



Message from the DAS

Inside:

- VACO Notes | [Page 2](#)
- Field Notes | [Page 3](#)
- Child Care Subsidy | [Page 4](#)
- Vet Diversity Stats | [Page 4](#)
- Policy Alerts | [Page 5](#)
- VACO LGBT Pride Month | [Page 8](#)
- D&I Training | [Page 11](#)
- Hearing Loss | [Page 11](#)
- Hispanic Summit | [Page 12](#)
- Diversity Council | [Page 12](#)
- Compliance Corner | [Page 13](#)
- Calendar | [Page 14](#)

Bookmarks:

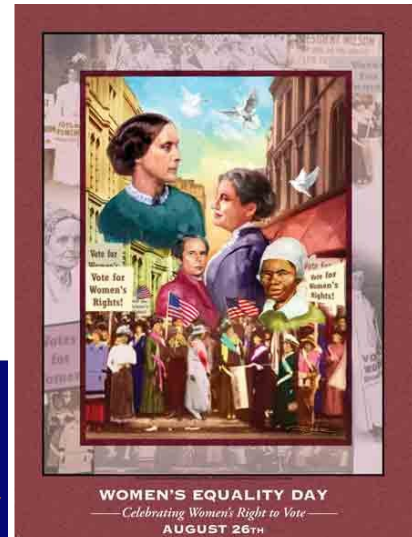
- HR Academy
<http://vahracademy.com>
- Talent Management System
<http://www.tms.va.gov>
- VA Alternative Dispute Resolution Program
<http://www.va.gov/adr>
- VA Learning University
<http://www.valu.va.gov>
- WorkLife4You
<http://www.worklife4you.com>

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

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) has had a busy summer! We were proud to host VA Central Office's fourth annual Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Pride Month observance (see [page 8](#)). This inspiring diversity event was broadcast live on VA Knowledge Network and was repeated throughout the succeeding 30 days. The program came on the heels of an important decision by the U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) stating that gender identity was a protected basis under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended. On April 20, 2012, EEOC issued a unanimous decision in the *Mia Macy v. the Department of Justice* case finding that claims of discrimination based on transgender status (included under gender identity), are cognizable under Title VII's sex discrimination prohibition, and may therefore be processed under Part 1614 of EEOC's Federal sector EEO complaints process. This decision affirms the protections already included in VA's EEO, Diversity, and No FEAR Policy Statement signed by Secretary Shinseki. Read more about this under Policy Alerts on [page 5](#).

Earlier this summer, we welcomed many new VA summer interns at ODI's National Diversity Internship Program Welcome Ceremony. This energetic cadre of talent offers VA yet another opportunity to leverage diversity to enhance our organizational performance—read about them on the [next page](#). Both events are testament to the new, broader, and more inclusive vision of diversity that we embrace in VA and have articulated in our new VA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan for FY 2012–FY 2016. Please be sure to review this Plan and share its vision with your organizations (<http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/plan.aspx>).

VA's Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report, signed by VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki, is now available online at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/diar.aspx>. [Continued on the next page.](#)



Commemorate

Women's Equality Day

2012 marks the 92nd anniversary of the adoption of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, granting women the right to vote. The United States Congress designated August 26th as "Women's Equality Day" starting in 1971. On this date, there is not a better way to reflect on this momentous date than to reflect on the lives and contributions of women activists who supported its creation, particularly focusing on Sojourner Truth, Ida Bell Wells-Barnett, and Helen Keller. Their legacies can teach us about the historic need for equality and the women's suffrage movement that took place to ensure that this need was met.

During this movement, racial tensions, and abolition of slavery were also still evident and also played a major role in the overall movement. For example, in 1851 the Women's Rights Convention, which was held in Akron, Ohio, in order for women's-rights leaders to outline and discuss the national fight for women's suffrage, Frances Gage, president of the convention, received requests from attendees not to let some women leaders to speak. [Continued on page 6.](#)

Message from the DAS

Continued from the previous page.



Georgia Coffey

This Report chronicles the status and many accomplishments and progress made by VA in the goals contained in the VA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan. I would like to personally thank our VA components for all that they are doing to realize VA's Diversity and Inclusion strategic goals and objectives as reflected this annual report. ODI is proud to partner with you in this endeavor. To that end, ODI has implemented a mechanism for VA components to report quarterly on their progress towards achieving the goals laid out in the VA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan for FY 2012–FY 2016. More information about this reporting template is included in the VA Diversity Council (VADC) article on [page 12](#). VADC members will be responsible for reporting on their organization's submissions so please be aware of who your organization's Diversity Council representative is so you can provide information as appropriate for this quarterly report.

Please be sure to catch the July edition of *Diversity News* either online at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/dn.aspx> or on the VA Knowledge Network, channel 2, immediately following VA News. This month we feature videotaped diversity and inclusion messages from VA senior leadership including Deputy Secretary W. Scott Gould and all three VA Under Secretaries.

Finally, join me in celebrating Women's Equality Day this August 26th. We have come a long way in the area of women's rights but there is much yet to do. We are proud that VA has increased its representation of women in senior leadership positions and remain above the government average (see the Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report referenced above) yet we must remain vigilant to ensure there are no barriers or glass ceilings to women as well as other historically underrepresented groups in the workforce. Please help us ensure we are each doing our part to promote full equality and inclusion in public service. ~Georgia Coffey, VA Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diversity and Inclusion

VACO Notes

Welcome, New ODI Summer Interns!

ODI welcomes Margaret Breihan. Ms. Breihan is a recent graduate of American University where she studied Literature and Communications. She comes to the Department of Veterans Affairs with a personal understanding of the positive difference that can happen when government policymakers and the diverse disability community work together. This is her fourth Workforce Recruitment Program internship, a program designed to help students with disabilities start careers in public service. When Ms. Breihan interned at the Bureau of Labor Statistics, she started to understand basic government administration. At her next internship at the Office of Disability Employment Policy in the Department of Labor, she gained better understanding of disability history and how that impacts government policies affecting people with disabilities today. It was during that internship that Ms. Breihan's communications skills started to make a difference, as she researched policies and tried to educate others. During her most recent internship, with Air Force Public Affairs, she wrote about everything from disaster relief efforts to fuel emissions—all stories highlighting the exemplary efforts of those in uniform. Ms. Breihan comes to VA with a desire to hone her communications skills and to help those who support our Nation's Veterans.

ODI also extends a warm welcome to intern Romee Trofort, a U.S. Army Veteran who served active duty and deployed to Iraq during Operation Enduring Freedom in 2003. A native of New York, Ms. Trofort also served overseas in Germany. She is a graduate Cum Laude with a Bachelors degree in Human Resource Management at Western International University and is currently studying Spanish at The University of Houston. Ms. Trofort began her Federal service in December 2008, working for the Agricultural Research Service branch of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in Southwest Arizona. While working with the USDA, Ms. Trofort was appointed as the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Committee chairperson as an additional duty. She worked with outreach efforts targeting the Indian and Hispanic communities and their students. Ms. Trofort also worked diligently to organize and present several different cultural observance celebrations. EEO and diversity and inclusion efforts are a passion for Ms. Trofort and she intends to continue working in this field in the Federal government.

Finally, welcome to Anastasia Wong who will be working with ODI's Workforce Analysis team to analyze the relationship of the diversity and inclusion indices with organizational performance measures. She will also assist in developing a system that will generate the inclusion index automatically at the administration level. Ms. Wong earned an undergraduate degree in mathematics from Mills College. As an undergraduate, she did research stints in financial options and modeling particles accelerated through gas (wave propagation in homogeneous media). Currently, Ms. Wong is a graduate student at Mississippi State University majoring in Statistics with a minor in Mathematics.

Field Notes

Section 508 Training

VA's Section 508 Program Office is conducting "General Section 508 Training" July 12 from 2:00 -4:00 pm EST and August 9 from 2:00 -4:00 pm EST at Central Office in Conference Room 730. The class will provide an overview of the law and its application to Electronic Information Technology (EIT) including the technical, functional, and documentation/support standards surrounding 508 compliance. VA employees attending the training session will learn more about VA's Section 508 Program Office and how it works to ensure that Electronic Information Technology products developed, procured, maintained, or used by 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.

Contact Vicki Leon at Vicki.Leon@va.gov to register.

BIG VA Preconference Forum

ODI is proud to present the Annual VA Preconference Forum during the Blacks in Government (BIG) 34th Annual National Training Conference. This year's conference will be held August 13-16, 2012, at the Detroit Marriott at the Renaissance Center in Detroit, Michigan. The theme for this year's conference is "Educate to Escalate, Reaching Your Potential Through BIG."

The VA Preconference Forum will be held on August 14th from 1-5 pm. This event is a special emphasis program training opportunity designed to provide information specific to VA's African American workforce including demographics, employment and advancement initiatives and opportunities, Veteran employment issues, and an overview and update of initiatives focused on African Americans. In addition, John Fuller of ODI will conduct



a 90 minute diversity and inclusion awareness presentation.

VA employees in the local commuting area are encouraged to attend the VA Preconference Forum, with supervisory approval, at no registration cost. All associated costs to attend the main BIG conference must be authorized by your organization.

For more information about the BIG conference, visit <http://www.bignet.org>. For more information about the Annual VA Preconference Forum, or to request a reasonable accommodation, contact Trina R. Faison, VA's National African American Employment Program Manager, ODI, at Trina.Faison@va.gov or (202) 461-4044.

FEW Agency and Veterans Forums



ODI is proud to present the Agency Forum and Veterans Forum during the 43rd Annual Federally Employed Women (FEW) National Training Program (NTP). This year, this event will be held from July 16-20, 2012, at the Detroit Marriott at the Renaissance Center in Detroit, Michigan. The theme for this year's conference is "Wheels of Change Keep on Moving."

The VA Agency Forum will be held on July 16th from 10 am-noon. This forum is a diversity training opportunity which will provide information workforce demographics, career development opportunities and initiatives, and leadership insights as they relate to women in VA. All VA employees whose attendance at the NTP is being paid for using VA travel funds, as well as VA employees in the local commuting area (with supervisory approval), are highly encouraged to attend this forum at no registration cost. Registration for the Agency Forum must be completed through the Talent Management System using course number 1853383.

In line with the theme of NTP, VA is making a new addition to this year's NTP and will host a Veterans Forum on July 16th from 1:30-4:30pm in the same room where the Agency Forum will be held. This event is open to all FEW NTP attendees and VA employees in the local commuting area, with supervisory approval. Attendees will be provided information specific to women Veterans health issues, benefits, VA for Vets, and other Veteran resources. There will also be an open forum that will allow attendees the opportunity to ask general questions.

All associated costs to attend the main FEW NTP must be authorized by your organization. For more information about the FEW NTP, visit <http://www.few.org>. For more information about the VA Agency Forum and the Veterans Forum, contact Nanese A. Loza, VA's National Women's Employment Program Manager, ODI, at Nanese.Loza@va.gov or (202) 461-4049. [Field Notes continued on page 7.](#)

VA's Child Care Subsidy Program

2,000 VA Employees Served by Program

Public Law 107-67, Sec. 630 and the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 792 permit Federal departments and agencies to administer a child care subsidy program to assist their lower income employees with the cost of child care. Under prescribed authority and policy in VA Directive 5009, VA has chosen to implement a Department-wide program that is available to full-time and part-time employees who meet the income criteria and have an eligible child in the care of a licensed or regulated center-based or family care facility (includes before and after school care programs). The commitment of this program was developed in partnership with the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE), National Association of Government Employees (NAGE), American Nurses Association (ANA), and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

VA's Child Care Subsidy Program (CCSP) Service is a nation-wide program that assists lower income VA employees whose total household income is less than \$59,999 per year with the cost of child care. The CCSP currently serves over 2,000 VA employees and the number continues to grow. An employee's subsidy is a percentage of the total child care costs based upon the total family income as follows:

Total Family Income	% of Total Child Care Costs Paid By VA
Under \$24,999	45
\$25,000 - \$34,999	40
\$35,000 - \$49,999	30
\$50,000 - \$59,999	25
\$60,000 and over	0

The application process for the CCSP has transitioned from a paper application process to an automated system. The Child Care Records Management System (CCRMS) gives employees the ability to apply for program eligibility on-line using their VA Network Identification (NT ID). If the employee does not have a NT ID, he/she will fill out the required paper application and contact their local HR office for assistance with entering information into the system on the employee behalf. Your local servicing HR office will submit all applications to the VA Child Care Subsidy Program (Office of Human Resources Management) through the CCRMS. To start the on-line CCSP application process, visit the CCRMS page on the VA intranet. The following forms must be completed on-line and supporting documents must be downloaded into CCRMS to complete each application package:

- VA Form 0730a, VA Child Care Subsidy Employee Application Form
- VA Form 0730b, Child Care Provider Information (for the Child Care Subsidy Program)
- Copy of provider(s) license and schedule of fees
- Copy of most recent SF-50, Notice of Personnel Action
- Copy of last two (2) Earning and Leave (E&L) Statements
- Signed and dated copy of federal tax return (IRS Form 1040), including spouse's, if applicable
- Copy of all W-2 forms, including spouse's, if applicable

Veteran Diversity Statistics

Figures from the 2010 Census for the Diversity of Our Nation's Veteran Population

- Total number of Veterans: 21.9 million
- 17.7 million - Non-Hispanic White
- 2.3 million - Black
- 1.1 million - Hispanic
- 258,000 - Asian
- 153,000 - American Indian or Alaskan Native
- 30,000 - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Female: 1.5 million
- Male: 20.4 million
- 5.5 million Veterans have a disability rating
- 3.3 million Veterans have service-connected disabilities
- Of the 3.3 million service-connected disabled Veterans, 652,000 are rated at 70% disabled or higher

Policy Alerts

New Guidance Regarding Secretary's EEO, Diversity, and No FEAR Act Policy

A recent decision was issued by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) regarding employment discrimination because of an individual's gender identity or transgender status. The decision impacts the "EEO and Prohibited Discrimination" section in the Secretary's EEO, Diversity, and No FEAR Policy Statement signed on March 14, 2012. According to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, the term "gender identity" refers to an individual's internal sense of being male or female and the term "transgender" refers to people with a gender identity that is different from the sex assigned to them at birth.

On April 20, 2012, EEOC ruled that employment discrimination based on gender identity or transgender status should be considered under the sex discrimination prohibitions in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Consequently, the Office of Resolution Management will process complaints of this nature in accordance with the EEO discrimination complaint process proscribed in 29 CFR 1614. View VA's EEO Policy online at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/policy/statement.aspx>.

VOW (Veterans Opportunity to Work) to Hire Heroes Act of 2011

On November 21, 2011, President Obama signed the VOW (Veterans Opportunity to Work) to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (Public Law 112-56). The VOW Act amends chapter 21 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.) by adding section 2108a, "Treatment of certain individuals as veterans, disabled veterans, and preference eligibles." This new section requires Federal agencies to treat certain active duty service members as preference eligibles for purposes of an appointment in the competitive service, even though the service members have not been discharged or released from active duty.

The Office of Personnel Management is reviewing its regulations, guidance, web sites, etc., to ensure that the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 2108a are incorporated into these policy vehicles. Please find the subject memorandum from US OPM Director John Berry, VOW (Veterans Opportunity to Work) to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 and a Fact Sheet and Frequently Asked Questions at the following link: <http://chcoc.gov/transmittals/TransmittalDetails.aspx?TransmittalID=4881>. Questions may be sent to staffingpolicy059/vaco@va.gov.

Policy Update Step 3 - Nurse Executive Special Pay

The following proposed changes regarding Nurse Executive Special Pay have been made to VA Handbook, Part VII, Chapter 2 and Part VIII, Chapter 16:

- The aggregate pay limitation for Nurse Executives has been increased from the rate for Level I (\$199,700) to the rate for the President of the United States (currently \$400,000);
- The maximum rate for special pay for Nurse Executives has been increased from \$25,000 to \$100,000;
- The mandatory \$10,000 in special pay for Nurse Executives at Complexity Level 1a VHA health care facilities has been eliminated;
- Nurse Executive special pay up to \$40,000 requires the approval of the Network Director; and
- Nurse Executive special pay in excess of \$40,000 requires the approval of the Under Secretary for Health, or designee

These changes have not yet been implemented and will not be effective until the policy revision has been approved.

5005-56 Selective Service Procedures

VA Handbook 5005, Part II, Chapter 2, has been revised to cover selective service decision and appeals procedures for both Title 5 and Title 38 proposed and existing appointments. Significant changes include:

- a. Identifies qualifying exemptions.
- b. Specifies facility actions required when an applicant or employee has failed to register.
- c. Establishes procedures for requesting adjudication.
- d. Establishes appeal procedures for unfavorable decisions.

The electronic version of VA Handbook 5005 is maintained on the Office of Human Resources Management intranet Web site. [Policy Alerts continued on page 9.](#)

Commemorate

[Continued from page 1.](#)

Gage later recalled some of these requests to silence a speaker who was viewed as controversial at the time: “‘For God’s sake, Ms Gage, don’t let her speak!’ half a dozen women whispered loudly, fearing that their cause would be mixed up with Abolition” (<http://www.kyphilom.com/www/truth.html>). The woman they were speaking of was Sojourner Truth. Truth was a well-known former slave and abolitionist who fought both for the abolition of slavery and the equal rights of all women. During the convention, Gage provided her an opportunity to speak. Truth gave her “Ain’t I a Woman?” speech, where she stood up to the critics of suffrage, and she also reminded those involved that the suffrage movement needed to fight for the rights and equality of all women, regardless of race.

Gage wrote down her memories of the powerful speech: “Sojourner pointed to one of the ministers. ‘That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody helps me any best place. And ain’t I a woman?’ Sojourner raised herself to her full height. ‘Look at me! Look at my arm.’ She bared her right arm and flexed her powerful muscles. ‘I have plowed, I have planted and I have gathered into barns. And no man could head me. And ain’t I a woman?’” (<http://www.kyphilom.com/www/truth.html>) Truth’s speech proved to be one of the most powerful and highlighted speeches in the convention. Her convictions regarding the rightness of equality and empowerment worked so well together because her overall message was one of inclusiveness.

Later in the suffrage movement, Ida Bell Wells-Barnett continued reminding the next generation of suffragists that the movement still needed to be inspired by that same sense of inclusiveness. She was an African-American suffragist who refused to march in the segregated sections of the women’s rights parades. Wells-Barnett went on to found the first African-American suffrage chapter in Chicago. She also helped found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) (<http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/civilrights/il2.htm>).

A supporter of suffrage that many may not consider in the same light as Sojourner Truth and Ida Bell Wells-Barnett is Helen Keller. Although she is most widely known for learning to work with her disabilities by learning from Anne Sullivan and as being a strong advocate for the rights of people with disabilities, she was also part of the suffrage movement supporting the equal rights of women. As an example of this, in a 1913 letter, Keller stated “Political power shapes the affairs of state and determines many of the every-day relations of human beings with one another. The citizen with a vote is master of his own destiny. Women without this power, and who do not happen to have ‘natural protectors,’ are at the mercy of man-made laws. And experience shows that these laws are often unjust to them. Legislation made to protect women who have fathers and husbands to care for them does not protect working women whose only defenders are the state’s policemen” (http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/keller-helen/works/1910s/13_10_17.htm). So, like others advocating women’s suffrage, Keller understood the importance of the law protecting the rights of all.

These three great women, suffragists, and activists all understood that rights and inclusion for all is the end goal. Celebrating the achievements of the suffrage movement is important, and knowing that the larger fight for diversity and inclusion in an ongoing battle is even more vital. As current statistics show the struggle for inclusion and diversity, especially in the workforce, continues to this day. In VA, where both equality and inclusion of both employees and the Veterans they serve are of utmost importance, there is still room for improvement. As of May 31, 2012, women represent 59.48 percent of the overall VA workforce. Although this may seem like a large number, it remains 5.37 percent below the National Relevant Civilian Labor Force (RCLF) of 64.85 percent, which is the benchmark. In VA’s permanent leadership pipeline (GS-12 through GS-14) women hold 62.9 percent of those positions. Women represent 35.3 percent of executive leadership positions (GS-15 and Senior Executive Service [SES]), including 35.29 percent of GS-15 positions and 35.57 percent of SES positions. Although representation of women in the higher grades has steadily increased over that last few decades, there is still improvement to be made. As VA has recently focused its efforts on employment of Veterans, employment of women Veterans is above what might be expected. As of May 31, 2012, Women Veterans represent 26.28 percent of total permanently employed Veterans within VA. This is far above the overall representation of women Veterans in the general population, which in 2009, was about eight percent. Of all VA-employed women Veterans, 30.43 percent are disabled. VA employment of Veterans is an area VA has made drastic improvements. For more information, contact Nanese Loza, VA’s National Women’s Employment Program Manager, ODI, at Nanese.Loza@va.gov or (202) 461-4049.

Field Notes

Continued from page 3.

It's Time to Start Planning Hispanic Heritage Month Events!

National Hispanic Heritage Month, September 15–October 15, is a time for us to celebrate the history, achievements, traditions and contributions of Hispanic Americans to our nation. Each year, activities, ceremonies, and programs are planned to commemorate the immeasurable impact that Hispanics have made in all aspects of American life to include military service, public service, entrepreneurship, the arts, the health sciences, education and many other fields. This year's theme is "Diversity United, Building America's Future Today." The ODI Web site offers resources to assist in planning special emphasis programs. Visit <http://www.diversity.va.gov/tools/event-planning.aspx>. If you should need additional assistance in planning this year's Hispanic Heritage Month event for your VA organization, contact Andy Gonzalez at Andy.Gonzalez@va.gov or 202-299-4320.

ADVANCE Conflict Management Training

ADVANCE Your Knowledge and Skill in Managing Conflict and Resolving Disputes through Mediation by taking classes at the Justice Center of Atlanta sponsored by the Office of Resolution Management Workplace Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Office.

The Managing Conflict and Resolving Disputes through Mediation training is a three-day course, that provides an opportunity to examine the factors that contribute to workplace conflict. It offers tools that managers can use to prevent these situations from escalating and diverting valuable time, resources, and energy from our mission. The course is balanced to include information on how to better manage conflict (i.e., asking effective questions, dealing with difficult people, negotiation skills), and understanding the mediation process.

While not asking you to become a professional mediator among your many other responsibilities at VA, it is hoped that by spending in-depth time studying, discussing, and trying the myriad of techniques and communication skills related to the mediation process, you will adopt new approaches, ideas, and skills in dealing with disputes.

Managing Conflict and Resolving Disputes Training is conducted by the Justice Center of Atlanta (JCA) in Atlanta, Georgia. The JCA has led the field of training and practice in conflict resolution for over 30 years and is nationally recognized as a provider of top quality practice and instruction in mediation by the U.S.

Government Accounting Office. Targeted Audience: Senior Executives, GS-14–15s, GS-12–13 Supervisors, Leadership VA participants, and Title-38 Equivalents who are in Supervisory Positions. Classes are scheduled for September 11–13, October 23–25, November 6–8, December 11–13, January 15–17, February 26–28, March 19–21, April 23–25, and May 21–23. These classes are now listed in the Talent Management System and you may register by visiting: <https://www.tms.va.gov/plateau/user/login.jsp>. All questions regarding this training may be directed to Rita Reese, ADR Manager, at Rita.Reese@va.gov. ADVANCE funding for registration and travel for the September class is available.

Workforce Resurvey

VA is resurveying its workforce to update disability status of employees pursuant to Executive Order 13548, "Increasing Federal Employment of Individuals with Disabilities." Self-identification of disability status is essential for effective data collection and analysis. The information employees provide will be used for statistical purposes only. With current data on the status of employees with disabilities, VA will be able to develop more effective policies and programs in compliance with the Executive Order.

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) recently leveraged its Support Service Center (VSSC) system and created an input portal for employees to enter data to the Office of Personnel Management Standard Form 256 (SF-256) "Self-Identification of a Disability" which was revised July 2010. Using VSSC provides a secure, confidential, and seamless process which will automatically update the employee's records currently in the HR Information System (HRIS) PAID database. This process is now available to all employees VA-wide.

Although self-identification of a disability is voluntary, all VA employees, especially those who have a disability, are encouraged to participate and update their status by July 15, 2012. Employee participation will enable VA to measure progress towards meeting the President's goals. Employees willing to self disclose will be able to go on-line via the VSSC System, click on a link to the SF-256 form, and complete the form.

Employees who do not have the ability to access to the Web portal (e.g. no access to PC or laptop) and are willing to participate, are asked to please complete the SF 256 form (http://www.opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/sf256.pdf) and provide the printed copy to the HR office for processing. Please be assured that after the SF 256 data is keyed into the HRIS' PAID database, the paper form is destroyed.

If you have any questions, please contact your facility EEO manager. [Field Notes continued on the next page.](#)

LGBT Pride Month at VACO

This Year's Theme: One VA—We Serve with Pride



VA Central Office (VACO) held its fourth annual Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Pride Month observance on Tuesday, June 19, 2012, in the G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery Veterans Conference Center. The theme for this year's observance was, "One VA—We Serve with Pride."

Opening remarks were provided by Georgia Coffey, Deputy Assistant Secretary for ODI. The Honorable Dr. Raul Perea-Henze, Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning, provided a videotaped welcome message. Captain John A. Breast served as a guest speaker. Captain Breast, the Section Head for Aircraft Carrier and Air Traffic Control Programs assigned to the Pentagon, discussed challenges LGBT Federal employees, active duty military members, and Veterans face in the workplace; why it is important to acknowledge our LGBT colleagues' presence in the workforce; and actions we can all take to ensure inclusion and share experiences or other valuable information that will provide employees with increased cultural competencies to promote and strengthen fair and just diversity and workforce inclusion practices.



Georgia Coffey and Captain John A. Breast

Deborah McCallum, Assistant General Counsel, provided a briefing on VA LGBT initiatives. Julie Murphy, Acting Director of the Veterans Health Administration's (VHA's) Office of Diversity and Inclusion, provided an overview of VHA LGBT initiatives and of VHA's new Office of Health Equity. Share your VA special emphasis event photos with us at odi@va.gov!

Field Notes

Continued from page 7.

Diversity News: An Online Training Resource

The July 2012 edition of *Diversity News* features diversity and inclusion messages from VA leadership. *Diversity News* is a 15-minute video program produced monthly by ODI with the support of the VA Central Office Broadcasting Center. The program is part of VA's continuing effort to foster equity, a diverse workforce, and an inclusive work environment. Boasting a wealth of knowledge, ODI's library of broadcasts can serve to educate the VA community on workforce diversity and inclusion issues and to share best practices in effective diversity management. *Diversity News* is available both on the internal VA Knowledge Network and on ODI's Web site. To view current and past episodes, visit <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/dn.aspx>.



1HR Connect! Broadcast Now Available

The 1HR 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 1HR Connect videos from the June 5, 2012, live broadcast:

- Veterans Hiring
- Schedule A
- Student Hiring

Policy Alerts

[Continued from page 5.](#)

HRML No. 05-12-04

In a memorandum dated May 11, 2010, President Obama directed Federal agencies to improve the Federal hiring process. VA is committed to adhering to Hiring Reform mandates, including taking steps to improve the application process to make it less burdensome for our applicants. In support of the President's Hiring Reform initiative, applicants are now able to apply online via USA Staffing for VA positions that are advertised on USAJOBS. USAJOBS is the Federal government's official web site for Federal jobs and employment information. USA Staffing is an online automated recruitment tool used to assess the qualification of applicants. However, special hiring authorities exist that provide an even greater efficient hiring process for applicants that are eligible and qualified. These special hiring authorities apply to Veterans Recruitment Appointments (VRA), 30% or more disabled Veterans, people with disabilities, as well as Title 38 and Hybrid Title 38 occupations. The excepted and noncompetitive service flexibilities enable hiring managers to select qualified applicants outside the traditional competitive hiring procedures.

The intent of Hiring Reform is to streamline the application process. However, additional flexibility must be exercised for those eligible for a noncompetitive appointment under an excepted service hiring authority. The Human Resources Office (HRO) must adhere to the following guidelines when using excepted service hiring flexibilities:

a. Vacancies Advertised on USAJOBS

- (1) If a job is advertised on USAJOBS, USA Staffing must be used to accept applications. All applications received for an announcement posted on USAJOBS must be recorded in USA Staffing. Facility HROs are responsible for assisting noncompetitive and excepted service applicants with the application process, which may include applying online, faxing and scanning documents for all advertised positions on USAJOBS.
- (2) All applicants who apply online via USA Staffing must fully adhere to the instructions outlined in the announcement. The Applying Online Pamphlet and the Guide on How to Upload in USA Staffing provide further guidance for applicants. All applicants should be encouraged to apply online.
- (3) Applicants unable to apply online for advertised positions have the option to fax in the responses. If an applicant chooses to fax, use of OPM Form 1203FX or the United States Government Application Cover Page is mandatory. The fax confirmation page should be retained by the applicant as proof of application submission.
 - (a) OPM Form 1203FX is a scannable response form which was originally developed to collect applicant responses and feed them into USA Staffing before USA Staffing accepted online applications. However, it may still be used for those special situations where applicants do not have access to apply online.
 - (b) OPM Form 1203FX does not allow for narrative responses; however, applicants using this form may attach additional pages to their submission to verify questions such as time-in-grade, licenses, certifications, etc.
 - (c) OPM Form 1203FX serves as a cover page when responding to assessment questions offline and when an applicant includes supplemental materials such as DD214, transcripts, resume, etc. with their initial offline application.
 - (d) The United States Government Application Cover Page must be used for all faxed submissions after the initial application (online or via OPM Form 1203FX) or for those who responded to the assessment questionnaire online and need to fax supporting documents. Faxes must be sent to the OPM Processing Center in Macon, GA at (478)757-3144.
- (4) Applicants who are eligible for a noncompetitive appointment and are unable to apply online or fax application materials for positions that are advertised on USAJOBS also have the option of mailing or hand delivering applications to the facility HRO.

NOTE: It is the responsibility of the facility HRO to ensure that all such applications are recorded in USA Staffing. It is recommended that the facility HRO fax the application materials to the OPM Processing Center in Macon, GA at (478)757-3144 immediately upon receipt.
- (5) Vacancy announcements should include language that encourages applicants eligible for non competitive appointments under authorities such as 5 CFR 213.3102 "u" (people with disabilities), 30% or More Disabled Veterans, VRA, and 5 CFR 315.604, to apply.
- (6) Knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) should be included in the announcement to inform applicants of the competencies for which they will be assessed. In accordance with Hiring Reform, HROs are prohibited from requesting applicants to provide narrative, essay-style KSAs with their initial application submission. [Continued on the next page.](#)

Policy Alerts

[Continued from the previous page.](#)

Assessment questionnaires may be used in place of narrative KSAs during the initial application process. KSAs may be requested by the Hiring Manager once the applicant has been referred. Panels may also request additional information from applicants as part of the second phase of the application process. For information on how panels function with USA Staffing, refer to the slides from the OPM monthly webinar—Stored Lists/Panels and System Enhancements—March 2011 Recording ID: 3KRM CJ.

- b. Vacancies Not Advertised on USAJOBS.** When filling a position through excepted or noncompetitive procedures, public announcement on USAJOBS is not required and procedures for traditional competitive procedures do not apply.
- (1) Applicants eligible for a noncompetitive or excepted hiring authority may submit an application directly to the HRO via fax, mail, email, or hand delivery. The HRO must accept and review the documents to ensure eligibility for consideration, and refer to hiring manager for consideration if applicable.
 - (2) All noncompetitive and excepted service selections must be documented in one of following ways:
 - (a) The HRO may establish a case file by creating a Vacancy Identification Number (VIN) in USA Staffing and use that VIN number to fax the applicant's documents to the OPM Processing Center, Macon, GA at (478)757-3144.
 - (b) The HRO may establish and maintain a manual or automated Applicant Supply File (ASF).
 - (c) The HRO may maintain applications using a manual tracking system. The OPM Hiring Tracking Tool can be used as a guide for tracking applications and data in accordance with HRML No. 05-11-04.
 - (3) A certificate of eligible candidates must be issued for all vacancies advertised on USA JOBS. The certificate of eligibles serves as documentation that Veterans preference has been applied and ensures Veterans receive proper consideration.

To comply with Hiring Reform initiatives for improving the speed and quality of hiring when an excepted service or noncompetitive selection has been made, the steps taken to fill the vacancy must be fully documented and tracked according to the following procedures:

- a. If applications are accepted for a job not posted on USAJOBS, HROs are encouraged to maintain a case file for noncompetitive or excepted service selections. The OPM Hiring Tracking Tool may be used as a guide for reporting data in accordance with HRML No. 05-11-04.
- b. If applications are manually accepted for a job posted on USAJOBS, the HRO must close-out the vacancy by ensuring that all hiring data prescribed in HRML No. 05-11-04 is entered and audited in the USA Staffing system.

In accordance with Hiring Reform requirements, applicants must be notified of their status at key points during the hiring process: when the application is received; when the applicant is determined to be qualified, not qualified, or ineligible; when the applicant is referred to the selecting official or not; and when the applicant is selected or not. If the applicant applies online, notification must occur via USA Staffing. Applicants whose applications were hand delivered may receive notifications through the email address provided on the resume or by US Postal mail. Copies of notifications made via email or US Postal mail must be included in the electronic vacancy case file in USA Staffing for audit purposes. Notifications made through USA Staffing (including email and US Postal Mail) are automatically included in the electronic vacancy case file.

If an applicant requests a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act, the HRO must make every effort to accommodate the person by accepting an application package outside the normal application process. The HRO may accept an oral request for a reasonable accommodation, but to ensure mutual understanding may require that the applicant or employee document her/his request in written form, via e-mail or other means. After receiving a request from an applicant, a HRO should document and clarify the individual's needs, identify the appropriate alternative method of application, and must inform the individual of the deadline to submit his/her application for the position. If the HRO has not received the application by the date determined, the HRO should move forward with the hiring process.

For additional information about USA Staffing, the VA USA Staffing Desk Guide, Central Assessment Library, and newsletters refer to the VA HR Resource Center Web site. USA Staffing training opportunities may be found at the VA USA Staffing Information Center. Questions regarding this HRML may be directed to the USA Staffing Program Office, Recruitment and Placement Policy Service, at vausastaffing@va.gov.

Diversity and Inclusion Training

ODI Delivers Virtual and Face-to-Face Training

ODI delivered a two-hour virtual training entitled "Cultural Competency in Health Care Settings" to 60 Veterans Health Administration (VHA) supervisors from Omaha, Nebraska, and Western Iowa Community Based Outpatient Clinics on June 18, 2012. The course is designed for VHA health care professionals so they can better understand the nuances, challenges, and business case for the development of cultural competency in health care settings. This training is part of an ongoing partnership with VHA Rural Health Professions Institute developed in January 2011 and delivered by John Fuller, Ed.D., ODI's Chief Diversity Educator. ODI also delivered two four-hour training sessions of Diversity and Inclusion, Workplace Respect, and General Awareness for the Workforce for all supervisors and managers of the Veteran Benefit Administration (VBA) Regional Office in Oakland, California, on June 20, 2012. This course is designed to increase awareness and enhance practical application of diversity and inclusion, civility, cultural competency, and equal employment opportunity (EEO)/conflict resolution in the workforce. This training is part of an ongoing partnership with VBA's Office of Diversity and EEO created in March 2011 and will be the 15th in a series of regional presentations delivered by Dr. Fuller. ODI is actively supporting Under Secretary Hickey's goal of achieving 50 percent of all VBA Regional Offices trained within a two-year period prior to the end of fiscal year 2012. For more information on ODI's diversity and inclusion training, visit <http://www.diversity.va.gov/training>. VA organizations interested in scheduling training should contact Brenda Martin at Brenda.Martin@va.gov.

Leadership Training

VA Managers, Supervisors, and Senior Executives Reminded to Complete Mandatory Training

VA is committed to ensuring equal employment opportunity (EEO), promoting diversity and inclusion, and resolving workplace conflict constructively in order to maintain a high-performing workforce in service to our Nation's Veterans. Secretary Shinseki articulates this commitment each year in his memorandum to all employees summarizing VA's EEO, Diversity, and No FEAR Policies. Managers and supervisors bear a special responsibility in maintaining a fair and inclusive work environment. Accordingly, the Secretary also states his expectations that managers and supervisors receive additional training on their responsibilities in these areas. In order to ensure VA has equipped its leaders with the knowledge, skills and tools necessary to meet their EEO, diversity, and inclusion responsibilities, ODI, in collaboration with the Office of Resolution Management, VA Learning University, and the three VA Administrations developed new, standardized EEO, Diversity, and Conflict Management Training for Managers and Supervisors. This training is mandatory for all senior executives, managers, and supervisors on a biennial basis online via the Talent Management System (TMS): <http://www.tms.va.gov>. The course number is 1328672.

Living with Hearing Loss

VA People with Disabilities Program Manager Serves as Keynote Speaker at Fair

Christy Compton, VA's Disability Program Manager, served as the keynote speaker (via video-conference) at the Better Living with Hearing Loss Fair May 24, 2012, held at the Togus VA Medical Center (VAMC) in Augusta, Maine. In attendance were Veterans, Togus staff, and staff from the Maine Center on Deafness. Ms. Compton was praised for her inspirational stories. A Deaf attendee was motivated to want to be in an office where their talent and skills could be appreciated rather than to be in jobs that were just "about or for" a deaf person. One attendee said her Veteran spouse was considering retirement because he felt he was not as productive as before, due to his hearing loss. After Ms. Compton's presentation, he scheduled a hearing test at the VAMC. He decided to delay his decision about retirement until after he was fitted with hearing aids. He said that he would not have had the courage to take that step without seeing Ms. Compton's example of success. The staff of the Maine Center on Deafness commented on how encouraging Ms. Compton was in inviting individuals with disabilities to contact her for assistance in applying to become VA employees, and her willingness to assist individuals and stations understand the special hiring authorities. The Togus People with Disabilities Committee members were delighted with her presentation and commented that seeing Ms. Compton and hearing her presentation impacted them significantly because they interact with Veterans daily who could benefit from the technology available to assist in their daily life. For more information on VA's People with Disabilities Employment program, visit <http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/pwd.aspx>.

Second Annual Hispanic Summit

VA Hispanic Employment Program Summit Held at LULAC National Training Conference and Exposition

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion hosted its Second Annual Hispanic Employment Program (HEP) Summit on Monday, June 25, 2012, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. in conjunction with the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) 83rd Annual National Training Conference at Disney's Coronado Springs Resort in Orlando, Florida.

LULAC is a nonprofit corporation founded in 1929 with the mission of advancing the economic condition, educational attainment, political influence, housing, health and civil rights of the Hispanic population of the United States.

This year's Conference theme was "America's Latino Communities Take Center Stage."

The Summit was open to all VA employees at no cost, and approximately 50 VA employees were in attendance. Program content included information on the draft VA Hispanic Employment Strategic Plan, VA Learning University toolkit "MyCareer@VA", HEP and Veterans outreach initiatives, VA's equal employment opportunity program accomplishments, and Office of Personnel Management initiatives. A Senior Executive Service Panel also provided perspectives on leadership and tips for successful career management.

For more information on VA's Hispanic Employment Program, visit <http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/hispanic.aspx>.

[Top] R to L: Armando Rodriguez, Senior Advisor to the VA Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration; Rosa Franco, VA Deputy Assistant Secretary for Office of Resolution Management; John Sepúlveda, VA Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration; and Arlene Gonzalez, VA National Hispanic Employment Program Manager.

[Bottom] R to L: Mr. Rodriguez, Ms. Franco, and Wanda Mims, Director of the VA Caribbean Healthcare System, served as panelists discussing strategic career management and leadership.



VADC Activity

DISP Reporting Template Now Available

The VA Diversity Council (VADC) serves as an independent executive level body that provides advice and recommendations to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on areas related to diversity and inclusion. The Council comprises representatives from each of the Department's major organizations, staff offices, and stakeholders. Council members have been asked to report on their organization's accomplishments towards VA's Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan (DISP) on a quarterly basis. Their first report on FY 2012 accomplishments will be presented at the VADC meeting in October 2012.

To obtain a copy of the template for reporting and for more information about submission deadlines, contact Brenda Martin, ODI, at Brenda.Martin@va.gov. 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>.

Workplace Rumors and Harassment

Harassment, sometimes referred to as hostile work environment, continues to be the most frequent claim when discrimination complaints are filed against VA. It may be found when co-workers or management officials make racial slurs or ethnic jokes, or engage in negative stereotyping based on an employee's protected basis, such as gender or age. To be legally actionable, the harassment must be both objectively and subjectively offensive, such that a reasonable person would find it to be hostile or abusive, and the employee perceived the environment to be hostile or abusive.

VA may avoid liability for a hostile work environment caused by co-workers if it can establish that: (1) the conduct complained of did not occur; (2) the conduct complained of was not unwelcome; (3) the alleged harassment was not sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the victim's employment; and (4) immediate and appropriate corrective action was taken as soon as the agency was put on notice.

In a recent finding against VA, an Equal Employment Opportunity Administrative Judge determined that a former employee was subjected to unlawful harassment when he was the subject of workplace rumors that destroyed his professional career and personal reputation. The complainant, a male, was a supervisor at a VA Medical Center. The complainant, who had no disability, was physically fit. However, due to personal stress unrelated to the workplace, he began losing a noticeable amount of weight in the spring of 2008.

On June 3, 2008, several of his co-workers began spreading rumors throughout the facility that the complainant had AIDS and was gay. The co-workers included one of the complainant's subordinates and a member of the facility's police department. According to the administrative judge's decision, "Like wildfire, the rumors spread quickly throughout the workplace. Fanned by the Complainant's recent weight loss, the rumors made their way throughout the Agency, evolving from Complainant's perceived health status to his perceived sexual orientation."

The complainant promptly informed management officials on June 3rd about the rumors and asked that appropriate action be taken. Two investigations were initiated—the first, a police investigation was concluded in late July 2008, finding that no threat or criminal activity had occurred. On July 29, 2008, an EEO investigation began.

As part of the medical facility's response, its director sent an email to all employees on June 20, 2008, under the generic caption "Director's Weekly Message" wherein he admonished them not to spread rumors in the workplace. The employees responsible for spreading the rumors were reprimanded and required to attend video EEO training in early September 2008. Complainant's subordinate, who had started the rumor, was reassigned. In December 2008, six months after the rumors started, the facility updated its "Disruptive Behavior Policy." However, this policy update did not include disciplinary actions for making false statements to a third party, nor did it specifically address rumors in the workplace.

Despite these actions, the rumors about complainant continued to circulate spreading to the local community. According to the administrative judge's decision, the complainant was told by a woman he asked out for a date that "she did not date gay men and people with AIDS." As late as November 2008, after he had left employment with VA, the complainant was still confronting these rumors. In that month, he ran into a former co-worker who told him "They tell me you're sick, and you got AIDs."

At the hearing, testimony established that the complainant's mental health deteriorated due to the unchecked rumors. He experienced paranoia and other emotional problems. He was unable to return to the workplace and was subsequently granted a disability retirement.

The administrative judge found the complainant met his burden to show that he was subjected to hostile environment harassment based on perceived disability (HIV/AIDs) and gender. The judge also found that the remedial measures put in place by management after the complainant brought the rumors to their attention were "ineffective and not immediate." The administrative judge concluded that the EEO training provided by the facility was ineffective because none of those who were required to attend could remember anything about it.

She also determined that the "Director's Weekly Message" email was not immediate and did not address the specific rumor spreading at the facility. In regard to the facility's "Disruptive Behavior Policy" update, the administrative judge wrote, "As the Agency was so saturated with serious falsehoods, gossip, and innuendos regarding the rumors circulating about Complainant, I find this policy was not an effective response." ~Maxanne R. Witkin, Director, VA's Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication

D&I Online

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To subscribe or unsubscribe, e-mail odi@va.gov.

CONTACT US

Mail:
810 Vermont Avenue
NW (06)
Washington, DC 20420

Phone:
(202) 461-4131

Fax:
(202) 501-2145

E-mail the Editor:
odi@va.gov

Visit our Web site
[http://www.
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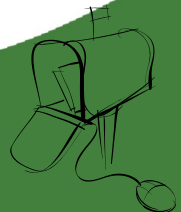
Veterans Health
Administration's Diversity
and Inclusion Community
of Practice
[Michael.Youngblood@
va.gov](mailto:Michael.Youngblood@va.gov)

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.

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:

- ▶ Women's Equality Day 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](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](http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/dn.aspx).

Calendar

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

July

Independence Day
July 4

National Council of La Raza Annual Conference
July 7–10; Las Vegas, NV
<http://www.nclr.org>

NAACP Annual Convention
July 7–12; Houston, TX
<http://www.naacp.org>

Federally Employed Women
National Training Program
July 16–20; Detroit, MI
<http://www.few.org>

National Urban League Conference
July 25–28; New Orleans, LA
<http://www.nul.org>

DeafNation World Expo
July 29–August 1; Las Vegas, NV
<http://deafnation.com/deafnationexpo>

August

Disabled American Veterans National
Convention
August 4–7; Las Vegas, NV
<http://www.dav.org>

American Veterans National Convention
August 4–11; Daytona Beach, FL
<http://www.amvets.org>

Blacks in Government Annual National Training
Conference
August 13–16; Detroit, MI
<http://www.biqnet.org>

Annual Federal Dispute Resolution
Conference
August 20–23; Palm Desert, CA
<http://www.fdrconferences.org>

International Association of Latino Public
Administration Executives Annual Executive
Leadership and Diversity Training Conference
August 27–30; Arlington, VA
<http://www.ialpae.org>

Women's Equality Day
August 26