

Statement of
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Nominee to be Deputy Director
Office of Personnel Management

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
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Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you, Ranking Member Voinovich, and the Committee for holding today's hearing. I also want to thank the Committee staff for the courteous and professional manner with which I have been treated throughout this process.

I want to thank President Bush for the honor of being nominated to be Deputy Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Finally, I want to thank OPM Director Linda Springer for her support throughout this process.

The Shape of the Future

One does not have to be an expert to recognize that demographic trends will dramatically change the face of the federal workforce. It is no longer news that the federal government faces a massive challenge as increasing numbers of older, experienced, employees become eligible to retire or leave over the next few years. There is also a widespread belief that in the near future there will be a lack of skilled workers affecting both the private and public sector. In sum, the demand for qualified workers is likely to exceed the supply.

In this emerging world, federal employers will have to effectively compete for talent with the private sector. To do so, we need to change widely held perceptions about federal employment. Surveys indicate that college age individuals believe the private sector offers greater opportunity than federal employment. Private industry also inherently possesses more flexibility than government to structure positions or to employ foreign nationals--avenues generally limited or closed to federal employers.

But crises also present opportunities. The talent crunch creates a "burning platform" forcing federal employers to establish new career options for existing employees, new ways to recruit prospective employees and new challenges to existing ways of doing things. This Committee has helped by creating hiring flexibilities that "fast track" certain potential employees or that provide tools, such as educational loan relief, to attract talented workers. As President of the Private Sector Council--part of the Partnership for Public Service-- my organization worked closely with OPM to develop OPM's online hiring toolkit which highlights ways to raise the effectiveness of the federal recruiting process. I know OPM has also suggested that agencies use a 45-day target benchmark, measured from the closing date of the announcement to the date the offer is formally made.

The challenge is not to just fill empty seats with people, but to fill those seats with the right people. If I am confirmed in this position, I will work with Director Springer, OPM staff and this Committee to help address the difficult issue of how to attract and retain federal talent. I will do my best to support the new “Career Patterns” initiative which may help to create more flexible work environments, appealing to workers at different career stages. I am also looking forward to exploring other ways to address the looming talent shortfall.

The future federal workforce will be a mosaic of different generations and work arrangements. Experts tell us that younger workers entering federal service will be better educated, with more diverse backgrounds than in the past. They will be used to instant communication and easily frustrated with out-of-date technologies and with people who refuse to adapt. They will be optimistic, hard working, and dedicated. They will be looking for opportunities to grow, but less likely to commit to a career with a single employer.

Retaining experienced federal employees and attracting recent federal retirees will also be a priority. Enticing these workers will require not only interesting work and flexible schedules, but financial incentives and arrangements that do not penalize retirees returning to work as well. To address the future shortage of management and technical expertise, the federal service will also need to rely on experienced “knowledge workers” attracted to federal employment from active or retired careers in private industry. Skilled veterans are also another important source of future federal employees.

The new federal manager will have to be skilled at managing this diversity. They need to be supervisors, leaders, mentors, referees, negotiators and contract managers. In my view, these demands will require a greater investment in the selection and training of future federal leaders. We will need to use OPM’s good offices, working with agency partners, to support efforts to enhance managerial skills.

The federal government has also not been immune to the technological winds of today. I know that Director Springer is directly involved in supervising the automation of OPM’s retirement system, using modern technology to improve the delivery of annuity payments to federal retirees. The E-Government initiative is another dramatic effort to improve governmental effectiveness through information management technology. The evolution to automated benefit administration, online training, e-payroll systems and other initiatives are well on their way to increasing the efficiency of federal processes. If confirmed, I would look forward to helping Director Springer advance OPM’s efforts in this area.

Supporting a Results-Oriented Culture

Everyone wants an effective, results-driven federal service. In 1993, this Committee and Congress sought to underscore these expectations by passing the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA). The Act mandated, among other things, “a new

focus” on results, service quality and delivery, and customer satisfaction in the achievement of program objectives.

The President’s Management Agenda (PMA) and the Program Assessment Review Tool (PART) have taken GPRA a step further by establishing the means to measure progress in a number of critical areas consistent with the Act. I believe that OPM takes its responsibilities under the PMA Strategic Management of Human Capital component seriously and that OPM monitoring of agency performance can make a real difference in helping agencies improve their human capital management capabilities. I believe Director Springer has also gone a long way towards enhancing opportunities for agency coordination through her recent reorganization of the Chief Human Capital Officers Council. I look forward to learning more about OPM’s and other agencies’ efforts.

Establishing metrics to measure results, while a necessary step, is not sufficient to ensure effectiveness. The challenge is to use these measures to focus agency efforts to create program success. Performance-based pay initiatives directly support this cultural shift. As Director Springer has previously noted, performance-based pay is not a particularly new idea. The private sector has successfully administered such systems for years. I am also aware that OPM has identified more than 90,000 federal employees (not including those covered by the DHS/DOD legislation) as being currently covered by some form of a performance-based pay system. Some of these programs date from as early as 1980 and are generally regarded favorably by a wide variety of employees.

I believe that OPM has worked hard to promote and refine performance-based initiatives. If confirmed, I look forward to being of whatever assistance I can to support these efforts.

In the end, we cannot forget that when we talk about the “federal workforce” we are really talking about people. While attitudes may have changed, some things remain constant. People everywhere respond to incentives and recognition. People fear the uncertainties of change and value employers who meet their needs for income and benefit security. To ensure an effective civilian workforce requires addressing these attributes. OPM needs to support agency efforts to reward employees for their contributions to agency success. We should encourage efforts to communicate the reasons for, and the impact of, change and to help those who are affected by it. In addition, OPM has direct responsibility to ensure that federal benefits address the needs of federal employees at a reasonable price. I recognize that your support is also critical to ensuring the effectiveness of these efforts.

Final Thoughts

In preparing my comments, I looked up synonyms for the word “deputy”. I found that a deputy is an “assistant, a representative, a surrogate, an agent, an emissary and an envoy.” As Deputy Director, it would be my job to act in many, or all, of these capacities to help Director Springer achieve the ambitious goals she has set for OPM.

I am also aware that, if confirmed, the relatively short time horizon allotted to me will not be sufficient to substantively address all the issues raised by the currents shaping the future federal workforce. My more modest aim would be to work with Director Springer to identify those areas where my experience might be helpful. My goal is to help the Administration make a lasting contribution towards advancing solutions to some, or perhaps many, of these issues.

If confirmed, you have my promise that I will be open, honest and direct in dealing with this Committee specifically, and the Congress, in general. I will use my best efforts to work with all interested parties to craft useful solutions to the complicated issues of our day. I believe we all want the same thing--an effective, results-driven workforce, populated by talented individuals who are proud to be called federal employees.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to any questions you or other Members of the Committee may have.