



PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE



THE VOLCKER ALLIANCE
Working for Effective Government

Renewing America's Civil Service: Guiding Goals and Principles

GOALS OF CIVIL SERVICE REFORM:

We need a strong civil service to achieve effective and efficient government that can meet the most critical challenges facing the American people. This will require a renewed sense of the value of government service.

While the size and responsibilities of the federal government are a matter of political debate, the civil service must be non-partisan and professionally competent.

The U.S. civil service system needs to reflect the rapidly changing, complex, globalized environment in which government operates, with an increasing need for knowledge-based skills.

The federal government must create a culture of excellence in service that will inspire trust from the American people and attract the best and brightest into public service.

PRINCIPLES GUIDING REFORM:

Good government starts with good people.

Reforms should be based on the premise that the success of government services depends on a skilled workforce of professionals who are dedicated to serving the American people.

Longstanding, core values are the bedrock of the civil service.

The U.S. civil service system should retain its longstanding, foundational core values of hiring based on merit, non-discrimination, fair and equitable treatment, veterans' preference, and due process in personnel actions. These principles foster political neutrality, diversity, and stability in the federal workforce.

Modernizing the workforce is a critical responsibility of leadership.

- **Federal leaders must inspire a new generation into public service and welcome outside talent.** At a time when employees under age 30 account for only 6.2 percent of the federal workforce, the government's leaders must redouble efforts to attract the millennial generation into the federal workforce and reflect the changing composition of the American population. The government also should seek to hire both individuals who want to spend a lifetime in government and those at any stage of their careers who are willing to bring outside skills into the government for shorter tenures.

- **Federal leaders must respect and value public service and public servants.** High performing organizations value their employees as an asset, express appreciation for their people, and engage in special recognition of outstanding employees. Federal leaders must also

communicate to the public the value of public service, including the importance of its support of our nation's security, a mission which employs over sixty percent of civilian federal employees.

- **A cadre of enterprise executives must be prepared to tackle cross-agency challenges.** The Senior Executive Service needs to fulfill its original mission of providing a cadre of leaders with broad perspective of government and strong managerial experience who can move from agency to agency to handle the most pressing challenges, which almost always involve multiple agencies. Technical experts should be promoted in a separate career track.

- **Federal leaders must treat human capital management as a core competency.** Managing talent is a key responsibility for agency leaders, from executive suite leaders down to sub-component leaders. In concert with these leaders, agency Chief Human Capital Officers should play an integral role in mission planning, including identifying and closing gaps in skills necessary for successful mission execution. Agencies must maintain strong human resources offices to recruit, develop and retain top talent.

- **Political appointees are accountable for building a high-performing workforce.** Political appointees should have performance plans that address the accountability of leaders for managing well, supporting efforts to recruit, hire and retain highly qualified talent, training and developing future leaders, engaging employees, and holding subordinate managers accountable for addressing employee performance issues.

- **Strong management supports execution of mission.** Serving the public in the federal government often is impeded by outdated technology and inefficient business systems. Federal leaders should advocate for a strong, effective management infrastructure to support the workforce.

The U.S. government should operate as an integrated part of the market for talent, instead of a stand-alone entity with a unique approach and onerous processes.

- **Compensation should be based on the market for talent.** Reforms must address the government's antiquated pay classification system, which was designed in 1949 and bears little connection to today's market for talent. Pay should be both occupation-specific and market-sensitive, in order to attract top talent into government.

- **The civil service system should provide an overall government-wide framework but also grant autonomy to agencies.** The civil service should operate under a common set of principles and policies that level the playing field across the government in the competition for talent. At the same time, individual agencies should possess autonomy to design personnel systems to meet their mission needs.

- **Hiring processes must be effective in attracting the right candidates.** Rules governing federal hiring should help, not hinder, agencies in recruiting and should be easy for applicants to understand. The federal hiring process should be efficient, competitive with non-governmental sectors, and focused on recruitment of highly qualified candidates, with particular attention to attracting recent graduates and young people.

- **Managers must be selected, trained, and empowered to manage.** The selection of good managers, as well as their training and leadership development, must be an integral part of the mission strategy of each federal agency. Performance management systems must be rigorous enough to address poor performance and misconduct swiftly, while also rewarding outstanding performance.

APPENDIX: THE CURRENT MERIT SYSTEM PRINCIPLES (5 USC § 2301)

Reforms should be consistent with the longstanding merit system principles, which are codified in law and applied by the Merit Systems Protections Board:

1. Recruitment should be from qualified individuals from appropriate sources in an endeavor to achieve a work force from all segments of society, and selection of advancement should be determined solely on the basis of relative ability, knowledge of skills, after fair and open competition which assures that all receive equal opportunity.
2. All employees and applicants for employment should receive fair and equitable treatment in all respects of personnel management without regard to political affiliation, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, or handicapping condition, and with proper regard for their privacy and constitutional rights.
3. Equal pay should be provided for work of equal value, with appropriate consideration of both national and local rates paid by employers in the private sector, and appropriate incentives and recognition should be provided for excellence in performance.
4. All employees should maintain high standards of integrity, conduct and concern for the public interest.
5. The federal workforce should be used efficiently and effectively.
6. Employees should be retained on the basis of adequacy of their performance, inadequate performance should be corrected, and employees should be separated who cannot or will not improve their performance to meet required standards.
7. Employees should be provided effective education and training in cases in which such education and training would result in better organizational and individual performance.
8. Employees should be protected against arbitrary action, personal favoritism or coercion for partisan political purposes, and prohibited from using their official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election or a nomination for election.
9. Employees should be protected against reprisal for the lawful disclosure of information which the employees reasonably believe evidences a violation of any law, rule or regulation, or mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety.