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

SUBJECT: 2015 Hispanic Heritage Month

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) joins the Nation in commemorating National Hispanic Heritage Month observed September 15 through October 15, 2015. This year's theme is "Hispanic Americans: Energizing Our Nation's Diversity."

Hispanic Heritage Month recognizes the rich multicultural history of Hispanics and the significant contributions they have made to American Society and our Nation. In 1968, Congress passed Public Law 40-498 to honor the achievements of Hispanics in America. The Congress, by Public Law 100-402, as amended, authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation designating September 15 through October 15 as "National Hispanic Heritage Month."

As of September 30, 2014, Hispanics represented 6.72 percent (21,725 employees) of VA's permanent workforce. Of the permanent workforce, VA employs (109,594) Veterans, of which 7.60 percent (8,332) are Hispanics. VA is experiencing less than expected participation for Hispanic males and females when compared to the Relevant Civilian Labor Force. In addition, Hispanic men and women have less than expected participation rates at the GS 12 through 14, and Title 38 equivalent pay grades when compared to the pay grade distribution of the total VA workforce. Although VA continues to develop and implement strategies to improve outreach and career development, the numbers indicate that considerable work is ahead of us to ensure that Hispanics are fully included in its workforce.

VA Central Office will observe Hispanic Heritage Month Thursday, September 17, 2015, in the G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery Veterans Conference Center, Room 230, at noon. For more information, contact Tynnetta Lee, Special Emphasis Program Manager, Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) at (202) 461-7968 or Tynnetta.Lee@va.gov. All managers and supervisors are encouraged to promote attendance at activities to recognize the many contributions of Hispanics.

For information on VA's Hispanic Employment Program (HEP) or to request a reasonable accommodation, contact Andy Gonzalez, VA's National HEP Manager, ODI, at (202) 299-4320, Andy.Gonzalez@va.gov, or visit the HEP Web site at http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/hispanic.aspx.

Gina S. Farrisee