Corralling COVID-19’s impact

For the last several months, the COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on the American economy, which has made a difficult situation even harder for transitioning service members or veterans looking to obtain employment or improve their career prospects.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the 2.9% unemployment rate among veterans at the end of 2019 reflected the lowest rate in nearly 20 years. This rate remained steady early in 2020. But then news began to break about a virus making its way across the globe, and it wasn’t long before the American workforce felt the impact.

As a result of the coronavirus’s assault on the U.S. job market, the unemployment rate among veterans had soared to between 8.5% and 11.9% by summer 2020. In a matter of weeks, the pandemic pushed veteran unemployment from a 20-year low to a 20-year high.

More recently, as the country continued to heal and our economy worked to recuperate, the unemployment rate among veterans settled in around 5.5% to 6%.

While this is an improvement from the peak of the outbreak, it is still nearly double the pre-pandemic numbers. In fact, we haven’t seen numbers this consistently high since DAV launched its employment program in 2014.

In order to recapture the low rates of 2019, we must continue to diligently monitor the situation and bring solutions to the table. One thing we can do is help make veterans and their families aware of the various DAV employment resources available to them. Transitioning to the civilian sector or a new career is hard enough. Add to the mix a pandemic the likes of which we hadn’t seen in a century, and it can become helplessly overwhelming.
One of those resources is our job fairs. In spring 2020, DAV was able to move our in-person job fairs to virtual events. This helped DAV offset the impact the virus was having on the job market by hosting 92 job fairs with over 32,000 candidates. We have also begun to move back to in-person hiring events, and you can find a complete listing of them by visiting our website, jobs.dav.org.

Veteran employment will remain an issue of great importance as our towns, cities and states begin to resemble normalcy. While we have all endured many challenges during the past year, I call upon each of you to help those we serve secure meaningful employment by encouraging them to utilize DAV employment resources.

Even with the restrictions from the pandemic, companies continued to recruit and hire veterans because they know the teamwork, skills, values and talents we bring to their workforce.

Lastly, there are many great companies that deserve our thanks for their ongoing efforts to hire veterans, so I also ask each of you to nominate a vet-friendly company or encourage a company to submit online for employer recognition by visiting patriotemployers.org.