



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Washington, DC 20415

The Director

Friday, March 29, 2002

MSG 2002-023

MEMORANDUM FOR: Directors Of Human Resources And Chief Information Officers

FROM: Richard A. Whitford
Acting Associate Director for Employment Policy

Subject: Veterans' Employment Issues

Attached is a recent memorandum from Director Kay Coles James to Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies about employment opportunity for veterans. I want to take this opportunity to call your attention to several specific matters concerning veterans' employment.

First, I am pleased to report 100 percent of agencies have submitted this year's Disabled Veterans Affirmative Action Program (DVAAP) reports. Congratulations! Congress requires these reports as a way of monitoring what Executive agencies are doing to further employment and promotion opportunities for disabled veterans. We very much appreciate your cooperation in getting these reports in on time.

I am also pleased to report that the Veterans' Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA) of 1998, as amended, has been a great success in furthering employment opportunities for veterans. In Fiscal Year 1999 (the first year of operation) there were 729 VEOA appointments. The following year, there were 4,433 appointments, and in FY 2001, the number doubled to 8,516.

Significantly, veterans are being hired under the VEOA authority in virtually every agency, large and small, for most occupations, and for every grade level.

Congress enacted the VEOA in response to concerns expressed by individuals as well as veterans' service organizations that veterans were having difficulty competing for Federal jobs because agencies were increasingly recruiting from within, rather than through open competitive examination. This Act, among other things, requires an agency to allow eligible veterans and preference eligibles to apply when it is recruiting outside the agency under Merit Promotion procedures. Initially, veterans appointed under this authority were given Schedule B appointments; that changed a year later, in November 1999, when Congress amended the VEOA to allow veterans who were selected under Merit Promotion competition to receive career conditional appointments.

Of course, as with the employment of veterans and noted in the Director's memorandum, some agencies are doing considerably better than others at hiring VEOA candidates. We find, for example, that approximately 90% of the appointments were in the military departments and the

Department of Veterans Affairs. This may mean that other agencies -- particularly those doing significant recruiting -- are missing an opportunity to use this important flexibility to appoint veterans. These are very high quality candidates who have a special dedication and commitment to continue serving the Nation. We urge you to pay special attention to the VEOA when you are considering recruiting options.

As evidenced by the DVAAP reports, a special focus of attention since the 1978 enactment of the Civil Service Reform Act has been making employment opportunities available for veterans with a 30% or more disability rating. Congress created a special noncompetitive appointing authority for these individuals (5 U.S.C. 3112). An agency can give an eligible veteran a temporary appointment lasting 60 days or more, and convert the veteran at any time to a career conditional appointment. Unfortunately, we find that agencies are making only limited use of this authority. Although approximately 4,000 30% or more disabled veterans were appointed in FY 2001, fewer than 700 were appointed under this authority. Please consider using this authority as a way to appoint severely disabled veterans.

Also available for your use in appointing veterans non-competitively is the venerable Veterans' Readjustment Appointment (VRA) -- one of the very first special appointing authorities. You may give eligible veterans excepted appointments up to grade GS-11 or equivalent. After a veteran successfully completes a 2-year trial period, you must convert the individual to a career conditional appointment. VRA eligibility lasts for 10 years from the date of the veteran's last separation from active duty. In FY 2001, agencies made more than 7,000 appointments under the VRA.

Director James is placing special importance on ensuring that veterans get the preferences to which they are entitled. She has instructed our Office of Merit Systems Oversight to pay special attention to these issues when evaluating agency programs. Within the Employment Service, we are giving veterans' issues special emphasis by meeting regularly with veterans' organizations on matters of mutual importance, working with the Departments of Labor and Veterans Affairs to facilitate the employment of veterans, and sharing program information with the Human Resources community and others.

Detailed, specific information on the above appointing authorities is available on our web site (www.opm.gov) under "veterans." There is also a discussion of the various appointing authorities for veterans in the VetGuide also available on our web site. If we can provide any additional information or answer any questions about the use of these authorities, please call Mr. Raleigh Neville on (202) 606-0960, e-mail address: rmneville@opm.gov. Hiring veterans is good for the Government and good for the Nation!