**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** September 5**,** 2017
**CONTACT:** Courtney Liss, cliss@ourpublicservice.org
202-775-9111

# PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE AND THE VOLCKER ALLIANCE LAUNCH NEW INITIATIVE TO ADDRESS CRITICAL REFORMS TO ARCHAIC CIVIL SERVICE SYSTEM

**WASHINGTON** –The Partnership for Public Service and the Volcker Alliance, two nonprofit, nonpartisan organizations focused on helping build a high-performing, effective government, have joined together to press for an overhaul of the outdated federal civil service system that has become an obstacle to a well-functioning government.

Designed decades ago, the federal personnel system governing more than two million civilian employees is a relic of a bygone era, reflecting the needs and characteristics of last century's workforce. While the world has changed dramatically, the civil service system has remained stuck in the past, serving as an impediment rather than an aid in attracting, hiring, retaining and managing the highly skilled federal workforce needed for government today and in the future.

The newly formed initiative, Renewing America's Civil Service, backed by a bipartisan group of leaders from across sectors, will focus on identifying tangible legislative and executive branch solutions to the most severe problems in the government personnel system, including outdated pay and hiring policies.

Thomas W. Ross, the president of the Volcker Alliance, said, "The civil service system has been—and should be—one of the great strengths of our democratic government. Yet it has not kept pace with changes in our workforce, our country and the world beyond. The civil service is entrusted with all non-political administrative functions outside the armed services. A modern and nimble civil service system is essential to our government's capacity to deliver on policy and to navigate the many challenges facing this country."

The American public expects much from its government. Whether the task is strengthening cybersecurity, assisting veterans, protecting our national security or preventing the spread of infectious diseases, the success of federal agencies rests with the people hired to carry out those missions. However, the decades-old personnel system stifles the performance, innovation and productivity of the many talented, dedicated civil servants.

"Civil servants are the government's greatest asset, but they are ill-served by an outmoded personnel system that was designed for a largely clerical workforce instead of one requiring highly specialized skills needed for today's knowledge-based economy," said Max Stier,

Partnership president and CEO. “No successful company would manage its talent in 2017 the same way it did decades ago. It is time to overhaul the federal civil service system to help ensure that our government has a first-class workforce capable of meeting the growing and complex needs of the American people.”

Currently, only 6 percent of full-time federal workers are under the age of 30, compared to about 24 percent of all employees in other sectors. The government has five times as many full-time information-technology workers over 60 as it does in their 20s. At the start of fiscal 2017, 41.5 percent of federal employees were eligible to retire in five years. Overcoming the lack of interest in federal service by young people and many others with critical skills will require that the federal government hire faster and manage better than it does today.

The Renewing America’s Civil Service initiative calls for the following actions to modernize the civil service:

- **Improve recruitment and hiring:** On average, it takes at least three times as long for federal agencies to hire employees as it does in the private sector. Today’s cumbersome hiring processes need to be streamlined to help attract young people and mid-career professionals seeking to move into government from a different sector, and those willing to serve in government for shorter stints.

- **Adjust pay:** The government’s compensation system is almost 70 years old and is disconnected from the broader job market, failing to distinguish between the skills and demand for different occupations. An occupation-specific, market-sensitive compensation system would attract and retain people with the skills needed to better serve the public.

- **Manage performance:** The performance management system should recognize exceptional performance and enable agencies to properly address poor performers. Probationary periods for new employees should provide for meaningful review of their performance.

- **Develop manager and supervisor skills:** Candidates for manager and supervisor positions should be promoted only if they prove they have the required skills. Continuous training must be a prerequisite to managing employees.

- **Create a true government-wide Senior Executive Service:** The SES needs to fulfill its original mission of providing leaders with strong managerial skills to tackle the most pressing challenges across government. The government should be able to promote technical experts on a separate track.

- **Hold leadership accountable**: Workforce management is a strategic imperative and leadership responsibility. Political leaders should be held accountable for managing talent and supporting a capable human resources workforce within their agencies, and federal executives must treat talent management as essential to successful mission planning and

execution.

The Partnership and Volcker Alliance are joined by an advisory board of public and private sector leaders in calling for civil service reform. They are:

- **Paul A. Volcker,** chair; chairman, The Volcker Alliance; former chairman, Federal Reserve Board of Governors
- **Mitch Daniels,** president of Purdue University; former governor of Indiana and former director of the Office of Management and Budget
- **Tom Davis,** director, federal government affairs, Deloitte; former Republican congressman from Virginia and former chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
- **Ted Kaufman,** former Democratic senator from Delaware
- **Lester Lyles,** chairman of the board, USAA; former Air Force vice chief of staff and former commander of Air Force Materiel Command
- **Hank Paulson,** chairman, Paulson Institute; former secretary of the Treasury and former chairman and CEO of Goldman Sachs
- **Penny Pritzker,** co-founder and chairman, PSP Capital Partners and Pritzker Realty Group; former secretary of Commerce

During the past 16 years, the nonpartisan, nonprofit **Partnership for Public Service** has been dedicated to making the federal government more effective for the American people. We work across administrations to help transform the way government operates by increasing collaboration, accountability, efficiency and innovation. Visit ourpublicservice.org to learn more.

**The Volcker Alliance** was launched in 2013 to address the challenge of effective execution of public policies and to help rebuild public trust in government. The nonpartisan Alliance works toward that broad objective by partnering with other organizations—academic, business, governmental, and public interest—to strengthen professional education for public service, conduct needed research on government performance, and improve the efficiency and accountability of governmental organization at the federal, state, and local levels. Visit volckeralliance.org to learn more.

###