



PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

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Prepared for

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Chairman Lynch, Representative Chaffetz, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am Tim McManus, Vice President for Education and Outreach at the Partnership for Public Service, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to revitalizing the federal civil service. We appreciate your invitation to discuss hiring in the federal government. A skilled and dedicated workforce is absolutely essential to fulfilling the many missions of the federal government on behalf of our nation, and we are honored to share with you our perspective on the challenges of transforming hiring in the federal government.

The Partnership has two principal areas of focus. First, we work to inspire new talent to join federal service. Second, we work with government leaders to help transform government so that the best and brightest will enter, stay and succeed in meeting the challenges of our nation. That includes all aspects of how we manage people, from attracting them to government, leading them, supporting their development and managing performance; in short, all the essential ingredients for forming and keeping a winning team. Given those objectives, we are highly encouraged by this Subcommittee's interest in fixing one of the most serious barriers the federal government faces in employing the right people with the right skills, and that is the federal hiring process.

In this testimony, I will share the Partnership's views on the most significant challenges in attracting new talent, discuss some promising developments and legislative proposals that merit consideration, and provide recommendations for agencies and Congress moving forward.

### **The Timing is Right**

The Partnership is very pleased to see that the Administration and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) have made hiring reform a key priority. Last week, President Obama issued a presidential memo to executive departments and agencies that set forth a clear agenda for reforming the federal hiring process. OPM promptly followed up the next day and issued guidance to federal agencies for implementing the President's agenda. This is a promising start, and the Administration should be commended for its efforts to date.

This renewed commitment to addressing the challenges surrounding the federal hiring process couldn't come at a better time. A record number of experienced federal workers will soon retire, resign or otherwise leave the government and will need to be replaced. At the same time, the federal government's hiring needs are also growing in response to the stimulus legislation, new or expanded programs, and the goal of having federal employees assume some functions currently done by contract employees. We project that more than 550,000 new hires will be needed over the next four years (FY 2010 through FY 2013) due to replacement hiring, in-sourcing and the addition of new jobs.

Potential applicants are out there, but the challenge is to attract and hire the *right* people with the *right* skills that government so desperately needs. The government must also retain and develop talented individuals already in the federal workforce. Aggressive and immediate action is needed to strengthen the federal civil service, match new skills to current challenges and build a government that the public deserves and the times demand.

## **Good News and Bad News**

The good news is that there is a high level of interest in government service among all age groups, from young people graduating from college to more seasoned professionals looking for encore careers. In our January 2009 report, *Great Expectations: What Students Want in an Employer and How Federal Agencies Can Deliver It*,<sup>1</sup> we reported that government/public service was the most popular industry choice out of 46 options among the undergraduates surveyed. We also conducted a survey of older workers (age 50 and over) and found that 53 percent of those surveyed were at least somewhat interested in working for the federal government, with 26 percent highly interested.<sup>2</sup>

The bad news, and challenge for federal agencies, is that lack of information about job opportunities and a well-earned negative view of the federal hiring process are significant barriers to recruiting top talent.

### *Lack of information is a barrier to recruitment*

Our nation's military spends millions of dollars on highly-targeted marketing campaigns to recruit new uniformed military personnel, but our country has not made the same kinds of investments in attracting the best and brightest to the federal civil service. As a result, job seekers of all ages lack knowledge about federal internship and job opportunities. A Partnership study of college students found that only 13 percent of students said they felt extremely or very knowledgeable about federal jobs. Further, fewer than two in ten faculty and advisors – those who help influence student decisions – felt they were knowledgeable about federal jobs and the process of finding and applying for those opportunities.<sup>3</sup> In addition, only 11 percent of older Americans indicated in a separate study they were knowledgeable about employment opportunities in the federal government.<sup>4</sup>

The Partnership and OPM have been working together to try and fill this void through the *Call to Serve* program, an effort to connect federal agencies to the tremendous source of new talent graduating from our nation's colleges and universities. The network currently includes more than 75 federal agencies and more than 710 colleges and universities from

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<sup>1</sup> *Great Expectations: What Students Want in an Employer and How Federal Agencies Can Deliver It*, Partnership for Public Service, January 2009.

<sup>2</sup> *A Golden Opportunity: Recruiting Baby Boomers Into Government*, Partnership for Public Service, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> *Back to School: Rethinking Federal Recruiting on College Campuses*, Partnership for Public Service, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> *A Golden Opportunity: Recruiting Baby Boomers Into Government*, Partnership for Public Service, 2007.

all 50 states who are doing more to educate young people about internship and job opportunities in the federal government.

Through our work we've found that job seekers need more guidance on how to search for a federal internship or job. They desire information that is tailored to their specific major or area of interest. On the whole, job seekers want to make a difference and do interesting and meaningful work, so agencies need to dispel myths about federal service, emphasize opportunities to serve the greater good and put a face on government, which is often perceived as overly bureaucratic. Agencies will also be more successful if they highlight government workplace flexibilities that contribute to work/life balance, one of the most important job attributes that employees are seeking. Technology certainly may aid recruitment efforts, but there is no substitute for personal connections – family, friends and faculty, among others – when it comes to generating interest. Agencies will also be more successful if they build and maintain relationships over time with faculty, advisors and career services professionals on campuses.

The Partnership is actively engaged in a set of activities to better inform students about federal opportunities. We have created the *Federal Service Student Ambassadors* program, in which a corps of passionate student advocates actively promote government service on campus following their completion of a federal summer internship. We have also created a website ([www.makingthedifference.org](http://www.makingthedifference.org)) dedicated to educating students on finding and applying for federal internships and jobs, are sending speakers through our *Annenberg Speakers Bureau* to campuses across the country to educate and inspire young people to serve in the federal government, and are helping a small group of federal agencies identify, attract and recruit entry-level talent in select mission-critical fields including information technology, acquisition and human resources, through our *FedRecruit* program.

We are also investing in educating experienced workers about opportunities to serve in the federal government or pursue “encore” careers through our *FedExperience* pilot program, designed to help meet government's critical hiring needs with the talents of experienced, older workers. Through the course of our work, we have discovered that most agencies rely solely on USAJOBS as their primary way to recruit talent, which produces a volume of applicants but not necessarily the “best qualified” and “best fit” for a job since USAJOBS is only one of many ways that agencies can market job openings to available talent pools. There are also often stereotypes about older workers that influence an agency's openness to seek the right talent regardless of age or prior federal experience.

### *Broken Hiring Process*

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, we can all agree that the federal hiring process is the biggest obstacle to bringing much-needed new talent into the federal workforce. As previously stated, the President's memorandum on hiring reform is an important step forward.

Long a source of frustration for agencies and applicants alike, the federal hiring process is not designed with applicants in mind and it discourages talent from all sources from pursuing federal service. A Partnership review of hiring at selected agencies revealed that the process for hiring a single employee can include more than 110 steps. When releasing OPM's hiring reform guidance, Director Berry stated that "on average it takes 5 months;" however some federal job applicants wait a year, or longer, before receiving a job offer. And some potential workers do not wait at all because the job announcement itself discourages them from applying in the first place. Sometimes running 10, 20 or even more pages in print form, federal job announcements are frequently confusing and filled with jargon indecipherable to the average person. Federal agencies often require applicants to submit college transcripts in short job application timeframes and to customize resumes to meet specific agency requirements. Also, agencies generally do a poor job of keeping applicants informed of the status of their applications – a basic courtesy that should be afforded to all job seekers. The end result is a difficult, lengthy and complex process that discourages many highly skilled candidates from pursuing federal service – and worse, only 47% of respondents to the 2008 Federal Human Capital Survey said that their agency is hiring quality talent.

The Partnership reached out last year to the career placement offices in the colleges and universities who are part of our *Call to Serve* network with a survey about changes in student interest in federal jobs and internships. Out of 258 respondents, 41 of them volunteered written comments on the problems with the application and hiring processes, USAJOBS, and the length of time it takes to respond to job applications. In our experience, for such a high number of respondents to volunteer written comments is a clear signal as to the depth and breadth of applicant discontent with federal hiring.

### **Recent Promising Developments**

Recognizing that there are major problems and weaknesses of long standing plaguing the federal hiring system, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) identified hiring reform as one its top priorities almost a year ago and undertook an extended interagency effort to identify and implement improvements to the federal hiring process. This effort, which had the active support of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, resulted in the release of a Presidential Memorandum dated May 11, 2010, *Improving the Federal Recruitment and Hiring Process*. This directive from the President to department and agency heads and follow-up guidance from OPM issued the following day are very promising developments.

Hopefully, the recent developments to improve the federal hiring system as well as related efforts, such as Executive Order 13518, *Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government*, dated November 9, 2009, will be sustained and supported over an extended period of time in order to achieve the desired end results. Among the major changes called for by the administration and supported by the Partnership for Public Service are the following:

- Creating a more applicant friendly approach to hiring which includes elimination of any requirement that applicants provide – at the initial application stage – essay-style responses to questions about their various knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA’s).
- Ensuring that federal job announcements are clearly written, that application procedures are easy to understand and that applicants are given timely information regarding the status of their application once it is submitted.
- Requiring that any agency still using a “rule of 3” approach which only allows hiring managers to consider a maximum of three candidates (out of potentially hundreds or more who may apply) instead use a “category rating” approach which allows consideration of a larger number of qualified applicants.
- Involving federal managers and supervisors with responsibility for hiring more directly (if they are not already) in the hiring process and making them more accountable for the end results (i.e., recruiting and hiring highly qualified employees with due regard for diversity and veterans).
- Establishing metrics and targets to improve the quality and speed of hiring.
- Providing relevant training for hiring managers to help them fulfill their responsibilities.
- Providing both oversight and assistance from OPM, which includes the sharing and replication of best practices for improving the hiring process.

### **Federal Career Intern Program**

The President’s May 11th Memorandum also directs the Office of Personnel Management to evaluate the Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP) established by Executive Order 13162 in order to provide recommendations concerning the future of that program. We recognize that there are some differences of opinion regarding the operation of that program and we would like to offer our views in the context of the role and value of the FCIP as one tool in the federal hiring toolkit.

The FCIP was established in July 2000. Although it incorporated the term “intern” in its title, the FCIP is not an intern program in the way many people think of internships. For example, the FCIP is not a hiring mechanism for filling temporary jobs with students who will be returning to school at the end of their internships. Rather, the clearly stated purpose of the FCIP is to “provide for the recruitment and selection of exceptional employees for careers in the public sector.” Federal agencies may and typically do hire these “career interns” directly into entry-level positions in mission-critical occupations for the hiring department or agency with the expectation that they will become part of the permanent workforce.

The hiring authority for the FCIP is via Schedule B of the excepted service as outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations for title 5 U.S.C. An appointment under the FCIP is for two years and, at the discretion of the employing agency, competitive civil service status may be granted to a career intern who satisfactorily serves for two years and meets all other requirements prescribed by OPM. Another significant feature of the FCIP is a requirement that an individual hired under the FCIP “shall participate in a formal program of training and job assignments to develop competencies that the OPM identifies as core to the Program, and the employing agency identifies as appropriate to the agency’s mission and needs.”

There are four other aspects of the FCIP that are important to note:

1. The Executive Order and OPM make it clear that veteran preference and equal employment opportunity requirements do apply to the use of FCIP. In her recent testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia, OPM Associate Director Nancy Kichak noted that approximately 15 percent of those hired under FCIP appointments are veterans. This is in spite of the fact that veterans constitute only 8.3 percent of the civilian labor force.
2. The merit system principles do apply to the FCIP. It does not allow federal agencies to make appointments non-competitively. Selections must still be made based on the relative qualifications of the applicants and selection may not be based on non-meritorious factors.
3. There is no public notice requirement for career intern appointments and this is not inconsistent with the merit system principles. This means that a federal agency may target their recruitment by limiting the areas from which they will solicit applications. For example, an agency may elect to accept applications only from individuals at selected colleges and universities, veteran’s centers or other talent pools if they determine that there is a sufficient supply of well-qualified and diverse candidates available at those locations. This is not dissimilar to the long-established and well-accepted practice under agency competitive merit-promotion programs wherein an agency may limit consideration to current government employees only (a widely used limitation on the area of consideration – at some grade levels more than half of all jobs posted on USAJOBS are restricted to current government employees or others who already have competitive service status). Federal agencies may further limit consideration to only employees of a particular agency or to only government employees in a certain geographic area.
4. As with any hiring authority, and as we have seen in the application of agency merit promotion plans, it is possible for a federal hiring manager to commit a prohibited personnel practice. If such a violation occurs, it should be dealt with as such and corrective action taken. Such a violation, however, is not alone reason to invalidate the hiring authority or the promotion plan.

So what has been the result in terms of the use of the FCIP by federal agencies? Starting with a modest 411 hires in the first year the authority was available (FY 2001), the number of appointments each year has been greater than the year before. In FY 2009, for example, there were 26,709 hires made under the FCIP. (To place this in context, in FY 2009 there a total of 142,687 new hires made into full-time, permanent, non-seasonal positions in the executive branch.) And since the general view among agencies using the FCIP is that it is a hiring authority intended to help them select “exceptional employees” for career positions, the vast majority of hires are converted to competitive civil service after their two-year FCIP appointment expires.

Are federal agencies complying with the requirement under the FCIP that they provide “a formal program of training and job assignments” to develop identified competencies? There does not currently exist a central source of information or data on the training provided to FCIP hires during their first two years. However, a 2005 report by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, “*Building a High-Quality Workforce: the Federal Career Intern Program*” found that 62 percent of FCIP hires had received five weeks or more of formal training, and only 10 percent reported receiving 40 hours or less. It would appear that some agencies do a very good job of providing the required training, others meet the minimum requirement of a formal training program, and at least a few agencies are likely not meeting the intent of this provision of Executive Order 13162. However, without better reporting requirements and more complete data, we cannot know the true state of the training and development opportunities provided to FCIP hires during the first two years.

Why has the use of the FCIP hiring authority continued to grow? We believe the growth is related to a very simple reason overall – it works well as a hiring authority for those agencies that use it. We think two features of the FCIP are particularly attractive to agencies in this regard. The first is the ability to make better use of scarce recruitment and assessment resources by doing targeted recruitment in lieu of a general public notice. Second, the two year period of the excepted appointment provides, in essence, a two-year probationary period during which an agency is able to confirm that the individual hired is or is not a good match for the job and worthy (or not) of conversion to a competitive civil service appointment. If the agency determines that continued employment of an individual is not in the best interest of the public served by the federal government, the FCIP appointment simply expires. There is no right to continued employment.

Since the President has directed OPM to evaluate the FCIP, there is a possibility the Executive Order may be rescinded or the FCIP hiring authority otherwise modified. If that should be that case, Congress and/or the Administration may wish to consider establishing an alternative hiring authority that preserves those aspects of the FCIP that have been most productive in meeting the intent of the Executive Order. That intent was to provide a vehicle that enhances the ability of government to attract and hire highly qualified individuals well matched to the requirements of the job and to provide for their training and development over a two-year period to ensure the presence of a highly capable and motivated workforce going forward.



Should there be a replacement for the FCIP, it should avoid use of the word “intern” to avoid confusion. Beyond that admittedly cosmetic change, however, any replacement should also allow an agency to define the area of competition but require the area to be large enough to ensure that it yields a reasonable number of highly qualified candidates from among which the selecting official may choose. Such a requirement currently exists in regulation (title 5, CFR 335.103(b)(2)) for agency merit promotion programs. In addition, any replacement for the FCIP should also provide for a two-year trial period that would serve, in essence, as the last stage of the assessment process. Continuation in federal employment at the end of the two-year period should require an affirmative declaration by the employing agency that the employee meets established standards of conduct and performance. Absent such an affirmative declaration, the employee’s appointment would expire. Finally, veteran preference and the merit system principles should continue to apply.

### **Veterans Employment Initiatives**

As noted, the Partnership fully supports current efforts to ensure that veterans are afforded their legal entitlement to preferential consideration for federal job opportunities for which they qualify. However, we are also aware that the real test of whether the intent of the law is being met is not whether a specific process or procedure is being followed but rather, at the end of the day, whether veterans are being hired. By this measure, most federal agencies have established a good track record. As noted in OPM’s “*Government-wide Veterans’ Recruitment and Employment Strategic Plan for FY 2010 – FY 2012*,” the total number of new hires who are veterans increased from 52,452 in FY 2007 to 65,631 in FY 2008. The report also notes that “In comparison to the private sector, the federal government hires three times the percentage of veterans, seven times the percentage of disabled veterans, and ten times the percentage of severely injured veterans.”

To maintain and build upon this commendable record of providing employment opportunities to veterans, we find that the aforementioned Executive Order 13518 and the Strategic Plan for FY 2010 – FY 2012, are appropriately focused on proactive steps that the federal government can take to enhance the employment of veterans, including engaging in active recruitment efforts, establishing coordinators within each agency, training of managers and human resources professionals, training and transition assistance for veterans seeking employment, and tracking and publicly reporting on the results in terms of veterans hired. We think such efforts will ultimately prove much more effective than seeking to keep or to place additional procedural requirements on the hiring process itself.

For example, a major issue in the debate over whether to allow agencies the option to use “category rating” of applicants rather than the “rule of three,” was whether allowing the use of the more flexible “category rating” option would cause fewer veterans to be hired. Once it was demonstrated that, in fact, a greater percentage of veterans were actually being hired in organizations that were allowed to use “category rating” on a trial basis, Congress amended the law in 2002 to allow all agencies to make use of this more flexible approach to hiring. The point is that a streamlined, flexible hiring process can and should

be entirely compatible with the merit system principles and the goals associated with workforce diversity and veterans' employment.

## **Legislative Proposals that Merit Consideration**

### *Codifying Hiring Reform*

We believe the reform initiatives are a strong first step to improving the federal hiring process; however, we would also recommend that Congress pass legislation to codify these reforms in law. The Partnership supports S. 736, the *Federal Hiring Process Improvement Act*, which was introduced last year by Senators Akaka and Voinovich. This bipartisan legislation was reported by the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs on May 12th,<sup>5</sup> and addresses many of the same issues that have been outlined in President Obama's memo on hiring reform – making the federal hiring process more applicant-friendly, measuring hiring effectiveness and training agency human resources professionals. We strongly encourage this Subcommittee to champion such common sense hiring reform legislation in the House.

### *Creating a Civilian ROTC*

The Partnership recently surveyed federal agencies and asked them to project their hiring needs through FY 2012. According to our study, agencies predict they will need to fill more than 273,000 mission-critical positions and will need to attract individuals with backgrounds in engineering, public health, information technology, acquisition, human resources and foreign languages, among others.<sup>6</sup> The private sector is also looking to recruit this mission-critical talent and federal agencies will need to compete for the same limited talent pool. One of the challenges the government faces is that individuals, especially those with higher degrees needed for mission-critical jobs, are graduating with staggering levels of debt that often price them out of public service. In order to compete with the private sector, we recommend that Congress invest in a civilian counterpart to the highly successful military ROTC program, through which the military currently recruits nearly 40 percent of its officers.

The Partnership strongly supports, H.R. 3510, the *Roosevelt Scholars Act*, which was introduced last year by Representatives David Price and Mike Castle. The bill would essentially create a civilian ROTC program offering graduate-level scholarships in exchange for a federal service commitment. Scholarships would be given to those individuals pursuing mission-critical fields where agencies have the greatest need for talent. While working toward their degrees, students would be expected to complete an internship in a federal agency and return to their campus and serve as an ambassador to their peers and career services professionals, educating them about federal internships and jobs and providing tips for how to search and apply for them. A small foundation would be created to administer the program and charged with marketing other federal

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<sup>5</sup> Senate Report 111-184.

<sup>6</sup> *Where the Jobs Are 2009: Mission-Critical Jobs for America*, Partnership for Public Service, September 2009.

scholarship programs, helping to place students in internships and jobs and working with agencies to expedite the often lengthy security clearance process.

### *Capitalizing on Student Internships*

Student internship programs are a highly valuable way for agencies to identify potential sources of future talent in that they allow agencies to assess the potential employee's fit for the position and observe the candidate's actual work and work habits on the job. Unfortunately, internship programs are underutilized across the federal government. A recent Partnership report, *Leaving Talent on the Table*<sup>7</sup> found that federal agencies lag behind their private sector counterparts in converting interns into full time hires. In 2007 federal agencies employed 59,510 interns through two of its largest paid internship programs, yet only 3,939 – 6.6 percent – of those student interns were hired into permanent jobs. Even among the students in 2007 who were employed under the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) and who could have easily been converted to permanent employment, just a little more than 1 out of 4 (26.7 percent) were actually converted. In comparison, private sector employers in 2007 converted 50.5 percent of their interns to full-time, permanent positions according to a survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers. Surely the federal government can, and must, do better.

We are pleased to see that Representative Connolly has introduced H.R. 3264, the *Federal Internship Improvement Act*, which will help agencies better understand where their interns come from, how they are utilized, the quality of the internship experience, and the barriers agencies face in converting their interns to full-time employees. The legislation requires agencies to collect data and provide an annual report to OPM and ultimately Congress on a number of important items, including how agencies recruit interns, the type of work in which interns are engaged and the quality of the internship experience as identified through exit interviews. Agencies are required to designate an internship coordinator and publicly post available internship positions with a clear point of contact to help attract the best candidates. The legislation also requires OPM to create a central database with the names of individuals who are completing their internships and are seeking federal employment. The central database will enable agencies to gain access to a talented pool of potential candidates. An additional section in the bill as introduced allows agencies to noncompetitively appoint interns to a full-time position if they meet relevant requirements. We think this provision is key in that it will allow agencies to capitalize on their high-performing interns. We urge the Subcommittee to retain this language as the bill moves through the legislative process.

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<sup>7</sup> *Leaving Talent on the Table: The Need to Capitalize on High-Performing Student Interns*, Partnership for Public Service, April 2009.

## Summary of Recommendations

The Partnership is pleased to offer the following recommendations to the Subcommittee as you pursue your legislative and oversight agenda regarding federal recruitment and hiring:

- 1. Congress should carefully monitor the results of the administration's current efforts at hiring reform and provide support for those efforts that are most promising, including funding for needed training and system development.**

The directives contained in the Presidential memorandum of May 11, 2010, *Improving the Federal Recruitment and Hiring Process*, and the subsequent actions taken by the Office of Personnel Management (see <http://www.opm.gov/hiringreform/>) are a good start of a government-wide effort to improve the federal hiring system. Of course, ultimately the success or failure of these hiring reform efforts will hinge largely on the ability of OPM and individual agencies to implement the reforms. Congress should carefully monitor the results of these efforts to 1) ensure they are achieving the desired end results and are consistent with the statutory merit system principles, and 2) identify those that would benefit from additional resources or legislative action.

- 2. Congress should pass S. 736, the *Federal Hiring Process Improvement Act*, to codify hiring reform efforts.**
- 3. Congress should actively solicit suggestions from agencies for modifications to the existing laws governing human resources management in the executive branch and consider statutory changes that are supported by a solid demonstration of their ability to further improve merit-based federal recruitment and hiring reform.**
- 4. Congress should build new pipelines of mission-critical talent into government by passing the H.R. 3510, the *Roosevelt Scholars Act*, a proposal to fund education in key fields in exchange for a federal service commitment.**
- 5. Congress should pass the H.R. 3264, the *Federal Internship Improvement Act*, and require agencies to collect metrics on where interns come from, how they are utilized, the quality of the intern experience, and steps agencies are taking to convert qualified interns into permanent positions.**
- 6. Changes to the Federal Career Intern Program, whether statutory or by Executive Order, should be made based on facts and not anecdotes.**

The use of the FCIP hiring authority has increased significantly every year since it was established and those reasons should be carefully examined. Those federal agencies that are making significant use of the FCIP should be given an opportunity to explain why and how the authority enhances their ability to recruit and hire highly

qualified candidates. The FCIP appears to be serving a legitimate need and it has been demonstrated that it can be used in a manner consistent with the merit system principles and veteran preference. Simply rescinding the Executive Order without having better alternatives available would be unwise.

- 7. Efforts to enhance employment opportunities for veterans should be focused more on meeting reasonable goals for actual hires (based in part on an analysis of the jobs to be filled and the percentage of veterans who possess those skills) and less on procedural requirements.**

Veteran preference laws and regulations provide entitlement to preferential consideration for qualified veterans but they do not convey entitlement to federal employment for any individual veteran. Cumbersome procedural requirements that provide consideration but not jobs serve little useful purpose. It would be more productive to the end objective of the Veterans Employment Initiative to establish hiring goals and to give federal agencies flexibilities in how they can best meet those goals.

- 8. We encourage Congress to ask for the collection of metrics to assess how agencies are using various human resources tools and flexibilities.**

Data will allow agencies and Congress to identify which flexibilities are most effective at attracting and retaining particular demographic groups, whether using flexibilities are resulting in good hires for government and how flexibilities can be used more effectively and are worthy further expansion and/or congressional support. A periodic third-party exit survey of departing employees would also do much to shed light on the factors that contribute to employee engagement, including the tools and practices that might have been more successful in attracting and keeping needed talent.

- 9. Congress should provide resources for federal agencies so that they are able to make the best possible use of the flexibilities that are available.**

Without adequate funding, agencies will be severely constrained in their use of human resources tools to recruit, hire, retain and develop the right talent for government. Congress may wish to consider reserving funds specifically for investments in (a) federal workforce recruitment, retention and development, and (b) training and developing the federal human resources workforce. Investing in talent is an investment that will more than pay for itself over time.

## **Conclusion**

The Partnership believes that the way to better government is through people. No federal agency can succeed if it does not have enough of the right people with the right skills to get the job done. While we have long argued that more investment in the capacity of the federal workforce is desperately needed, recent economic and other national challenges

add a new sense of urgency to your efforts to help our government improve its recruitment and hiring.

We applaud the Subcommittee for holding this hearing and we look forward to working with you on these important issues.

Thank you. I'm happy to answer your questions.