

TESTIMONY OF
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Introduction

Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Keating, and other distinguished members of the subcommittee, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss employee morale at the Department of Homeland Security.

One of my top priorities as Chief Human Capital Officer for DHS is to support the Secretary's efforts to improve employee morale and engagement across the Department. In the 2011 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, our strengths included DHS employees' belief in their work and a willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty. This is a strong foundation and gives me hope that we can return to the strong upward trend in scores DHS experienced from 2006 to 2010. Moreover, our drop in Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey scores between 2010 and 2011 was mirrored government-wide to a lesser degree, suggesting external factors also shaped 2011 results.

DHS's areas for improvement, as outlined in the 2011 Survey results, included employee recognition; opportunities for creativity, innovation, and empowerment; opportunities to get a better job within the organization; and the ability of senior leaders to generate employee motivation and commitment. While the specific strengths and gaps, as measured by the 2011 results, vary by Component, we are using these findings to dictate a three-pronged strategy to improve employee morale at DHS:

- 1) Institutionalizing a Secretarial mandate to all Component heads to prioritize employee engagement, including the establishment of an Employee Engagement Executive Steering Committee;
- 2) Supporting a unified, One DHS, through improved employee communication, training, emphasis on diversity and inclusion, and employee recognition; and
- 3) Strengthening the leadership skills and capacity of all supervisors and managers within DHS.

With this concerted and comprehensive approach, I expect to see DHS improve its Employee Viewpoint Survey scores in the coming years. The correlation between morale and employees' need to feel connected to their leadership and to feel valued are unmistakable links to improving our overall scores.

Secretarial Mandate

I would like to share with the subcommittee some concrete examples of what DHS is doing to address employee engagement and morale. On January 9, 2012, Secretary Napolitano directed Component heads to take several steps to institute accountability in a focused employee engagement initiative across the Department. Component heads were directed to:

- Develop and assume responsibility for employee engagement improvement plans;
- Identify and assign specific responsibilities for improved employee engagement to Component Senior Executive performance objectives;
- Identify a Component Deputy level official to serve on a newly-created DHS Employee Engagement Executive Steering Committee (ESC);
- Conduct town hall meetings with employees (including in field locations);

- If applicable, attend a labor-management forum; and
- Provide regular reports on actions planned and progress made to my office.

The Employee Engagement ESC, which I chair, launched in February and is developing a strategic framework to boost employee engagement, including enhanced employee communications. At our first meeting, we shared best practices regarding what each Component was doing to address gaps identified by the 2011 Survey, which facilitated the development of action items at both the Component and Departmental Headquarters levels.

The DHS Employee Engagement ESC will continue to meet periodically to inject new ideas and leadership attention to the set of communications, recognition, and other employee engagement efforts I will describe shortly. The Employee Engagement ESC will also more effectively engage our union partners through the DHS Labor-Management Forum and encourage Components with bargaining unit employees to work with union partners on action planning. In the spirit of transparency and best practices sharing, the Employee Engagement ESC members will also post all Component Action Plans to the DHS intranet and conduct targeted pulse surveys across the Department.

Communication, Training, Diversity and Recognition

Over time, the Secretary has been building a stronger and more unified One DHS, and there are several mutually reinforcing employee engagement efforts that fit under this umbrella. Today, I'd like to highlight our efforts to consolidate our learning management systems; our DHS Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program and our DHS Fellows Program; our new Diversity and Inclusion strategic plan; and the Secretary's Awards Program as initiatives that I believe will positively impact employee engagement.

One of the areas we are prioritizing in our Human Resources Information Technology strategy is the move from many to a common learning management system, or LMS. This will enable employees from across DHS to access the same training and development opportunities, and will create greater consistency, and a stronger and more unified culture and Departmental identity. A common LMS will channel resources to the important training and professional development that is so crucial to continued investment in our employees.

We have also been delivering a set of DHS-wide programs aimed at improving unity and common leadership skills across the Department. This past year we selected our first cohort of a DHS-wide Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program, or SES CDP, replacing Component-specific programs with different curricula. The DHS SES CDP is now preparing high potential employees that will be able to step into leadership positions across in the Department. Similarly, our DHS Fellows Program identifies and grooms employees across the Department at the GS-13, 14, and 15 levels and instills a common leadership vision and experience. I believe these common leadership and development programs will significantly help us realize the One DHS vision.

We have developed a diversity and inclusion strategic plan which will be important to acknowledging and appreciating the diverse workforce of DHS, including Veterans, women, individuals of all heritages, abilities, and backgrounds. Integrating a recruitment strategy that

communicates that the Department focuses on education and/or experience as its priority, ensures those we hire will contribute to our mission – which is our top priority. The plan builds on progress we have made in the area of diversity and inclusion at the Department, including in the Senior Executive Service (SES) and the Transportation Senior Executive Service (TSES). For instance, we have made considerable progress in diversity in our senior levels over the last several years.

Employee recognition is a key element of employee engagement. In addition to our performance recognition efforts, a Secretary's Awards program is being scheduled for later this year to recognize and honor the important and impressive work of individuals and teams across the Department. This level of recognition is another example of our concerted effort to promote the Secretary's One DHS theme and address gaps identified in the Employee Viewpoint Survey.

Leadership skills and Capacity of Supervisors and Managers

Lastly, I'd like to share our exciting work in the area of leader development, which we consider to be our most critical effort. This is an area integrally tied to employee satisfaction, and is an area in which we are doing a lot of groundbreaking work at DHS.

In FY 2010, the Deputy Secretary directed the establishment of an integrated DHS Leader Development Program to maximize mission performance, strengthen the DHS leadership bench, and build leadership competencies at all levels of the DHS workforce, through a coherent and seamless continuum of leader development opportunities across the Department.

The guiding principles for the Leader Development effort at the onset include transparency by ensuring Component perspectives are considered; ensuring Components have a seat at the table to help design, develop and execute the leader development programs, which ensures their ownership and buy-in; Component participation in developing the Department-wide requirements and programs; and leveraging what already exists within the Components, across the Department.

In collaboration with the Components, the DHS Leader Development Program Office has identified a common set of competencies for DHS leaders. The competencies have been organized into five groups: Core Foundations (integrity/honesty, continual learning, self-management); Building Engagement (written/verbal communications, interpersonal skills, conflict management); Management Skills (financial/HR/performance management, developing others, accountability); Solutions Capabilities (problem solving, creative/critical thinking, decision making); and Homeland Security (leading joint teams, risk and incident management, planning joint operations).

In January 2011, the Deputy Secretary approved the Leader Development "Framework," a strategic roadmap for the next three years, which identifies five leadership levels spanning all of DHS. They are: Team Member (learning good Departmental citizenship and how to lead by example); Project Leader (an informal leadership position); Supervisor (first formal level of supervision, leading performance and employees); Manager (overseeing supervisors and leading organizations and programs); and Executive (strategic leadership, includes all SESs and Coast Guard admirals).

The top priority to date has been the development of the "Cornerstone" leader development program for front line supervisors. The program establishes department-wide training requirements

in four distinct groups: Understanding the DHS Leadership Commitment, Supervisor On-boarding, Fundamentals of DHS Leadership, and Continuous Development for Supervisors.

We are also moving forward in developing our Executive Capstone Program, which will be required for all new DHS executives (SES, TSES, and Coast Guard Admirals). The program, designed with significant input from Components, will provide new executives across the department with an intensive exposure to strategic leadership capabilities unique to being an executive at DHS, and support their transition into executive leadership. The three-week program will feature onsite instruction at key DHS locations, action learning, and simulation activities that build collaboration, strategic, and crisis leadership competencies within a homeland security context. We plan to pilot the program this summer.

Conclusion

With this renewed focus directed from the Department-level through the Employee Engagement ESC, I am optimistic that DHS will again make incremental gains in employee satisfaction and engagement as measured by the annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. It is our goal to ensure that the Department of Homeland Security is considered “a best place to work,” in the Federal Government and beyond. Through the collective efforts described in the statement, I believe that the Department has instituted a strong and broadly-scoped foundation upon which our efforts to improve employee morale will continue. We recognize the difficulties that exist due to the many organizational cultures that were brought together when the Department was created nine years ago, but these difficulties are not insurmountable and we will continue to move forward in our efforts toward creating a One DHS. Once again, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I look forward to answering your questions.