

**Statement of Senator George V. Voinovich
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management,
the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia**

**“A Domestic Crisis with Global Implications:
Reviewing the Human Capital Crisis at the State Department”
July 16, 2008**

Chairman Akaka, thank you for calling today’s hearing to discuss the workforce challenges facing the Department of State.

At a time when our public diplomacy is arguably at its lowest point in history, the State Department is chronically understaffed, limiting its ability to overcome significant challenges including shared missions and responsibilities with other agencies. The State Department faces a shortfall of about 2,400 personnel focused on core diplomatic efforts. One out of every five employees holds a job designated for a more experienced person. In restructuring agencies responsible for our national security, such as the Department of Defense and Intelligence Community, we have largely neglected the soft power of the State Department.

We should consider ourselves lucky that the men and women of the State Department have answered the call to serve and, through their leadership and dedication, helped our nation avoid the news stories which often drive change. These dedicated public servants must no longer be taken for granted.

Last year, the Foreign Affairs Council found that the Department of State lacked the personnel necessary to meet its priority missions, a theme carried in other reports by the Center for Strategic and International Studies. The Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing earlier this year where we discussed the concept of smart power, which seeks to better match our strategies and structures at home to the challenges that face us abroad.

In September, we will formally receive the recommendations from the American Academy of Diplomacy Advisory Council, which I am honored to be a member of. The Academy will recommend a 16 percent increase in the State Department’s workforce. Together, these reports demonstrate the need for a strong diplomatic corps, recognizing that diplomacy occurs in the embassies and consulates around the world, not inside the beltway.

I question how many reports it will take before we are honest with ourselves and the American people about the challenge we face. How we allocate our resources in support of public diplomacy is a question that must be answered if we are to meet our foreign policy goals.

Too often, we hear agency officials tell us they have adequate resources to get the job done. Today’s hearing is an exception, however. The testimony from the State Department makes clear

that Congress' failure to provide the tools necessary to get the job done has resulted in a situation that can no longer be ignored. Although I've often said we need to do more with less, there comes a time when our priorities must be reset.

Ambassador Thomas, I commend you for recognizing the challenge and your responsibility in ensuring the State Department's workforce receives the support necessary to effectively carry out their duties. State has made significant progress in addressing the recommendations from the State Department Office of Inspector General, and your results have been met with some success. According to the Partnership for Public Service's Best Places to Work rankings, the State Department is one of only two large agencies with a double-digit increase in overall employee engagement. This same survey shows room for improvement in promoting work-life balance and a family friendly culture. That is why I am proud to be working with several of my colleagues to address the cost-of-living issue facing less seasoned officers assigned to overseas posts.

Going forward, it would be irresponsible to allocate additional funds absent an oversight mechanism so we can measure the results of our efforts. We must balance identified needs in critical occupations with new demands resulting from implementation of programs such as the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative. As we dedicate additional resources, we should take a closer look at the training provided to our men and women in uniform and the framework provided by the Goldwater Nichols Act. Training must become a cornerstone of the State Department's workforce planning.

The Inauguration of our next President is six months from now. In addition to selecting qualified individuals to lead the Department of State, the new administration will have the challenge of presenting its first budget that balances many competing priorities and takes into account our growing budget deficit. Future budgets must ensure that the State Department is resourced appropriately to meet its mission and strengthen its global posture. Otherwise, we diminish our ability to foster democratic principles and to influence world opinion. The State Department should be a model for global outreach and negotiation.

The international environment will continue to reflect the dangers and opportunities of today. Creating a more secure, democratic, and prosperous world for the benefit of the American people requires a highly-skilled workforce that is held accountable for their individual performance.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.