



OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

UNITED STATES  
OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT  
WASHINGTON, DC 20415-1000

JUN 13 2002

The Honorable Lane Evans  
U. S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Evans:

Thank you for your recent letter asking about agency compliance with the reporting requirements under the Disabled Veterans' Affirmative Action Program (DVAAP), and for seeking the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM's) comments on agency compliance with the *spirit* of DVAAP.

The law (38 U.S.C. 4214) states that "[I]t is therefore the policy of the United States and the purpose of this section to promote the maximum of employment and job advancement opportunities within the Federal Government for disabled veterans and certain veterans of the Vietnam era and of the post-Vietnam era who are qualified for such employment and advancement." The law also requires OPM to report annually to Congress on agency activities under this section. In turn, OPM requires agencies to report to us annually so that we can prepare the necessary report to the Congress.

As you know, last year several agencies did not submit the required DVAAP reports which contain agency plans to further the employment and advancement of disabled veterans. Some, in fact, had not submitted reports in several years. To make sure that this poor compliance level was not repeated again this year, I instructed my staff to write first and then phone any agency which had not filed a DVAAP report. As a result of these initiatives, I am pleased to say that *all agencies* have submitted reports this year. I appreciate your recognition of staff efforts on this. This is indicative of my entire professional team here at OPM.

As for our impressions of agency compliance with the spirit of DVAAP, agencies are ensuring that veterans receive the preferences to which they are entitled, and are given the kinds of opportunities envisioned by the DVAAP law.

OPM has placed increased emphasis on its scrutiny of agency policies and practices for adherence to veterans' preference laws and regulations. We are encouraged, in fact, by the latest employment figures which suggest that the Federal Government is a model employer of veterans. 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 quantifiable results would not be possible if agencies did not take their responsibilities to veterans seriously. When we do find noncompliance with the veterans' preference requirements, we have acted swiftly and strongly to remedy the situation. We recently cited the Department of Labor for failing to properly apply merit systems principles to a job opening, and we have ordered the Department to take corrective action.

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I would also like to take this opportunity to point out some of the things we are doing under this Administration to benefit veterans:

- Immediately after the terrorist attacks of September 11, we published extensive guidance to agencies on the rights and benefits of employees called to active duty.
- We published a comprehensive list of Frequently Asked Questions on military leave

We reestablished a tradition of meeting on a regular basis with veterans' service organizations to hear their concerns, and to enlist their help in addressing issues of mutual interest.

- I have established an internal task force to coordinate and better address veterans' issues across the broad spectrum of OPM activity.

OPM's oversight function is giving increased emphasis to veterans' employment matters in reviewing agency personnel actions for compliance with law and OPM regulations.

- OPM's staff has been working with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) over the past year to completely revise VA disability letters used to establish entitlement to veterans' preference and make it easier for disabled veterans to claim preference.
- OPM is working with DOL and VA to facilitate the employment of veterans, and we are sharing program information with the Human Resources community and others.
- OPM is working with the Department of Defense to develop outreach materials and activities designed to interest veterans separating from the military in pursuing a career with the Federal Government.
- I recently wrote to agency heads reminding them of their obligations to our veterans and urging them to hire more veterans.
- OPM's Associate Director for Employment followed this up with a letter to Directors of Human Resources pointing out the various appointing authorities that could be used to appoint veterans. He also stressed that OPM is placing special emphasis on ensuring that veterans get the preferences to which they are entitled.

Finally, there are many other important initiatives underway that we believe will help agencies, specifically, and ultimately benefit everyone, including veterans. For example:

- The Partnership for Public Service, OPM and others have launched "A Call to Serve: Leaders in Education Allied for Public Service," – an initiative to build ongoing relationships between institutions of higher education and Federal agencies in anticipation of the impending retirement of a large proportion of the Federal workforce

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- OPM is doing many things to improve the hiring process and establish a citizen-centered approach to the treatment of applicants, supporting the President's long term human capital objective of improved services and increased citizen satisfaction. These include:

Streamlining the Senior Executive Service hiring process;

Improving vacancy announcements and the use of the USAJOBS web site;

Developing a communications strategy that will help agencies build, sustain, and effectively deploy the skilled, knowledgeable, diverse, and high-performing workforce needed to meet the current and emerging needs of Government and its citizens;

Getting agencies to provide better treatment of job applicants;

Conducting virtual job fairs for information technology jobs;

Requesting agencies to identify barriers which are viewed as obstacles to hiring and recruitment efforts;

Developed, in collaboration with the Partnership for Public Service, a "Pledge to Applicants" to ensure that Federal job applicants receive timely and informed responses regarding the status of their applications.

- The Managerial Flexibility Act would give managers greater flexibility to manage in an increasingly more difficult and competitive environment. Proposals such as allowing agencies to use category ranking (in which veterans receive absolute preference) can only benefit veterans. We encourage your support of this important initiative.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our perspectives on these important matters with you. Please let me know if we can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,



Kay Coles James  
Director