

Statement of Senator Daniel K. Akaka
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management,
the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia
“Enhancing Employee Performance: A Hearing on Pending Legislation”
June 29, 2006

Thank you Mr. Chairman for holding today’s hearing to review our respective bills. You and I know that strong employee performance translates into improved agency performance, which is why the measures we’ve introduced deserve attention. We both want to make the federal government an employer of choice, and I commend you for your leadership in this effort.

Nothing is more important to the success of federal programs than how the federal government hires, fires, compensates, and evaluates its employees. To be effective, government programs and services depend on well-trained employees and skilled managers.

And yet, because supervisor training is left to the discretion of individual agencies, this training is often inconsistent and its availability is many times plagued by inadequate agency resources. Meaningful training matters and should not be a discretionary option for agencies.

Federal workers deal with a broad and complex range of issues affecting our nation and the world. They understand that well-trained managers empower them, which in turn improves programs and saves taxpayers money.

Training also strengthens communication skills, ensures that employees have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and promotes stronger manager-employee relationships.

That is why I introduced the Federal Supervisors Training Act. My bill will bridge the training gap that exists now and help ensure that federal managers have the necessary skills to manage and meet agency missions. The legislation has three major training components. First, the bill will require that new supervisors receive training in the initial 12 months on the job, with mandatory retraining every three years on how to work with employees to develop performance expectations and evaluate employees. Current managers will have three years to obtain their initial training. Second, the bill requires mentoring for new supervisors and training on how to mentor employees. Third, the measure requires training on the laws governing and the procedures for enforcing whistleblower and anti-discrimination rights.

Agencies will also be required to:

- set standards that supervisors should meet in order to manage employees effectively,
- assess a manager’s ability to meet these standards, and
- provide training to improve areas identified in personnel assessments.

I also believe this training will address the perceived shortfalls in the General Schedule (GS). I know there are those who believe that the government should throw out the GS because, in their view, agency and employee performance has not improved. I, on the other hand, believe that the lack of manager training is a primary reason the GS has not lived up to expectations. The GS was designed to be a performance-based compensation system that is both transparent and credible.

I am grateful for the support my bill has received from the Government Managers Coalition; the American Federation of Government Employees, the National Treasury Employees Union; the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers, the AFL-CIO, Metal Trades Department, as well as the Partnership for Public Service. I want to thank you Mr. Chairman for holding today's hearing, and I thank our witnesses as well.