

**STATEMENT
OF
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**BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
April 27, 2016**

Introduction

Good afternoon, Chairman Meadows, Ranking Minority Member Connolly and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's hearing. As the Chief Human Capital Officer for the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL or Department), I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the Department's leadership and performance with regard to the 2015 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government.

It is my personal privilege to report on the Department of Labor's climb in Best Places to Work rankings and to share our efforts over the past few years.

2015 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government

Every year, Federal Agencies participate in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) which is administered by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The survey period for the Labor Department was from April 27, 2015 to June 5, 2015. OPM compiled the survey responses and issued many reports over several months beginning in late summer. The Partnership for Public Service gains access to the FEVS data and derives the Best Places to Work in the Federal Government.

For both years, 2014 and 2015, the Department received recognition from the Partnership for Public Service for receiving the most improved score for departments and large agencies. In 2015, the Labor Department ranked as the 8th Best Place to Work in the Federal Government (BPTW) of 19 departments and large agencies. This was an improved ranking over the 2014 ranking where we broke into the top ten departments and large agencies, at number 10, and an even more significant accomplishment when compared to our 2013 ranking of 17th.

Our survey results have dramatically improved since the 2013 FEVS. Nearly seventy percent of the Labor Department's subagencies improved their 2015 BPTW subcomponent ranking in comparison to 2014. Four Labor subagencies were ranked among the top 100 subcomponents: Office of the Solicitor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Administrative Law Judges and the Mine Safety and Health Administration. The Department's Bureau of International Labor

Affairs (ILAB) was recognized as the most improved subcomponent, having improved its ranking by 165 places from 2014 to 2015. ILAB moved from 303rd place to 138th.

The BPTW analysis indicates that we are making progress in all BPTW categories (Effective Leadership, Skills-Mission Match, Pay, Strategic Management, Teamwork, Innovation, Training and Development, Work-Life Balance, Support for Diversity and Performance Based-Rewards and Advancement.) For example, the Labor Department was ranked 7th out of 19 departments and large agencies with regard to Effective Leadership, a category which saw dramatic improvement for each of the four subcomponents: Empowerment, Fairness, Leaders and Supervisors. Previously, the Labor Department ranked 13th in 2014 and 17th in 2013. Another area of improvement was Teamwork. The Labor Department's 2015 Teamwork ranking was 7th compared to the 2014 ranking at 10th and the 2013 ranking at 15th. Another category of significant improvement was Performance-Based Rewards and Advancement – the 2015 ranking was 8th compared to 2014 at 9th and 2013 at 18th. The Labor Department scored in the top ten rankings for the following BPTW categories: Effective Leadership (7), Skills-Mission Match (10), Strategic Management (5), Teamwork (7), Work-Life Balance (10) and Performance-Based Rewards and Advancement (8). While we are pleased with our improved rankings in all BPTW categories, the Labor Department continues to strive toward top ten ranking in all categories. The Labor Department has focused resources toward improving our rankings for Innovation (15); Training and Development (15), and Support for Diversity (14).

Improving Workforce Engagement at the Department of Labor

Secretary Thomas E. Perez, who was confirmed in July 2013, made improving employee morale and engagement a top priority and has continually reinforced his commitment toward building a better DOL through employee input and feedback. Secretary Perez came to the Department with a belief that an engaged workforce is a more productive. Since his appointment, virtually all communications from the Secretary's Office reinforce the importance of employee feedback. With the Secretary's vision and his well communicated interest in improving workforce engagement, he appointed his Deputy Chief of Staff and several members of the Office of Secretary including the Office of Public Affairs and Human Resources Center leaders, to lead employee engagement efforts. The team meets weekly to discuss progress with regard to communications and various workplace initiatives. The team provides regular briefings to DOL leadership on a variety of workforce initiatives, oversees progress and authors many employee communications.

Our work began in the summer of 2013. We conducted extensive data analysis and research, which included interviews with other agencies including the Department of Transportation and the Department of Justice, to identify several strategies that we would consider and implement. The Secretary also met with union leadership and invited them to submit "white papers" articulating their concerns relating to low employee morale and how to improve employee engagement efforts. The Secretary received ideas and suggestions from our unions: National Federation of Federal National Council of Field Labor Locals (NCFLL); Local 12, American Federation of Government Employees; AFL-CIO; and National Union of Labor Investigators

(NULI). The most prevalent suggestions related to improving supervisory training and accountability.

In addition to data gathering efforts, the team worked with program leaders and others to increase communication efforts. Numerous town hall meetings and listening sessions were conducted throughout the Department, including visits to all of DOL regional offices. Sessions were conducted by the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Chief of Staff, Deputy Chief of Staff, the CHCO and other staff members from the Office of Secretary, either singly or in groups. The frequency and comprehensive coverage of these employee meetings lead to more meetings being conducted by DOL senior and regional leaders. Employee questions were invited in advance of and during meetings. Electronic suggestion boxes were implemented, subsequent written communications included descriptions of suggestions and actions taken. Later, suggestion boxes were replaced with the Department's implementation of IdeaMill, an electronic suggestion/crowd-sourcing tool.

Based on feedback received through various engagement methods, we implemented several new initiatives in 2014. For instance, in response to concerns from employees that they could not participate in training programs they found relevant to their work, we implemented a new policy that allows up to 40 hours of duty time to participate in management-approved professional development activities. In response to feedback that details were not advertised and were hard to find, we implemented the ROAD (Repository of Opportunities, Assignments and Details) program that allows managers to post on an intranet site opportunities that can be short term and allows employees to "apply." This program has been very well received by our workforce. In the less than two years since the program has been implemented, over 300 employees have completed detail assignments, usually of 120 days. Employees have indicated that the temporary assignments enable them to refresh themselves with new skills, new programs and even new co-workers. Several ROAD assignments have also led to permanent placements. The Department also implemented a Bicycle Reimbursement subsidy, a new employee Innovation award, greater access to telework and flexible work schedules, a greater use of time-off awards to recognize superior performance, an emergency dependent care back up program, improved accommodations and facilities for nursing mothers, and improved leadership training for managers. We have also recently implemented a mentoring program pilot.

We have worked closely with the Partnership for Public Service to create customized training offerings to our SES, to our supervisors and to aspiring leaders. The SES Onboarding training is a tailored program that includes executive management workshops, mentoring, executive coaching, and coach-led action learning. The program offers a unique developmental experience for new SES to transition into their new role within DOL and will provide strategic development opportunities. This is required training for all new SES hired on or after December 29, 2013. DOL also worked with the Partnership for Public Service (the Partnership) to design a customized training program called Leading@Labor. This program aims to develop an effective supervisory corps across the Department with a shared vision of supervisory success, supported by a common set of tools, skills, language and knowledge. The program includes a one-day intensive program for all supervisors and an in-depth, four-day program for more experienced supervisors and managers.

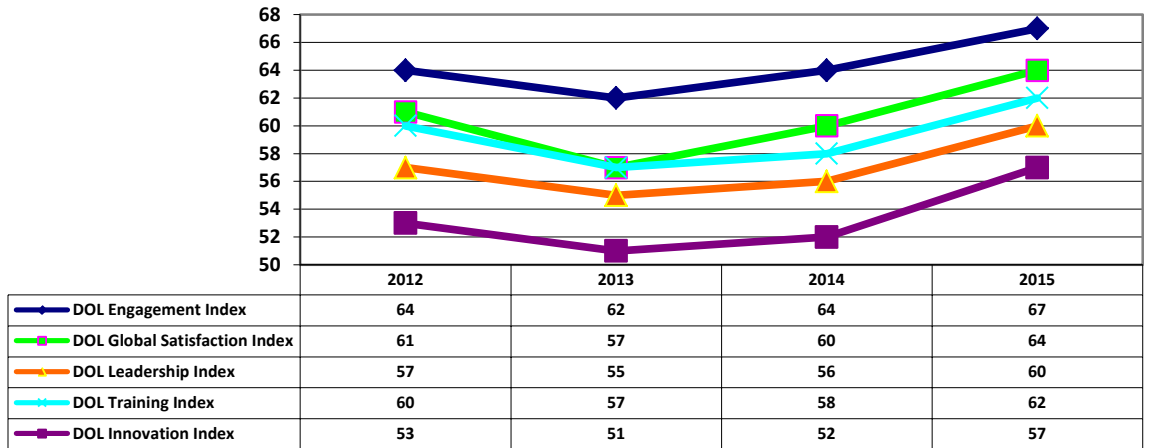
In addition to the enterprise-wide efforts, we also spurred all of DOL's agencies to develop their own engagement goals. Early in 2014, we began requiring every DOL agency to produce EVS annual action plans that react to the FEVS results and organizational needs. After our extensive data gathering efforts, we focused our Department-wide efforts on three areas: leadership, training and innovation. We created our own index of survey items under each of these areas. We track our progress and issue reports to each DOL Agency about their results. We issue templates for them to use to create action plans and then post action plans to our internal website alongside survey results. We have consistently maintained focus on these three areas. This consistent approach allows our DOL Agencies to focus on meaningful solutions that may extend beyond the year of the survey timeframe and continue to measure progress. Our leadership office routinely reviews the agency-specific action plans and results in management meetings to discuss progress on various agency goals.

We recently formed an EVS Community of Practice within DOL. At these meetings, DOL Agencies share progress, challenges and different initiatives which have improved networking and provided another forum for input on Department-wide initiatives.

DOL Results

One of the most important strategies for the Department was to improve our response rates. In 2013, the Department's response rate was 44.7%. In 2014, we increased to 71.7%, and last year, 2015, we increased to 76.5%. To improve the response rates, we sent out communications to employees throughout the year informing them how the survey was being used to implement changes outlined above. During the survey period, we sent frequent reminders from the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, and other DOL leaders, reminding them to fill out the survey. We also used regular leadership meetings to remind agency leadership to encourage employees to fill out the survey.

The Department uses the data reports compiled by OPM to measure progress. We track our progress with various OPM indices for: workforce engagement, global satisfaction, diversity and inclusion, leadership and knowledge management, results-oriented performance culture, talent management and job satisfaction. The Department has developed its own indexes, compiling FEVS results, with regard to Leadership, Training and Innovation. Using OPM's index for workforce engagement, the Department improved its score from 62 in 2013 to 64 in 2014 to 67 in 2015. Our global satisfaction score also increased over the same time period from 57 in 2013 to 60 in 2014 and 64 in 2015. We have seen progress with our own indexes. For leadership, we have increased our score from 55 in 2013 to 56 in 2014 to 60 in 2015. For training, we have increased from 57 in 2013 to 58 in 2014 to 62 in 2015. Finally for innovation, we have increased from 51 in 2013 to 52 in 2014 to 57 in 2015. A line chart is provided below to show our improvement.



Our efforts to focus on the workforce have also focused on our labor-management relations. We work with our labor unions to implement important workplace flexibilities and to develop a project on positive workplace behaviors. Where possible, we have strived to obtain pre-decision input and informal dispute resolution, as well as to utilize labor-management forums. In March, the union was invited to submit survey questions, eight of which have been included in the 2016 survey.

DOL Participation in Government Wide Efforts

In late February the Department hosted an event with OPM and OMB for Senior Accountable Officials (SAOs) engaged in workforce engagement efforts. The Department provided presentations from the Office of Solicitor and our Deputy Chief of Staff, and a panel presentation from the President of NCFLL and me. We focused our presentations on useful practices and recommendations. Among the recommendations were to:

- Seek commitment from senior leadership that engagement is important, and back up that commitment with regular communications with staff.
- Increase workforce communications.
- Engage in listening sessions and, to the extent possible, act on the feedback you receive. Both the unions and employees are delighted to provide feedback. Take actions to respond to what you hear and improve their experience.
- Implement actions, even those actions that don't seem on the surface to be big hitters. Examples are us putting microwaves in the lunch area or increasing signage in the building. They may be small actions but, are seen by employees and, are signals that leadership is listening.
- Be consistent. Identify what you are measuring and stay with it. Provide data and updates to leadership regularly.

In addition to this event, I participated in a GSA webinar to share best workforce engagement practices with other Federal leaders. I am scheduled to attend an upcoming event sponsored by

the Potomac Forum to cover best practices in workforce engagement. The President of NCFLL and I are also presenting at an upcoming event sponsored by the Society of Labor and Employee Relations Practitioners.

Conclusion

The Department looks forward to working with the Committee and to support workforce engagement efforts. Our civilian workforce is our greatest asset. We must continually address employment obstacles and create greater flexibilities to attract and retain a quality workforce. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, distinguished Members of the Committee, this concludes my written statement. Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of this hearing. I welcome your questions.

Sydney Rose - Bio

Ms. Rose was named Acting Director for the Department of Labor's Human Resources Center on February, 2012. The Human Resources Center (HRC) is located in the Department's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management (OASAM). It provides leadership, guidance, and technical expertise in all areas related to management of Department of Labor human resources, including recruitment and development of staff, management of personnel systems, and leadership in labor management partnership. HRC also provides services to employees that improves and supports work and family life, and direct human resource support and services for OASAM and OASAM client Agencies.

Prior to her appointment she served as the Department's Director of Departmental Labor Relations and Negotiations, HRC. In this role she directed all labor-management relations activities for the Department, including the administration of collective bargaining agreements with the three unions, and served as Chief Negotiator for collective bargaining negotiations.

Previously, Ms. Rose was the Director of Human Resources and Organization Management at the Bureau of Labor Statistics for seven years. She was responsible for management of all Bureau personnel operations. She also served for four years as the Director of Human Resources and three years as the Chief of Employee Relations for the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office at the United States Department of Commerce. She began her career with the government at the Office of Personnel Management's Office of Federal Investigative Services.

Ms. Rose graduated from the University of Mary Washington, Magna Cum Laude.