



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, D.C. 20240

Memorandum

AUG 14 2013

To: Assistant Secretaries
Bureau and Office Directors

From: Pamela Haze *Pamela Haze*
Deputy Assistant Secretary – Budget, Finance, Performance and Acquisition

Subject: Attendance and Travel in Connection with Federal Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters

The Department of the Interior has a dedicated cadre of law enforcement and fire program professionals that work closely with each other and with others in their communities. Recent deaths in the line of duty have highlighted the need to review our policies for leave and attendance, travel, and reimbursement for attendance at funerals and memorials.

The Department has not issued a declarative policy to provide direction in this regard, but will be doing so in the coming weeks. Until we have a policy in place to guide you in these matters we would ask that you take careful and prudent action consistent with governing law and relevant guidance from the Government Accountability Office and the Office of Personnel Management. In considering the appropriate actions, please be aware of the following guidance in this area.

- **5 USC Section 6328, Absence in connection with funerals of fellow Federal law enforcement officers** provides the following specific direction: “A Federal law enforcement officer or a Federal firefighter may be excused from duty without loss of, or reduction in, pay or leave to which such officer is otherwise entitled, or credit for time or service, or performance or efficiency rating, to attend the funeral of a fellow Federal law enforcement officer or Federal firefighter, who was killed in the line of duty. When so excused from duty, attendance at such service shall for the purposes of section 1245 (a) of title 31, be considered to be an official duty of the office or firefighter.”
- **A November 22, 1994 PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT LETTER NO. 94-26** states: “Agency heads have broad authority to grant excused absence (without charge to pay or leave) for various reasons. Under certain circumstances, one or more employees – while on official business and without loss of pay or leave – may attend the funeral of a fellow federal employee who is killed in the line of duty. In addition, the Comptroller General has held that an employee so designated may be reimbursed for his or her travel expenses from agency funds.”

- GAO's most recent decision on this matter (**B-239887, Jan 25, 1991, 70 Comp.Gen. 200**) states: "Attendance at a funeral is not normally considered official business for which an agency may pay an employee's travel expenses. However, where the head of the agency or his delegate determines that there are circumstances relating to significant activities of the agency that justify the designation of an employee as an official agency representative to attend a funeral, the employee may be reimbursed travel expenses from agency funds."

We ask that you consult with us before approving official attendance at funerals and memorials of fellow law enforcement professionals or firefighters. Based on our experience, we have found that the appropriate action depends on the specific facts of the event or incident. In the event of a funeral for a law enforcement officer or firefighter, please contact one of the individuals listed below to determine the appropriate level of official representation and to discuss the appropriate actions relating to granting excused absence and/or incurring travel expenses. The consultation will be helpful to guide consistent actions within the scope of relevant authorities and will also help us to formulate a policy on these matters.

I appreciate your assistance in this matter. If you have questions please contact the following individuals who will be working with you to develop the policy:

- Pam Haze, Deputy Assistant Secretary- Budget, Finance, Performance and Acquisition, (202) 208-4775, Pam_Haze@ios.doi.gov.
- Kim Thorsen, Deputy Assistant Secretary - Deputy Assistant Secretary- Public Safety, Resource Protection, and Emergency Services, (202)208-5773, Kim_thorsen@ios.doi.gov.
- Mary Pletcher, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary – Human Capital and Diversity, (202) 208-7966, Mary_Pletcher@ios.doi.gov.

cc: Office of the Solicitor