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Governor Bentley Creates Commission to Address Delivery of Services for Veterans

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MONTGOMERY—Governor Robert Bentley on Tuesday signed an executive order creating the Alabama Executive Veterans Network (AlaVetNet) to address ways to better provide services for Alabama service members, veterans and their families.

“Alabama is a strong pro-military state, and it is important to help our military members whenever we can,” Governor Robert Bentley said. “Alabama ranks as the third highest state in the nation in the number of people deployed to support the Global War on Terrorism. These brave men and women will return home to their families, and we owe it to them to help ease their return into their communities. AlaVetNet will work to address ways to streamline the access of services for military members, veterans and their families in key areas. Because of the sacrifice of those who serve our country, we can continue to live in a free society.”

The adjustment of returning service members into communities can have long-lasting and challenging implications for them and their families. Many veterans suffer from physical and psychological disabilities, including traumatic brain injuries, post-traumatic stress disorder and other debilitating health conditions. The services provided to veterans and their families are critical to help overcome some of the implications from deployment.

AlaVetNet will study and evaluate all services in the state directed at improving the well-being of service members, veterans and their families in the key areas of education, employment, health, homelessness, and legal assistance. The goal of AlaVetNet is to use existing resources available and explore opportunities to expand the services. The committee will develop a long-range plan for a unified, statewide system for the delivery of services aimed at helping those who served in the military.

Alabama Department of Mental Health Commissioner Jim Reddoch and Veterans Affairs Commissioner Retired Rear Admiral Clyde Marsh will serve as co-chairs of the commission. Seventeen other members from state agencies and organizations have been appointed to serve on the commission.

“Our service members and veterans can experience many different mental health issues as they begin to adjust from deployment,” Alabama Department of Mental Health Commissioner Jim Reddoch said. “AlaVetNet will work to help better coordinate mental health services available. We owe it to our service members and veterans to show thanks for all they have sacrificed for our country. I am honored to be a part of this initiative because of the meaningful role it will play in the lives of our military men and women and their families. The network being created by this executive order is the result of a policy group working together for the past several years, and special thanks are due to Acquanetta Knight at the Department of Mental Health and Bob Horton at the Department of Veterans Affairs for keeping this project moving forward.”

“AlaVetNet is a great initiative that will help bring together resources that may fall outside the scope of some state agencies and that generally fall through the cracks,” Retired Rear Adm. W. Clyde Marsh, Commissioner, Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs said. “With the expertise of the agencies that comprise this network, we can connect to dots and direct resources to meet the needs of our service members, veterans and their families.”

AlaVetNet is expected to present a formal plan to the Governor by June 30, 2014.

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