

Opening Statement of Carol Waller Pope

Good Afternoon. I want to thank the Committee and, in particular, Senators Tester and Portman for conducting this hearing. I also thank the Committee staff for their work and meaningful assistance. Finally, I want to thank Congresswoman Norton for being here today as she has been on the two-prior occasions that I appeared before this Committee. I admire her illustrious career in the law, civil rights, human rights, and public service as the first female Chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, appointed by President Carter in 1977. Since 1991, she has served as the distinguished and effective Congresswoman representing the District of Columbia.

While she has found her place as an elected representative, I found mine as Member and Chairman of the Federal Labor Relations Authority. I am here today honored and delighted to have been nominated by President Obama to serve for a third term as Member and, if confirmed, to again serve as Chairman of the Federal Labor Relations Authority. The FLRA, where I have worked as a career attorney and political appointee for the last 33 of my 34 years in public service, has an important statutory mission -- a mission that has been the cornerstone of my professional career.

That mission is to exercise leadership in promoting stable, constructive labor-management relationships and resolving disputes in a manner that contributes to a more effective and efficient government. That mission extends to over 2.1 million non-Postal, federal employees, approximately 1.2 million of whom are represented in 2,200 bargaining units. The FLRA accomplishes its mission through the work of our seven regional offices, where investigations, training and education, alternative dispute resolution, and prosecution of violations of the law take place; and in the Office of Administrative Law Judges, where dispute resolution efforts continue and if unsuccessful, formal adjudication begins. Also, the FLRA component known as the Federal Service Impasses Panel works to resolve bargaining impasses. Finally, and most relevant to the hearing today, the three-Member body known as "the Authority" has responsibility to: 1) render quality, timely decisions to resolve unfair labor practice charges on appeal from the Office of Administrative Law Judges; 2) resolve exceptions to grievance arbitration awards; 3) make determinations regarding representation petitions; and, 4) resolve negotiability disputes.

When I last appeared before this Committee on September 11, 2008, the FLRA was plagued with poor mission performance, hundreds of unresolved cases, and a dispirited workforce noted primarily for its low morale. Today, the FLRA is functioning at a high level of productivity, with customer and FLRA-employee engagement, and with full consultation and collaboration among Presidential and career employees. Upon becoming Chairman in February 2009, I instituted an internal and external campaign known as the "Three R's - Revitalization, Reinvention and Re-engagement." This multi-pronged, multi-year initiative was geared toward revitalizing mission performance and customer service; re-inventing work processes and service delivery models; and re-engaging our customer to better meet their needs for training and timely and quality dispute resolution.

While the "three-R" initiative helped focus our actions and our resources, the FLRA's success over the last four years would not have been realized without the hard work of all of its employees, including those that are mostly unseen and often under-appreciated in our Case Intake and Publication, Human Resources, Administration, and Budget offices. All FLRA employees -- here in Washington and Atlanta and Boston and Chicago and Dallas and Denver and San Francisco -- are its greatest asset! Together we were successful in eliminating the backlog of cases, revising regulations, and renewing a commitment to training, education, and alternative dispute resolution

to avoid costly litigation. Internally, a strategic plan was developed; long-vacated senior and entry-level positions were filled; technology was enhanced; and the agency-wide performance management system was revised.

With increased communication, collaboration, and transparency, employees' commitment to the mission and confidence in leadership was revitalized. Our mission success improved morale and job satisfaction. In 2010, the first Employee Viewpoint Survey conducted after I became Chairman, the FLRA was recognized as the "Most Improved Small Agency" in the federal government with a 250% increase in employee morale and satisfaction. In that Survey, the FLRA rose from 34th (last place) to 20th. The FLRA continued its rise in employee satisfaction in the 2011 Survey, ranking 7th. Most recently, in the 2012 Survey the FLRA ranked 8th. The FLRA currently ranks in the top five small agencies in Teamwork (3rd) and Effective Leadership (3rd).

I would like to share one other perspective with you. Given the fact that at the end of my holdover period in January 2013, the FLRA was a relatively young agency (34 years old) and the fact that I joined the agency as a relatively young attorney, I had then served the agency in increasing responsible positions during 97% of its history. Therefore, I own a unique perspective of both the "good" and the "not-so-good" of our history. Never has there been such a dramatic *improvement* of the FLRA's performance matrix as during my tenure as Chairman. The employees of the FLRA achieved these remarkable results. As Chairman, I worked together with all of the Presidential appointees to provide the leadership and the resources for them to unleash their collective energy, skills, and talents. Going forward, if confirmed, no matter what the challenges -- internal or external, financial, technological, or perhaps skill-based -- as Chairman, I will again work with my Presidential colleagues and all employees to implement a shared vision that prioritizes our resources in order to deliver even better customer service. Our ability to achieve this will be greatly enhanced by the contributions of the full panel of nominees sitting before you today.

I am honored to appear today with my fellow Member-nominees Ernest DuBester and Patrick Pizzella. Chairman DuBester deserves praise for his management of the agency and the Authority for the last eight months, without a quorum of Members. Issuing decisions in pending cases before the Authority, approximately a third of which now exceed internal time-targets for issuance of a decision, has been stalled. Upon confirmation, I am eager to join Member DuBester and to welcome nominee Pizzella to the FLRA family and get busy resolving this backlog of cases. The FLRA also must continue to recruit, train, and retain a diverse workforce. With the looming possibility of government-wide reorganizations and larger budget reductions, the FLRA must continually revise and enhance its work processes to ensure that workplace disputes are resolved in a manner that promotes the effective and efficient operation of government.

In closing, with respect to the FLRA's statutory mission and the role and responsibilities of the position to which I have been nominated, I would like to quote President Teddy Roosevelt, who once stated -- "*Far and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing!*"

I will be happy to answer any questions.