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United States Senate

CHARLES E. GRASSLEY
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1501

April 2, 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,

The response, dated April 1, 2008, from your staff to my letter to you of February 27, 2008, regarding hiring of veterans provided examples of the numerous existing authorities for the hiring of veterans in the federal government, which I had alluded to in my letter, and described the outreach efforts on the part of the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Labor and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). It also expressed that you share my aims of improving the veterans hiring practices of the federal government. I am glad to be assured of that fact.

Nevertheless, aside from these restatements of existing programs and broad assurances, the response lacked much substance and the central request of my letter remains unaddressed. I am aware of the current figures from OPM on the employment of veterans in the federal government overall. However, the overall figures hide a wide disparity between various departments and agencies in terms of their success in recruiting and hiring veterans. In fact, my letter to you specifically cited figures from OPM for individual agencies illustrating the disparity. I pointed out that, in fiscal year 2006, 46.4% of new hires in the Air Force were veterans, while at the Department of Health and Human Services, only 4.4% of new hires were veterans. Among independent agencies, the Office of Personnel Management was the most successful, hiring 28.9% veterans, while at the Federal Trade Commission, only 1.6% of new hires were veterans.

I still seek your commitment to establishing a very reasonable and attainable goal that, at a minimum, 10% of new hires in ALL federal departments and agencies be veterans. More than one-third of federal departments are not currently meeting that goal, according to the most recent data from OPM, and well over half of independent agencies fall short.

To accomplish this goal, I proposed 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. Also, since clearly some departments and agencies are already successful in hiring a significant number of veterans, I suggested evaluating what federal departments and agencies are doing that works, where shortcoming are, and developing a set of best practices for use by ALL federal departments and agencies. It would also be wise to reward departments and agencies that are particularly successful in hiring veterans in some way.

RANKING MEMBER,
FINANCE

Committee Assignments:
BUDGET
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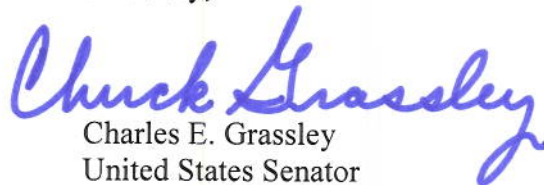
CO-CHAIRMAN,
INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS
CONTROL CAUCUS

My primary concern remains the fact that recent combat veterans who have returned from serving their country so bravely have been shown to have more difficulty in finding employment than those who have not served. In fact, just yesterday, an article in the *Washington Post* highlighted this fact, citing the survey for the Department of Veterans Affairs that found eighteen percent of the veterans recently back from tours of duty unemployed. Therefore, I am less concerned about the proportion of the federal workforce that are veterans than the current hiring practices of individual federal departments and agencies. Moreover, I am particularly concerned that opportunities be extended to those who have been disabled in combat.

I reiterate my request that you commit to a goal of having at least 10% of new hires in each federal department and agency be veterans and that your administration undertake a coordinated effort to ensure that ALL federal departments and agencies are proactively reaching out to recent combat veterans, including disabled combat veterans, whose service to their country makes them ideal candidates for the federal workforce. I am disappointed that your staff's response to my previous letter attempted to change the subject and ignore my request. I ask that you now provide me with a clear response on whether or not you will make such a commitment.

As there has already been ample time to consider these issues, I look forward to your reply no later than April 11, 2008.

Sincerely,


Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator