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STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN DANIEL K. AKAKA

Investing in an Effective Federal Workforce

Hearing Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Aloha and thank you all for being here today as the Subcommittee examines a number of issues that are vitally important to our Federal workforce. We will discuss the progress that has been made on many issues and the steps we must take to make sure the Federal government is effective and efficient now and for future generations.

The Federal government is facing some of the most complex challenges in our nation's history – and doing it with serious budget constraints. To do more with less, it is more important than ever that we have a first-class workforce. The government must make the proper investments in its employees and take the steps necessary to recruit, retain, and develop its talent.

The media often focuses on what goes wrong in government, but today I want to take a moment to recognize the important work of two million civil servants who provide essential services to the American people. The tragic deaths of Ambassador Stevens and three other civil servants remind us of the sacrifices public servants make on our behalf – unfortunately, occasionally, the ultimate sacrifice.

Over the years, I have met and worked with so many inspiring men and women, who work hard every day to serve this country. Our country is stronger thanks to their service and it has truly been my privilege to support them and move our government forward.

I am pleased that we have made progress in a number of areas that have been priorities for me and for this Subcommittee, including enacting and implementing the Non-Foreign Area Retirement Equity Assurance Act and the Telework Enhancement Act, as well as making important strides in reforming the Federal hiring and security clearance processes. We are also doing a better job matching federal employment opportunities to the important skills of veterans and people with disabilities, and in making sure all employees get the training they need to help agencies meet critical missions. But there is more work to be done.

As many of you know, I will be retiring at the end of this year and this will be my last hearing as Chairman of this Subcommittee. It has been a great honor for me to serve as Chairman of this Subcommittee, and work on issues that – although they may not always make headlines – are crucial to improving the lives of our citizens.

Throughout my career in Congress, I have used the spirit of aloha to get things done. In Hawaii, the Aloha Spirit is the feeling that we need to bring people together and solve problems. I may not always have the same priorities or perspectives as my Republican counterparts, but I always try to look for common ground. Recently, I have been working closely with Representative Issa to pass the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act, which has been a priority for me for years, before Congress adjourns.

Over the years, I have often said that I believe that the Federal government, as the nation's largest employer, has a responsibility to lead by example, to be a model employer. It is my hope that the work of this Subcommittee has moved us toward that goal.

I have been so privileged to work closely with the witnesses here today to address the needs of our country and the Federal workforce. Today we have two panels of star witnesses including some of the most dedicated, effective leaders on federal workforce issues. I know each of you cares deeply about our nation and these issues, and I want to thank you for being here today and for the work you do every day to improve our government and our workforce. I look forward to your testimony.

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