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Veterans Can Continue Public Service in Civilian Careers – Applying Veterans Preference Benefits

(fifth in a series of articles on veterans pursuing civilian careers)

Career forums and job fairs provide face-to-face opportunities for veterans to learn more about applying for federal civilian positions. Counselors and human resources (HR) professionals say one of the most frequently asked questions centers around veterans' preference.

As early as the Civil War, veterans have received preference in selection for federal jobs. Regulatory updates since then further codified the preferences afforded to those service members who have been discharged or released from active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces under honorable conditions (honorable or general discharge). Retired members of the U.S. Armed Forces are not included in the definition of preference eligible unless they are a disabled veteran or retired below the rank of major or its equivalent.

When job opportunity announcements under the section "Who May Be Considered," indicate all US citizens, veterans preference rules must be applied. For example, when evaluating the qualifications of an applicant, an assessment system is used to rank the applicants. Veterans who meet the regulatory criteria for appointment and preference eligibilities who are found to be minimally qualified receive additional consideration often moving them to the top of a category for selection. Veterans with a 10-point preference may be placed at the top of the highest category for referral.

Veterans claiming preference benefits must include their veteran's preference information on their resume when applying to a job opportunity announcement. Supporting documentation of their preference eligibility should also be uploaded to USAJOBS. Supporting documentation includes a copy of the veteran's DD 214 "Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty" or a statement of service that describe the veteran's character of service from their military personnel office. Additionally, veterans with a service-connected disability should provide a completed SF 15 "Application for 10-Point Veteran Preference." Information on veterans preference criteria is found at www.opm.gov/staffingPortal/Vetguide.asp.



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When job opportunity announcements are open to internal applicants, including current or prior federal employees, veterans preference benefits do not apply and all applicants compete on a level playing field based upon their resume, past performance, interviews and other criteria. Veterans preference does not apply for senior executive service positions; however, the experience is considered as part of the executive core qualifications.

The Department of the Navy (DON) webpage for veterans interested in pursuing civilian careers (www.public.navy.mil/donhr/Employment/Vets/Pages/Default.aspx) not only contains information on the application process, but also provides tip sheets and links to additional resources. Veterans should first pursue the resources and support provided through their local Fleet and Family Service Centers (FFSC). Resources and information also are available through www.fedshirevets.gov/ or, for information on veterans hiring eligibilities and tip sheets to help with the application process, visit the DON Civilian Human Resources website: www.donhr.navy.mil or the Department of Labor Veterans Preference Advisory website at www.dol.gov/elaws/vetspref.htm.

The DON remains committed to improving the applicant's experience, reducing the time to fill vacancies and securing quality candidates for DON positions. Civilian careers in the Department of the Navy offer real world challenges with real life rewards – careers where purpose and patriotism unite. Additional questions on DON civilian employment and the application process may be directed to DON Employment Information Center at DONEic@navy.mil.

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