

Clark's Journal Indiana-

Kentucky/George Rogers Clark Chapter NDIA Newsletter June 2015 Editor: Ted B Markley "I never worry about action, but only inaction." - Winston Churchill

ICOD: 31MAY15 Chapter News and Commentary

Hoosier Veterans

Controversy and "miscommunications" seemed to plague the 2015 Indiana General Assembly. A lesser noticed but worrisome dust-up resulted from a clash between Indiana General Assembly's Leadership and the Veterans Coalition of Indiana. This did not burnish Indiana's reputation in its treatment of veterans and military retirees. Indiana's reputation is already near the bottom when compared to other states. Other than the apparent hubris on the part of elected officials it points to a growing gap in civil-military understanding in the State of Indiana and the nation.

Today's all-volunteer military, to paraphrase an old automobile commercial, "It's not your Granddaddy's Army!" The Pentagon is very particular about who it recruits. According to a study conducted in 2009, Ready, Willing and Unable to Serve, "75 percent of the young people ages 17 to 24 are unable to enlist in the United States military." Most common barriers for potential recruits are, inability to meet mental standards, criminal records, drug abuse, and physical fitness issues, including obesity. When the military recruits high school grads from the Hoosier state, they are competing for candidates that are college material.

Let us be clear, a hitch in the military is no walk in the park. But every individual who is an alumnus of the U.S. Military has been through the most intense practicum in leadership ever devised. They have served in a values driven organization where loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage have real meanings. It is a bit removed from the contemporary culture.

Hoosier veterans are a real asset to the state not victims as often implied. According to the Indiana University Kelly School of Business, there are about 455,000 vets in Indiana or roughly 10% of the population over the age of eighteen. Further, Kelly reports veterans are better educated and earn more than their fellow Hoosiers. Those living in rural areas are more likely to be involved in "high skill industries." Approximately one third of Indiana's veterans have served in the all-volunteer force. They are the group most probably still in the workforce. Few statistics are available on the numbers of Hoosiers that left the state for military service and did not return similar to the much discussed "brain drain" when college graduates migrate.

Veterans are of particular interest to the aviation/defense sector of the state's economy. Aviation and defense are areas of Indiana's economy that have growth potential. Employees with military backgrounds make easy transitions to aviation/defense sector jobs. This is important to a workforce that routinely requires citizenship, drug tests and security clearances.

Iowa was quick to pick-up on the value of veterans in the spring of 2014. Seeing the downsizing of the military and a potential Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process in the future, Iowa acted. The state began aggressively recruiting veterans to position the state to deliver a trained workforce for its defense industries. Debi Durham, Director, Iowa Economic Development Authority, said,

We have Rock Island Arsenal in Illinois on the border. We see a direct benefit to having them there. We believe that the more we build up Guard units and the veteran talent pool, the more it helps set us apart. We are always watchful of BRAC and very proactive in making a case of the value we bring to the country.

Like Iowa, Indiana should start taking advantage of the skills and knowledge its native sons and daughters acquired while in military service. Indiana should enact legislation and policies to entice wayward Hoosier Warriors to return home and help build the state. And, maybe they should run for the Indiana General Assembly! It could stand a little more selfless service!

Non Sibi Sed Patriae

Ted