coverage

The long tours and combat actions Iowa's veterans are witnessing while serving overseas has caused problems for many upon return home. As a result, the Legislature passed legislation to require insurance companies to cover mental health and substance abuse treatment for veterans.

Senate File 2201 includes a provision that insurance policies must treat mental health and substance abuse coverage in the same way as they treat medical health care coverage. This will apply to new or renewed policies on or after January 1, 2011.

The State of Iowa has authority over only 25% of the market. The other insurance policies are covered by the federal government. In addition, the provision only applies to businesses of 50 or more employees.

The bill now goes to the Governor for his consideration.

Supporting Military Families

In an effort to support military families, the Iowa Legislature approved a measure to provide unemployment insurance benefits for the spouse of military personnel forced to leave their job due to a military reassignment or a spouse called to active duty.

House file 2110 helps middle class military families who need extra assistance while a military family member is away or in transition. The benefits will be paid out of the Unemployment Compensation Trust Fund.

Currently, at least 17 other states provide unemployment insurance benefits to spouses of military personnel who left employment, due to no fault of their own, and relocated because of a military assignment in another area.

The bill was signed by the Governor and takes effect July 1, 2010.

Veterans Day Holiday

The Iowa Legislature believes every Veteran should be honored for their service.

House File 2197 requires that a veteran, at least one month in advance, can request Veteran's Day off with their employer. However, the veteran must show proof of service.

The employer has discretion to determine if the holiday is a paid or unpaid day off. In addition, the employer may take into consideration the public health and safety when determining whether a veteran gets the holiday off from work.

The employer is required to, at least ten days prior to Veteran's Day, notify the employee if he or she will be provided paid or unpaid time off on Veterans Day.

November 11 is designated as Veteran's Day because it marks the anniversary of the Armistice that ended World War I. The bill now goes to the Governor for his signature.