



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Washington, DC 20415

The Director

Friday, November 15, 2002

MSG-082a

MEMORANDUM FOR: Human Resources Directors

FROM: Kay Coles James, Director

Subject: Veterans' Employment in the Federal Government

In recognition and follow up to President Bush's proclamation in observance of Veteran's Day, I wish to remind you of the importance that the President and his Administration places on veterans' employment issues, including veterans' preference.

At a time when the Armed Forces of the United States are once again called to protect our lives, liberties, and freedoms, OPM is committed more than ever to ensuring that when veterans seek employment in the Federal Government they are provided every opportunity to take advantage of the entitlements they have earned. This is why I am pleased by the results shown by many of you in terms of veterans' employment.

Veterans have been, and continue to be, one of the main sources of candidates for Federal jobs. Despite the continuing drop in the percentage of veterans in the civilian labor force, the employment of veterans in the Federal service remains strong. New veterans hired during Fiscal Year (FY) 2001 totaled 39,874, an increase of 3,343 from 36,531 during FY 2000. Compared to the private sector, Federal agencies employ over twice the percentage of veterans, over five times the percentage of disabled veterans, and over nine times the percentage of 30% or more disabled veterans. These results would not be possible if agencies were ignoring their obligations to veterans. I believe, however, that we can and must do better.

The Government certainly has every right to be proud of its overall record of hiring veterans, but we still face many challenges, some of which are cultural and others are rooted in process. Consequently, I have directed our staff to initiate a special Governmentwide review of agency adherence to the letter and spirit of veterans' preference laws. Selected human resources management offices will be contacted in the near future as we initiate these audits. Please ensure that your staffs fully understand the importance of veterans' preference in employment in the Federal Government, and your personal commitment to the veterans of our Nation.

The Federal personnel team understands that our veterans are a valued resource who have earned through their very life's blood a hiring preference which we should be so very **honored** to provide. We must never forget that disabled veterans are heroes who have paid a price so dear that it will stay with them for the rest of their lives. Such veterans are assets to any organization as they bring strength, courage and commitment in a way that can only be imagined by those

who have never stood in harm's way for the cause of their country. It is vital that we maintain this outlook and continue to honor their service.

Let us always remember that veterans' preference is not a barrier to the Federal hiring process; it is a key component of this process. Furthermore, OPM encourages agencies to hire veterans specifically because they oftentimes possess the skills and competencies you need to fulfill your missions. Though some hiring barriers may exist, veterans' preference is not among them. Veterans' preference is a legal right that reflects a national value; it can not, will not, and shall not be circumvented by Federal employers. We must never forget that the many freedoms we enjoy as a Nation did not come freely. They were earned through the lives and selfless sacrifices of our veterans. We owe them a debt we can never fully repay. Providing our veterans with the hiring preference they have earned is but a small way of acknowledging their sacrifice and demonstrating our thanks.

Thank you for your continued ongoing leadership on this issue and for your continuing cooperation as we seek to uphold merit system principles and the letter and spirit of veterans' preference laws.

cc: Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

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