



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

December 11, 2001

MEMORANDUM FOR UNDER SECRETARIES, ASSISTANT SECRETARIES,
OTHER KEY OFFICIALS, AND DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARIES

SUBJECT: Labor-Management Partnership

On February 17, 2001, the President signed Executive Order 13203. It revokes Executive Order 12871 and a Presidential Memorandum dated October 28, 1999, that required agencies to establish labor-management partnership councils and to bargain in permissive areas such as numbers, types, and grades of positions. In addition, Executive Order 13203 requires that VA rescind any orders, rules, regulations, guidelines, and policies that were used to implement or enforce the earlier Executive Order and Memorandum.

With respect to the requirement to rescind regulations, guidelines, etc., that were used to implement partnership, I have asked the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration to rescind any such documents, or portions of those documents, that are covered by this requirement.

With the President's action, VA is free to adopt a labor relations program best suited to our needs, consistent with our collective bargaining agreements. As a first step, I have decided to continue the labor-management partnership council at the national level. The council will serve as an advisory body to me and our leadership team. I am asking the current members to develop a new partnership agreement for my approval. I want this agreement to build on those previous arrangements and practices that best support VA's Strategic Plan for improving service to veterans and providing a positive work environment for employees.

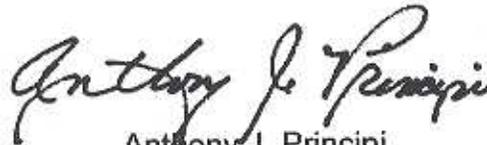
At the same time, I am asking you to support and encourage your partnership councils to renew their efforts in improving service to veterans and employees. To assist you, I have asked VA's National Partnership Council to help me establish a national awards program to recognize collaborative efforts between labor and management that result in notable improvements in VA's performance.

With respect to bargaining, I will not require managers to bargain in permissive areas like those mentioned above. I think these are best dealt with under partnership arrangements where management and labor can have a full exchange of views. Labor's views, as representatives of employees who are directly involved in delivering services, are very important and need to be seriously considered before making final decisions.

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Labor-Management Partnership

With all of the opportunities and challenges facing VA, we should look for new and improved ways to work together on behalf of veterans and employees. I sincerely believe that the National Partnership Council had it right all along when it adopted as its motto "Labor & Management for Veterans." By nurturing this relationship and creating a positive work environment for employees, veterans will be better served. I ask for your support and active involvement in achieving this goal.



Anthony J. Principi