

STATEMENT OF
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BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL WORKFORCE, POSTAL SERVICE,
AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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Good afternoon, Chairman Davis, Ranking Member Marchant, and members of the Subcommittee. My name is Susan LaChance. I am the Vice President, Employee Development and Diversity, for the United States Postal Service. It is my honor to be here with you today to discuss the Postal Service's commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce, and how the Postal Service has integrated diversity into our day-to-day operations.

The diversity of the Postal Service reflects the diversity of the United States of America. For us, diversity includes not only an individual's race, color, national origin, and sex, but also other attributes, such as background, education, life experiences and perspectives. We recognize that only with a workforce that represents the diversity of the communities we serve, can we effectively meet the needs of our customers in the 21st Century.

With this in mind, in 2005, the Postal Service implemented an innovative approach to managing the development of a diverse talent pool, combining various functions to create one department integrating employee development, diversity, and EEO complaints processing. This new department is Employee Development and Diversity.

Employee Development and Diversity is responsible for providing learning and development opportunities to approximately 700,000 career employees. We are continuously enhancing our workforce's ability to achieve a performance-based culture. My team also has the responsibility for promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace, and in the marketplace, helping to eliminate any barriers to equal employment opportunity, and processing EEO complaints.

We recognize that diversity is key to our corporate success because it impacts every aspect of the organization – employees, customers and the business.

One of our key business strategies, now and into the future, is to continue to recruit, retain, and develop a diverse and inclusive workforce. In fact, developing all of our employees is at the heart of our Strategic Transformation Plan. Our organization has identified employee engagement, and talent development and management as essential business strategies.

The Postal Service not only wants to be considered the best employer in government, but the best employer overall. Since the 18th Century, a diverse pool of individuals, with diverse cultures, beliefs, and perspectives, have built the Postal Service. Building on this legacy of diversity, the Postal Service will further expand recruitment efforts and continue to promote workplace practices that provide career opportunities for the best and brightest talent available. We are committed to providing employees with the tools and knowledge needed to do their jobs today and prepare them for the leadership challenges of tomorrow.

We recognize that for diversity to be successfully integrated at every level of the organization, diversity initiatives must be continuously guided by our leadership's full commitment.

I am pleased to inform you that Postal leaders have demonstrated, again and again, their commitment to diversity. We recognize that diversity is an important part of the foundation for our corporate success. That is the reason we have dedicated time and resources to promoting diversity at all levels of our organization.

Our senior leadership further demonstrates their commitment by dedicating their own time to participating in employee development and affinity group conferences, as well as hosting informal chat sessions with their employees, sharing insight on the value of networking, and providing advice on exploring career advancement opportunities.

The Postal Service also has diversity professionals dedicated to developing initiatives and strategies to fully integrate diversity at all levels of the organization, thereby fostering an inclusive environment at headquarters, and in our area and district offices. Our diversity professionals:

- recruit talent from the diverse communities we serve
- provide one-on-one sessions with employees interested in development
- hold career awareness conferences and workshops throughout the year to help employees prepare their job applications and fine-tune their interviewing skills
- identify and help eliminate any barriers to equal employment opportunity
- and, most importantly, they are integral partners in promoting career development and succession planning.

Senior Leadership recognizes the contributions of our diversity professionals. That is why we have these dedicated resources throughout our organization focused on promoting the value of diversity in our day-to-day operations.

Our focus today is on the demographics of our executives and high-level employees. I would like to share with you some information concerning the composition of this group.

Today, the Postal Service remains one of the leading employers of minorities and women. Minorities comprise 26 percent of our executives and women comprise nearly 29 percent. This reflects our history of providing equal employment opportunities to members of the diverse communities we serve.

In 2006, out of 40 Postal Service officers, 11 were women and seven were minorities. There were 728 Postal Service executives, excluding the officers. Of the 728 executives, 209 were women, 53 Hispanics, and 113 African-Americans. In addition, there were 21 Asian-Americans, and 2 American Indian/Alaskan Natives.

Over the past five years, we have seen increases in the participation rates of females and black males in our officer corps. Similarly, over the same period, we have seen increases in the participation rates of females, black females, Asian-American/Pacific Islanders, and Hispanic males in our executive ranks.

African Americans represent 15.49% of Postal Service executives, versus 6.7% in the rest of the federal government. In addition, Hispanic postal executives comprise 7.03% of the Postal Service executive ranks compared to 3.7% for the rest of the federal government.

In our Executive and Administrative Schedule, which provides a pool of candidates for executive leadership, there were 8,606 Postal Service employees at levels 22 and above. Out of the 8,606 EAS employees, 2,658 were women; 541 Hispanics; 1,485 African-Americans; 424 Asian-Americans; and 51 American Indian/Alaskan Natives.

Recruiting and retaining a diverse management and executive corps enables our leaders to use their unique talents, skills, and experience to offer levels of service that our diverse customer base needs and expects. To that end, we seek to recruit and retain diverse, talented individuals who have the skills critical to our business success.

We recognize that we face key challenges in recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce in the coming years. First, our Nation faces a shrinking labor pool of talent with the exit of our Baby Boomers from the workplace, and there will be a smaller pool of individuals to replace them.

Our second challenge is that we have a high concentration of leadership positions in the Washington, DC area, but our workforce is not always amenable to relocating.

Finally, rapid changes in demographics continue to reshape our society. As society's demographics change, we must adapt accordingly, continually evaluating our processes to ensure that we are actively seeking the best talent from the diverse communities we serve.

We believe that the best way to ensure that the Postal Service recruits and maintains an inclusive workforce is to cast our recruiting net as widely as possible. To this end, our diversity professionals have established effective relationships with a broad range of representatives of women and minority organizations and associations, such as the National Council of La Raza, the National Hispana Leadership Institute, the League of United Latin American Citizens, the NAACP, the Urban League, Federally Employed Women, Organization of Chinese Americans, and the Society of American Indian Government Employees.

We actively recruit veterans and military personnel, participate in job fairs and conventions, and recruit at colleges and universities.

Further, the Postal Service has successfully recruited diverse talent for our Management Intern Program. At the successful conclusion of a two-year developmental program, these interns assume mid-level management positions that are critical to the future of the Postal Service.

I want to share with you some of our key recruitment strategies.

We have developed, for future implementation, an on-line application process that will be available to both internal and external applicants. This will streamline our process and make it more accessible and user-friendly. We are enhancing our targeted recruitment through major national Web sites to include a focus on hard-to-fill positions.

Moreover, we are developing a comprehensive marketing plan that creates awareness of the varied postal career opportunities, and promotes the Postal Service as a model employer of choice. And finally, I am also pleased to report that last month, the Postal Service launched a new organization, Talent Acquisition and Retention, which will manage national policy and develop initiatives dedicated to recruiting, attracting, and retaining highly talented individuals.

By dedicating resources, simplifying our application processes, and enhancing our recruitment efforts and strategies, we are positioning the Postal Service to meet our future workforce challenges and business needs.

The Postal Service knows that a more inclusive workforce leads to a more productive workforce and thus improves our organizational success. Research indicates that employees who believe that their employer values them are more likely to work productively toward organizational goals. Moreover, a workforce that reflects the makeup of the communities it serves is better able to identify and satisfy the needs of those communities.

We are very proud of the level of employee engagement in our organization. Our employees are actively involved in the communities in which they live. They help us recruit new talent to the organization, enhance our business goals by providing customer service to our diverse market segment, and identify needs that particular customers may have for products and services.

Many of our diverse employees are also active members of employee affinity groups. The Heritage Coalition, established in 1998 and composed of postal employee groups, advances and supports the Postal Service's commitment of providing all current and future postal employees equal access to career opportunities. Heritage Coalition members include the Hispanic Organization of Postal Employees, African-American Postal League United for Success, National Hispanic Society, Asian-American Postal Employees Association, Emerging Postal Leaders, Jewish Postal Workers Welfare League, National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees, and NETWORK, an organization composed of female postal employees. The Coalition provides a valuable forum for ongoing dialogue and collaboration between employee groups and Employee Development and Diversity.

One of our most successful programs in promoting employee involvement in diversity is the National Awards Program for Diversity Achievement. The Program, sponsored by the Postmaster General and the Postal Service's Executive Committee, provides employees an opportunity to recognize individuals and teams who have made significant contributions to encourage, promote, support, and value diversity.

The awards recognize individual employees and teams for their contributions to the business, customers, and suppliers; for changing the lives of people in their communities; and for serving as role models in the workplace. Open to all employees, this program is the largest peer-recognition program in postal history.

Key to our retention strategies is creating employee awareness about the availability of developmental programs and opportunities that will enhance their skills and prepare them for future leadership positions. This also allows us to address the potential loss of postal leadership and develop a pool of well-prepared potential successors at all levels of the organization.

To develop future leaders and improve employee performance at all levels of the organization, the Postal Service has developed a strategic "Learning Continuum" -- a "whole career" approach to learning.

A critical objective of the Learning Continuum is to strengthen and further develop an educated pool of dedicated postal executives and leaders prepared to meet the current and future strategic objectives of postal business.

I would like to take this opportunity to discuss some components of the Continuum that focus on leadership development and talent management.

The Advanced Leadership Program (ALP) is a developmental program for high-performing employees who exhibit the desire and potential for increased levels of responsibility. The program seeks to develop a highly competent managerial base from which future organizational leaders will emerge. The Postal Service developed the ALP in an effort to create a pipeline of talented future leaders.

The Career Management Program (CMP) is a training program for mid-level managers. The courses, based on critical competencies developed by Postal Service managers, provide the skills and knowledge managers and supervisors need to perform successfully.

The Executive Development Continuum (EDC) is a comprehensive new approach to executive development within the Postal Service. The EDC offers four specific developmental tiers to newly promoted, mid-career, and senior PCES managers. The intention of the EDC is to create a world-class executive development program that encompasses best industry practices, as well as customized cutting-edge development.

To strengthen our succession planning, we created our Corporate Succession Planning (CSP) process. CSP is a succession planning model and process that is aligned with industry best practices and serves as a conduit to channel future leaders into executive positions. CSP identifies employees at Executive and Administrative Schedule (EAS) levels 22 and above as potential successors for Postal Career Executive Service positions. This standardized process is open and inclusive, allowing employees to nominate themselves for consideration for higher-level assignments in the executive ranks. CSP supports the Postal Service's commitment to diversity by helping to identify individuals who have the potential for highly effective executive performance.

The EAS Leadership Development (ELD) process prepares individuals for managerial positions. Individuals approved to participate in ELD have demonstrated the potential for highly effective management and leadership performance. The ELD process is open to field employees at EAS-levels 19 and above who wish to apply for developmental pools. Our goal with ELD is to create a pool of qualified employees ready to fill future managerial and

leadership positions competitively.

Those employees selected to participate in CSP or ELD go on to develop comprehensive Individual Development Plans that include training, formal education, special projects, and detail assignments.

The Learning Continuum concept is a comprehensive approach to developing the skills and abilities of our leaders and future leaders. We are very proud of all our leadership development programs that support our succession planning efforts.

The Postal Service has always had a strong culture of developing employees from within the organization. Out of 40 Postal Service officers, 21 began their careers as craft employees, while four began their careers in one of our structured development programs. We continue to build upon this key human resource strategy, which has proven to be very successful over the years.

Perhaps Postmaster General Jack Potter best illustrates the effectiveness of this approach to promoting Postal Service employees. Jack, whose father was also a postal employee, joined the Postal Service as a clerk in New York in 1978. He holds a degree in economics from Fordham University. He is a Sloan Fellow and earned a master's degree at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He has served as chief operating officer, vice president of Labor Relations, and in a number of other senior operational positions, both at postal headquarters and in the field.

Delores Killelte is another example of this tradition. Delores, a graduate of Coppin State University, began her postal career in 1968 as a distribution clerk in Baltimore, Maryland. She has held a number of management positions over the years, including Manager for Operations Support in the Baltimore District. Delores was the 39th Postmaster of Washington, DC, when she was selected to serve as the Consumer Advocate and Vice President of Consumer Affairs.

I would like to share one more story that illustrates the inclusiveness of Postal Service management. Betty Henderson is a Supervisor, Distribution Operations, for the Philadelphia Processing and Distribution Center. She has been a Postal Service supervisor for 17 years – and she has been deaf all of her life. Betty has an excellent rapport with her employees, with whom she communicates by signing, writing, and occasionally using an interpreter. Betty coordinates activities for the Deaf and Disabilities Awareness Group with the Mail Processing function at the plant.

I am pleased to report that Betty has been selected by Equal Opportunity Publications, Inc. (EOP), publisher of CAREERS & the disABLED, as the "Employee of the Year." With this award, which was presented to Betty on

May 7, EOP has recognized her outstanding contributions to diversity and her commitment to improving the work life of deaf and hard-of-hearing employees.

Assessment of our progress in promoting diversity is an indispensable element in determining our success. To reinforce accountability for managing and integrating diversity, the performance ratings for field executives, managers, and supervisors reflect the degree to which they have been effective in communicating and leading a diverse workforce.

The Voice of the Employee Survey is another valuable tool in measuring effectiveness in promoting inclusiveness. This survey allows our employees to identify barriers to effectively performing their jobs.

Another important measurement of our success in promoting diversity is reflected in the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint process. The Postal Service has been making steady progress in reducing the number of formal and informal EEO complaints, and the findings of discrimination continue to be low. We have made a concerted effort to review and resolve workplace disputes quickly, and the results show that we have been increasingly successful in this effort. Appropriate field managers are held accountable for the number of complaints filed by their employees; and their success is measured by a compensable factor in their annual job performance.

It is also important to note that the Postal Service, as an organization, will be held to an accountability standard under the new postal reform law, the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act. The law requires the Board of Governors to submit to the President and Congress a report concerning the extent to which women and minorities are represented in supervisory and management positions within the United States Postal Service.

Serving as a champion of diversity has played a major role in the Postal Service's ability to provide excellent service to all Americans. The unique qualities of all employees are valued, and the Postal Service will continue to seek out and develop the talents and skills that each individual brings to the organization.

Our commitment to diversity has been widely recognized by private organizations that monitor and evaluate diversity best practices.

In 2004, the Postal Service was recognized by *Fortune* magazine as one of "50 Best Companies for Minorities" for the fourth straight year.

Moreover, just last month, Postmaster General Jack Potter received the LeGree Daniels Heritage Award from the African American Postal League United for Success (A-PLUS). A-PLUS is a nonprofit association created to mentor and develop postal managers toward successful career paths. The organization's highest award recognizes individuals who are positive role models, who

demonstrate significant professional contributions and service, and who support diversity through ongoing involvement in community service.

For more than 200 years, the Postal Service and its predecessor, the Post Office Department, have provided individuals from a variety of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds with the opportunity to earn a living, support their families, develop their careers, and serve their country. We proudly continue that tradition today.

I would be pleased to answer any questions that the Subcommittee may have.