

**TESTIMONY OF DAVID S. FERRIERO**  
**ARCHIVIST OF THE UNITED STATES**  
**BEFORE THE**  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS**  
**APRIL 16, 2015**

Chairman Meadows, Ranking Member Connolly, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:  
Thank you for inviting me here today to discuss the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and our ranking in the Partnership for Public Service's 2014 Best Places to Work in Federal Government®.

**NARA MISSION AND WORKFORCE**

NARA's mission is to store, preserve, and provide public access to the permanently valuable records of the Federal government. NARA works with other agencies to help them manage their records from the time the records are created until they are either properly disposed of or transferred to our ownership. NARA also provides temporary storage of other agencies' records on a fee-for-service basis. Once permanent records are transferred into our legal custody, NARA stores and preserves the documents so that the public may access the records in perpetuity. NARA provides public access to the records through research rooms located across the country, mail and email correspondence, private sector partners, and on-line, at [archives.gov](http://archives.gov) and through various social media outlets.

NARA provides records management services, stores temporary records, and holds in trust the permanently valuable records from all three branches of government. In total, NARA holds about 35 million cubic feet of permanent and temporary records (equivalent to more than 83 billion pages) in more than 40 facilities across the United States, including the Presidential Libraries of 13 former Presidents. In fiscal year (FY) 2014, NARA received over 2.7 million written and in-person requests for records, and 4 million people visited NARA facilities to view our museum exhibits, participate in public programs, and view original records. An additional 57 million visitors accessed NARA websites to view government records posted on-line and to learn more about the National Archives.

NARA performs its mission through a workforce of approximately 3,000 employees. More than half of NARA employees occupy General Schedule (GS) grades GS-08 and below. This staff performs primarily NARA customer service activities and manages our vast holdings of government records, often physically demanding work frequently done in warehouse environments with no air conditioning or the amenities found in most government office settings. NARA staff occupying grades GS-09 and above primarily perform the more analytical functions of archival work, support museum exhibits and public programs, or are assigned to specialized units that fulfill unique requirements assigned to NARA by statute or policy. Two-thirds of NARA employees are located in the Washington, DC metropolitan area (40%) or in the vicinity of St. Louis, MO (26%); the remaining one-third of our workforce fulfills NARA's mission in 38 facilities in 16 States.

## **BEST PLACES TO WORK IN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT®**

I am extremely disappointed in NARA's position in the annual Best Places to Work in Federal Government® rankings. In 2014, NARA ranked 23 out of 25 mid-sized agencies (agencies with 1,000 to 14,999 employees) in employee satisfaction. NARA received an overall score of 46.7, well below the government-wide average (56.9). NARA also scored in the lowest quartile in each of the Partnership for Public Service's ten indexes related to workplace environment, including effective leadership, employee skills / mission match, pay, and work-life balance.

NARA's 2014 ranking is consistent with our rankings in previous years. NARA has ranked in the lowest quartile when compared to other Federal agencies in every ranking since 2007. NARA has also declined in rank in the workplace environment indexes: While we were mostly in the third quartile (25% to 50%) in 2007—and exceeded the median score for mid-sized agencies in two categories in 2009—all NARA scores have been in the lowest quartile in both of the past two years. This is particularly disappointing in the two categories where we have demonstrated improvements in our objective scores—fairness and supervisors—but have not been able to make gains in the comparative rankings of Best Places to Work.

## **AGENCY LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

I am committed to improving employee satisfaction at NARA and have been directly involved in agency efforts to increase engagement since my arrival in 2009. In each of the past five years, I have actively encouraged staff participation in the annual Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS), which is used to calculate

Best Places to Work rankings. I personally review the results in detail each year in order to better understand NARA's scores. I have been frank and transparent about NARA's FEVS scores in communications with NARA employees and in my public statements, and I have ensured that NARA FEVS results are widely disseminated and available to all NARA staff. I have conducted "listening tours" to hear concerns directly from employees at facilities across the country, and commissioned internal surveys to better understand how NARA-specific conditions and activities influence our FEVS scores.

In 2012, I formed a partnership with our employee labor union—the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) Council 260—to address our low employee satisfaction survey results. Since then, our partnership has evolved into a national action team that includes senior leaders and union officers, meets bi-weekly, and is chaired by the Deputy Archivist of the United States, my second-in-command. I have also solicited assistance from the Partnership for Public Service (PPS) and, based on their recommendations, I sent a joint Labor/Management team of NARA employees to consult with their peers at the Department of the Treasury's Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) and the U.S. Mint, two agencies identified by PPS as having shown the greatest improvement in Best Places to Work rankings.

The most important action I have taken is to direct all NARA Executives to engage in meaningful activities to increase employee satisfaction. Each NARA Executive has a formal plan to address barriers to employee engagement and improve FEVS scores. In most cases, these plans were developed by staff at the local level, who identified challenges affecting employee satisfaction and recommended actions to address them. NARA Executives routinely report to me on their progress to implement their plans and are held accountable for the results in their annual performance assessments.

Significantly, this sustained Executive focus has led NARA to adopt some of the newest and most innovative practices for engaging the Federal workforce. While we still have more work to do, NARA has already implemented many of the strategies in the recently-released Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum M-15-04, *Strengthening Employee Engagement and Organizational Performance*, including: setting clear employee engagement goals, ensuring Executive accountability, engaging employee unions, developing action plans at the local level, and distributing FEVS survey results to all employees in an open and transparent manner.

NARA has also adopted an improvement program that is consistent with the six strategies recommended by the PPS and Deloitte Consulting LLP in their best practices document, *Ten Years of the Best Places to Work in the Federal Government® Rankings*, including:

- **Own the change.** NARA Executives regularly discuss employee satisfaction at senior leadership meetings and consider employee feedback and engagement concerns when making decisions. NARA Executives set targets based on survey data, develop plans, and report on their progress on a quarterly basis.
- **Partner with unions.** NARA Executives and managers have engaged our union at the national level and in office- and local-level employee satisfaction working groups. NARA has improved our partnership with the union at the national level and is building more effective working relationships at facilities outside of the Washington, DC metropolitan area.
- **Go for quick wins.** NARA has successfully partnered with our union to identify and implement a number of short-term activities to quickly respond to employee feedback.

Examples include re-starting annual Take Your Child to Work Day activities, and developing a process to recognize employee affinity groups, which has empowered our employees to form their own, self-directed groups recognizing the contributions of NARA veterans, Hispanic/Latino employees, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender employees, women, and disabled employees.

- **Develop shared values.** In 2011, NARA adopted new organizational values of “innovate, collaborate, and learn.” Developed by a staff working group, these values reflect the need to operate as a cohesive team as we adapt and modernize to address significant changes in the external environment that impact our mission. Our values are explicitly stated and many NARA leaders actively incorporate our values into their messaging and their interactions across the agency. This is an area in which we can and will do much more work.
- **Build connections through communication.** NARA holds quarterly Town Hall-style video conferences, where senior leaders communicate with all staff on issues of topical interest and provide immediate responses to employee questions and concerns. We have expanded our communications tools to better connect employees with the agency mission through new bi-weekly and quarterly newsletters, digital signage in high-traffic areas, and the Internal Collaboration Network, a NARA-only social media platform that facilitates information sharing, knowledge management, and collaboration.
- **Invest in employees.** NARA is committed to investing in our employees through training. We have recently revitalized our leadership training program with refreshed content and more offerings, and we have committed to send more NARA employees to

participate in the PPS Excellence in Government Fellows program and the OPM Emerging Leaders course. We have worked collaboratively with our union to institute a new cross-training program of rotational assignments that will provide employees with more variety in their work and help build a cadre of staff with a wider range of skills and experiences.

## **EMPLOYEE AND TEAM PERFORMANCE**

NARA has focused management attention on the areas with the most influence on individual and team performance and we are beginning to see results. NARA staff identified three actions that directly impact their satisfaction: increase the skills of their supervisors, improve performance management, and provide meaningful career paths. These actions are consistent with our observations at BEP and the U.S. Mint and align with best practices recommended by thought leaders in the field of improving organizational performance through increased employee satisfaction.

NARA has looked to best practices from outside the agency and implemented new approaches to make substantive, lasting change in three key areas:

- **Develop a cadre of motivated, well-trained supervisors.** I hold regular agency-wide all-managers meetings (approximately eight times per year) and we have established dedicated space in our internal collaboration tool to share organizational information directly with NARA managers and supervisors, communicate expectations, and solicit their feedback and ideas. We have improved our supervisory training courses and increased the number of training opportunities available for managers and supervisors,

and we are working to develop a more comprehensive supervisory development program. We have incorporated OPM's 360-Degree Assessment Tool to provide staff feedback to supervisors. We have developed new job aids to help managers and supervisors fulfill their supervisory responsibilities, and we include critical elements relating to supervision in their performance plans, so that NARA managers and supervisors are evaluated on both work group outcomes and their individual demonstration of supervisory competencies.

- **Administer a fair and effective performance management system.** One of my top priorities as Archivist of the United States is to ensure that NARA employees are treated in an equitable and consistent manner. Early in my tenure, I discovered substantial discrepancies in the annual performance ratings assigned to NARA employees in different GS grades. Over the past several years, NARA Executives have reinforced standards for assessing employee performance and we have provided managers and supervisors with training in performance management and providing constructive feedback. I have introduced regular conversations about performance management into senior leadership meetings and we are making decisions based on data that NARA had not previously collected. I am committed to applying performance standards more consistently across the workforce and—while we have made significant progress in this area--there are still discrepancies that we will continue to address. We have also brought greater rigor and increased accountability by improving our performance management system for NARA Executives.



- **Provide meaningful career paths.** NARA is currently working through a structured process to redesign our core jobs to improve organizational performance, modernize our work processes, and better support employee motivation and engagement. We have already restructured some traditional jobs into new positions that allow employees to use a wider variety of skills, take responsibility for a whole task (instead of only completing a portion of a larger task), and rotate through different activities within a single function or program. Many of these positions were designed to address known shortcomings in organizational performance, but we also expect these changes to improve employee motivation and job satisfaction. In some cases, increasing responsibilities and employee discretion have allowed us to increase the GS grade of selected positions, which has also allowed NARA to offer new opportunities for career advancement.

NARA has started to see the results of these efforts in our annual FEVS scores. In 2014, the majority of NARA employees responded positively to questions focusing on their relationship with their supervisor, including trust, respect, and support. For example, 68% of employees said their immediate supervisor is doing a good job, 78% said they were treated with respect, and 74% reported that their supervisor listened to what they had to say. NARA responses to these three questions were all within two percentage points of the government-wide average.

NARA has also seen improvements in questions related to performance management, where 84% of employees reported that their supervisors had spoken with them about their performance in the last six months, well above the government-wide average and a 6.5% increase over NARA's 2013 score. NARA also exceeded the government-wide average in

response to the performance management questions, “Steps are taken to deal with a poor performer...” (32%) and “Differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful way...” (32%). Despite exceeding the government-wide average, these scores are low and we are continuing our efforts to improve them.

## **WORKPLACE MORALE**

NARA has partnered with our union on a number of initiatives to improve the general work environment for NARA employees. The partnership identified three key areas for improvement: more respect and appreciation, an increased focus on workplace health and safety, and better access to the tools that employees need to do their jobs. Labor and Management officials used personal observations and experience and collected employee input to select these areas for additional focus and attention.

Over the past three years, NARA has developed these three needs into continuing programs to improve workplace conditions and increase employee morale:

- **Create a culture of respect and appreciation.** In 2013, NARA implemented a new anti-harassment program including a strong policy statement, mandatory training for managers and supervisors, and a clear and accessible process for addressing complaints. In FY 2014, we received 73 complaints and we have successfully resolved 61 to date (84%), without escalating to formal complaints. We have issued our first ever Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, created a new disability employment program, and hired our first full-time disability program manager. NARA has also recently implemented an innovative Special Emphasis Program (SEP) for Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)

that trained existing staff across NARA to help identify and eliminate employment barriers and promote equal and fair employment practices in the workplace.

Additionally, after three years of effort, NARA has corrected 23 EEO deficiencies reported in our MD-715, *Agency Annual EEO Program Report*, and, for the first time, our FY 2014 report identified zero deficiencies.

- **Make workplace safety a priority.** In 2014, I established NARA's first formal policy on workplace health and safety. Labor and Management partnered to develop workplace safety goals, establish clear expectations for management and employees, and establish a system for continuous improvement of workplace health and safety. Labor and Management jointly issued surveys to managers and union officials at each NARA facility to collect information on workplace safety programs and conditions; they are currently reviewing the results to identify best practices and opportunities for improvement. Based on staff suggestions, we have provided all employees with emergency "grab and go" bags that provide essential items for use if they were required to shelter-in-place for a significant period of time or otherwise evacuate their facility.
- **Ready access to the tools employees need to do their jobs.** NARA regularly surveys staff to assess their satisfaction with the common administrative functions that support their operations. NARA uses survey responses to evaluate the success of administrative programs, collect employee suggestions for improvement, and hold Executives accountable for results. In 2013, NARA implemented a one-call "311" system that integrates help desks for multiple internal, administrative functions so that staff can connect to internal service providers with a single one-stop, non-emergency number.

NARA's Federal Record Centers Program has recently implemented a program—based on best practices in equivalent private-sector operations—of frequent, short meetings to quickly check in with all staff and ensure that they have the equipment and materials necessary to do their jobs.

NARA FEVS scores demonstrate incremental progress in each of these areas. NARA responses to questions on respect are stable at a level that is only slightly below the government-wide average and responses to questions on diversity and inclusion—while still well below government-wide averages—have shown slight improvements over prior year responses. NARA consistently approaches or exceeds government-wide averages on FEVS questions assessing the physical conditions of our workplaces and NARA programs to protect employees from safety hazards and security threats.

## **CLOSING STATEMENT**

I am committed to improving the workplace satisfaction and morale of NARA employees. Our approach is based on the best practices recommendations of leaders in the field of employee engagement, partnership with our employee labor union, and direct feedback from our employees. We have invested considerable time and effort to improve working conditions for our employees across the agency, and we will continue to make the investments necessary to build and sustain high levels of employee engagement and workplace morale. We have started to see evidence of improvement in the specific areas we have focused on, but those gains have not translated into improvements in general employee morale and have not impacted the FEVS responses that influence our ranking in the Best Places to Work in the Federal Government®.

I remain optimistic that NARA can improve employee engagement and improve our ranking in the Best Places to Work. Our employees have consistently demonstrated their commitment to NARA's mission and work: In the 2014 FEVS survey, nearly all employees responded positively when asked if they are willing to put in the effort it takes to get the job done (94%), feel the work they do is important (89%), and are constantly looking for ways to do their jobs better (88%). In each of these questions, NARA's response was within two percentage points of the government-wide average.

NARA employees also responded positively to FEVS questions that measure their perceptions of teamwork and the quality of work, with 70% indicating that the people they work with cooperate to get the job done (slightly below the government-wide average) and 83% reporting that they believe their work unit produces quality work (slightly above the government-wide average).

These results—and other results referenced earlier in my testimony—demonstrate that NARA employees are dedicated to our mission, engaged in their work, and trust their work units and their immediate supervisors. These are strengths that NARA must nurture and grow in order to build greater trust in agency leadership and pride in being part of our agency as a whole. NARA employees regularly demonstrate uncommon skill, dedication, and motivation, and they deserve an agency that they are proud of and that they can honestly call one of the best places to work in the Federal government.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my formal statement. I look forward to continuing this discussion with you and the Members of the Committee.

## Biography of David S. Ferriero, Archivist of the United States

David S. Ferriero was confirmed as 10th Archivist of the United States on November 6, 2009. Early in 2010 he committed the National Archives and Records Administration to the principles of Open Government—transparency, participation, and collaboration. To better position NARA to fulfill these goals, Mr. Ferriero initiated an agency transformation in 2010. The transformation restructured the organization and set goals to further our mission, meet the needs of those who rely on us, and find new, creative ways to approach the agency's work.

Openness and access drive NARA's actions in a variety of ways. The agency has embraced a number of social media tools—Facebook, Twitter, blogs, YouTube, Tumblr, and others—to reach a wider and broader audience. NARA uses this digital engagement as a two-way street. Early in his tenure, Mr. Ferriero celebrated the contributions of “citizen archivists,” and he encourages public participation in identifying historical Federal records and sharing knowledge about them.

Access and protection go hand in hand, and NARA has taken steps to ensure that future generations will continue to enjoy access to Federal records. In August 2012, NARA produced the Managing Government Records Directive to modernize and improve Federal records management practices. Mr. Ferriero also instituted new security measures to deter theft or mishandling of records.

Several new facilities, designed to protect the records and improve access to them, have been opened since 2010. The George W. Bush Presidential Library became the 13th Presidential Library under NARA's administration. The National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, MO, moved into a newly constructed building that is better equipped to preserve the millions of veterans records in its care. And the National Archives at New York and the National Archives at Denver moved to new locations. In Washington, DC, the National Archives Museum's visitors entrance was reconfigured, and the new David M. Rubenstein Gallery opened in December 2013.

Previously, Mr. Ferriero served as the Andrew W. Mellon Director of the New York Public Libraries (NYPL). He was part of the leadership team responsible for integrating the four research libraries and 87 branch libraries into one seamless service for users, creating the largest public library system in the United States and one of the largest research libraries in the world. Mr. Ferriero was in charge of collection strategy; conservation; digital experience; reference and research services; and education, programming, and exhibitions.

Before joining the NYPL in 2004, Mr. Ferriero served in top positions at two of the nation's major academic libraries, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, MA, and Duke University in Durham, NC. In those positions, he led major initiatives including the expansion of facilities, the adoption of digital technologies, and a reengineering of printing and publications.

Mr. Ferriero earned bachelor's and master's degrees in English literature from Northeastern University in Boston and a master's degree from the Simmons College of Library and

Information Science, also in Boston. Mr. Ferriero served as a Navy hospital corpsman during the Vietnam War.