



FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

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Statement of National President Jon Adler Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association

On

“A More Efficient and Effective Government: Cultivating the Federal Workforce”

Before the

**Subcommittee on Efficiency and Effectiveness of Federal
Programs and the Federal Workforce**

Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee

May 6, 2014

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Portman, and Members of the Subcommittee, I am pleased to submit this statement on behalf of the membership of the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association. FLEOA is a non-partisan, nonprofit professional organization representing more than 26,000 criminal investigators in 65 agencies across the federal government. We thank you for convening this hearing on the state of the federal workforce. I would be remiss, Chairman Tester, if I did not also thank you for your steadfast leadership on preventing harmful changes to the Federal Employees Compensation Act and your continued support for federal law enforcement.

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, our nation has taken a proactive, "forward leaning" position in order to ensure that America and its citizens are protected from both foreign and domestic threats. That protection has come at a high cost. A cost not only in terms of dollars spent, but in countless agent-hours, deployments, and lives lost. As the National President of the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, I have the privilege of representing men and women who are on the front lines protecting our nation both at home and abroad. At the American Embassies in Iraq and Afghanistan, Diplomatic Security Service Agents are there doing their job. In Iraq and Afghanistan and the broader CENTCOM area, multi-agency federal law enforcement task forces, led by the FBI, are tracking down and capturing those that wish to do us harm. The US Marshal's Service is protecting Afghanistan's Court system while DEA Agents, are working to eradicate the spread of opium in that country. Here at home, Secret Service Agents are working around the clock to keep America's leaders safe. On the borders, the dedicated officers of the US Border Patrol are keeping a war from spreading onto American soil. These officers are on the front lines in the war on terror, and are responsible for hundreds of millions of dollars in seizures each year from terrorist financiers, money launders, and drug cartels.

As this introduction indicates, federal law enforcement is a profession that is absolutely unique in the ranks of the federal government, and the federal law enforcement officer has no counterpart in the private sector. Federal law enforcement officers are routinely asked to put their lives on the line to protect our nation from terrorists and criminals. It is one of the most stressful, most dangerous, and most rewarding careers for those who meet the rigorous requirements of the job. It is in recognition of these facts that Congress established distinct pay, benefit, and personnel systems for federal law enforcement positions.

Unfortunately, in both the 112th and 113th Congresses these same pay, benefit, and personnel systems have been under attack, largely as part of the effort to address the negative effects of sequestration. While each of the workforce policy changes that have been considered to date may appear to have merit in the overall effort to reduce the federal budget, they have also negatively impacted both employee morale and the various missions law enforcement agencies are asked to perform. Such policies have the potential to significantly impact the safety of both federal law enforcement officers and the public.

Indeed, as today's hearing notice intimates, federal law enforcement officers in recent years have weathered a perfect storm of assaults on their jobs and their livelihoods through the government shutdown, sequestration, and hiring and pay freezes, to name just a few. This has been an ever-present reality for the men and women I represent. But they have also been subject to almost relentless verbal assaults as overpaid and underperforming bureaucrats, the threats of layoffs and reductions-in-force, the prospect of significant changes to their retirement system, the threat of additional budget cuts endangering both agency mission and officer safety, and a continuing attempt to alter the disability benefits available to those officers who have sacrificed themselves in defense of this nation. Without question, each of these and many other initiatives have taken a heavy toll on federal law enforcement officers' morale and on agency recruitment and retention efforts. Yet to their credit, the federal law enforcement community has never let it affect their dedication to carrying out their sworn mission to protect and serve their fellow citizens.

Despite the resiliency of our federal law enforcement workforce, it is past time for Congress and the Administration to reverse course before the effects are irreversible. Serious consideration must be given to prioritizing both the human capital and operational needs of the agencies charged with protecting homeland security and public safety. It is no easy, quick, or inexpensive thing to recruit, vet, train, and assign an individual to a federal law enforcement position. Particularly if it is in response to an imminent threat or to a catastrophic natural or manmade disaster.

To do so means placing a greater emphasis on recognizing the unique nature of the law enforcement mission, and law enforcement officers and their agencies, within the federal government for purposes of staffing, allocation of resources, and personnel policies. While we agree that there is a legitimate need to reduce the cost and size of the federal government, we must not do so at the expense of the homeland security and public safety needs of our nation and its citizens. It is neither fair nor wise to try and balance the budget on the backs of those whose sole mission is to keep us safe. Congress should recognize federal law enforcement as the "essential" government service that it is, and carefully consider the impact that any future workforce policy changes will have on both personnel and mission.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, we hope that this will be the first of several hearings examining the impact that recent Administration actions, federal agency policies, and congressional legislation have had on federal law enforcement. We also trust that this Subcommittee will help steer the Congress and the Administration towards solutions that build up and retain a highly capable and qualified workforce. FLEOA looks forward to working with you and others to advance solutions for the benefit of the brave men and women who are asked to put their lives on the line to protect us each and every day.