



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT  
WASHINGTON DC 20420

September 28, 2001

**HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT LETTER NO. 05-01-05**

**Processing and Approval of Personnel Actions**

1. **Purpose.** This Human Resources Management Letter (HRML) provides guidance to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) servicing human resources (HR) officials on applying the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM's) requirements for processing and approving personnel actions.

2. **Background.** VA servicing HR offices need to give careful consideration to OPM's requirements on personnel action processing. Personnel actions that are not properly approved and processed may result in significant consequences to both affected employee(s) and the Department. VA recently received a Central Personnel Data File (CPDF) scorecard for its submission of personnel action data to OPM. The scorecard revealed that only 75 percent of VA's personnel actions were submitted within the month they were effective, while OPM's timeliness standard for such submissions is 90 percent. The Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) is taking several internal steps to improve VA's timeliness record to include monthly reminders of PAID processing deadlines, improving automatic pay adjustment processing, and increasing VA management's and HR staff's awareness of the issue. Some improvement has already been realized, e.g., 84 percent of the actions submitted in the June CPDF submission were timely. However, more improvement is needed to raise VA's annual scorecard to the 90 percent standard set by OPM.

3. **Guidance**

a. Based on the requirements and delegations listed in paragraph 4 (below), in most cases, the appropriate appointing officer—who, in VA, is the field facility director, servicing HR officer, or Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources/Shared Service Center (SSC), should authorize personnel actions prior to the effective date of those actions. Therefore, there is an expectation that managers will submit personnel actions to the servicing HR office or the SSC before the effective date of the personnel action. To give sufficient lead time for the servicing HR office or the SSC to adequately review and process an action, it should generally arrive not later than the Wednesday prior to the effective date. For actions submitted electronically via HR LINK\$ MA (Management Activities) the action must be initiated early enough to gain concurrence of the first and second authorizer and approval of the "final approver" by this same deadline. Except in rare cases, such as exceptions listed in paragraph 3b or 4b,

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the effective date should be adjusted when actions are not timely submitted. VA organizations that have not yet adopted such timeliness requirements are encouraged to do so immediately.

b. Clearly, there are situations in which retroactive actions are both appropriate and necessary, including those cases in which administrative error has occurred. Note that for a discretionary pay action like a promotion, the administrative error must occur after the action has been approved in order for the action to be properly backdated. Justification for the retroactive action should accompany the personnel action prior to processing. This may be submitted as a statement on the SF-52. (NOTE: For those stations serviced by the SSC, if the personnel action is received without justification, the SSC will contact the servicing HR office for the information prior to processing the action.) In addition, certain negotiated bargaining unit agreements may have articles that call for retroactively processed actions. In all cases, the decision to process an action retroactively should be the result of careful consideration.

c. Generally, personnel actions should be promptly processed by the servicing HR office or the SSC and signed by the appointing official before the action is effective. In most cases, the actions should be received by the coding section (servicing HR office or SSC) within 2 workdays after the effective date.

d. Notwithstanding the above, any personnel actions effective during the calendar month should be submitted to the servicing HR office or the SSC at least 5 workdays before the end of the month. This will allow the servicing HR office or the SSC sufficient time to review and process the actions before the effective date and within the calendar month that they are effective. Adhering to these guidelines will provide the servicing HR office or the SSC the opportunity to meet VA's goal of exceeding the Office of Personnel Management's CPDF timeliness standard.

### 1. References

a. OPM's Guide to Processing Personnel Actions, Chapter 3, paragraph 1-3a, states "Except as explained in Table 3-A<sup>1</sup>, no personnel action can be made effective prior to the date on which the appointing officer approved the action. By approving an action, the appointing officer certifies that the action meets all legal and regulatory requirements and, in the case of appointments and position change actions, that

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<sup>1</sup> Table 3-A. Setting Effective Dates provides instruction on conditions which must be met before certain actions may be effected.

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the position to which the employee is being assigned has been established and properly classified.”

b. OPM’s Guide, Chapter 3, paragraph 1-4a, further states “As explained in paragraph 1-3a, most personnel actions must be approved by the appointing officer on or before their effective dates. An appointing officer is an individual in whom the power of appointment is vested by law or to whom it has been legally delegated. Only an appointing officer may sign and date the certification in Part C-2 of the SF-52.”

c. Table 3-B lists those actions for which prior approval of the appointing officer is *not* required in setting effective dates. Those actions are:

- ❑ Actions required by law, Executive Order, or regulation;
- ❑ Actions required by court action, settlement agreement, or arbitration award;
- ❑ Actions required by an OPM, Merit Systems Protection Board, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, or Federal Labor Relations Authority decision;
- ❑ Actions documenting a death, resignation, disability retirement, mandatory retirement, other types of retirements;
- ❑ A change in tenure or appointment based on completion of service requirements for career or permanent tenure;
- ❑ A conversion to a competitive service appointment when an employee who has competitive status occupies an excepted service position that is brought into the competitive service;
- ❑ A change in Federal Employees’ Group Life Insurance;
- ❑ A pay adjustment to implement a new pay plan or to change the rates for an existing pay plan;
- ❑ A change to lower grade following a temporary promotion;
- ❑ A termination of grade retention;
- ❑ Most leave-without-pay actions and any return to duty from leave without pay or non-pay status;
- ❑ A detail or termination of detail;
- ❑ A change in work schedule;
- ❑ A change in hours for an employee with a part-time work schedule.

d. In MP-5, Part I, Chapter 250, Paragraph 10, Delegations of Appointing Authority, authority is delegated to officials occupying the positions listed, and persons properly acting in such positions, to effect appointments, separations (including removals), and other personnel actions for VA positions as specified. Subparagraph d lists field facility directors and HRM officers.

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e. The Delegation of Human Resources Management Authorities for HR LINK S was issued by the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration in a memorandum dated October 22, 1999 (and reiterated in a memorandum dated February 15, 2001). In paragraph 1.e.(3) of the October memorandum, the Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources, Shared Service Center, is delegated appointing authority regarding actions for which HR service is provided. This authority is accompanied by the responsibility for completing appropriate review and certifying that personnel actions are legal and proper.

### **5. Questions**

Questions concerning this HRML may be referred to the following individuals:

- Alan Beale (051) for pay administration issues, (202) 273-9801
- Darryl Greene (051) for staffing, (202)273-9703
- William Ellison (051) for position classification, (202)-273-9841
- Roy Coles, Jr. (054) for HR PAID processing, (202) 565-8093
- Janet Kipp for SSC personnel action processing, (785) 350-3723

/s/  
Ventris C. Gibson