



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON
January 9, 2003

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

SUBJECT: National Partnership Agreement

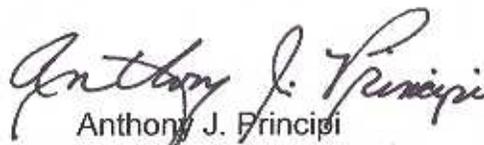
Last year, I made a decision to retain VA's National Partnership Council as an advisory body to me and our leadership team. I asked the Council, made up of VA's five national unions and VA leaders, to develop a new partnership agreement that I could sign.

In doing so, I also asked the Council to review their past accomplishments and to identify those factors which produced positive results on behalf of employees and veterans. From there, they were to ensure that the Council's objectives were realistic and attainable and its purpose clear.

I am pleased to inform you that the Council has completed its work and has produced a new partnership agreement that I have signed. The attached agreement focuses on cooperative labor-management relations that result in improved services to veterans and a positive workplace for employees.

The Council will carry out its purpose by developing advisory opinions on policies, programs and initiatives that affect employees and customer services. In addition, it will be an advocate for predecisional involvement with labor, alternative dispute resolution, and employee training.

Please support the Council in their efforts to help improve the Department's performance. They are available to you as an advisor, particularly where changes in working conditions are contemplated as a part of that improvement.


Anthony J. Principi

Attachment

VA NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

The Department of Veterans Affairs, American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE), Service Employees International Union (SEIU), National Association of Government Employees (NAGE), and the United American Nurses (UAN) enter into this partnership agreement in the spirit of cooperative labor-management relations.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the VA National Partnership Council (NPC) is to advise the Secretary and VA leadership on matters associated with labor-management relations VA wide and VA initiatives which impact employees, and to promote cooperative labor-management relations which result in improved services to veterans and a positive workplace for employees.

OBJECTIVES

In order to achieve this purpose, the partners agree to the following objectives:

1. Develop advisory opinions and recommendations on policies, programs, and initiatives that affect employees and customer services;
2. Promote a positive work environment for all employees;
3. Promote cooperative labor-management relations, including partnerships throughout VA;
4. Advocate a full exchange of views and sharing of information between labor and management to include predecisional involvement;
5. Support the use of alternative dispute resolution as appropriate; and
6. Encourage training that promotes cooperative labor-management relations.

STRUCTURE /OPERATION

The Council will be comprised of representatives from the following organizations:

Management

Union

Labor Management Relations
General Counsel
National Cemetery Administration
Veterans Health Administration
Veterans Benefits Administration

American Federation of Government Employees
United American Nurses
National Association of Government Employees
National Federation of Federal Employees
Service Employees International Union

There will be 4 members from AFGE and 2 members from each of the other unions (total 12) and 10 management members.

The Council will have two Co-Chairpersons representing labor and management, respectively. Management and labor will each select their Co-Chair every two years. Either party may also designate an alternate.

Meetings will be held quarterly. The Co-Chairpersons may call additional meetings as are necessary.

The NPC may establish committees, task forces, or work groups as appropriate to carry out the work of the council.

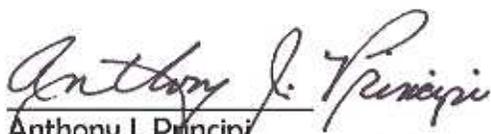
The Department of Veterans Affairs will be responsible for all council members' travel and per diem expenses.

All NPC members will be in a duty status while participating in council business. National partnership activities beyond or outside normal duty hours of those involved will be considered as official duty.

NPC decisions will be made using a consensus approach.

COMMITMENT

This agreement is a commitment by the partners to make the best efforts to ensure that cooperative labor-management relations are maintained in the interests of the employees and the veterans we serve.


Anthony J. Principi
Secretary

January 9, 2003
Date