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OPINION

Employers, step up to hire a veteran

Our nation's returning soldiers will become excellent employees

On Veterans Day, I heard a radio commentator say, "Make a veteran's day — hire one." That effort is now underway in 2012, with more than a dozen Michigan companies registering to post jobs for military service members and their families.

In December, we kicked off the "American Jobs for America's Heroes Jobs Bank Initiative" with Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder and National Guard commander Maj. Gen. Gregory Vadnais to announce the public-private collaboration to build national awareness that there are thousands of highly skilled men and women in the National Guard and military veterans in need of good-paying jobs.

The effort, which American Electric Power is proud to support, is a call to action for small and mid-size businesses to post job openings to reach this talented workforce.

The Center for America and the Military Spouse Corporate Career Network, in an alliance with the National Guard, are now posting these jobs.

Our nation is facing a perplexing dichotomy today. We have an estimated

60,000 National Guard members who are unemployed, yet employers are saying they can't find the skilled workers they need to fill critical positions.

In our business, we couldn't keep electricity flowing to our 5.3 million customers without skilled workers such as line mechanics and power plant operators. And when a power plant needs maintenance, we call upon highly skilled individuals such as electricians, pipefitters, boilermakers, welders and numerous others.

At AEP, we believe that this challenge requires action.

The "American Jobs for America's Heroes" Jobs Bank Initiative is an effort to encourage small and mid-size companies to register and post jobs that will help streamline the application process and allow applicants and employers to connect more quickly than many other job-search environments do.

According to recent studies, as many as 600,000 skilled jobs are going unfilled right now across America because employers can't find qualified applicants.

Last year alone, AEP hired approximately 70 military veterans in a wide variety of positions.

Nearly 10 percent of our 18,600-person workforce served in the military. We serve customers in 11 states, but the highest number of military veterans on our payroll is right here in Michigan, with a good number at our Cook Nuclear Plant at Bridgman, some of whom have served in the U. S. Navy's nuclear program.

As you look across the 11 states that AEP serves, we have veterans working not only as line mechanics and power



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plant operators, but also as chemical technicians, maintenance technicians, in the supply chain organization, and in a host of other positions, as well.

Now I'm calling on every employer throughout Michigan and throughout our country to step up, too.

It doesn't matter if you can hire two members of the National Guard or 20. Take the time to register on the National Guard Jobs Bank. List your job openings. Review the applications that you receive. Interview the best prospects.

And then make a veteran's day — hire one.

Bob Powers Video: www.CenterforAmerica.org/powers.html

www.CenterforAmerica.org