

## WYOMING VETERANS HOPE TO ACQUIRE BETTER JOBS THAN PRIOR TO SERVICE



Many veterans of the United States Armed Forces living in Wyoming are hoping to acquire a better job now than the one they had prior to entering military service. Tad Roccaro is one of those Wyoming veterans who is looking for better work upon returning home. "I got tired of the 40-below winters, working outside," the Afton native said. "I kind of decided I was smarter than that and decided to go to college." At Laramie County Community College, the former Marine is now president of the Student Veterans of America chapter in Cheyenne. Roccaro served stints in Kuwait and Iraq in 2002 and 2003, returned to Wyoming in 2004 after being discharged from the military and became a carpenter and an electrician. "They expect to land a better job than the one they had before," he said. The unemployment rate for Wyoming veterans is roughly three percent higher than that of the state's general population for post-September 11, 2001. The state's post-September 11, 2001 unemployment percent is 8.6 in May of 2011. Out of a total veteran Wyoming employment population of 55,510, 4,800 are unemployed. In the month of May, the unemployment rate for all Wyoming veterans hit 7.1 percent compared to the state's general unemployment rate of 6 percent in May. That number is currently hovering around 5.8 percent. Roccaro chose radiography as a major since returning to school because of his medicinal interest, which began when his mother passed away of cancer when he was 13 years of age. Roccaro claims that there are anywhere from 350-400 veterans enrolled in the community college he attends. Roccaro originally did not invest in the GI-Bill while in the service but was talked into doing it by his fellow Marines. As he works towards his degree, he is thankful that he listened to his fellow Marines and invested in the program. The scholarship and veterans' coordinator from Casper College, Lisa Goss, claims there are more military veterans coming home and going to college. Almost all of them have found that they are over-qualified or under-qualified for employment in various fields. "That's why so many are choosing to come and get their degree so they can be more marketable," she said. Goss went on to say that the majority of veterans enrolling at Casper College are between the ages of 25 and 35, have completed a couple of college classes, but do not have an associate's degree. D.J. Brown, a resident of Cheyenne and a veteran, is a member of the Wyoming Army National Guard. Brown was on a deployment to Kuwait from 2009-2010 as part of a ground crew. Prior to military service, Brown was working at a concrete plant. Since returning home, Brown has been working part-time construction jobs while waiting for better work to arrive, which might still be a couple of months down the road.

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