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Employment of Veterans Governmentwide 2010 - 2012

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Foreword

This is America's first strategic plan to increase the hiring of Veterans throughout the Federal civil service. It is a major component of President Obama's Veterans Employment Initiative.

President Obama has been clear: "America's commitments to its Veterans are bonds that are sacrosanct—a sacred trust we are honor bound to uphold." And we will. One way we honor that trust is by making Federal civilian employment opportunities available when our servicemen and women lay their uniforms down.

It is not only a matter of honor. We all benefit from retaining the dedication, leadership, skills and abilities Veterans have honed in the fast-paced, dynamic environments of our Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard.

And, in the words of George Washington:

The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional as to how they perceive the Veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their country.

Veterans' Preference in hiring dates back to the Civil War era. Since then, Congress has enacted laws to prevent Veterans seeking Federal employment from being penalized for their time in military service. Veterans' Preference recognizes the economic loss often suffered by citizens who have served, restores Veterans to a favorable competitive position for Government employment, and acknowledges the larger obligation we owe to disabled Veterans.

It's not enough simply to say, however, "We'll add five or ten points to your score, thank you for applying."

We must aggressively dismantle barriers to entry and success for Veterans and transitioning service members pursuing careers in the Federal civil service. By implementing and building on this Strategic Plan, we will create a Federal culture that welcomes Veterans and values their service, skills, and dedication.

John Berry
Director

Introduction

The Federal Executive Branch (hereafter referred to as the Federal Government) is the Nation's leading employer of Veterans. Nearly a half million (481,223) Veterans are employed today in agencies across the country and around the world. Veterans comprise more than one out of every four Federal workers. FY 2008 hiring data for agencies identified in the President's Executive Order on Veterans Employment, which represent 97.8% of all Federal workers, show these agencies employ 476,684 Veterans. Other agencies reported approximately 4,539 of their employees are Veterans. Additionally, the total Veteran new hires in the Federal Government have increased from 52,452 in FY 2007 to 65,631 in FY 2008. In comparison to the private sector, the Federal Government hires three times the percentage of Veterans, seven times the percentage of disabled Veterans, and ten times the percentage of severely injured Veterans.

We are proud of our accomplishments relating to Veterans' employment, but we can and must do more. Not only is hiring Veterans the right thing to do, it also makes good business sense. The Government invests significant resources in the training and development of military service personnel. Acting aggressively to retain transitioning military service personnel within the Federal Government helps maximize our return on this investment and can fill high-demand positions in Federal agencies.

However, as we look closely at our Veteran employment numbers, we realize there are pockets of excellence within the Government that must be explored and shared so all agencies benefit from the talents and dedication Veterans bring to the Federal workforce. For instance, nearly 80% of Veterans are employed in three Departments – Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security. These Departments make up approximately 58% of the workforce. Some will argue that these agencies have occupations that are more conducive to the skills sets of transitioning military service members and Veterans. There is some truth to that assertion, but at the heart of the issue is the need for a better overall approach to recruiting, on-boarding, and providing career counseling to Veterans.

The Government-wide Veterans' Recruitment and Employment Strategic Plan for FY 2010 - FY 2012 was born out of the sincere belief that by leveraging the practices of successful agencies, like those mentioned, we, as a Government, will be more effective in our Veteran recruitment and employment efforts.

To develop this Strategic Plan, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) convened interagency representatives from across Government for a two-day strategic planning session on July 7-8, 2009, at its Eastern Management Development Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Senior leaders from the Departments of Defense, Labor, Veterans Affairs, Commerce, Homeland Security, Treasury, and Transportation,

as well as OPM, attended the session. During the session, we identified five key barriers to increasing the number of Veterans employed in the Federal Government:

- Lack of clear leadership regarding the value and importance of hiring Veterans;
- Infrastructure that does not support advocacy of Veterans' employment within Federal agencies;
- Insufficient understanding of Veterans' Preference and utilization of special hiring authorities by our HR professionals and hiring officials;
- Inadequate understanding of Veterans' Preference and the Federal hiring process by our Veterans and transitioning service members; and
- Absence of systems to match Veterans' skills and education to positions within the Federal Government.

This Strategic Plan aggressively breaks through these barriers using a number of strategies centered on four comprehensive areas. These areas of focus were outlined in the Executive Order for the *Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government*: 1) Leadership Commitment; 2) Skills Development and Employment; 3) Marketing Veterans' Employment; and 4) an Information Gateway.

- Leadership Commitment – establishes a governance structure and infrastructure dedicated solely to the employment of Veterans in the Federal Government;
- Skills Development and Employment – focuses on providing employment counseling and aligning the talents and aspirations of Veterans and transitioning service members with civil service career opportunities;
- Marketing Veterans' Employment – creates a marketing campaign targeted to Veterans and transitioning service members on the benefits of continuing their careers with the Federal civil service as well as targeted to hiring officials on how Veterans can meet skills demands in their organizations; and
- Information Gateway – creates a single-source website for disseminating accurate and consistent Veteran employment information and resources for Veterans, human resources (HR) professionals, and hiring officials.

An initiative of this magnitude is a great challenge. It requires a strategic approach and a shared vision. But, most important, it requires our commitment to make it happen.

Our Vision

The Federal Government will become America's Model Employer of Veterans

The Vision Statement embodies our key guiding principles:

- We have top leadership support and accountability for the recruitment, employment, development and retention of Veterans in the Federal Government;
- We are committed to Veterans by administering Veterans' Preference and acknowledging the sacrifices of both Veterans and their families;
- We ensure there are no barriers to Veterans' employment;
- We value Veterans for their commitment to public service, skills, and dedication;
- We recognize that military spouses and Veterans' families also possess skills and the public service motivation needed in the Federal workplace;
- We make a special effort to employ those Veterans who have the most difficulty in transitioning to employment, such as homeless and disabled Veterans; and
- We identify and promote excellence throughout Government in the recruitment, on-boarding, development, and retention of Veterans.

Our Mission

**Increase the Employment of Veterans in
the Federal Government**

Strategic Goals

The strategies in this plan are designed to help agencies take a comprehensive and collaborative approach to Veterans' employment in the Federal Government. By leveraging the capacity and resources of the Departments of Defense, Labor, Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security, and OPM, each Federal Executive Branch agency¹ will be better positioned to increase the number of Veterans coming into its workforce and to utilize their talents to achieve its mission.

Leadership Commitment

Strategic Goal: Ensure Federal leaders advocate the value and importance of hiring Veterans in the Federal Government

Our Federal leaders boldly advocate for Veterans' employment, understanding the sacrifices our Veterans have made in protecting our country and preserving our tenets of freedom. They deem the skills, leadership and discipline that Veterans bring to our ever evolving and dynamic workplaces as essential to meeting mission objectives.

Strategies:

- 1. Create a governance structure within the Federal Government to provide leadership and accountability for Veterans' employment by:**
 - a. Issuing an Executive order establishing the Veterans Employment Initiative
 - b. Establishing an interagency Council on Veterans Employment co-chaired by the Secretaries of Labor and Veterans Affairs, with the Director of the Office of Personnel Management serving as Vice-Chair, and comprised of the heads of certain specified agencies and any others the President may designate
 - c. Establishing a Steering Committee, which shall consist of the Secretaries of Defense, Labor, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security, the Director of OPM, and any other Council member designated by the Co-Chairs
 - d. Providing an annual report to the President on the progress of the Veterans' Employment Initiative
 - e. Establishing a Veterans Employment Program Office within OPM designed to provide Government-wide leadership and support policy direction

¹ Agencies listed in section 901(b) of title 31, United States Code (CFO Act)

- f. Developing and implementing Government-wide Veterans' Recruitment and Employment Strategic Plan
- g. Continuing OPM's oversight of Federal hiring programs to ensure adherence to Veterans' Preference law, and
- h. Reporting Veterans' employment results in the Annual Human Capital Management Reports of agencies

2. Create advocates for Veterans' employment within each Federal agency by:

- a. Establishing Veterans Employment Program Offices, or designating an agency officer or employee with full-time responsibility for promoting Veterans' recruitment, employment, training and development, and retention in their agencies and working with agencies having Veterans' employment services and resources. Agencies should consider using available special hiring authorities, including those specifically designed to hire Veterans, when staffing these offices
- b. Developing and implementing agency-specific Veterans' Employment Operational Plans that are aligned with this Strategic Plan and the agency's Strategic Human Capital Plan

INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

- Executive Order 13518 signed November 9, 2009
- Co-Chairs convene Council on Veterans Employment, outlining the Government-wide Veterans' Recruitment and Employment Strategic Plan
- OPM, in consultation with the Council, releases the Government-wide Veterans' Recruitment and Employment Strategic Plan in January 2010.
- By March 2010, all agencies have established Veterans Employment Program Offices.
- By April 2010, all agencies have submitted their Veterans' Employment Operational Plans

Skills Development and Employment

Strategic Goal: Align Veterans' and transitioning service members' skills and career aspirations to Federal employment opportunities

The Federal Government is the most diverse and progressive employer in the country. It employs every possible occupation and career field imaginable. In addition, there are a number of high-demand occupations (those where a strong recruitment need exists over the next several years) that must be filled so Federal agencies successfully meet their mission objectives. The key is aligning Veterans and transitioning service members with these employment opportunities. Through skills developed during service and from additional training and education received through the GI Bill, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Veterans Employment and Training Services, Veterans and transitioning service members are excellent candidates to fill high-demand occupations in Federal agencies.

1. Match Veterans' skills with Federal career opportunities by:

- a. Developing an interactive program to translate military skills to Federal civilian occupations and produce a document for Veterans and transitioning service members outlining potential Federal careers based on their military experience
- b. Developing a transitioning service member, Veteran, and spouse resume bank/skills inventory so hiring officials are able to easily search and identify Veterans with skills to meet staffing needs

2. Improve Veterans' and transitioning service members' success in obtaining and maintaining a Federal career by:

- a. Maximizing career counseling opportunities for Veterans, transitioning service members, and their spouses through social network platforms available on OPM and other Government websites as well as through other counseling resources within the Departments of Labor and Veterans Affairs and agency dedicated Veteran Employment Program Offices
- b. Training and educating Veterans and transitioning service members to meet the staffing needs of agency high-demand and other occupations
- c. Aligning the Veterans Employment Initiative with other Federal initiatives targeted to those Veterans who have the most difficulty in transitioning to employment, such as women, homeless, and disabled Veterans
- d. Aligning Veterans recruitment efforts, including outreach to homeless and disabled Veterans and their families, with hiring initiatives

- e. Providing Federal workforce staffing projections to Veterans' employment counselors and others providing employment assistance to Veterans
- f. Developing and implementing programs to maximize the retention of Veterans within the Federal agencies, particularly in agency high-demand and other occupations
- g. Developing a network of mentors at Federal agencies who will support the transition of Veterans into their agencies

3. Maximize the transition assistance experience for all service members and spouses by:

- a. Instituting policy to reinforce leadership commitment and support of service members' transition process
- b. Instituting policy that encourages every eligible service member to take the opportunity to enroll in any or all of the four components of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP)
 - 1) Pre-separation Counseling
 - 2) DOL Employment Workshops
 - 3) VA Benefits Briefings
 - 4) Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP)
- c. Enhancing Federal employment information within DOL Employment Workshops to include Veterans' and military spouses' employment information
- d. Expanding membership of the TAP Steering Committee to include OPM

INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

- Interactive military skills matching program is deployed
- Agencies use resume bank as a source for Veteran, transitioning service member, and military spouse candidates
- Other Federal Veteran initiatives are identified and intergrated into operational planning
- Veterans' and transitioning service members' skills and training are aligned with selected high-demand occupations
- Veterans receive career counseling through the social network platforms on the Veterans' Employment Website and through agency Veteran Employment Program Offices
- DOD and DHS issue revised TAP policies

- All DOL Employment Workshops include updated Federal employment information
- The Government experiences an increase in the number of qualified Veteran applicants

Marketing Veterans Employment

Strategic Goal: Ensure Federal agencies view Veterans' skills and dedication as essential in meeting mission objectives

Each year the Federal Government spends millions of dollars training our military service members to meet numerous challenges, including those in hostile environments. Over the years, these servicemen and women have developed key leadership and technological skills and have developed a strong sense of public service. It is critical we aggressively market the Federal civil service as a place Veterans and transitioning service members can continue serving America while realizing their career aspirations. At the same time, we must also ensure hiring officials are keenly aware of Veterans' skills and attributes and view them as essential in meeting mission objectives.

Strategies:

1. Promote Veterans and their employment in the Federal Government by:

- a. Creating a Government-wide marketing campaign highlighting Veterans' and transitioning service members' skills, leadership, and dedication and how those attributes will support Federal agencies in meeting mission objectives
- b. Linking the Government-wide marketing campaign to agency-specific recruitment efforts and operational planning

2. Promote the Federal Government to Veterans, transitioning service members, and their spouses as the "Employer of Choice" by:

- a. Integrating the Government-wide marketing efforts with Transition Assistance Programs and other targeted marketing efforts underway at the Departments of Defense, Labor, and Veterans Affairs
- b. Including a link to OPM's Veterans Employment website on all job opportunity announcements

INDICATOR OF PROGRESS

- Veterans Employment Initiative marketing campaign launched November 12, 2009
- By April 2010, agencies are using the marketing materials as part of their Veteran outreach efforts
- Veterans and transitioning service members indicate the Veterans Employment Initiative encouraged them to pursue Federal employment

- The Federal Government experiences an increase in the number of Veterans applying and inquiring about jobs
- Federal hiring officials indicate they are highly satisfied with the qualifications of Veteran applicants
- All job opportunity announcements include a link to OPM's Veterans Employment website

Information Gateway

Strategic Goal: Ensure Veterans, transitioning service members and their families, HR professionals, and hiring managers receive accurate and consistent information regarding Veterans' employment

Veterans' Preference is a critical, as well as a legal, component of our Federal employment system and we must ensure those entrusted with its protection are aware of their responsibilities. Additionally, the Congress has enacted numerous special hiring authorities to facilitate hiring Veterans in the Federal Government. We must also ensure hiring officials and Veterans are aware of these authorities and how they can expedite bringing Veterans onboard in their agencies.

Strategies:

- 1. Provide accurate and consistent information to Veterans, transitioning service members, military spouses, HR professionals, and hiring managers by:**
 - a. Redesigning OPM's Veterans' Employment Website to serve as the single-source for Veterans' employment information
 - b. Establishing a gateway to Government-wide Veterans' employment information, training and talent development resources, and transition assistance, reintegration, and support services
- 2. Ensure HR professionals and HR hiring officials are well-versed on Veterans' Preference, special hiring authorities, and reasonable accommodations for Veterans, transitioning service members and their families by:**
 - a. Designing and providing agencies training for HR professionals and hiring officials on Veterans' employment, including the strategic use of special hiring authorities, employment of military spouses, and reasonable accommodations for disabled Veterans
 - b. Leveraging current learning technology to ensure maximum distribution of training on Veterans employment

INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

- OPM's Veterans' Employment Website launched on January 21, 2010.
- Agencies link to the OPM Veterans' Employment Website, ensuring consistent and accurate information across Government.

- Veterans, transitioning service members, military spouses, HR professionals, and hiring officials indicate that information on the OPM Veterans' Employment Website is useful through online feedback
- Agency HR professionals and hiring officials receive annual training on Veterans employment
- Agencies increase the use of special hiring authorities to appoint Veterans to Federal positions

Plan Implementation

All Federal agencies will have responsibility for implementing the Strategic Plan. OPM and the Departments of Defense, Labor, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security will champion specific strategies as well as work together to implement others. In addition, other Federal agencies will be involved in achieving specific objectives where they have core competence or direct influence over the outcome. The Council on Veterans Employment will seek to align the strategies and operational efforts of this plan with other Federal initiatives regarding Veterans' employment.

A detailed Government-wide Veterans' Recruitment and Employment Operational Plan will further delineate the discreet actions, planned completion dates, and performance measures/indicators to assess success. After the Operational Plan is released each agency covered under the Executive order will be responsible for developing its own agency-specific operational plan. Agency-specific operational plans will align with the Government-wide Strategic Plan and the agency's Strategic Human Capital Plan. Yearly operational plans will be developed until strategies are achieved and our goals are obtained.

Starting FY 2011, OPM will provide a report to the President of the United States on the progress of the Veterans Employment Initiative. Additionally, each agency will include its results relating to this initiative in the Annual Human Capital Management Report submitted to OPM by December 15 of each year.

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