

**STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN DANNY K. DAVIS AT THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE AND AGENCY ORGANIZATION
HEARING
ON ACHIEVING DIVERSITY IN THE SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE**

Wednesday, October 15, 2003

Chairwoman Davis, as you know, earlier this year I requested that the Subcommittee hold a hearing on diversity in the federal Senior Executive Service. That request was based on the findings of two reports that GAO issued on diversity in the Senior Executive Service (SES) that were requested by myself and other members on the Committee on Government Reform.

I thank you for not only holding this hearing this afternoon, but I would also like to thank you, Chairman Tom Davis, and your respective staffs, for your hard work in ensuring that the witnesses on Panel Two appeared before us today.

Simply stated, the GAO reports found that there is a lack of diversity among the SES, and that unless there is some *intervention*, as predominately white male SES members retire, they will be replaced, for the most part, by white women.

I, Delegate Norton and others, requested this hearing to help move us *forward* on the very important issue of diversifying the highest and most influential ranks of the federal workforce – the Senior Executive Service. The hearing is to focus on the steps the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) are taking to address the following issues; how these agencies, and others, will diversify their respective SES corps; how effectively we are recruiting minorities for federal service; and how agencies are being held accountable for discriminatory practices that hinder diversity and upward mobility in the workplace.

The Director of the OPM, Kay Cole James, has met and corresponded with me to discuss the findings in the GAO reports. To her credit, in April, she announced the creation of a new SES Candidate Development Program (CDP). The CDP is the first step in addressing diversity in the SES. The program was created by OPM to help participants develop their leadership skills and prepare them for the senior executive positions they will be immediately eligible for upon completion. But this is only a first step.

As Director James pointed out when she announced the program in April, out of the 249 graduates from agency sponsored CDP programs since January of 2001, 30 percent were minorities. But only 39 percent of those 249 graduates have been placed in the SES. Agencies, and this Subcommittee, have a lot more work to do to ensure that we are not talking about this same problem ten years from now. This is not a new problem, or one that is confined to federal service. The federal government, however, should be leading the way in addressing it.

As GAO stated in its most recent report, “Diversity can bring a wider variety of perspectives and approaches to policy development and implementation, strategic planning, problem solving, and decisionmaking, and can be an organizational strength that contributes to the achievement of results.” The federal government is at risk of failing to realize these benefits because its workforce does not appropriately reflect the diversity the people it serves.

Last Sunday's issue of *The Washington Post Magazine* contained an article entitled, "Profiles in Courage: Washingtonians Tell the Truth about Diversity in the Workplace." The article profiles ten people who told their stories about how race, size, gender or ethnicity impacted their treatment in the workplace.

In one such profile, Stacey Davis Stewart tells of working in the housing and community development business where there are few Blacks and even fewer women. Stacey Davis Stewart is the President of the Fannie Mae Foundation. Her profile is one we can learn from.

Ms. Stewart said she was so tired of being confronted and challenged in the workplace that her boss had to tell her to speak up in meetings because she had really good ideas. She was quoted as saying, "It was like he had let me out of a cage. When you have a work environment that values people, look at the talent that unfolds." Later in the article she says, "The perspective I bring as an African American female should be something that is highly valued, but in some cases it's not completely heard or respected because of the lack of diversity in that group. They haven't established some way of accepting difference."

The federal government has to do a better job of "accepting difference," whether it is race, ethnicity, or gender based, and create an environment where difference is accepted and appreciated. As I mentioned, agencies and this Subcommittee have a role to play in ensuring that progress is made with regard to this issue. I would like this Subcommittee to hold quarterly hearings where agencies will be randomly selected to testify about the steps they are taking to diversify their SES.

By holding quarterly hearings, this Subcommittee can hold agencies accountable for results. Oversight and accountability are integral to achieving results, particularly, when agencies appear reluctant to testify on this issue.

I, again, thank you Chairwoman Davis for holding this hearing and welcome the testimony of today's witnesses.