

STATEMENT OF
ANGELA BAILEY
DEPUTY ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR TALENT AND CAPACITY POLICY
U.S. OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

before the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT, THE
FEDERAL WORKFORCE, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

on

RECRUITING AND HIRING THE NEXT GENERATION OF FEDERAL
EMPLOYEES

MAY 8, 2008

Good Morning, Chairman Akaka, Senator Voinovich, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for this opportunity to highlight, during Public Service Recognition Week, the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) mission to ensure the Federal Government has an effective civilian workforce – a workforce that draws on the strength of America's rich diversity of talent. In pursuing our mission, OPM must balance the needs of our agencies and job applicants with merit system principles and veterans' preference. We are also mindful of the responsibilities assigned to OPM under the President's Management Agenda concerning strategic management of human capital, and we are very appreciative of all of the work done by this subcommittee over the last several years to provide needed flexibilities that are helping to improve Federal recruitment efforts and the overall Federal hiring process.

The Next Generation

As you noted in your invitation letter, approximately 40 percent of Federal employees will retire in the next five to ten years. As the President's human resources advisor, OPM Director Linda Springer fully understands the importance of recruiting and employing the next generation of Federal workers. She has set clear goals and timelines for achieving those goals as part of our Agency's Strategic and Operational Plan, and all of us at OPM are held accountable in the performance of our mission.

OPM has expanded our efforts to reach out across the country to encourage Americans to join Federal service. We have used television ads to promote public service; we are highlighting our compensation and benefits packages, and we are promoting our telework

and family friendly policies, which are geared to the preferences and expectations of today's job seeker.

To help agencies better address their hiring needs at both ends of the employment spectrum, OPM developed a legislative proposal that would allow agencies – without coming to OPM for approval – to rehire annuitants on a part-time and/or time-limited basis under certain conditions, without a salary offset. This proposal, which we submitted to Congress a year ago, would permit Federal agencies to reemploy retired Federal employees, without offsetting annuity from salary, for a maximum of 520 hours in the first 6 months following retirement, a maximum of 1,040 hours in any 12-month period, and a total of 6,240 hours for any individual. While those reemployed under this authority would receive both salary and annuity payments, they would earn no additional retirement benefits based on the reemployment.

This proposal is carefully drafted to make such reemployment both attractive to annuitants and easy for agencies to use, and to avoid abuse. This proposal will encourage individuals who otherwise would leave the Federal Government permanently to continue their service part-time, for a limited period. These experienced workers, with their institutional knowledge can help the next generation of employees integrate into an agency's workforce by serving as mentors and knowledge management facilitators, thus providing a seamless transition from generation to generation.

OPM would particularly like to thank Senators Collins, Warner, and Voinovich for their introduction of this proposal as S. 2003. We also appreciate the support for this proposal from the President of the Partnership for Public Service who is testifying on the next panel.

In addition to the aforementioned, I would like to address three specific areas in which OPM is leading the way to improve the recruitment and employment of the next generation of Federal employees: 1) the hiring process, 2) job announcements for entry-level positions, and 3) selection methods for the Senior Executive Service (SES).

The Hiring Process

We are well aware that the Federal hiring system has evolved over many years into a cumbersome process and hiring takes far too long. There are few of us who do not have a story to tell that illustrates frustration with the Federal hiring process, whether it is our own, a friend's, or a neighbor's.

OPM, through collaboration with agencies and on our own, has instituted some important initiatives to “fix the hiring” over the years. OPM has provided recruitment tools and regulatory flexibilities to help agencies achieve their recruitment goals and human capital needs. At the same time, we have reminded agencies of their pivotal role as a strategic “front line” in the Federal hiring process and the need to thoughtfully plan their recruitment strategies to aggressively and creatively pursue applicants in the labor market.

Under the leadership of Deputy Director Howard Weizmann, we have expanded these efforts by partnering with several agency Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) to launch a new, holistic and systemic view of the hiring process. In the past, we took a much narrower view of the process and tried to “fix” individual pieces, rather than look at all of the components and their interrelatedness. Our current initiative focuses on five components—workforce planning, recruitment, hiring, suitability and security, and orientation – that work in concert to create an efficient and effective hiring process.

We are also piloting this roadmap within OPM and the Departments of the Army and Navy. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Department of the Treasury are piloting the recruitment and orientation components of the roadmap, respectively. By July we will have the results of our pilot efforts and will publish in September a Governmentwide standard for the hiring process, along with a “how to” guide that includes successful practices, templates, and scripts for communicating with applicants.

OPM plans to require agencies to establish their baseline by December of this year, and will ask the agencies to measure and report their success against this Governmentwide standard by December 2009. The intent is to drive smart, proven hiring practices throughout the Federal Government, increase reciprocity among agencies, and to have measurable improvements both in the length of time it takes to fill a Federal job and in how agencies communicate with applicants throughout the hiring process.

Improving Job Announcements

As a subset of this initiative, we are also streamlining our job announcements and creating templates that agencies may use when advertising for entry-level positions. In April, OPM made available through USAJOBS three templates agencies may use for accountant, accounting technician, and secretary positions. Currently, OPM is developing a template for entry-level contract specialist positions. As you are aware, there is a huge demand for qualified acquisition personnel, and attracting and retaining highly skilled employees is of utmost concern.

OPM is working with the Federal Acquisition Institute to design the job announcement for the acquisition community and has managed to streamline the announcement by reducing verbiage by 75 percent. We have replaced the legalese and pages of extraneous information that were not required or necessary to announce a job with a shorter announcement that is written in plain language and is easier to navigate. It also advertises upfront two of the most important issues of concern to new professionals – pay and benefits. The Federal Government has one of the most progressive benefits packages in the world, and the Federal Government must heighten the public’s awareness of this by increasing the focus on the benefits package in our job announcements. We simply cannot afford not to promote these benefits to the next generation of Federal employees. OPM anticipates releasing this new template for agencies to use by this summer. We will continue to pursue our streamlining efforts based on the success of our initial templates.

Selection Methods for the Senior Executive Service (SES)

Moving to our executive corps, OPM has determined that agency processes for making SES selections are less effective and efficient than they could be, and may ultimately deter qualified individuals from applying for executive jobs in the Federal Government.

In concert with several agencies, (Departments of the Air Force, Army, Navy, Justice, Treasury, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Veterans' Affairs and Energy) OPM will pilot two separate methods for executive selection starting this June. One alternative in the pilot will be a more streamlined selection method that focuses on an individual's accomplishments as identified through the current executive competencies.

The other alternative in the pilot will allow candidates to apply for SES positions by providing only their resume. This method is specifically designed to attract seasoned executives whose resumes clearly demonstrate the extent of their experience and accomplishments. Both methods may attract individuals who otherwise might be deterred from applying for positions by the additional written requirements to separately describe their executive competencies. We anticipate completing the pilot testing of these initiatives by December 2008.

The Balancing Act Continues

OPM must find a delicate balance between efficiency and effectiveness, while maintaining our principles and values as a Federal employer. We believe these initiatives and improvements will preserve our strong foundation of merit principles and veterans' preference. If anything, OPM believes that these efforts will prove that it is possible to challenge difficult and esoteric processes, and, more importantly, create solutions that do not compromise our principles.

The work of the Federal Government relies on skilled, hardworking individuals who have committed themselves to public service. During Public Service Recognition Week, our Nation pays tribute to those who have chosen this means of service. This week serves as a reminder of OPM's mission and guiding principles in striving to ensure we maintain an effective Federal workforce. Public service is a noble calling, and we look forward to working with you to inspire a new generation to join public service.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement, and I would be pleased to answer any questions you and other Members may have.