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- ☐ 206 FEDERAL BUILDING  
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# United States Senate

CHARLES E. GRASSLEY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1501

February 27, 2008

REPLY TO:

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The Honorable George W. Bush  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush,

I urge you to reform and ramp up your administration's efforts to hire recent combat veterans for federal jobs government-wide, including those who have been disabled in service to their country. You proposed in your State of the Union Address to extend federal veterans preference in hiring to the spouses of service members, which is one piece of what needs to be done to lessen the strain on military families that have sacrificed so much for their country. However, it is essential that federal departments and agencies do a better job of using the authorities given to them by Congress by proactively seeking out and recruiting veterans, particularly those who have served recently in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The September 28, 2007 Employment Histories Report prepared for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) highlighted the difficulty many recently discharged veterans have had in finding employment. This was attributed to factors like inadequate job networks, a lack of mentors after extended periods of deployment, and employers' misplaced stereotypes about veterans' fitness for employment. Because the nature of military service can make it more difficult for veterans to find employment after separating from the service, the federal government has a special obligation to look to veterans first when federal jobs come open. Every state in the nation has recent combat veterans who have the skills, work ethic, and devotion to their country to make excellent federal employees. Furthermore, all federal departments and agencies have existing authorities to hire qualified veterans over other candidates. However, they vary widely in their success in employing veterans.

According to the most recent data published by the Office of Personnel Management, in fiscal year 2006, at the most successful department in hiring veterans, the Air Force, 46.4% of new hires were veterans. Among independent agencies, the Office of Personnel Management topped the list with 28.9%. On the other hand, at the Department of Health and Human Services, only 4.4% of new hires were veterans, and at the Federal Trade Commission, only 1.6% of new hires were veterans. While some variation is to be expected, the wide disparity suggests that some departments and agencies have a much more successful approach to recruiting and hiring veterans.

For example, just last week I received a written response to my question to IRS Commissioner nominee Shulman during the Senate Finance Committee's confirmation hearing regarding my

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Committee Assignments:

BUDGET  
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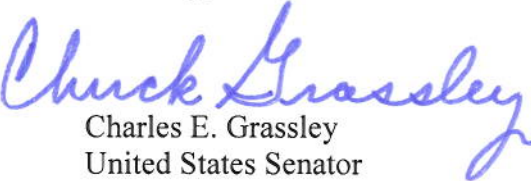
CO-CHAIRMAN,  
INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS  
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request for a commitment to hire one thousand Iraq and Afghanistan veterans this fiscal year. The Department of the Treasury came near the bottom of the list for success in hiring veterans in fiscal year 2006 with only 6.4 percent of new hires being veterans. Yet, the response included very little concrete information about what the agency will do to proactively recruit and hire recent combat veterans.

I seek your commitment to establishing a goal that 10% of new hires in all federal departments and agencies be veterans, with particular emphasis on recent combat veterans, especially those who have been disabled in combat. Your leadership is needed to undertake a government-wide effort to ensure that all departments and agencies have in place a plan to proactively recruit and hire recent combat veterans in every state where they have job openings. I also suggest that you evaluate what federal departments and agencies are doing that works, where shortcomings are, and develop a set of best practices for use government-wide to assist in recruiting and hiring recent combat veterans, particularly those with combat disabilities.

I ask for your commitment to this goal and I look forward to your written response by April 1, 2008. Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your support of our combat veterans across the nation.

Sincerely,

  
Charles E. Grassley  
United States Senator