

## Governor Quinn Honors Veterans During Chicago Welcome Home the Heroes Weekend

Written by Ryan C. Woods  
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### Events Celebrate 2.4 Million Returning Veterans Since 9/11, Boost Efforts to Support Servicemembers Transitioning to Civilian Life

CHICAGO – December 14, 2012. Governor Pat Quinn today joined with Erica Borggren, director of the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs, and Illinois servicemembers to celebrate Chicago Welcome Home the Heroes Weekend, which will mark the one-year anniversary of the end of combat operations in Iraq. The two-day event will honor the 2.4 million Veterans who have served in the military since September 11th, 2001 and raise awareness of programs designed to help them successfully transition to civilian life. Governor Quinn has fought to improve life for Illinois Veterans throughout his career with a variety of initiatives.

"These brave men and women have sacrificed greatly to preserve our freedom," Governor Quinn said. "Now that they're back on American soil after honorably serving our country, it's our duty to give them the support they need to successfully transition into civilian life."

The two days of events begin with the Reading of the Fallen Ceremony at 9:11 a.m. in the plaza outside the James R. Thompson Center in Chicago, where volunteers read the names of the more than 6,600 servicemen and women who lost their lives protecting our country in Iraq and Afghanistan. This ceremony is dedicated to Gold Star families who have lost their sons or daughters in combat.

On Saturday, the Chicago Welcomes Home the Heroes parade will honor the entire military community and will be followed by a Veterans Resources Reception at the Chicago Cultural Center.

"This weekend's homecoming celebration and recognition of our fallen is an important thanks to those who have served since 9/11," Director Borggren said. "It is also a reminder and part of Illinois' much broader, everyday commitment to serving those who have served as they transition home and encounter challenges related to Post Traumatic Stress, employment, housing, and education."

As part of this special weekend, Governor Quinn is also reminding Illinois Veterans that a new

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statewide, public-private partnership has been launched to improve support for servicemembers, Veterans and their families. Illinois Joining Forces seeks to increase collaboration and communication among not-for-profit organizations and public agencies serving Veterans at the local, state and federal levels.

Through IJF, participating organizations work together to address gaps in services in job training and placement, healthcare, education and housing, actively refer Veterans and service members in need of assistance, and offer better navigation of available resources and service to the public. For more information, visit [www.IllinoisJoiningForces.org](http://www.IllinoisJoiningForces.org).

Governor Quinn has long made commitment to Veterans' affairs, servicemembers and their families one of his top priorities throughout his career in public service. He has led programs including the Illinois Warrior Assistance Program and the Veterans Cash lottery ticket, which has awarded more than \$10 million to non-profit organizations across the state that provide health care and post-traumatic stress disorder treatment, housing assistance, disability benefits and other services to Illinois Veterans.

As Lieutenant Governor, Governor Quinn championed and helped enact the Illinois Military Family Relief Fund Act, which established a fund to provide grants to families of Illinois National Guard members and Illinois residents serving in the U.S. Armed Forces Reserve components who were called to active duty as a result of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. These grants help service members and their families with the costs of food, housing, utilities, medical services and other expenses they struggle to afford because a wage-earner has temporarily left civilian employment to be placed on active military duty.

To learn more about Chicago Welcome Home Heroes and other ways you can support our Veterans, visit [www.chicagowelcomeshometheheroes.org](http://www.chicagowelcomeshometheheroes.org) and [www.OperationHomefront.org](http://www.OperationHomefront.org).