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Opening Statement Rep. Stephen F. Lynch

Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, U.S. Postal Service and the Census Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Hearing "Is the Federal Government's General Schedule (GS) a Viable Personnel System for the Future?"

July 15, 2014

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank you for holding this hearing to examine the General Schedule (GS) System, which covers 80% or 1.5 million of the over 2 million dedicated civil servants in the federal government. I also thank our witnesses for being here today and look forward to hearing your thoughts on how to improve the federal government's management of its workforce.

I don't know that Congress has a lot of credibility with federal workers. Throughout the past several years, Congress has imposed on our vastly-middle income federal employees a 3-year pay freeze, unpaid furloughs, and pay and benefit cuts. Congress has required federal workers to contribute approximately \$138 billion towards deficit reduction over 10 years – including \$21 billion as a result of increases in retirement contributions for our new federal workers.

As we consider issues that affect our dedicated federal workforce, including the effectiveness of the General Schedule pay system, we must bear in mind the critical services that federal workers provide to American citizens on a daily basis. Our federal workers are the border patrol agents who work every day securing our borders, the law enforcement personnel who identify and capture terrorists, the nurses and doctors at the VA who care for our wounded warriors, and the personnel in charge of administering and providing oversight of multimillion and multibillion dollar essential government programs.

Today's hearing seeks to determine the ideal and necessary attributes of a modern personnel system for a 21st century government and the increasingly complex functions that our agencies are expected and required to perform in service of the American people.

Some would like to modernize the GS system. Others want to eliminate it and replace it with a pay-for performance system.

In their written testimony, the Government Accountability Office identified eight attributes of a modern personnel system, but noted the difficulty in finding the right mix of attributes. Stakeholders disagree on the mix and I believe that this is the greatest challenge to modernizing our personnel system. For instance, does internal equity, meaning equal pay for work of equal value, continue to be a primary

value? Or, is allowing a greater degree of unequal pay, as some have proposed, the key to effective government?

Frankly, the notion that inequality should become federal government policy is a bit concerning to me. But I'm sure there will be articulate advocates for it.

I think that congress and stakeholders can all agree that a modern and effective personnel system must allow for an increasing focus on flexibility, accountability, and performance.

I look forward to discussing these and other issues with our witnesses this morning.
Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield the balance of my time.

Contact: Jennifer Hoffman, Communications Director, (202) 226-5181.