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PRESS RELEASE

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IVY PLANNING GROUP STUDY RELEASED

GAO Commits to Key Recommendations on Ratings Assessments of African American Analysts

Washington, DC – (April 30, 2008) – An independent study of African American employee ratings at the Government Accountability Office (GAO) was released today and the agency immediately committed to begin implementing several of the report's key recommendations.

The GAO requested the study after monitoring analysts' performance ratings for several years and determining that the data showed differences between the average ratings for African American analysts and Caucasian analysts. The study was performed by the Ivy Planning Group of Rockville, Maryland, one of the premier diversity consulting firms in the nation.

"This report will be extremely helpful going forward and, along with the steps we are already taking, should help us to address these issues," said U.S. Acting Comptroller General Gene Dodaro, head of the GAO. "I am committed to ensuring an even playing field for every employee at GAO and making sure every employee has equal opportunities at our agency."

The report contains more than 25 different recommendations. "Some of these recommendations outline long-term fixes and we will put together an action plan to address those. But some we can take-up immediately and we will do so," Dodaro said. Among the steps which Dodaro committed to work with both the GAO union (GAO Employees Organization, IFPTE) and the non-bargaining unit employees to undertake are:

- Adopt the first recommendation in the report: to create a more inclusive work environment by convening a series of facilitated conversations across the agency about perceptions and assumptions regarding race and introducing organization wide diversity training, as well as proactively assessing the needs of other groups.

(more)

- Under recruiting and hiring, research alternative sources of talent (schools, professional organizations, etc.) to maximize a more diverse talent pool and expand the internship program; follow-up with job candidates who turn down offers to understand why they chose to turn them down; and assess the “GAO brand” within the marketplace for highly talented African Americans and leverage any strengths associated with the brand.
- Reassess how GAO evaluates performance. A full systematic and inclusive review of the performance appraisal system is now set to get underway. In looking to identify what works, what does not, and what could be done better, the assessment will address the concerns raised by the Ivy study and will look for both long and short term improvements.

Dodaro added, “These first steps will not be enough and I am committed to do more. There are many excellent recommendations in the report and we will need to work with the union and all employees to craft an effective action plan including assignment of responsibilities, setting of timeframes, and regular reporting on our progress. GAO strives to be a model agency and has been committed to a diverse workforce that represents the multi-cultural strengths of America. While we have made progress toward this goal, Ivy's report shows we still have work to do. I am determined to work with all GAO employees to ensure GAO is always a fair and equitable place to work.”

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