



OHRM - 2003-E02

Office of Human Resources Management Policy Memorandum

Subject: Procedures for Requesting Freeze Exemptions

1. Background: As a result of a hiring freeze imposed in the year 2001, ITA Assistant Secretaries were instructed that all recruitment actions for GS-14 and GS-15 positions require the approval of the Under Secretary. To obtain approval, Assistant Secretaries were directed to submit a short justification on the need to fill the position (i.e, a freeze exemption request) to the Under Secretary and Deputy Under Secretary, through the Chief Financial Officer and Director of Administration (CFO/DoA).

This requirement to obtain approval of GS-14 and GS-15 recruitment actions still stands. However, there does not exist a standard methodology for submitting recruitment requests when an exemption to the freeze is required. Some managers submit their recruitment requests to the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) and then submit their freeze exemption request to the Deputy Under Secretary for approval. Others seek an exception to the freeze before submitting the recruitment request to OHRM. Lack of a standardized procedure for requesting freeze exemptions has created confusion on the part of managers as well as staffing specialists. Managers are not sure when to prepare the waiver request, and staffing specialists often are not sure when a recruitment request is approved for processing. This has sometimes resulted in unnecessary delays in filling critical positions.

2. Purpose: To establish a standard operating procedure for processing recruitment actions and waiver requests for positions covered by the hiring freeze.

3. Procedures: Managers and OHRM staff will follow the procedures below when processing actions requiring an approved freeze exemption.

(a) Managers who wish to recruit for new or established GS-14 and GS-15 positions will obtain approval of the freeze exemption prior to submitting a Request for Personnel Action (SF-52) to OHRM. The approval will be obtained by submitting a memorandum from the appropriate Assistant Secretary (or designee) to the Deputy Under Secretary, through the CFO/DoA. The memorandum (sample attached) will include the following information.

- (1) Position title, series, and grade,
- (2) Exact organizational location of the position,
- (3) Statement of whether the position is an existing or proposed position,
- (4) Brief description of the work to be performed and linkage to the mission,
- (5) Immediate supervisor over the position,
- (6) A statement explaining the benefits of filling the position, and
- (7) A statement of the anticipated consequences of not filling the position.

(b) Managers may opt to submit an advanced copy of the SF-52 and freeze exemption memorandum to OHRM prior to receiving approval. However, advanced copies of these documents are for information and planning purposes only, and will not obligate the staffing specialist to take action to fill a position. Upon receipt of an advanced copy of the SF-52 and approved freeze exemption, the staffing specialist will establish a “pending” file. If an approved waiver request is not received within two weeks, the staffing specialist will follow up with the manager to determine the status. The file will be updated based on feedback from the manager. If approval is not received within four weeks, the file will be closed and no further action will be taken.

(c) When an SF-52, with the approved freeze exemption is received, the staffing specialist in OHRM will begin the appropriate recruitment process to fill the position in accordance with Merit Systems Principles and established DoC and ITA policies and procedures. If an exception to competitive procedures is proposed (i.e., an accretion-of-duties promotion), all required documentation must be submitted along with the SF-52.

4. Records: Copies of approved waiver requests will be filed in the following locations:

- (a) As an attachment to the SF-52 that is ultimately filed in the Official Personnel Folder of the incumbent,
- (b) As part of the merit promotion file as a record of authority to fill the position, and
- (c) In a central location for all waiver requests maintained by Employment Advisory Services Division.

5. Effective Date: This standard operating procedure is effective upon approval by the ITA CFO/DoA and the Human Resources Officer.

Approved:



Human Resources Officer

10/14/03
Date

signed
Chief Financial Officer and
Director of Administration

10/24/03
Date

SAMPLE MEMO

MEMORANDUM FOR:

Deputy Under Secretary

THROUGH:

Chief Financial Officer and
Director of Administration

FROM:

Assistant Secretary

SUBJECT:

Freeze Exemption

This is to request an exemption to the hiring freeze covering GS-14 and GS-15 positions, in order to establish or recruit for the position of (Title, Series, and Grade) in (Organizational Location). Information to support this request is provided below.

Background Information on the Position

Benefits of Filling the Position

Consequences of Not Filling the Position

I trust that the information provided above is adequate for you to authorize establishment and/or recruitment for the position of _____. If you require additional information, please contact (Name, Title), at (telephone number).

DECISION:

____ Approve

____ Disapprove

____ Let's Discuss

_____ Date