

GOVERNMENT MANAGERS COALITION

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December 17, 2008

Mr. John Podesta
Co-Chair
Obama-Biden Presidential Transition Team
1333 H Street NW, 10th Floor
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Podesta,

We write to express our concern about the Obama-Biden proposal titled, “The Change We Need in Washington,” which specifically states, “Barack Obama will thin the ranks of Washington middle managers.” The Government Managers Coalition (GMC) consists of five major federal-sector executive and management professional associations representing over 200,000 federal executives and managers. The GMC strongly disagrees that thinning the ranks of federal managers is the most effective way for President-Elect Obama to achieve his goals and to tackle government reform. We propose alternate solutions for your consideration.

In looking for a creative solution to develop a more effective federal government, many previous incoming administrations have focused on what they see as a “bloated” federal workforce. Consistent with this focus, President Clinton in 1994 organized the National Performance Review that called for a reduction of the civilian federal workforce by 100,000 jobs by the end of 1995, with 10 percent of those cuts coming from senior management. The career executive corps alone was cut by 18 percent. According to the White House Record of Progress for the Clinton-Gore Administration, by the end of his second term, the workforce had been reduced by 377,000 jobs. The National Performance Review also called for the span of control (the number of people who report directly to a manager) to increase from 1:7 to 1:15. In reaching President Clinton’s reduction goals, agencies eliminated thousands of management positions without any measurement of the effectiveness of the effort and undoubtedly have had a direct impact on the increasing backlog of cases at the Social Security Administration and Veterans’ Affairs.

An arbitrary cut of managers based upon an across the board ratio for all of Federal service is **not** the answer. Instead, we encourage you to think about the long-term impact that qualified managers have on the ability of an agency to meet mission critical goals. As your transition team conducts its agency by agency review, focus should be on making an objective job specific determination of where managers are needed, what type of critical skills are required to accomplish the task, developing and training those individuals to manage their subordinates effectively within the context of governmental and agency performance goals.

In fact, prior to making any cuts, we suggest the best way to reform the management sector of the federal government would be to allow the Government Accountability

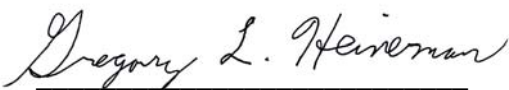
Office to conduct an objective in-depth study of the effects of actions taken in the 1990s that initially reduced the management ranks. Of particular interest is a review of the effect that the earlier cuts had on agency employee and customer surveys, existing goals and scorecards, and other tangible measurements of agency performance.

Based on our observations and feedback from our associations' members, the negative impacts of these cuts on the remaining managers and the ability of federal employees to meet agency critical missions has been long-lasting. With the onset of retirements predicted over the next few years it is probable that non-surgical reductions will result in skill imbalances, loss of institutional memory, severe work pressure and responsibilities beyond the managers' training level, a loss of focus on agency goals and a lack of lower level managers ready and willing to higher level positions.

In talking to federal managers today, our Coalition has learned that they deal with an increased workload and an expanded span of control, not just over federal employees, but over the increasing numbers of federal contractors. Managers routinely work long hours beyond the normally scheduled 40-hour work week and deal with issues for which they often receive little to no training. Furthermore, managers are often burdened by an increasing amount of regulations and red tape.

We applaud the new Administration's goal of government reform and look forward to working with you to meet many of your goals. We hope you will consider the usefulness of a strong management team, rather than wholesale implementation of further cuts to an already reduced managerial workforce, as a first step in the new Administration.

Sincerely,



GREGORY L. HEINEMAN
President
National Council of Social Security
Management Associations



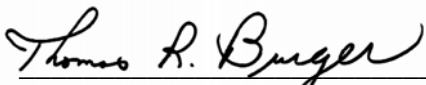
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