

**STATEMENT OF  
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**before the**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT  
MANAGEMENT, THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE, AND THE  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND  
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
UNITED STATES SENATE**

**on**

***Assessing Telework Policies and Initiatives in the Federal Government***

**June 12, 2007**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to be here today on behalf of Director Linda M. Springer of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to discuss the status of telework in the Federal Government. It is clear that telework has become an important human capital management tool for ensuring the Federal Government has an effective and flexible civilian workforce capable of meeting 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges. As Director Springer seeks to advance the Strategic Management of Human Capital component to President Bush's Management Agenda, we are seeing increased signs that Federal agencies are

keenly aware that telework is a useful tool which can help attract and retain a 21<sup>st</sup> century high-performing workforce that produces high-quality results.

We also recognize the relationship between telework and Continuity of Operations (COOP) planning as well as the impact telework can have on traffic congestion and energy consumption, especially in the National Capital Area where more than 280,000 Federal employees work each day. Additionally, telework can be used as a method to increase available employment options for individuals with disabilities.

I would like to discuss some of the more recent efforts OPM has undertaken which involve telework. First, as you may recall, last year Director Springer introduced our Career Patterns initiative. This new approach for bringing the next generation of employees into the Federal Government highlights telework as a High Impact HR Flexibility. In preparation for the looming retirement wave, we have encouraged Federal agencies to shift their thinking about the work environment to make it more appealing to non-traditional employees and applicants. We are pleased to see that many Federal agencies have begun to operate and hire using OPM's Career Patterns approach. Agencies have also developed workforce planning and marketing strategies to attract specific career pattern scenarios. These agencies have begun to improve work environments and to advertise the broad range of opportunities and arrangements that are available in their agencies.

Evidence of agency progress can be found in improved vacancy announcements that highlight worklife characteristics important to applicants, such as telework options, nontraditional hours, part-time work, and other flexibilities which can contribute to the accomplishment of agency missions. As Director Springer noted in her Performance and Accountability Report to Congress for Fiscal Year 2006, we have been particularly pleased with the progress the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office has been making with career pattern awareness efforts – particularly with respect to telework options. We are happy they are here this afternoon to testify about their efforts.

As I mentioned, we recognize that telework can also be a critical component for emergency COOP activities. Because of this, Director Springer initiated a telework exercise at OPM in September 2006 to test our state of readiness and the ability of our employees to conduct mission critical functions and activities in the event of an emergency that did not allow access to our headquarters building in downtown Washington. While we encountered a few minor technical difficulties along the way, the overall exercise was carried out smoothly, and we did not uncover any serious deficiencies in our abilities to work from remote locations. We are continuing to evaluate and monitor our performance and abilities in this area to ensure our employees have what they need to safely conduct mission-critical functions in a secure and timely manner. Working with our partners at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), we are encouraging other Federal agencies to incorporate telework into their own COOP planning efforts.

Another area where OPM has been very active over the last year concerns President Bush's Implementation Plan for his National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza. In that plan, the President specifically directed OPM to update existing telework guidance to include information about teleworking in the event of a pandemic influenza.

In response to this requirement, OPM issued a revised comprehensive "Guide to Telework in the Federal Government" on August 3, 2006, which was distributed to all Federal agencies. This Guide, which is also available on the web at [www.telework.gov](http://www.telework.gov), details the benefits of telework for managers and employees, as well as their rights and responsibilities in implementing telework. As required, the Guide also includes information about emergency planning, and specifically about pandemic influenza.

In addition, OPM is now visiting with Federal agencies – and specifically their managers, HR, and technical personnel – to provide comprehensive briefings on policies regarding pandemic preparedness and telework.

OPM is also using the Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) Council chaired by Director Springer to highlight best practices on telework across the Federal Government. In February 2007, the Council's Training Academy conducted a session with over 50 attendees representing more than 20 agencies. Attendees learned how effective and valuable telework is for the Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA), a DOD component involved with preparation for Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) activities. In addition, the International Trade Commission's (ITC) Director of

Administration and the President of the local American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) union co-presented their agency's telework tracking system, a technology solution which allows employees to establish their telework schedules with relative ease. OPM also shared highlights from our recent COOP telework exercise during this same meeting.

Mr. Chairman, in addition to these efforts, OPM is continuing to work with agency telework coordinators, hosting quarterly staff-level telework meetings to share best-practices across agencies and to provide a forum for airing agency issues and concerns. In addition, we visit with Federal agencies to provide technical assistance and guidance on telework programs and policies. We are also pleased that our continuing collaboration with the General Services Administration (GSA) has helped to further promote telework. We are particularly pleased with our most visible endeavor, our joint website, [www.telework.gov](http://www.telework.gov), a one-stop shop for any agency HR professional that wants to start or expand their telework program. It's also a great place for employees and managers to go to learn more about telework. With OPM's expertise in human resources issues, and GSA's expertise in technical, equipment, and telework center issues, we are working hard to ensure that the ability to telework can be effectively implemented across government.

OPM also conducts an annual survey of agencies with respect to telework. In our most recent surveys for 2005 and 2006, we have worked to further clarify terminology and eligibility definitions in order to solicit more complete and focused data. In addition,

we are now seeking more detailed responses from agencies through these surveys with respect to information security, as it has become increasingly clear to us that, as a matter of agency policy, security concerns need to be effectively addressed, from a technological connectivity standpoint, prior to telework arrangements being implemented.

In terms of agency telework policies, we believe the Federal Government is continuing to make progress, though we would like to see even more progress made as I indicated. However, we are encouraged by the fact that all Federal agencies have implemented telework policies, and all agencies have designated a telework coordinator to facilitate their telework programs. In addition, while we will shortly be releasing the latest data from our most recent surveys now under review at OPM, we are pleased that during the Administration's first term, telework by Federal employees doubled from 72,844 in 2001 to 140,694 in 2004. At OPM, I can tell you that as of May, 2007, among our almost 5,660 employees, 928 employees telework at least once per month, including 638 employees teleworking at least once a week. So almost 1 out of every 5 OPM employees is currently teleworking. The telework numbers do not include our field investigators and test administrators whose principal duty station is their home since the work they do does not require them to report to a traditional workplace, thereby excluding them from OPM's definition of telework.

Mr. Chairman, your letter of invitation also asked me to address S. 1000, the "Telework Enhancement Act of 2007" which was recently introduced by Senator Ted Stevens. First, let me say that we appreciate Senator Stevens' longstanding advocacy for

Federal employees, and we appreciate the subcommittee's interest in moving this legislation forward. Director Springer has sent a letter on behalf of the Administration which outlines OPM's suggestions and concerns with respect to this bill. We are looking forward to talking more with your staff on how this language might best be modified. As the legislative process moves forward, we want to ensure our mutual goals can be effectively met with respect to enhanced use of telework by Federal managers and employees.

Let me make a few specific comments on the proposed bill, consistent with the letter we just sent to your subcommittee and to Senator Stevens. First, the bill would presume that all Federal employees are eligible to telework unless determined otherwise by their employing agency, with exceptions for Federal employees who handle secure materials or special equipment, as well as those who are assigned to national security or intelligence positions. We believe this presumption would be consistent with current OPM guidance on this subject. However, the bill would redefine telework as an arrangement where the employee regularly works at an alternate site at least two business days per week. We would recommend continuing with the current one day per week definition in order to provide maximum flexibility.

In addition, we believe that incorporating telework training at new employee orientation, as the bill requires, may not be the most appropriate timing for such training. Telework training, in our view, is training on how to be an effective teleworker, and we believe it is best taught "just before" or concurrent with an employee actually beginning

to telework. We agree, however, that new employees should be made aware of various flexibilities, benefits, and agency programs during orientation, including telework, and we agree that periodic reviews of employee telework arrangements should be conducted.

S. 1000 would also require each agency to appoint a full-time senior-level employee to be the Telework Managing Officer within the Chief Administrative Office, or comparable agency office, to oversee the agency's telework program and "serve as liaison between employees engaged in teleworking and their employing entity" – a role which is somewhat unclear given the relationships which still need to exist between managers or supervisors and their employees, regardless of whether they are teleworking. As I mentioned previously in my testimony, agencies already have designated telework coordinators – all of whom are listed at [www.telework.gov](http://www.telework.gov). We work with these individuals regularly and they also serve as our points of contact with respect to our annual survey and data collection effort.

The bill would also require the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to evaluate each agency's telework policy, and publish a report that rates each policy and the level of employee participation. We believe it may make more sense to have OPM continue collecting agency telework implementation information since it is something we have been doing for several years now. We feel we already have a process in place for that effort – which provides a good benchmark for judging the effectiveness of telework policies and agency programs -- and we do share those results with the Congress and GAO on a regular basis, in addition to posting those results on the OPM website.



In conclusion, we believe Federal agencies recognize the value and impact telework can have with respect to strategic human capital management, effective COOP planning, traffic congestion and energy consumption. We are committed to working with GSA, GAO, this Subcommittee, and others to ensure telework policies are effectively managed and promoted. And we are prepared to work further with your Subcommittee and Senator Stevens with respect to S. 1000 as we appreciate and share your expectation that more progress can be made with respect to telework. Mr. Chairman, I would be pleased to respond to any questions you or other Members of the Subcommittee may have.