



Message from the DAS

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Bookmarks:

American Veterans (AMVETS)
<http://www.amvets.org>
Blinded Veterans Association
<http://www.bva.org>
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America
<http://www.iava.org>
Japanese American Veterans Association
<http://www.javadc.org>
Vietnam Veterans of America
<http://www.vva.org>

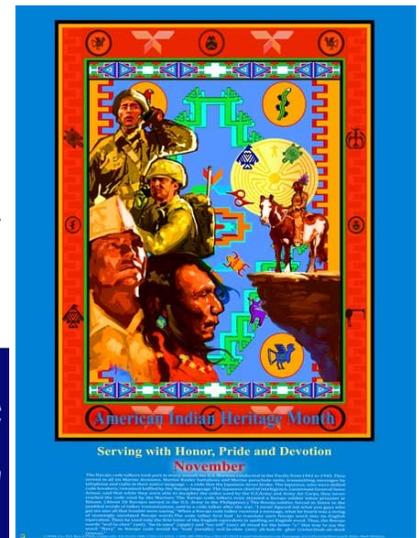
**Do you have an EEO complaint?
Contact the Office of Resolution
Management at (888) 737-3361
within 45 days of alleged
incident.**

Welcome to the November 2012 issue of VA's *Diversity@Work* newsletter and to the beginning of the 2012 holiday season. I'd like to begin by offering our heartfelt condolences to all who lost loved ones and who have suffered through the recent storm that devastated much of the mid-Atlantic and northeast. Our thoughts are with you and as we kick-off the Combined Federal Campaign season, our sincere hope is that those in need will receive the support needed. Americans and Federal employees in particular have always displayed incredible generosity in times of crisis and we know they will again.

As fall settles in and we welcome the holidays, I would like to remind VA managers and supervisors of VA Directive 0022 which revises authority and policy for including religious symbols in holiday displays at VA facilities. This ensures that holiday displays in public areas of VA facilities do not favor one religious faith group over another and do not appear to be an official endorsement of religion. This also ensures that displays are made with respect, knowledge of and sensitivity to our Nation's diverse religious traditions.

November is National Native American Heritage Month. Please join me in commemorating the many contributions American Indians and Alaska Natives have made to our country throughout our Nation's history. Read more below.

Also, please join me in saluting our Nation's Veterans this Veterans Day, November 11. World War I officially ended when the Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28, 1919. However, fighting ceased seven months earlier when an armistice (or temporary cessation of hostilities) between the Allied nations and Germany went into effect on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. For that reason, November 11, 1918, is generally regarded as the end of "the war to end all wars." In November 1919, President Wilson proclaimed November 11 as the first commemoration of Armistice Day. An Act approved May 13, 1938, made the 11th of November in each year a legal holiday—a day to be dedicated to the cause of world peace and to be thereafter celebrated and known as "Armistice Day." [Continued on the next page.](#)



Commemorate

National Native American Heritage Month

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) commemorates National Native American Heritage Month during the month of November. This year's theme is "Serving with Honor, Pride and Devotion".

From generation to generation, American Indians have handed down invaluable cultural knowledge and rich traditions such as art, folk tales, literature, religion, language, and American history, which continue to thrive in Native American communities and across our country today. Native Americans have also served in the United States Armed Forces with honor and distinction, defending the security of our Nation with their lives.

According to the U.S. Department of Interior, the U.S. has 566 federally recognized tribes, and more than 100 state recognized tribes. Tribes contain many dialects and customs, each having its own chief and set of Elders. As of 2011, an estimated 5.1 million people identified as American Indian or Alaska Native alone or American Indian and Alaska Native in combination with one or more other races, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. [Continued on page 4.](#)

Message from the DAS

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Armistice Day was primarily a day set aside to honor Veterans of World War I, but in 1954, after World War II had required the greatest mobilization of soldiers, sailors, Marines and airmen in the Nation's history; after American forces had fought aggression in Korea, the 83rd Congress, at the urging of the Veterans service organizations, amended the Act of 1938 by striking out the word "Armistice" and inserting in its place the word "Veterans." With the approval of this legislation (Public Law 380) on June 1, 1954, November 11th became a day to honor American Veterans of all wars. There is much to the interesting history behind this observance; be sure to read more at <http://www.va.gov/opa/vetsday/vetdayhistory.asp>.



Georgia Coffey

On the topic of our Nation's Veterans and VA's efforts to ensure that Disabled Veterans as well as other individuals with targeted disabilities are well represented throughout the organization's ranks, Secretary Shinseki signed a memorandum establishing a new 3 percent hiring goal for individuals with targeted disabilities. The new 3 percent goal is a "stretch" goal, and was set because the three VA Administrations met or exceeded the fiscal Year (FY) 2012 hiring goal of 2 percent. The on board goal for VA is still 2 percent. Please join me in committing to increasing the representation of qualified people with disabilities, including qualified Disabled Veterans, in all levels of VA's workforce.

Thank you, once again, for your commitment to a diverse VA workforce and an inclusive VA workplace. We in ODI cannot accomplish our mission without you! ~Georgia Coffey, VA Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diversity and Inclusion

VACO Notes

Farewell!

ODI wishes a fond farewell to intern Margaret Breihan. As a member of ODI's Training and Communications Team, Ms. Breihan wrote articles for the *Diversity@Work* newsletter, researched and compiled online resources for *NewsLink*, and assisted with many other projects. Ms. Breihan will be missed but her contributions to VA will not be forgotten. Good luck, Ms. Breihan!

Training

Learn to Better Connect with Veterans

Whether you have served or not, it may be difficult to fully comprehend our Veterans' sacrifices. Hear about their unique experiences to learn how you can improve your service to them in the new Connecting with Veterans course. Following the highly successful Military Cultural Awareness course, Connecting with Veterans is the latest addition to the Veterans Advocacy and Awareness suite of e-Learning courses.

This highly interactive and engaging course provides the opportunity to discover, through their own personal and diverse stories, what Veterans experienced as Servicemembers during the different military eras. You learn how those experiences may influence what they need from VA and from you. The course gives you the concrete tips and best practices for translating that understanding into outstanding service to Veterans and their families, no matter your job title.

The Connecting with Veterans course is available on TMS: https://www.tms.va.gov/plateau/user/deeplink_redirect.jsp?linkId=ITEM_DETAILS&componentID=2084024&componentTypeID=VA&revisionDate=131956500000.

For more information contact VALU at VALU.Training@va.gov, or go to <http://www.valu.va.gov/Home/CareerPlanning> to find out more about the suite of Veterans Advocacy and Awareness courses.

IHR Connect! Broadcast Now Available

The IHR Connect! video broadcast and power point are a blended-learning strategy to meet diverse learning needs! Now available on the Office of Human Resources Management intranet Web site are three IHR Connect! videos from the September 26, 2012 broadcast:

- HRIS eOPF and PAID Updates
- HR Line of Business
- G.E.A.R.

Videos on Veterans hiring, Schedule A, and student hiring are also available. For more information, email the IHR Connect! team at vahrconnect@va.gov.

Cultural Competence Training Now Available

"Cultural Competence and Caring for the Rural Veteran" is now available on-demand through the VHA MyVeHU virtual campus (<http://www.myvehucampus.com>). Dr. John Fuller, Chief Diversity Educator, ODI, in collaboration with the Rural Health Professions Institute and faculty from East Tennessee State University, designed the curriculum to provide an overview of rural related, patient-centered philosophy, team care and to demonstrate the importance of increasing cultural competence in health care delivery. For more information, contact Dr. Fuller at (202) 461-4002 or John.Fuller2@va.gov. [Continued on the next page.](#)

Training

Diversity News: An Online Training Resource

The November/December 2012 edition of *Diversity News* features an interview with Rosa Franco, VA Deputy Assistant Secretary for Resolution Management.

Diversity News is available both on the internal VA Knowledge Network and on ODI's external Web site. To view current and past episodes, visit <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/dn.aspx>.



- Identify tools available to validate your Web sites and applications.

Training is captioned. For more information, contact Vicki Leon at Vicki.Leon@va.gov.

IALPAE, Inc. Conference

The International Association of Latino Public Administration Executives, Inc. (IALPAE, Inc.) will hold its 2nd Annual Executive Leadership and Diversity Training Conference December 3–5, 2012, in Arlington, Virginia. The theme for this conference is “Leading the President's Commitment to Diversity & Inclusion: Demonstrating Excellence, Equity, Integrity, and Transparency in Public Service.” The IALPAE, Inc. Executive Leadership and Diversity Training Conference qualifies as training in compliance with 5 U.S.C. Chapter 41. This conference is open to all Federal employees and will provide training and workshops in areas such as Diversity and Inclusion, Ethics in the Workplace, and Engaging in Leadership Competencies to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workplace. Information about the conference, including the agenda and registration form, can be found online at <http://www.ialpae.org>. For more information, contact Arlene Gonzalez, EEO Specialist, ODI, at (202) 461-4041 or Arlene.Gonzalez2@va.gov.

Section 508 Webinars

The Section 508 Program Office currently has two webinars: General Section 508 and Programming with Section 508 in Mind. The webinars have their own TMS number for self-certification. Details for self-certification will be given at the end of the webinars. General Section 508 should be a prerequisite before taking Programming with Section 508 in Mind.

The General Section 508 webinar (November 14, 2 to 4 pm, and November 20, 10 am to noon) will provide an overview of the law and its application to Electronic Information Technology (EIT) including the technical, functional, and documentation/support standards surrounding conformance to Section 508. VA employees attending the training session will learn more about VA's Section 508 Program Office and how it works to ensure that EIT products developed, procured, maintained, or used by the VA are Section 508 conformant.

If you develop any of the following, supervise, procure, develop or administer policy relating to the following you should attend:

- Develop web pages
- Develop web-based applications
- Develop software
- Produce documents
- Develop or procure hardware
- Develop training materials
- Produce videos or other multimedia products
- Supervise activities above
- Develop or administer policy involving or relating to the above
- Have responsibility for the integration or maintenance of any of these items
- Are responsible for the procurement of any of these items
- Are involved in the contracting for the procurement of any of these items.

The Programming with Section 508 in Mind webinar (November 15, 10 am to noon, and November 20, 2 to 4 pm) will allow you to gain more insight into coding for accessibility from a programming perspective. This informative session will prepare you to:

- Define common accessibility issues;
- Define accessibility issues with dynamic content;
- Include the new W3C Accessible Rich Internet Applications specification in developing accessible dynamic content; and

VA Corporate Employee Development Board Call for Applications (AY 2013/2014)

NOTE: This message is for employees who are GS-13 or above (including Title 38/Hybrid Title 38 equivalents). All other employees please disregard:

The Corporate Employee Development Board (CEDB) in conjunction with VA Learning University (VALU) and Corporate Senior Executive Management Office (CSEMO) is now accepting applications for several leadership development programs that will take place during the upcoming 2013-2014 academic year (AY). These programs include the Federal Executive Institute (FEI), Senior Service Colleges (SSC), School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS), and Army Intermediate Level Education Program (ILE). Please read the Call for Applications located on the CEDB Web site at <http://www.valu.va.gov/Home/CEDB> for more information about the programs and the application process.

The application deadline is December 7, 2012. All applications must have 3 levels of leadership endorsements, including your Assistant Secretary or Under Secretary before this date. Therefore, you will likely need to complete the application well in advance of this deadline to allow time for the endorsement process.

You must coordinate with the Human Resources Point of Contact (HR POC) in your Administration/Office to find out about organization-specific deadlines for the application process and the protocol to be followed for the leadership endorsements in your respective organizations. Please see the HR POC list also located on the CEDB Web site.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact your HR POC or David C. Austin, the VALU POC, at David.Austin2@va.gov, (202) 632-7919 or (202) 420-8792.

Commemorate

[Continued from page 1.](#)

This racial group comprises two percent of the total U.S. population. Twenty-two percent of American Indians and Alaska Natives live on reservations or other trust lands and sixty percent of American Indians and Alaska Natives live in metropolitan areas. There are 1.5 million American Indian and Alaska Natives under the age of 18, comprising 31 percent of this racial group.

As of September 2012, American Indians and Alaska Natives represent 1.14 percent of VA's permanent workforce. Also, VA employs 100,158 Veterans, of which 1.08 percent are American Indian or Alaska Native. Federal agencies, including VA, are striving to recruit qualified Native Americans to apply for vacant positions. Our effort to reach out and recruit more American Indians is a pivotal endeavor to enhance VA's responsibility in providing for the welfare of Native American Veterans.

As is true for many Federal agencies, VA anticipates losing a significant percentage of employees due to retirement during the next five years. This will provide numerous opportunities for joining VA's workforce as well as career advancement in the second largest Federal agency. VA will be adding approximately 1,600 mental health clinicians—to include nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers as well as nearly 300 support staff to its existing workforce. With over 300 occupations, the Department of Veterans Affairs has opportunities for qualified diverse candidates to include American Indians and Alaska Natives.

As we commemorate the contributions and heritage of Native Americans, we also recommit to supporting tribal self-determination, security, and prosperity for all American Indian and Alaska Natives. VA also salutes and honors all American Indian and Alaska Native employees, who help care for our Nation's Veterans and their family members through their commitment and dedicated service.

For more information on VA's Native American Employment Program, contact Aurelia Waters, Equal Employment Specialist/American Indian and Alaska Native Employment Program Coordinator, ODI, at Aurelia.Waters@va.gov.

Veterans Day 2012

VA joins the Nation in proudly saluting those who have served our Nation on Veterans Day, November 11. About 32 percent of VA's employees are Veterans, and approximately one-third of the Veteran population have a service-related disability.

This Veterans Day marks the one-year anniversary of the establishment of VA for Vets. Launched on Veterans Day of 2011, VA for Vets facilitates the reintegration, retention and hiring of Veteran employees at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). VA for Vets offers career-search tools for Veterans seeking employment at VA, career development services for our existing Veterans, and coaching and reintegration support for military service members.

For more information on VA for Vets, visit <http://vaforvets.va.gov>. Information, activities, and resources concerning VA's Veterans Day celebration can be found at <http://www.va.gov/opa/vetsday>.



Policy Update

Performance Management System

VA Handbook 5013, Part I has been revised to reflect performance plans for supervisors must include a standard requiring them to ensure that subordinates complete all mandatory training on a timely basis.

The changes will be incorporated into the electronic version of VA Handbook 5013.

Reaching for 3 Percent

New Goal for Hiring People with Targeted Disabilities

On October 11, 2012, Secretary Shinseki signed the memorandum “Fiscal Year 2013 Employment Goals for Individuals with Targeted Disabilities,” establishing a new 3 percent hiring goal for this group. The nine targeted disabilities, as established by the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and recognized by the US Office of Personnel Management are: blindness, deafness, partial paralysis, total paralysis, missing extremities, dwarfism, psychiatric disorders, severe intellectual disabilities, and epilepsy. The new 3 percent goal is a “stretch” goal, and was set because the three VA Administrations met or exceeded the fiscal Year (FY) 2012 hiring goal of 2 percent. The on board goal for VA is still 2 percent.

The memo recognized the Veterans Benefit Administration for their high hire rate: 2.73 percent of all their total hires in the first three quarters of FY 2012 were people with targeted disabilities. It also recognized the Veterans Health Administration’s Central Office and Veterans Integrated Service Networks 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, and 23 for meeting or exceeding the 2 percent goal. The National Cemetery Administration’s Atlanta Memorial Service Network had the highest hire ratio, which was 8.33 percent. (Individual facilities in VA may have had a higher hiring rate, but the data was not compiled by facility.) Congratulations to all!

The separation rate for VA employees with targeted disabilities in FY 2012 was 1.85 percent, which is higher than their on board ratio of 1.65 percent at the beginning of the FY. The higher separation rate makes it more difficult for VA to achieve the on board goal of 2 percent. During FY 2012, employees with targeted disabilities were 1.92 percent (565 employees) of employees who separated voluntarily and 4.20 percent of those who separated involuntarily. Most of the involuntary separations were people with psychiatric disabilities, a majority of whom are Veterans. Whenever a group’s separation ratio is higher than their on board ratio, it indicates a need to analyze whether the group is experiencing barriers to employment.

Secretary Shinseki also encouraged hiring of individuals with targeted disabilities for positions that offer promotion potential, in keeping with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. In VA, employees with targeted disabilities are not well represented in pay grades 8–15 and the Title 38 equivalent, except for the GS 9 level. In addition, this group is over-represented in the Wage Grade positions. If VA is to be a model employer, we need to seek out employees and applicants with targeted disabilities who are qualified for higher level positions, and place them as these positions become available. Doing so will also reflect to the Veterans who are our clients that even with a serious disability they can contribute to society in a meaningful way.

All VA offices and facilities are encouraged to recruit and hire individuals with targeted disabilities into senior level positions while striving to meet the hiring goal. Each entity has a Selective Placement Coordinator who will be collecting resumes of qualified individuals and can walk hiring officials through the non-competitive Schedule A hiring process. Of course, hiring for Title 38 positions is also non-competitive. (The only exception is a position which is targeted for merit promotion.) Visit VA’s People with Disabilities Employment Program Web site at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/pwd.aspx> for additional information.

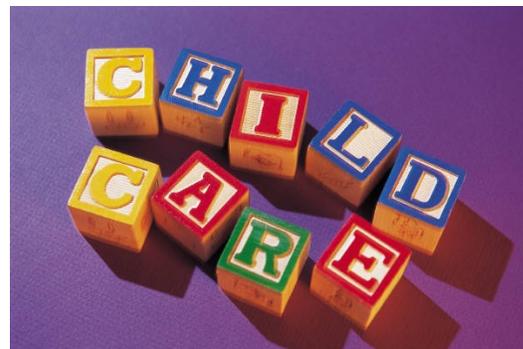
Policy Alert

VA Child Care Subsidy Program Licensed and/or Regulated Child Care Providers

VA Directive 5009/VA Handbook 5009, Part I, VA Child Care Subsidy Program has been revised to clarify the requirement that employees must utilize licensed and/or regulated child care providers in the state or location in which they operate to participate in the VA Child Care Subsidy Program. The requirements for child care subsidy applicants and participants who utilize regulated child care providers are revised as follows:

- The child care provider must be issued regulatory documentation by the state’s child care regulatory authority (a signed statement provided by the child care provider or VA employee that the child care provider meets all of the state regulatory requirements to provide child care services will not be accepted as regulatory documentation);
- The documentation must clearly reflect that the child care provider is in compliance with the provisions of the regulations of the state or, where applicable, by local authorities where the child care service is delivered; and
- Regulatory documentation must be up-to-date and not expired.

For more information about this policy alert or the policy communication schedule/timeline please visit the Office of Human Resources Management intranet Web site.



Compliance Corner

Reasonable Accommodation and Virtual Employees

More and more employees will find themselves working from virtual locations on a long term or permanent basis as the VA reduces its leasing of office space. In a case of first impression, the Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication (OEDCA) determined that a VA virtual employee was subject to unlawful discrimination, based on her physical disability, when the Department failed to provide her with an ergonomic chair for her home office.

Unlike an employee who elects to telework one or two days a week, the complainant was informed during the hiring process that she would be required to work at home on a full time basis until other employees were hired in the Denver area. She was further advised that VA would then either rent space or find a telework center for its employees.

The complainant submitted a telework proposal in March 2009 including a request for an ergonomic chair as a reasonable accommodation for her back and shoulder conditions. The complainant noted that when she had previously worked for VA in a traditional office setting she was provided with an ergonomic chair as a reasonable accommodation. After several inquiries by the complainant, she was informed in November 2009 that her request for an ergonomic chair for her home office could not be granted. VA cited its telework policy which provides that it is the employee's responsibility to provide the particular furniture she needs to work at home.

Subsequently, the complainant contacted an EEO counselor. Shortly thereafter, she was reassigned to the Denver Federal Center as a reasonable accommodation and provided with an ergonomic chair. The complainant then alleged that her reassignment was in reprisal for her protected EEO activity. She argued that she was hired to work from her home and that management retaliated against her by reassigning her to the Denver Federal Center.

In regard to the complainant's reasonable accommodation claim, OEDCA determined that the Rehabilitation Act takes precedence over the Department's telework policy. OEDCA found that complainant was not a telework employee, but rather a virtual employee who was forced to work at home because of Agency needs. Thus, the Rehabilitation Act required VA to modify the complainant's work environment, including purchasing an ergonomic chair for home office, to ensure she could perform the essential functions of her position.

However, OEDCA found that the complainant was not reprised against when she was moved to the Denver Federal Center. First, the complainant was on notice when she was hired that she may eventually end up working at a VA facility or telework center as more employees were hired. Second, the complainant's reassignment to the Denver Federal Center was made as a reasonable accommodation for her disability. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has held that an individual with a disability under the Rehabilitation Act has the right to an effective accommodation, but the accommodation may or may not be the accommodation of the employee's choice.

In this case, there were two available options to provide complainant with a reasonable accommodation—either management could provide the ergonomic chair for her home office or she could be reassigned to an office location and provided with an ergonomic chair. OEDCA found that either option was an effective accommodation and that management was not required to provide the accommodation preferred by the complainant. *—Maxanne R. Witkin, Director, VA's Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication*



Diversity Council Activity

DISP Reporting

At the October 2012 quarterly meeting, VA Diversity Council (VADC) members reported on their organization's fiscal year 2012 accomplishments towards VA's Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan (DISP) and have been asked to continue to report accomplishments on a quarterly basis. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 16, 2013.

For more information on the VADC, including meeting agendas and minutes, the roster, and a copy of the charter, visit <http://www.diversity.va.gov/council>.

Diversity@Work is published by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI), a program office within the Office of Human Resources and Administration (HR&A).

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Visit our Web site
<http://www.diversity.va.gov>
for staff e-mail addresses.

OTHER USEFUL LINKS

HR&A
<http://www.va.gov/ofcadmin>

VA's Office of Human Resources Management
<http://www.va.gov/ohrm>

VA's Office of Resolution Management
<http://www.va.gov/orm>

Veterans Health Administration's Diversity and Inclusion Community of Practice
Michael.Youngblood@va.gov

GOT NEWS?

We want to hear from you! If you'd like to share your story ideas, comments, or suggestions, e-mail us at odi@va.gov.

D&I Online

The mission of the Department of Veterans Affairs' diversity and inclusion program is to develop and implement a comprehensive, integrated, and strategic focus on diversity and inclusion as key components of the Department's human resources strategies. Here's a sampling of online tools available at <http://www.diversity.va.gov> that can help leverage diversity and build inclusion:

- ▶ National Native American Heritage Month and other observance resources.
- ▶ Training resources, guides, and reports.
- ▶ Links to professional and community organizations.
- ▶ Best practices for diversity management.



D&I In Your E-mail Inbox

Once a week, ODI sends out *NewsLink*, an e-mail message with annotated links to current news items and other information related to leveraging diversity and building inclusion. For a FREE subscription to this weekly electronic news service, e-mail odi@va.gov with the words SUBSCRIBE NEWSLINK in the subject line. Find a sample of *NewsLink* at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/newslink.aspx>.

D&I on Your TV or PC

Diversity News is a monthly video program produced by the VA Central Office Broadcast Center for ODI. *Diversity News* follows *VA News* on the VA Knowledge Network, Content Distribution Network, channel 2. Programs are also available at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/dn.aspx>.

Calendar

<http://www.diversity.va.gov/calendar>

November

Military Family Month
National Adoption Month
National Entrepreneurship Month
National Family Caregivers Month
National Native American Heritage Month

American Indian Science and Engineering Society National Conference
November 1-3; Anchorage, AK
<http://www.aises.org>

Deaf Nation Expo
November 3; Chicago, IL
<http://deafnation.com/deafnationexpo>

World Freedom Day
November 9

Veterans Day
November 11 (Federal holiday observed November 12)
<http://www.va.gov/vetsday>

Federal Interagency Diversity Partnership Annual Training Day
November 14
https://s.zoomerang.com/s/FIDP_registration

International Day of Tolerance
November 16
<http://www.un.org/en/events/toleranceday>

National Family Week
November 18-24

CAREERS & the disABLED Magazine's Career Expo for People with Disabilities
November 19; Washington, DC
<http://www.eop.com/expos.php>

Transgender Day of Remembrance
November 20

Thanksgiving Day
November 24