

# MILITARY-EFFECTIVE AND DISABILITY- INCLUSIVE: WHAT STILL MATTERS IN 2025

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ALIGNING COMPLIANCE, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND  
CULTURE UNDER VEVRAA & SECTION 503

Presented by:



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A faint, stylized illustration of a room serves as the background. It features a light blue door slightly ajar, revealing a glimpse of the outdoors. To the left of the door, two men are depicted in profile, looking at a laptop. To the right, there is a large potted plant with green leaves, a smaller potted plant, and a framed picture of a pink vase. The overall style is minimalist and modern.

WHY WE'RE HERE

# COMPLIANCE OPENS THE DOOR. CULTURE DECIDES WHO MOVES THROUGH IT.

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VEVRAA and Section 503 were created to drive opportunity through accountability. Fifty years later, the rules are changing, but the purpose remains the same.

The goal isn't to do less; it's to do what matters more effectively.

WHO WE REALLY ARE

INCLUSION STARTS BELOW THE SURFACE.

## WHAT YOU SEE

Job titles,  
Credentials  
Compliance Expertise



## WHAT YOU DON'T

Lived experience,  
Empathy  
Purpose that drive this work



# THE 2025 REGULATORY LANDSCAPE


## WHAT'S SHIFTING AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU.



The Department of Labor and OFCCP are updating two key rules that impact nearly every federal contractor.

### HERE'S WHAT'S ON THE TABLE:

- **For Individuals with Disabilities (Section 503):** The government is *considering removing the 7% goal* and asking employers to focus more on outcomes than checkboxes.
- **For Veterans (VEVRAA):** The veteran hiring benchmark and outreach expectations *stay the same*, but expect a closer look at whether those efforts actually work.
- **For Everyone (ICR Proposal):** The government has suggested *retiring the Self-ID of Disability form* and exploring better ways to collect this data in the future.
- **Timeline:** Comments are open until **September 17, 2025**. None of this is final yet... keep following current rules until you hear otherwise.

 **Key takeaway:** The rules are changing, but the mission isn't. Employers will be expected to show *real progress*, not just paperwork.



SECTION 503: THE REAL PURPOSE

503 ISN'T ABOUT COUNTING PEOPLE.  
IT'S ABOUT DESIGNING EQUITABLE SYSTEMS.

- Section 503 ensures proactive inclusion for individuals with disabilities.
- The 7% goal was never a quota... it was a conversation starter.
- OFCCP is shifting from numeric targets to *behavioral accountability*.



"Numeric goals have not produced measurable gains in self-identification or employment outcomes." — OFCCP Preamble, July 2025



A detailed illustration of a large group of soldiers in full combat gear, including helmets and tactical vests, ascending a steep, rocky mountain. At the very peak, several soldiers are reaching up to plant a large American flag. The scene is set against a dramatic, cloudy sky. The overall tone is one of perseverance and military achievement.

# 5.1%

VEVRAA: WHAT STILL APPLIES

## VETERAN INCLUSION STILL REQUIRES DELIBERATE EFFORT.

- 2025 hiring benchmark = **5.1%**
- Outreach and documentation (41 CFR 60-300.44) still required
- VETS-4212 reporting remains mandatory
- Emphasis shifting from activity volume to effectiveness of results



# 503 VS VEVRAA: DIFFERENT RULES, SHARED PURPOSE

TWO FRAMEWORKS. ONE GOAL: EQUITABLE ACCESS.

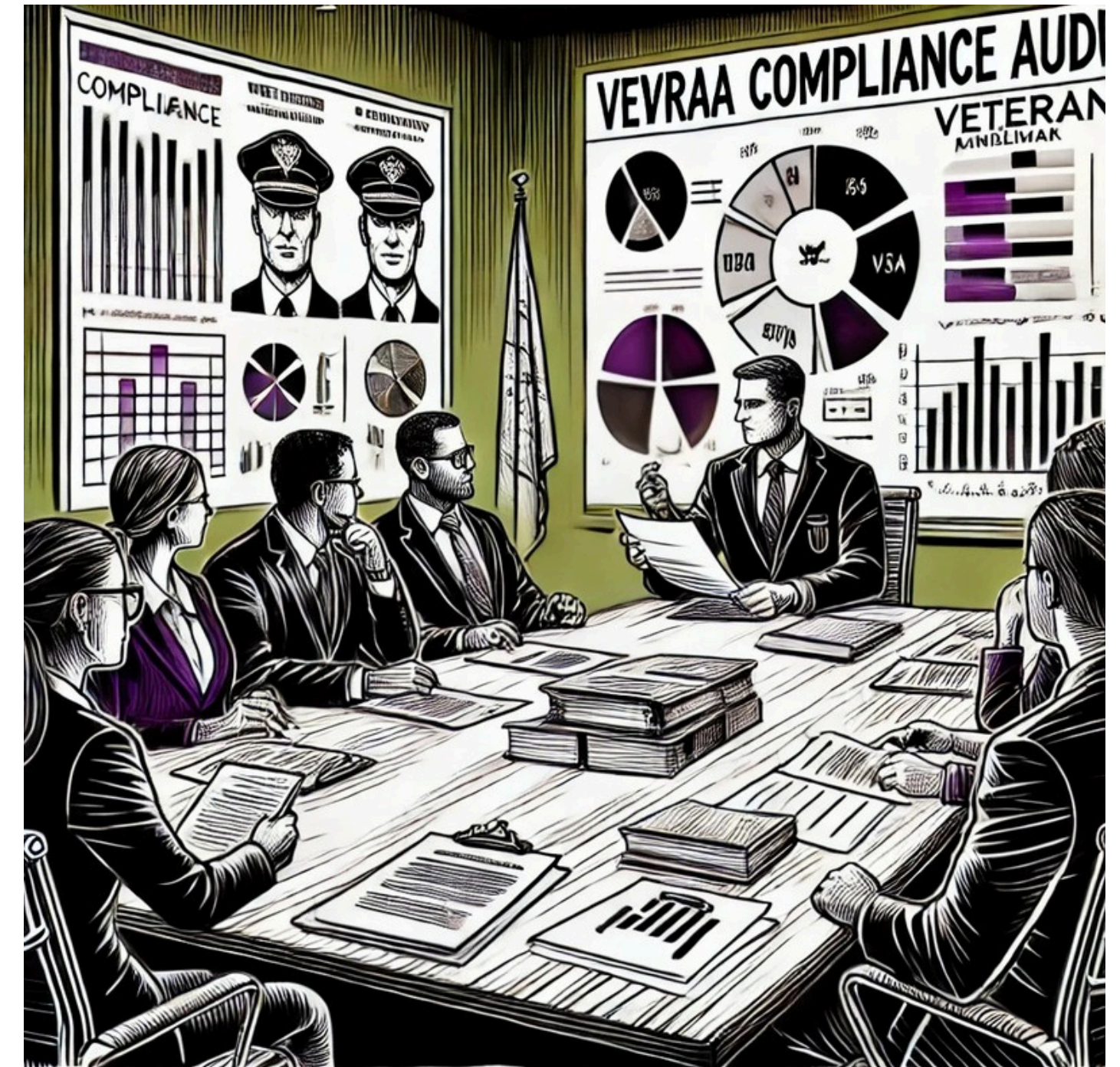


Category	Section 503	VEVRAA	Shared Objective
Focus	Individuals with Disabilities	Protected Veterans	Equal opportunity systems
Benchmark/Goal	Utilization goal (7%, proposed removal)	Hiring benchmark (5.1%)	Continuous improvement
Reporting	Self-ID form (proposed withdrawal)	VETS-4212	Data transparency
Core Challenge	Disclosure & accessibility	Outreach & translation of military skills	Sustainable inclusion culture

## ENFORCEMENT REALITY

# THE RULES MAY EVOLVE, BUT ACCOUNTABILITY ISN'T GOING ANYWHERE.

- OFCCP continues audits under both 503 and VEVRAA (Oct 2025).
- Maintain full AAP documentation and outreach evidence.
- Expect future audits to emphasize *impact over intent*.







## COMPLIANCE VS CULTURE

**YOU CAN CHECK A BOX OR YOU CAN CHANGE A SYSTEM.**

### SELF-ID

- Employer-driven
- Compliance-based
- Required
- Measured

### SELF-DISCLOSURE

- Employee-initiated
- Trust-based
- Voluntary
- Lived

The form collects data; trust reveals truth.



## THE DATA REALITY

# PROGRESS HAS STALLED

NOT BECAUSE OF BAD POLICY, BUT BECAUSE OF MISSING TRUST.

4.6%

SELF-ID RATE (FY 2024)

vs goal 7%

18.3%

VETERAN UNDEREMPLOYMENT

vs national average 15%

±0.3%

VETERAN BENCHMARK MOVEMENT

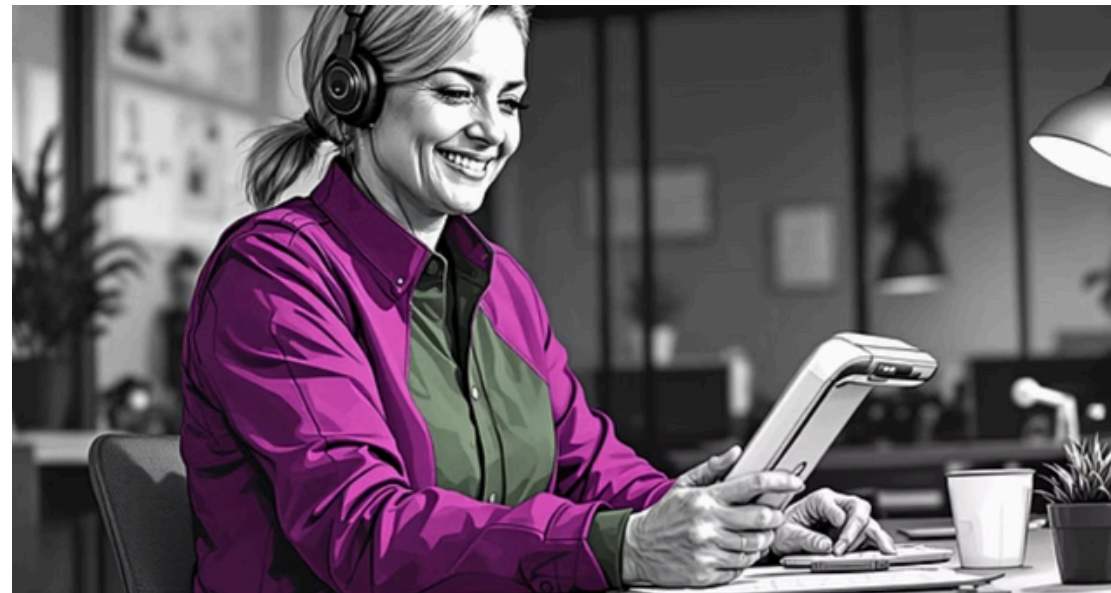
2022–25

Flat progress = flat trust.

# INTERSECTIONALITY IN PRACTICE

## VETERANS AND INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES: TWO PATHS, ONE REALITY.

- 40% of post-9/11 veterans report a service-connected disability (BLS 2025).
- Yet most systems track them separately.
- True inclusion means addressing overlapping experiences — not parallel checkboxes.



"Where two laws meet, one workforce lives."

## INCLUSION IN ACTION

# REAL INCLUSION STARTS WITH AWARENESS.

### CASE STUDY:

Mechanic with TBI couldn't recall tasks →  
Manager introduced a visual checklist.  
Zero cost. 100% inclusion.  
Now a best practice.

📌 **Takeaway:** The best DEI work happens when someone fixes the barrier right in front of them.





FROM BARRIERS TO BEHAVIORS

EVERY COMPLIANCE PROBLEM HIDES A CULTURE PROBLEM.



Barrier	Behavior	Fix
Fear of disclosure	Silence	Train leaders to normalize storytelling
Inaccessible systems	Missed candidates	Audit vendor tech for accessibility
No ownership	Compliance fatigue	Assign measurable accountability



FROM METRICS TO MEANING

# IF NUMERIC GOALS GO AWAY, WHAT STILL MATTERS?

## KEY INDICATORS:

### EMPLOYEE SAFETY

% employees who feel safe to disclose

### RESPONSE TIME

Time to resolve accommodation requests

### CAREER GROWTH

Retention & promotion rates

### SYSTEM ACCESS

Accessibility audit scores

### LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Manager inclusion competency index



WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD FOCUS ON NOW

LEAD WITH WHAT CREATES CHANGE.



## TRUST

Employees won't disclose without it.



## ACCESS

Inclusion starts with accessible systems and language.



## ACCOUNTABILITY

Measure what leaders actually own, not what HR tracks.

WHAT STILL MATTERS

COMPLIANCE OPENS THE DOOR.

CULTURE KEEPS PEOPLE INSIDE.

VEVRAA and 503 built the floor for equity, but leaders decide how high we build from there.





# REFLECTION FOR EVERY LEADER

WHAT DOES TRUST LOOK LIKE HERE?

WHEN DOES COMPLIANCE BECOME CULTURE?

WHO OWNS INCLUSION OUTCOMES?

ARE WE MEASURING PARTICIPATION OR BELONGING?



# LEADING THROUGH UNCERTAINTY

## DON'T WAIT FOR FINAL RULES LEAD NOW!

### CHECKLIST:

- Monitor Federal Register updates
- Engage through your ILG chapter comment process
- Benchmark internal data before rule changes
- Align culture initiatives with compliance structure



"We can't wait for clarity... we have to lead through uncertainty." — Meaghan Walls

# CONTACT & PARTNERSHIP

LET'S KEEP BUILDING SYSTEMS THAT WORK.

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**Center for  
Disability Inclusion**

PARTNERING FOR WORKPLACE SOLUTIONS

One mission. Two perspectives. Shared accountability.





## Q&A: WHERE COMPLIANCE MEETS CULTURE

If numeric goals go away, how should we measure progress?

Where does trust live... in policy or people?

What's one compliance behavior your organization should evolve?