

My View: Arizona Legislature should prioritize attracting military veterans to fill jobs



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**By Kathy Gallowitz and Lionell Hardy – Contributing writers
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More than ever, Arizona must step up and vigorously attract military veterans and their spouses from across the nation to meet the state's demand for labor and help propel our economic growth. The state's robust economy, overheated hiring market, cooling housing prices, world-class quality of life and expansive military-support ecosystem are ideal conditions for military-connected talent.

Veterans bring unique skills and experiences to the civilian workforce. They work in high-stress environments, operate complex machinery, collaborate

effectively in teams, have strong work ethics and are adaptable, tech savvy, resilient while working remotely and are committed to excellence.

These traits are recognized by most employers and especially sought after by aerospace, defense, advanced manufacturing and emerging technology industries — the foundation of Arizona's economy. Leveraged well, veterans' in-demand and highly transferable skills can help companies improve productivity, profitability and prepare us for the workplace of the future.

The competition for veteran talent is fierce and will only get worse. Across the nation, industry collaboratives, corporations, state governments, nonprofit organizations and employer coalitions set and exceed veteran-hiring goals in record times. Moreover, state collaboratives such as Virginia Values Veterans, Veterans Florida, North Carolina's NC4ME, Home Base Iowa, Indiana's INVETS, Texas' Just for Veterans and other organizations lure veterans from other states to their workforce. The result: a veteran unemployment rate of 2.1% in April, the lowest mark since the start of 2000 when the Bureau of Labor Statistics began tracking veteran unemployment monthly.

Without a nationwide veteran talent attraction strategy, Arizona lags behind. Let's start with a website that touts the advantages for military-connected families to work and live in the Grand Canyon State, participation in large military base and nationwide veteran-hiring events and strategically placed ads in military-hiring focused publications.

The Arizona Legislature can make this opportunity, a reality. Ask your legislator to support bills that captivate and entice veteran talent to move here and help us better prepare for the workplace of tomorrow.

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