

Statement of Senator Daniel K. Akaka
Nomination Hearing for Mr. Howard Weizmann to be the
Deputy Director at the Office of Personnel Management
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
May 1, 2007

Today, the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs meets to consider the pending nomination of Mr. Howard Weizmann to be Deputy Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Mr. Weizmann is a native of Ohio and a graduate of Ohio University and the University of Michigan. He also earned a law degree from Georgetown University. Mr. Weizmann is a former executive of Watson Wyatt, a world-wide Fortune 500 consulting firm focused on human capital and management issues. He currently heads the Private Sector Council at the Partnership for Public Service, which brings leaders from America's top companies together with federal decision-makers to improve the management, efficiency, and productivity of federal agencies. I want to welcome you and your family, and congratulate you on your nomination.

I believe each of us is here today because we care a great deal about improving the strength of the federal workforce and supporting its ability to meet the various missions of all agencies. If confirmed, you will be central to carrying out Director Springer's operational plan and ensuring implementation of human capital strategies throughout the federal government. Senator Voinovich and I have dedicated a considerable amount of time to addressing the human capital challenges in the federal workforce. We have listened to the needs and concerns of employee and management groups. We have heard the administration's requests to provide greater workforce flexibilities to agencies and their proposals to carry out the largest civil service reform effort in more than 25 years.

If confirmed, your role with OPM is vital to the success of all of our collective efforts. The federal government is at a pivotal time in its history. Not since the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 has its workforce undergone so many fundamental reforms. The new personnel systems underway at the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have struggled to get off the ground. Federal Courts have questioned the fairness of the appeals system at both agencies and have enjoined each agency's regulations relating to collective bargaining. Furthermore, both DHS and DoD, in addition to the Senior Executive Service, are implementing new pay for performance systems. My concerns with pay for performance are well known. As agencies continue to face diminished budgets that impact employee training and incentive programs, I fail to see how agencies will be able to properly train managers and employees on how to measure performance and make meaningful distinctions in performance. Nor do I see how they will guarantee sufficient funds for performance bonuses or pay increases. Without strong training, there are no guarantees that

employees will have fair and transparent appraisal systems. We need to get these systems right before we can move forward with broad sweeping reforms at other agencies.

Another issue facing the federal government is the fact that a generation of talented, knowledgeable and dedicated civil servants is on the brink of retirement. A wave of new employees with similar aspirations but new career expectations is ready to take on the call to service. The upcoming generation may not expect to work in the federal government for their entire career. It is the responsibility of OPM to help agencies implement management flexibilities and create an attractive work environment. One reason I feel so strongly about this is that Senator Voinovich and I have successfully moved forward a number of significant workforce flexibilities. Unfortunately, as the Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently reported, the use of those flexibilities by agencies is “uneven.” It will be up to you and Director Springer to help agencies find ways of best utilizing those tools.

I am sure that your many years of private sector experience will enhance our public sector management, and I am encouraged by your strong commitment to address the human capital challenges within the federal workforce. The federal government is 1.8 million employees strong. In this new role you will be responsible for their rights, their paychecks, and their effectiveness as a workforce. I look forward to working with you and hope that we can work together to address the challenges of the modern workforce.