

Opening Statement
Hearing before the Regulatory Affairs and
Federal Management Subcommittee,
Thursday June 15th at 9:30 AM

“Agency Approaches to Reorganization: Examining OMB’s Memorandum on the Federal Workforce.”

Good morning and welcome to today’s hearing titled “Agency Approaches to Reorganization: Examining OMB’s Memorandum on the Federal Workforce.” Today this Subcommittee focuses for the third time this year on how to ensure the federal workforce effectively and efficiently serves the American people. I have the privilege of serving tens of thousands of federal employees in Oklahoma, and I know that they work every day to honorably serve their country.

However, a complicated federal bureaucracy has hamstrung agencies as they seek to achieve their core missions in service to Americans. Federal agencies have responded to ever evolving missions and changing circumstances by creating new component agencies and offices in an attempt to better their constituencies.

But this has led to a troubling reality—as we meet today, no one knows exactly how many agencies actually make up the federal government. In 2012 the Administrative Conference of the United States tried to determine how many federal agencies exist and concluded “there is no authoritative list of government agencies.” In addition, according to the Office of Personnel Management, the total number of non-seasonal full-time permanent federal employees grew from approximately 1.76 million in 2000 to 2.1 million in 2016. This represents a 16.2 percent increase, with no understanding or measurement of whether this has made government more effective or responsive to the problems we face.

With such a sprawling bureaucracy and growing workforce, Congress and the executive branch must examine whether taxpayer dollars could be spent more effectively and more efficiently. Until recently, the federal government has not pursued a comprehensive approach to determine how best federal agencies should be structured to tackle the challenges facing our nation today.

It is past time we critically examine how government should be organized to best serve the American people. Recognizing the need for a new direction, on March 13, 2017 President Trump issued Executive Order 13781 on a Comprehensive Plan for Reorganizing the Executive Branch. Following this executive order, OMB published a memorandum on April 12, 2017 for agencies titled “Comprehensive Plan for Reforming the Federal Government and Reducing the Federal Civilian Workforce.”

Today we have the opportunity to discuss agency plans to meet the reorganization requirements and the timeline outlined in OMB's memorandum. Specifically, OMB directed agencies to finalize three items by June 30, 2017: plans to maximize employee performance; high-level drafts of Agency Reform Plans to reorganize programs and organizational charts to eliminate duplication and inefficiencies; and progress reports on "near-term workforce reduction actions."

Today we will discuss the processes and methods individual agencies are pursuing to restructure and improve their agencies and operations. In conversations with OMB I have learned that this first phase in the federal reorganization is an opportunity for agencies to comprehensively redesign and improve their structures and operations. This means that agencies themselves have been empowered to improve employee performance, realign their workforces and operations with their missions, and streamline costly, duplicative programs.

Most importantly, OMB is providing the American people—the customers of the federal agencies—the opportunity to comment on the federal government's reorganization efforts through a public comment website. Ultimately it is every public servant's most important job to hear the American public and serve their needs.

In an effort to give agencies better tools to accomplish that core job, I recently partnered with this committee's Ranking Member, Senator McCaskill to introduce the Federal Agency Customer Experience Act of 2017. This bipartisan legislation will remove a barrier that prevents agencies from getting public feedback on their satisfaction with the federal government's customer service. I hope to quickly send this bill to the President's desk for signature into law.

With much more work to do to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the federal government, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today regarding their agencies' plans to meet the OMB memorandum's requirements. We look forward to hearing testimony today from the Departments of Commerce, Justice, Agriculture, and Homeland Security.

With that, I recognize Ranking Member Heitkamp for her opening remarks.