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"Legislative Branch Diversity Management Review"

Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
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Mr. Chairman, Congressman Marchant, members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to discuss the Office of the Architect of the Capitol's (AOC's) diversity management program, and our efforts to identify, attract, hire, promote, and retain a diverse workforce.

Respect and diversity are among our Agency's core values. The AOC values the individual differences of its employees and the varied backgrounds, talents, abilities, knowledge, and skills they bring to their jobs. Our commitment to equal employment opportunity is strong, and we have marked a number of successful achievements since we testified before this Subcommittee in November of last year. We are very proud of our efforts to integrate diversity at every level of the AOC as we carry out our mission to serve Congress and the American people.

The core values are an integral part of the AOC's Strategic Plan and, as such, our senior leadership team regularly discusses them and our mission with AOC staff. Senior managers are also expected to personally demonstrate a commitment to each of the core values, and are accountable for ensuring equal opportunities for all employees and job applicants, and for facilitating and enhancing the recruitment, career development, and advancement opportunities of women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities.

The Acting Architect of the Capitol has made a commitment to our workforce to foster open communication among colleagues, and I look forward to working with him to strengthen

communication channels to ensure that our EEO and diversity programs continue to be linked to the AOC's mission and strategic goals.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to report that the Architect of the Capitol recently implemented its first Affirmative Employment Program. It was a great achievement for the Agency, and I was honored to personally introduce the program to our senior management team. As is noted in the AOC's Inspector General report, this order "will form the basis and framework for success in the resolution and removal of barriers impacting the diversity management program, and the under-representation of women, minorities, and persons with disabilities."

The Affirmative Employment Program will serve as the foundation for ensuring diversity in senior-level positions, and other areas where under-representation has been determined. It will ensure that applicants for employment, and employees looking to advance professionally in the organization, are considered fairly and equally in all areas of employment. A primary component of the program will be the development of a plan that will delineate action-oriented strategies and measurable goals to increase the AOC's workforce diversity. The program puts into action our long-standing commitment to equal opportunity in every area of employment. This extends beyond hiring to include promotions, disciplinary actions, and training opportunities.

In the coming months, we will also implement our new Reasonable Accommodation Policy for Persons with Disabilities. This policy formalizes procedures to accommodate the needs of our disabled employees and will help to ensure a diverse and qualified workforce.

Every AOC employee will be receiving a copy of the new Reasonable Accommodation Policy. In fact, every new AOC employee receives copies of our policies, and my staff or I make a brief presentation at each new employee orientation session about the scope of each policy and the rights and protections they afford each and every employee.

The AOC also provides mandatory EEO training for all supervisors and managers. As we work toward achieving the goals set forth in our Human Capital Plan, we are looking to expand our

training to include diversity training for all AOC employees. Because the Human Capital Plan was designed to help ensure that we are adequately addressing the needs of our workforce, while at the same time, addressing the future needs of our organization by developing strong leaders and managers, we are looking for the resources to provide this training Agency-wide in the most effective way.

In addition to continuing to develop the existing talent within our Agency, we are conducting a comprehensive AOC Workforce Analysis to better identify the make-up of our workforce. We expect that the workforce analysis, including adverse impact analyses, will be completed in the coming months, and we believe it should provide a thorough and comprehensive understanding of any barriers that may prevent the full participation of women and minorities in our workforce.

This information will also help us to better focus our recruiting and hiring efforts. As my colleague on the first panel noted, the statistics provided in the IG report are out of date. The report noted an increase in the number of women and African-Americans hired at the SES-equivalent level between 2002 and 2007, but a corresponding decline in the number of Hispanic and Asian-Americans at those levels. We are all aware that there are challenges in interpreting statistical data when dealing with a small group to be measured.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to update those figures based on the information we have recently gathered. While the representation of women and minorities in our senior level positions remain at 33 percent and 19 percent, respectively, these percentages demonstrate a significant increase over 2002 levels. As of August 16, 2008, minority representation in the GS-15 development pool has increased from 12.8 percent to 18 percent, and representation for women has increased from 23.1 percent to 25 percent.

With the implementation of the Affirmative Employment Program and the completion of our workforce analysis, we will be able to strengthen our process for recruiting and hiring diverse, qualified candidates for senior-level and development pool positions, and we will have better tools at our disposal by which to measure our progress and success.

The IG's report also noted the importance of establishing a "Diversity Network" between the AOC and other Legislative Branch Agency EEO/Diversity Directors in order to share best practices and discuss the critical issues we have in common. I am pleased to note that my peers agree with this recommendation and welcome the opportunity to strengthen our ties and work together toward common goals.

Lastly, the report highlighted personnel practices and other areas that merit attention. We have developed an action plan to address a number of these issues, and are working to expand programs or policies already in place.

As I noted last November, we advertise our career opportunities nationwide through a wide and diverse number of Web sites, newspapers, and professional networks and associations. We also continue to actively participate in recruitment events to increase awareness of job opportunities with our Agency. This past year, we attended the Federally Employed Women Job Fair Conference; Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton's annual job fair; Former Representative Albert Wynn's annual job fair, and the League of United Latin American Citizens Job Fair. Over the next few weeks, we will be participating in Mayor Fenty's DC-Wide Job Fair, and the Asian Job Fair in Arlington, Virginia.

In addition, the AOC has recently advertised positions in our Architect's Mobility Program. This program, which is strongly supported by the Acting Architect of the Capitol and our senior leadership team, offers career opportunities for high potential employees who are currently in career limiting positions, and lack qualifying experience to enter career fields within the AOC. Participants are provided on-the-job training as well as formal classroom training. Participation is limited to current, permanent AOC employees who have one year or more of continuous service. Eligible employees are at Grades 1 through 8 under the GS, WG, WL, and RW pay plans. Eligible employees are typically in positions such as Laborer, Custodial Worker, Recycling Utility Workers, Waiters/Waitresses, Food Service Workers, and Subway Car Operators, to name a few examples.

The Architect's Mobility Program provides promotion potential to the diverse population typically occupying these positions, and we anticipate an increased number of opportunities. Our Senate Superintendent's Office is currently filling three AMP positions, one in each of the following trades: Elevator Mechanic Helper (trainee); Painting Helper (trainee); and Masonry Helper (trainee). The Architect's Mobility Program will assist in increasing diversity in established career fields, providing an exciting path for participants.

We are also participating in Operation Warfighter, the Department of Defense's temporary assignment/internship program for service members that are convalescing at military treatment facilities in the National Capital Region, many of whom were stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan. Operation Warfighter is designed to provide recuperating service members with meaningful activity outside of the hospital environment that assists in their wellness and offers a formal means of transition back to the military or civilian workforce.

This program enables the AOC to benefit from the considerable talent and dedication of these soldiers, and to positively affect their recuperation by providing a positive work environment. The soldiers have an opportunity to explore employment interests, develop job skills, and gain federal government civilian work experience, all of which will help prepare them for the future.

To date, five service members have worked with us in a variety of jobs in these AOC organizations or divisions: Project Management, Construction Division, Photography Branch, House Superintendent's Office, and Information Technology Division. Although Operation Warfighter assignments are temporary, we hope program participants will be interested in applying for permanent employment opportunities with the AOC.

We are extremely proud, as an Agency, to do our part to help the men and women of our Armed Forces "build their resumes, explore employment interests, develop job skills, and gain valuable federal government work experience." The mission of Operation Warfighter mirrors that of our EEO Program and our organization's core values.

Although we have made great progress, we recognize we still have work to do. The AOC is deeply committed to our goal of attracting and retaining a diverse workforce and this commitment begins at the top of the organization. We all benefit from a workplace that brings together people with different backgrounds, skills, experiences, and perspectives, and we are diligently working to further increase the diversity in our workforce, and in particular, among our senior-level management.

This concludes my statement. I would be happy to answer any questions the Subcommittee may have.