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For Immediate Release

Wednesday, February 13, 2008

Grassley says veterans should fill job vacancies at the IRS

Senator follows up on commitment made by IRS nominee to consider 1,000 hires

WASHINGTON – Senator Chuck Grassley said today there are job opportunities at the Internal Revenue Service and he’s asking the Treasury Secretary to do everything possible to hire veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars for these vacant positions.

“There’s a lot of room for improvement in the Internal Revenue Service’s hiring of veterans,” Grassley said. “And veterans coming home right now are having a hard time finding jobs in many cases. There’s no question that these men and women are extremely capable. So the case I’m making to the Treasury Secretary is that these individuals offer the federal bureaucracy new energy, a fresh outlook and a ‘can do’ attitude.”

Grassley first urged the Internal Revenue Service to look at hiring 1,000 veterans during a hearing two weeks ago for the new Commissioner. The nominee committed to consider the possibility. Grassley said he’s following up with a letter to the Treasury Secretary today to make sure the matter doesn’t get dropped.

According to the Internal Revenue Service, the agency needs to hire about 3,300 revenue agents and 4,600 tax examiners by next year to replace departing employees. In 2006, veterans made up 22 percent of new hires in federal agencies on average, but for the Treasury Department it was only 6 percent.

“The vacancies at the Internal Revenue Service are a very good opportunity to make the situation right, especially for disabled veterans who have served our country so honorably,” Grassley said.

Grassley is Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Finance, which is responsible for tax policy and oversight of the Internal Revenue Service. The text of his letter to Treasury Secretary Henry M. Paulson follows here, along with a related news release issued by Grassley on January 29.

February 13, 2008

The Honorable Henry M. Paulson, Jr.

Secretary of the Treasury
Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear Secretary Paulson:

I urge your support for a goal of hiring 1,000 veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars for positions at the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) this fiscal year.

The nation is seeing a significant number of veterans, many of whom are disabled, returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. These are extraordinary men and women, and our country is honored by their service. There is no question that these men and women are extremely capable. I think it is important for the IRS to do all that it can to hire these returning veterans, and it is clear that the IRS offers many opportunities for these servicemen and servicewomen, particularly the disabled. They will bring to the federal government a great deal of much-needed energy, a fresh outlook and, most importantly, a "can do" attitude that is much needed. Without question, the IRS will benefit significantly from these veterans joining its ranks.

A September 28, 2007, Department of Veterans Affairs report highlighted the many challenges war veterans face in finding good jobs upon returning home. This report found that 18 percent of veterans were unemployed within one to three years of discharge, while one out of four who did find employment earned less than \$21,840 a year. In addition, the VA report attributed the poor job prospects for these veterans to inadequate job networks, a lack of mentors after extended periods of deployment, and employers' misplaced stereotypes about veterans' fitness for employment.

According to the Office of Personnel Management, veterans comprised 22.1 percent of new hires in federal departments for Fiscal Year 2006. However, the Department of Treasury looked to veterans for only 6.4 percent of their 2006 job openings. Furthermore, the Department of Treasury hired disabled veterans at a rate of only 1.9 percent of new hires in 2006. These figures are extremely alarming to me.

I seek your commitment to implement a strategy for IRS to hire 1,000 veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, with a particular emphasis on disabled veterans, during Fiscal Year 2008. IRS Commissioner nominee Douglas Shulman, at his nomination hearing before the Finance Committee on January 29, 2008, gave me assurances that if confirmed, he would work toward such a goal. To assist me in understanding your commitment to this effort, I seek your responses to the following inquiries:

1. Please provide me a discussion of how you will seek to implement this goal, including outreach, job classifications and reclassifications, notification, working with veterans' organizations, and working with the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense.
2. Please describe how Treasury and IRS will make this recruitment of veterans a national effort. A July 2007 analysis by the Partnership for Public Service estimated that IRS will need to hire about 3,350 revenue agents and 4,600 tax examiners by next year to replace departing

employees. However, a recent internet search for federal jobs by my staff found only two IRS job openings in my home state of Iowa. As veterans face employment difficulties in every state, please explain how IRS plans to expand job opportunities for veterans in the places that they live across the country.

3. Finally, if there are any legislative changes that you believe will aid or assist this effort, please identify them.

I ask for your written responses by April 1, 2008. Thank you for your prompt attention to this very important matter.

Cordially yours,

Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member

For Immediate Release
Tuesday, January 29, 2008

Grassley secures commitment from IRS nominee
to consider veterans from Iraq, Afghanistan for vacant jobs at agency

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley, Ranking Member of the Committee on Finance, won assurances today from the nominee for IRS Commissioner to try to hire 1,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans for agency positions during the upcoming fiscal year.

“It’s important for the federal government to do everything it can to help returning service men and women, including many who are disabled, find employment. In turn, veterans offer a talented and dedicated work force,” Grassley said. “These are extraordinary young men and women, and our country is honored by their service. The IRS is facing a skilled worker shortage, and it seems obvious that the agency could benefit from veterans’ experience, energy and ‘can do’ attitude.”

It’s anticipated that the IRS will lose a significant number of experienced personnel and skilled staff to retirement over the next few years. Grassley said it makes sense for the agency to actively pursue this kind of opportunity “to help veterans and improve taxpayer services.”

Grassley said he would pursue any legislative changes needed to assist a hire-veterans effort by the IRS, though he also said he’s confident that the tax-collection agency already has authority to undertake this kind of initiative.

Grassley presented his proposal and received a willing response from the IRS nominee, Douglas Schulman, during a Finance Committee nomination hearing this morning. Grassley said he looks forward to receiving feedback on how the incoming commissioner would conduct outreach, job classifications and reclassifications, notification and work with veterans’ organizations and the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Defense.

Grassley has a long record of working to improve services provided by the IRS. He worked

to establish the IRS Restructuring Commission and win passage of IRS overhaul legislation ten years ago. He previously co-authored numerous taxpayer bills of rights, and he has conducted active oversight of the agency from his leadership position on the tax policy committee in the United States Senate.