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**MAYOR EMANUEL, ALDERMAN VILLEGAS INTRODUCE ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING A  
CERTIFICATION PROGRAM FOR VETERAN-OWNED BUSINESS ENTERPRISES**

Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Alderman Gilbert Villegas, Alderman Carrie Austin and Alderman Matt O'Shea today introduced an ordinance to establish a certification program for veteran-owned business enterprises (VBE).

"The creation of this program underscores our commitment to ensuring veterans can thrive in the City of Chicago, and will help veteran-owned businesses compete and win City contracts," said Mayor Emanuel.

In creating this new program, the City will ensure that businesses that are seeking to take advantage of the incentives and programs established for veterans are legitimately owned, operated, and controlled by veterans.

"Under the leadership of Mayor Emanuel and the Veteran's Caucus, we want to do our part to recognize veterans for their service," said Chief Procurement Officer Jamie L. Rhee. "Establishing a VBE program will create additional opportunities for our local veteran owned businesses."

The establishment of the VBE certification will allow the City to conduct an analysis of the availability of small, local veteran-owned businesses and their areas of specialty. The VBE certification program would mirror the rigorous application process that is in place for minority and women-owned business enterprises (MBE/WBE).

"As Chairman of the Veteran Caucus I can tell you that Veteran owned businesses are great for our neighborhoods," said Alderman Gilbert Villegas. "On average, Veteran Owned Businesses tend to be small but highly successful, employing nearly 6 million Americans and spending over \$200 billion in annual payroll. The future of Chicago lies in the hands of small business owners, why not ensure they are strong, capable hands?"

“The VBE is a great opportunity for those interested in procurement opportunities at the local level. The fact that any existing certification held specific to Veteran status will be acknowledged is also a great observation,” said Ariel Shivers-McGrew, Associate Director, Veterans Program at the Veterans Business Outreach Center. “It is recognized when the process is clearly defined and easy to understand the buy-in presents itself with ease. For those Veterans with established businesses in one of the five collar counties mentioned, there's a real chance to reasonably scale up.”

“The skills and experience our veterans gained while bravely serving our country make them uniquely positioned to be able to start and run successful businesses here in Chicago,” said Alderman O’Shea. “I am pleased to work with the Mayor, DPS and my colleagues to continue to support our Veteran-owned businesses.”

“Veterans are valued members of our community who also serve as role models for our young people,” said Alderman Austin. “I strongly support any measure that will expand opportunities for Veterans.”

The City currently has a series of bid incentives that encourage the use of veteran-owned firms:

- Veteran/small business JV bid incentive – five percent for eligible joint ventures and small, local, veteran-owned businesses
- Veteran-owned subcontractor bid incentive – up to two percent for utilization of veteran-owned subs
- Business Enterprises Owned or Operated by People with Disabilities (BEPD) – current proposed amendment would enhance the program to include an up to four percent bid incentive for the utilization BEPDs, including service-disabled veteran-owned businesses

To become certified as a VBE, firms will have to demonstrate that they are at least 51 percent owned by an honorably discharged veteran, be located in the six-county region of Cook, DuPage, Lake, Kane, McHenry or Will and not exceed size standards as set by the federal government.

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