

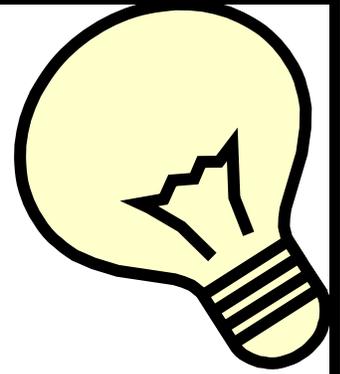
The

Illuminator

Shedding Light on the HR World

7-2010

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This publication is issued to ensure the Fort Benning commanders, managers, supervisors, and employees are kept informed of employment and staffing issues. Monthly issuances will contain updated information on specific employment topics (i.e., compensation, recruiting procedures, travel entitlements, classification issues, NSPS, the Maneuver Center of Excellence (MCOE) civilian transition, etc.).

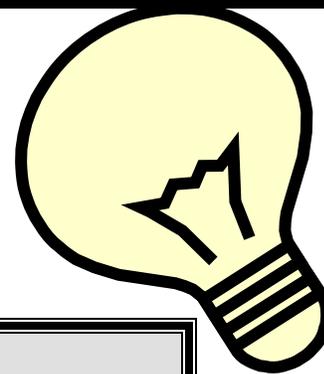
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Retirement, Life/Health Insurance, TSP, Social Security and Such

The Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS). The Federal Employee Retirement System, or FERS, is a retirement plan offered to employees working in different agencies and departments of the U. S. Federal government. This program was formulated to provide financial support to all beneficiaries and their qualified dependents at the time of their retirement, disability, or death.

Components of FERS

Recipients of the Federal Employee Retirement System receive their benefits from three various components, namely:

Basic Benefit Plan – Employees paid their contribution for this plan every payroll schedule during their civil service employment. For individuals to become eligible in this program, they must be employed in any federal government agency for a minimum of 5 years of creditable service. As beneficiary of this plan, the employee can receive retirement benefits, disability benefits, special retirement supplement benefits (for special cases), and survivors benefits for qualified dependents.

Social Security Benefits – The beneficiary gets Social Security benefits from the Social Security taxes he/she paid each year through his employment payroll. The types of benefits received are retirement benefits, disability benefits (if the beneficiary becomes disabled while employed), and survivors benefits for eligible dependents if and when the beneficiary dies.

Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) – This plan is the FERS' counterpart of 401(k) retirement plan offered by private companies to their employees. TSP is a tax-deferred savings and investment plan wherein workers are given the right to decide the amount they want to deposit in their thrift account every pay day, as well as choose investment options in how they want their money invested. The employee can only withdraw the funds after he/she leaves the federal job. The employee can collect the account in a single or multiple payments, or buy a life annuity through TSP.

Retirement Eligibility and Categories

The Federal Employee Retirement System determines the eligibility of a worker using the total number of creditable years he/she worked in the Federal government and the age the employee retires. Typically, for a recipient to avail of retirement benefits, the recipient's age should be covered in the Minimum Retirement Age rule set by FERS.

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There are four types of retirement benefits a federal employee may apply for. They are:

Immediate retirement—benefits are received after 30 days he/she left the Federal service. The employee must have at least worked 5 creditable years in the government and his/her age is 62.

Early retirement—is offered to workers who voluntarily or involuntarily separate from work because of certain administrative reasons affecting the federal agency they are working in. To qualify for early retirement, an employee must have worked a minimum of 20 years at the age of 50.

Deferred retirement—is for people who resigned from their federal civilian job before their retirement age, but had worked at least 5 years of creditable service in the government. The payment of retirement benefits are postponed until the employee turns 62 years old.

Disability retirement—is given to individuals who become mentally or physically incapacitated while working in an environment under FERS. There is no limit for age as long as he/she was employed in the government for a minimum of 18 months.

TSP Payday. This article was written by Tammy Flanagan, National Institute of Transition Planning. Any references to “I” refer to her as the author.

Figures recently issued by the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board, which oversees the Thrift Savings Plan, show that 75 participants in the TSP currently have accounts valued at \$1 million or more. And one savvy investor has at least \$3 million socked away.

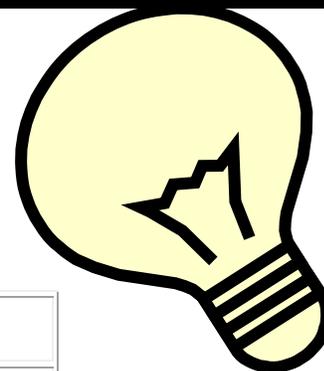
All told, more than 10,000 TSP participants have at least \$500,000 in their accounts. I decided to run some numbers through the TSP calculator to find out what kind of income \$500,000 would provide a retiree. It turns out that with that kind of money, you could:

- * Withdraw \$3,000 per month for 30 years if the remaining balance in the account continued to earn 6 percent interest.
- * Withdraw \$2,500 a month for 27 and a half years if the remaining balance earned 4 percent interest.
- * Provide a payout based on life expectancy at the following schedule (based on taking advantage of this option at 57, and assuming the account balance continued to earn a 6 percent rate of return):

Please see the table below.

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Age	Montly Payment	Age	Montly Payment	Age	Montly Payment	Age	Montly Payment
57	\$1,493.43	69	\$2,842.41	81	\$3,378.30	93	\$5,231.20
58	\$1,581.25	70*	\$1,853.24	82	\$3,550.37	94	\$5,265.12
59	\$1,674.08	71	\$1,962.12	83	\$3,729.32	95	\$5,282.36
60	\$1,772.17	72	\$2,077.19	84	\$3,915.12	96	\$5,280.62
61	\$1,868.13	73	\$2,198.79	85	\$4,079.90	97	\$5,257.33
62	\$1,977.19	74	\$2,327.23	86	\$4,247.65	98	\$5,209.68
63	\$2,083.13	75	\$2,462.89	87	\$4,417.73	99	\$5,057.91
64	\$2,204.20	76	\$2,606.11	88	\$4,589.35	100	\$4,881.39
65	\$2,320.86	77	\$2,744.26	89	\$4,761.53	101	\$4,679.08
66	\$2,442.89	78	\$2,903.03	90	\$4,889.77	102	\$4,450.05
67	\$2,570.42	79	\$3,054.72	91	\$5,012.03	103	\$4,112.98
68	\$2,703.57	80	\$3,213.11	92	\$5,126.53	104**	\$3,766.84

- * The balance in the account at death is payable to the account holder's beneficiary.
- * While receiving payments, the account balance still can be transferred among the various TSP investment options.
- * If a final lump-sum payment is desired, the payments can be stopped and the account balance can be paid in cash or transferred to an individual retirement account.
- * You can choose this option at any age without incurring a tax penalty for early withdrawal.
- * Changing from monthly payments based on life expectancy to a fixed monthly payment amount could make you liable for the 10 percent penalty tax on the payments you previously received, if you make the change within five years of beginning your payments or before you are age 59 and a half.

To explore other withdrawal scenarios using a different account balance, different interest rate assumptions, and a different age at the time payments begin, use the calculators at the TSP website <<http://www.tsp.gov/calc/index.html>> .

Federal Retirements Drop. It appears that the ongoing economic downturn has slowed the number of federal workers who are retiring to the lowest level in seven years.

In fiscal 2009, the Office of Personnel reported that 43,649 full-time employees retired. That figure is 27 percent lower than OPM's earlier projections.

Federal retirements have not been this low since 2002, when 41,699 employees retired.

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OPM still estimates that more than 575,000 federal workers will retire between now and 2018.

Turning your TSP into an Income Stream. Turning accumulated savings in the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) into a stream of income is a goal for federal employees who are hoping to retire at a comfortable level. This is particularly true for FERS employees who get a less generous pension than employees who are covered by CSRS.

If you are a FERS employee who has worked 35 years, your pension will be 35% of your high-three salary if you are under age 62, or 38.5% of your high-three average annual salary if you are 62 or older.

The average Social Security benefit is slightly less than \$14,000 per year. Let's look at an employee who retires at age 62 with 35 years of service. How much will this employee need to make up from their TSP and other investments to have a retirement income that is 90% of their final salary? A 90% replacement rate would let a retiree continue to live at or near the standard of living they had before they retired.

The employee in this example has a final salary of \$64,000 and a high-three salary of \$60,000. In order to replace 90% of the final salary of \$64,000, the retiree will need \$57,600.

90% of Final Salary		\$57,600
Annual FERS annuity (high-three x 1.1% per year for 35 years, a total of 38.5%)	\$23,100	
Annual Social Security (this employee would receive a somewhat larger than average benefit)	\$15,000	
Total FERS and SS	\$38,100	\$38,100
Shortfall		\$19,500

Making Up Lost Income During Retirement

Where could you get an income of \$19,500 a year?

The TSP would be one source. So would IRAs, the proceeds from selling your home and downsizing or even working part time during the early years of retirement. This article will not address the topic of how much money is needed to generate an annual income of

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\$19,500. We will simply look at the choices you have inside and outside your Thrift Savings Plan to generate a stream of income for your retirement.

Withdrawal Choices

If you leave your money in the TSP after you retire, there are two withdrawal choices that can generate a stream of income.

One of these choices is what the TSP refers to as "Substantially Equal Monthly Payments". You can choose to have payments of a certain dollar amount per month, or you can choose to have the TSP send you payments based on the IRS life expectancy table. If you choose payments of a specific dollar amount they cannot be less than \$25 per month and can be changed once a year, during an open season in December.

As long as you retire in the year in which you reach the age of 55 (or later) you will not be subject to the 10% early withdrawal penalty on any monthly payments from the TSP. Those who retired earlier than the year in which they reached age 55 (e.g., law enforcement, firefighters, etc.) will be subject to the 10% early withdrawal penalty on all monthly payments taken before reaching 59 ½.

If you retire earlier than the year in which you reach 55, you can manage to avoid the penalty if you follow IRS rule 72(t). Under 72(t), if you base your monthly payments on the IRS life expectancy table and continue following the table for the longer of reaching age 59 ½, or five years, you are exempt from the penalty.

The other choice for those who leave their money in the TSP is purchasing a TSP annuity. TSP annuities are sold by MetLife. A TSP annuity will guarantee that you will not run out of money in your lifetime. Joint annuities provide that protection for spouses as well as for those who have an insurable interest in your life. There are no early withdrawal penalties with TSP annuities, regardless of your age when you begin payments.

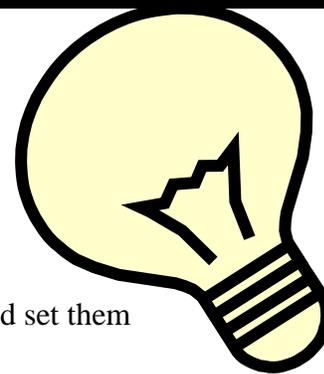
The book, *Withdrawing Your TSP Account After Leaving Federal Service*, has detailed information on these two withdrawal methods (as well as other methods). The book is available on the [TSP website](#).

Rolling Over Your TSP

Of course, you are not required to leave your money in the TSP. Many retirees choose to move their money into an Individual Retirement Account (IRA). Within an IRA you can set up monthly payments, just like you can in the TSP. IRAs however, give you more flexibility in changing the amount of your payments. You can change the amount at any

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time. In fact, your payments do not even have to be taken monthly. You could set them up bi-monthly, semi-annually, or however you want.

Once you roll money into an IRA, you will face the 10% early withdrawal penalty on any money you withdraw before you reach the age of 59 ½. You can, just like with the TSP, follow IRS rule 72(t) to avoid the penalty.

Money that is in an IRA can also be used to purchase an annuity. You should thoroughly investigate any annuity investments, because all annuities are not created equal. Make sure you completely understand what you are getting in to before you invest your money. There are no early withdrawal penalties with annuities.

How Much Money will I Receive in Retirement? You can determine what you will get from our CSRS or FERS annuity relatively easily. Most agencies have Human Resource websites that will give you a good estimate as to how much you will have when you retire. Also, when you get close to retirement, you can have an Army Benefits Center (ABC-C) human resources specialist compute a retirement benefit for you, just to be sure.

There is also an easy way to figure out to what you are entitled to from Social Security. If you are a FERS employee, chances are that your annual Social Security Statement is correct. Do be aware, however, that the benefits it lists for various ages (i.e., 62, your full retirement age, and 70) are based on the assumption that you will continue to work up until those ages, and that you will continue to make a salary similar to today's.

If, however, you are CSRS, CSRS Offset, or a FERS Transferee, you may be hit by the Windfall Elimination Penalty (WEP). The annual Social Security Statement does not factor in the WEP, so you may be entitled to less than the statement indicates. The website of the Social Security Administration (<http://www.socialsecurity.gov>) has a WEP calculator that allows you get a better handle on what you will get from Social Security.

Determining how much income we will receive from the TSP is a little trickier. If your agency provides an annual benefit statement, it almost certainly lists potential TSP income as a level-payment annuity. The problems with this are that TSP annuities are the least popular withdrawal choice and that a level-payment annuity is not indexed for inflation. How can you get a better estimate?

You can go to the TSP calculator on the TSP website (there is a link to it on the [TSP homepage](#)) and compute a different method of payment. You might want to compute an increasing-payment annuity. Even if you choose a different method of withdrawal, the amount of the increasing-payment annuity estimate will factor in an inflation increase of

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roughly 3% per year. You may be surprised at how much lower the increasing-payment figure will be than the level-payment figure.

You can take the advice on many financial planners who suggest that an annual withdrawal rate of 4% to 5%, increased each year by the amount of inflation will have excellent odds of lasting you for your entire retirement. Planners use Monte Carlo Simulators to come up with these percentages.

The simulator runs hundreds, or thousands, of possible investment scenarios, from the very positive to the very negative and gives odds of running out of money in a fixed period of time, usually 30 years. Assuming a portfolio that is 60% stocks and 40% fixed income investments, the odds of running out of money in 30 years at a 4% withdrawal rate is less than 5%. Using the same assumption, the odds of running out of money at a 5% withdrawal rate is less than 10%. In addition, there is an excellent chance that you will have money left over for heirs.

Benefits Q&A.

Special Category Positions:

Q: I am currently in a law enforcement position, as a Federal Employees Retirement System employee, and I am covered under the special group of employees Firefighters, Law Enforcement Officers, and Air Traffic Controllers retirement. I am considering, after 10 years of service, a lateral transfer to a GS-13 position, with the Defense Department (non-law enforcement) with more potential for promotion and a significant decrease on my commute. Since I paid an increase of .5 percent to FERS for 10-plus years, why doesn't the 1.7 percent transfer in government to government services?

A: Under the law, only those special category employees who have completed 20 years of covered service are entitled to have their annuities computed using the more generous formula. The standard formula is used to compute the annuities of anyone who has fewer than 20 years of covered service.

Social Security Benefits:

Q: I plan to retire in June 2011 on my 62nd birthday. If I work up until that date and make approximately \$20,000 will my Social Security benefits be reduced?

A: The Social Security Administration has a special "first year" rule that lets them pay a full Social Security check for any whole month they consider you retired, regardless of your yearly earnings. In other words, the pay you received before retiring won't count against the earnings limit. Note: In 2010, if you are below full retirement age, you are

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considered retired in any month that your earnings are \$1,180 or less and you did not perform substantial services in self employment.

Disability Payments:

Q: I am an 80 percent disabled veteran right now. I have applied for a Federal Employees Retirement System disability retirement, and they I was told it would take three to six months. Is that about the right time? I thought it would go through rather quickly.

I went to apply for Social Security, but until I am not working, they can't process my claim. Same thing with Veterans Affairs. I gave them an individual unemployment form, then they said I had to wait until I am not working. Is that right? I applied for Social Security under the Wounded Warrior Program – Desert Storm and Afghanistan in 2003 Veteran – and it is supposed to be fast tracked. I also got to meet the people I need to contact when I have to file again.

Why is disability from the federal government taxable? It is ridiculous that they do that, and can you provide me info on that as well?

A: The speed with which disability retirement applications are processed by the Office of Personnel Management depends on the volume of work they are handling and the complexity of the cases that are in line before they get to yours.

The criteria for disability retirement from the civil service are different from those for the Social Security Administration. For the former, you only need to be disabled to the point that you can't provide useful and efficient service in your current job or one that's open at current current grade or pay within your agency's commuting area. To be considered disabled by the Social Security, you have to be disabled for all gainful employment. If you are still working you are considered to be gainfully employed. While the VA's rules may be the same, I'm in no position to comment about them because they apply to the military and fall outside the scope of this forum.

As a rule, civilian disability annuities are taxable as regular income, unless you are deemed to be totally disabled, a determination that is originally made by the Social Security Administration and reviewed by the Internal Revenue Service. While you may think that taxing that income is ridiculous, it is a matter of law.

Social Security Disability Benefits:

Q: I read somewhere that if you had enough quarters of Social Security, like 28 or 30, you could qualify for your Social Security pay based on that and I would get both my

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Federal Employees Retirement System and Social Security disability retirement money, without there being an offset. Is that correct?

A: The criteria for receiving a Social Security disability benefits are much higher than those for a FERS disability benefit. To receive such a benefit with fewer than 40 credits, you would have had to be covered under Social Security from the time you turned age 22. Under no circumstance would you receive both benefits without an offset. The FERS law is clear. If you are receiving a FERS disability benefit, during the first year you will receive 60 percent of your High-3, minus 100 percent of any Social Security disability benefit. After the first 12 months, you'll receive 40 percent of your High-3 minus 60 percent of and Social Security disability benefit. At age 62, your annuity would be recomputed as if you had actually worked to that age.

CSRS Employment:

Q: I was a Civil Service Retirement System employee who quit after eight years of service to take care of my ailing mother. After the what I believe is the three year window for rehire into CSRS, I never tried to go back. It has been 20 years. Recently, I have heard of a legal case that might allow me to be rehired under CSRS. Under what circumstances could I now go back as a CSRS rehire?

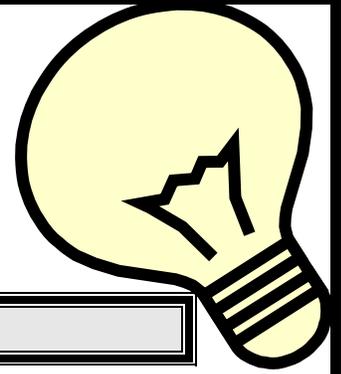
When I was hired originally in 1981, I was eligible for a GS-9, but took a much lower grade so I could get on board sooner to start earning money. I was assured that I would be able to move to the higher grade quickly. It never happened. I left as a GS-6, despite having been left in place in two positions where I was doing the duties of GS-12s who had gone elsewhere. I have been assured that under current rules, if I am eligible for a GS-12, I will be hired as a GS-12. Is that really likely? What is the rumor-mill saying?

A: Since you had at least five years of service under CSRS, if you were to return to work for the federal government, you would be offered a choice of being covered by CSRS Offset (CSRS and Social Security) or the Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS). No legal case was required to make this happen. It's a matter of law and has been since 1987.

If you apply for a job with the federal government, your grade level will be determined the same way that it has always been. You can be hired or rehired into any grade level position for which you meet the requirements.

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Employment-Related News

Professional Resume Services: Are they Worth it? Your resume is the most important part of your job search. A job search is an intense experience, and having a well-crafted resume can make it go much smoother. The importance of a good resume, then, may make you wonder if you should use a professional service to write your resume for you. But you also may wonder how a company full of strangers write my history better than I could?

You may know your work history better than they do, but you just may not be able to translate it well into words or into the format that is accepted in the professional world. You may feel that you are cheating by hiring a professional resume writing service, or your pride may even be wounded.

But a resume is just too important to let your pride get in the way. So many other people will be vying for the same job as you, that it is absolutely essential to have a premier resume to represent your qualifications. This will make sure that you stand out from the crowd of applicants. There are many advantages to using a professional resume service including:

1) They Will Create Your Resume

By creating your resume from scratch, a professional resume writing service is able to completely use the information that they have learned about you to create a brilliant resume. If you work with a good resume service they should go so far as to interview you in order to learn as much as possible before writing your resume. Often, professional resume writing services will have clients fill out questionnaires and give them copies of their old resumes. This allows them to have as much relevant information as possible to create the best possible resume.

2) They Know Resumes

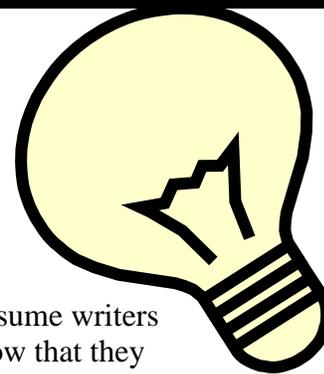
Professional resume services understand what employers are looking for in a resume. There are certain formats of resumes for some fields and industries, and professional resume writers know this and will tailor your resume to fit.

3) They Have Experience and Skills

As with most other industries and fields, professional resume writing has many certifications. Certifications can be earned by an individual or by a company. If you want to find a good resume writing service, look for these certifications in their

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advertisements, or just ask if the service has earned any of them. Certified resume writers have significant experience and have had to meet strict standards, so you know that they are well-qualified to be shaping your resume.

4) You Can Have Confidence In Their Work

If you have found a good resume writing service, they will usually offer you a guarantee. Often, this means that they will continue editing and revising the resume until you like it. Sometimes, they will even re-write the entire resume if you do not have any results with the original version.

5) They Will Distribute It For You

Resume writing services will often use their large number of connections to give out your resume. This is a huge help to you, as it certainly cuts down on the footwork you must do during the already stressful job hunt. Also, since resume writers are in the business of knowing what employers are looking for, the chance that you will be called in for an interview is much higher.

With these five reasons to hire a resume writing service, the answer seems obvious - hiring a professional is the right choice. It will give you a professional resume that will be more likely to land you a job.

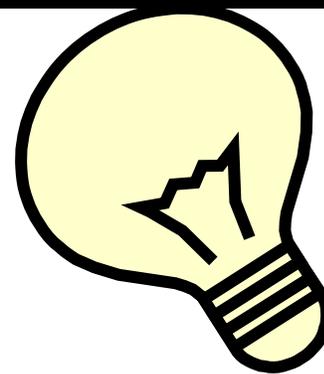
However, it is important to remember that hiring a [professional resume writing service](#) will cost money. It is important, then, to do the necessary research and to find the professional resume writing service that you think fits your needs the best.

Overall, resume writing is something that is learned. It is a skill, and one that may require professional level experience. During your job search, it is most likely in your best interest to research professional resume writing services and to eventually hire one to help you in your job search. By writing your own resume you may be severely limiting your chances at landing your dream job.

Going Back to Work for Uncle Sam. There are specific rules and regulations on returning to work for Uncle Sam after you retire. This article will not attempt to answer the question as to **why** someone would want to return to working for the federal government after retiring. It will simply address the **how**.

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Basically, there are three ways to return to a federal position.

1. By accepting a non-waivered position
2. By accepting a waived position
3. By returning part time based on a 2009 change in civil service law

There is a legal prohibition against receiving "dual compensation" from the federal government (e.g., receiving both your pension and a full salary from a government job. This prohibition can be waived in certain situations, and has been repealed for certain approved part-time work (effective in late 2009).

If you are returning to a "non-waivered" position (i.e., a position that has not received a waiver of the prohibition on dual compensation, or is not approved part-time work), you cannot receive both your pension and the full salary for the job. You will receive your pension, but the salary of the job to which you return will be reduced dollar for dollar by the amount of your pension. If you make retirement contributions during this period of re-employment, you can become entitled to additional annuity payments.

- If you remain in the new position as a re-employed annuitant for more than one year, but less than five years, you will, upon your "re-retirement", become entitled to a supplemental annuity based on that period of re-employment
- If you remain in the new position for more than five years, your entire annuity will be recomputed when you re-retire.

If you are returning to a "waivered" position (i.e., a position that has received a waiver from the prohibition on dual compensation), you will receive the full salary for the job and your full annuity. Your re-employment will be limited to two years, and you will not earn any additional retirement credit for this period of re-employment.

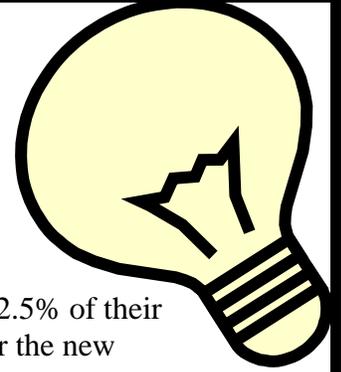
The prohibition against dual compensation is generally waived only for special purposes. Currently you may find waived positions in agencies that deal with national security and counter-terrorism. Earlier, you found many waivers being granted for Y2K issues.

These rules do not apply to someone who retired under discontinued service retirement (not a common occurrence). They have special rules; when they return to federal employment, their annuity ends.

In late 2009 civil service legislation was passed that allowed federal retirees to return to work part-time for a limited period without losing any of their annuity. OPM recently announced implementing regulations.

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The outlines of the legislation provide that agencies cannot allow more than 2.5% of their positions to be covered by the rules and that people who return to work under the new provisions:

- Cannot work more than 1040 hours per year and not more than 520 hours in six months
- Cannot work more than a grand total of 3,120 hours

A Guide to Writing Executive Corps Qualifications (ECQ). ECQ stands for Executive Core Qualifications and they are a vital part of what is looked at when you apply for a Senior Executive Service, or SES, position with the Government. Only the cream of the crop need apply for SES positions and if you are one of the elite than you are among good company.

However, because you are among such distinguished company you have to be sure that you stand out even more than they will in order to be considered for the SES position you seek. One sure way to accomplish this task is by performing successful ECQ writing. Well written ECQs can mean the difference of an interview with a federal review board or your SES resume and your poorly written ECQs hitting the bottom of a trash can in a hurry.

The hiring recruiters that work for the federal Government use the ECQs that you submit along with those of everyone else competing for the same opening to help them determine who among you will have the competencies and the characteristics that they will be require for the specific opening. So as outstanding as you are, if your ECQs are not written properly you are literally shooting yourself in the foot and can easily cost yourself your dream job.

There are five main ECQs that are usually required when applying for an SES position. The five main ECQs are:

1. ECQ 1: The first ECQ will deal with Leading Change.
2. ECQ 2: The second ECQ will deal with Leading People.
3. ECQ 3: The third ECQ will be Results Driven.
4. ECQ 4: The fourth ECQ will deal with Business Acumen.
5. ECQ 5: The fifth ECQ will deal with Building Coalitions.

Most of the time all five of these ECQs are required when you are seeking an SES position, but the specific requirements will be on the SES job announcement so you need

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to be sure to look and follow what the announcement is asking for to the letter. Failure to follow these instructions can lead to an automatic disqualification of your application.

The format that you want to use to write your ECQs is known as CCAR. CCAR stands for Challenge, Context, Action, and Results. Writing in the CCAR format ensures that you will cover all that the Government is looking for and the format breaks down as follows:

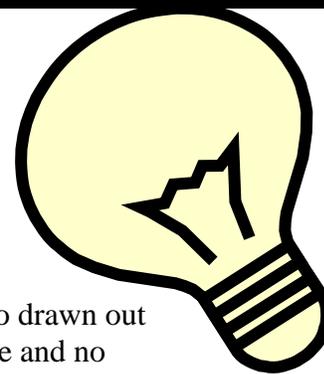
- C, Challenge: This will show your ability to identify and then describe a challenge, a problem, or a specific goal.
- C, Context: Once the challenge, problem, or goal has been identified you will then go into detail about who you may have worked with in order to solve the challenge, problem or goal. You will further want to describe the work environment while the challenge, problem, or goal was being attended to.
- A, Action: Here you will have an opportunity to go into detail about the specific actions that you and anyone else you worked with took when facing the challenge, problem, or goal. The more specific the better and you want to show your ability to perform definitive and decisive actions.
- R, Results: Here you will give the exact outcome that occurred as the direct result of your actions in regards to the challenge, problem, or goal. Here you have a chance to display that you can effectively accomplish tasks and display leadership.

When writing your ECQs using the CCAR format you need to be sure that you are in fact using the proper tone. Yes you want to certainly come off sounding intelligent, but that alone will not suffice. In order to dazzle and stand out you need to have the answers come off sounding as though they are coming from your own voice. So you have to have a nice balance of intelligence and sincerity. Otherwise you risk coming off too pompous or uneducated and neither will get you an SES position.

Each section of the ECQs should be written both clearly and concisely and contain specific examples of your abilities and skills within. An obvious statement that cannot be under-emphasized is the fact that your ECQs should not contain any spelling or grammatical errors whatsoever. To that end be sure to check, re-check, and the re-check again to guarantee the best ECQs possible.

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Another point to keep in mind with the ECQs is that you don't want to get too drawn out with your writing. It is good to keep each section of the ECQs to about a page and no more than a page and a half in length if possible.

As far as how long it should take you to complete your ECQs, there is really no time frame. However, you do need to be sure that your ECQs encompass all the areas that are required and that your ECQs are executed with precision and accuracy.

ECQs are obviously a very important part of obtaining an SES position. Many people try to accomplish the perfect ECQs by themselves, but you have to remember there is a trick to it just like anything else. Fortunately there are a number of ECQ professional writers that you can consult with for help in writing your ECQs or who can take your information and mold it into the perfect ECQ answers.

However you decide to tackle the ECQs just be sure that they are as perfect as you can make them. Your ECQs will be your way of showing the Government that you are in fact the perfect candidate for the SES position that you seek. On the flip side, if your ECQs are written poorly it really won't matter how qualified you are as your ECQs and the rest of your application will never see the light of day.

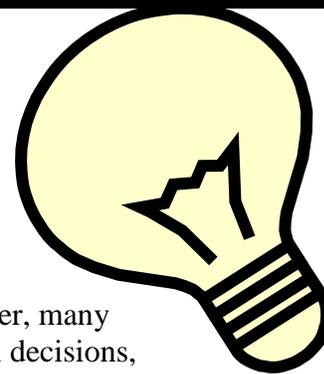
Perceptions of Fair Treatment Improving, Overall. Federal employees over the years have grown increasingly positive in their views regarding treatment in the workplace but perceptions of unfairness remain and minority employees still are more likely than whites to perceive that they have been denied a job benefit due to race or national origin, MSPB has said. In addition, minority employees remain more likely to say they suffered from a lack of career-advancement opportunities and are less confident in promotion processes, it said. Such differences in viewpoints "create the potential for disagreement and discord over matters such as the prevalence and severity of discrimination in federal agencies, the appropriateness of giving agencies and managers greater discretion in hiring and pay, and the need for measures to prevent and address prohibited discrimination." MSPB's report reviewed and updated findings from numerous past reports on prohibited personnel practices, which are actions such as discrimination, coercion, unfair advantages and retaliation that are deemed to violate merit principles.

MSPB is conducting further research on the topic, in particular focusing on whistleblower retaliation.

MSPB said that over the 15 years ending with its most recent detailed look at discrimination in 2007, reports of bias have declined as the workforce meanwhile became more diverse. At the peak in 1996, about 14 percent of employees said they had suffered racial/national origin discrimination in a job decision such as a promotion or a raise, 13 percent gender discrimination and 11 percent age discrimination; now the numbers are around 5 percent in each category. Other forms of discrimination, such as related to

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disability or religion, have remained fairly flat at around 2-3 percent. However, many employees continue to believe that factors such as favoritism drive personnel decisions, and substantial numbers of employees lack confidence in appeals systems such as the EEO process, MSPB added.

Democrats, Unions say Push to Freeze Federal Pay is Demoralizing Workforce.

Ongoing efforts to freeze or cut federal pay to help control U.S. spending are demoralizing and bad for recruitment, according to Democratic lawmakers and unions.

Senate Republicans recently failed to amend a jobs bill with a proposal to pay for the measure by freezing federal worker salaries and capping the number of federal employees. The proposal, pushed by [Sen. John Thune](#) (R-S.D.), was the latest [GOP](#) attempt to pay down the deficit by zeroing in on federal salaries and benefits and other spending on government operations.

"In these challenging economic times, private employers are having to tighten their belts, and the federal government is no different," Thune said in a statement supporting his amendment. "Washington has a spending problem and steps need to be taken to fix it. Reining in the amount we spend on government operations has to be a part of the solution."

Thune's proposal would have permitted federal agencies to give bonuses and pay increases if they didn't exceed 2009 funding levels for salaries, a provision considered reasonable by co-sponsor [Sen. Tom Coburn](#) (R-Okla.).

"Shouldn't we just say, 'Okay, time out, no increases except for stellar performance in the federal government until we get our house in order?'" Coburn asked.

But [Sen. Ted Kaufman](#) (D-Del.) -- [who speaks each week from the Senate floor to honor rank-and-file federal workers](#) -- said federal employees work "for substantially less pay than the same job in the private sector and with considerably more at stake. As I have said before, there are no Wall Street bonuses, and there is rarely ever recognition for hard work."

[Rep. Gerald E. Connolly](#) (D-Va.), whose Northern Virginia district is home to at least 70,000 federal workers, called the Republican proposals "a cheap shot."

"Every time that happens, it has a demoralizing impact on the federal workforce and frankly discourages young people from joining the federal workforce," Connolly said in

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an interview. "Treating them like a punching bag may make for a good story back home, but it's really a long-term cost to the very people we're trying to serve."

John Gage, president of the American Federation of Government Employees, said Republicans were "wrong to put a burden on this politically convenient group of employees who perform such important work for the American public every day."

"Any efforts to freeze federal pay to finance the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, or for general deficit reduction, amount to imposing a special tax increase on just one group of people when all Americans must pay their fair share to fund government operations," Gage said.

Colleen M. Kelley, president of the National Treasury Employees Union, called the proposals "an ideological response that will end up costing the government more money for less quality," because capping the number of federal workers would lead to increased use of costly government contractors.

Gage and Kelley also noted that [President Obama](#) has requested a modest 1.4 percent pay raise for civilian federal workers.

Coburn spokesman John Hart, asked about the concern that calls for cuts are demoralizing to federal workers, said: "Every family in America is making hard choices. If the politicians and unions who are complaining get their way in the short term, they'll be facing far more painful choices down the road."

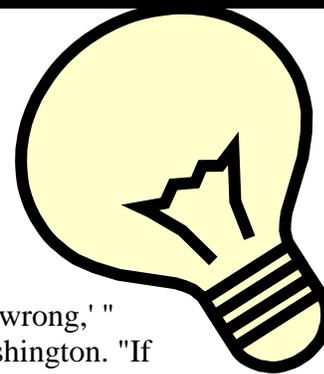
Coburn will continue to introduce amendments to freeze federal pay, but Thune currently has no plans to do so, according to their spokesmen.

OPM Enlists Outside Experts to Determine Federal-Private Pay Gap. Government statistics on the gap between federal and private-sector salaries "have a credibility problem," Office of Personnel Management Director John Berry says. So he's enlisted outside experts to help come up with a better way to determine the pay differences.

According to the President's Pay Agent — an interagency council of top agency and labor leaders that advises the White House on pay issues — federal employees earn 22 percent less on average than their counterparts in the private sector earn. But studies by the Cato Institute and USA Today — which have been cited by Republican lawmakers trying to cancel next year's federal pay raise — have found that federal employees earn far more than private-sector workers.

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"Everybody has their formula, and says, 'My formula's right, your formula's wrong,' " Berry said Wednesday at a Senior Executives Association conference in Washington. "If people of goodwill come together and are genuine about this, we ought to be able to craft a formula that has credibility everywhere."

Berry said he has asked the National Academy of Public Administration and the Administrative Conference of the United States (ACUS) to work together with statisticians from OPM, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics to settle the debate. NAPA is an independent, nonprofit group of public management leaders that studies government issues. ACUS is a federal advisory committee that studies ways to improve agency operations.

Berry has defended the growth in federal salaries by pointing out the increased education and specialization of the federal work force in recent years, as the government has hired more people in fields such as financial regulation, medical research, cybersecurity and law enforcement. He told lawmakers in March that Cato's comparisons are "misinformation" and include service-industry jobs, such as restaurant workers, that are not in great demand in the federal work force. But Berry also supports lowering the salaries of federal employees who earn more than private-sector employees doing comparable work with similar levels of education.

Berry also said that his plan to create an office to oversee Senior Executive Service policies and standards has stalled because he hasn't found a "superstar" to head it. OPM announced the SES office last August and had hoped to have it up and running by the end of 2009.

Also, OPM soon plans to start looking for ways to make it easier for students to find federal jobs, in what Berry called "phase two" of his hiring reform effort. .

Management-Employee Relations

EEOC finds DOD Liable for not Reassigning a Disabled Employee as an Accommodation. In a recent decision, *Bowers v. Robert M. Gates, Secretary, Department of Defense*, EEOC Appeal No. 0720070012 (March 22, 2010), the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) affirmed an Administrative Judge's (AJ) decision finding the Department of Defense (DoD) liable for illegal disability discrimination.

Complainant, who worked as a Personnel Security Specialist at Fort Meade, Maryland, was born with the four fingers of her left hand fused into a cone. After almost a dozen

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surgeries, she was left with fingers without knuckles, dexterity, or grasp. Complainant's job was to conduct background checks for security clearances of federal employees, which required a substantial amount of typing.

To keep up with her responsibilities, complainant requested several accommodations including lower production levels and the use of adaptive equipment. DoD denied the request to lower her production levels, but ordered a one-handed keyboard for her to use, which was expected to improve her typing speed only slightly.

In June 2002, complainant applied for a vacant Privacy Act Specialist position, which involved less typing and for which she was qualified. Then, in July 2002, complainant asked to be reassigned to the Privacy Act position as a reasonable accommodation. DoD denied complainant's request, opting instead to give the one-handed keyboard a 30-day trial period. In addition, complainant's supervisor informed her that she could face a Performance Improvement Plan if her performance did not improve by the end of the 30-day period. At the same time, the agency increased its typing production standards from 14-17 units per day to 19-22 per day. After this increase, complainant again requested reassignment, but the agency did not grant her request.

Complainant then contacted the agency's EEO Director, who asked management to keep the Privacy Act position open until complainant's 30-day trial period ended.

Management agreed, but at the end of the trial period, complainant's performance did not meet her performance requirements. Further, the agency decided to withdraw the vacancy announcement and give the position to its former incumbent, who decided to return to the agency. Complainant then left the agency after being granted disability retirement.

Complainant filed an EEO complaint alleging that she was discriminated against on the basis of disability and reprisal when the agency denied her reassignment as a reasonable accommodation. After hearing, the AJ found that the agency's failure to reassign complainant to the vacant Privacy Act Specialist position constituted a denial of reasonable accommodation, finding that she was not required to compete for the position.

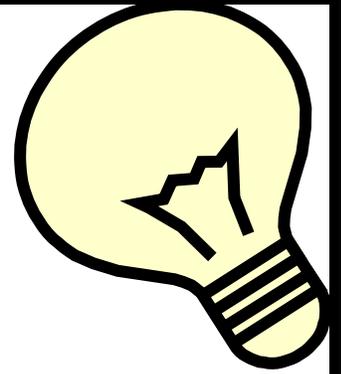
The AJ also found in complainant's favor on her retaliation claim.

On appeal, DoD argued that complainant is not an individual with a disability. Within the meaning of the Rehabilitation Act, an "individual with a disability" is one who:

1. has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities;

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2. has a record of such impairment; or
3. is regarded as having such impairment.

A "qualified" individual with a disability is one who satisfies the requirements for the employment position she holds or desires and can perform the essential functions of that position with or without reasonable accommodation. 29 C.F.R. § 1630.2(m). The Commission was not persuaded by the agency's argument, finding that complaint is essentially one-handed and thus is substantially limited in several major life functions.

The Commission then explained that in reassignment cases like this, complainant has an evidentiary burden to establish that it is more likely than not that there were vacancies during the relevant time period into which she could have been reassigned. *See Hampton v. U.S. Postal Service*, EEOC Appeal No. 01986308 (2002). Here, complainant established that a vacancy existed for which she was qualified, and she requested reassignment into the position on several occasions. The Commission then determined that:

Instead of simply reassigning complainant to the position, the agency essentially made her compete for the position, because it determined that the person most qualified for the position was the individual who had recently vacated the position.

The position remained open for several months after complainant was denied the position. However, an employee seeking reassignment as an accommodation should be placed in the position, if qualified, without competition. . . . There was no . . . evidence presented that complainant was not qualified for the Privacy Act Specialist position. The agency therefore should have reassigned her to the vacant Privacy Act Specialist position when it became apparent that she could not be reasonably accommodated in her Personnel Security Specialist position.

The Commission also upheld the AJ's finding of retaliation. The record contained deposition testimony which established that efforts to secure the Privacy Act Specialist position for complainant ceased as soon as it became known that she had initiated EEO counseling. As noted by the AJ, the refusal of complainant's superiors to assist her in securing the reassignment was "a materially adverse action" which could have deterred complainant from pursuing her rights; further, the agency did not demonstrate that it would have dropped complainant from consideration for the position in the absence of complainant's EEO activity.

Finally, the Commission upheld the AJ's award of \$2,500 in non-pecuniary compensatory damages for physical pain and \$24,000 in non-pecuniary compensatory damages for emotional distress as reasonable, over DoD's objection.

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Employees Right to Representation can be Tricky for Managers. Federal managers are often confronted with a situation in which a subordinate employee wants a representative or witness to be part of a meeting. The question for the manager is: Do I have to let the representative in?

The answer depends on whether the employee is a member of a bargaining unit represented by a federal-sector union. If so, specific rules exist concerning formal meetings and investigations. In general, if a meeting is formal, the union must be notified and provided an opportunity to be present. With respect to investigations, a manager must allow a representative into a meeting if the employee requests representation and reasonably believes disciplinary action will result from the meeting. These entitlements are sometimes referred to as Weingarten rights after a Supreme Court decision that established them.

A manager confronted with these situations should consult with a labor relations specialist to prevent the commission of an unfair labor practice. Determining when a meeting is formal and the types of investigations that are covered can be tricky. This exists within a structure that says most day-to-day meetings between a supervisor and subordinate come with no obligation to let the employee delay or control the meeting by requesting a representative or witness.

A manager has more discretion with an employee who is not in a bargaining unit. The subordinate is entitled to a representative only in the context of a criminal investigation, in connection with a grievance, or as a part of a response to a serious disciplinary proposal. Even in a noncriminal investigation, many agencies will permit an attorney or other representative into an interview if the matter under investigation is serious or complicated.

However, employees who are not in bargaining units should be aware that they will have difficulty prevailing on an appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board if they are fired for refusing to cooperate due to a refusal to attend a meeting without a lawyer present. The following details situations in which a manager must let an employee's representative into a meeting or investigation:

Formal meetings. A formal meeting is one that discusses grievances, personnel policies and practices, or other matters affecting general working conditions. The union would likely need to be notified and at least one representative would be allowed into the meeting if it was to discuss a grievance, a proposed or final decision on a disciplinary or performance action, or a matter of concern to employees generally.

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It is not a formal meeting — no representative is required to be present — if its purpose is to discuss a matter that concerns only that employee or if it is a brief meeting on a routine topic.

Investigations and Weingarten rights. Before Weingarten rights are applicable, the employee must be subjected to an examination in connection with an investigation. This usually means the employee is questioned about some matter or issue that has arisen in connection with the job. For example, if an employee is to be questioned about his whereabouts the previous day because he is suspected of misuse of official time, this would give rise to Weingarten rights.

The employee's belief that disciplinary action may result must be reasonable. A concern that it might happen is usually sufficient.

Finally, the employee must request the representation. Be careful, because some agencies have negotiated this away by requiring management to notify the employee of his Weingarten rights.

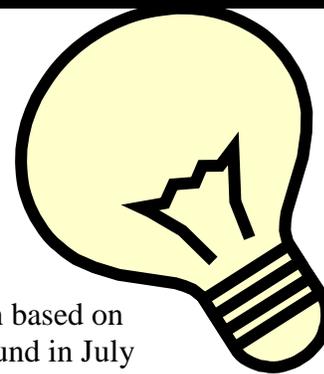
A manager should check the collective bargaining agreement for clarification of the employee's rights and the manager's obligation on this issue.

Discrimination for Taking FMLA Leave. On April 12, 2010, the EEOC Office of Federal Operations issued its decision in *Ramos v. Department of Defense*, EEOC Appeal No. 0720090055. OFO affirmed the Administrative Judge's reinstatement of Ramos, finding that the agency had engaged in disability discrimination by firing Ramos for taking Family and Medical Leave Act leave.

Ramos was hired on a one-year appointment to work at the commissary at McGuire AFB in New Jersey. At the end of May 2006, Ramos suffered a heart attack, from which he spent three months recuperating on agency-approved leave. Ramos returned to work in September 2006, and the agency extended Ramos' appointment for another year. Ramos had returned to work subject to a 20 lb. lifting restriction, which the agency accommodated by modifying Ramos' duties. Six months later, in February 2007, Ramos again suffered chest pains diagnosed as caused by a possible pulmonary embolism, and his doctors ordered him not to work for five weeks and increased his lifting restriction to a 5 lb. maximum. After two weeks, Ramos exhausted his leave and requested FMLA leave for three weeks. The agency responded by terminating Ramos' employment effective early March 2007 for inability to perform his duties.

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Ramos filed an EEO complaint challenging the termination as discrimination based on disability and other bases. After a hearing, an EEOC administrative judge found in July 2009 that the agency had engaged in disability discrimination. The AJ found that Ramos's lifting restriction and physical cardiac limitations rendered him a qualified individual with disability, and found that Ramos's leave requests constituted requests for reasonable accommodation. For firing Ramos rather than granting his FMLA leave, the agency was found to have failed to reasonably accommodate him. Remedies ordered included Ramos's placement in a permanent position at Seymour Johnson AFB in North Carolina (near Ramos's then-current residence), payment of back pay and \$4,000 compensatory damages.

The agency rejected the decision and appealed to OFO. OFO affirmed the decision with one modification.

The agency had asserted that Ramos was not a qualified individual with disability with respect to the pulmonary embolism—the cause of the leave request—and that Ramos's other medical conditions were unrelated to the need for leave, thus requiring an analysis of whether the pulmonary embolism, in isolation, substantially limited a major life activity (presumably under the pre-ADA Amendments Act standards, as Ramos was terminated before that Act was passed). OFO rejected that argument, finding that Ramos's prior medical absences and his other disabilities influenced the agency's decision to terminate, noting record evidence that the agency would not have removed Ramos had his FMLA request been made in isolation of his prior medical absence. Citing EEOC enforcement guidance, OFO noted that failure to grant leave under these circumstances constituted retaliatory punishment of Ramos for utilizing his prior approved reasonable accommodation leave. OFO found the agency's argument that accommodating Ramos's FMLA request would constitute an undue hardship unsupported in the record.

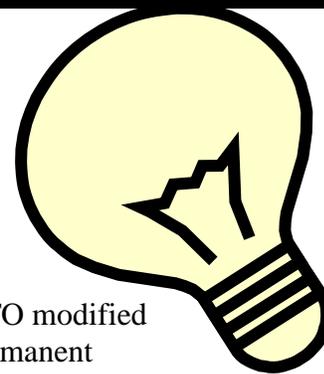
OFO also rejected the agency's challenge to the reinstatement remedy ordered by the administrative judge.

The agency had asserted that since Ramos was a term employee rather than a permanent employee, his reinstatement and back pay should only be limited to September 2007, the end date for his last one-year term appointment. OFO affirmed the award of a permanent appointment, relying on record evidence of other term employees similarly situated to Ramos generally receiving permanent appointments at the agency. OFO further affirmed the administrative judge's compensatory damages award.

OFO adjusted the relief in terms of the duty station for Ramos' reinstated position. OFO found that the mere fact that Ramos had moved to North Carolina did not itself mandate that the agency provide Ramos a job at Seymour Johnson AFB. However, OFO also found that had the agency not discriminated against Ramos, he would not likely have

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been impelled to move from New Jersey to North Carolina. Accordingly, OFO modified the remedial order to give the agency a choice between offering Ramos a permanent appointment at McGuire AFB and offering Ramos a permanent appointment at Seymour Johnson AFB. If the agency were to choose McGuire AFB, however, OFO required the agency to provide Ramos 120 calendar days to move, with Ramos occupying an interim appointment at Seymour Johnson AFB during that period. OFO remanded the case to the agency for determination of back pay.

* This information is provided by the attorneys at Passman & Kaplan, P.C., a law firm dedicated to the representation of federal employees worldwide.

How to Make PIP More Tolerable – and Productive. Performance improvement plans (PIPs) are not fun for either the manager or the employee. But, both the manager and the employee can make the best of a PIP.

The PIP is a notice to the employee of an opportunity to improve performance, or be fired. From the employee's perspective, it is almost like being put back on probation, and should be regarded as such. From the manager's viewpoint, a PIP is a lot of work with a seemingly never-ending period of putting up with a nonperformer.

The employee who receives a PIP notice should take it seriously and respond with a positive attitude and much hard work. The employee should try to impress the manager and not appear to be fighting back against what the employee believes is an injustice. There is no right to grieve a PIP or to file an equal employment opportunity complaint or Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) appeal on a PIP alone. Appearing to be uncooperative or belligerent, no matter how wrong the manager is in his or her conclusion about the employee's performance, will only play into the manager's hands and make it easier for the agency to prevail on an MSPB appeal.

An employee who is 50 years of age with 20 years of service or any employee who has 25 years of service is eligible for discontinued service, or early, retirement if he is fired for poor performance after failing a PIP. An employee who has the requisite service and who receives a PIP letter should do some serious soul searching about his performance. He should consider the early retirement option if he concludes there is some merit to the supervisor's PIP, even if he disagrees on the severity of the action. As a general rule, it is difficult for an employee to win an appeal of a performance-based adverse action if the employee has a valid performance standard, goes through a meaningful PIP and has a manager who engages the employee before and during a PIP.

From the manager's perspective, the PIP can be made easier if the manager is in the habit of maintaining and keeping documentation. Helpful documentation would include e-

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mails to the employee, notes in the margin of a work product, memos to the employee about performance and memos to the file about conversations between the manager and the employee concerning performance expectations.

A frequent practice in preparation for a PIP is the writing of an extensive PIP notice. Sometimes these notices are the equivalent of a full-length nonfiction book about the employee's perceived poor performance. There is no requirement to do this. The only requirement is to identify where the employee's performance has fallen short and what the employee must do to reach an acceptable level. A manager should fully and clearly state these expectations, but does not have to write a PIP notice that covers every eventuality and attempt to rebut every perceived argument that the employee might have. It is just a notice and the manager does not have to spend excessive time on it. A trip to the human resources office will help the manager determine the right balance.

A manager who approaches a PIP with a sincere desire to rehabilitate the employee's performance will do better on all fronts. Such a manager will make a favorable impression of sincerity with an arbitrator or MSPB judge if the employee fails the PIP and files a complaint. And given human nature, a manager who really cares about improving the employee's performance may be able to succeed in rehabilitating a poor performer, turning the employee into a productive asset.

The final point for a manager is to offer assistance during a PIP — for instance, having an open door policy, assigning a mentor, or offering training to the employee — and to follow through on that assistance. Failure to do this has, in some cases, resulted in a reversal of a performance-based adverse action.

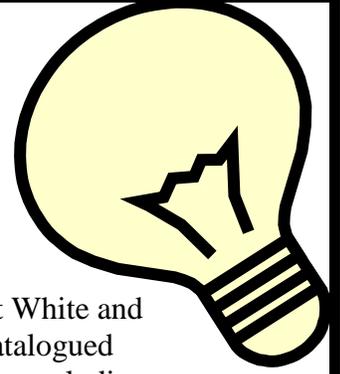
Both managers who impose PIPs and employees who are subjected to them find the process unpleasant. With some careful attention and the right attitude by both the manager and the employee, the PIP experience will be more tolerable, and, hopefully, more productive.

Padding Time Cards Leads to Removal. A Postal Service supervisor found his 15-year career abruptly ended when the agency caught him "padding" his time and attendance records. His appeals to the Merit Systems Protection Board and then to the federal appeals court were fruitless, so he remains fired. ([White v. United States Postal Service](#), C.A.F.C. No. 2010-3057 (nonprecedential 6/14/10).

When he got into trouble, White was serving as Manager of the Computer Forwarding Processing and Distribution Center in Bedford Park, Illinois. The Postal Service Inspector

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General, acting on a tip that people at that office were padding their time, put White and others under surveillance. According to the federal court's decision, the IG catalogued eight occasions where White claimed overtime that he did not actually work, concluding that White received \$7,557.64 for 251.51 extra hours that he did not actually work. (Opinion p. 3)

By the time the dust settled, White found himself fired based on a charge of accepting pay for time not worked, supported by eight specifications. The deciding official, in concluding that removal was appropriate, cited White's disregard for agency rules, "misguided" attempts to rationalize his actions, and his refusal to admit that he had done anything wrong. She also relied on the seriousness of the offense, the fact that he was a manager responsible for enforcing time and attendance rules, and his lack of remorse. (p. 4)

On appeal, the administrative judge found the IG investigator's testimony more credible than White's. The AJ called White's claim that he had been absent from the office for the periods of time at issue so he could interview candidates for temporary positions "not credible," since White's supervisor testified that he had no responsibility whatsoever for these types of hires. Further, White could not name one applicant he interviewed nor could he produce any application forms. (p. 5)

The MSPB upheld the agency's case against White and found that removal was appropriate.

The federal appeals court has now affirmed the decision of the Merit Systems Protection Board.

The decision does not indicate White's grade level at the time of his removal, nevertheless one has to wonder if \$7,557.64 was worth jeopardizing a seemingly good career.

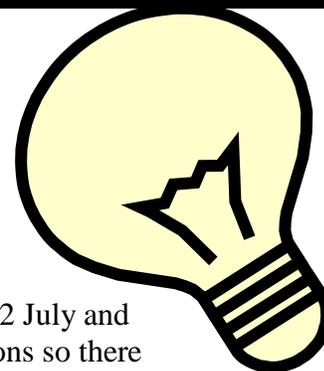
[White v. Postal Service10-3057](#)

Training, Self-Development, and Personal Improvement

NSPS to GS Town Hall Meetings. Two town hall meetings have been scheduled to update NSPS employees who will transition to the General Schedule (GS) system. These meetings will consist of an informational briefing followed by a Q&A session and will focus primarily on "workforce" specifics (i.e. classification of positions, pay, performance management, etc) as opposed to the transition plan itself.

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The briefings will take place in Pratt Hall, building 35 at 1330 on Monday, 12 July and Monday, 19 July. The same information will be presented during both sessions so there is no requirement to attend both. Briefing slides will be disseminated prior to the meetings under separate cover and will also be posted to the website for future reference.

ALL affected employees and supervisors/managers/Commanders of these employees are invited to attend.

It is highly recommended that all employees who have never worked under the GS system log on to the DoD NSPS website, <http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps> and complete the GS 101 course. This training provides the basics of the GS system and its completion may also serve as a refresher for those who have worked under the GS system.

Human Resources (HR) for Supervisors Course. The HR for Supervisors Course encompasses instruction applicable to the Legacy (i.e. GS) System. The course is 4.5 days long, includes lecture, class discussion, exercises; and, is designed to teach new civilian and military supervisors of appropriated fund civilian employees about their responsibilities for Civilian Human Resource Management. This instruction does *not* cover supervision of non-appropriated fund (NAF) or contract employees.

Instruction includes the following modules:

- Introduction of Army CHR which includes coverage of Merit System Principles and Prohibited Personnel Practices, CHRM Life Cycle Functions, Operation Center and CPAC Responsibilities
- Planning
- Structuring – Position Classification
- Acquiring – Staffing and Pay Administration
- Developing – Human Resources Development
- Sustaining – Performance Management, Management Employee Relations, Labor Relations

Training dates for the next iterations of this course are below. Registration information will be disseminated electronically three weeks before each class start date.

13-17 Sep 10

6-10 Dec 10

RPA and ART Workshop. The Fort Benning CPAC HR specialists are available to conduct RPA and ART desk-side walkthroughs and/or workshops to assist HR liaisons,

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managers/supervisors, and new DCPDS account holders with accessing and using DCPDS, ART, initiating RPAs, forwarding and tracking RPAs, generating reports and printing SF 50s. Training can be accomplished via individualized sessions or activity specific workshops upon request. If you desire training of this nature, please contact your servicing HR specialist to arrange for scheduling.

Job Aids Available on the Web. Lotus ScreenCams (how-to-movies) are available to assist DCPDS users with DCPDS, Army Regional Tools (ART), Oracle 11i and other automation tools. ScreenCam movies ART Logon, Ghostview, Gatekeeper, Inbox Default, Initiating an RPA, Logging On, Navigator, RPA Overview and RPA Routing are available on the web at: <http://www.chra.army.mil/>. Click on HR Toolkit and then click on the name of the movie to download or play it. Managers/supervisors and administrative personnel responsible for initiating RPAs are encouraged to review this site and check out these new tools. ART Users Guide has been updated and provides descriptions of and instructions for using tools available in ART, including such tools as Employee Data, Inbox Statistics (timeliness and status information about personnel actions), Organization Structure (information about positions in various organizational elements), and many more tools. It is intended for use by managers, resource management officials, administrative officers, and commanders as well as CPAC and CPOC staff members. There is both an on-line and downloadable Word version (suitable for printing).

In addition, to the ART Users Guide, there is a Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS) Desk Guide which provides how-to information about tasks and functions that end users might need to perform in DCPDS, such as initiating a Request for Personnel Action (RPA) and creating a Gatekeeper Checklist. The ART Users Guide and the Desk Guide can be accessed from the CHRA web page at: <http://www.chra.army.mil/>, by clicking on HR Toolkit. In addition to these tools the Fort Benning CPAC staff is available to assist you in accessing DCPDS, ART, initiating RPAs, creating a Gatekeeper Checklist, forwarding and tracking RPAs, generating reports and printing an SF 50. If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact your servicing HR specialist to arrange a time so we can come to your office to help you.

BLANCHE D. ROBINSON
Human Resources Officer
Fort Benning CPAC
Phone: 545-1203 (Coml.); 835-1203 (DSN)
E-Mail:
blanche.d.robinson@us.army.mil

