

# Secretary Napolitano Highlights DHS' Strong Commitment to Veterans at American Legion Conference



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Louisville, Ky.—Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano today delivered remarks at the 2009 American Legion National Conference, highlighting the Department's ongoing outreach to American veterans and announcing her commitment to employ 50,000 veterans at DHS by 2012.

"The men and women of the armed services work tirelessly every day to ensure the safety and security of the American people," said Secretary Napolitano. "We are honored by the thousands of veterans working at DHS whose unique experience and extraordinary dedication strengthen the Department's efforts to protect our nation from threats and prepare for disasters."

Secretary Napolitano issued a call to veterans to join the Department's ranks, stressing the importance of their expertise in helping DHS carry out its critical mission. Veterans comprise a quarter of the civilian DHS workforce. DHS has hired 3,000 veterans to date in 2009 and today employs more than 46,000—including 2,100 service-disabled veterans.

In her remarks, Secretary Napolitano emphasized the close collaboration between DHS and the Department of Veterans Affairs in their shared homeland security mission to support America's emergency management and response efforts.

Secretary Napolitano also highlighted the Department's role in naturalizing non-citizens who serve in the American military. Since Sept. 11, 2001, more than 50,000 men and women in uniform have become American citizens while serving in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Following her remarks, Secretary Napolitano made an impromptu appearance in front of more than 1,000 members of the American Legion Auxiliary. Secretary Napolitano, a former American Legion Auxiliary Girls State participant, commended the program for the important role it plays in cultivating young women leaders and spoke about the importance of shared personal responsibility in preparing for all disasters and emergencies—including H1N1.

Prior to her remarks, Secretary Napolitano met with American Legion National Commander David Rehbein to discuss DHS' veterans outreach initiatives including opportunities for veteran-owned small businesses to bid on Department contracts, Operation Warfighter—a program that allows servicemen and service women on medical hold to gain valuable federal government work experience—and the first-ever DHS veteran job fair, held in July.

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