

Frequently Asked Questions about **Federal Disability Hiring Efforts**

1. What is the federal government doing to hire more people with disabilities?

On July 26th, 2010, the 20th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, President Obama signed Executive Order 13548, instructing the federal government to work to increase the representation of people with disabilities within the federal workforce. The executive order was the latest in a long series of policy measures undertaken by past administrations to support hiring of people with disabilities, including President Clinton's 2000 Executive Order 13163, which called for hiring 100,000 people with disabilities within the federal government within the next five years. President Clinton's Executive Order was never fully implemented by the subsequent administration. As a result, President Obama's new initiative represented the most comprehensive effort by the federal government to act as a "model employer" for people with disabilities, as it has in the past for racial and ethnic minority groups.

2. What is the Schedule A Hiring Authority?

The Schedule A Hiring Authority is a tool that hiring managers in the federal workforce can use to streamline the process to bring on a new employee when hiring a qualified person with a disability. Schedule A can be used for any person with a , intellectual disabilities, severe physical disabilities, or psychiatric disabilities that meets the qualifications for a vacancy. To use Schedule A, you need a certificate of job readiness and proof of disability from a doctor, licensed medical or rehabilitation professional or any federal or state agency that issues or provides disability benefits. Alongside similar programs for service-disabled veteran's, Schedule A represents an important asset in efforts to enhance the representation of people with disabilities in the federal workforce.

...President Obama's new initiative represented the most comprehensive effort by the federal government to act as a "model employer" for people with disabilities...

3. What is the May 30th DOJ memo “Hiring of Persons with Targeted Disabilities Policy” about?

On May 30th, the Department of Justice issued a memo entitled, “Hiring of Persons with Targeted Disabilities Policy”. The memo was in response to the President’s executive order on hiring people with disabilities and outlined the Department’s plan to achieve compliance with the order, including through the use of the Schedule A Special Hiring Authority. On August 22nd, the Washington Times cited the memo in an editorial called “Holder’s ‘Severe Mental Deficiency,’” stating, “Most employers would balk at even minor mental disabilities in hiring a lawyer, let alone severe ones. But the policy states that the Cabinet department run by Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. must “achieve a work force from all segments of society,” which includes those who are teetering on the edge of sanity.”

Apart from the blatant offensiveness of the editorial itself, the Washington Times makes numerous factual errors in characterizing the policy it discusses. First, the Schedule A program it attacks is not a policy of Attorney General Holder or even President Obama – it dates back several decades and is in place across the federal government. Second, the program specifically requires that individuals be qualified in order to be hired – and must serve in a probationary period prior to being converted to a permanent position. Furthermore, far from being unprecedented, similar hiring authorities exist for veterans with and without disabilities.

...the Washington Times makes numerous factual errors in characterizing the policy it discusses.

4. Is it true that the Schedule A Hiring Authority lets the federal government hire unqualified workers?

No, this is a myth. Just like the competitive hiring process, prospective employees must be qualified for the vacancies with which they are applying for to be hired under Schedule A.

5. What is Standard Form 256? How is it used?

People with disabilities join the federal workforce through a wide variety of avenues, including both Schedule A and other disability focused hiring authorities as well as the competitive hiring process. To track progress in hiring and retention of people with disabilities hired both through the competitive hiring process and through Schedule A, each new employee to the federal government is given the opportunity to fill

out Standard Form 256 (SF-256). SF-256 lists various types of disabilities and gives each new federal employee an opportunity to voluntarily and anonymously self-identify as a person with a disability.

The Washington Times' editorial claims, "People may self-identify disability status on the government's Standard Form 256, which states that information provided 'will be used for statistical purposes only and will not in any way affect you individually.' As the Justice Department policy makes clear, this flatly is not true." Once again, the Times' editorial is demonstrably false – the SF-256 form has nothing to do with the Schedule A Hiring Process the Justice Department's memo is about and is used only for tracking progress in hiring people with disabilities.

6. What impact have these policies had to date?

As a result of President Obama's Executive Order 13548, over 3,000 federal employees from 56 agencies have been trained on recruitment techniques using Schedule A and other disability hiring and retention tools. As of Fiscal Year (FY) 2011, new hires who were people with disabilities totaled 18,738, representing an increase from 10.3 percent in FY 2010 to 14.7 percent in FY 2011. Also, in FY 11, the number of non-seasonal, full time permanent Federal employees with disabilities was approximately 204,189, including people with targeted disabilities, all other disabilities, and 30 percent or more disabled Veterans. This is more people with disabilities in federal service both in real terms and by percentage than at any time in the past 20 years.

...the [Schedule A] program specifically requires that individuals be qualified in order to be hired – and must serve in a probationary period prior to being converted to a permanent position.