

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HISPANIC FEDERAL EXECUTIVES

Statement to the House Subcommittee on Civil Service and Agency
Organization. House Government Reform Committee. October 15, 2003

DIVERSITY WITHIN THE SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE

Madam Chair, Members of the Sub Committee on Civil Service and Agency
Reorganization, Congressional Staff, fellow organizations present in this
hearing.

My name is Manuel Oliveriez and I am the President and CEO of the
National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives, NAHFE. It is an honor
for me to represent, before this Sub Committee, an organization of
Hispanic professionals concerned about Hispanic representation in the
Senior Executive Service.

Hispanic population represents the largest minority group in the United
States and, according to the US Census Bureau's statistics and forecasts,
will continue to increase at a rapid pace within the next few years. At the
present time, Hispanics represent more than 13 percent of the total
population; and more than 12 percent of the civilian labor force is Hispanic.
Hispanics, according to the June 2003, OPM Report to the President on
Hispanic Employment in Federal Agencies represent, however, only 6.9
percent of the Federal workforce. Hispanic representation at the Senior
Executive Service level is only 3.3 percent, including professionals, who
receive senior pay, but are not in senior executive or management
positions. Hispanic representation in the pipeline for senior executive
positions, are 4.5 percent, 3.8 percent, and 3.3 percent for GS-13, GS-14,
and GS-15 respectively.

NAHFE concurs with GAO estimates concerning the upcoming losses of
Federal employees in the Senior Executive Service, and at the GS-15 and
GS-14 levels. NAHFE maintains that, if current hiring, promotion, and
retention practices continue, diversity at the senior level of the Federal
government will continue at the current unacceptable level. And the level
of Hispanic representation will continue to be a serious concern to those

who design, develop, and implement personnel practices in the Federal government.

The June 2003 OPM report to the President indicates that Federal agencies hired more than 13,000 Hispanics, or 9.5 percent of all employees hired into the Federal workforce during fiscal year 2002. However, the total number of Hispanic employees increased by 6,151 employees, or 5.7 percent. NAHFE commends the Director of OPM, Ms. Kay Coles James, and those members of the Interagency Task Force on Hispanic Employment for their efforts in the right direction. However, based on the numbers on Hispanic representation, NAHFE agrees with GAO that more consistent efforts and accountability measures are needed to improve diversity in the Federal workforce, especially at the senior executive level.

Hispanics are affected, not only by past and current discriminatory recruitment, hiring, promotion and retention practices, but also by a lack of participation in succession planning, developmental assignments, and opportunities for formal and informal training, coaching and mentoring. These barriers are evident just by looking at the number of Hispanics selected for SES positions as well as Hispanic candidates selected for SES Candidate Development Programs. And to add insult to injury, many of those who complete the SES training are not placed in senior positions.

NAHFE appreciates the material in Spanish containing information on employment opportunities in the Federal government. However, these resources, as well as those invested in training candidates for the SES, will not produce desired results until other issues are addressed. Hispanic youth deserves the opportunity to learn about Public service early in their careers, and Hispanics entering the Federal workforce deserve the opportunity to learn about the Senior Executive Service as early as possible. Career development is as important as a potential for leadership.

The National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives would like to thank again the OPM Director for including NAHFE as stakeholder in the discussion of issues and policies that will shape diversity in the Federal government in the future. NAHFE members are very concerned about the stagnant progress of Hispanic representation in the Federal workforce, in spite of continued increase in Hispanic population. Initiatives and policies

will not produce desired results unless there is a consistent support and commitment for diversity from The White House, the US Congress, Cabinet Secretaries and Agency Heads.

NAHFE recognizes and is excited about the President Management Agenda, and specifically about the Strategic Management of Human Capital, that provides guidance to Federal agencies in hiring and retaining policies consistent with agency mission and critical needs. NAHFE supports a pay for performance initiative that will definitely encourage performance and will eventually clean the system from non performers. And though there may be a need for checks and balances, and tools for managers to justify their recommendations and decisions, NAHFE believes that ultimately, these policies will encourage Federal employees to maintain and update their level of skill and performance.

In summary NAHFE recommends that organizations of Federal employees and organizations advocating excellence in Public service be given the opportunity to participate in the process. First of all, non profit organizations should have access to small business, education and training funding opportunities to assist Federal agencies in the identification, preparation, training and career development programs of candidates that will improve diversity in the Federal workforce.

NAHFE has identified several initiatives that, given the adequate attention and funding, will meet the objectives of the Strategic Management of Human Capital. Following are those NAHFE initiatives that can help Federal agencies achieve diversity at the Senior Executive Service level:

- NAHFE Leadership Development Training and Conference
- Hispanic Federal Executives Summit
- Project Eagle
- Project NERIS
- NAHFE Mentoring Programs
- Networking initiatives

These initiatives will ensure that Hispanics possess the skills to compete for Federal employment at all levels. For those competing for entry level positions, NAHFE can offer training in resume preparation, interviewing

skills and general knowledge of requirements for Federal employment. For those already in the Federal workforce, NAHFE can coordinate seminars and other training opportunities to prepare Hispanics for GS-13 to GS-15 positions, the pipeline. For those at the GS-14 and GS-15 level, NAHFE can support OPM efforts to ensure Hispanic candidates nationwide are aware of opportunities at the senior level, and understand the preparation and application process that will allow them to submit competitive application packages.

All outreach efforts, including the dissemination of material in Spanish, will not produce the desired results until Hispanic candidates are interested in Public service, understand the process and requirements, and have access to training and mentoring opportunities to advance to the senior level.

The increase in Hispanic population, not only in traditionally Hispanic geographical areas, demands a comparable diversity at all levels of the Federal government, but most critically at the Senior Executive Service level.

NAHFE wants to thank all Members of the Sub Committee on Civil Service and Agency Reorganization, and especially to Representative Jo Ann Davis, Chairwoman of the Sub Committee, for inviting NAHFE to the discussion of issues concerning diversity at the Senior Executive Service. NAHFE members, mostly in grades GS-13 and above including the SES, are excited about the opportunity to make a difference and be part of the team developing initiatives and policies that will increase Hispanic representation at the senior executive and management level.

Thank you.