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BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY**

DIVERSITY AND THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

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Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member King, and Members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today to discuss diversity issues within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

When the President and Congress called for the integration of 22 disparate agencies, we answered the call and stood up an agency that today is nearly 210,000 employees strong. I have had the opportunity to meet with and observe the hard work and dedication of employees from across the Department. I have observed how our ability to achieve critical mission objectives depends upon the experience, knowledge, diligence, and training of our employees. Expanding diversity such as gender, geographic, economic, ethnic, and veteran representation of this workforce will increase the variety of available skills and knowledge that can be employed in pursuit of the Department's success, thereby bringing greater benefit to American public.

Commitment

DHS is committed to improving current diversity efforts and creating better solutions to areas in need of attention. The Department maintains this commitment with good cause as we recognize diversity as a management and mission imperative for success.

- Better business decisions are made when diverse points of view are considered.
- Diversity improves problem solving capabilities by bringing more diverse viewpoints to the table.
- Teams perform better when their members represent diverse backgrounds and experiences that can expand the knowledge of all participants.
- Embracing differences is vital to making DHS stronger and more productive by helping it to better understand mission environments and how to better serve the public.

- Creating an organizational culture of inclusion that leverages diversity, leads to higher employee morale--improving retention and productivity.

Currently

At present, the Department of Homeland Security recognizes the need to achieve a qualified diverse workforce, particularly in its senior executive service (SES) appointments. DHS is below the federal government's percent representation of minority populations in its SES cadre. We also recognize the need for ensuring diversity across the DHS workforce. In light of our recent Human Capital survey, I wish to inform you today of current and future efforts within DHS to improve the range of skills and expertise that can be put into action in support of the Department's mission.

With strong encouragement from Secretary Chertoff and Acting Deputy Secretary Schneider, I am leading the design and have begun the implementation of a new strategy to increase diversity across our workforce with particular attention on the leadership and executive ranks. This strategy includes initiatives to identify, train, and promote high performing employees and is coupled with external efforts to attract, recruit, and hire diverse applicants and potential leaders. This strategy incorporates a multifaceted approach to *recruitment, training and development* and *retention* of high performing employees. It is our aim that these efforts will bring diversity to the forefront of organizational development.

Recruitment

DHS has focused resources and is actively reaching out to candidates more than ever before. We are expanding our networks with local associations and universities to inform them of DHS employment opportunities beyond the USAjobs website. Expansion of this network provides us broader opportunities to introduce our new branding efforts, our 'Proud to Protect' campaign. In seeking applicants with mission critical skills, our talent experts demonstrate the importance of and a respect for the benefits of diversity, while recognizing that all applicants will be evaluated only on their qualifications for each position. However, initiatives aimed at increasing DHS' diversity by expanding our applicant pool through targeted, out-reach efforts is imperative. Our efforts include:

- Recruiting for qualified applicants at career fairs, historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). We established relationships with "Minority Serving Institutions," in particular: Texas Southern University, Jackson State University and Tougaloo College. In addition, we also have a robust on-campus recruiting schedule for this fall at other colleges and universities.
- Working with the academic community through Science and Technology's (S&T) Office of University Programs to develop needed research and analysis, and providing education and training to enhance DHS homeland security capabilities. We are supporting this initiative through three primary programmatic areas including university-based system of DHS Centers of Excellence, DHS Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Education Programs, and Minority Serving Institutions, such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities

(HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and Native Alaskan/Hawaiian/Pacific Islander serving institutions. Homeland Security S&T is striving to build a homeland security scientific community that reflects the face of America and has a strong stake in preserving its institutions and way of life.

- Expanding internship programs such as the Delta Region Homeland Security Internship Program. The Department's mission is national in scope and requires many levels of strategic cooperation and communication between Federal, state, local, and private interests. These multi-level partnerships have become critical for coordinating and maintaining regional emergency prevention and response efforts. The primary goal of the Delta Region Homeland Security Internship Program is to expose talented college students in southern Delta regional locations to the various DHS component agencies in the area and provide opportunities to learn about and support critical mission efforts.
- Participating in panels on careers in federal government and providing SES preparatory workshops hosted by minority associations such as the African American Federal Executive Association, the National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives and the Asian American Executive Network.
- Expanding upon our robust Veterans Outreach strategy which was launched in October 2007 and cited as a best practice. The strategy includes a one-stop web site for Veterans seeking to continue their service to America by working for DHS. The establishment of a Veterans Outreach Advisory forum is composed of various Veterans Services Organizations (VSOs) which advises on our veterans outreach efforts. As a result of this forum's input, we developed a new recruitment brochure targeted to Veterans with the marketing theme of "Proud to Protect. Continue Your Service to America with DHS." Currently, 40,468 veterans are employed at DHS or 24.2 percent of the total permanent civilian workforce. Of this veteran population at DHS, 6,407 are disabled. Later this year, we plan to establish a DHS speakers cadre that will train veterans working in DHS to speak to veterans groups. This will greatly expand our capacity for outreach.

Training/Development

A crucial factor in the recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce is the development of current supervisors within the Department who have the skills to manage and mentor diverse populations. We are increasing our efforts to develop a qualified and diverse pool of applicants that focuses on preparing current GS-14 and GS-15 for our SES positions through new programs, such as:

- **The SES Candidate Development Program (CDP)**
Of the 23 DHS employees recently selected for the next SES Candidate Development Program which is approved by Office of Personnel Management (OPM), 22 percent are African American, 13 percent are Hispanic, and 30 percent are women.
- **The DHS Fellows Program and Follow on Rotational Assignments**

Managing diversity within the workplace means creating an environment where each employee is empowered to contribute to the work of the unit, being sensitive and alert to the interactions among and between leadership and staff. Our DHS Fellows program highlights the value of rotational assignments to learning important skills for managing a diverse workforce across various organizational environments. The current Fellows cohort of 50 participants ending next October is 20 percent minority and 30 percent women. Rotational assignments are key elements of the Fellows and CDP programs. In addition, more than 200 employees are currently on ad hoc rotational assignments beyond these two programs.

- **Career Development for Women**

In April 2008, DHS headquarters held a forum on career development for women. This forum consisted of panel discussions, and speakers focused on mentoring current DHS employees interested in SES positions.

- **Growth of Mentoring and Coaching Initiatives**

An important part of our development programs is to offer mentoring and coaching. Effective mentoring in a multicultural setting means understanding diverse learning styles and approaches to problem-solving. Most important, mentoring in a diverse workplace requires providing appropriate feedback by supervisors to employees of their contributions to accomplishing the mission. Our mentoring and coaching initiatives emphasize the practice and teaching of these skills.

Other elements of career development include:

- Career Pathing Program. This program seeks to ensure that DHS employees have the opportunities to advance within the Department. For example, this past year, 480 Transportation Security Officers applied for and were hired into positions with Customs and Border Protection.
- Identifying critical jobs within the Department where success qualifies employees for promotion and encouraging minorities to compete for such positions thereby further developing the leadership pipeline.
- Offering on-line training via our web-enabled learning management system to continue development of personal, professional and technical skills related to the numerous homeland security positions within the Department.
- Prototyping diversity management training for managers and executives and diversity awareness training for all DHS employees.

Retention

Early identification of high-potential employees, including those from diverse groups such as minorities, women, and people with disabilities, is critical to their retention. Early identification allows them to be placed in leadership development programs, which

can lead to continued performance and the potential for promotion to their next job. Our other strategies to retain high-performing employees include:

- Continuing to use Human Capital employee surveys to study what makes employees stay, to try to understand work-life issues, and what can be done to enhance retention and attract new talent.
- Continuing to sponsor Human Capital focus groups allowing for responses and the submission of ideas for improvement to occur on a confidential basis.
- Work to broadly announce job opportunities internally to allow individuals to consider lateral/upward moves across business units, thereby expanding their background and experience and increasing overall employee satisfaction and retention.
- Establishing an external Diversity Outreach Advisory Forum of interested stakeholders to assist in DHS' diversity outreach plans and efforts;
- Analyzing departure of employees for weaknesses in diversity strategy through exit interviews. We have begun this within the headquarter components and plan to expand it throughout the Department.

These efforts will contribute to be proactive, strategic approach to recruiting, developing, retaining and promoting a high-performing and diverse workforce and we will continue to adapt best practice recommendations that are applicable to DHS' military and civilian workforce.

Accountability and Looking Ahead

I look forward to reporting improvements in diversity to our employees, and the Committee that result from increasing accountability in substantial ways. Recent developments demonstrating our commitment include:

- I recently formed the DHS Diversity Council which consists of senior management officials from the major operating components and headquarter offices. Each member of the council signed the charter pledging their commitment to diversity at DHS. Among the Council's most pressing actions will be issuing a DHS Corporate Diversity Strategy and implementing a Diversity Action Plan for the remainder of FY 2008 through FY 2010.
- DHS has one of the largest law enforcement populations with the federal agencies and as such created the Law Enforcement Council. To further recruit and retain a diverse workforce, this Council meets to discuss three things: 1) Best practices—the Council is an open forum for the different law enforcement components to share information 2) Discuss quality of life issues and 3) Training opportunities. With respect to training, DHS is currently developing a Law Enforcement Professional program. The program identifies eligible participants to take certain training courses as well as complete rotations and meet with a mentor to further help them prepare for other law enforcement positions throughout the department.
- We recently created a SES-level Director of Recruiting and Diversity within our Chief Human Capital Office. This position is responsible for implementing

strategic programs to recruit a more diverse talent pool for all jobs within DHS, including the SES corps. These efforts are critical given that 26 percent of our career executives are eligible to retire in 2008, 34 percent in 2009, and 41 percent will be eligible for retirement in 2010.

- We are reviewing our SES hiring procedures to identify potential best practices that would integrate attention to diversity in our current processes
- Issuing specific guidance to hold executives accountable for the “Diversity Advocate” competency in their performance plans.
- Determining the feasibility and return on investment in using the services of an executive search firm with a proven record in attracting high caliber diverse candidates for executive positions.

In the very near future DHS will execute other elements of our diversity strategy such as:

- Continuing our formal partnership with the Urban League’s Black Executive Program (BEEP) whereby 150 DHS employees have volunteered, with management endorsement, to serve as presenters and speakers at BEEP events at HBCUs. Since entering into this vital partnership this year, DHS speakers have participated at 11 events at such HBCUs as Mississippi Valley State University, Tennessee State University, Florida A&M University, Hampton University, and others.
- Establishing similar partnerships with the National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives and the African American Federal Executive Association, and the Asian American Executive Network. We will be providing our SES vacancy listings to these organizations for distributing amongst their memberships, and we will provide them with speakers, presenters, and other similar support.

We are pleased with your interest and support in ensuring that DHS continues to increase the diversity of its workforce and we look forward to collaborations that will ensure success.