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The Flexible HIRE Act of 2016 (Hiring and Improving Recruitment, Retention, and Education)

In order for our nation to function as efficiently and securely as possible, it is essential that our federal government have access to a vibrant and effective federal workforce. That ability has been greatly compromised in places where unique economic events or the sheer remoteness of a geographic location have negatively impacted the recruitment and retention of federal employees. While the energy boom brought new jobs and opportunity to North Dakota, it also caused the cost of living to skyrocket in the Bakken. The federal workforce was unable to effectively respond, leading to high turnover and government inefficiency in critical areas such as energy, agriculture, and civilian military jobs. The remoteness of locations along the Northern Border has also proved challenging in terms of staffing. For example, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) employees can be stationed in some of the most isolated places in the country, and may even lack access to the basic amenities. When that type of situation leads to high workforce attrition, our nation's security and safety are threatened. In order to overcome difficult workforce challenges such as these federal agencies need access to a flexible toolkit of resources to improve their hiring and human resource policies so they can quickly and successfully meet recruitment and retention challenges.

Key provisions in The Flexible HIRE Act:

- **What authorities can agencies exercise in these specific geographic situations once they have access to this toolkit?**
 - **Direct Hire Authority** – allows agencies to hire employees more quickly, while still remaining cognizant of the need to prioritize hiring veterans.
 - **Special Pay Rates** – allows for higher rates of pay for certain occupations when the recruitment and retention efforts of the federal government would be compromised without greater parity with the private sector.
 - **Recruitment & Relocation Bonuses** – allows agencies to include this consideration when determining whether to award a bonus to a newly-appointed employee or an employee who may relocate to a different area.
 - **Retention Bonuses** – allows agencies to include this consideration when determining whether to award a bonus to retain an employee. This has been expanded to include those employees who are looking to move to a different location within the same agency due to challenging geographic circumstances.
 - **Allowances Based on Duty at Remote Worksites** – amends the current monetary allowance for commuting to remote worksites in accordance with the General Schedule Administration. Also establishes allowances for other remoteness factors.
- **Office of Personnel Management (OPM) & Agency Responsibilities:**
 - A number of provisions are included that hold OPM and federal agencies accountable for making hiring and human resource flexibilities as accessible and efficient as possible, as well as educating their employees on these flexibilities.