



**Written Testimony for Kathleen Lingle  
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Prepared for

**The Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs  
Subcommittee on the Oversight of Government Management, the Federal  
Workforce and the District of Columbia**

**Hearing Entitled,  
"Work-Life Programs: Attracting, Retaining and Empowering the Federal  
Workforce"**

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## **I. Introduction**

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Voinovich, distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the honor of testifying before you today on how work-life programs can attract, motivate and empower employees and for the opportunity to explain how these vital initiatives coalesce into a strategic framework that can be used to improve federal employee engagement and satisfaction. We are pleased that this Subcommittee decided to highlight this important issue during Public Service Recognition Week and has continued its leadership in efforts to make the federal government an employer of choice.

My name is Kathleen Lingle, and I'm the Executive Director of Alliance for Work-Life Progress at WorldatWork. I've been a work-life researcher, practitioner, consultant, and now have the privilege of leading the Alliance for Work-Life Progress. Now an entity of WorldatWork, AWLP promotes work-life thought leadership and facilitates dialogue among work-life researchers and practitioners across all industries and sectors. AWLP also defines and celebrates work-life innovation and best practices with its Work-Life Innovative Excellence Award, which showcases programs and policies that demonstrate excellence in enhancing and promoting work-life effectiveness while achieving organizational goals.

As the parent organization of AWLP, WorldatWork is a global association for human resources professionals dedicated to the integration of total rewards designed to attract, motivate and retain a talented workforce. The elements of total rewards represent the "tool kit" from which an organization chooses to offer and align a value proposition that creates value for both the organization and the employee. An effective total rewards strategy results in satisfied, engaged and productive employees, who in turn create desired business performance and results. WorldatWork provides training and certification in all areas of total rewards, including the only work-life certification currently in existence.

## **II. Historical View of Work-Life Initiatives in the Federal Government**

The discussion of the current state of work-life practices in the federal government would not be complete without first taking a quick historical view. Let me begin by pointing out that human resources professionals within a number of federal agencies experimented with workplace flexibility long before such innovation was introduced into private industry. An early, limited menu of flexible work options were practiced during the early 1970s within some federal agencies. The benefits of doing so were sufficient enough to precipitate the Federal Employees Flexible and Compressed Work Schedules Act (FEFCWA) and the Federal Employees Part-Time Career Employment Acts in 1978, the former being permanently authorized by Congress in 1985.

In 1989 Congress required OPM to establish a formal job-sharing program. This led OPM to establish the Federal Flexible Workplace Pilot Project in conjunction with GSA. The next year, 1990, Congress passed the Treasury, Postal Service and General Government Appropriations Act, which funded federal "flexiplace" arrangements and received permanent funding in 1995. As a point of comparison, it wasn't until the early 1990s that flexible work arrangements began to be adopted by some of the most proactive corporations in the United States, most of this activity originally inspired by The Clean Air Act of 1990.

This Administration has also demonstrated a dedication to advancing work-life initiatives within the federal government and the private sector as demonstrated by the establishment of the White House

Council on Women and Girls and by hosting the White House Forum on Workplace Flexibility, held in March and attended by leaders from across all sectors.

### **III. Current State of Work-Life Effectiveness in the Federal Government and the Private Sector**

As we have seen over the past 35 years, most if not all federal agencies have developed an impressive variety of supports to help everyone who works manage their dual agenda throughout the career lifecycle. What is striking today is that for the most part, the federal sector is not harnessing the full power of work-life effectiveness as the most inexpensive and intrinsically motivating driver of attraction, engagement and retention available in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The notable gap in the federal environment is a failure to deploy work-life as an overarching organizational strategy, one that has a demonstrated capacity to engage the minds and hearts of any labor force. In private industry today, employers compete to be perceived as best in class because such employee-friendly behavior literally pays itself many times over: higher productivity, more profitability, greater attraction and retention of the kind of talent required for success, excellence in operations, better corporate citizenship, and even more positive mental and physical health outcomes. The discrepancy between the private sector and public sector has little to do with the specific work-life programs available in both environments, which are ample.

One way of strategically thinking about work-life programs in a holistic manner is the work-life portfolio, seven categories of support for the life events that are predictably encountered by everyone who works, encompasses a broad array of programs, policies, resources and leadership practices that recognize the employee as someone who functions simultaneously in multiple roles — as a contributor in the workplace, within a family, and in the community that the employee and employer share. (For a visual of the portfolio and how the categories interact with one another, please see the attached graphic.) The categories of support are:

- Caring for dependents (policies and services for reconciling family obligations and employment)
- Creative uses of paid and unpaid time off
- Proactive approaches to health and wellness
- Workplace flexibility
- Financial support
- Community involvement – internal (caring for each other as a community) and outreach to the external community
- Managing cultural challenges

Each employer takes a somewhat different approach to addressing one or more of these work-life issues, based on the composition and needs of its workforce, clients, business model and organizational culture.

As employees use more and more work-life options in response to the numerous and predictable work-life conflicts encountered in the course of a typical career, the greater the benefits that can be documented for the business, workforce and other key stakeholders, such as clients and shareholders, families and communities.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Category #1: Caring for dependents (children and aging parents)**

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<sup>1</sup> *Categories of Work-Life Effectiveness: Successfully Evolving Your Organization's Work-Life Portfolio*, [www.awlp.org](http://www.awlp.org)

This first category of support in the work-life portfolio encompasses policies and services that are designed to reconcile parenthood, other unpaid care giving, and employment, for men as well as women. According to the OPM website, there are more than 1,000 free, federal child care centers sponsored by various federal agencies for use by federal employees. The Department of Defense (DoD) Child Care System provides child care in more than 800 Child Development Centers alone. On a daily basis, DoD cares for more than 200,000 children in centers, family child care homes and school-age care programs. In addition, the U.S. Coast Guard offers new parents a one-time leave of up to two years, access to nine on-site child care centers, training for non-working spouses as family daycare providers, allows families to donate time off to coworkers, and offered adoption aid and flexibility scheduling.

One best practice from the private sector comes from Abbott headquartered in Abbott Park, IL. Abbott sponsors a massive on-site child care center at the firm's headquarters to look after children from birth through kindergarten. In addition, all parents receive discounts at more than 2,600 U.S. child care centers (generating a total of \$280,000 in savings last year) and save part of their salary in a pre-tax child care account to help pay for it. Some companies that do not offer on-site care will contract with child care facilities close by, such as the Kellogg headquarters in Michigan, which has contracted with a child care facility nearby that offers priority access to full-time care for Kellogg employees. There are companies that even go a step farther. TriHealth in Ohio offers on-site camps with cooking, sports and science lessons when school is out in addition to year-round discounts at local child care centers and emergency caregivers available for sick children for only \$2.50/hour.

### **Category #2: Creative uses of paid and unpaid time off**

How employers provide time off to their employees is the second category of the work-life portfolio. With all workers experiencing a "time crunch" due to the competing demands of work and life, finding enough time to spend with family, on one's self and in the community is the most fundamental work-life need. Some of the more innovative private sector policies in this category include paid family leave for new fathers as well as mothers, sabbaticals, paid or release time for community service, responsive shift-work policies, paid-time-off leave banks (PTO), extreme travel compensatory time, and after-hours e-mail policies. In fact, at the Dow Corning headquarters in Michigan, employees who want to further their education are allowed to take up to four years off. And in a nod to those balancing work and motherhood, Dow Corning just expanded leave for adoptive parents to six fully paid weeks from five.

### **Category #3: Proactive approaches to health and well-being**

The work-life portfolio takes a holistic view of the employee, which means the employee's health and wellness along with helping them balance the competing demands of work and life. This category also has a demonstrated cost-savings benefit to the employer. Because the negative impact of stress-related illness has been shown to cost companies \$50-\$150 billion annually<sup>2</sup>, a focus on this category of work-life support holds the most promise of contributing to the reduction in the escalating cost of health care. Today, many employers are trying to encourage individual employees to engage in behavioral change that includes healthier options. Some of the most popular programs in this area are on-site gyms or subsidized gym memberships, along with monetary incentives for participating in health screenings and on-site wellness programs. One company in Hawaii, Kaikor Construction, has gone above and beyond this for the past two years by hiring a personal trainer for twice weekly circuit and weight training sessions during working hours. One hundred percent of full-time staff have participated in this program. The federal government is also making strides in this area with the opening of the new work-life campus

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<sup>2</sup> Sauter, S.L.; Murphy, L.R.; and Hurrell, Jr., J.J. (1990) Prevention of work-related psychological disorders. *American Psychologist*. 45(10):1146-1153

shared by OPM, GSA and the Department of the Interior that offers services such as blood pressure screenings, influenza and H1N1 vaccinations, body mass index measurement, health education, and blood glucose screenings to 5,000 federal employees.

#### **Category #4: Community involvement**

This is one category of the work-life portfolio where employers' and employees' interests are in close alignment, because both the labor force and customers usually come from the community in which the organization operates. Corporate social responsibility is expanding to include not only new types of external community outreach, but also a renewed focus on building a strong internal sense of community. Formal ethics programs, shared (or catastrophic) leave banks, and disaster relief funds are some of the creative ways of employers engaging in their community. This year, AWLP awarded an Innovative Excellence Award to Hospital Corporation of America's Caring for the Community program. HCA, with locations across the country including in Colorado, Louisiana, Hawaii and South Carolina, engages employees by allowing an employee to take up to 24 hours of paid volunteer leave each year. When the employee adds just one more hour of personal time, HCA provides a \$500 contribution to that organization in recognition of the 25 hours donated. HCA added to this a giving campaign match of up to \$750 to a charity of the employee's choice. Another demonstrated best practice in this area comes from the American Savings Bank in Hawaii whose employees serve on the boards of more than 100 local nonprofits and who have, since 2005, contributed more than 7,800 total volunteer hours to schools and nonprofit organizations on various Hawaiian islands through the company's Seeds of Service program.

#### **Category #5: Financial support (self and family)**

Providing financially for oneself and family from career entry through retirement is basic to work-life effectiveness and the work-life portfolio demonstrates that employers can help in this area. In this arena, benefits, compensation and work-life professionals collaborate closely to create non-traditional policies, where appropriate, and find compelling ways to communicate the value of financial offerings. Some examples of programs and services of value to employees today include personal financial planning, adoption reimbursement, dependent and health-care flexible spending accounts, discounted pet/auto/home insurance, mortgage assistance, group discounts on a variety of retail products, and workplace convenience services (dry cleaning, parking lot oil changes, etc.).

#### **Category #6: Workplace Flexibility**

Workplace flexibility, arguably the most familiar of the work-life portfolio categories, refers to a leadership practice that facilitates the customization of when, where and how work gets done by individuals and teams. There are many tools and approaches employed to enhance workplace flexibility, including flexible career strategies, flexible benefit options, management flexibility training, flexible work scheduling and work redesign that streamlines essential processes and continually identifies and eliminates low-value work.

Flexibility is one of the most powerful drivers of retention and engagement today. It has no fixed cost. It is the work-life initiative most sought after by employees (especially top performers). It is empirically linked to higher levels of productivity, resilience and shareholder value. It is ubiquitous among "employers of choice," who are significantly more profitable than their less flexible peer group. Hundreds (if not thousands) of companies have policies and tools to support it. It continues to be the most popular topic at national work-life conferences and in the media. Some examples of the variety of best practices in this area include:

- At the Procter and Gamble headquarters in Ohio, employees engage in quarterly FlexLife sessions to help them determine whether they're living balanced lives and how to create action

plans for change, if needed. Overall, 60 percent of all employees adjust their hours or telecommute, and compressed schedules have quadrupled since being introduced to hourly workers last year.

- Nurses and imaging professionals at Northwestern Memorial Healthcare in Chicago, IL can choose their own hours online and are able to adjust them every six weeks.
- At the Kellogg headquarters in Battle Creek, Michigan, regular educational seminars are held to explain to employees how to apply for and manage flexible schedule, and there is new online training providing managers with a template for creating a balanced work environment. At least 30 percent of employees now use formal flex arrangements and all workers use flextime, while 90 percent of professionals worked from home at least once.
- The United States Patent and Trademark Office has developed a work-from-home program for examining attorneys who review trademark applications. The program features spaces to work and the necessary equipment to establish a secure connection to the agency's network, and automated systems enable users to complete all of their examination duties electronically. This program has become a model for the federal government and allowed the Trademarks team to maintain 86 percent of normal workday production during the February 2010 blizzard.

#### **Category #7: Managing cultural challenges**

Creating organization-wide support for work-life effectiveness is a crucial category in the work-life portfolio. This is often a complex and difficult undertaking that requires strong leadership in culture change management. In order to combat the very real barriers to the full engagement and productivity of every contributor in the workforce, it is usually necessary to engage in specific culture change interventions to demonstrate the positive business case for these programs. Thus, there is a strong link between work-life effectiveness, diversity initiatives, women's advancement, mentoring and networking.

#### **IV. Benefits of a Coherent Work-Life Strategy**

Not only are there numerous best practices from which to model a coherent strategy for federal work-life programs, there are also numerous studies that document the variety of benefits that come with a successful work-life portfolio. Many studies have shown that the quality of workers' jobs and the supportiveness of their workplaces are key predictors of workers' job productivity, job satisfaction and commitment to employers. Work-life initiatives are also predictive of an employers' ability to retain workers.

WorldatWork's 2007 survey "Attraction and Retention: The Impact and Prevalence of Work-Life & Benefit Programs" found that a successful work-life portfolio can result in tangible increases to retention and attraction. In that survey, WorldatWork found that a majority of companies report moderate to high impact on attraction and retention for most work-life programs, including all those listed under the categories of workplace flexibility, paid and unpaid time off, culture change initiatives, coaching/mentoring, and learning and advancement opportunities.<sup>3</sup>

The evidence for flexibility's prowess in both attracting and retaining employees as well as creating value for the company comes from several sources, including Watson Wyatt's Human Capital Index research, which has established the link between superior human capital management and equally

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<sup>3</sup> WorldatWork. "Attraction and Retention: The Impact and Prevalence of Work-Life & Benefit Programs." October 2007. <http://www.worldatwork.org/waw/adimLink?id=21945&nonav=yes>

superior shareholder value. Excellence in five key human resource areas is associated with a definable increase in bottom-line performance. One of these clusters is labeled "Collegial, Flexible Workplace," which centers on management practices and support for flexible work arrangements and the concomitant trust and shared values that are required for successful implementation. This cluster of eight specific human capital practices creates 9 percent of shareholder value, of which company support for flexible work options alone contributes the most with 3.5 percent.<sup>4</sup>

There are also numerous benefits to the employees themselves. According to the Families and Work Institute 2009 Guide to Bold New Ideas for Making Work Work, employees in more flexible and supportive workplaces are more effective, more highly engaged and less likely to look for a new job in the next year. These employees also enjoy better overall health, better mental health and lower levels of stress.<sup>5</sup> In a report released last September based on data collected in the 2008 National Study of Employers, the Families and Work Institute found that 41 percent of employees report experiencing three or more indicators of stress sometimes, often or very often. However, twice as many employees in organizations defined as "highly effective" (based on criteria that include economic security, autonomy, work-life fit) reported being in excellent health than employees in "low effectiveness" organizations.<sup>6</sup>

These results aren't just confined to the private sector. There is also data that show similar outcomes for public sector employees. In fact, according to the Best Places to Work in the Federal Government report by the Partnership for Public Service, work-life balance and a family-friendly culture are among the key drivers of engagement and satisfaction for employees in the federal workforce, as shown by the fact that these are two of the "Best in Class" categories used to rank federal agencies.<sup>7</sup>

It's not just one demographic group that values these programs. Finding a good work-life balance is important to everyone. From experienced workers ages 50-65 to students just graduating from college, work-life programs appeal to workers in multiple generations, which is especially important with four generations currently working today. Nearly 50 percent of workers between the ages of 50 and 65 find flexible work schedules "extremely appealing," according to a study conducted by the Partnership for Public Service.<sup>8</sup> On the other end of the spectrum, the Partnership for Public Service found that attaining a healthy work-life balance was an important career goal of 66 percent of students graduating in 2008.<sup>9</sup>

And although some still identify work-life programs as programs geared toward women, more and more men are showing a preference for flexibility in their work schedules. The Radcliffe Public Policy Center found that men in their 20s and 30s and women in their 20s, 30s and 40s identified a work schedule that

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<sup>4</sup> Watson Wyatt. "Watson Wyatt Human Capital Index: Human Capital as a Lead Indicator of Shareholder Value." 2002. <http://www.watsonwyatt.com/research/deliverpdf.asp?catalog=W-488&id=x.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Eby, S., Galinsky, E., & Peer, S. 2009 Guide to Bold New Ideas for Making Work Work. 2009. New York, NY: Families and Work Institute. <http://familiesandwork.org/site/research/reports/2009boldideas.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Aumann, K. & Galinsky, E. "The State of Health in the American Workforce: Does Having an Effective Workplace Help?" September 2009. <http://www.familiesandwork.org/site/research/reports/HealthReport.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Partnership for Public Service.; "2009 Best Places to Work;" 2009. <http://bestplacetowork.org/BPTW/assets/BPTW09.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Partnership for Public Service; "A Golden Opportunity;" January 2008. [www.ourpublicservice.org/OPS/publications/download.php?id=122](http://www.ourpublicservice.org/OPS/publications/download.php?id=122)

<sup>9</sup> Partnership for Public Service and Universum; "Great Expectations! What Students Want in an Employer and How Federal Agencies Can Deliver It;" January 14, 2009. [www.ourpublicservice.org/OPS/publications/download.php?id=131](http://www.ourpublicservice.org/OPS/publications/download.php?id=131)

allows them to spend time with their families as the most important job characteristic for them.<sup>10</sup> Also, data from the 2008 National Study of Employers from the Families and Work Institute show that for the first time ever men are experiencing more work-life conflict than women.<sup>11</sup>

There is also strong evidence that work-life programs, such as workplace flexibility programs, have a large impact on commitment and retention among both low- and high-wage workers. A 2005 Corporate Voices for Working Families study found that workers, both low- and high-wage, who had access to flexibility and the freedom to use it without repercussion experienced significantly less burnout than those who did not.<sup>12</sup> It is increasingly clear that this is an issue that cuts across all demographic characteristics.

## **V. Recommendations**

The notion that the federal government should be America's model employer is a familiar refrain. Twenty years ago, Congress required OPM to establish a Federal Flexible Workplace Pilot Project in conjunction with GSA. However, OPM has also recently launched another Workplace Flexibility Pilot project. It feels like we are trying to remake the wheel instead of making forward progress toward the goal of serving as an employer-of-choice role model.

The most straightforward path out of this maze is to do as Director John Berry said recently: consider the big picture. Instead of pursuing one discrete work-life program after another, in relative isolation from each other, I recommend that the entire exercise be ratcheted up a notch and considered in its entirety as one coherent people strategy. Using the work-life portfolio as the well-tested roadmap it has become for employers everywhere, all of the component elements of policy and practice required to meet the dual agenda of federal workers throughout their career lifecycle will fall into place. Any important missing pieces will become evident and can be developed as necessary.

A few immediate tactics will make this task easier:

- Apply a consumer lens, viewing the work environment from the perspective of the people who work there. Organize all benefits, policies and practices around the most common life events experienced by everyone who works, from career entry, to marriage, to buying a home, having children, reforming family, illness, caring for elders, preparing for retirement, etc. This methodology automatically builds and reinforces the work-life portfolio, making it obvious what work-life conflicts are not sufficiently addressed for specific populations or subgroups within the workforce.
- Revise the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey to better reflect actual experience within the work environment. One enhancement would be to ask about ease of access to and usage of work-life initiatives instead of relying on satisfaction scores without verifying that respondents are commenting based on first-hand knowledge. Allow the best work-life researchers (of whom there are many) to partner in analyzing data from the current 2010 survey to help clarify

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<sup>10</sup> Radcliffe Public Policy Center with Harris Interactive (2000). Life's work: Generational attitudes toward work and life integration. Cambridge, MA: Radcliffe Public Policy Center.

[http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/statistics\\_template.php?id=1114&topic=2&area=All](http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/statistics_template.php?id=1114&topic=2&area=All)

<sup>11</sup> Galinsky, E., K. Aumann & J. Bond. "Times Are Changing: Gender and Generation at Work and at Home." March 2009. [http://familiesandwork.org/site/research/reports/Times\\_Are\\_Changing.pdf](http://familiesandwork.org/site/research/reports/Times_Are_Changing.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Corporate Voices for Working Families and WFD Consulting. "Workplace Flexibility for Lower Wage Workers." October 2006. <http://www.corporatevoices.org/system/files/lowerwageflexreviewreport.pdf>

questions of most value for flexibility data and other work-life issues, based on appropriate national norms and scales.

- Consider conducting a one-time work-life needs assessment in between administrations of the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, with the objective of eliciting what is working and not working in terms of support for work-life conflict across all of the categories of the work-life portfolio, by agency, demographic group, etc. In addition, it would be useful to conduct a government-wide work-life needs assessment to address the issue of how well employees are being supported, to perform gap analysis and define necessary enhancements for each agency to achieve its mission. The combination of these data points would provide a much fuller picture of how each agency is positioned within the work-life portfolio.
- Consider establishing a work-life Technical Assistance platform, a national website that would serve as a repository of work-life resources, data, best practices, tools and other expertise.
- Re-constitute a viable, staff-level Interagency Family-Friendly Workplace Working Group, in coordination with the White House Council on Women and Girls with representation from every federal agency and ensure the Working Group will be sustainable and permanent by housing it within an agency, such as OPM or the Department of Labor Women's Bureau. Carefully define roles and responsibilities and make the function of serving on this Working Group a career-enhancing service to the government. It would be advantageous to provide professional facilitation for this group to ensure neutrality, continuity and sustainability. It would be helpful to identify and emulate existing best practices within the federal government, as well as importing those from other sectors as appropriate. The most stellar example I am aware of today is the WorkLife team at NSA, which has been amplifying and expanding the work-life portfolio in all of its manifestations for at least as long as I've been in the work-life field.
- Increase the depth and breadth of work-life and total reward competency across the entire spectrum of human resources professionals in the federal government. This will help solidify the role of government as a model employer, because both private industry and academia are struggling to produce/replace enough work-life expertise to successfully engage a 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. In this regard, the federal government can lead the way, by virtue of its sheer size and impact.
- Reinforce and publicize what a strong employment value proposition the idea of service in the federal government represents today vis a vis private industry.
- Expand current narrow perceptions and practices surrounding flexible work arrangements to encompass the more important and strategic capacity for organizational agility, working to delayer cumbersome decision-making, streamlining processes, and empowering people to take greater control and accountability for the conditions of their own work. Make the federal government a more nimble, proactive, flexible set of organizations, united around a coherent set of people practices.

## **VI. Conclusion**

Despite the popular perception, the federal government has many of the tools needed to create a successful work-life portfolio, from the desire to change to programs and policies already in place to support employees' various needs. It just needs to be pulled together into a comprehensive strategic framework. Thank you for the honor of testifying before you on this important issue today. The Alliance for Work-Life Progress at WorldatWork stands ready to provide any additional resources and information to help the federal government move toward its goal of becoming a model employer.

# The Work-Life Portfolio

