

OPENING STATEMENT

SENATOR GEORGE V. VOINOVICH
CHAIRMAN

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT,
RESTRUCTURING, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

HEARING ON

"HAS GOVERNMENT BEEN 'REINVENTED'?"
THURSDAY, MAY, 4, 2000

Good morning and thank you all for coming. Today the Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management will examine the National Partnership for Reinventing Government, known more commonly by its acronym, NPR. Initiated in March 1993, NPR's stated goal was "to create a government that works better, costs less, and achieves the results Americans care about." It is now the federal government's longest running government reform initiative, and on that, I congratulate them.

This morning, I would like to look beyond the longevity of NPR to learn more about what it has and has not accomplished. This fits in with the Subcommittee's larger goal of considering where we have been and where we need to go to ensure that the federal government is prepared to meet the challenges of this new century.

As many of you know, prior to my election to the Senate I was a government executive for 18 years. I am passionate about government management. When I was County Commissioner and Mayor, I often spoke about getting into the bowels of government. I didn't know the Senate would take me so seriously and put me in the bowels of the Dirksen office building when I first arrived here.

When I became Mayor of Cleveland and again when I became Governor of Ohio, one of the first actions I took was to conduct a thorough management review of government operations. My motto for state government was to work "harder and smarter and do more with less," which stressed public-private partnerships.

I established an Operations Improvement Task Force, through which we had over 300 people - experts in their fields - volunteer 150,000 hours to look into every nook and cranny of state government and make recommendations for improvement; much like I had done when I was Mayor. I made it a priority to follow through on those recommendations and, as a result, the State of Ohio saved literally tens of millions of dollars that would have been lost to overlap, duplication and inefficiency. The efforts of the State of Ohio received much-deserved recognition over the years, and were written about by Harvard Business School. My point is that I know first-hand the challenges and the rewards of rooting out waste and improving management of government at all levels.

Today, I will ask our witnesses if the National Partnership for Reinventing Government has accomplished what it set out to do on the federal level. What have been its successes? Where have its efforts fallen short? And what has it left unaddressed?

Unfortunately, I cannot ask the Director of NPR, Mr. Morley Winograd, these same questions. Although officially invited almost a month in advance, Mr. Winograd has declined our invitation to be the lead witness or to send a deputy to discuss NPR's record. NPR has taken on an operational role, acting on its own as an agent of change in the government. I think it would have been appropriate for NPR to have been represented here this morning. I am deeply disappointed that NPR chose not to participate and that, as a result, we cannot discuss the effects of NPR with the people who know it best.

The questions the Subcommittee is raising are important for this reason: in nine months, a new administration is going to take office. The next president will face an array of very serious problems, particularly in the management of human capital, that will demand immediate attention. For example, by 2004, over 900,000 Federal employees will be eligible to retire. An honest assessment of NPR's accomplishments will be instructive in this effort and will give the new administration a better sense of what has worked, what has not, and what remains undone. I hope our Subcommittee hearing today is helpful in providing that assessment.

Let me repeat NPR's mission statement: "In time for the 21st century, reinvent government to work better, cost less, and get results Americans care about." Today, we will hear differing opinions as to whether NPR has indeed fulfilled this mission, and I look forward to the testimony.

I would now like to introduce today's witnesses. I have asked them to address a variety of issues associated with NPR, such as the downsizing and savings attributed to NPR actions.

Mr. J. Christopher Mihm is an Associate Director of Federal Management and Workforce Issues at the U.S. General Accounting Office.

Mr. Paul C. Light is the Vice President and Director of the Governmental Studies Program at The Brookings Institution.

Mr. Donald Kettl is a Professor of Political Science and Public Affairs at the LaFollette Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Mr. Ronald C. Moe is a Project Coordinator in the Government and Finance Division at the Congressional Research Service. He is also a Professor at the Center for American Government of Johns Hopkins University.

Mr. Scott A. Hodge is the Director of Tax and Budget Policy at Citizens for a Sound Economy.

We thank you all for coming, and look forward to your testimony.

Before we adjourn, I have a few closing comments. Based upon what I have heard today, I would conclude that NPR has been a worthy initiative on the part of the administration, but like so

many initiatives in government, it did not have the implementation and oversight needed to make it the success anticipated.

This Subcommittee is currently examining many of the problems, that, in my opinion, NPR should have addressed, such as the dearth of Federal employee training, lackluster incentives, the growth of the shadow government, and the human capital crisis that will confront the government in the next few years as hundreds of thousands of seasoned government employees become eligible for retirement.

Later this year, my Subcommittee will issue a report which will highlight for the next administration the major management challenges confronting the Federal Government and suggestions on how these challenges can be met. I also anticipate recommendations on how Congress can be a better partner in providing resources to meet these challenges. I once again want to thank all of today's witnesses. With that, this hearing is adjourned.