

PREPARED STATEMENT OF
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Organization**

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Good morning, Madam Chairwoman and Mr. Davis, thank you for the invitation to come before you today. I am pleased to speak before this committee on the Federal government hiring process.

With your permission, I would like to summarize my written testimony and ask that my full statement be included in the record. I am Regional Director of the Chicago Regional Office of the U.S. Census Bureau, which is responsible for all census and survey activities in Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin. I have been an employee of the Census Bureau for more than 48 years. During my tenure, I have held several positions, including:

- Associate Director for Field Operations
- Regional Director
- Assistant Regional Director

➤ Computer Analyst

I am also a member of the Chicago Federal Executive Board (FEB). Although I have served as a member of the Federal Executive Board's Executive Committee since 1972, I served as its Chairman during FY 2003. Federal Executive Boards were created in 1961 by President Kennedy through a Presidential Directive to improve coordination between federal activities and programs outside of Washington. Approximately 84% of federal employees reside outside of Washington, D.C.

The Chicago Federal Executive Board oversees the operation of more than 38 Federal agencies and 85,000 civilian and military employees in an 11-county area. I submit along with my testimony a list of activities that the Chicago FEB has sponsored over the course of the past four years on the recruitment and retention of federal employees. I have been actively involved in all of these activities and events.

The federal government has made significant changes in the way it recruits and selects its staff over the nearly five decades of my employment. However, streamlining the hiring process remains a work in progress. The Census Bureau is a leader in developing strategies to remove any impediments that may prevent a seamless hiring process.

Like other federal agencies, the Census Bureau is concerned with the potential loss of significant numbers of our middle and senior managers in the next few years through retirements. The question comes to mind: ***Do we have programs in place to meet this challenge and demand?***

The Census Bureau, with the support of the Office of Personnel Management, has developed programs that are new, innovative approaches to staff recruiting, training and development.

Additionally, the effort to move the hiring authority closer to those who recruit and review candidates has had a major impact on streamlining the hiring process.

One of the major moves the Census Bureau has undertaken, again with OPM support, is the implementation of an electronic hiring database to streamline the hiring process for key occupations—mathematical statistician, statistician, and information technology specialist. This automated system enables a candidate to file his or her application electronically as well as respond to a series of screening questions. Applicants have reported how pleased they are with this system. Also, their application remains active for a period of 90 days and can be renewed electronically after this period on a continuous basis. The OPM ranks the candidates and, upon request, provides the Census Bureau with a certificate of eligible candidates. This streamlining has reduced from about 4 months to a matter of weeks the amount of time it takes to complete the hiring steps and extend an offer of employment to an applicant. We believe this has been a very successful effort, especially in our attempts to hire entry-level employees.

We continue to streamline in other ways as well. Through our Disability Program, managers can have access to the Workforce Recruitment Program database. This database contains the names of about 1,600 qualified students and recent graduates with disabilities. Candidates selected from this list can be hired without competition into the excepted service.

The Census Bureau has a very unique situation in regards to hiring. Our decennial operation bears heavily on the way we manage both our fiscal and human resources. We have a limited period during the early to middle years of the decade to recruit and develop practical experience among our regional managers and supervisors, to be prepared for the dramatic expansion and challenges of

managing the decennial census in the three years at the end of each decade.

In light of the extraordinary stress that the Decennial Census Operation places on the Census Bureau's Field Organization each decade, we are continually looking for creative ways to attract and retain skilled and experienced senior and middle managers during these end-of-the-decade activities.

During the 1990 and 2000 Censuses, the annuity offset waiver program was very effective. For the 2010 Census, we plan to consider this program in conjunction with retention incentive initiatives to encourage many highly skilled managers and supervisors to lend their many years of seasoned experience in support of our Census operations without penalty or reduction in their pensions.

I also would like to address the need to recruit and retain a diverse federal workforce. Some of the steps in the hiring process may appear to be cumbersome. However, in my experience they are necessary to ensure that all applicants are treated fairly. These steps have helped to ensure that minorities and women receive equal consideration for federal employment.

With the changing demographics in our nation, a federal workforce that reflects the face of America cannot be overlooked. The federal workforce that was in place when I started nearly 50 years ago has changed for the better. As the streamlining of the hiring process is considered, do not forget the policies and practices that are in place to insure that the federal workforce lives up to our nation's creed and ideals.

Over the past year, the Census Bureau merged its diversity and recruitment programs to ensure that its commitment to diversity remains a core tenet of the recruitment program. The Census

Bureau sends recruiters to a diverse array of more than 70 college campuses twice a year—in fall and spring. The Census Bureau is committed to establishing partnerships and relationships with Historically Black Colleges and Minority Serving Institutions for key occupations, as well as administrative positions. In September 2003, Census Bureau Director Charles Louis Kincannon signed a memorandum of agreement with the University of Puerto Rico. This is a partnership to expand recruitment activities within the Hispanic community. Under the agreement, students can participate in internship programs, faculty can participate in research, and Census Bureau experts can lecture on campus. Senior-level Census Bureau staff play an active role in curriculum development in relevant majors. There are also opportunities for promoting Census Bureau jobs on campus. The Census Bureau is currently embarking on efforts to secure a similar partnership with another major university.

Earlier I mentioned that OPM has granted certain flexibilities concerning salaries. Working with OPM and other federal agencies, the Census Bureau successfully completed a process to establish new levels for the special salary rate for mathematical statisticians. The special salary rate has been in place for several years, but new rates were put into effect in October 2002. Census Bureau analysis showed that the previous rates were no longer competitive with private industry. Currently, the Census Bureau is working with other federal statistical agencies to review and improve the effectiveness of these special rates.

Through these combined efforts, the Census Bureau has been successful in hiring and retaining a diverse group of employees for key entry-level positions. There remain challenges, however, in attracting applicants with post-graduate degrees for higher-level positions. This is particularly true for the position of mathematical statistician. One reason for this is that there are fewer advanced degrees awarded in math and statistics today than a decade ago and

many of these degrees go to non-citizens, who are ineligible for hire into the competitive service.

The number of applicants the Census Bureau is receiving for mathematical statistician positions continues to decline. In addition, about one-third of the applicants offered positions decline them, the highest refusal rate for any job series.

The Census Bureau will continue its partnership with the OPM and seek ways to incorporate existing hiring flexibility into its hiring, recruitment, and retention objectives. Madam Chairwoman, that concludes my testimony. I will be happy to answer any questions.

Attachment

List of activities that I have been involved with that were sponsored by the Chicago Federal Executive Board to assist federal agencies in recruiting and retaining an adequate workforce.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES - FY 2001

November 29, 2000 • Growing Leaders for the 21st Century

This one-day training workshop, conducted in cooperation with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) was designed especially for employees at the GS 12/13/14/15 level or equivalent who aspire to a leadership career, including SES. A total of 109 Federal employees attended this in-depth workshop which featured personal assessment of participant's leadership competency, government-wide Leadership Competencies and the Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs), Effective career planning and development strategies, tips for completing a quality application, how –to market for career advancement, including effective job interviewing techniques. This workshop was developed and conducted by Robert Franco, a senior executive on special assignment to OPM.

September 19, 2001 • GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES: From “Ricky and Lucy to Beavis and Butthead.” This program brought together over 30 first and second line supervisors and managers to understand the different generational perspectives and how to help them work together effectively in the workplace.

September 19-21, 2001 • PEOPLE, TECHNOLOGY, AND REFORM: AN EXECUTIVE DIALOGUE. This program was a unique opportunity for FEB executives and their most senior staff to explore and define the dynamic challenges they face through a series of facilitated and interactive forums. Our major focus was on energizing the current workforce, balancing work and home, and the obstacles in recruiting and retaining employees to government service. John Palguta, then the Director of Policy and Evaluation for the Merit Systems Protection Board in Washington, D.C., opened the forum with, “Energizing the Current Workforce” on the first day and followed with “Balancing Work and Home.” Participants also heard from Troy Campbell, Senior Consultant with The Center for Generational Studies who gave his presentation on “Generational Differences.” Recommendations from the executives at this forum were compiled and directed to the Office of Personnel Management in Washington, D. C.

The Chicago FEB communicated to Board Members information on the following special requests, meetings, and events - The Chicago FEB provided its members with an easy and efficient means to reach the entire Federal community with job opening notices or in cases of special circumstances. Just one example – the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), USDA requested assistance from FEB agencies to review available positions for the possibility of assisting a Federal employee needing to relocate to the Ohio area due to family illness.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES - FY 2002

March 5, 2002 - Federal Women Sustaining the American Spirit co-sponsored with the Department of Labor's Women's Bureau. Over 200 Federal employees came to hear about the career building strategies relayed by our keynote speaker Rear Admiral Anne E. Rondeau, Commander of the Great Lakes Naval Training Center.

April 29, 2002 - Succession Planning Briefing - Conducted in conjunction with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), provided an opportunity for leaders in the public sector in Chicago to learn more about the important topic of succession planning.

Federal Recruiting Practices and Outcomes and How Automation is Affecting Federal Hiring - Conducted by the Merit Systems Protection Board, twenty-seven (27) FEB members, senior staff, and HR officials participated in two separate, but related, studies/focus groups on how their agencies recruited employees and how automation was used in hiring.

Partnership for Public Service - The Chicago FEB assisted the Partnership for Public Service in its request regarding their Speaker's Bureau initiative. Interested Federal employees wanting to be involved were encouraged to submit their information. Thirty-one (31) Federal employees submitted applications that were then forwarded to the Partnership for Public Service for this initiative. This list would then be used to when schools in the local Chicago area contacted the Partnership for speakers to address students about the opportunities available in public service.

University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Certificate Program - This program continued to be an asset to the Chicago area Federal employees. Our continuing partnership with UIC provided an opportunity for Federal employees to take graduate level courses leading to a Certificate in Electronic Public Administration. Each of the three courses in the series was offered at a special rate -- about half of what regular students were charged. In Fall of 2002, a total of 11 employees at a reduced tuition rate of \$592 per participant attended; and in Spring of 2002, a total of 11 employees at a reduced tuition rate of \$648 per participant attended, for a total savings of \$13,640.00.

EMAIL MESSAGES SENT:

The Chicago FEB continued to assist member agencies in job vacancy announcements and other related job-vacancy issues. The Chicago FEB provides an easy and efficient means to distribute information directly about job opportunities directly to our Federal community.

Re-distributed a memorandum providing job security/consideration to veterans, particularly those returning to active duty.

(Mailing) A number of Chicago FEB members and their staffs participated in focus group meetings with MSPB staff members. In March 2002, this collected information was issued in a report titled "Assisting Federal Job-Seekers in a Delegated Examining Environment" and mailed to each FEB member with an invitation to provide additional feedback concerning the report's findings and recommendations.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES - FY 2003

Strategic Management of Human Capital -In December 2002, 81 FEB members and senior officials attended our first Full Board Meeting on "Strategic Management of Human Capital." The presentation given by Phyllis Stabbe, Manager of the Chicago Human Capital Group for the Office of Personnel Management, former Chicago FEB Chair and current Executive Committee member, revealed the key points within this initiative. The program was very well received with over 90 agency heads and Human Resource managers attending. Approximately 20-25 agency officials requested copies of the PowerPoint presentation after the meeting. Ms. Stabbe offered to conduct similar presentations at the other FEBs within the region.

The Federal Midwest Human Resources Council (FMHRC) - This affiliated member of the FEB held a symposium for HR professionals on June 4, 2003. In addition to keynote speaker, Ron Sanders, Associate Director for Strategic Human Resources Policy who spoke on "Raising HR Performance to Meet Strategic Goals," FEB members also heard from Marta Brito Perez, OPM's Associate Director for Human Capital Leadership and Merit System Accountability, who addressed issues on "Attracting the Best: Making the USA a Competitive Employer."

CAP Program - The FEB Executive Director disseminated an e-mail reminding agencies of the Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP), a program available to assist in "getting to green." CAP, established by the Department of Defense (DoD) is the Federal government's centrally funded accommodations program. CAP provides assistive technology and related services, free of charge for individuals with visual, hearing, dexterity, and cognitive disabilities. By providing accommodations, CAP assists Federal agencies in complying with Public Laws 99-506 and 100-542, which require computer and telecommunications systems to be accessible. Although information on the program had been shared previously, FEB members were reminded that the program was still available to help meet their disability management requirements.

The Diversity Advisory Council Recruitment Initiative - The Diversity Advisory Council (DAC) investigated potential recruitment opportunities and opportunities to promote federal employment within underrepresented cultures. Mr. Sergio Guzman, IRS Recruitment Coordinator, gave a presentation to the DAC to inform them of the various IRS hiring efforts and summarized opportunities to underrepresented groups. Mr. Diego Diaz of Operation ABLE, an agency that contracts with the City of Chicago Mayor's Office of Workforce Development (MOWD), gave a presentation to DAC members in July, explaining the various services provided by his agency. This led to a partnership between the DAC and MOWD.

In August, DAC representatives visited the "Pilsen One-Stop" Center, a facility located in a predominately Chicago Latino neighborhood, and gave a presentation to over twenty-five job counselors to educate them on the Federal job search and applications process. The presentation was well received, and as a result, MOWD has asked DAC to conduct similar informational briefings at additional sites in the Chicago area. The DAC will also be participating in an upcoming Job Fair (FY 04) targeted to the Latino/Hispanic workforce.

Hispanic Organizations/Resources - The Chicago Federal Executive Board's The Diversity Advisory Council (DAC) assembled a list of Latino/Hispanic resources. The list provided Federal agencies with easy access to contact organizations with job vacancy announcements. The list covered nine states with a link to an organization that allowed employers and applicants to post jobs and resumes. This list was then posted to the Chicago FEB website and e-mailed to FEB members.

UIC Partnership – Certificate Program -The on-going partnership with the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs Graduate Program in Public Administration enabled the Chicago FEB

to extend another educational opportunity to Federal employees. The partnership reduced the cost for each of the required courses in these programs to half of the normal tuition charged. Registrations for the Spring Semester were received from six employees for courses offered in Management of Information Technology in Government and Computers in Public Administration and fifteen participants registered for the Fall Semester. The total savings was \$14,280.00.

CIO University at Loyola University. In support of the development of skilled IT staff, the CIO University, a virtual consortium of universities that offers graduate level programs that directly address the executive core competencies adopted by the Federal Chief Information Officers (CIO) Council, was established by the General Services Administration (GSA). This initiative satisfies the competencies identified by the Clinger-Cohen Act, designed to provide technology management leadership skills for current and future technology management and CIO's. The purpose of the CIO University is to improve government by enhancing the skills of its top executives.

The Chicago FEB, through its Federal IT Council, worked diligently with **Loyola University Chicago** in order to establish such a program in the Midwest. In June 2003, the General Services Administration approved Loyola University for participation in the program, the first CIO University outside of the Washington, D. C. area. It is anticipated that the dollar savings in travel, lodging and per diem per participant will be far greater than the cost of tuition. This will save agencies time and dollars since those professional IT employees will no longer have to travel to the Washington area to obtain that training.

“Unlock Your Potential” - This very successful event was sponsored by the Women in Government Mentoring Council, a task force of the Chicago Federal Executive Board (FEB), and was developed to highlight the vital contributions of women in the federal government. The March 12, 2003 event highlighted a keynote address by Kathleen McChesney, Executive Director of the Office for Child and Youth Protection of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and former FBI Special Agent in Charge in Chicago. The day also included a panel discussion with top Federal agency women and men and concurrent workshops on such topics as “How to Get the Job You Want” and “Mentoring Skills.”

MSPB Study Results: “Making the Public Service Work – Recommendations for Change” - The Chicago FEB sponsored a briefing by the Office of Policy and Evaluation of the Merit Systems Protection Board in Washington, D.C. John L. Crum, Ph.D. discussed the work of their office and provided information of recent reports and studies that were currently underway. He also discussed emerging or high profile Human Resources Management issues. Seventy-six agency heads, senior managers and HR professionals attended.

OPM – TELEWORK PARTICIPATION - The Chicago FEB participated in a focus group, at the request of the Director for FEB Operations, Paula Bridgham, and Office of Personnel Management's Assessment and Training Assistance Service Group, to identify barriers as to the utilization of telework arrangements. A series of six focus groups were held across the country, including Chicago. The Chicago FEB assisted in bringing first-line supervisors and managers from various agencies that had been making an effort to increase telework arrangements for staff members. The supervisors in each of the on the focus group represented the spectrum of employee staffs within government: those with large or small staffs, those with professional staffs (e.g., science agencies), and those with clerical/administrative staff (e.g., SSA, IRS). Also, there was representation from supervisors who currently had teleworkers and those who did not. Eight to twelve employees from member agencies participated in each of the two sessions held in Chicago.

Savings Bond Marketing Office - The Chicago FEB assisted the Savings Bond Marketing Offices, that were scheduled to close their doors on September 30, 2003, by distributing to the

entire Federal community a list of those employees being affected, their responsibilities, as well as a point of contact should job opportunities be available within another agency.

GSA Entry Level Candidates Screened - The Chicago FEB disseminated information to agencies about promising candidates already screened and interviewed for entry level positions by the General Services Administration Entry Level Recruiting Coordinating staff in Chicago. All of the candidates were highly recommended and qualified; however, due to budget restraints could not be hired by that agency.

Campus Visits by Agency Recruiters - The FEB disseminated an invitation from the Assistant Dean for Student Services to FEB members inviting agencies' recruiters to visit and speak to their graduate students at the University of Illinois at Chicago's College for Urban Planning and Public Affairs about the opportunities available. Agencies interested in exploring possible opportunities were asked to contact the Assistant Dean directly.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES - FY 2004

Underrepresentation of Hispanics – On November 14, the FEB's Diversity Advisory Council (DAC) exhibited at a career fair that was held at the Westside Technical Institute, 2800 S. Western Ave, in Chicago. Located in a largely Hispanic area of the city, over 2000 Hispanic and non-Hispanic job seekers were in attendance. There were 11 agency representatives present as well as three members of the DAC. Approximately 1,500 individuals visited the 5 tables set aside for our Federal representatives where they received an overview of each agency's hiring process as well as current/future job opportunities.

Groundhog Job Shadow Day - Held on December 29, the Chicago FEB promoted to its community the "Groundhog Job Shadow Day" being sponsored by the Chicago Public Schools on Tuesday, February 3, 2004, during National Groundhog Job Shadow Week. This was a nationwide event dedicated to giving high school students an opportunity to "shadow" a workplace mentor as they went through a normal day on the job. The purpose of Groundhog Job Shadow Day was to take students into the workplace and to provide an up-close look at what a real job was like. The goal for this event was to create an opportunity for students to make a critical link between education and success on the job. This event provided an opportunity for students to get hands-on experience, to learn about the workplace skills that were necessary to succeed, and, most importantly, to understand why school was so important in the real world.

March 19 - Disseminated information to the Federal community inviting Federal agency recruiters to visit and speak with graduate students at the University of Illinois at Chicago. This was an open invitation.

June 26 - OPM Job Fair -- OPM is hosting a federal job fair at Malcolm X College. More than 3,000 potential job applicants are expected to attend. The Census Bureau will staff an exhibit highlighting the American Community Survey (ACS) and conduct two testing sessions for ACS positions. OPM is handling all promotional and public relations activities for the job fair.

