

JOYCE A. BARR
ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF ADMINISTRATION
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE
ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, AND
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE

JULY 30, 2014

Good morning Chairman Barletta, Ranking Member Carson, and members of this Subcommittee. My name is Joyce Barr, and I am the Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Administration at the State Department.

Thank you for inviting me to testify today on this important subject. The State Department is a relatively small part of the General Services Administration's (GSA's) overall real estate holdings since we account for approximately two percent of its nationwide portfolio. In general, approximately half of the domestic real estate that the Department occupies is government-owned space and half is leased. Primarily in metropolitan areas, State Department personnel are housed in about 150 facilities across the country, and we are the sole tenant in roughly 50

percent of this space. In the remainder, we are co-located with other Federal organizations and other entities, mostly in Federal office buildings. Additionally, under special legislative authority we own about a half dozen properties. We have a close partnership with GSA to acquire space to meet our operational needs, and we depend on their expertise and experience in real property management to help us meet our mission requirements domestically.

The Bureau of Administration, which I head, is responsible for defining and validating the Department's evolving real estate requirements, coordinating with GSA in acquiring those facilities, and in managing the costs of those assets effectively. Our many missions shape and add complexity to our overall domestic real estate strategy.

As a member of the National Intelligence Community, the Department must meet certain operational security directives, which can increase costs under certain circumstances, such as when we have to move operations. Bureaus within the State Department are heavily integrated and must continually collaborate to effectively support the numerous policy and operational requirements of 275 U.S. embassies and consulates around the world. We therefore strive to co-locate

bureaus together to foster that collaboration, and depending upon their needs, place them as close as possible to headquarters in Foggy Bottom. At the same time, “back-office” or support functions like passport production and routine financial activities are located in lower-cost areas, such as Portsmouth, New Hampshire, or Charleston, South Carolina. In addition, mail and shipping operations that support U.S. overseas posts, as well as all of the Department’s IT support, have been located outside of the Washington D.C. metropolitan area. These operational factors have guided State’s overall domestic real estate strategy for 25 years.

We wholeheartedly endorse the goal of reducing leasing costs to the greatest extent possible. We recognize the need to minimize our real estate “footprint” and have been reducing our space allocation per person within our properties as opportunities arise. For example, the GSA recently leased on our behalf a building vacated by the World Bank, enabling us to consolidate our Bureau of Consular Affairs, which had formerly been located in five separate locations. By incorporating modern space utilization benchmarks consistent with Federal and private sector trends, we are now capable of accommodating approximately 30 percent or 600 more personnel in the same amount of space. Using the same methodologies, we are actively working with GSA to accommodate approximately 1500 more employees in our headquarters building at the end of our current

modernization project. We at the State Department have also made it our priority to operate our facilities smartly by integrating energy conservation and environmental sustainability principles into our day-to-day activities.

We have a great partnership with the GSA; they have been instrumental in helping us to identify the most suitable real estate opportunities and assisting us to meet our long term office space needs. We practice good stewardship of the Department's real estate assets on behalf of the American taxpayer, and we will continue our efforts to increase efficiencies in order to obtain the best value for each dollar spent.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear today and describe our program. I welcome any questions you may have.