

PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

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Written statement for the record prepared for

**The House Veterans Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations**

Hearing on Pending Legislation

July 12th, 2023

Chairwoman Kiggans, Ranking Member Mrvan, and members of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, thank you for the opportunity to share the Partnership for Public Service's views on H.R. 4278, the Restore VA Accountability Act.

The Partnership for Public Service is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that works to revitalize our federal government by helping it attract mission-critical talent, engage employees, modernize its management systems, develop effective leaders, and deliver a high-performing and accountable government.

Over the years I have had the privilege of addressing this committee on issues surrounding leadership development, recruiting and retaining a worldclass workforce, and modernizing talent and performance management to ensure an accountable, effective system at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). I commend the subcommittee for continuing to identify ways to help VA best meet its mission and deliver strong services to veterans and their families.

The VA has made great strides in strengthening management practices since the department was rocked by several scandals roughly a decade ago, yet there is more work to be done. While the Partnership had concerns about the procedures for removal included in the VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act, we also worked on a bipartisan basis with the House and Senate Veterans Affairs committees to help enact strong management provisions in that law as well as in the VA Choice and Quality Employment Act. New tools that the Partnership championed included direct hire authority for medical center and Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) directors, a VA Executive Management Fellowship Program, required performance plans for political appointees, a provision allowing for easier hiring of former employees, and training for VA human resource professionals. The extent to which these tools have been implemented and evaluated for outcomes is unclear, though. I encourage the committee to work with VA to ensure that these laws are put into practice and that additional barriers to strong management and leadership are addressed.

I understand the committee's continued focus on dealing with poor performers, and it is imperative that they are held accountable and that necessary actions are taken. One of the merit principles – the core values of the civil service which are enshrined in law – is that employees who cannot or will not improve their performance to meet standards should be separated.¹ In this statement I will describe some options the committee should consider for dealing with poor performers and other ideas for creating strong employee performance, which is crucial to providing effective service for veterans. I encourage the committee to focus on the entirety of employee accountability – from skills-based hiring, to developing employees and training managers, to modernizing the systems that allow employees to effectively work across the enterprise. These elements are critical to a high-performing organization and are all critical parts of accountability.

The VA has an important mission – to provide benefits and support to veterans and their families. I am encouraged by the work the agency has done to improve veterans' experiences with the services VA provides. This focus by VA on the customer experience is meaningful, and the committee should identify and promote ways to accelerate and scale the customer experience work across the VA to streamline processes and make it easier for employees to serve veterans. Improving the VA's customer experience

¹ 5 U.S.C. § 2301(b)(6).

infrastructure, including defining expectations of federal employees, will help drive accountability and outcomes across the agency.

Perspective on H.R. 4278 and the current employee accountability system.

There are several possible reforms that could improve the balance between efficiency and due process in VA removal actions. However, in its pursuit of greater efficiency, H.R. 4278 builds upon the same approach from the 2017 VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act with which the Partnership expressed concern at the time. Specifically, H.R. 4278 continues to erode and eliminate the role of third-party, independent executive review by the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB). This approach unnecessarily compromises due process for line employees while *reducing* accountability for senior executives and political leaders during removal proceedings. The Partnership also believes that the bill's removal of 10 of the 12 so-called Douglas factors (which are factors laid out by MSPB that must be considered when determining employee punishment) is unnecessary. Additionally, the bill's provisions providing for retroactivity of the new procedures are likely to tie the VA up in extensive litigation, diverting resources and attention from other urgent needs of the department.

Independent review of removal decisions from outside the agency helps hold leadership accountable for overseeing their workforce effectively and for avoiding prohibited personnel practices. Survey data available from the MSPB shows that, throughout the government, supervisors themselves overwhelmingly agree that employees deserve protection from managers who make mistakes or act in bad faith during removal proceedings.² MSPB appeal rights provide such independent protections. Moreover, MSPB review also provides deterrence against unmerited removal proceedings, as indicated by the fact that agency removal decisions are upheld in the vast majority of cases.

H.R. 4278 moves away from this procedural accountability by removing MSPB review and vesting final decision-making authority on adverse personnel actions with the Secretary. Elsewhere, this approach has not been successful in increasing accountability throughout an agency. For example, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) initially used a completely internal removal process with no third-party review. However, a Government Accountability Office report from 2013 found that the TSA investigations and adjudications process had procedural weaknesses that were impairing transparency and potentially compromising uniformity,³ leading some to believe that the TSA was administering arbitrary punishments.⁴ The TSA has moved away from the completely internal approach, and recently granted appeal rights at the MSPB to all Transportation Security Officers.⁵

² Off. of Pol'y & Evaluation, *Addressing Misconduct in the Federal Service: Management Perspectives*, U.S. Merit Sys. Prot. Bd. 3 (Dec. 2016), https://www.mspb.gov/studies/researchbriefs/Addressing_Misconduct_in_the_Federal_Civil_Service_Management_Perspectives_1363799.pdf.

³ U.S. Gov't Accountability Off., GAO-13-624, *Transportation Security: TSA Could Strengthen Monitoring of Allegations of Employee Misconduct* 22 (2013).

⁴ *TSA Integrity Challenges: Examining Misconduct by Airport Security Personnel: Joint Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Oversight and Mgmt. Efficiency and the Subcomm. on Transp. Security of the H. Comm. on Homeland Sec.*, 113th Cong. 11 (2013) (statement of Rep. Cedric L. Richmond, Ranking Member, Subcomm. on Transp. Sec. of the H. Comm. on Homeland Sec.) (available at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-113hrg86032/html/CHRG-113hrg86032.htm>).

⁵ James P. Garay Heelan, *TSA Gives Screening Personnel MSPB Appeal Rights*, Fed Manager (Oct. 5, 2021), <https://fedmanager.com/news/tsa-gives-screening-personnel-mspb-appeal-rights>.

While H.R. 4278 does allow employees to appeal adverse removal decisions in federal court, that option can be costly and time-consuming for both employees and agencies. Obtaining MSPB review is a straightforward process for employees, and since 2018, the average appeal processing time has consistently been between three and three and a half months.⁶ On the other hand, obtaining an attorney for federal court can be prohibitively expensive for some federal employees, and federal court cases can drag on for long periods of time.

There are certainly ways to continue reforming due process procedures to streamline removal proceedings and the Partnership looks forward to working with you to identify these changes. Moreover, we must work to overcome other major barriers to removal – namely agency cultures where it is assumed that it is difficult to fire employees and a lack of adequate training and resources for managers and supervisors on how to discipline or fire an employee.⁷

VA data trends highlight strides to greater management accountability and employee engagement along with improved veterans experience.

Over the past decade, and across administrations of both parties, the VA has increased expectations for its leaders and employees at all levels to focus on customer experience to drive improved services for veterans. I encourage the committee, and the agency, to focus on increasing tools to further this work, and ensuring that the employee accountability process supports, rather than unintentionally hinders, forward progress.

Data from the Partnership's the [Best Places to Work in the Federal Government rankings](#),⁸ based on the Office of Personnel Management's [Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey](#) (FEVS) and other agency-administered surveys, highlights workforce trends across the government.⁹ Since 2018, the VA has administered its own employee survey, the VA All Employee Survey, to collect data. We utilize data from the VA's internal survey when analyzing trends for the Department. The trends for most of the survey data are headed in the right direction, meaning the employee experience is improving overall at the VA. The Department of Veterans Affairs [ranked fifth this year](#) out of all large agencies for the overall Best Places to Work rankings.¹⁰ By contrast, in 2014, VA's index score was 54.6 out of 100, its lowest level since the Partnership began the rankings in 2003, and VA ranked 18 out of 19 large agencies in employee satisfaction.¹¹

⁶ *Annual Performance Report (APR) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 and Annual Performance Plan (APP) for FY 2023 (Final) & FY 2024 (Proposed)*, U.S. Merit Sys. Protection Bd., https://www.mspb.gov/about/annual_reports/MSPB_APR_APP_for_FY_2022_2024_2010982.pdf.

⁷ Off. of Pol'y & Evaluation, *Remedying Unacceptable Employee Performance in the Federal Civil Service*, U.S. Merit Sys. Prot. Bd. 15 (June 18, 2019), https://www.mspb.gov/studies/researchbriefs/Remedying_Unacceptable_Employee_Performance_in_the_Federal_Civil_Service_1627610.pdf.

⁸ *2022 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government*, P'ship for Pub. Serv., <https://bestplacestowork.org/>.

⁹ Off. of Pers. Mgmt., *Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results (2022)*, <https://www.opm.gov/fevs/reports/governmentwide-reports/governmentwide-reports/governmentwide-management-report/2022/2022-governmentwide-management-report.pdf>.

¹⁰ *2022 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government*, P'ship for Pub. Serv., <https://bestplacestowork.org/>.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

This improvement is important because an engaged workforce is more productive and provides better customer service.

The following are additional points of data, both from OPM's FEVS and the VA's own condensed survey, [the VA All Employee Survey](#), that provide an encouraging picture of management changes at the agency.¹²

- In response to the question, "I can disclose a suspected violation of any law, rule or regulation without fear of reprisal," the number of positive responses ("good" or "very good") has steadily increased every year, with 68% of employees affirming the question in 2020, 69% in 2021, and 70% in 2022.¹³
- For the question, "Overall, how good a job do you feel is being done by your immediate supervisor?," 76% responded affirmatively in 2020, 78% in 2021, and 78% in 2022.¹⁴
- With the question, "In my work unit, differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful way," 53% of respondents answered affirmatively in 2020, 54% in 2021, and 55% in 2022.¹⁵
- The VA is also trending higher in some areas than the government as a whole. In the question, "Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your job?," the VA-specific affirmative response was 69%,¹⁶ while the government-wide affirmative response to this question in 2022 was just 66%.¹⁷

We also recommend that the committee engage the secretary and the department's staff to recognize the innovative work the VA civil servants are doing, and how those lessons learned from their success can be applied across the department. The Partnership's [Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medals \(Sammies\) program has recognized many VA employees for their groundbreaking work](#).¹⁸ From using virtual reality and immersive technologies to treat veterans for medical issues such as anxiety and depression, to building a customer-oriented culture of service delivery that is responsive to the needs of veterans and their families, the stories from our Sammies finalists and winners demonstrate that the VA's employees are driving results across the organization.

One area where the VA has been particularly effective is in the work to improve customer experience (CX) for veterans and their families. Our [research](#) has shown that positive employee experiences in the federal government lead to better customer experience.¹⁹ The Partnership has released several reports

¹² *VA All Employee Survey*, U.S. Dep't of Veterans Affs., <https://www.datahub.va.gov/stories/s/VA-All-Employee-Survey-AES-/r32e-j4vj>.

¹³ *Ibid.* (AES-FEVS Percents Public Data Reports for years 2020, 2021, and 2022).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Off. of Pers. Mgmt., *Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results 20 (2022)*, <https://www.opm.gov/fevs/reports/governmentwide-reports/governmentwide-reports/governmentwide-management-report/2022/2022-governmentwide-management-report.pdf>.

¹⁸ *Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medals: Honorees*, P'ship for Pub. Serv., https://servicetoamericamedals.org/honorees/?_agency=department-of-veterans-affairs (filtered for honorees from the Department of Veterans Affairs).

¹⁹ *A Prescription for Better Performance: Engaging Employees at VA Medical Centers*, P'ship for Pub. Serv. & Bos. Consulting Grp. 1 (Mar. 2019), https://ourpublicservice.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/BPTW18_VA-issue-brief.pdf.

over the years that examine this relationship, as well as the overall health of the VA's workforce and CX infrastructure.

The VA [addressed](#) low employee engagement at several health centers by creating leadership development and training opportunities, using employee feedback to connect employees to the mission, and recognizing high performers.²⁰ These low cost, talent-focused efforts [led](#) to improved patient satisfaction, a decline in turnover of registered nurses, and increased call center answer speed.²¹

The VA's dedicated workforce has also improved its ability to provide a wide array of services for veterans and their families through modernization efforts. During the pandemic, the Veterans Benefits Administration [made it easier for veterans to receive information](#) about their eligibility and benefits by using texts and other mobile device applications.²² By collecting and learning from [customer feedback](#), the Veteran Health Administration identified various pain points when veterans navigated VHA services, allowing the VHA to understand and decrease specific barriers customers faced when accessing VHA services.²³

In addition to highlighting success, our reports also recommend a variety of actions the department and Congress can take to ensure the VA continues to meet its mission. Adopting these recommendations would help the VA continue to build a user-centric mindset and establish accountability across every function. Some of these recommendations include:

- Congress and the VA should work together to promote the use of [human-centered designs](#) by making it easier for the agency to collect, learn from and incorporate veteran experiences in service and program designs, which would improve customer experiences.²⁴
- Congress should [support the VA's workforce health](#) by streamlining hiring and recruitment for CX-focused talent, prioritizing positions that execute CX projects, such as public-engagement specialists and digital service designers, and data managers, which will increase the VA's ability to serve veterans effectively.²⁵
- The VA should [create opportunities for professional development](#), such as CX training, promoting cross-government rotations, and other opportunities to develop skills, which can help improve employee engagement.²⁶

²⁰ *Ibid.* at 3.

²¹ *Ibid.* at 1-2.

²² *Veterans Education and Training Benefits*, P'ship for Pub. Serv. (2021), <https://ourpublicservice.org/our-solutions/customer-experience/y2021/veterans-education-and-training-benefits/>.

²³ *Outpatient Health Care Services for Veterans*, P'ship for Pub. Serv. (2021), <https://ourpublicservice.org/our-solutions/customer-experience/y2021/outpatient-health-care-services-for-veterans/>.

²⁴ Paul Pietsch & Anthony Vetrano, *The Good Government Connection: Linking the Federal Employee and Customer Experiences*, P'ship for Pub. Serv. (May 18, 2023), <https://ourpublicservice.org/publications/the-good-government-connection/>.

²⁵ Nadzeya Shutava, Loren DeJonge Schulman, & Sarah Hughes, *Designing a Government for the People: Collaborative Approaches to Federal Customer Experience*, P'ship for Pub. Serv. (Dec. 6, 2022), <https://ourpublicservice.org/publications/designing-a-government-for-the-people/>.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

- Congress should [support the VA's data and information management](#) by investing in a secure and transparent environment that will reduce administrative burden and ensure the unique needs of all veterans are met.²⁷

As recommended in my 2018 letter to the full committee on the state of the VA,²⁸ the committee should continue to engage with the secretary and the department's staff to understand the conditions that allowed these civil servants to innovate and solve problems, and how those lessons can be applied across the department. As the stories above demonstrate, the VA's employees are a significant asset. Focusing on talent management and enabling strong performance is crucial to building a culture of excellence.

The scope of accountability must encompass the entire lifecycle of talent management to drive outcomes for veterans.

Driving reform at the VA must, as a matter of necessity, be a sustained and long-term effort. The VA's work is taking place against a backdrop of an aging population and medical and technical professional shortages across the whole of society, not just VA alone. As noted above, the VA has achieved important successes and made notable improvements strengthening the workforce. While this work is clearly still not complete, we urge the committee to focus on long-term investment and expanded adoption of best practices and approaches that have already been proven to foster meaningful change at the VA.

The culture of accountability and service delivery begins with the people who work at the agency. It is critical to strengthen and streamline the front end of the process – including recruitment and hiring, employee development, data collection, and supervisor training. In 2018, I submitted a written statement to the committee citing several recommendations that remain relevant today.²⁹ The following derive from the 2018 list and include the areas that continue to be critical to stronger management.

- *Develop and strengthen an enterprise-wide approach to workforce management.* Agency leaders should be responsible for ensuring their agency identifies strategic workforce needs and has a plan in place to meet current and future needs. Executives, along with supervisors and managers, should be held accountable in their performance plans for hiring and developing the next generation of talent. VA also needs to ensure that HR staff and hiring managers are trained in the use of the hiring tools available to them.

The decentralized nature of the organization means data is often not aggregated to provide a complete picture of the state of the organization. Better data about the composition of the workforce and more sophisticated dashboards that offer real-time views of the critical information that enables better management decisions would greatly enhance the department's talent management and use of workforce flexibilities.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *The State of the VA: A 60-Day Report: Hearing Before the S. Comm. on Veterans' Affs.*, 115th Cong. 73 (2018) (statement of Max Stier, President and Chief Executive Officer, Partnership for Public Service) (available at <https://www.veterans.senate.gov/services/files/37C27E61-4069-4CAB-A2DC-DFA9254293E4>).

²⁹ *More than Just Filling Vacancies: A Closer Look at VA Hiring Authorities, Recruiting, and Retention Before the Subcomm. on Health of the H. Comm. on Veterans' Affs.*, 115th Cong. Appendix (2018) (statement of Max Stier, President and Chief Executive Officer, Partnership for Public Service) (available at <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/VR/VR03/20180621/108430/HHRG-115-VR03-Wstate-StierM-20180621.pdf>).

- *Encourage and resource sustained hiring efforts and innovations.* These efforts should include developing, collecting and reporting more comprehensive measures of hiring effectiveness as well as supporting HR in developing robust capacity to recruit, hire and retain employees. The Partnership has previously advocated for expanded collection and reporting requirements for aggregated applicant and hiring data. Given the ongoing concerns about shortages of workforce data raised by GAO and others, the Partnership believes this recommendation remains relevant. Beyond simply looking at vacancies in specific clinical or non-clinical positions, these data would also examine applicant pools, recruiting efforts and manager satisfaction with candidates. The Federal Hiring Process Improvement Act of 2010, introduced by former Senators Daniel Akaka and George Voinovich, includes several measures of hiring effectiveness that could be instructive, as well the data being collected in the hiring assessments and selections dashboard³⁰ that could be further expanded by the agency and utilized to make strategic hiring decisions. Such data driven planning would allow VA to examine its early career talent needs, including the use of interns and entry-level positions, which the Partnership strongly recommends as a means of building a robust talent pipeline. Providing such detailed information and analysis would make it easier for the committee to target further reforms to the talent management process.

In addition, the work being done currently through OPM to identify qualified candidates through the use of skills-based hiring, technical assessments and pooled hiring can be instructive to VA's efforts. In work spanning the previous and current administrations, OPM has learned valuable lessons that can now start to be scaled. Building on those lessons, bipartisan, bicameral legislation, the Chance to Compete Act (H.R. 159 and S. 59), would encourage the use of high-quality, skills-based assessments in federal hiring, among other improvements. There is potential to increase applicant and hiring manager satisfaction, develop pools of qualified candidates, and potentially lower hiring times. However, the Chance to Compete Act currently being considered by Congress only applies to Title 5 employees. More work is needed to determine whether these hiring innovations might also be appropriate for Title 38 employees as well as to ensure that the HR functions work together across the agency and have appropriate funding to develop assessments.

- *Identify additional areas to streamline employee performance and accountability.* While supervisor development, training and leadership attention are critical to holding employees accountable for performance and outcome delivery, there are other areas the committee should consider when streamlining the process. An initial step is to strengthen the probationary period for new supervisors. Many supervisors in government are selected for their technical expertise, rather than their leadership skills, and have little incentive to manage effectively. To fix this, managers at VA should be required to make an affirmative decision to pass a new supervisor through their probationary period – the period during which the individual must demonstrate successful performance as a supervisor – only if the employee has exhibited the necessary management capabilities, in addition to possessing technical qualifications. Managers should also be held accountable in their performance plans for providing feedback to new supervisors throughout the probationary period and for making a decision whether the supervisor should continue on after the probationary period has ended.

³⁰ *Hiring Assessment and Selection Outcome Dashboard*, Gen. Serv. Admin., <https://d2d.gsa.gov/report/hiring-assessment-and-selection-outcome-dashboard>.

Moreover, requiring affirmative decisions at the end of the probationary period for *all* employees is a good use of the tool. This provides a concrete opportunity for managers to ensure that the employee has the necessary skills to be successful in the job, identify additional training and development, or even let the employee go before further investing in them. This change will require robust supervisor training as well as improved HR data and tracking of the probationary status of each new hire.

Changes made through these efforts can be tracked by amending questions in the VA's employee survey to explicitly ask about employee accountability. It is the Partnership's understanding that the FEVS question about whether or not steps are taken to deal with poor performers in their work units has been removed from the VA survey. Adding this question back would allow employee views on performance management to be tracked over time.

- *Move toward a unified personnel system.*³¹ Currently the VA has a complex mix of employee personnel systems through Title 38, Title 5 and hybrid. Anecdotally we have heard that this makes it challenging for human resources to create streamlined efforts to recruit and retain employees. Beyond small-bore changes to the department's current personnel operating authorities the Partnership strongly encourages the committee to work with the administration to move towards a unified personnel system for the department that will allow the agency to fully address its hiring, classification, pay and accountability issues. The system should be the product of strong leadership across the branches, employee buy-in, and investment in agency HR and other implementation functions, and should reflect a commitment to the Merit System Principles that serve as the bedrock of the civil service system.

Conclusion

While dealing with poor performers is a process every organization needs to be prepared for, it is impossible to fire one's way to success. As this subcommittee has shown through its oversight, accountability means tracking and improving outcomes over the entirety of an employee's time at the agency, as well as investing in the workforce population as a whole – from hiring to professional development and growth, to strategic workforce and succession planning – and streamlining the systems and tools they need to work effectively.

We appreciate your continued work on management reforms, increasing the use of data, and technology modernization efforts. The Partnership looks forward to working with you to build out proposals, provide data and stories, and ensure that the VA has a strong, accountable workforce delivering results for veterans and their families.

³¹ *Ibid.* at 10.

I. Appendix I

With our Best Places to Work in the Federal Government Rankings, we have provided data visualizations with some key takeaways from data trends for not only the Department of Veterans Affairs, but also how the VA ranks in comparison to the government-wide trends.

VA Effective Leadership Rankings Among Large Agencies; 2012-2022

Effective Leadership	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Overall	18	18	18	18	17	17	-	-	11	6	7
Senior Leaders	17	16	18	18	17	17	-	-	11	6	6
Supervisor	19	18	18	18	17	18	-	-	14	13	12



2018-2019 gap due to Veteran Affairs' transition from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey to the VA All Employee Survey.
Table: Partnership for Public Service • Source: Best Place to Work in the Federal Government Workplace Categories • Created with Datawrapper

Veterans Affairs BPTW Ranking Among Large Agencies; 2012-2022

BPTW Rank	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Department of Veterans Affairs	18	13	18	18	17	17	6	6	8	5	5



Table: Partnership for Public Service • Source: Best Places to Work in the Federal Government • Created with Datawrapper

I can disclose a suspected violation of any law, rule, or regulation without fear of reprisal.

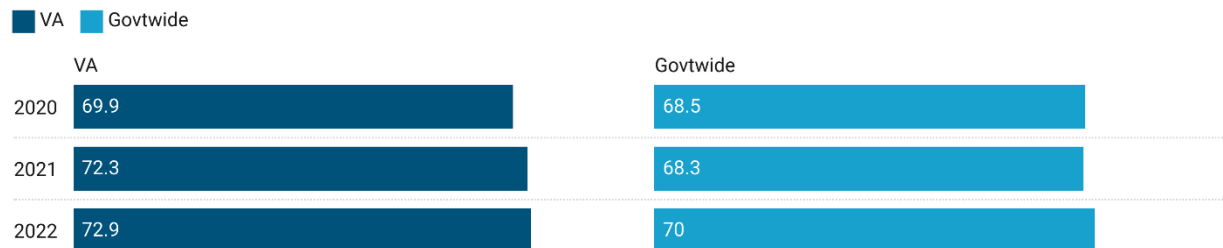


Chart: Partnership for Public Service • Source: VA All Employee Survey and OPM Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey • Created with Datawrapper

Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your job?

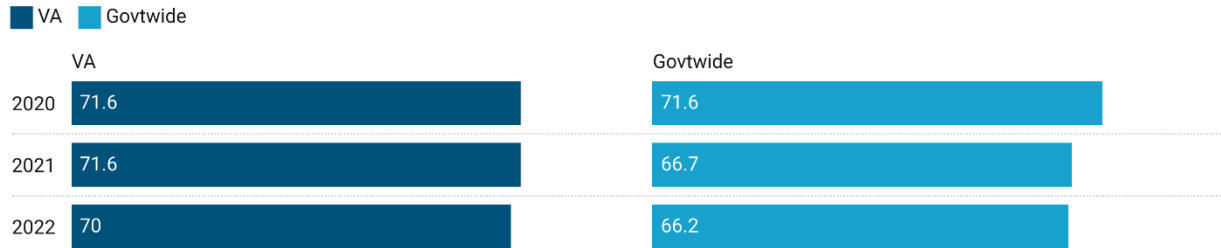


Chart: Partnership for Public Service • Source: VA All Employee Survey and OPM Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey • Created with Datawrapper

How satisfied are you with the recognition you receive for doing a good job?

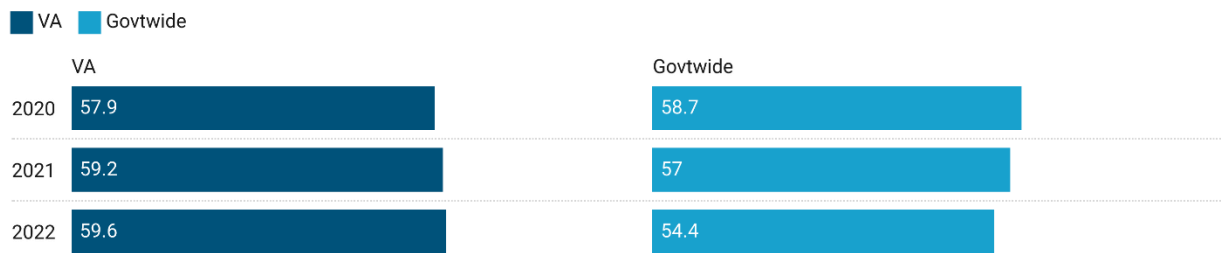


Chart: Partnership for Public Service • Source: VA All Employee Survey and OPM Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey • Created with Datawrapper

In my work unit, differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful way.

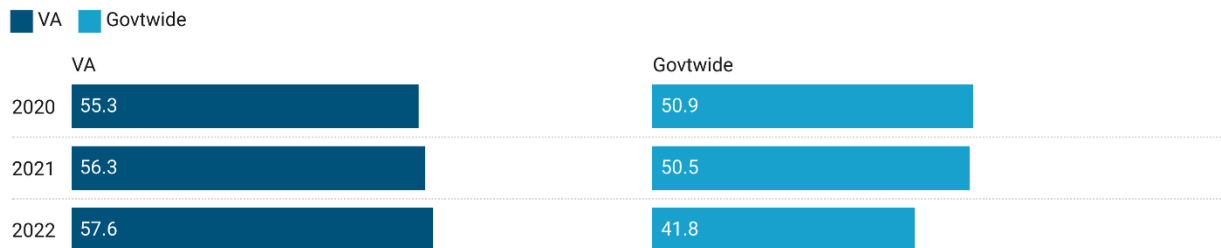


Chart: Partnership for Public Service • Source: VA All Employee Survey and OPM Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey • Created with Datawrapper

My organization's senior leaders maintain high standards of honesty and integrity

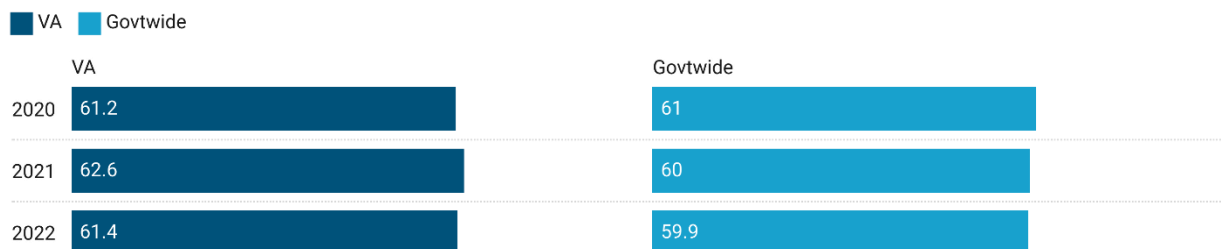


Chart: Partnership for Public Service • Source: VA All Employee Survey and OPM Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey • Created with Datawrapper

Overall, how good a job do you feel is being done by your immediate supervisor?

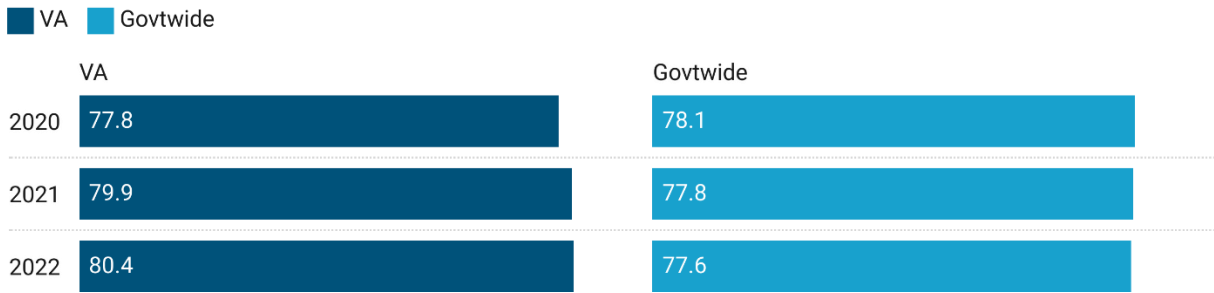


Chart: Partnership for Public Service • Source: VA All Employee Survey and OPM Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey • Created with Datawrapper

II. Appendix II

Department of Veterans Affairs Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medals Winners and Finalists Since 2017

Every year, the nonpartisan, nonprofit Partnership for Public Service recognizes federal employees for excellence in public service with the Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medals (Sammies). Referred to as the Oscars of Public Service, the Sammies is the premier awards program for career federal employees. These awards spotlight remarkable accomplishments that benefit the nation, build trust in our government and inspire more people to consider careers in public service. Every year, hundreds of federal employees across the government are nominated for the Sammies, but only forty nominations become finalists, and seven are recognized as winners. The categories include: Federal Employee of the Year, Paul A. Volcker Career Achievement, Emerging Leaders, Safety, Security and International Affairs, Management Excellence, Science, Technology and Environment and the People's Choice Award. Please read below for a complete list of every VA finalist and winner over the past six years.

2023

[Anne Lord Bailey, Caitlin Rawlins and the VA Immersive Team](#) – Anne, the Director of Clinical Tech Innovation and Immersive Technology Lead worked with Caitlin, Deputy Director of Clinical Tech and Innovation and Veterans Health Administration Extended Reality Network Lead, to build a cutting-edge nationwide immersive technology network to empower front-line staff and enable the treatment of veterans for a wide range of medical issues such as anxiety, depression, pain management, spinal cord injuries and more **(Awards to be given on Oct. 17, 2023)**

2022

[Barbara C. Morton](#) – Barbara, Deputy Chief Veterans Experience Officer, built trust and a customer-oriented culture among veterans and their families seeking services and benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs by listening and responding to their needs – **Winner, Management Excellence**

2021

[Mary Frances Matthews](#) – Mary, an Operations Senior Management and Program Analyst, reduced the lengthy backlog of disability appeals for veterans by 87% in two years, providing long-awaited decisions on benefits to thousands of individuals

2020

[Beth Ripley, M.D., Ph.D.](#), – Beth, National Director for VHA 3D Printing Network, created an interconnected, hospital-based 3D printing network that assists health care providers with medical procedures, reducing unnecessary surgeries to help improve quality of life for veterans – **Winner, Science, Technology and Environment**

[Neil C. Evans, M.D., Kathleen L. Frisbee, Ph.D. and Kevin Galpin, M.D.](#) – Neil, Chief Officer, Office of Connected Care, Kathleen, Executive Director, Connected Health Office and Kevin, Executive Director, Telehealth Services, developed vital telehealth options, mobile apps and digital services for veterans to receive health care virtually, while removing barriers to implementation through policy, regulatory and administrative changes – **Winner, Management Excellence**

2019

[Victoria Brahm](#) – Victoria, the Medical Center Director for Tomah VA Medical Center, restored the quality and safety of a broken health care center for veterans that had become notorious for unsafe medical practices, excessive opioid use and a toxic work environment – **Winner, Federal Employee of the Year**

[Anne McKee, M.D.](#) – Anne, Chief of Neuropathology at the VA Boston Healthcare System, revolutionized scientific research and our understanding of the long-term effects of concussions, including chronic traumatic encephalopathy, in veterans and athletes – **Winner, Paul A. Volcker Career Achievement**

[Paul Shute, Christopher Aragao and David Enright](#) – Paul, Chief of Operational Innovation, Christopher, Supervisory Veterans Service Representative and David, a Management Analyst, dramatically cut the time and manpower needed to make decisions on service-related mental health claims for veterans, helping tens of thousands of individuals each year receive their benefits faster

2018

[Marcella Jacobs and the VA Digital Service Team](#) – Marcella, Executive Director of Digital Service, created online digital tools for veterans to more easily access benefits and services, delivering a high-quality and seamless user experience – **Winner, Management Excellence**

[Jordan T. Manos](#) – Jordan, as the Director of Operations at the Acquisition Academy, improved the system used to assess flood damage from hurricanes and other major storms, helping residents receive aid more quickly and saving the government millions of dollars in appraisal costs

2017

[Rory A. Cooper](#) – Rory, the Director of Human Engineering Research, designed innovative wheelchairs and other assistive technology equipment that has greatly improved the mobility and quality of life for hundreds of thousands of disabled veterans and other Americans – **Winner, Science, Technology and Environment**