

**Veterans Employability Survey  
OMB Clearance Package**

**June 2006**

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## **Abstract**

The goal of the Department of Veterans Affairs' Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program is to enable veterans to live independently, achieve the highest quality of life possible and, given advances in medical science and technology, to secure gainful employment. In 2004, an independent task force assessed the VR&E program and concluded that approximately one-third of veterans enrolled in the program did not persist and complete the program. Instead, they had their program of rehabilitation interrupted or they completely discontinued; indeed about twenty to twenty-five percent of the new applicants were in fact veterans who had previously discontinued the program. Further, in 2003, 12 percent of the veterans in the program had to interrupt their rehabilitation plans, primarily due to health problems, family and financial issues, and problems arising from their disabilities.<sup>1</sup>

The proposed study, called the *Veterans Employability Survey*, consists of a nationally representative survey of veterans who have discontinued the program at one of four VR&E Program phases, as well as a comparison group of veterans who have completed the program. An advance letter from the VA explaining the general purpose of the survey and how the data will be used along with a letter from Abt Associates will be mailed to the sampled veterans. Telephone interviews will be completed with a total of 5,000 veteran applicants to the VR&E Program. The 5,000 will comprise 1,000 interviews with veterans who discontinued the program at each of four phases and 1,000 veterans who belong to the comparison group of veterans who completed the program.

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1 VA Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Task Force. (2004). Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Veteran. Washington, DC.



## **A. Justification**

### **A.1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary**

The goal of the Department of Veterans Affairs' Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program is to enable veterans to live independently, achieve the highest quality of life possible and, given advances in medical science and technology, to secure gainful employment. The demands being placed on the VR&E Program are exceeding the organization's capability to effectively deliver services. It has been reported that the processing of claims has taken precedence over the provision of rehabilitative services. Similarly, the administration and oversight of service provision for the veteran under the VR&E Program have not been leadership priorities. The application of the VR&E Program likely differs in each Region.<sup>2</sup>

In March 2004, the VR&E Task Force presented its report, "The Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Program for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Veteran," to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. That report was an independent assessment of the VR&E Program. Per the VR&E Task Force report, the program does not have the measurement systems to "design and implement interventions to reduce the number of veterans who drop out of the [vocational rehabilitation] program or have to interrupt their rehabilitation plans" and to "provide for long-term evaluation of program outcomes." On average, it takes 1,095 days for a veteran to complete the program without interruption. However, for a veteran who has for some reason discontinued the program, the average number of days increases to 1,625. The VR&E Task Force report found that approximately one-third of veterans enrolled in the program did not persist and complete the program. Instead, they had their program of rehabilitation interrupted or they completely discontinued; indeed about twenty to twenty-five percent of the new applicants were in fact veterans who had previously discontinued the program. Further, in 2003, 12 percent of the veterans in the program had to interrupt their rehabilitation plans, primarily due to health problems, family and financial issues, and problems arising from their disabilities.

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<sup>2</sup> Glazier, Raymond E. and Jeffrey W. Anderson. (2005). Veterans Employability Literature Review and Analysis Report, Report delivered to Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Policy under contract #101-J47306.

Under the 38 United States Code 527, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs has the authority to gather data for the purposes of planning and evaluating VA programs (Attachment 1). The *Veterans Employability Survey* will be conducted under this general authorization.

#### **A.1.1. Need for Data Collection**

The need to further study those discontinuing or interrupting the VR&E program is documented in the 2004 Task Force report to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on the results of an independent assessment of the VR&E Program. In that report, Task Force members indicated that “there has not been a concerted effort to research the interrupted and discontinued case problem and then to design and implement interventions to mitigate risk of a veteran dropping out temporarily or permanently from the program.” In its recommendations, the task force proposed a followup with Chapter 31 veterans who interrupted or discontinued the VR&E program.

Furthermore, as the United States is at war, the number of veterans with disabilities requiring the services of the VR&E Program continues to increase. As this number increases so will the number of veterans who fail to persist and attain VR&E Program goals unless the VA devises intervention strategies. The *Veterans Employability Survey* will allow the VA to identify the risk factors for interruption/discontinuation so that an intervention plan can be implemented that will increase the number of program completers and, in turn, improve the quality of life for veterans with disabilities.

#### **A.1.2 Project Description**

Briefly, the *Veterans Employability Survey* consists of a nationally representative survey of veterans who have discontinued the VR&E Program as well as veterans who have successfully completed the program. An advance letter from the VA explaining the general purpose of the survey and how the data will be used will be mailed to the sampled veterans along with a letter from Abt Associates Inc., the contractor hired by the VA to conduct the study, that will explain the procedures for the survey. Telephone interviews will be completed with 4,000 veteran applicants to the VR&E Program who discontinued the program at various points as well as a comparison group of 1,000 veterans who have

completed the program.

The study will address the following research issues:

- (1) What effect does veteran satisfaction with the VR&E program have on persistence and attainment of program completion?
- (2) What role does communication play in the ability of the veteran to persist in the program?
- (3) What are the internal (VR&E program) and external (e.g., familial, financial) barriers to persistence and attainment?
- (4) How does disability level affect persistence?
- (5) How likely will participants find employment that matches their abilities, training and interests?
- (6) How do characteristics and reasons of veterans who discontinue the program differ by phase of the program (cohort) they were in? How do characteristics of veterans who discontinue the program differ from those who complete the program?

## **A.2 Purpose and Use of the Information Collected**

Data collected in the *Veterans Employability Survey* will be used to identify the risk factors that have an impact on veterans not completing the Chapter 31 VR&E Program, a program designed to help service-connected veterans secure gainful employment. Results of analyses of these data will then be used to make informed recommendations on developing risk mitigation interventions that will lead to improvements in the success rate for the program.

Attachment 5 contains a crosswalk of the *Veterans Employability Survey* questions, which lists each question, identifies the cohorts that will be asked the question, and the research issue(s) that will be addressed.

## **A.3. Use of Information Technology and Burden Reduction**

The computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) data collection method to be used for the



telephone interviewing employs computer software that presents the questionnaire on computer screens to an interviewer. The computer program guides the interviewer through the questionnaire, automatically skipping to the appropriate questions based on answers to previous questions. Interviewers enter survey responses directly into the computer, and the CATI program determines if the selected response is within an allowable range, checks it for consistency against other data collected during the interview, and saves the responses into a survey data file. This data collection technology reduces the time required for transferring, processing, and releasing data.

#### **A.4. Efforts to Identify Duplication and Use of Similar Information**

A literature review was conducted in preparation for this study, as well as a review of studies and materials provided by VA's Veteran Benefit Administration Customer Satisfaction Survey staff and VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment staff. Although data collected in the past from VA customer satisfaction surveys have suggested risk factors contributing to discontinuation in the VR&E Program, samples drawn for these customer satisfaction surveys did not focus specifically on those who did not persist in the VR&E Program. There are no recent national studies of veterans designed to specifically study veterans who have discontinued the VR&E Program.

#### **A.5. Impact on Small Businesses or Other Small Entities**

While not expected to account for a large proportion of the respondents, it is anticipated that some of the respondents might own a small business. In an effort to minimize respondent burden, the questionnaire has been kept as brief as possible, averaging 20 minutes to complete.

#### **A.6. Consequences of Collecting the Information Less Frequently**

As the United States is at war, the number of veterans with disabilities requiring the services of the VR&E Program continues to increase. Because data regarding veterans who have discontinued the program are limited, the VA will use *Veterans Employability Survey* data to develop plans that will

accommodate veterans' needs so that they can complete the program. Without these data and the intervention strategies that eventually will be developed based on the data, the number of veterans who discontinue the VR&E program will continue to increase.

Respondents will be asked to complete only one questionnaire during the course of the *Veterans Employability Survey*.

**A.7. Special Circumstances Relating to the Guidelines of 5 CFR 1320.5**

There are no special circumstances for this information collection. The *Veterans Employability Survey* is in full compliance with the guidelines of 5 CFR 1320.5.

**A.8. Comments in Response to the Federal Register Notice and Efforts to Consult Outside Agencies**

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the VA published a notice in the *Federal Register* announcing the intention to request an OMB review of *Veterans Employability Survey* data collection activities. The notice was published on September 27, 2005, Volume 70, Number 186, and provided a 60-day period for public comment (Attachment 2). The VA has received no public comments in response to this notice. The 30-Day Federal Register Notice is displayed as Attachment 3.

Staff from Abt Associates Inc. contributed to the design of the survey.

**A.9 Explanation of Any Payment or Gift to Respondents**

This survey does not include any payments or gifts for respondents.

**A.10. Assurance of Confidentiality Provided to Respondents**

Prior to data collection, in keeping with the basic tenet of human subjects research as noted in the Belmont Report in 1979, all respondents will be assured of the confidentiality of their responses and clearly and completely informed about their choice to participate. Respondents will be informed with:

- 1) A description of the research,

- 2) A clear explanation of the research purpose,
- 3) Identification of risks and benefits of the research,
- 4) Assurance that confidentiality will be respected *except* as otherwise required by law, and
- 5) Reassurance that participation is voluntary.

Veterans will receive assurance and information about confidentiality in the initial survey contact through the U. S. Mail and over the telephone. The advance letters (Attachment 4) will include descriptive information about the study and an assurance of confidentiality. The telephone interviewers will explain the study to potential participants and assure them of confidentiality during the initial and any follow-up calls.

The contractor has established standards and procedures for maintaining confidentiality and these procedures will be used for the *Veterans Employability Survey*. The contractor will use contacting information (name, address, and telephone number) for mailing and interviewing purposes only. A unique survey identification number will identify respondents. Once the surveys have been completed, identifying information will be purged from the data files prior to delivery to the VA. While an updated sample file will be provided to the VA, it will not be possible to link the sample file records with the data.

The study contractor also safeguards confidentiality during the collection, storage, and disposition of survey data. All staff who have access to confidential information are instructed on the requirement to protect confidentiality and are required to sign a pledge to maintain confidentiality. Only authorized personnel are allowed access to confidential records, and only when their work requires it. Hard copies of confidential information not in use are stored in locked filing cabinets in the contractor's secured data preparation area.

In all contractor offices, access to the data processing areas is controlled, with only authorized personnel allowed in the telephone and data preparation centers, computer rooms, and tape libraries. In addition, individual data banks and files are protected by passwords and other techniques that prohibit

access by nonapproved staff. At all contractor sites, building security forces are on duty 24 hours, seven days a week.

Data security also encompasses back-up procedures and other file management techniques to ensure that files are not inadvertently lost or damaged. All important data files are routinely backed up to tape, using fast dump/restore software. File protection is additionally provided by in-place procedures to prevent unauthorized changes or access to data files.

The contract specifies that the contractor shall protect the privacy of survey respondents as well as information about prospective respondents. No information which may allow the identification of a respondent will be provided VA. Abt Associates will strip such information from the data to be provided prior to delivery.

Furthermore, information obtained in the course of this project will be protected under the Privacy Act and section 5701 of Title 38 U.S. Code. The VA maintains a System of Records entitled "Veterans, Dependents of Veterans, and VA Beneficiary Survey Records (43VA008).

#### **A.11. Justification for Sensitive Questions**

The *Veterans Employability Survey* does not include questions regarded as personally sensitive. The questionnaires are included as Attachment 6. The contractor's procedures to safeguard documents and files containing confidential information have been described above in Section A.10.

#### **A.12. Estimation of Hour Burden Including Annualized Hourly Costs**

The hour burden estimate associated with the *Veterans Employability Survey* appears in Table A.12-1. Prior to the main data collection effort, the contractor will conduct a pretest of 150 respondents (30 from each cohort), currently estimated to last 20 minutes on average. We estimate that 5,000 veterans will respond to the survey. This implies a total hour burden of 1,717 hours. The annualized cost to respondents is shown in Table A.12-2. If we estimate the value of a veteran's time at \$18.09 per hour<sup>3</sup>, the annualized cost of the survey is approximately \$31,061.

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3 Based on data for all occupations, July 2004, from the National Compensation Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.

**A.12-1 Estimates of Hour Burden**

<b>Type of Respondents</b>	<b># of Respondents</b>	<b>Frequency of Response</b>	<b>Average Time per Response</b>	<b>Annual Hour Burden</b>
Pretest	150	1	20/60	50
Main Study	5,000	1	20/60	1,667

**A.12-2 Annualized Cost to Respondents**

<b>Type of Respondents</b>	<b># of Respondents</b>	<b>Frequency of Response</b>	<b>Hourly Wage Rate</b>	<b>Respondent Cost</b>
Pretest	150	1	\$18.09	\$905
Main Study	5,000	1	\$18.09	\$30,156

**A.13. Estimate of Other Total Annual Cost Burden to Respondents or Recordkeepers**

There are no capital costs, operating costs, or maintenance costs to report.

**A.14. Annualized Cost to the Federal Government**

The eighteen-month contract cost to the Federal government for the design, implementation, and analysis for the *Veterans Employability Survey* is \$836,218. Thus, the average annual cost is \$557,479.

**A.15. Explanation for Program Changes or Adjustments**

This is a new collection of information.

**A.16. Plans for Tabulation and Publication and Project Time Schedule**

The database from which all analyses will be tabulated will include, for each respondent, selected

variables from the database from which the veterans were selected, updated information on locating efforts and response status, and *Veterans Employability Research Survey* responses. No individual respondent will be separately identified in any analyses or reports and all personal identifiers will be removed from the analysis files.

### **A.16.1 Analysis Plan**

After data collection is complete, Abt Associates will analyze the survey data. This analysis will describe, overall and by cohort, participant and item response rates, and describe the pattern of responses.

***Descriptive analyses.*** The initial analyses will consist of basic frequency distributions on all survey items. This will provide information to enable the VA to form an overall picture of the results and of the survey characteristics of the responding veterans to guide the more complex analyses.

For dichotomous variables (e.g., veterans that have been tested in the VR&E Program), frequency distributions will be constructed, along with proportions and 95% confidence intervals. For non-dichotomous variables (e.g. income), summary statistics will be calculated, including means, medians, minimums, maximums, and 95% confidence intervals.

***Comparing respondents to non-respondents.*** It is important to assess whether responding veterans are different from those that did not respond. The sampling frame will provide the necessary data to conduct this analysis. This analysis will be used to help form classes for development of sampling weights.

***Cross-tabulations.*** A selected subset of the numerous possible cross-tabulations of the veteran characteristics (“independent” or “predictor” variables) with the survey response (“dependent”) variables will be selected and produced, based on study hypotheses (e.g., to test the hypothesis that overall general health affects program completion, these two variables would be cross-tabulated and the appropriate statistical test, for example a chi-squared or an exact test, would be applied).

***Multivariate analysis.*** Multivariate analyses offer a powerful way of identifying veteran characteristics correlated with a successful employment outcome. An appropriate model will be developed using multivariate methods such as logistic regression, to identify the existence and strength of a relationship between dependent and independent variables and to control, as appropriate, for confounding variables.

### **A.16.2 Project and Publication Schedule**

The schedule for the *Veterans Employability Survey* is shown in Table A.16-1. Interim data tabulations will begin during the data collection period, with formal analysis to occur immediately after data collection activities are closed. While the schedule below shows the final report to the VA being prepared in the month following data analysis, many components of this report will be developed throughout the life of the project and will be in place long before the last month.

**Table A.16-1. Veterans Employability Survey Schedule**

Activity	Months after OMB Approval
Interviewer Training	1 month
Data Collection	1-4 months
Quality Control of Data Collection	1-4 months
Interim Tabulations	1-4 months
Data Analysis	4-6 months
Final Report	7 months

**A.17. Reason(s) Display of OMB Expiration Date is Inappropriate**

All instruments will display the expiration date for OMB approval.

**A.18 Exceptions to Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submission**

No exceptions to the Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act (5 CFR 1320.9) are requested.



**Attachment 1**  
**Authorizing Legislation**

From the U.S. Code Online via GPO Access  
[wais.access.gpo.gov]  
[Laws in effect as of January 7, 2003]  
[Document not affected by Public Laws enacted between  
January 7, 2003 and February 12, 2003]  
[CITE: 38USC527]

## TITLE 38--VETERANS' BENEFITS

### PART I--GENERAL PROVISIONS

#### CHAPTER 5--AUTHORITY AND DUTIES OF THE SECRETARY

##### SUBCHAPTER II--SPECIFIED FUNCTIONS

###### Sec. 527. Evaluation and data collection

(a) The Secretary, pursuant to general standards which the Secretary shall prescribe in regulations, shall measure and evaluate on a continuing basis the effect of all programs authorized under this title, in order to determine their effectiveness in achieving stated goals in general, and in achieving such goals in relation to their cost, their effect on related programs, and their structure and mechanisms for delivery of services. Such information as the Secretary may consider necessary for purposes of such evaluations shall be made available to the Secretary, upon request, by all departments, agencies, and instrumentalities of the executive branch.

(b) In carrying out this section, the Secretary shall collect, collate, and analyze on a continuing basis full statistical data regarding participation (including the duration thereof), provision of services, categories of beneficiaries, planning and construction of facilities, acquisition of real property, proposed excessing of land, accretion and attrition of personnel, and categorized expenditures attributable thereto, under all programs carried out under this title.

(c) The Secretary shall make available to the public, and on a regular basis provide to the appropriate committees of the Congress, copies of all completed evaluative research studies and summaries of evaluations of program impact and effectiveness carried out, and tabulations and analyses of all data collected, under this section.

(Added Pub. L. 102-83, Sec. 2(a), Aug. 6, 1991, 105 Stat. 391.)

#### Prior Provisions

Provisions similar to those in this section were contained in section 219 of this title prior to repeal by Pub. L. 102-83, Sec. 2(a).

## **Attachment 2**

### **60-Day Federal Register Notice**

[Federal Register: September 27, 2005 (Volume 70, Number 186)]  
[Notices]  
[Page 56527]  
From the Federal Register Online via GPO Access [wais.access.gpo.gov]  
[DOCID:fr27se05-123]

[[Page 56527]]

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DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

[OMB Control No. 2900-NEW (Veterans Employability Survey)]

Proposed Information Collection Activity: Proposed Collection;  
Comment Request

AGENCY: Office of Policy, Planning and Preparedness, Department of  
Veterans Affairs.

ACTION: Notice.

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SUMMARY: The Office of Policy, Planning and Preparedness, Department of  
Veterans Affairs (VA), is announcing an opportunity for public comment  
on the proposed collection of certain information by the agency. Under  
the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) of 1995, Federal agencies are  
required to publish notice in the Federal Register concerning each  
proposed collection of information, including each proposed new  
collection of information, and allow 60 days for public comment in  
response to the notice. This notice solicits comments on information  
needed to determine the factors impacting a claimant discontinuing or  
interrupting their vocational rehabilitation and employment program  
plans.

DATES: Written comments and recommendations on the proposed collection  
of information should be received on or before November 28, 2005.

ADDRESSES: Submit written comments on the collection of information to  
Susan Krumhaus, Office of Policy, Planning and Preparedness (008A1),  
Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Ave., NW., Washington, DC  
20420 or e-mail [susan.krumhaus@mail.va.gov](mailto:susan.krumhaus@mail.va.gov). Please refer to ``OMB  
Control No. 2900-NEW (Veterans Employability Survey)'' in any  
correspondence.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Susan Krumhaus at (202) 273-5108 or  
FAX (202) 273-5993.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Under the PRA of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13; 44  
U.S.C. 3501-3521), Federal agencies must obtain approval from the  
Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for each collection of  
information they conduct or sponsor. This request for comment is being  
made pursuant to Section 3506(c)(2)(A) of the PRA.  
With respect to the following collection of information, the Office

of Policy, Planning and Preparedness invites comments on: (1) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of VA's functions, including whether the information will have practical utility; (2) the accuracy of VA's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information; (3) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (4) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or the use of other forms of information technology.

Title: Veterans Employability Survey (VERS).

OMB Control Number: None assigned.

Type of Review: New collection.

Abstract: The purpose of the study is to obtain information on veterans who discontinued or interrupted their Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program. VA will use the data to determine the factors impacting the veteran's discontinuation of the program, effect on employability and types of interventions that might enable veterans to stay in the program and to compare this VR&E Program population with veterans who successfully complete the program and with the general veteran population.

Affected Public: Individuals or households.

Estimated Time Per Respondent and Annual Burden: 1,667 hours.

Estimated Average Burden Per Respondent: 20 minutes.

Frequency of Response: One time.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 5,000.

Dated: September 14, 2005.

By direction of the Secretary.

Denise McLamb,

Program Analyst, Records Management Service.

[FR Doc. E5-5197 Filed 9-26-05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8320-01-P

**Attachment 3**  
**30-Day Federal Register Notice**

[Federal Register: December 20, 2005 (Volume 70, Number 243)]  
[Notices]  
[Page 75543]  
From the Federal Register Online via GPO Access [wais.access.gpo.gov]  
[DOCID:fr20de05-113]

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DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

[OMB Control No. 2900-New (VERS)]

Agency Information Collection Activities Under OMB Review

AGENCY: Office of Policy, Planning and Preparedness, Department of Veterans Affairs.

ACTION: Notice.

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SUMMARY: In compliance with the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3501-3521), this notice announces that the Office of Policy, Planning and Preparedness (OPP&P), Department of Veterans Affairs, has submitted the collection of information abstracted below to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review and comment. The PRA submission describes the nature of the information collection and its expected cost and burden; it includes the actual data collection instrument.

DATES: Comments must be submitted on or before January 19, 2006.

For Further Information or a Copy of the Submission Contact: Denise McLamb, Records Management Service (005E3), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20420, (202) 565-8374 or FAX (202) 565-6950. Please refer to ``OMB Control No. 2900-New (VERS)'. Send comments and recommendations concerning any aspect of the information collection to VA's OMB Desk Officer, OMB Human Resources and Housing Branch, New Executive Office Building, Room 10235, Washington, DC 20503 (202) 395-7316. Please refer to ``OMB Control No. 2900-New (VERS)' in any correspondence.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Veterans Employability Survey (VERS).

OMB Control Number: None assigned.

Type of Review: New collection.

Abstract: The purpose of the study is to obtain information on veterans who discontinued or interrupted their Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program. VA will use the data to determine the factors impacting the veteran's discontinuation of the program, effect on employability and types of interventions that might enable veterans to stay in the program and to compare this VR&E Program population with veterans who successfully complete the program and with the general veteran population.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The Federal Register Notice with a 60-day comment period soliciting comments on this collection of information was published on September 27, 2005, at page 56527.

Affected Public: Individuals or households.

Estimated Time Per Respondent and Annual Burden: 1,667 hours.

Estimated Average Burden Per Respondent: 20 minutes.

Frequency of Response: One-time.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 5,000.

Dated: December 12, 2005.

By direction of the Secretary.

Denise McLamb,

Program Analyst, Records Management Service.

[FR Doc. E5-7573 Filed 12-19-05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8320-01-P