

Opening Statement of Carol Waller Pope

Good Morning. I want to thank the Committee for conducting this hearing. I also thank the Committee staff for their work and meaningful assistance.

It is my honor and privilege to be here today as President Obama's nominee to serve for a fourth term as Member and, if confirmed, to again serve as Chairman of the Federal Labor Relations Authority. I thank President Obama for the trust that he has placed in me to serve in this leadership capacity at the FLRA. I also want to thank my family for their unwavering support and trusted guidance – Lynda White and Fred Grigsby, Jr., who are here today representing those of my family members who could not be here, along with many members of my extended family who are in attendance. I also want to acknowledge the collegiality and support of my fellow Presidential leadership at the FLRA: Members Patrick Pizzella and Ernest DuBester, General Counsel Julie Clark, and Federal Service Impasses Panel Chairman Mary Jacksteit and Panel Member and former FLRA Chairman and Member Donald Wasserman.

I am here today standing on the shoulders of my parents – my father a Pittsburgh steelworker and my mother, a domestic worker, both of whom embodied the principle of hard work. They worked hard to ensure that their four daughters had a foundation of love and education as well as their shared commitment to service and to helping others. I have devoted my entire professional career to public service – first at the U.S. Department of Labor and for twenty-one years as a career employee at the FLRA. I have the distinct honor of being the first career employee to serve as a Member and Chairman of the FLRA; and as the first Member to be nominated by three Presidents: Presidents Clinton, Bush, and Obama, and to be confirmed on three prior occasions by this august body, the United States Senate.

The FLRA encompasses in one small agency the investigator, prosecutor, adjudicator, and interest arbitrator for labor-management disputes involving 1.2 million federal employees. Since its creation as part of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, the FLRA has been committed to providing leadership in establishing policies and guidance related to federal-sector labor-management relations, and ensuring compliance with the Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute. For over thirty-six years the FLRA has been promoting and protecting labor-management relations for an effective and efficient government. Simply stated, the FLRA must meet the needs of the federal workforce with high-quality legal decisions and alternative-dispute-resolution services to ensure that workplace disputes do not unduly impede the performance of the missions of agencies in service to the American people. I have the honor and privilege to speak to you about the hard work and dedication of the FLRA's nationwide workforce of employees who perform our important mission.

With respect to mission performance, fiscal year 2015 was a strong year for the FLRA. I am proud to report that the Authority completely eliminated its backlog of overage cases, despite a 22 percent increase in case filings, and it also issued 24 percent more merits decisions than it did in the prior fiscal year. The Office of the General Counsel again exceeded all of its strategic and performance goals for the timely resolution of both unfair-labor-practice and representation cases, and it continued to close more cases than it did in previous years. The Federal Service Impasses Panel also exceeded all of its strategic and performance goals. And the FLRA delivered over 300 training, outreach, and facilitation sessions to over 8,000 customers in furtherance of its commitment to train our customers regarding their rights and responsibilities under the Statute. Innovation and technology, including modernization of our IT equipment and infrastructure; a revitalized website, eFiling, and enhanced legal-research capabilities for

our customers; and video conferencing to expedite case processing and reduce travel costs are just some of the improvements during my tenure that have been key to our increased mission performance.

Alternative-dispute resolution, or “ADR,” activities throughout the agency also continued to be extremely successful in fiscal year 2015. ADR is deeply embedded in the way that all cases are processed throughout the agency. Of course, making voluntary ADR available and making it work are two different things. Over 80 percent of the FLRA’s cases agency-wide are resolved through mediation and ADR. During my tenure as Chairman, we have formally integrated mediation and ADR into all case processing in every component of the FLRA. Successful ADR means voluntary settlements that are more effective in building productive labor-management relationships, the development of parties’ experience and expertise to resolve future disputes, and the reduction – and in most cases avoidance – of costly, protracted litigation. In real terms, as just one example, our ADR efforts resulted in parties amicably resolving in only two days of mediation a dispute over 44 contract provisions. As a direct result of our ADR work, the parties’ dispute ended without the need for formal adjudication by the Authority, which would have required an enormous amount of staff resources, and the parties were able to quickly return to the business of government.

It is proven in both the private and public sector that mission performance and high levels of employee engagement and morale go hand-in-hand. And the FLRA is no exception. When I began my tenure as Chairman in 2009, employee morale at the FLRA was at an all-time low. In fact, the FLRA was ranked last among all small agencies in the Partnership for Public Service’s Best Places to Work in the Federal Government rankings. Our mission performance was also well below our annual performance targets.

I proudly note – on behalf of all us at the FLRA – that in FY 2015 the FLRA captured the rank of #2 on three important indexes in the Office of Personnel Management’s Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) – Employee Engagement, Global Satisfaction, and New IQ, which measures the inclusivity of the work environment. We also achieved an all-time-high employee-response rate of 84 percent, demonstrating that employees value the survey process and use the FEVS as a tool to communicate their interests and concerns to agency leadership and managers. Equally important to our mission success, 99% of the FLRA’s respondents reported that they are willing to put in extra effort to get a job done; 94% believe that the agency is successful at accomplishing its mission; and 94% know how their work relates to the agency’s goals and priorities. Of course our mission-performance outcomes are a direct corollary to these impressive survey results.

This year, the FLRA expects to improve upon its #5 ranking in the 2014 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government rankings, which reflects an impressive and unprecedented improvement of over 300 percent in the FLRA’s overall engagement score since 2009. This sustained progress since I first became Chairman nearly seven years ago reflects the commitment of agency leadership at all levels to manage the agency with transparency and accountability, and to truly and meaningfully engage our employees. It also reflects the hard work, dedication, and commitment of our employees at all levels.

If I am confirmed, I will continue to work hard every day with my FLRA colleagues throughout the country – some of whom are here at this hearing, and countless others of whom are following the live stream of this proceeding – to build upon this record of success in our mission performance and employee engagement for an effective and efficient government in service to the American people.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for the opportunity to be here today and I would be pleased to respond to any questions.