

Statement of
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Before the
Subcommittee on Civil Service and Agency Organization
Committee on Government Reform
House of Representatives
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Chairwoman JoAnn Davis and Ranking Member Danny K. Davis, thank you for the opportunity today to address you regarding the federal hiring process. My name is Krystal Kemp, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to share my experiences with you. Hopefully as a result of these hearings, other recent graduates will have better resources available to pursue a career with the federal government.

I would like to take this time to give you a little bit of background information about myself. I graduated with honors from the University of Alabama in 1998, where I was selected to become a member of the Phi Beta Kappa honor society. This May, I received my juris doctorate from Washington University in St. Louis. While I attended Washington University, I received a scholarship to study abroad. I took two years off to study Chinese at the Mandarin Training Center in Taipei, Taiwan. Upon my return to Washington University, I interned in a variety of legal settings, including working for the city prosecutor, the Legal Services of Eastern Missouri (which provides legal aid to the indigent), and clerking for a federal magistrate judge. I was also fortunate to be selected for our Washington D.C. Congressional and Administrative Law Clinic. The aspect of all of these jobs that I enjoyed most was the knowledge that I was using my education to help the public. These experiences sparked a desire in me to work for the federal government.

As you may know, Washington University in St. Louis is a highly respected educational institution. This year, the Washington University undergraduate program was ranked as the ninth best university in America by US News and World Report. And, the Law School was ranked number 20. Our legal clinical program was ranked number 4 in the nation.

The clinical program at Washington University allows students to practically apply the knowledge they gain in the classroom. Students do hands on work for real clients while being supervised by professors. The Washington DC Congressional and Administrative Law Clinic is a highly competitive clinic that allows a law student to spend their final semester in the capitol working for a member of Congress or an agency. During my tenure in this program, I worked in the Government Reform Committee's Minority Office.

I have been searching for a permanent position for roughly one year. I am very anxious over my current jobless situation due to the debt I have incurred to undertake my legal studies as I owe over \$100,000 in educational debt.

My search for a federal job led me to the usajobs.com website. I found the website to be at best –confusing, and at worst –discouraging. There were three main areas in which I had difficulties with the website: the language; the resume builder; and, some job announcements directed me to another website where I was required to fill out more applications, many of which were duplicative of applications I had filled out on usajobs.

First, the language of many of the job announcements was incomprehensible. Many of the announcements used special government code talk that I had not previously encountered. There was some legalese that I could decipher, but for the most part my initial encounter with the website completely befuddled me. I do not understand how the average citizen could read those announcements and know clearly what the job's duties entailed or what the requirements were. I had the feeling that the announcements were not written for me, but were created for people already initiated into the fraternity of government jobs.

Second, I was very uncomfortable with the resume builder. The resume builder requires the applicant to enter data and then compiles the information into the website's resume format. This function was not especially helpful to me because the format for an attorney's resume is different, and I was constricted to the single format provided. However, this was not the most troubling aspect of the resume builder. The resume builder requires the user to input his or her social security number. I was extremely leery of doing this, considering the rampant identity theft that our society faces. It makes me very uncomfortable to have my social security number at the top of a resume being sent to someone I have never met and know nothing about. The disclaimer explains that the social security number is necessary to process a person's application for federal employment. However, I still find this aspect—sending my social security number over the Internet—extremely unsettling. Due to the desire to protect my personal information, I have had difficulty completing the resume.

Finally, I found it very frustrating when I accessed a job announcement on usajobs and was then directed to another website where I would be directed to fill out another application. I was under the impression that the purpose of the usajobs website was to allow the job seeker to provide information once and be able to send it to multiple employers within the federal government.

At this time, I have given up on the website. When I complete my bar study and sit for the bar exam, I will have more time to work with the site and hopefully figure it out. Thus far, the only federal jobs that I have applied for have been through job announcements directed to my school. Unfortunately, there have not been many sent to the Washington University School of Law. Outside of the few job announcements we received, a small number of federal agencies came on campus to interview students.

In the fall, three groups participated in our on campus interviewing—the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Department of Transportation, and the Comptroller of the Currency.

The Department of Justice gave an informational presentation, but they do all of their hiring through the Honors Program.

The Honors Program is highly competitive and there are very few spots open. However, I also understand that some of the agencies do have additional entry-level positions opening. Yet, these positions are not easily accessible by job seekers. A graduate's only option is to find them through usajobs or a similar avenue.

I hope my remarks today have been informative and helpful to each of you in understanding this issue. I thank you for inviting me to testify, and I will be glad to answer any questions you may have at this time.