

**May 20, 2015**

**Opening Statement of Senator James Lankford**

**Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs  
and Federal Management Hearing titled:**

**“21st Century Ideas for the 20th Century Federal Civil Service”**

Good morning. This is the Subcommittee’s first hearing on the federal workforce. Today, we will explore the policies guiding today’s federal civil service.

The state of the federal workforce is expansive: the federal government currently employs 2,663,000 executive branch civilians. Ensuring that agencies have processes in place to efficiently recruit, retain, compensate, train, and if necessary, dismiss problem federal employees is a difficult but essential task. And as the Subcommittee with oversight over federal management, this task falls to us.

But before we discuss these matters, I would like to take a moment to thank our federal employees for their dedicated service.

I am reminded that twenty years ago the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City was destroyed by a bomb that nearly leveled that building. The majority of those that died in that tragedy were federal employees. I can’t emphasize enough my gratitude and admiration for those who choose to serve their country as a federal employee.

It is true that lately, a few bad apples in our federal workforce have made the news. These stories represent the importance of congressional oversight, both as to the incidents themselves, as well as to the management policies that underlie them. But they also tend to cast a shadow over the good work that individuals across the federal government accomplish each day for our nation.

Senator Heitkamp and I are deeply appreciative of the work of the federal civil service. We honored their dedication by sponsoring a resolution recognizing the first week of May as Public Service Recognition Week, and were joined by many of our colleagues on this committee. And we would like to extend our thanks again today.

The issues we will discuss, which may be critical of the way the federal workforce is operated today, are not indictments on those dedicated federal employees. In fact, I would wager that many of them share the same concerns that we do.

For example, many federal workers may be upset that misbehaving employees may be placed on paid administrative leave, sometimes for a year or longer, pending a personnel investigation.

Or, some federal workers may be irritated that, because of the way in which many agencies compensate employees under the General Schedule, they are doing twice the work of a colleague, but are paid the same amount.

These are just a few concerns that federal employees have brought to our attention. The stakes here are high, and our responsibility as Congress is great, because we rely on federal employees to run the government as we know it.

It is time we think critically about many of the policies that currently govern the federal workforce, so that we can maintain a talented pool of employees in the years and decades ahead. I look forward to discussing these issues with our members and witnesses today, because the future of the federal civil service depends on it. With that, I will recognize Ranking Member Heitkamp.