



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

June 14, 1993

PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT LETTER NO. 93-9 (338) (531)

SUBJECT: Revised Policy on Making Appointments Above the  
Minimum Rate

Attached is the Department's revised policy on making appointments above the minimum rate. This policy has been revised to conform to the changes in the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) regulations contained in 5 CFR 531.203.

The Department's policy has been revised by eliminating the requirement for OPM approval for rates more than 20 percent higher than an applicant's existing pay. We have also added instructions on the documentation which must be prepared when making superior qualifications appointments, as well as appropriate internal guideline and evaluation procedures.

The Department's earlier policy on appointments above the minimum rate (contained in PML 91-3, dated June 7, 1991) is hereby superseded. That portion of PML 91-3 which covers the payment of travel expenses for new appointments and preemployment interviews remains in effect.

Morris A. Simms  
Director of Personnel

Attachment

INQUIRIES: Alan Coulter, Division of Employee Relations,  
Room 5219, Telephone 208-5284, Mail Stop 5203

Superior Qualifications Appointments

A. Authority.

5 U.S.C. 5115, 5338 and Chapter 54; E.O. 12748; section 302 of Public Law 101-509; and 5 CFR 531.203

B. Policy.

The Department of the Interior hereby establishes a plan for making appointments above the minimum rate because of superior qualifications in accordance with the regulations issued by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in 5 CFR 531. Heads of bureaus and offices and Assistant Secretaries will be responsible for administering this plan.

C. Departmental Procedure.

1. Bureaus may make superior qualifications appointments above the minimum rate at any grade of the General Schedule (includes GS and GM) as long as the increase does not exceed 20 percent of the candidate's existing pay. Superior qualifications appointments at any rate above 20 percent of the candidate's existing pay may be effected only with prior approval of the program Assistant Secretary.
  - a. The authority of Heads of bureaus and offices to approve superior qualifications appointments may be further delegated at the discretion of the bureau or office head.
  - b. The authority of Assistant Secretaries to approve superior qualifications appointments at rates in excess of 20 percent of a candidate's existing pay may not be delegated to a lower level.
2. Bureaus may also make appointments above the minimum rate to meet a special need of the bureau. Some examples of special needs are: a manpower shortage in a particular occupation or a program which is unique to the bureau.
3. Bureaus which make superior qualifications appointments must establish documentation and recordkeeping procedures to allow reconstruction of the action in each case. Documentation must include:
  - a. The superior qualifications of the individual or special need of the bureau that justified use of this authority;

- b. The factors considered in determining the individual's existing pay and the reason for setting pay at a rate higher than that needed to match existing pay; and
  - c. The reasons for authorizing an advanced rate instead of or in addition to a recruitment bonus.
4. Bureaus will establish appropriate internal guidelines and evaluation procedures to ensure compliance with the law, OPM's regulations, and this policy.