

STATEMENT OF

GAIL LOVELACE

**CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER
U.S. GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION**

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT
MANAGEMENT, THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE, AND THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

U.S. SENATE

APRIL 22, 2010



Introduction

Good morning Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Voinovich, and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of the General Services Administration (GSA) and our Administrator, Martha N. Johnson. My name is Gail Lovelace and I serve as GSA's Chief People Officer. During Presidential Transition I served as GSA's Senior Career Executive for Presidential Transition. I testified before you on September 10, 2008 on this very topic. I am happy to be back with you today to update you on our efforts in Presidential Transition.

As you may recall during my testimony, our then Acting Administrator Jim Williams stated that the Presidential Transition was his highest priority for GSA. We were fully committed to a successful and smooth transition from one Administration to the next, and emphasized an unyielding dedication to customer service throughout the process. I am proud to be here before you today to say that I think we met all our goals.

I am honored to have been able to play a role in ensuring a smooth transition as envisioned by the Presidential Transition Act of 1963. As stated in that Act –

“The Congress declares it to be the purpose of this Act to promote the orderly transfer of the executive power in connection with the expiration of the term of office of a President and the inauguration of a new President.....”

GSA's mission is to use expertise to provide innovative solutions for our customers in support of their missions and by so doing foster an effective, sustainable, and transparent government for the American people. We are able to leverage the buying power of the federal government to acquire best value for our federal customers. We exercise responsible asset management. We deliver superior workplaces, quality acquisition services, and expert business solutions.

In accordance with the Presidential Transition Act of 1963, our responsibility in Presidential Transition was to provide these same services to the President-elect, Vice President-elect and members of the Presidential Transition Team, upon request. We started early in our preparation, had great teams in place, and were well-positioned to provide space, furniture, parking, office equipment, supplies, telecommunications, mail management, travel, financial management, vehicles, information technology, human resources management, contracting and other logistical support as necessary and appropriate.

Specifically, GSA leased and furnished approximately 120,000 square feet of office space in Washington DC, in close proximity to both the White House and the Capitol. GSA also provided 600 laptops, Blackberries, and desk phones to support transition staff in both Washington DC and Chicago. GSA's secure IT infrastructure supported 1,300 users, many working remotely throughout the world. To prepare for this high volume of support, GSA proactively met with representatives from the Obama and McCain campaigns prior to the election. In doing so, we ensured the efficiency of the transition while demonstrating the non-

partisan spirit of our work. This preparation allowed us to begin supporting the Obama-Biden Transition the morning after the election. Every day during the transition period, our employees met new members of the Obama-Biden team as they walked in the door, showed them to their offices, explained how to use their computers and blackberries and gave them an overview of the facility, allowing them to get to work right away. Our motto was “*from the street to your seat in 15 minutes.*”

We partnered with the Secret Service and the Federal Protective Service, both part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), so they could provide security for the President-elect, Vice President-elect and the Presidential Transition Team.

GSA also provided space, services and logistical support to the Presidential Inaugural Committee (PIC) and the Armed Forces Inaugural Committee (AFIC). The PIC and the AFIC planned and staged the various events that make up a Presidential inauguration. Our GSA Inaugural Support Team began preparations in August 2007 and worked straight thru until shortly after the Inaugural on January 20, 2009. Approximately 800 employees of the Armed Forces Inaugural Committee (AFIC) occupied the Mary Switzer Building during this time. GSA provided space, IT and telecommunications support as well as several hundred pieces of surplus furniture. AFIC was very appreciative of GSA efforts to prepare their space timely so they were able to prepare for the Inaugural events. AFIC stated their specific appreciation for the money GSA saved them by diligently searching for and providing surplus furniture. GSA

provided space and other logistical support for over 600 staff members of the Presidential Inaugural Committee (PIC), working closely with the Chairs of the PIC who were named by then President-elect Obama.

GSA provided similar logistical support services to former President Bush and former Vice President Cheney. Coordination with the Executive Office of the President, the White House Office of Administration, and other agencies began in February of 2008 and continued through the transition and well into this new Administration. We helped both the Former President and Vice President to establish their offices when they departed the White House. We continue to support the Office of the Former President; those efforts will continue for the life of the former President.

The Presidential Transition Act of 2000 expanded the services that GSA provides to support the incoming Presidential transition. One of the new functions identified in that Act is to assist the incoming Administration on orientation activities for key Presidential appointees. The objective of orientation is, and I quote from the Act, “to acquaint them with the types of problems and challenges that most typically confront new political appointees when they make the transition from campaign and other prior activities to assuming the responsibility for governance after inauguration.” We worked with both campaigns to understand the requirements of this Act well before the election. After the election, we worked closely with the Transition Team to outline how to best meet the requirements of the Act. Orientation activities started early in the

new Administration and are continuing. GSA will continue to work with the White House on providing these orientation activities.

GSA worked closely with NARA to create a Transition summary document and designed and constructed a website that housed more detailed information. We reached out to Office of Presidential Personnel, the Office of Personnel Management, the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of Government Ethics to ask for their assistance in completing this directory. Every one of these agencies stepped up and helped to make this a smooth transition.

In accordance with GSA's role in Presidential transition – for both incoming and outgoing Presidents, the FY 2009 President's Budget requested \$8,520,000 for this orderly transfer of executive power. Transition funds became available to the incoming administration beginning the day following the day of the general election and ended 30 days following the inauguration. Funds were available for expenses of the outgoing President and Vice President from 30 days before, until 6 months after their terms of office expired.

GSA served as the transition manager and advisor on behalf of the President-elect; however, the allocation of the funds was determined by the President-elect and his designee(s).

Looking inside Federal agencies, we started meeting with agencies very early in 2008 to help them prepare for transition. We met individually and collectively to share GSA's unique role with them and to share our thoughts and ideas about what it might take to be ready for a transition. We continued that

throughout the transition period. We created a special section of our gsa.gov website to share information about Presidential Transition with other agencies and the public. We prepared additional guidance for agencies, building upon our past experiences with transition. Prior to the election, we actively worked with Clay Johnson, then Deputy Director of Management for the Office of Management and Budget, to bring all agency Transition Directors together for special sessions focused on Transition. After the election, we worked with the Presidential Transition Team to continue these special sessions for agencies.

This was an exciting time for our government. It presented many challenges and opportunities for many of us across government. Agencies had to focus on preparing for a new administration while also paving the way for a smooth and orderly departure of outgoing appointees. Agencies prepared information and orientation activities for incoming appointees and they ensured that essential programs and services were continued unimpeded. This was a great time to be working in the public service ensuring that our country was well-served while going through a major transition.

Like all other agencies, GSA worked diligently to ensure a smooth transition within our agency. We started early in preparing for transition; we conducted many briefings for political appointees on what the change of administration could bring. Transition guidance that was issued by the Executive Office of the President on July 18th, 2008, provided us and our fellow agencies with excellent reinforcement on the importance of ensuring a smooth transition. This guidance established target dates for specific activities that helped to ensure

an orderly succession, continuity of operations and public service, and also helped non-career employees exit successfully.

In addition to our incoming, outgoing and inaugural teams, GSA empowered four teams to plan for a successful internal transition.

- The first team was focused on support to GSA political appointees who were leaving.
- The second team identified the actions that must be taken prior to and during transition to ensure the continued success of GSA programs, operations and services, including continuity of leadership, transfer of knowledge, and communication with employees. Our leadership succession plan outlined a detailed set of recommendations to ensure no gaps in organization leadership.
- The third team identified logistical and information support to members of the Presidential Transition Team that gathered information about our agency, such as organization, policies, programs and key issues.
- And the fourth team focused on how to ensure a smooth transition of new appointees into leadership positions within our agency.

As an agency, I believe we were well-positioned to ensure a smooth transition inside GSA.

Closing

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Voinovich, and Members of the Sub-Committee, I want to thank you again for the opportunity to address you this

morning. I am proud to have served in this very important role in our government. We worked very closely with both campaigns, with the incoming and outgoing Administrations, and with many Federal agencies. We set the goal of ensuring a smooth and orderly transition. I believe we successfully met that goal.