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HRCI to Introduce First-Ever State Certification in 2007

New program to focus on California laws and regulations

Process will ensure HR Managers up to date on state's unique employment laws

Alexandria, Va. – Meeting a growing demand from the market, the Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI), announced today that it is offering a new certification. This California-specific certification will help ensure HR professionals have the means to demonstrate their knowledge of the state's unique employment laws.

The new certification is being developed by HRCI with significant assistance by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) California State Council along with many other subject matter experts in California. According to Springer, without the leadership and hard work of the SHRM California State Council, this groundbreaking new certification would not have been developed. "It was the State Council that identified the need, conducted the legwork and identified the initial content areas to be tested."

"This is a really important step for the HR profession and for the millions of Californians who depend on the competency of their human resource manager to guide them on complex human resource issues," said HRCI Executive Director Cornelia Springer, CAE. "Today, more than 80,000 HR professionals hold a certification from HRCI which demonstrates a mastery of key HR principles from a federal perspective. The California certification, which will be administered for the first time in April, 2007, will signal to employers and employees a firm understanding of the complex set of regulations required in the state."

Because of the diverse demographics that employers face when working in the state, and the unique legal compliance and practice requirements, this new certification will be critical in determining an HR practitioner's professional competence with California law, Springer added.

According to the SHRM California State Council, they will be able to use the state certification exam to identify areas where California law and regulation impose specific responsibilities on HR practitioners and to test the applicants' understanding of the legal requirements and their ability to put that knowledge into practice. There are many issues, such as overtime, pregnancy leave, and labor relations where California law is more generous than federal regulations. Understanding the differences in state and federal law is critical since employers are required to follow the law that is more generous toward the employee.

The California certification examination will include the following topic areas:

- **Compensation and Benefits**
- **Employee and Labor Relations**
- **Leaves of Absence and Workers Compensation**
- **Health, Safety, and Security**

“Currently, no comprehensive way exists to identify and measure the HR body of knowledge specific to California,” said Gina Maciula, SPHR, State Director, California State Council of SHRM. “HR professionals in our state must be able to capably serve their organizations by demonstrating expertise in both federal and California laws and regulations. We anticipate a strong demand for not only the certification, but, more importantly, the body of knowledge that goes with it.”

Eligibility and Testing

The California certification will be designed to complement the existing, national certification from HRCI, which examines knowledge of federal employment laws pertaining to human resources, and will not duplicate anything from the national exam. An HR practitioner must hold a Professional in Human Resources (PHR) or Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) designation from HRCI to be eligible to sit for the California exam. No specific work experience in the state will be required since there are HR professionals who are responsible for California employees but who physically work outside the state.

“The focus on the exam is to test professionals’ knowledge of California-specific requirements, not to measure their experience in California,” said Maciula.

HRCI will administer the California certification program, approved by the HRCI Board in June, and award certifications to those who pass a comprehensive exam. As with the PHR and SPHR certifications, those holding the new California designation will be required to recertify every three years either through reexamination or activities that demonstrate currency.

As it does with other certifications, SHRM is developing a preparation course to support the California certification. The prep course will be completed in time for the first administration of the examination in April 2007.

“We expect that this certification will benefit not only those who practice in California, but those who are based elsewhere and do business in the state,” said Springer. “As the HR profession continues to evolve and HR professionals are taking on broader and more strategic responsibilities, tens of thousands of practitioners are turning to certification to demonstrate to themselves and their employer that they’ve mastered a core set of HR principles. Given the complexities in California, this additional certification will provide an enhanced measure of knowledge and expertise that any human resource professional operating in that state should want.”

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HRCI is an independent, internationally recognized certifying body for the HR profession. Established in 1976, HRCI awards certifications to professionals who meet minimum eligibility standards and pass a rigorous examination. HRCI testing requires professionals to demonstrate their expertise in both the underlying principles of HR practice and the real-world application of those principles. To remain certified, individuals must fulfill continuing education requirements or demonstrate their current knowledge of the profession through retesting. HRCI is an affiliate of the Society for Human Resource Management.