

5/26/2011
Statement by U.S. Representative Cynthia M. Lummis
At-Large Member, Wyoming
House Oversight and Government Reform
Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, U.S. Postal Service and Labor Policy
Hearing on
“Rightsizing the Federal Workforce”

I want to thank Chairman Ross and Ranking Member Lynch for inviting me to testify on how to “right size” the federal workforce. As a member first of the House Budget Committee and now the House Appropriations Committee, one of my top priorities is restoring fiscal and economic stability in the United States. I've been listening to Wyoming's common-sense minded people from the feed store to the grocery store. They want Congress and the President to halt this country's spending spree and tackle our long-term debt problem. Your subcommittee, with its jurisdiction over the federal workforce, will play a critical role in determining how we can make the federal workforce leaner and more efficient in light of our dire fiscal circumstances.

Many American families have had to cut back and make sacrifices to deal with the recession. But even as times got tough for the American people, they look at Washington and see more spending and a booming federal government. The federal workforce has expanded significantly in just the two and one half years since I took office. The Administration's Fiscal Year 2012 budget proposal shows that over 180,000 employees have been added to the federal workforce since President Obama took office. This total excludes temporary workers hired for the census. The President is requesting an additional 15,000 workers for Fiscal Year 2012.

At the same time, our economy has lost millions of jobs and the unemployment rate continues to hover around 9 percent. The \$1.1 trillion economic stimulus bill that was supposed to keep employment under 8 percent failed to do so. If the stimulus succeeded at anything it was

creating public sector jobs using hard-earned tax dollars and debt. Creating more government jobs does little to foster sustainable economic growth in the private sector, which is where we need jobs the most and where most Americans want jobs to be created.

In the last election, the American people sent a clear message to Washington that they want a change in the direction of their government, which had responded to economic crisis with more spending and bigger government. I am dedicated to reversing this dangerous trend in which the private sector shrinks and the public sector expands at the expense of the taxpaying public.

I have introduced H.R. 657, the *Federal Workforce Reduction Act of 2011*, to establish a policy of federal workforce reduction by attrition. Under an attrition policy, the federal government would be limited in its replacement of workers who retire, are terminated or otherwise separate from federal service. The replacement ratio specified in my legislation is 2 to 1, so for every two employees that leave federal service, the government could hire only one new employee. This notion of attrition has been replicated by the House Republican Budget Resolution, which assumes a more aggressive 3 to 1 replacement rate, and the President's deficit commission, which called for a less aggressive 3 to 2 replacement rate.

I prefer the attrition approach to a rigid hiring freeze. My goal is not just to reduce the size of the federal workforce; I want our agency heads to be more efficient and better at prioritizing their resources. They should be afforded some measure of hiring flexibility and attrition provides them that flexibility. Additionally, an attrition policy will reduce the workforce without forcing any dedicated civil servants out of the jobs they have now.

Under my bill, the replacement rate would be calculated and applied government-wide, not by individual agency or department. This approach both provides the Executive Branch with

flexibility and forces agency heads to compete with each other to justify their workforce needs. As workers retire or otherwise separate, their positions would be deposited in the new Federal Workforce Hiring Pool. The President would then be charged with distributing these hiring slots among the different departments and agencies. My bill does not micromanage this process. But it does require the President to establish criteria and a competitive process by which agencies would make their case for the hiring slots in the Federal Workforce Hiring Pool. For the benefit of the public, the Executive Branch would be required to regularly disclose to Congress and the American people a list and description of all new federal positions, broken down by federal agency. This disclosure will allow the public to continually monitor their government's hiring priorities.

Finally, my legislation would exempt the Departments of Defense, Homeland Security and Veterans Affairs from the new attrition policy. These Departments would not be constrained by the limitations in the Federal Workforce Hiring Pool. I included this provision, as well as a general national security waiver of the bill's hiring limitations, to acknowledge the preeminent importance of national security and the federal responsibility to care for our nation's veterans.

I do believe that there is room for improved efficiency at our security-related agencies, which like every other agency need to strive towards doing more with less staff and fewer resources without compromising their missions. I am willing to work with the committee to accomplish this legislatively in the context of my bill, so long as care is taken to ensure the vital missions of these agencies are not jeopardized.

Working with Republican staff on the House Budget Committee, we estimated the savings for H.R. 657 to be somewhere in the ballpark of \$35 billion over ten years. This is a

meaningful amount of money and we should act to achieve these savings. It might pale in comparison to current debt limit discussion, in which we all know that we need savings in the trillions and not the billions. But controlling the sheer size and scope of the federal government is a necessary part of the solution because it represents a move towards smaller government in general. We simply cannot afford the government we have now, much less the government President Obama envisions as is outlined in his latest budget submission.

On our current path, the annual interest we pay on our debt will triple to \$844 billion over the next decade. Currently policies are not sustainable, and we need to make reforms now to change course. This is no longer a fiscal issue; it is a moral issue because the debt we incur today will be heaped upon our children and grandchildren. I urge the members of this committee to do their part by working towards a more sustainable and efficient federal workforce.

Thanks you again Chairman Ross, and Ranking Member Lynch, I look forward to working with you on H.R. 657 and other federal workforce issues.

Biography – Representative Cynthia Lummis (WY-AL)

Cynthia Lummis (pronounced "Luh-miss") was elected to represent the people of Wyoming in the U.S. House of Representatives in 2008. She was raised on her family ranch in Laramie County and graduated from the University of Wyoming with bachelor degrees in Animal Science and Biology. In 1979, Cynthia became the youngest woman ever elected to the Wyoming Legislature. She returned to the University of Wyoming for a law degree, which she received in 1985.

Cynthia then clerked at the Wyoming Supreme Court, practiced law in Cheyenne, and served a total of fourteen years in the Wyoming House and Senate, concentrating on natural resource and taxation issues. She completed her legislative service in 1994 and then chaired Governor-elect Jim Geringer's transition team. She continued to work in the Governor's office for two more years, primarily on natural resource issues. Cynthia also served as the interim Director of the Office of State Lands and Investments.

Cynthia was elected Wyoming State Treasurer in 1998. In eight years (two terms) as Wyoming State Treasurer, she converted Wyoming's primarily fixed income investment portfolio of \$3.5 billion to a fully diversified portfolio of equities, real estate and fixed income investments, public and private, domestic and international, totaling \$8.5 billion. Her term of office as State Treasurer ended in January 2007.

Cynthia continues to be involved in the daily operations of the Lummis family ranch. She and her husband, Al Wiederspahn, former Wyoming legislator who is a Cheyenne attorney, have one daughter, Annaliese.