



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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**MAYOR JOHNSON, CITY COUNCIL MAKE VETERANS BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM
PERMANENT, EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VETERAN-OWNED BUSINESSES**

The program reduces barriers for veterans and works to ensure their success.

CHICAGO — In a unanimous vote today, the Chicago City Council approved the Veterans Business Enterprise (VBE) Program as a permanent program within the Department of Procurement Services (DPS), building on the success of the VBE pilot program. This milestone builds on a continued commitment by the City to expanding economic opportunities for veteran-owned businesses and reduce barriers for those who have served our country.

The newly codified VBE Program empowers DPS to certify Veteran Business Enterprises and set participation goals for City contracts, practices that are now formally written into law. This move aligns with Mayor Brandon Johnson's [Cut the Tape initiative](#), which aims to reduce bureaucratic red tape and make it easier for businesses—especially those from historically underserved communities— to work with the City.

"I am proud of the work our administration is doing to create a more inclusive and accessible economy," said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. "Veterans deserve our full support, and today's vote ensures they are active participants in the City's vision for equitable growth."

Under the leadership of Chief Procurement Officer Sharla Roberts, the VBE Program will now increase the participation goal for veteran-owned businesses on City contracts from 1% to 3%. The program also expands eligibility by accepting certifications from the State of Illinois, Cook County, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and streamlines access while removing redundant certification requirements.

"After seeing great success with the pilot program, we are proud that this ordinance now codifies our support for our veterans and their service to our country," said **Chief Sharla Roberts**. "This is another step towards ensuring that our City contracts are distributed equitably so that every community in our city can succeed."

"As Chairman of the Veterans Caucus, I had the honor of helping launch the VBE pilot program," said **Alderman Gilbert Villegas**. "Today's action to make it permanent guarantees our veteran-owned businesses more opportunities to thrive and contribute to our city's success."

"This was a true collaborative, all-hands on deck effort, especially from the Mayor's Advisory Council on Veterans Affairs, whose continued support and advocacy helped make this possible," said **Kevin Barszcz, Director of the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs**. "Since the start of the Johnson Administration, we've seen a more than 50% increase in certified veteran-owned businesses."

The Department of Procurement Services will immediately begin updating its contract documents and certification process to align with the new ordinance. All pending applications will be reviewed under the revised guidelines, and upcoming City contracts will reflect the updated VBE goals and eligibility standards.

This vote solidifies Chicago's long-term commitment to inclusivity, equity, and ensuring veterans are fully recognized as vital contributors to the city's economy.

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