

Opening Statement of
Chairman George V. Voinovich
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce and the
District of Columbia
November 13, 2007

“Human Capital Needs of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection
‘One Face at the Border’ Initiative”

Good morning. Chairman Akaka, thank you for calling this morning’s hearing to assess the human capital challenges at the Department of Homeland Security’s Customs and Border Protection.

Secure borders are a cornerstone to national security. Securing 326 land, air, and sea ports entails more than preventing individuals from crossing these borders illegally. It includes protecting our economy from illegal goods, whether drugs or counterfeit merchandise. It includes protecting our environment from invasive species. CBP holds this responsibility, and the American people are grateful to the thousands of officers who every day accept this responsibility. No where in government is it more apparent than at CBP that if you do not have the right people, with the right skills, in the right job, at the right time, you will not be successful.

However, as the Government Accountability Office will discuss in its testimony, CBP faces significant challenges in getting the right people who are able to get the job done in place. Two of the three components that today make up CBP came to DHS with significant operational and management challenges. These existing challenges were only compounded by the challenge of merging into a single, new Department in 2003.

But more than four years later, CBP must be able to identify the concrete steps it is taking to ensure it has a skilled workforce in place to meet its mission. CBP must find and take immediate steps to address the needs of its workforce today. Not in one or two years, but today.

Mr. Chairman, it is easy for us in Congress to criticize the actions or inactions of the executive branch. My hope is that in today’s hearing we can discuss concrete actions that can be taken address the needs of CBP and its workforce.

Thank you.