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Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

November 09, 2009

President Obama Launches Major Veterans Employment Initiative

Initiative Would Transform Federal Government into Model of Veterans Employment

Washington, DC – Today, the White House announced the launch of an initiative that is designed to transform the federal government into the model employer of America's veterans. This evening, President Obama will be joined by Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki, Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis, Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano and Office of Personnel Management Director John Berry to sign an Executive Order on the Employment of Veterans in the federal government, which establishes the Veterans Employment Initiative for the Executive Branch. The Initiative underscores to federal agencies the importance of recruiting and training veterans, aims to increase the employment of veterans within the Executive Branch, and helps recently hired veterans adjust to service in a civilian capacity.

"Honoring our sacred trust with America's veterans means doing all we can to help them find work when they come home so they never feel as if the American Dream they fought to defend is out of reach for them and their families," said **President Obama**. "But this initiative is about more than repaying our debt for their courageous service and selfless sacrifice. It's also about continuing to fill the ranks of federal employees with men and women who possess the skills, dedication, and sense of duty that Americans deserve from their public servants. And few embody those qualities like our nation's veterans."

The Executive Order creates an interagency **Council on Veterans Employment** that will advise the President and the Director of the Office of Personnel Management on the veterans' employment initiative. The Council will be chaired by Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis and Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki. OPM Director John Berry will serve as the Vice Chair and Chief Operating Officer of the Council.

"Veterans have shown unmatched dedication to public service," said **Secretary Shinseki**. "They offer leadership and technical skills that are in high demand, whether in the public or private workforce. Not only does this initiative present an opportunity for Veterans to serve their Nation once again, the Nation will benefit from the education and training Veterans received in the Armed Forces. I am looking forward to working with Secretary Solis and Director Berry to achieve the objectives of this initiative across the federal government."

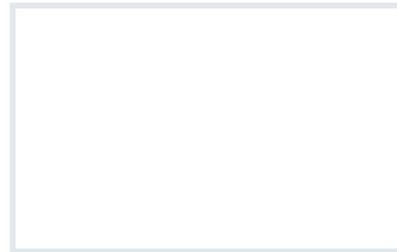
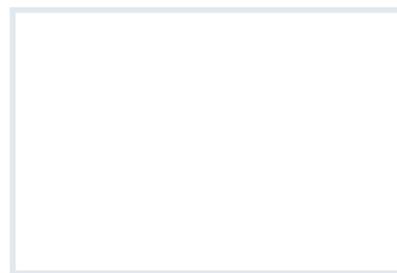
"Veterans are an important part of our nation's past, present and future. They deserve our full support as they reintegrate into the civilian workforce," said **Secretary Solis**, "In signing this Executive Order, President Obama underscores his Administration's commitment to our military men and women, and keeps us squarely on the path to achieving the goal of good jobs for everyone."

"President Obama strongly believes in honoring the service of our veterans and he sees this initiative as an opportunity to put some real muscle behind that promise," said **Director Berry**. "The strong sense of patriotism and public service held by members of our armed forces doesn't leave them when they exit from active duty. It benefits our government to seize this opportunity to utilize their skills and dedication to service. The Veterans Employment Initiative will help our federal agencies identify qualified veterans, clarify the hiring process for veterans seeking employment with the federal government, and help our veterans adjust to civilian life once they are hired."

The Order also establishes a Veterans Employment Program office within most federal agencies. These offices will be responsible for helping veterans identify employment opportunities within those federal agencies, providing feedback to veterans about their employment application status, and helping veterans recently employed by these agencies adjust to civilian life and a workplace culture often different than military service.

In addition, the Office of Personnel Management will issue a government-wide strategic plan that will focus on creating leadership commitment and an infrastructure in each agency to promote continued skills development and employment success for veterans. The strategic plan will also include marketing strategies aimed at agency hiring managers as well as veterans and transitioning service members.

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"This Executive Order reflects the shared commitment across the Obama administration to hiring American veterans," said **Secretary Napolitano**. "Veterans play a vital role in the Department of Homeland Security's mission to protect the nation, which is why we have pledged to grow our veteran workforce to more than 50,000 Department-wide by 2012."

At the end of Fiscal Year 2008, there were approximately 480,000 veterans working within the federal government.

For more information, visit: www.fedshirevets.gov

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