

## **Statement of Gail T. Lovelace**

### **Before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs**

#### **Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia**

**September 10, 2008**

#### Introduction

Good afternoon Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Voinovich, and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of the General Services Administration (GSA). My name is Gail Lovelace and I serve as GSA's Chief Human Capital Officer and have been asked to serve as GSA's Senior Career Executive for Presidential Transition. The Presidential Transition is the top priority for GSA, as stated by our Acting Administrator, Mr. Jim Williams, during his confirmation hearing before the full Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. Acting Administrator Williams, and all of us at GSA, are fully committed to a successful and smooth transition from the current Administration to the next.

As a former Political Science major, I believe that the transition from one administration to the next is an exciting time for our government. I am honored to be able to play a role in ensuring a smooth transition as envisioned by the Presidential Transition Act of 1963. As stated in that Act –

*“The Congress declares it to be the purpose of this Act to promote the orderly transfer of the executive power in connection with the expiration of the term of office of a President and the inauguration of a new President.....”*

As an agency, part of GSA's mission is to leverage the buying power of the federal government to acquire best value for taxpayers and our federal customers. We exercise responsible asset management. We deliver superior workplaces, quality acquisition services, and expert business solutions. In accordance with the Presidential Transition Act of 1963, our responsibility during Presidential Transitions is to provide many of these same services, including providing suitable office space appropriately equipped, furnished and supplied to the President-elect, Vice President-elect and members of the incoming and outgoing Presidential Transition Teams, upon request. We started early in our preparation for the upcoming transition and have good teams in place. We have secured suitable space in Washington, D.C. for a Presidential Transition Team and are currently well-positioned to provide furniture, parking, office equipment, supplies, telecommunications, mail management, travel, financial management, vehicles, information technology (IT), human resources management, contracting and other logistical support as necessary and appropriate. A key component will be the use of IT resources. We have also partnered with the Secret Service and the Federal Protective Service, both part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), so they can provide security for the President-elect, Vice President-elect, other protected persons, and the Presidential Transition space. We recognize that a transition can be perceived as a time of vulnerability for our country and so we are taking appropriate steps along with DHS and other national security agencies to ensure continuity of government during this time as

well as having identified alternate locations and workplace solutions for the Presidential Transition Team in the event of an emergency.

In accordance with our statutory responsibilities, under 40 U.S.C. 581(e), GSA also provides space, services and logistical support to the Presidential Inaugural Committee (PIC) and the team that plans and stages the various events that make up a Presidential Inauguration. Our GSA Inaugural Support Team began preparations in August 2007 and has been in full operation since April 2008. Approximately 200 employees of the Armed Forces Inaugural Committee (AFIC) have occupied the workspace we provided since June. GSA provided space, IT and telecommunications support as well as several hundred pieces of surplus furniture. AFIC has been very appreciative of GSA preparing their space in a timely fashion so they can prepare for the Inaugural events. AFIC has also stated their specific appreciation for the money GSA has saved them by diligently searching for and providing surplus furniture. GSA currently is preparing space and other logistical support for up to 600 staff members of the PIC.

GSA provides similar logistical support services to President Bush and Vice President Cheney to help them establish their offices when they depart the White House. These services are provided for a 7-month period beginning December 20, 2008. GSA assists in establishing the former President's office and assists in managing the funds for that office, as we do for all former Presidents. Our team devoted to the outgoing Administration has completed preliminary planning and began coordinating with the Executive Office of the

President, the White House Office of Administration, and other agencies in February of this year.

The Presidential Transition Act of 2000 amended the Presidential Transition Act to expand the services that GSA provides to support the incoming Presidential transition. We coordinate and help to plan and implement orientation activities for key Presidential appointees. The objective of orientation is, and I quote from the Act, “to acquaint them with the types of problems and challenges that most typically confront new political appointees when they make the transition from campaign and other prior activities to assuming the responsibility for governance after inauguration.” Orientation activities focus on broad-based executive-level information and may include informal discussions, workshops and other group sessions. Other agencies and non-government organizations may assist in the planning and implementation of these activities. The decision on how this will be carried out rests with the incoming President or his designee.

The Presidential Transition Act of 2000 also authorized GSA to develop a transition directory, in consultation with the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). The directory provides information about the officers, organization, and statutory and administrative authorities, functions, duties, responsibilities, and mission of each department and agency. It also provides a variety of other information that may be useful to appointees and members of the Presidential Transition Team.

GSA has already prepared information about appointee orientation for the Presidential Transition Team. We are actively working with NARA to create a Transition summary document and to design and construct the website that will house more detailed information. We have also reached out to the Office of Presidential Personnel, the Office of Personnel Management, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Office of Government Ethics to ask for their assistance in completing this directory.

In accordance with GSA's role in supporting Presidential transitions – for both incoming and outgoing Presidents -- the FY 2009 President's Budget requested \$8,520,000 for this orderly transfer of executive power. Transition funds become available to the incoming administration beginning the day following the day of the general election and ending 30 days following the Inauguration. Funds are available for expenses of the outgoing President from 30 days before, until 6 months after the term of office expire.

GSA serves as the transition manager and advisor on behalf of the President-elect; however, the allocation of the funds is determined by the President-elect and his designee(s). In the event of a Continuing Resolution (CR), GSA will need to make sure that funds will be available for obligation by the incoming administration the day after the general election, which will require a special provision in the CR. The Appropriations Committee has been notified, and we are hopeful Congress will ensure funds are in place for the transition.

Looking inside Federal agencies, the former and recently retired Acting Administrator and I have met with many agencies, individually and in groups, to

explain GSA's unique role with them and to share our thoughts and ideas about what it takes to be ready for a transition. I will continue to do this as needed. We have created a special section of our *gsa.gov* website to share information about Presidential Transition with other agencies and the public. We are preparing additional guidance for agencies, building upon our past experiences with transitions. We are actively working with Clay Johnson, OMB Deputy Director of Management, to bring all agency Transition Directors together for a special session focused on the upcoming Transition.

This is an exciting time for our government. It is a great testament to our Constitutional system of government, but it can also present many challenges. At the same time, agencies must pave the way for a smooth and orderly departure of outgoing appointees, as well as prepare information and orientation activities for incoming appointees, they must ensure that essential programs and services continue unimpeded. As one of our GSA employees recently described it, "We have to keep the train on the tracks and running on time."

Like all other agencies, GSA is diligently working to ensure a smooth transition within our agency. We started early in preparing for the transition of our agency's political leadership; we have already conducted several briefings for our current political appointees on what the change of Administration may bring. Transition guidance that was issued by the Executive Office of the President on July 18, 2008, provided us and our fellow agencies with excellent reinforcement on the importance of ensuring a smooth transition. This guidance established target dates for specific activities that will help to ensure an orderly succession in

leadership, continuity of operations and public service, and also help non-career employees exit successfully.

In addition to our incoming and outgoing Presidential transition teams and our Inaugural team, GSA empowered four teams to plan for a successful internal agency transition. The first team is focused on support to current GSA political appointees who will be leaving. The second team is identifying the actions that must be taken prior to and during the Transition to ensure the continued success of GSA programs, operations and service, including continuity of leadership, transfer of knowledge, and communication with employees. Our leadership succession plan outlines a detailed set of recommendations to make sure there are no gaps in organization leadership. The third team is identifying necessary logistical and information support to members of the Presidential Transition Team that gather information about our agency, such as organization, policies, programs and key issues. And the fourth team is focusing on how to ensure a smooth transition of new appointees into leadership positions within our agency. As an agency, I believe we are well-positioned to ensure a smooth transition inside GSA.

#### Closing

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Voinovich, and Members of the Subcommittee, I want to thank you again for the opportunity to address you this afternoon. Working together as a team, I am sure that the federal government will continue with the smooth system of Presidential transitions that began when George Washington departed and John Adams assumed the office of the President of the United States.