

News Release

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Contact Name: Michael Volpe or Gloria Della

Phone Number: (202) 693-3984 or x8666

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US Labor Department proposes rule to improve employment of protected veterans

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs today announced a proposed rule to strengthen affirmative action requirements of federal contractors and subcontractors for veterans protected under the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974. Veterans protected by VEVRAA include those with disabilities and those recently discharged as well as those who served during a war, campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge is authorized. The proposed rule will be published in the April 26 edition of the *Federal Register*.

"At the Labor Department, we support veterans as they seek meaningful ways to apply their talents to expand the American economy. By re-examining our affirmative action requirements, we will ensure that our nation's veterans are protected against discrimination and provided equal opportunity in the workforce," said OFCCP Director Patricia A. Shiu.

The award of a federal contract comes with a number of responsibilities. Among them are complying with non-discrimination and affirmative action provisions, engaging in meaningful and effective efforts to recruit and employ veterans protected under VEVRAA, and maintaining accurate records on affirmative action efforts. Failure to abide by these responsibilities may result in various sanctions, from withholding progress payments to termination of existing contracts and debarment from receiving future ones.

The framework articulating a contractor's responsibilities with respect to affirmative action, recruitment and placement has remained unchanged since 1976. Increasing numbers of veterans are returning from tours of duty, and many are faced with substantial obstacles in finding employment upon leaving the service.

The proposed rule clarifies mandatory job listing requirements, under which a contractor must provide job vacancy and contact information for each of its locations to an appropriate employment service delivery system. The rule proposes requiring contractors to engage in at least three specified types of outreach and recruitment efforts each year. In addition, the proposed rule would require that all applicants be invited to self-identify as a "protected veteran" before they are offered a job. Increasing data collection on job referrals, applicants and hires, and requiring contractors to establish hiring benchmarks to assist in measuring the effectiveness of their affirmative action efforts also are proposed.

Comments on the notice of proposed rulemaking must be submitted by June 25. Visit the federal e-rulemaking portal, <http://www.regulations.gov>, to submit comments.

In addition to VEVRAA, OFCCP's legal authority exists under Executive Order 11246 and Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. As amended, these three laws hold those who do business with the federal government, both contractors and subcontractors, to the fair and reasonable standard that they not discriminate in employment on the basis of gender, race, color, religion, national origin, disability or status as a protected veteran. For general information, call OFCCP's toll-free helpline at 800-397-6251. Additional information is available at <http://www.dol.gov/ofccp>.