

Stockton Record

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A bipartisan bill, HR1941 - the Hiring Heroes Act of 2011 - was introduced last week in the House of Representatives to help reduce unemployment among veterans.

The bill was co-introduced by Rep. Jerry McNerney, D-Pleasanton, whose San Joaquin County constituents face some of the highest jobless rates in the nation. For April, unemployment in the county was measured at 17.3 percent. For veterans, it's even higher, so the bill is aimed at helping them transition from military service to civilian life and find jobs.

"Veterans have earned the thanks of a grateful nation when they return home, and employers can benefit from the unique skills, sense of duty and professionalism veterans possess," McNerney said last week.

Among other provisions, the Hiring Heroes Act:

- Makes sure that every veteran participates in the Transition Assistance Program and that the program delivers individual assistance to each returning veteran.

- Encourages federal agencies to hire veterans.

- Provides additional Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment benefits to qualifying veterans with service-connected disabilities.

- Creates a competitive grant program for nonprofits that help veterans find employment.

- Requires the departments of Labor, Defense and Veterans Affairs to work to reduce and

eliminate barriers between military training and civilian licensing requirements for specialized work.