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## Veterans get business set-asides

BY [Michael Hardy](#)  
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A new small-business set-aside will aid businesses owned by veterans disabled in the line of duty. The process to implement the set-aside was completed earlier this week.

Lawmakers had set a governmentwide goal that agencies should award 3 percent of their contracts to such veteran-owned small businesses, which are worth more than \$280 billion. President Bush signed that bill in December 2003.

The new interim rule provides guidelines for implementing the law. Under certain conditions, agencies can set aside contracts for competition among those businesses or even award sole-source contracts to a qualified company. As an interim rule, it is in effect but also open to public comment through July 6. The final rule could reflect that public input.

"This effort reflects President Bush's commitment to the men and women veterans of the U.S. military, who have given so much to protect and defend freedom and democracy for our great country," said Stephen Perry, administrator of the General Services Administration, in a written statement. "As a major federal acquisition agency, GSA is leading the effort to expand opportunities for service-disabled, veteran-owned small businesses to compete for contracts with federal government agencies."

Now the challenge is to raise awareness among federal contracting officers, said [John Moliere](#), president of Standard Communications Inc. and an advocate for his fellow service-disabled veterans. "The real issue now is getting the contracting officers to use it and the program managers to make it happen, and both being accountable to the federal agency leadership," he said.