



NATIONAL ACADEMY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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**Written Testimony of the Honorable Dan G. Blair
President and CEO
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Before the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related
Agencies
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Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, I appreciate this opportunity to offer the written views of the National Academy of Public Administration (the Academy) on issues affecting the Fiscal Year 2014 appropriations for agencies and programs within the jurisdiction of the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies. I am the President and CEO of the National Academy of Public Administration. Chartered by Congress, the Academy is an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to helping leaders address today's most critical and complex challenges. Our organization consists of nearly 800 Fellows—including former cabinet officers, Members of Congress, governors, mayors, and state legislators, as well as distinguished scholars, business executives, and public administrators.

Governing in the 21st century has become increasingly complex. As mandated by our Charter (Public Law 98-257, Sec. 3), the Academy helps public institutions address their most critical challenges through in-depth studies and analyses, advisory services and technical assistance, Congressional testimony, forums and conferences, and online stakeholder engagement. Our Charter permits Congress to request that the Academy conduct work for federal cabinet departments and agencies. Currently, we are providing such assistance in the following projects:

- ***Assessing the STOCK Act's Financial Disclosure Requirement.*** In response to a Congressional mandate, the Academy is conducting an independent review of the impact of providing financial disclosures online for Executive Branch senior career and political appointees and congressional staff. This review is considering a range of issues, including how best to manage the balance between promoting transparency and accountability while protecting privacy and security. The Academy Panel is examining such critical topics as the degree of risk to federal missions and employees associated with the online disclosure, as well as any harm that has arisen from current online disclosure in the legislative branch.
- ***Evaluating the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation's Governance Structure.*** Congress has requested that the Academy conduct a review of the current governance structure of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC), which provides retirement income protection to millions of Americans. The Academy has formed a five-

member Panel of Fellows to lead this study. The Panel will issue recommendations on such key governance issues as the ideal size and composition of the PBGC Board of Directors and the policies necessary to enhance Congressional oversight and Board transparency, as well as to mitigate potential conflicts of interest.

Over the past few years, the Academy has worked with agencies across the federal government to help them address critical governance and management challenges. Further examples of congressionally-mandated work include the two following reports that were released in January 2013:

- ***Government Printing Office.*** At the request of Congress, the Academy conducted a broad operational review of Government Printing Office (GPO) to update past studies of GPO operations; examine the feasibility of GPO continuing to perform executive branch printing; and identify additional cost saving operational alternatives. The Academy's independent Panel concluded that, in the digital age, ensuring permanent public access to authentic government information remains a critical government responsibility. GPO and the rest of the federal government must continue to "reboot" to perform this mission successfully in the digital age. The Panel issued fifteen recommendations intended to position the federal government for the digital age, strengthen GPO's business model, and further GPO's continuing transformation.
- ***Department of Energy.*** The Department of Energy's (DOE) national laboratories have occupied a central place in the landscape of American science for more than 50 years. Congress tasked the Academy to review how DOE oversees its contractor-operated labs, including a review of the performance metrics and systems that DOE uses to evaluate the performance of the labs. While conducting this review, the Academy Panel overseeing this study determined that these management issues must be considered as part of a broader issue about defining and ensuring the future of the lab complex. The Academy's independent Panel issued findings and recommendations regarding the labs as a national asset, how to evaluate the labs, and how to conduct systems-based oversight.

Apart from the traditional management and congressionally-mandated studies, the Academy endeavors to provide a forum for our Fellows to engage in thought leadership efforts and provide practical support to federal agencies in addressing pressing issues in public administration. For example, we have been working with the Office of Management and Budget to manage the Collaborative Forum, whereby the Academy facilitates discussions, supports participants in the development of pilot ideas and offers its collective knowledge about the intergovernmental system. The Forum draws on state and other stakeholder expertise to generate, develop, and consult on innovations in how states administer federally funded assistance programs. These innovations seek to improve payment accuracy and service delivery, enhance administrative efficiency and reduce barriers to program access. More information on this project can be found on the Forum's website, <http://home.community.collaborativeforumonline.com/>. I believe that such collaborative efforts between federal, state, local, and private sector stakeholders can improve program delivery and ultimately reduce costs.

Another example of the exercise of the Academy's thought leadership efforts is evidenced in the election transition area. This past year, the Academy and the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) launched a joint "Memos to National Leaders" project to develop memos to national leaders on how to address the most challenging policy and management challenges facing the nation. These memos can be found at www.memostoleaders.org and addressed the following topics:

- Strengthening the Federal Budget Process;
- Rationalizing the Intergovernmental System;
- Administrative Leadership;
- Strengthening the Federal Workforce;
- Reorganization of Government;
- Information Technology and Transparency;
- Managing Big Initiatives;
- Next Steps in Improving Performance; and
- Managing Large Task Public-Private Partnerships.

The memos were developed with both a Presidential and Congressional focus, reflecting the joint ownership of problems and solutions for these major challenges.¹

The Academy has also established a "Political Appointee Project" to inform current discussions about improving the presidential appointments process. We hope to serve as an important forum for this discussion. Our website (<http://www.politicalappointeeproject.org/>) contains information on previous related studies, as well as ongoing commentaries on this issue by Academy Fellows and other experts in the field; serves as a repository of profiles of the key management positions in government; and provides insights to new political executives on the challenge of managing in government.

In summary, the Academy has a long track record of working across the federal government to address critical governance and management challenges. Effectively managing scarce federal dollars is a goal shared across the aisle. The Academy stands ready to assist the Subcommittee in its oversight efforts to enhance and improve agency and program performance.

¹ These memos are the opinions and views of their respective authors, and are not the opinions of the Academy or ASPA. They can be accessed at <http://www.memostoleaders.org/memos-national-leaders>.