



**From The Desk of V Corps Equal Opportunity Sgt. Maj. Evy Lacy**

### **Discrimination in the Workplace**

Discrimination in the workplace is often the subject of costly lawsuits and local news stories.

Promoting discrimination-free workplaces, whether in the Armed Forces or corporate America, is essential. An environment free of discrimination not only prevents lawsuits, but also promotes morale. All Soldiers, regardless of race, religion, gender, national origin, and color are entitled to work in an environment free of discrimination.

Discriminating against people because they are perceived to be different is wrong. Prejudice still exists in the workplace, but has it really evolved to a more subtle element? Do women still earn less than their male counterparts while performing the same jobs? Are disabled people made to feel that they are not as productive as their counterparts? If this is occurring in your work environment, it is wrong because it is discrimination, plain and simple.

Discrimination laws have progressed a long way from a time when physical and verbal abuse were often accepted as the “office culture.” Abusive behavior may have been viewed as a form of personal expression, or as “only a joke.” Today, however, this behavior is not acceptable, and will not be tolerated in the armed forces.

In fact, recent legislation has outlawed this behavior in the civilian sector as well. Civilian employees are protected under the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975, the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995 and the Race Relations Act of 1976. The Sex Discrimination Act and the Race Relations Act protect people against discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, nationality, race, color, marital status, sex, and national origin, and employers are responsible for the behavior and actions of their employees. Under the Disability Discrimination Act, employees are protected against discrimination on the grounds of disability. This act also calls for employers to take preventative measures to ensure that a disabled person is not at a disadvantage. While it is common to see advertisements stating that a company is an “equal opportunity employer”, the employer must look at a person’s ability to perform a job and not look at his disabilities as a barrier to the job.

Studies show that many victims of discrimination do not file complaints because they are embarrassed, or they fear they won’t be believed, or they don’t want to make matters worse by being branded as “troublemakers”, or because they hope that it will just stop without the need for action.

If you are a victim of discrimination based on race, religion, color, gender, national origin or disability, report it to your organization’s Equal Opportunity Advisor or Equal Employment Opportunity Counselor immediately. Both programs are here to support the Soldiers and civilians who support our great country. Help us help you.

If you’d like more information on discrimination or other EO topics, call me or V Corps EO Program Manager Maj. John Sirmon at 370-5768 or 380-5763.