

DCPAS Message 2024034

FOR: CIVILIAN PERSONNEL POLICY COUNCIL MEMBERS

FROM: Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service Director, Mr. Daniel J. Hester //Signed
04/10/2024//

SUBJECT: Statutory Changes to the John S. McCain Strategic Defense Fellows Program

ACTION: Disseminate to Department of Defense (DoD) Human Resources Managers and Practitioners

REFERENCES:

1. National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019, Section 932 of Public Law (P.L.) 115-232 (attachment 1).
2. NDAA FY 2024, Section 1113 of P.L. 118-31 (attachment 2).
3. Deputy Secretary of Defense (DSD) memorandum, "John S. McCain Strategic Defense Fellows Program," dated February 4, 2020, [Deputy Secretary of Defense 1010 Defense Pentagon Washington DC 20301-1010 \(osd.mil\)](#)

BACKGROUND: The John S. McCain Strategic Defense Fellows Program is a DoD civilian fellowship program designed to recruit and provide high performing and talented individuals with challenging opportunities to develop their leadership capabilities towards becoming future senior leaders in the DoD. In accordance with reference (1) this fellowship program was implemented in 2020 and is currently in the 4th cohort of participants.

Reference (2) made significant modifications to the program structure as follows: (1) updates geographical representation for selecting program participants; (2) permits extension of the temporary one-year fellowship appointment up to one additional year; (3) updates the fellowship appointment grade level to between the GS-10 and the GS-12; (4) expands participation in the fellows programs beyond the office of the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of the military departments; (5) removes the requirement to reserve positions in the excepted service for potential placement of participants who successfully complete the program; (6) provides participants who successfully complete the fellowship program with competitive and excepted service opportunities; and (7) removes the hiring authority to noncompetitively appoint successful program participants into the reserved excepted service positions. These changes are applicable as of December 22, 2023, the effective date of reference (2).

The Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service (DCPAS) is working with the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel Policy to identify potential appointment options for participants who successfully complete the McCain Fellows Program. DCPAS will provide additional information once a way forward is determined. In the meantime, reference (3) remains applicable to the extent the provision has not been superseded by reference (2).

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- [NDAA FY24 Sec 1113 \(attachment 2\).pdf](#)
- [NDAA FY 2019 Sec 932 \(attachment 1\).pdf](#)