

Department of the Interior Departmental Manual

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Chapter 451: Awards and Recognition Program

Subchapter 3: Honor Awards

Originating Office: Office of Human Resources

370 DM 451.3

3.1 **General.** Departmental Honor Awards provide non-monetary recognition to employees and partners of the Department. Honor Awards are the most prestigious recognition that can be granted by the Department for career accomplishments, exceptional support of the Department mission, or for heroism.

A. Honor Awards are not intended to serve as a substitute for deserved monetary awards, but are designed to bestow singular honor on an individual as an official recognition of achievement at all levels of the organization when the high standards required for these honors are met.

B. Employees at all grade levels are eligible to be nominated for an honor award in accordance with the criteria established for each category of award. Employees may receive only one Meritorious Service Award and one Distinguished Service Award in the course of their career.

C. Any employee may initiate an Honor Award nomination by completing form DI-451, Award Certification. However, the nomination and supporting documents must be prepared and submitted through supervisory channels to the appropriate bureau awards coordinator for review.

D. When granted, Honor Awards are meant to be progressive career recognition as described in paragraph 3.2. However it is not a requirement to award them in successive order. They may also be awarded upon an employee's retirement.

3.2 **Honor Awards.** Honor Awards can be granted and presented throughout the year and also may be given to an employee at a retirement ceremony. Honor awards include:

A. Highest Level Honor Awards. The highest Departmental Honor Awards presented to career employees or non-employee partners. Recipients must have demonstrated extremely

significant long-term contributions to Departmental programs and missions. These awards are signed by the Secretary of the Interior.

(1) Distinguished Service Award - This award is granted to career employees of the Department. Normally the recipients of this award will have received a Meritorious Service Award (MSA), but a Distinguished Service Award may be granted to an employee who has not been awarded a MSA. A one page citation is required for this award.

B. Mid-Level Honor Awards - The second highest Departmental Honor Awards presented to employees and groups who have made exceptional continuing contributions to Department or bureau mission accomplishments. These Awards are signed by the appropriate Assistant Secretary or bureau/office.

(1) Meritorious Service Award - For career employees of the Department, typically in mid-career, who may have received one or more Superior Service Awards. However, prior receipt of a Superior Service Award is not a prerequisite for a Meritorious Service Award. A one page citation is required for this award.

(2) Unit Award for Excellence of Service - For exceptional contribution(s) of employee groups, units, or teams. The award may be signed by the bureau/office head.

C. Entry-Level Honor Awards. The first level of recognition in the Departmental Honor Awards program. These awards are presented to career employees, volunteers, or other partners who have made significant contributions to the Department through outstanding service to a bureau program. These awards are signed by the bureau/office head.

(1) Superior Service Award - For career employees of the Department who have made significant achievements and/or performed acts, or services that materially aid the mission of the Department of the Interior. A one page citation is required for this award.

(2) Citizen's Award for Exceptional Service - Bureau-specific award for private citizens or organizational partners, including volunteers.

D. Heroic Act Honor Awards - Departmental honorary recognition granted to employees or private citizens for heroic acts or unusual bravery. These awards are signed by the Secretary.

(1) Valor Award - The highest honors granted to employees of the Department who demonstrate unusual courage involving a high degree of personal risk in the face of danger and risk their lives while attempting to save the life of another. The heroic act does not have to be related to official duties and the site of the incident does not have to be the official duty station. A one page citation is required for this award.

(2) Citizen's Award for Bravery - For private citizens who risk their lives to save the life of a Departmental employee serving in the line of duty or the life of any other person,

while on property owned by or entrusted to the Department. A one page citation is required for this award.

(3) Exemplary Act Award - For Department employees or private citizens who attempt to save the life of a Departmental employee serving in the line of duty or the life of any other person while on property owned by or entrusted to the Department, when risk to their own lives is not an issue.

E. Other Honor Awards - Special Honor Awards granted by the Department to recognize significant accomplishments by individuals or groups in support of the Department's mission.

(1) Departmental Unsung Hero Award recognizes employees of the Department who have made valuable behind-the-scene contributions. These awards are signed by bureau or office heads.

(2) Secretary's Diversity Award recognizes and honors employees or groups of employees of the Department who have provided exemplary service and/or have made significant contributions to the Department in its efforts to increase diversity at all levels. These awards are signed by the Secretary.

(3) Environmental Achievement Award recognizes Department employees and teams as well as DOI cooperators (contractors or outside partners) who have attained exceptional environmental achievements. These awards are signed by the Assistant Secretary - Policy, Management and Budget.

(4) Safety Awards. Detailed information about the Department of the Interior Safety Awards can be found in 485 DM 10, Safety Management Awards. The Safety Awards given by the Department are:

(a) Award of Merit. The Safety Award of Merit is given to an individual or to a group, bureau, office, or organizational unit which has performed an outstanding service or made a contribution of unusual value to the DOI Safety and Occupational Health Program.

(b) Professional Service Award. The Professional Service Award is the highest recognition presented to members of the Department's safety and health community who have demonstrated sustained accomplishments in preventing injury, illness, and accidents; and who have contributed quality service to their bureau, office, and the Department during their career.

(5) Outstanding Service Award (for Political Appointees). Established in 1972, the Outstanding Service Award may be granted to non-career employees for outstanding performance in a policy or personal staff relationship with the Secretary or the various Secretarial offices. This award gives the Secretary a means to recognize non-career employees for outstanding personal and policy service to his or her administration. The Outstanding

Service Awards may be given at a bureau ceremony and the presentation may be delegated to a ranking executive in an organization component.

3.3 Responsibility. Bureaus and offices are strongly encouraged to establish mechanisms, such as an awards committee, to ensure that a consistent approach is applied in the review, evaluation, and recommendation of the award nomination. These mechanisms should also provide oversight of equity and cultural diversity to ensure that employees at all levels of the organization who meet the high standards required for these honors are considered for the awards.

3.4 Requirements for Nominations for Awards.

A. Any employee may recommend an honor award recipient by completing an Award Certification Form (DI-451) and submitting the form to the recipient's supervisor for concurrence and transmittal through the bureau awards coordinator to the approving official.

B. Before final approval of an honor award, the bureau's servicing human resources office must ensure that there is no derogatory information in the nominee's Official Personnel Folder (OPF). Potential derogatory information may include issues such as discriminatory actions, garnishment orders, suitability and security findings.

C. Bureau servicing human resources offices are also required to check with their bureau's Office of Civil Rights, the Departmental Office of Civil Rights, the Departmental Ethics Office, and the Office of Inspector General to determine whether there are any known findings of discrimination, wrongdoing, or other derogatory information resulting from investigations on the proposed awardees.

D. All potential derogatory information will be forwarded to the Departmental Office of Human Resources for evaluation to determine if there is justification to disapprove the award. In this evaluation the Office of Human Resources will consider recency, seriousness, relationship to the award, notoriety and impact of the incident, and other relevant factors. The determination will be forwarded to the bureau.

3.5 Nominating Procedures. All honor award nominations should be submitted in a timely manner. Nominations must be received no later than six months after the date of retirement or separation of an employee. When appropriate, the sample format provided in the Appendix to this chapter should be used as a guide to write a citation for an honor award.

A. Distinguished Service Award /Valor Awards. Although these awards are presented officially only once a year, at the Department Convocation, nominations may be submitted year round. The following instructions apply:

(1) Bureau and Office Awards Coordinators will ensure that: the nomination packet consists of proper documentation; a review and clearance by the Office of the Executive Secretariat and Regulatory Affairs; approval of the nominee is signed by the head of the bureau and the appropriate Assistant Secretary; the bureau human resources office has documented its

review of the employee's OPF; and the Departmental Office of Civil Rights, the Departmental Ethics Office, and the Office of Inspector General have followed the procedures in section 3.4 of this chapter if derogatory information was found.

(2) The Bureau and Office Awards Coordinators will give the nomination packets to the Department of the Interior Awards Coordinator; and when requested, a digital photograph of the nominee or media files illustrating the event.

(3) The Departmental Awards Coordinator will then prepare Certificates and send a copy of the packet and the certificate to the Office of the Executive Secretariat and Regulatory Affairs. The certificate will be signed by the Secretary.

(4) The Office of the Executive Secretariat and Regulatory Affairs is responsible for obtaining the Secretary's signature, ensuring the certificate format is correct, and sending a copy of the packet and certificate to the Secretary's files.

B. Citizens Award for Bravery. These awards are presented once a year at the Department Convocation but the nominations may be prepared year round. The Citizens Award for Bravery nomination packets will include the materials required for the Valor Award except that certifications of review from the Office of Civil Rights and the servicing Human Resources Office are not required. Certification of review procedures for the Citizen Award for Bravery procedures will be provided to Bureau and Office Coordinators by the Departmental Awards Coordinator.

C. Meritorious Service Award. The Meritorious Service Award should follow the general awards procedure in 3.5 above. The Meritorious Service Award is presented to recipients at an appropriate bureau ceremony. The award nomination should be primarily based on the employee's recent contributions while an employee of the Department of the Interior, although contributions to other Government agencies where the employee worked may be cited.

D. Outstanding Service Award. The Outstanding Service Award nominations may be initiated by the Secretary, the Deputy Secretary, an Assistant Secretary, the Solicitor, and the Inspector General in the form of a memorandum to the Secretary. The nomination is based on personal and policy contributions of an employee rather than the length of professional performance implied in the Distinguished Service and Meritorious Service awards. Each recipient of the Outstanding Service Award receives an engraved silver medal, a silver lapel pin, a certificate, and a citation signed by the Secretary outlining the achievements of the employee. Award presentation is made at a bureau or office ceremony which may be delegated to a ranking executive in an organization component.

3.6 Partners in Conservation Award. This honor award is granted to Department employees and partners, including individuals and groups who work cooperatively with bureaus or offices to achieve common goals related to conservation. The award may be granted for outstanding performance and direct service to the effectiveness of the Department's mission including service to any of the bureaus or offices of the Department. A one page citation is required for this award.

A. Nomination Procedures. When the Assistant Secretary - Policy, Management and Budget (PMB) calls for the Partners in Conservation Awards, the following information must be submitted:

(1) Electronic and paper copies of the justification of the group's or individual's accomplishments in relation to the award;

(2) Approval of the nominee by the bureau Director and appropriate Assistant Secretary; and

(3) The OPF review by the bureau Office of Civil Rights to ensure there is no derogatory information, findings of discrimination, or wrongdoing when the nominee(s) is a DOI employee.

B. Nomination packets are submitted to a panel for final review. The panel will develop recommendations which will be submitted to the Secretary.

C. For nominations/recommendations submitted to the Secretary, reviews will also be made by the bureau Office of Civil Rights, when applicable; the Departmental Office of Civil Rights; the Departmental Office of Ethics; and the Office of Inspector General to determine whether there are any known findings of discrimination, wrongdoing, or other derogatory information resulting from investigations on the awardees. The reviews will be coordinated by PMB.

D. The Partners in Conservation Award must be signed by the Secretary. The Office of the Executive Secretariat and Regulatory Affairs is responsible for obtaining the Secretary's signature, ensuring the certificate format is correct, and sending a copy of the packet and certificate to the Secretary's files.

Appendix

**FORMATTING AND PROCESSING OF
DEPARTMENTAL HONOR AWARDS**

HONOR AWARD CITATIONS:

The citation must be clearly written, in plain language, with sufficient detail so that a layman can easily understand the contributions of the recipient. Specific examples of accomplishments should be included with limited laudatory expressions.

CITATION FORMAT:

Margins should be at least one inch and the text should be justified. The font used will be Times Roman 12 point.

Citations should not be dated; the Executive Secretariat will date the citation

The citation should have a heading that is in capital letters, in bold, and centered on the page as follows:

CITATION
[Double Space]

FOR MERITORIOUS SERVICE
[Double Space]

JOHN D. DOE

The name may be an individual or a group. Triple space between full name and first paragraph.

The body of the citation consists of two paragraphs. The first paragraph always begins, "In recognition of his /her ..." and ends with the bureau name. For example:

"In recognition of his outstanding leadership of international water resources programs for the Bureau of Reclamation."

or "In recognition of the outstanding contributions of the Florida Upland Invasive Plant Management Program to preserve the recreational, economic, and ecological values of Florida's uplands."

The citation must reflect formal reference to the nominee, i.e., Dr. Brown, Mrs. Jones, Mr. Smith - not John, Barbara, or Henry. Always use the formal reference except in the last sentence of the second paragraph where the full name must be used.

The final sentence of the second paragraph for Distinguished Service Awards will read: "For ...(full name) is granted the highest honor of the Department of the Interior, the Distinguished Service Award."

The final sentence of the second paragraph for MSAs will read: "for ...(full name) is granted the Meritorious Service Award of the Department of the Interior."

The final sentence for other Honor Awards will read similarly to MSAs. The final sentence may use the group name.

The signature block will be six spaces below the body of the citation and will begin at the center of the page.

Citations should be approximately 350 words and must fit on one page with heading and signature block.

Eliminate large gaps in spacing on citations.

When the bureau name is first used in citation, spell out the bureau name. Use the word "Bureau" or "Service" for all subsequent references to the bureau instead of spelling it out.

Use action verbs in the citation.

Citations should be checked for correct spelling (including nominee's name), grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure prior to sending to the Executive Secretariat.

Citations should be clear and concise.

If the nominee is deceased, and is receiving a Distinguished Service Award, the citation should follow normal procedure and the closing statement should read as follows, "For his contributions to the (insert bureau or office), (Insert name) is posthumously granted the Distinguished Service Award of the Department of the Interior."

Before processing a Departmental Secretarial honor award, bureau award coordinators must conduct a review to ensure that there is no derogatory information in the employee's Official Personnel Folder, and there are no findings of discrimination or wrongdoing as determined by the bureau's Office of Civil Rights, the Departmental Office of Civil Rights, the Departmental Ethics Office, the Office of Inspector General, and if appropriate, the Office of the Solicitor. If derogatory information is found, see section 3.4 of this chapter for further instructions.

The above review results must be documented under Honor Award Review Application on the Form DI-451, Award Certification.

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