

ORAL TESTIMONY
OF
ROBERT E. CORSI, JR.
FORMER ASST DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF, MANPOWER, PERSONNEL & SERVICES (USAF-RET)
BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES SENATE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON REGULATORY AFFAIRS AND FEDERAL MANAGEMENT
ON
EMPOWERING MANAGERS: IDEAS FOR A MORE EFFECTIVE FEDERAL WORKFORCE
FEBRUARY 9, 2017

Thank you Chairman Lankford, Ranking Member Heitkamp, and Members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to share my experiences of over 46 years in the Air Force in both my military capacity and as a member of the Senior Executive Service to assist the Committee in finding ways to improve the management of the federal workforce. In both my roles, I have had the distinct honor of working with some of the most professional, dedicated, and incredibly humble career civilians. Whatever reforms you are contemplating need to recognize the importance of our career civilian workforce in providing that necessary continuity during periods of high leadership turnover and that we, above all, hold them in high regard. My comments will literally address most aspects of managing the civilian workforce and I ask that my written statement be included in the official record which includes 30 actionable recommendations for the Committee's consideration.

I would be the first to say that the civil service system needs major rework. The system has evolved over many years, but fundamentally has not changed since its inception. What has changed is a very dynamic budget environment, a workforce that is unjustifiably held in disregard, and pressures to reduce the workforce without knowing the true work requirements.

Managers are consumed on a daily basis with: budget uncertainty, dealing with a 90+ year old pay system that rewards longevity, archaic hiring practices that don't allow agencies to compete on a level playing field with the private sector, the lack of ability to develop and shape their workforces, and grievance and complaint processes that drag on for years.

On any given day, we have approximately 2.1 million federal employees on board, excluding Postal, which equates to approximately \$210 billion/year using an average of \$100,000/person. For the most part, there has never been an analytic foundation to support the level of federal employees. To its credit, the DOD has a requirements-driven process, with manpower professionals, to determine both its military and civilian levels. Most federal

agencies do not have that same rigor and are ill-prepared to defend their manpower levels. Most agency heads are blind to their true manpower requirements and most have no centralized accounting for their manpower and skill levels at every level in their organizations. Fiscal pressures demand that agencies need to justify the size of their workforce. This will require Congress to insist that work force levels are requirements-based, that agency heads can defend their manpower levels, and that authoritative documents support those levels. But Congress must also help with timely budgets and consider giving agencies a planning target for personnel levels for an additional two years to allow them to make informed decisions.

For over 90 years, we've had the General Schedule (GS) Pay System. Locality pay, special pay authorities, expanding workforces under non-GS pay demonstration projects, and longevity not performance-based increases, all make a compelling case to eliminate the General Schedule Pay System. The time is now to export the lessons learned from the pay demonstration projects and to move forward with a pay for performance system.

There are significant challenges with managing the federal workforce. There is no requirement for agencies to have a human capital strategic plan with the analytics to guide current and future force shaping. Managers are mired in a hiring process that significantly limits their ability to compete with the private sector. And, there are limited tools and hiring authority for agency heads to attract and retain the best talent. Congress can help by directing OPM to: 1. ensure that all agencies have viable human capital strategic plans, 2. give agency heads all decision authority to use direct hires to meet their critical skills needs, 3. ensure that all agencies have the authority to shape their workforces without OPM approval, and 4. require every agency to have a formal civilian training and development program. Congress can also help by providing dedicated and fenced training monies in the agency budgets.

Any changes that will give agency heads more authority to manage their workforce and to empower them with the proper tools will pay great dividends in giving managers more time to be managers. Again, I applaud the Committee for taking on this challenge. I offer my service to do whatever I can to help the Committee bring real positive change to the federal workforce. Our country and our federal employees deserve no less.