



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

**STATEMENT OF
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U.S. OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

before the

SENATE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

June 12, 2013

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this statement for the record related to the June 12, 2013 hearing on pending veterans benefits legislation. Specifically, the Committee has requested the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM's) input on section 2 of S. 495, the Careers for Veterans Act of 2013.

Our nation's veterans have sacrificed tremendously in service to our country, and we have an obligation to support them upon their separation from the Armed Forces. This Administration has supported that obligation repeatedly through the years, and OPM has been a proud partner in the efforts to employ greater numbers of veterans in the Federal workforce. While OPM believes that S. 495 is a well-intended bill, it is important to highlight existing work being carried out to employ veterans with the Federal Government.

Presently, when applying for Federal employment, veterans may take advantage of special hiring authorities for veterans. For example, a veteran applying for Federal employment may do so under the Veterans' Recruitment Appointment (VRA). It is an excepted authority that allows agencies to appoint eligible veterans without competition at any grade level up to and including GS-11 or equivalent. VRA provides the opportunity for eligible veterans to train for two years in a position. Additionally, the Veterans Employment Opportunity Act of 1998 (VEOA), a competitive service appointing authority used when filling permanent, competitive service positions, affords veterans the opportunity to compete with current Federal employees. Veterans who are 30 percent or more disabled may be appointed non-competitively. Disabled veterans may also use Schedule A appointing authority for an excepted service appointment. Finally, disabled veterans who are eligible for training under the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) vocational rehabilitation program may enroll for training or work experience at an agency under the terms of an agreement between the agency and VA.

Statement of Angela Bailey
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In addition to the special hiring authorities, veterans have also been subject to targeted outreach by the Administration. As part of these efforts, on November 9, 2009, President Barack Obama signed Executive Order 13518, Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government, which establishes the Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI). The VEI is a strategic approach to helping the men and women who have served our country in the military find employment in the Federal Government. Under the VEI, OPM and partner agencies developed the Government-wide Veterans' Recruitment and Employment Strategic Plan for FY10-12, an important tool in the implementation of the President's Executive Order. The plan outlined strategies the Federal Government subsequently used to improve employment opportunities for veterans in the Executive Branch. Presently, the Veterans' Recruitment and Employment Strategic Plan for FY13-15 is under development. Additionally, Veteran Employment Program Offices have been established in the 24 agencies covered under Executive Order 13518. Further, OPM has created the Feds Hire Vets website to provide a single point for providing veterans' employment information to veterans, their families, and hiring managers. OPM has also created a Government-wide marketing campaign on the value of our veterans and toolkits were provided to Federal agencies to aid in their efforts to hire veterans. Finally, OPM conducted the Veterans Employment Symposium which provided essential learning to human resources professionals and hiring managers. This symposium was followed by web-based training applications in the areas of veterans' appointing authorities and veterans' preference.

OPM has worked with other agencies on the implementation of the VOW (Veterans Opportunity to Work) To Hire Heroes Act of 2011 ("the VOW Act"). The VOW Act, which requires Federal agencies to treat active duty service members as veterans, disabled veterans, or preference eligibles for purposes of appointment in the competitive service when these service members submit a certification of expected discharge or release from active duty under honorable conditions along with their applications for Federal employment, was passed in the last Congress and is another tool in assisting veterans in obtaining Federal employment.

The efforts of OPM and other Federal agencies, through the Council on Veterans Employment, to employ veterans in Federal service are already paying dividends. In FY12, veterans accounted for 28.9 percent of all new hires in the Federal Government which is the highest percentage of veteran new hires in the past twenty years and exceeds FY11 which was the previous all-time high. Additionally, the number of veterans in Federal employment has steadily grown from 25.8 percent of the Federal workforce in FY09 to 29.7 percent in FY12. Since FY09, 263,754 new hires in the Federal government have been veterans.

OPM welcomes efforts that support employment of veterans, and is actively engaged with agencies to increase the number of veterans in the Federal workforce. This Administration's efforts in this regard are already showing results in numbers well beyond the goals set forth in S. 495. We are concerned that the planning and reporting requirements contained in the legislation would increase the workload for agencies and detract from efforts already underway. OPM looks forward to continuing to work with this Committee on legislation that aims to assist veterans in obtaining employment following their service for our country as members of the Armed Forces.