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**THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE FEDERAL
WORKFORCE, THE POSTAL SERVICE AND THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
GOVERNMENT REFORM
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Hearing on “Jobs, Jobs, Jobs:
Transforming Federal Hiring”**

MAY 19, 2010

My name is Stephen P. Crosby, and I serve as Dean of the John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston. It is my pleasure to appear before you and to speak on behalf of House Resolution 3264 and Senate Bill 736, and particularly on the importance to the country of improving federal hiring practices for students and recent graduates.

Over the course of the last 50 years, there has been an evolving realization that government needs highly educated and trained workers to respond to the increasingly complex challenges facing this country. As a consequence, schools of public policy, public service, and public administration education—schools of public affairs broadly speaking—such as mine have developed for the express purpose of providing education and training for the design, evaluation and implementation of public policy. The graduates of our programs are intentionally and thoroughly trained to improve the quality of public service. I am convinced that it is in the public interest to pass legislation which assures that the graduates of these schools have a clear path to employment in the federal government and have at least a level playing field for accessing governmental positions.

As you in the Congress know better than I, the next couple of decades will see a huge cohort of experienced federal public officials reaching retirement age, thus creating a tremendous demand for people in public service. Graduate schools like mine are committed to preparing students to meet this great demand, but the present system of hiring impedes this cohort of job candidates from readily accessing the federal system. Because our candidates are relatively “new” and relatively “inexperienced” in terms of literal federal service, despite the fact that they have extensive training in the tools of public service, they have a difficult time competing for these positions. The legislation for which I speak today will hold the executive branch (the Office of Personnel Management) accountable to Congress for how it hires, and requires the entire federal hiring system to be more transparent to all. As former Secretary of Administration and Finance working for the Governor of Massachusetts, I never thought that I would call for more legislative oversight of the custodial functions of the executive branch. But it is clear to me that in this case, such oversight is appropriate, and that this legislation will give the executive branch the tools to improve its hiring practices.

The supply and demand for graduate students exists, but the pipeline is broken. The current hiring process is a confusing, poorly advertised, drawn-out process that fails to match or proactively recruit future talent. The usajobs.gov automated process places a premium on qualifications such as professional work experience (especially internal candidates) and other preference, none of which many students possess.

I support Senate Bill 736, “The Federal Hiring Process Improvement Act” and strongly encourage the introduction of a companion bill in the House, because the bill presents

several elements that lay the groundwork for establishing a working hiring pipeline. The bill requires agencies to develop plans to identify hiring needs and recruitment strategies, shorten the hiring process and make it more applicant-friendly. It would also attempt to maintain an inventory of federal job applicants and measure the effectiveness of hiring reform efforts.

I also support H.R. 3264, “The Federal Internship Reform” bill, as it will attempt to open up the federal hiring process to continued positive use of internships, which are indeed highly competitive programs that can and should attract the best and the brightest from our graduate programs. The private sector will convert something like 50% of their interns to full-time employment. However the Federal Government converts less than 10% of interns. This is a missed recruiting and staffing opportunity that our country cannot afford with the myriad challenges before us.

H.R. 3264 offers us the opportunity to accomplish this by encouraging agencies to create a more effective framework for monitoring and implementing internship programs. Specifically I find the following provisions in the bill to be attractive:

- **Data collection:** each agency that utilizes internship programs is required to collect and track data into an annual report that is sent to OPM. We believe measuring and using such metrics will permit agencies to use interns effectively and will assist Congress in its oversight responsibilities.
- **Accountability:** each participating agency is required to create an internship coordinator position. This will provide agencies with professional staff responsible for recruiting, developing, and tapping into intern candidates.
- **Definitions:** the definitions of ‘intern’ and ‘internship’ must be clear. They should connect directly to student status and should be restricted to those students who are currently registered in a regularly accredited university/school and/or be within two years of graduating from said school.

The Presidential Management Fellowship is a powerful model for getting great young people to serve in the federal government. However, it is small in scale with only a few hundred participating each year. This is why having smart, competitive, and developmental internships as part of federal recruiting is vital. Both government AND students need a special vehicle, the federal internship, that ensures a moderate but vital flow of recent graduates into the federal workforce.

I think I can safely speak for the almost 300 other Deans and Directors at graduate public affairs schools across the country as well as different graduate degrees than ours,

such as engineering, business, public health and others, that the pathways to federal public service need to be clear in order to attract the right people for the right positions.

I would like to briefly address the intended federal hiring reforms contained in the May 11 [2010] Executive Memorandum issued by President Obama on the subject of "Improving the Federal Recruitment and Hiring Process." It is a promising step in the right direction, but I believe the accountability framework established for federal hiring in the Congressional legislation is an important safeguard on the sustainability of reform and the long term health of federal hiring.

The U.S. Government is no different than other organizations in that it needs to continually replenish its employee pool especially with those who have the latest learning, ample motivation and lots of enthusiasm to contribute. Unless we unclog the current malfunctioning hiring system, and provide clear, dedicated pathways for capable new graduates into the civil service, we will be choking off a critical source of supply of desperately needed, highly skilled workers for Federal service.

Ultimately, this is not just about federal jobs and the need to hire more students. Federal hiring reform is about ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of the federal government in coming decades, and our ability to tackle the tough public problems we face. It is not an understatement to say the future of our government, and our country, is at stake.