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Opening Statement Ranking Member, Elijah E. Cummings Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, U.S. Postal Service and Labor Policy Hearing on "Retirement Readiness: Strengthening the Federal Pension System"

January 25, 2012

Thank you, Chairman Ross, for yielding. I agree wholeheartedly with the comments made by Ranking Member Lynch. The title of this hearing is "Strengthening the Federal Pension System." But the proposals being discussed do the exact opposite: they weaken the promises made to Federal employees and are counterproductive to employee morale, retention, and productivity.

Federal workers are the backbone of our government. They support our troops in the battlefield and provide care upon their return. They protect our borders, safeguard our food supply, ensure that seniors receive their Social Security checks, and track down terrorists like Osama bin Laden. They carry out each and every federal program, service, and initiative.

Unfortunately, some in the majority want to reward Federal workers by extending their two-year pay freeze, slashing retirement benefits, and arbitrarily reducing the size of the Federal workforce.

The majority argues that Federal workers are overpaid. This is untrue, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. They found that Federal employees are paid about 26% less than their private sector counterparts with comparable skills and education levels.

Federal workers have already made tremendous sacrifices to address our nation's budget deficits. They have given up the equivalent of \$60 billion, which was taken away in the current two-year pay freeze. They have done their part, and now it is time for others to do theirs. The only workable solution to our country's budget deficit is a balanced one that includes shared sacrifice, including from the most wealthy among us.

I stand with other Members on this side of the aisle in our commitment to oppose any additional measures that would result in further cuts to Federal employee pay or benefits. The work our Federal employees perform is simply too valuable to do otherwise.

I thank our witness for being here with us this morning and look forward to a constructive debate on the true value of our dedicated Federal workforce.

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