

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 1, 2008

Dear Senator Grassley:

In your letter to the President, dated February 27, 2008, you raised a number of important issues related to veterans employment in the Federal Government. You urged the President to establish a goal “that 10% of new hires in all Federal departments and agencies be veterans, with particular emphasis on recent combat veterans, especially those...disabled in combat.”

The President wholeheartedly agrees that our nation owes a special debt of gratitude to those who have put themselves in harm’s way on its behalf, and to their families. His State of the Union Address this year highlighted the need for Federal government hiring preferences to be extended to spouses as well as veterans. This simple step will help alleviate the lower-than-average employment rates for military spouses.

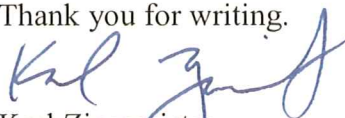
Numerous statutory authorities exist to promote the hiring of veterans in the Federal government. For example, Veterans Recruitment Appointments allow expedited placement of eligible veterans in positions up to GS-11 or its equivalent. Authority under 30% or More Disabled Veterans allows a hiring manager to appoint an eligible candidate to any position for which he is qualified without competition, up to GS-15. The Veterans Employment Opportunities Act of 1998 gives eligible veterans access to jobs that otherwise would have been available to ‘status employees’—those already inside an agency or those with reinstatement eligibility. Veterans are eligible for either a 5- or 10-point addition to their qualifying score in the competitive examination process.

Outreach is a key part of any effort to employ veterans. To that end, the Department of Veterans Affairs National Veterans Employment Program (NVEP) is a leading advocate for the use of special hiring authorities to obtain employees for the VA. The VA also conducts outreach at military transition centers, job fairs, and veterans’ conferences. VA’s outreach efforts include the Coming Home To Work initiative, which has coordinators in every state. The Office of Personnel Management and the Department of Labor also promote the hiring of disabled and non-disabled veterans in myriad ways.

These multiple efforts have yielded significant results: the percentage of veterans employed in the Federal non-Postal workforce is currently 25%—well above a 10% goal. This is a recent high, and the employment percentages of disabled veterans and disabled veterans rated more than 30% by the VA have both increased since 2002.

We are continuing to implement the recommendations of the Interagency Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes, which will likely continue the great success our veterans have had in seeking employment in the Federal government. I thank you for your laudable commitment to veterans employment, and want you to know the President strongly shares your aims.

Thank you for writing.



Karl Zinsmeister
Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy