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Governmental Affairs
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government
Management, the Federal Workforce, and the
District of Columbia**

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify on the principles for a successful alternative public personnel system.

As President of the National Academy of Public Administration I am pleased to appear before you to provide some perspectives based on work at the Academy. As you know, the Academy is an independent, non-partisan organization chartered by the Congress to give trusted advice. The views presented today are my own and are not necessarily those of the Academy as an institution.

Academy study and research panels composed of Academy Fellows and other experts have focused on the challenges faced by personnel systems in individual agencies, as well as on human capital management governmentwide. My comments today focus on two aspects of that work. First, we can draw conclusions about specific characteristics of the robust human resources systems needed to support federal missions. Second, much greater attention needs to be devoted to the management issues raised by the increasingly multisector workforce carrying out federal missions today.

There are several characteristics common to robust human resource systems:

One, all of our recent HR studies have emphasized the need for top agency leadership – both political and career – to become totally invested in the design, implementation, evaluation and communication of the human capital management system. This is particularly important with respect to the implementation of alternative HR systems.

Two, agencies should have the flexibility and agility necessary to establish human capital management systems which allow them to meet their unique missions. In a study of the Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), the Academy panel stressed that for the agency to fulfill its key mission of furthering innovation in the US and around the world, it needed to establish its own competitive recruitment, training and career development plan. Development of a targeted strategic workforce planning and staffing process was also one of our lead recommendations for improving the capacity of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

Three, an appropriately designed and implemented performance management system can increase employee morale and organizational performance. Critical components are that the agency's mission be clearly articulated and that individual employees can see how their own work contributes to that mission. Ongoing training and communication among all participants is key. This has been discussed in detail in several Academy reports, including one issued by our Human Resources Management Consortium last year.

Four, the importance of leadership development and succession planning, based on a comprehensive human capital strategy, was stressed in a study we did of the Senior Executive Service for the Office of Personnel Management. Our FBI study panel recommended that their leadership and succession planning program be designed to ensure that the best candidates fill leadership positions and to reduce the excessive turnover in those positions. In our ongoing work with NASA we have recommended that the agency carefully analyze its leadership resources, competencies and needs, and that it broaden the scope of its leadership and career development program.

I have copies of our most recent FBI, NASA and USPTO reports for the Subcommittee's use and they are also available on the Academy's web site. (www.napawash.org)

The application of these principles and systems – involvement of top leadership; individualized workforce planning and competitive hiring; performance management; and leadership and succession planning, will likely result in differing approaches in different agencies, depending on their organization and mission. The Academy is examining the issue of what values and systems should remain governmentwide in an increasingly flexible civil service system. Stakeholder interviews and surveys to date show strong support for the establishment of an underlying, governmentwide framework of values, principles and processes to support individual agency systems. In other words, there should be a common framework for all federal personnel management systems, within which individual agencies have the flexibility to develop and implement their individual human management strategies to accomplish their particular missions.

A second area of Academy work that has a direct bearing on the Subcommittee's inquiry is our consideration of the management implications of the multisector workforce. The federal government's work is increasingly carried out by a combination of federal, state, local, private contractor and non-profit entities. In many cases, private sector employees work side by side with federal civil servants. Federal human capital systems should take the management implications of this multisector workforce into account, but there is little evidence that they are doing so systematically or effectively. One place where such work is underway is at NASA, where the Academy is assisting the agency as it develops

a strategic workforce planning directive and process that takes into account the total workforce, encompassing civil servants, contractors and other employees.

An Academy working group has identified several challenges and questions raised by the multisector workforce, including:

- How can we assure accountability for achieving the results expected of federal programs with a multisector workforce?
- How do we improve the skills and competencies of federal managers to manage programs being performed by a multisector workforce?
- How can federal managers effectively manage non-federal workers who are reporting to a third party?
- What is the impact of contractors supervising other contractors?
- Is it important that the federal civil service retain core competencies?
- What is the impact of the multisector workforce on values traditionally promoted by the federal government? For example, the federal government has been a leader in providing career opportunities for individuals with disabilities and for those who need work flexibility to meet family needs.

I believe that these questions and related ones need to be carefully addressed as part of the federal government's workforce strategy and planning.

I appreciate the Subcommittee's ongoing work on these issues and would be glad to respond to any questions that you have for me.