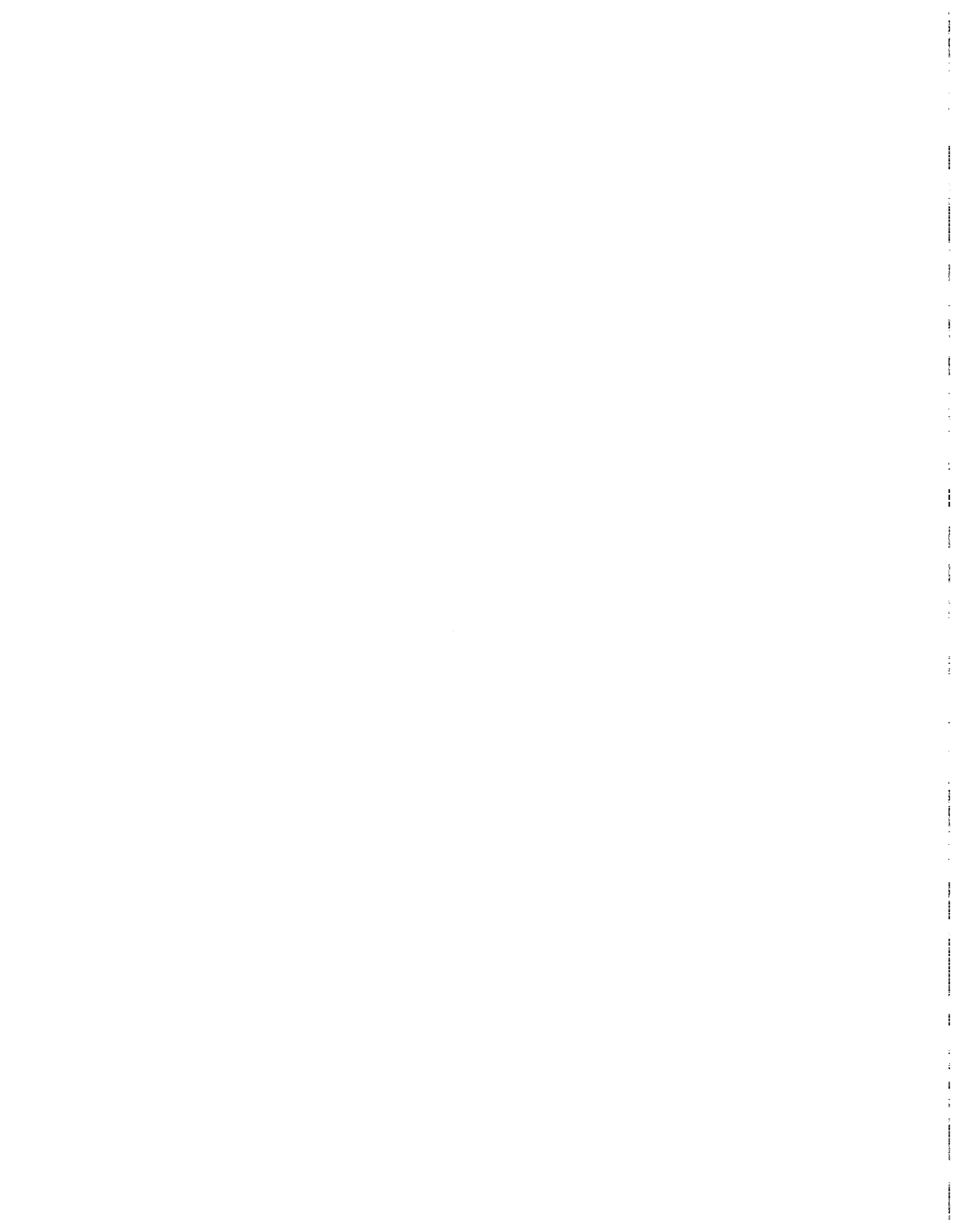


April 1994

**FEDERAL  
PERSONNEL**

**Architect of the  
Capitol's Personnel  
System Needs  
Improvement**







United States  
General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

---

General Government Division

B-256160

April 29, 1994

The Honorable Wendell H. Ford  
Chairman, Committee on Rules and  
Administration  
United States Senate

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This briefing report responds to your request that we examine the personnel management policies and practices of the Architect of the Capitol (AOC). As agreed with the Committee, we examined the extent to which AOC's personnel system incorporates selected personnel management principles in eight areas—(1) equal employment opportunity (EEO)/affirmative action, (2) performance management, (3) hiring and promotion, (4) training and employee development, (5) classification, (6) employee assistance, (7) adverse action, and (8) employee relations. We also reviewed steps taken by AOC to address concerns regarding hazardous-duty pay raised by the window washers of the Senate Office Buildings. As agreed with you, we limited our review of individual personnel records to employees working in AOC components under the Committee's jurisdiction—the Senate Office Buildings and the Senate Restaurants. Appendix I contains the materials used to brief you on the areas reviewed and on accepted personnel management principles and the corresponding conditions that exist at AOC.

---

## Results

Personnel management at AOC has not kept pace with the human resource management practices common among other federal and private sector organizations. Although we noted progress in some areas, many generally accepted principles of modern personnel management are not present in AOC's system. We believe that this situation has contributed to a demoralized and distrustful working environment, as evidenced by the views expressed to us by employees working at the Senate Office Buildings and the Senate Restaurants. Our findings include the following:

- AOC does not have an EEO program with affirmative action features for ensuring a diverse workforce. Minority and female employees at AOC were underrepresented in the higher-paying skilled and managerial occupational series.
- AOC's hiring and promotion policies and procedures are not defined in an agencywide staffing plan or other document. Case file reviews showed

---

that hiring and promotion procedures were not uniform or fully documented.

- Supervisors were not required to provide employees with annual performance appraisals or routine feedback on job performance. Consequently, employees may not be aware of the need to improve performance or how to do so.
- AOC employees had minimal opportunities to receive agency-funded, skill-based training. This disadvantage can inhibit their ability to improve performance and advance to targeted positions of greater responsibility.
- The hearing process used for adverse actions appeared to be handled fairly, and case files contained the required documentation. However, many employees were unaware of the range of disciplinary actions that could be taken or the procedures for appealing a disciplinary measure.
- AOC did not maintain regular channels of communication with its workforce through publications, employee organizations, or regular work unit meetings. The lack of communication can lead employees to misunderstand management's actions and contributes to low morale.

AOC has recently taken steps to address some of these and other personnel issues. For example, AOC established an Office of Fair Employment Practices in 1993 to mediate employee complaints, and AOC has drafted operating procedures for this office. In November 1992, AOC augmented the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and has prepared draft operating guidelines that, among other things, should provide greater protection of participants' confidentiality.

AOC reviewed the concerns of the six window washers assigned to the Senate Office Buildings. These employees believed that they should have received hazardous duty pay for cleaning the "clouds" that hang about 70 feet above the floor because of the height and suspended scaffolding used to perform this task. The "clouds" are the mobile section of the Calder artwork, "Mountains and Clouds," which was installed in the atrium of the Senate Hart Office Building in 1986. Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) criteria authorizing hazardous-duty pay for height work includes working on any structure of at least 50 feet above the floor if the structure is unstable.

AOC officials believed that an upgrade the window washers received in 1982 from Wage Grade (WG) 04 to WG-05 reflected a recognition of the hazardous nature of this work. The officials also pointed out that if a hazardous-duty pay differential had been granted, the AOC would have been obligated to downgrade the positions by one grade and reduce pay accordingly.

However, recognizing the concerns about the hazardous nature of this work, AOC officials contracted in fiscal year 1993 for services to clean the "clouds" and the exterior windows of the Senate buildings. AOC reassigned the window washers, at their current grades, as helpers in the Upholstery Division. The exterior window washing and mobile cleaning duties, however, were not removed from the employees' position descriptions. According to AOC officials, these duties were maintained in the position

---

descriptions in case cleaning needs arose between scheduled visits by the contractors. Since the hazardous-duty pay issue could arise in the future if the window washers were instructed to clean the mobile, we believe further examination of whether the tasks should be compensated by hazardous-duty pay is warranted.

Although AOC has taken some steps and planned others to update its personnel system, we believe AOC would benefit from developing and implementing a detailed plan aimed at modernizing its personnel system to incorporate commonly accepted personnel principles and policies. The development and implementation of such a plan would be more likely to succeed if the Committee, possibly in conjunction with the comparable House committee that oversees AOC operations, were to regularly monitor AOC's progress.

The Architect and other senior AOC officials agreed with our assessment and are willing to explore ways to improve personnel management. The Architect pointed out, however, that AOC will need the support of Congress in this effort because of policy questions and the need for additional positions and funding to expand personnel programs.

---

## Background

AOC is a legislative branch agency responsible for the structural, mechanical, and domestic care of the U.S. Senate and House buildings, Senate Restaurants, Library of Congress buildings, Supreme Court building, U.S. Capitol Building and grounds, and the Capitol Power Plant. AOC employed a staff of about 2,233 full-time employees in March 1993.<sup>1</sup> Most of these employees (82 percent) were blue-collar or Federal Wage System (FWS) employees—WG, Wage Supervisor (WS), Wage Leader (WL) and Restaurant Worker (RW) employees.

Of the 2,233 employees, 825 worked at various Senate facilities—261 assigned to the Senate Restaurants and 564 assigned to the Senate Office Buildings.<sup>2</sup> About 90 percent of these 825 employees were blue-collar workers who performed such services as general cleaning, plumbing, upholstering, painting, carpentry, heating and air conditioning repair, and food service and preparation.

As a legislative branch agency, AOC is not subject to the provisions of many personnel statutes that guide personnel policy for other federal agencies. AOC's personnel office, the Human Resources Management Division (HRMD), is responsible for developing, interpreting, and administering personnel policy and regulations for AOC employees. As of March 1993, HRMD had 28 employees.

---

<sup>1</sup>The workforce of the Botanic Gardens is not included because it is a separate entity with its own budget.

<sup>2</sup>Technically, Senate Restaurants workers are employees of the Senate rather than AOC; however, AOC provides all personnel services for these employees. House restaurant workers are contract employees.

---

## Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, which has oversight responsibility for the Senate Office Buildings and the Senate Restaurants, asked us to review the extent to which the AOC personnel system incorporates selected personnel management principles in eight areas. These areas are (1) EEO/affirmative action, (2) hiring and promotion, (3) performance management, (4) employee training and development, (5) classification, (6) employee assistance, (7) adverse action, and (8) employee relations. At the Committee's request, we also reviewed the window washers' concerns about hazardous-duty pay for work performed at the Senate Hart Office Building.

To identify basic personnel management principles, we reviewed the provisions of various personnel laws, GAO reports, Office of Personnel Management (OPM) guidance, and personnel publications. We then examined draft and final AOC policies and procedures in these areas to determine the extent to which basic personnel principles were a part of AOC's personnel system. We discussed personnel functions and practices with the Architect and other key executives, HRMD staff responsible for various aspects of personnel operations, selected managers and supervisors in the Senate Restaurants and Senate Office Buildings, and employees. We also reviewed audit reports on personnel operations at AOC and discussed them with AOC's Internal Auditor.

We analyzed AOC personnel statistics to develop general and EEO profiles and examined selected personnel actions, such as promotions, hiring, training, and adverse actions taken in fiscal year 1992. To determine if AOC's workforce was reflective of a diverse workforce, we compared fiscal year 1992 race and gender profiles of AOC employees in selected occupational series with 1992 OPM data on the total federal workforce and 1990 census data on the metropolitan Washington, D.C., civilian workforce in similar occupations. Appendix II shows the results of this comparison in 22 occupations. As agreed with you, we limited our review of individual files to AOC employees working in the Senate Restaurants and the Senate Office Buildings. We developed and administered a survey to 637 of the 825 employees (77 percent) working at the Senate facilities to solicit their views about personnel practices. Appendix III contains the full text of this survey and a summary of the responses. We also received unsolicited comments from numerous AOC employees about personnel practices at AOC. We considered these comments in selecting areas for review. We did not, however, pursue individual concerns and allegations.

We conducted our review from July 1992 to March 1994 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

---

## Recommendations to the Architect of the Capitol

We recommend that the Architect develop and implement a detailed plan to revise AOC's personnel system to incorporate basic personnel management principles, including policy statements, procedures, and implementation dates.

---

We also recommend that the Architect reconsider whether duties associated with cleaning the mobile in the Senate Hart Office Building warrant hazardous-duty pay in light of the specific criteria for such pay in the CFR.

---

## Matter for Congressional Consideration

We suggest that the Committee, possibly in conjunction with the comparable House committee that oversees AOC operations, monitor the development and implementation of the Architect's plan to improve AOC's personnel system.

---

## Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

AOC provided written comments on a draft of this report, which appear in appendix IV. In general, AOC characterized our report as a generally balanced review of its personnel system and acknowledged the need to improve the system in several areas.

The principal area of disagreement AOC had with our draft report involved the discussion of the window washers' concerns over cleaning the "clouds." AOC said that it did, in fact, view the "cloud" cleaning as hazardous duty and that the window washers were compensated for this work when their positions were upgraded from the WG-04 to the WG-05 level in 1982. Further, AOC pointed out that if they had elected to pay a hazardous-duty differential instead of the upgrades, the window washers would have experienced a net decrease in their pay because they would have received hazardous duty pay only for the time actually spent cleaning the "clouds." We have clarified page 3 of this report to more precisely reflect AOC's view.

AOC said that it will continue to use an outside contractor to clean the "clouds" and will delete any duties involving the "clouds" from the position descriptions of the window washers. If, as AOC suggests, these duties are deleted from the position descriptions, the objective of our hazardous-duty recommendation should be met.

AOC also provided perspectives on the other issues covered in our report. AOC pointed out that it is not required to have performance appraisals but agreed that preparing formal performance appraisals would be a positive step. It indicated that substantial resources would be needed to incorporate an appraisal system for AOC. AOC also pointed out that (1) approval has been given to the Senate Restaurants for a program to provide employees feedback on performance and conduct, and (2) although it has no formal appraisal system, AOC is required to certify that GS employees have performed at an acceptable level of competence for within grade increases.

We did not examine the extent that additional resources would be needed to develop and implement an appraisal system. However, we believe that a system that incorporates expectations and performance feedback is fundamental to a performance management system aimed at improving organizational and individual performance. Required resources and other

---

needs should be included in the detailed plan we recommend that AOC develop to revise its personnel system. The certificate of acceptable performance for the purposes of within grade increases is generally not helpful in improving employee performance, except in instances where an employee's performance is already at the unacceptable level.

AOC said that its incentive awards program is presently limited to recognition of career service. It also said that Congress would have to authorize additional funding if monetary awards were to be provided. We did not intend to suggest that a program of monetary rewards was necessary. We believe considerably more could be done, however, to expand the use of non-monetary awards (letters of commendation, plaques, small gifts) to reward employees.

AOC also said that final approval of its Career Staffing Plan will address many of the hiring and promotion issues cited in our report. AOC accepted our observations about inconsistent interviewing practices and recognized a potential need to train supervisors in interviewing techniques. However, AOC did not think these practices were systemic weaknesses or adversely affected the selection process. While we found no evidence that the selection process was adversely affected, we believe the absence of a formal process could lead to a lack of uniformity in conducting and documenting the process as well as reduced employee confidence in the system.

Regarding training opportunities, AOC said that, with increasing workload demands and personnel reductions, supervisors are more reluctant to nominate employees for training that is not considered a critical need. AOC said that it is not aware of any critical training not being provided. We did not attempt to identify critical training that was or was not provided. However, we believe it is significant that approximately 46 percent of the employees responding to our survey believed they were not getting the training (classroom or on-the-job) needed to do their jobs adequately. We also noted that training, as an investment in employee and organizational performance and productivity, becomes even more important during a period of increasing workloads and personnel reductions.

AOC pointed out that every employee receives and signs for a copy of the AOC's disciplinary policy and that in disciplinary cases employees are notified of their appeal rights. AOC also questioned the results of our employee survey, which indicated that 24 percent of the respondents believed that appeals would not be handled fairly. AOC asked if we could help explain why this perception was present.

While we cannot cite the specific causes for such perceptions, in our view, the employees' general lack of knowledge about the adverse action program contributes to this condition. For example, 35 percent of responding employees said they were not aware of the range of possible disciplinary measures and 54 percent reported they were not familiar with procedures to follow in appealing a disciplinary action.



---

AOC commented on our discussion of its EAP and the recommendation of AOC's Internal Auditor that, to mitigate the need for HRMD officials to examine EAP folders, it should contract with an EAP consultant to review the status of the program. AOC explained its reasons for deciding not to implement this recommendation, including the fact that its new EAP manager has significant experience with quality assurance practices. AOC also said that all EAP activities are managed in a confidential manner.

The recommendation of AOC's Internal Auditor was aimed at avoiding future situations that would allow personnel officials to have access to EAP participant records. When a personnel official reviewed and purged EAP records earlier in the program's history, it created concerns among employees about the confidentiality of EAP records. As AOC implied, a satisfactory alternative could be for AOC management to rely on the new EAP manager to provide the necessary program administration reports while protecting the confidentiality of participants' records.

AOC pointed out that the importance of regular staff meetings and communications are emphasized in its basic supervisory training course. While this is a positive step, we noted that about 79 percent of the respondents to our survey indicated that staff meetings were not held.

---

We are sending copies of this briefing report to the Architect, the Ranking Minority Member of the Committee on Rules and Administration, and other appropriate congressional committees. Copies will be made available to other interested parties upon request.

The major contributors to this briefing report are listed in appendix V. If you have any questions about this report, please call me on (202) 512-5074.

Sincerely yours,



Nancy Kingsbury  
Director  
Federal Human Resource Management  
Issues

---

# Contents

---

Letter	1
Appendix I AOC Personnel Management— Principles and Conditions	10
Appendix II Comparison of Selected AOC, Federal, and Civilian Occupations by Race and Gender, Fiscal Year 1992	41
Appendix III GAO Survey of Employees at the Senate Office Buildings and Senate Restaurants	43
Appendix IV Comments From the Architect of the Capitol	50
Appendix V Major Contributors to This Briefing Report	54

---

## **Abbreviations**

AOC	Architect of the Capitol
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
EAP	Employee Assistance Program
EEO	Equal employment opportunity
FWS	Federal Wage System
GS	General Schedule
HRMD	Human Resource Management Division
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
RW	Restaurant Worker
WG	Wage Grade
WL	Wage Leader
WS	Wage Supervisor

---

# AOC Personnel Management—Principles and Conditions

---

---

GAO AOC Review

---

## PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

---

---

---

GAO AOC Review  
Objective

---

Determine the extent to which AOC's personnel system incorporates selected personnel management principles

---

---

GAO AOC Review  
Scope

---

**Focused on nine areas**

- EEO/affirmative action
  - Performance management
  - Hiring and promotion
  - Training and development
  - Classification
  - Employee Assistance Program
  - Adverse Action Program
  - Employee relations
  - Window washers' concerns
-

---

---

# GAO AOC Review Methodology

---

- Reviewed policies and procedures
- Interviewed employees, personnel staff, managers, and executives
- Analyzed AOC personnel data
- Surveyed 637 AOC employees at the Senate Office Buildings and the Senate Restaurants

---

We summarized the results of our audit on the following pages. First, we identified the personnel principles pertinent to the personnel management areas discussed. We summarized the conditions we found at AOC on the next and following pages and provided narrative when additional discussion was needed.

A total of 637 AOC employees working at the Senate Office Buildings and Senate Restaurants participated in our survey. However, the number of respondents to specific questions varies because some participants did not answer every question in the survey.

---

---

**GAO AOC Review**  
**EEO/Affirmative Action: Principles**

---

- Ensure a workforce reflective of the diverse labor force
- Provide for fair resolution of discrimination cases
- Hold managers accountable for actions and inactions



---

GAO AOC Review  
EEO/Affirmative Action: Conditions

---

- AOC Office of Fair Employment Practices mediates and recommends resolutions; Architect makes final decisions
- AOC employees at the Senate Restaurants and Senate Office Buildings may pursue their EEO complaints with the Senate Office of Fair Employment Practices

---

---

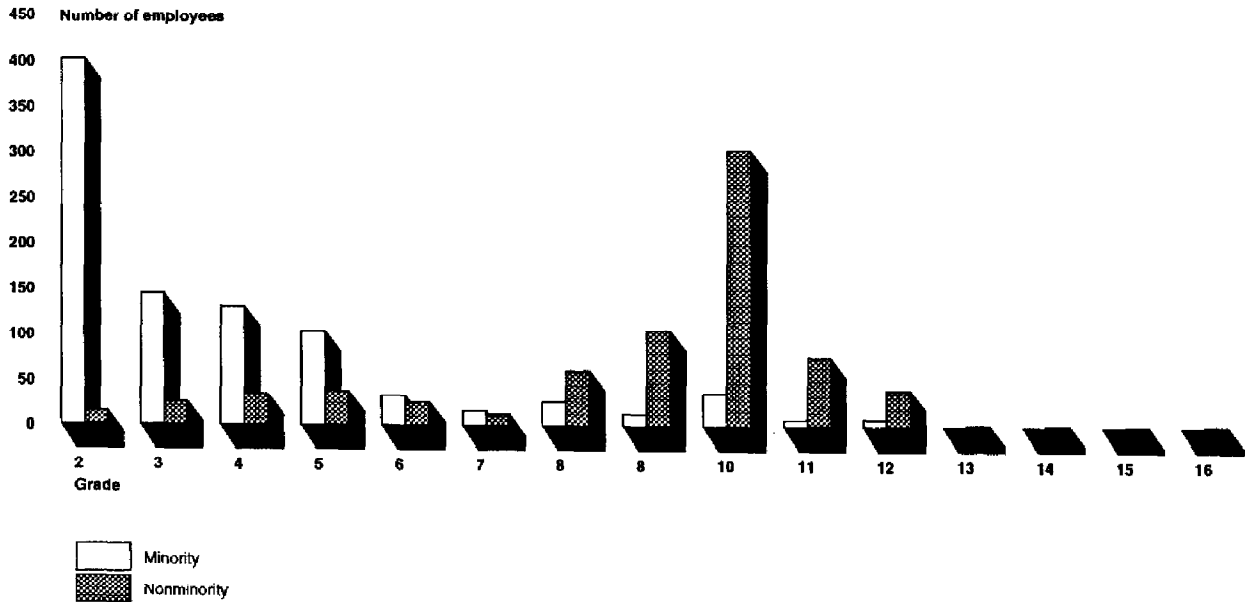
**GAO AOC Review**  
**EEO/Affirmative Action: Conditions**

---

- No affirmative action program to ensure diverse workforce and outreach programs
  - Minorities and women underrepresented in AOC's workforce
  - 33% of 624 respondents believe AOC does not support eliminating discrimination
-

# GAO AOC Review EEO/Affirmative Action: Conditions

## Racial Profile of AOC FWS Employees, FY 1992

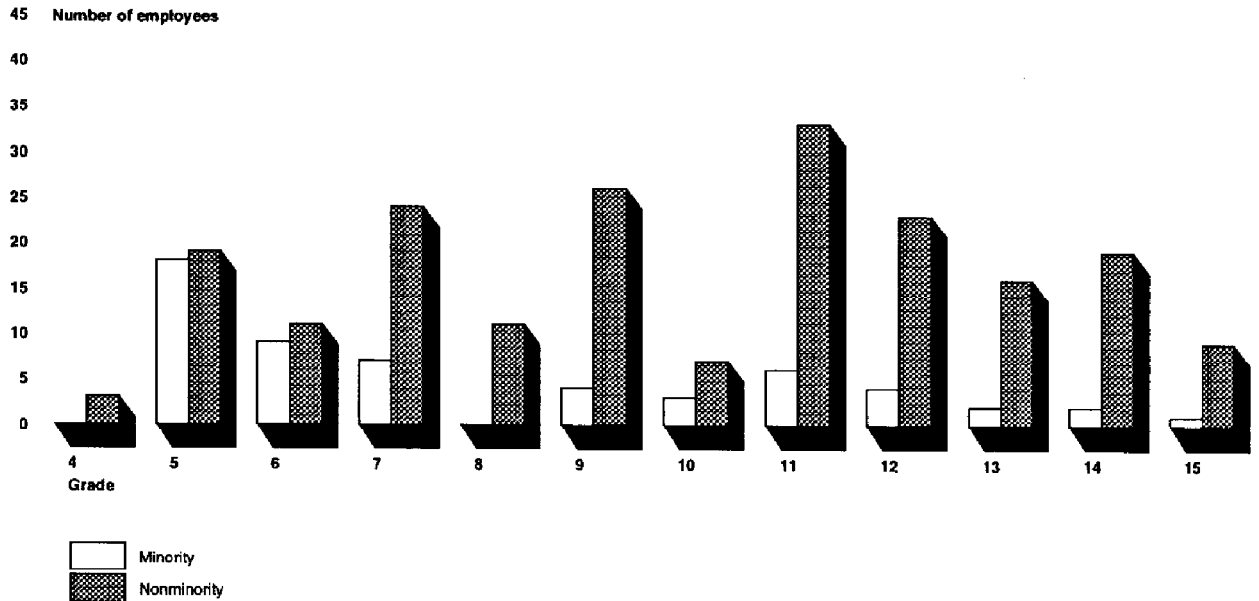


Note 1: The above graph represents the racial profile of AOC's total population of full-time FWS employees as of fiscal year 1992.

Note 2: Federal Wage System includes employees in WG, WL, and WS positions.

# GAO AOC Review EEO/Affirmative Action: Conditions

## Racial Profile of AOC General Schedule (GS) Employees, FY 1992

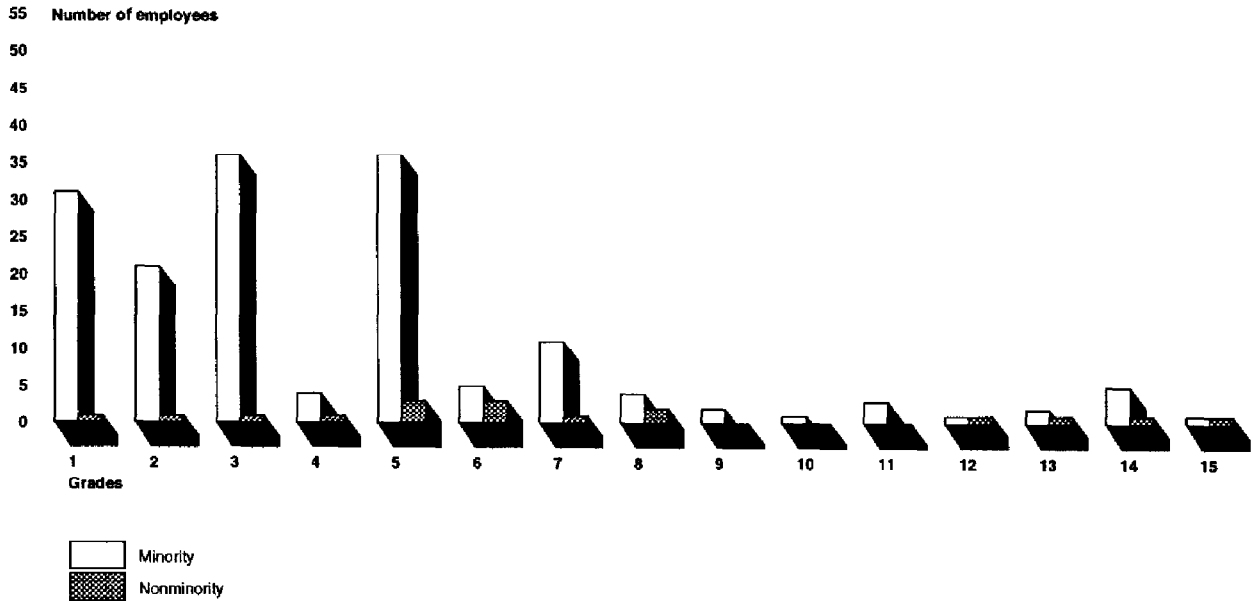


Note: The above graph represents the racial profile of AOC's total population of full-time GS employees as of fiscal year 1992.

# GAO AOC Review

## EEO/Affirmative Action: Conditions

### Racial Profile of AOC Senate Restaurant Employees, FY 1992



Note: The above graph represents the racial profile of AOC's total population of full-time RW employees working at the Senate Restaurants as of fiscal year 1992.

GAO AOC Review  
 EEO/Affirmative Action: Conditions

1992 Minority and Gender Profiles in AOC's Higher-Paying Blue-Collar Occupations Compared to Profiles in Similar Federal and Civilian Occupations

Universes	White		Black		Other Minorities	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
AOC	87.6	0.7	10.9	0.0	0.7	0.0
Federal	64.3	0.6	32.3	0.9	1.9	0.0
Civilian	63.3	1.8	17.3	0.6	16.8	0.3

As the preceding charts and table indicate, minorities and women in AOC's workforce are underrepresented. For example, information in the above table represents summarized data about 11 of the higher-paying blue-collar occupations at AOC—(1) electronics mechanic, (2) electrician, (3) electrician (high voltage), (4) sheet metal mechanic, (5) painter, (6) pipefitter, (7) wood crafting, (8) carpenter, (9) air conditioning mechanic, (10) elevator mechanic, and (11) utility systems operator. As shown, the AOC workforce in these occupations is not reflective of the comparable federal workforce and the civilian workforce of the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. Appendix II shows the racial and gender profiles for each of 22 occupations at AOC, and the profiles of the federal workforce and the Washington, D.C., civilian labor force for the same occupations.

---

---

GAO AOC Review  
Performance Management: Principles

---

- Assess and improve employee performance
- Communicate expectations
- Provide periodic feedback to employees

---

---

GAO AOC Review  
Performance Management: Conditions

---

- No formal performance appraisals or expectation-setting process
  - Inability to support promotion and other decisions with performance information from periodic appraisals
  - No incentive awards program (plaques, certificates, letters, etc.); one planned
  - 56% of 617 respondents said they received no oral feedback in the past year
-



---

---

GAO AOC Review  
Hiring and Promotion: Principles

---

- Define merit-based hiring and promotion processes to guide applicants, employees, and decisionmakers
- Promote fair and equitable consideration of all applicants and employees through open competition

---

---

GAO AOC Review  
Hiring and Promotion: Conditions

---

- No agencywide merit-based hiring and promotion plan
- Promotion practices are inconsistent and not documented
- 48% of 616 respondents believe hiring practices are unfair and 59% of 617 respondents believe promotion practices are unfair

---

We reviewed AOC documentation for 15 of the 16 promotions made in fiscal year 1992 at the Senate Restaurants and 61 of the 83 promotions made at the Senate Office Buildings during the same year. The documentation indicated inconsistencies in the promotion practices. For example, while vacancy announcements were posted for all except one of the promotions at the Senate Restaurants, the interviewing procedures appeared inconsistent. In some instances, the files contained copies of the specific questions posed by the interviewing official and noted responses to each question. In other instances, the files did not contain a copy of the interview questions or the responses. Since formal written performance appraisals are not provided to most AOC employees, these were not available to the selecting officials. When the files showed that selecting

---

officials received some verbal input from the candidates' supervisors, it was noted as one-word adjectives such as good, reliable, or excellent.

Documentation at the Senate Office Buildings indicated that 50 of the 61 promotions were not advertised. Less information about the selection process was available at the Senate Office Buildings than at the Senate Restaurants. For example, the files did not contain enough information to determine the type of interviews (panel or one-on-one), questions asked, responses, or panelists' scores, when a panel may have been used.

At our request, AOC officials researched the 50 promotions that showed no evidence of competition. They reported that 44 did not require competition because they were due to such circumstances as career-ladder progressions, upgrades pursuant to classification reviews, and increased duties. They said that the six remaining promotions had been posted and subsequently provided us with copies of the announcements.

We believe that AOC's explanation of the 44 promotions demonstrates the benefits of a formal staffing plan. Among other things, such a plan would inform employees of the policies and procedures of, as well as the exceptions to, merit staffing. The lack of such information, in our opinion, supports the survey results of employee perceptions about promotion. In that survey, 617 employees responded to the question "In your opinion, how fair or unfair are the current promotion practices in your unit (Senate Office Building or Restaurants)?" A total of 361 (58.5 percent) gave negative responses—103 (16.7 percent) indicated "somewhat unfair" and 258 (41.8 percent) answered "very unfair."

AOC is developing a formal staffing plan.

---

---

**GAO AOC Review**  
**Training and Development: Principles**

---

- Improve employee performance
- Provide advancement opportunities for employees to fill targeted positions

---

---

# GAO AOC Review

## Training and Development: Conditions

---

- Limited training opportunities provided
  - No skills training for targeted advancement opportunities
  - Apprentice program planned
  - AOC requested \$80,000 for training in its FY 1995 budget
  - 45% of 620 respondents believe training is inadequate
- 

We reviewed data on training provided in fiscal year 1992 to AOC employees working at the Senate Office Buildings and Senate Restaurants. In total, 219 of 825 employees took training during that year. Twenty-nine of the 825 employees (3.5 percent) took courses offering technical skill training directly related to their jobs. The remaining 190 (23 percent of the 825 employees) took nontechnical training, such as sexual harassment, substance abuse, supervision, or remedial reading. Fiscal year 1992 training data showed that AOC spent \$63,695 on training for its employees at the Senate Office Buildings and Senate Restaurants. This amounts to about \$225 for each employee who took a course, or about \$77 per worker for all employees.

---

According to the Architect, AOC's fiscal year 1995 budget contains a line item request for \$80,000 for training in the Senate Office Buildings appropriation. Initial funds were provided for training in fiscal year 1986 by reallocating funds from other Senate Office Buildings allotments. AOC requested and received training funds in fiscal years 1992 and 1994.

---

---

**GAO AOC Review**  
**Classification: Principles**

---

**Assess the difficulty, responsibility,  
and qualification needs of positions to  
help ensure equal pay for equal work**

---

GAO AOC Review  
Classification: Conditions

---

- Hired two classification specialists since October 1991
  - Routinely audits vacated positions before hiring and promotion
  - AOC review of Senate Restaurants found positions classified incorrectly
  - 30% of 542 respondents reported incorrect position descriptions (before review of all restaurant positions)
-



---

---

GAO AOC Review  
Employee Assistance: Principles

---

- Provide services to deal with mental health, alcohol, drug, and other related problems
- Enhance employee confidence by protecting counseling information

---

GAO AOC Review  
Employee Assistance: Conditions

---

**Before November 1992**

- Confidentiality compromised
- No operating guidelines
- No trained Employee Assistance Program staff

**After November 1992**

- Expanded EAP staff and scope
  - Drafted operating guidelines
  - Restricted access to EAP files
  - 33% of 519 respondents doubt protection of confidentiality
- 

AOC established its EAP in 1988 under the direction of a personnel management specialist. The program operated without formal policies and procedures. Concerned about the status of the program and the type of information kept in the EAP files, a personnel official reviewed and purged the files in 1991. Such access to the files added to concerns among employees about the confidentiality of the EAP records.

AOC's Internal Auditor advised in a May 1992 report that access to EAP files by personnel officials was "risky and does not adhere to program intent." To mitigate the need for personnel officials to examine EAP folders, the auditor recommended that AOC contract with an EAP consultant to review and report on the status of the program. AOC did not implement this recommendation. However, AOC hired a new EAP manager in

---

November 1992 and, according to this new manager, file access is now restricted to EAP personnel.

---

---

GAO AOC Review  
Adverse Action: Principles

---

- Fair and equitable system to address unacceptable behavior or performance
  - General statement of sanctions and violations
  - Mechanism for dispute resolution
-

---

# GAO AOC Review

## Adverse Action: Conditions

---

- Limited employee awareness of sanctions and appeals process
- No table of penalties
- Case files contained required documentation, and hearings appeared to have been conducted fairly
- 24% of 594 respondents believe appeals would not be handled fairly

---

Adverse action files we reviewed showed that they contained required documentation, such as the nature and reasons for the proposed actions and notification to employees explaining their right to review the material supporting the adverse action. We listened to two of three audio tapes of adverse action hearings available for our review. These hearings appeared to have been conducted fairly. However, employees had a limited awareness about potential disciplinary actions for misconduct and the disciplinary appeal process. Thirty-five percent of 589 respondents said they were not aware of the range of disciplinary measures AOC could take for offenses, and 54 percent of 585 respondents indicated that they were not familiar with the appeal procedures.

---

---

**GAO AOC Review**  
**Employee Relations: Principles**

---

- Inform employees of their rights and obligations and about organizational and policy changes
- Provide opportunities for communication with employees

---

---

GAO AOC Review  
Employee Relations: Conditions

---

- Limited communication between management and workforce
  - Plan to give new employees a pamphlet and video presentation
  - Limited communication can lead employees to believe they are treated unfairly
-

---

---

GAO AOC Review  
Window Washers: Principle

---

- Duties that are physically hazardous should be compensated over and above normal pay levels by means of a pay differential



---

---

GAO AOC Review  
Window Washers: Conditions

---

- Concern about the lack of hazardous pay for cleaning a mobile of clouds from an unstable platform about 70 feet above the atrium floor of the Senate Hart Office Building
  - Duties appear to meet CFR criteria justifying hazardous pay differential
  - AOC believed the 1982 upgrade of window washers to WG-05 provided adequate compensation
- 

Concerns of the six window washers stemmed from their assignment to clean the “clouds”—the mobile section of the “Mountain and Clouds” artwork in the atrium of the Senate Hart Office Building. This assignment requires workers to suspend a swinging scaffold approximately 70 feet above the atrium floor and, using extended dust mops, reach out from the scaffold to brush the dust and debris off the top of the “clouds.” The window washers believed this work qualified them for a hazardous duty pay for the hours spent doing this work. Criteria provided in the CFR defining hazardous duties includes working on any structure of at least 50 feet above the base level if the structure is unstable. In an August 1992 audit report, the AOC Internal Auditor concluded that a hazardous duty differential should be authorized for these employees.

---

AOC officials disagreed. They believed that an upgrade that the window washers received in 1982 from WG-04 to WG-05 reflected a recognition of the hazardous nature of this work. These promotions, however, occurred in 1982 in recognition of the responsibilities and hazards associated with cleaning the windows in the atrium and the galleries of the Senate Hart Office Building. The mobile of the "clouds" was installed in 1986, about 4 years later.

In fiscal year 1993, AOC officials contracted for services to clean the cloud mobile and exterior windows that the six window washers had been responsible for cleaning. Estimated contract costs for cleaning the "clouds" are about \$3,600 a year for three scheduled cleanings, or \$1,200 per visit. Estimated contract costs for cleaning the exterior windows of the Senate buildings are about \$28,600 a year for two scheduled cleanings, or about \$14,300 per visit. According to the Superintendent of the Senate Office Buildings, these duties were contracted out to reduce the risk to AOC employees. The Superintendent also told us that the window washers were reassigned at their current pay and grade levels to the Upholstery Division to provide them opportunities to learn a skilled craft that will qualify them for greater responsibilities and pay.

However, we noted that the position descriptions of the six window washers transferred to the Upholstery Division as upholstery helpers still contained the duties of cleaning the exterior windows and the "clouds." AOC officials told us that these duties were kept in the position descriptions to provide for cleaning that may need to be done between scheduled visits by the contractors. If such a situation were to occur, we see the potential for the issue of whether the work merits a hazardous-duty pay differential to arise again.

In commenting on a draft of this report, AOC said that it will delete any duties involving the "clouds" from the position descriptions of the window washers. In our opinion, deletion of these duties from the position descriptions would prevent the issue from arising in the future.

# Comparison of Selected AOC, Federal, and Civilian Occupations by Race and Gender, Fiscal Year 1992

Series	Title	Compared units	Percent white		Percent black		Percent other minorities <sup>a</sup>	
			Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
301	Administration	AOC	44.2	23.3	20.9	11.6	0.0	0.0
		Federal	38.3	36.1	5.0	16.3	2.0	2.2
		Civilian	12.2	52.4	4.1	23.7	1.4	6.2
530	Cash processing	AOC	0.0	11.1	14.8	55.6	0.0	18.5
		Federal	5.0	27.0	11.0	51.0	1.0	5.0
		Civilian	11.5	39.2	5.0	25.2	4.6	14.5
544	Civilian pay	AOC	22.2	33.3	5.6	27.8	5.6	5.6
		Federal	3.3	27.4	9.0	57.4	0.2	2.6
		Civilian	5.9	51.5	4.8	30.0	1.3	6.5
1101	General business	AOC	40.0	15.0	10.0	20.0	10.0	5.0
		Federal	40.6	28.4	6.5	21.1	2.0	1.4
		Civilian	12.2	52.4	4.1	23.7	1.4	6.2
2604	Electronics mechanic	AOC	77.1	2.9	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Federal	66.3	3.0	24.9	1.8	3.6	0.6
		Civilian	54.2	6.3	24.0	2.5	12.1	0.9
2805	Electrician	AOC	89.8	0.0	9.1	0.0	1.1	0.0
		Federal	63.5	0.3	33.6	0.8	1.7	0.0
		Civilian	68.8	1.0	22.9	1.1	6.2	0.1
2810	Electrician (high voltage)	AOC	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Federal	64.0	0.0	35.1	0.0	0.9	0.0
		Civilian	70.4	0.6	24.8	0.0	4.2	0.0
3502	Laborer	AOC	17.9	0.0	80.3	0.3	1.4	0.0
		Federal	13.3	2.0	62.4	19.7	2.6	0.0
		Civilian	33.2	6.5	40.6	7.5	8.4	3.7
3566	Custodial worker	AOC	0.0	3.6	2.8	90.0	0.0	3.6
		Federal	3.1	3.3	37.6	55.4	0.5	0.1
		Civilian	14.6	7.1	33.2	19.6	13.6	12.1
3806	Sheet metal mechanic	AOC	89.3	0.0	10.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Federal	68.6	0.0	29.3	0.0	2.1	0.0
		Civilian	71.7	2.0	19.0	0.0	7.3	0.0
4102	Painter	AOC	83.9	3.2	12.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Federal	41.7	1.1	53.0	2.8	1.4	0.0
		Civilian	44.5	3.8	17.2	0.4	33.4	0.8
4204	Pipefitter	AOC	86.1	0.0	13.9	0.0	0.0	0.0

(continued)

Series	Title	Compared units	Percent white		Percent black		Percent other minorities <sup>a</sup>	
			Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
		Federal	69.4	0.3	29.5	0.0	0.9	0.0
		Civilian	70.1	1.1	22.9	0.4	5.6	0.0
4605	Wood crafting	AOC	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Federal	66.7	2.8	24.1	0.9	5.6	0.0
		Civilian	65.9	1.0	11.9	0.3	0.6	0.2
4607	Carpenter	AOC	77.3	4.5	13.6	0.0	4.5	0.0
		Federal	70.5	0.0	27.6	1.3	0.6	0.0
		Civilian	65.9	1.0	11.9	0.3	0.6	0.2
5003	Gardener	AOC	51.0	2.0	47.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Federal	35.2	5.0	56.8	2.0	1.0	0.0
		Civilian	49.1	5.8	23.0	2.0	9.6	0.5
5306	Air condition mechanic	AOC	88.6	0.0	9.8	0.0	1.5	0.0
		Federal	71.0	0.7	25.3	0.3	2.7	0.0
		Civilian	70.9	0.5	18.8	0.9	8.9	0.0
5313	Elevator mechanic	AOC	85.4	0.0	14.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Federal	61.2	0.0	35.3	0.0	3.5	0.0
		Civilian	86.1	0.6	5.9	1.8	5.7	0.0
5406	Utility systems operator	AOC	61.8	0.0	35.3	0.0	2.9	0.0
		Federal	60.0	2.9	37.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Civilian	69.4	3.0	15.6	3.3	2.0	6.6
5703	Motor vehicle operator	AOC	21.4	0.0	57.1	10.7	3.6	7.1
		Federal	18.3	1.0	75.5	3.4	1.8	0.0
		Civilian	42.4	4.1	44.4	2.1	6.6	0.4
7404	Cook	AOC	11.1	0.0	33.3	29.6	11.1	14.8
		Federal	6.2	17.2	41.4	30.3	4.1	0.7
		Civilian	19.3	13.0	18.6	13.5	22.7	13.0
7408	Food service worker	AOC	4.3	2.2	39.1	30.4	12.0	12.0
		Federal	4.5	5.5	23.6	62.5	1.0	2.9
		Civilian	14.0	17.1	15.5	15.6	24.4	13.4
7420	Waiters/waitresses	AOC	0.0	5.6	11.1	55.6	22.2	5.6
		Federal	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
		Civilian	19.1	43.1	5.3	9.4	12.9	10.2

<sup>a</sup>Other minorities include Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, and Native American.

Note: Row totals may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

Sources: AOC data obtained from the AOC personnel database for fiscal year 1992. Federal workforce percentages were calculated from fiscal year 1992 data for the Executive Branch obtained from OPM. Civilian labor force percentages were calculated from 1990 Census data for the Washington, D.C., metropolitan statistical area.

# GAO Survey of Employees at the Senate Office Buildings and Senate Restaurants

**U.S. General Accounting Office  
Employment Practices of the  
Office of the Architect of the Capitol**

**INTRODUCTION**

The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO), a research agency of Congress is reviewing the employment practices of the Architect of the Capitol. We wish to obtain your views on several major issues having to do with personnel.

This document is anonymous. There is nothing on it that can identify an individual respondent. No one in the Office of the Architect of the Capitol will see anyone's individual responses. In our report to Congress, only aggregated statistics will be presented.

Please complete your responses and return them to us before you leave the room.

Thank you for your help.

**I. FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES**

1. Do you believe that your employer, the Office of the Architect of the Capitol, supports eliminating discrimination in the work place? (Check one.)

	<u>Total</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>
1. <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely yes	20.4%	28.1%	14.8%	26.8%
2. <input type="checkbox"/> Probably yes	26.9	29.8	25.1	28.6
3. <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	18.9	17.0	20.3	19.6
4. <input type="checkbox"/> Probably no	14.3	16.4	13.8	7.1
5. <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely no	19.6 n=624	8.8 n=171	26.0 n=311	17.9 n=56

2. If there were a complaint about discrimination in the work place, do you believe that the Office of the Architect of the Capitol would attempt to investigate the problem in order to resolve it? (Check one.)

	<u>Total</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>
1. <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely yes	20.6%	28.1%	16.1%	30.9%
2. <input type="checkbox"/> Probably yes	31.4	32.7	30.2	27.3
3. <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	17.4	15.2	17.4	27.3
4. <input type="checkbox"/> Probably no	17.9	17.0	19.6	9.1
5. <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely no	12.7 n=621	7.0 n=171	16.7 n=311	5.5 n=55

Note: n equals the number of respondents to each question. Columns to the right of the total column will not always equal the total number of respondents because some individuals chose not to provide that information.

3. Do you know about the Architect of the Capitol Fair Employment Practices Office? (Check one.)

	<u>Total</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>
1. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes -->	76.0%	90.4%	76.5%	50.0%
2. <input type="checkbox"/> No --->	24.0 n=588	9.6 n=167	23.5 n=289	50.0 n=48

4. If you felt that you were discriminated against at work, would you take the problem to the Architect of the Capitol Fair Employment Practices Office? (Check one.)

	<u>Total</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>
1. <input type="checkbox"/> I definitely would	34.3%	30.0%	36.0%	38.5%
2. <input type="checkbox"/> I probably would	13.6	18.1	12.4	19.2
3. <input type="checkbox"/> About a 50/50 chance	13.6	13.8	13.1	9.6
4. <input type="checkbox"/> I probably would not	9.3	13.8	6.4	5.8
5. <input type="checkbox"/> I definitely would not	4.0	2.5	4.6	3.8
6. <input type="checkbox"/> It would depend on the problem	25.2 n=572	21.9 n=160	27.6 n=283	23.1 n=52

5. If you were to have any problem with your supervisor or with co-workers, would you take the problem to the Architect of the Capitol Fair Employment Practices Office? (Check one.)

	<u>Total</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>
1. <input type="checkbox"/> I definitely would	29.5%	23.8%	32.5%	32.7%
2. <input type="checkbox"/> I probably would	11.7	13.7	11.3	11.5
3. <input type="checkbox"/> About a 50/50 chance	12.6	13.0	12.4	13.5
4. <input type="checkbox"/> I probably would not	11.7	16.1	9.2	7.7
5. <input type="checkbox"/> I definitely would not	5.6	5.6	4.9	1.9
6. <input type="checkbox"/> Depend on the problem	29.0 n=573	28.0 n=161	29.7 n=283	32.7 n=52

## II. ADVERSE ACTIONS

6. Do you know that the Office of the Architect of the Capitol can discipline an employee if he or she is absent without permission, steals something on the job, or gets into a fight? (Check one.)

	<u>Total</u>
1. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I know this	88.4%
2. <input type="checkbox"/> No, I did not know this	11.6 n=597

7. Are you aware of the range of disciplinary measures the Office of the Architect of the Capitol has for offenses such as being absent without permission, stealing something on the job, or getting into a fight? (Check one.)

	<u>Total</u>
1. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I am aware of the range of disciplinary measures	64.9%
2. <input type="checkbox"/> No, I am not aware of the range of disciplinary measures	35.1
	n=589

8. If an employee is being disciplined for offenses such as those mentioned in questions 6 and 7, are you familiar with the procedures to follow in order to appeal the disciplinary measures? (Check one.)

	<u>Total</u>
1. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I am familiar with the procedures	45.6%
2. <input type="checkbox"/> No, I am not familiar with the procedures	54.4
	n=585

9. If an employee were accused of one of these offenses and decided to appeal it, do you believe the appeal would be handled fairly or unfairly by your employer? (Check one.)

	<u>Total</u>
1. <input type="checkbox"/> Very fairly	13.8%
2. <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat fairly	24.7
3. <input type="checkbox"/> As fairly as unfairly	11.8
4. <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat unfairly	10.4
5. <input type="checkbox"/> Very unfairly	13.3
6. <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know	25.9
	n=594

### III. EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

10. Do you know about the Architect of the Capitol's Employee Assistance Program? (Check one.)

	<u>Total</u>
1. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	60.6%
2. <input type="checkbox"/> No	39.4
	n=597

11. If you had a problem with drugs or alcohol, or some personal problem that affected your work, would you seek help from the Employee Assistance Program? (Check one.)

	<u>Total</u>
1. <input type="checkbox"/> I definitely would	50.1%
2. <input type="checkbox"/> I probably would	16.5
3. <input type="checkbox"/> About a 50/50 chance	8.8
4. <input type="checkbox"/> I probably would not	7.9
5. <input type="checkbox"/> I definitely would not	4.1
6. <input type="checkbox"/> It would depend on the problem	12.6
	n=509

12. If you went to the Employee Assistance Program office and talked with a counselor about a purely personal matter, do you believe it would be kept private? (Check one.)

	<u>Total</u>
1. <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely yes	18.5%
2. <input type="checkbox"/> Probably yes	19.8
3. <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	28.7
4. <input type="checkbox"/> Probably no	16.0
5. <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely no	17.0
	n=519

#### IV. YOUR POSITION

13. Have you ever seen a written summary of your job duties? (Check one.)

	<u>Total</u>	<u>GS</u>	<u>FWS Skilled</u>	<u>FWS Unskilled</u>
1. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	75.8%	89.1%	86.5%	69.4%
2. <input type="checkbox"/> No	24.4	10.9	13.5	30.6
	n=599	n=46	n=148	n=265

14. How accurately or inaccurately does this written job summary describe what you actually do for your job? (Check one.)

	<u>Total</u>	<u>GS</u>	<u>FWS Skilled</u>	<u>FWS Unskilled</u>
1. <input type="checkbox"/> Very accurately	23.4%	29.3%	18.4%	27.8%
2. <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat accurately	36.5	53.7	37.5	33.3
3. <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat inaccurately	18.5	7.3	23.5	16.2
4. <input type="checkbox"/> Very inaccurately	11.4	9.8	14.0	9.8
5. <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know	10.1	0.0	6.8	12.8
	n=542	n=41	n=136	n=234



15. Thinking about your major job duties, about how many are included in your written job summary? (Check one.)

	<u>Total</u>	<u>GS</u>	<u>FWS Skilled</u>	<u>FWS Unskilled</u>
1. <input type="checkbox"/> All are included	17.6%	17.1%	14.8%	20.8%
2. <input type="checkbox"/> Most are included	40.0	68.3	40.0	35.9
3. <input type="checkbox"/> About half	20.5	7.3	25.9	17.7
4. <input type="checkbox"/> Less than half	10.5	4.9	13.3	10.4
5. <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know	11.4	2.4	5.9	15.2
	n=533	n=41	n=135	n=231

**V. EMPLOYEE RELATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT**

16. Do you, your supervisor, and other people you work with, have staff meetings on a regular basis (weekly, monthly, etc.) to discuss various topics of interest concerning your job, your unit, or your organization? (Check one.)

	<u>Total</u>	<u>GS</u>	<u>FWS Skilled</u>	<u>FWS Unskilled</u>
1. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	21.3%	41.3%	23.6%	15.9%
2. <input type="checkbox"/> No	78.7	58.7	76.4	84.1
	n=621	n=46	n=148	n=277

17. Within the past year, has your supervisor in your current job ever given you something in writing that summarized how well he or she thought you were doing on your job? (Check one.)

	<u>Total</u>	<u>GS</u>	<u>FWS Skilled</u>	<u>FWS Unskilled</u>
1. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	9.8%	6.5%	12.7%	7.2%
2. <input type="checkbox"/> No	90.2	93.5	87.3	92.8
	n=622	n=46	n=150	n=276

18. Within the past year, how often or rarely has your supervisor in your current job talked to you about how well he or she thought you were doing on your job? (Check one.)

	<u>Total</u>	<u>GS</u>	<u>FWS Skilled</u>	<u>FWS Unskilled</u>
1. <input type="checkbox"/> About once a week	6.6%	13.0%	6.0%	6.9%
2. <input type="checkbox"/> 2 - 3 times a month	9.1	4.3	6.0	8.8
3. <input type="checkbox"/> 3 - 4 times in the past year	13.3	15.2	14.1	15.0
4. <input type="checkbox"/> About once in the past year	15.4	23.9	15.4	14.6
5. <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all in the past year	13.3	13.0	10.7	12.8
6. <input type="checkbox"/> Never	42.3	30.4	47.7	42.0
	n=617	n=46	n=149	n=274

19. Do you believe that you are getting the training (either classroom training or training on-the-job) that you need to do your job adequately? (Check one.)

	Total	GS	FWS Skilled	FWS Unskilled
1. <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely yes	17.7%	15.2%	14.7%	22.5%
2. <input type="checkbox"/> Probably yes	23.1	37.0	22.7	22.8
3. <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	13.7	6.5	18.7	12.3
4. <input type="checkbox"/> Probably no	15.8	23.9	15.3	12.7
5. <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely no	29.7	17.4	28.7	29.7
	n=620	n=46	n=150	n=276

#### VI. HIRING AND PROMOTION

20. At any given time, how aware are you of job openings at the Office of the Architect of the Capitol? (Check one.)

	Total	GS	FWS Skilled	FWS Unskilled
1. <input type="checkbox"/> Aware of all job openings	29.9%	47.8%	34.4%	28.0%
2. <input type="checkbox"/> Aware of job openings in my unit	29.9	37.0	36.4	28.4
3. <input type="checkbox"/> Aware of job openings in my working group	19.3	6.5	15.2	22.5
4. <input type="checkbox"/> Not aware of any job openings	20.8	8.7	13.9	21.1
	n=615	n=48	n=151	n=275

21. If you do keep aware of job openings, what is the primary or main way you keep aware of them? (Check one.)

	Total	GS	FWS Skilled	FWS Unskilled
1. <input type="checkbox"/> From fellow workers	16.2%	14.3%	17.7%	14.3%
2. <input type="checkbox"/> From bulletin boards	77.7	73.8	76.6	80.1
3. <input type="checkbox"/> Some other way	6.1	11.9	5.7	5.6
	n=561	n=42	n=141	n=251

22. In your opinion, how fair or unfair are the current hiring practices in your unit (Senate Office Building or Restaurant)? (Check one.)

	Total	GS	FWS Skilled	FWS Unskilled
1. <input type="checkbox"/> Very fair	9.3%	13.3%	10.7%	6.9%
2. <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat fair	19.2	35.6	18.0	18.5
3. <input type="checkbox"/> As fair as unfair	8.4	6.7	12.0	7.6
4. <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat unfair	14.9	20.0	18.7	13.1
5. <input type="checkbox"/> Very unfair	32.8	17.8	25.3	39.3
6. <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know/No opinion	15.4	6.7	15.3	14.5
	n=618	n=45	n=150	n=275

50

23. In your opinion, how fair or unfair are the current promotion practices in your unit (Senate Office Building or Restaurant)? (Check one.)

	<u>Total</u>	<u>GS</u>	<u>FWS Skilled</u>	<u>FWS Unskilled</u>
1. <input type="checkbox"/> Very fair	5.2%	8.9%	5.4%	2.5%
2. <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat fair	15.6	31.1	16.2	15.6
3. <input type="checkbox"/> As fair as unfair	8.8	6.7	8.8	7.6
4. <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat unfair	16.7	15.6	19.8	18.5
5. <input type="checkbox"/> Very unfair	41.8	26.7	43.9	42.9
6. <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know/No opinion	12.0	11.1	6.1	12.7
	n=617	n=45	n=148	n=275

**VII. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

24. Please check the boxes or enter the following information about yourself:

**Grade:**

1	7.5%
2	22.1
3	14.2
4	7.5
5	12.6
6	3.9
7	2.4
8	3.2
9	5.1
10	16.6
11	2.4
12	1.2
13	.2
14	.6
15	.4
	n=493

**Job Title:**

GS	7.2%
FWS Skilled	23.7
FWS Unskilled	44.3
Not indicated	24.8
	n=479

**Sex:**

Male	54.3%
Female	36.1
Not indicated	9.6
	n=576

**Race:**

African-American (Black)	49.3%
Asian-Pacific Islander	1.1
Caucasian (White)	26.8
Not indicated	22.8
	n=492

**Hispanic Origin:**

Yes	9.3%
No	18.1
Not indicated	72.7
	n=174

# Comments From the Architect of the Capitol



Washington, DC 20515

April 26, 1994

Ms. Nancy Kingsbury  
Director  
Federal Human Resource Management  
Issues  
United States  
General Accounting Office  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Kingsbury:

We have reviewed your draft report dated April 4, 1994, and appreciate the time and attention your staff has given to the generally balanced review of and report on the Office of the Architect of the Capitol's (AoC) Personnel System. As previously discussed, we recognize and acknowledge that several areas of our program need improvement. However, we continue to believe there are several items in your review that require discussion for either correction or clarification.

One of our major points of disagreement with the report concerns the window washers and the management of hazardous duty pay for cleaning the "clouds." You state on page two (2) that "AoC officials do not believe that this cleaning task merits hazardous duty pay." This statement is not factual. AoC officials provided the window washers compensation for hazardous duty through classifying the positions one grade higher than justified under normal classification standards, even though they were working from a stable structure. This action provided continuous additional pay for hazardous duty regardless of the amount of time spent cleaning the "clouds."

Had we elected to pay hazardous duty pay under your recommendation, we would have been obligated to down grade the positions the one grade and reduce pay accordingly. If that had been implemented, the window washers would have experienced an overall net decrease in their pay as their basic pay would have been reduced and hazardous duty pay received only when actually cleaning the "clouds." As has been made known to you, the window washers have not been asked to clean the clouds for the last two years, even though they have continued to receive the higher pay.

Our expectation is that cleaning the "clouds" will continue to be done by an outside contractor. Consequently, the window washers have been transferred to the upholstery shop

April 26, 1994  
Page two

and reclassified as upholstery helpers. Also, we will take affirmative action to remove from the employees' position descriptions any mention of work involving the "clouds." This effectively precludes future consideration of hazardous duty pay. We believe these changes are in everyone's best interest.

Under "Matter for Congressional Consideration" the issue of major changes will require significant additional resources in order for this office to incorporate and implement new functions and simultaneous policies and procedures. We are continually seeking ways to improve the personnel program, and in that regard your audit results are very helpful. However, our efforts toward improvement must be fully supported by the appropriate Committees of the Senate because of policy questions and the need for additional positions and funding to effect an expansion of the personnel programs.

Consideration of Subject Areas are discussed below:

#### Performance Management

As you may be aware, Congress, in its wisdom and as a matter of policy, did not include the Office of the Architect of the Capitol under the provisions of Chapter 43 - Performance Appraisal - Title 5, United States Code. Therefore, we do not have a formal written performance appraisal system. However, supervisors do have ways of providing feedback. As a part of their training, supervisors are encouraged to meet with employees on a regular basis and discuss performance expectations. In addition, we are required by law to certify that "GS" employees have performed at an acceptable level of competence for within grade increases. If their work has been less than acceptable, they must be advised of that fact and given an opportunity to improve before the within grade adjustment is authorized. That is, of course, a form of performance appraisal. The Senate Restaurant has received HRMD's approval on a program to provide employees feedback on performance and conduct. We agree that formal performance appraisals are a positive step. We reemphasize that to incorporate such a system AoC wide will require substantial resources and will need to address the uniqueness of our high proportion of trades and labors work force.

Presently, the Incentive Awards Program is extremely limited but there is recognition for Career Service. Monetary awards matching the Executive agencies' experience of 1½ percent of payroll would necessarily require additional funding that Congress would have to authorize.

#### Hiring and Promotion

Final approval of the Career Staffing Policy which is currently being reviewed will eliminate many of the noted issues. While we accept the observations of apparent inconsistent interviewing practices, there is no indication that these practices are systemic weaknesses or adversely affect the selection process. There may be a potential need to train supervisors in interviewing techniques.

#### Training and Development

Training opportunities are only limited by money and whether or not management feels the training is necessary to complete their missions. With increasing workload demands corresponding to personnel reductions, supervisors are more reluctant to nominate employees except for critical needs. We are not aware of any critical training not being provided. If GAO has specific information showing critical training not being provided, we would appreciate the specific instances being cited. Due to low turnover (less than 5 percent) and the nature of the AoC's mission, advancement opportunities are not prolific.

Furthermore, skills training is accomplished with regular informal (on-the-job training), as well as formal training.

#### Classification

No comment

#### EAP

AoC's internal auditor study of EAP files or use of EAP consultants in other Federal agencies was limited in scope. Therefore, the HRMD conferred with four (4) other Federal agencies and found that administrative supervision was frequently exercised by Personnel. Outside consultants were used only occasionally. The new EAP manager is of the opinion that use of an external reviewer would be premature at this time for the following reasons: 1) standards for EAP service have only recently been established, and the EAP will need time for adequate integration into the AoC work force before meaningful quality assurance measures can be applied to the program; 2) few EAPs within the federal setting, and none within the Legislative Branch, have ever been subjected to any kind of external audit process; and, 3) the AoC's present EAP Manager has significant experience with quality assurance practices based on his own work as a former quality assurance division director for a national EAP firm. All EAP activities are managed in a confidential manner.

April 26, 1994

Page four

#### Adverse Actions

Every employee has received and signed for a copy of the disciplinary policy. The AoC does practice progressive discipline without a Table of Penalties. It is, of course, important for employees to be knowledgeable about their rights, including appeal procedures. In disciplinary cases employees are given very specific notification of their rights, including the right to comment on the charges, and the right to a hearing. GAO states that the hearings they reviewed were conducted fairly, so the point of 24 percent believing that they (the appeals) would not be handled fairly does not appear to be supported, unless, of course, GAO can help by explaining why this perception is present.

#### Employee Relations

In our Basic Supervisory course the importance of regular staff meetings is emphasized as well as the importance of all communications both up and down the chain of command.

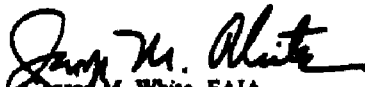
#### Window Washers

The only additional comment is clarification that the window washers were already being overcompensated when the clouds were installed in 1986 and we know of no principle of or authorization for dual compensation for a position.

With your consideration and incorporation of these comments, we anticipate the submission of a balanced report to the Committee in the near future.

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report, and trust that these comments will be useful as you finalize your report.

Cordially,

  
George M. White, FAIA  
Architect of the Capitol

---

# Major Contributors to This Briefing Report

---

**General Government  
Division, Washington,  
D.C.**

Richard W. Caradine, Assistant Director  
Helen Fauntleroy Branch, Assignment Manager  
Steven J. Berke, Evaluator-in-Charge  
Stuart M. Kaufman, Senior Social Science Analyst  
Jerry Sandau, Evaluator  
Ernestine B. Burt, Secretary

---

**Office of the General  
Counsel, Washington,  
D.C.**

James M. Rebbe, Attorney Advisor



---

**Ordering Information**

**The first copy of each GAO report and testimony is free. Additional copies are \$2 each. Orders should be sent to the following address, accompanied by a check or money order made out to the Superintendent of Documents, when necessary. Orders for 100 or more copies to be mailed to a single address are discounted 25 percent.**

**Orders by mail:**

**U.S. General Accounting Office  
P.O. Box 6015  
Gaithersburg, MD 20884-6015**

**or visit:**

**Room 1000  
700 4th St. NW (corner of 4th and G Sts. NW)  
U.S. General Accounting Office  
Washington, DC**

**Orders may also be placed by calling (202) 512-6000  
or by using fax number (301) 258-4066.**

