

# Minority Representation in Senior Positions in U.S. Federal Agencies: A Paradox of Underrepresentation

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**U.S. federal agency workforces are typically believed to epitomize equal opportunity and diversity. Yet, an analysis of employment data reveals that minorities are still underrepresented in senior government positions. The percentage of minority senior federal employees do not match the percentages of minorities in the general population or at lower levels of the civil service. Various programs can be adopted to ensure that diversity is embraced and that steps are taken to increase the representation of minorities across all levels of federal agency employment.**

**U**S federal government agency workforces are typically believed to epitomize equal opportunity and embrace merit principles. The federal government has historically spearheaded policies and programs to mandate affirmative action, eradicate glass ceilings, and institute initiatives to recognize the achievements of and provide equal employment opportunities to all members of minority groups. Some agencies even integrate merit principles into their strategic missions and cultural climates. Yet, an analysis of federal agency employment data reveals that minorities still constitute a small percentage of higher level government employees in most agencies. While minorities make up a sizable percentage of lower level government employees, their percentages decline progressively up through the senior levels. In fact, the racial composition of some agencies' workforces mirrors that of the nation's population only at the lowest pay levels, and race is the leading category for equal employment opportunity charges filed by aggrieved federal employees. Agencies should, thus, examine minority employment at all pay levels, even if their aggregate percentages are comparable to the general population.

The lack of minority representation at senior levels raises the additional concern that federal agencies may not always address the needs of all U.S. citizens. Since top-level officials establish agencies' missions, set major policies, and determine agencies' goals, the composites of senior leaders in agencies that do not mirror the general population may not well represent all groups in the populace. According to Dolan,<sup>1</sup> in a representative democracy, a "bureaucracy composed of individuals who share the

values and attitudes of the public at large will produce public policy that closely reflects the interests and desires of the public. Since the public is diverse in terms of race, religion, gender and social class, a demographically diverse bureaucracy will ideally include a variety of viewpoints and perspectives and produce policy that is consistent with public sentiments.”

Accepting this definition, it follows that senior leaders in the bureaucracy of a representative democracy should include individuals who reflect the diversity of their constituents and their subordinates. Greene, Seldom and Brewer<sup>2</sup> stated this principle by writing, “The potential for individuals to be effective in an organization seems obviously to depend not just on their presence, but also on the rank of their positions in the bureaucratic hierarchy.” Minority representation at higher pay levels in federal agencies is necessary to ensure that the needs and interests of all employees are considered and that multiple viewpoints are integrated when policies, regulations, and strategic directions are set.

Many executive and legal attempts have been made to ensure minorities are adequately represented in federal employment. For example, Executive Order 11478, originally signed on August 8, 1969, by President Richard Nixon, states, “It is the policy of the government of the United States to provide equal opportunity in federal employment for all persons, to prohibit discrimination in employment because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, handicap, or age, and to promote the full realization of equal employment opportunity through a continuing affirmative program in each executive department and agency. This policy of equal opportunity applies to and must be an integral part of every aspect of personnel policy and practice in the employment, development, advancement, and treatment of civilian employees of the federal government.” Later, the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 established a policy standard of a “federal workforce reflective of the nation’s diversity.”

President Bill Clinton took the most dramatic steps to ensure minorities were represented at the highest levels of government. He called for a government that “looks like America” and named more women and minorities to his Cabinet than any previous president. During Clinton’s first term in office, approximately 25% of sub-Cabinet level positions were also held by minorities. Additionally, Clinton appointed Madeline Albright as the nation’s first female secretary of state.<sup>3</sup>

These and other actions have resulted in some increases in minority representation in senior federal government positions over the last few decades. Still, progress toward making the federal workforce fully reflect the general population has been made mostly at the lowest levels, and much work remains to be done to ensure minorities are afforded opportunities to obtain high level positions.

Having a diverse workforce is no longer just a matter of meeting an agency’s civic responsibility. It has become a matter of survival. Federal agencies serve customers who are diverse and who are sensitive about who provides services to them. Minorities are expected to make up 50% of the U.S. population by 2050.<sup>4</sup> Agencies must have diverse employees at all levels to serve their ever increasingly diverse constituencies. Also, suppliers, lawmakers, and media professionals are becoming more diverse and are closely monitoring federal agencies for similar developments. For example, more than

one-quarter of the members of the 109th Congress women or non-Whites. Black representatives have increased their numbers from 19 in 1981–1983 to 42 in 2003–2005. These congressional members are undoubtedly somewhat sensitive to the racial composition the of senior agency leadership.

## Measuring Diversity

Table 1 presents the percentage of the U.S. population by race, according to the 2000 Census. Whites constituted 69.1% of the population, Blacks were 12.1%, Hispanics were 12.6%, American Indians and Alaskan Natives were 0.7%, and Asians, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders were 3.7%. The remaining 1.8% of the U.S. people were people of other races or those who reported being of two or more races.

Table 2 shows the percentage of private sector jobs were held by members of each minority group in total during 2003, as well as private sector professional positions and federal General Schedule (GS) positions. Private sector professional occupations are comparable to public sector GS positions because the majority of both types of require incumbents to hold bachelor's degrees as a minimum qualification. In total, Blacks held 17.1% of all federal positions and 13.8% of all private sector positions. This 13.8% representation was in line with their percentage of Blacks in the general population. However, Blacks held 7.2% of private sector professional positions.

**Table 1: Racial Composition of the U.S. Population (281,421,906) in 2000**

Race	Percent of total population
White	69.1
Black or African American	12.1
Hispanic or Latino	12.6
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.7
Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	3.7
Other	0.2
Two or More Races	1.6

*Note.* From *Overview of race and Hispanic origin: Census 2000 brief*, by the U.S. Bureau of Census, March 2001, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/cenbr01-1.pdf>

Hispanics were the perhaps the most underrepresented in government positions (7.2%) and in private sector professional positions (4.1%) because they made up 12.6% of the general population. Asians and Pacific Islanders were well-represented in private sector professional positions (8.9%) and in government positions (4.8%) considering they made up 3.7% of the general population. The same can be concluded from analyzing the representation of American Indians and Alaskan Natives.

**Table 2: Comparative Percentages of Minorities Employed in the Private Sector (Total Jobs and Professional Jobs) and the Federal Government (Professional Jobs) During 2003**

Race	Total private sector employment	Private sector professional employment	General Schedule federal employment
Black	13.8%	7.2%	17.1%
Hispanic	11.1%	4.1%	7.2%
Asian or Pacific Islander	4.6%	8.9%	4.8%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.6%	0.4%	2.0%

*Note.* From *Occupational employment in private industry by race/ethnic group/sex and by industry, United States, 2003*, by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, May 9, 2005, <http://www.eeoc.gov/stats/jobpat/2003/national.html>; *Race/National origin by pay plan, grade, and selected agency as of September 30, 2004*, by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, n.d., <http://www.opm.gov/feddata/demograp/Table2mw.pdf>

Comparatively, Table 3 shows the number and percentage of white-collar employees in GS and senior-level government positions by race across the federal government as of September 30, 2004. Senior pay levels include positions above the GS-15 grade (i.e., members of the Senior Executive Service). At the lowest levels, grades GS-01 through GS-04, minorities constituted 43.3% of the workforce. Their percentage fell to 33.9% at the mid-level grades GS-05 through GS-12. For positions in grades GS-13 through GS-15, those occupied by candidates for senior positions, minorities were 21.5% of the workforce. These percentages held for Cabinet departments, which account for approximately 90% of federal government employment.

In the early 2000s, then, minorities made up 30.9% of the general U.S. population and held 31.1% of federal jobs. The percentage of Blacks in the federal workforce (17.1%) surpassed that of the general population (12.15%). However, those percentages diverge greatly when only higher level government positions are considered. Minorities held only 21% of GS-13, GS-14, and GS-15 positions, and only 14% of positions above the grade of GS-15. At the same time, Whites were 69.1% of the general U.S. population and held 56.7% of lower level government positions. White also held 66.1% of mid-level government positions and 86% of the most-senior government positions.

Blacks made up 12.1% of the general U.S. population and were highly represented in lower level (24.2%) and mid-level federal government positions (19.1%). Blacks held only 6.5% of senior positions, however. As shown in Table 3, Hispanics were even more underrepresented in the highest levels of government employment. While Hispanics made up 12.6% of the general population, they held only 3.5% of senior positions.

The degree to which an organization's workforce mirrors the racial composition of the general population can be represented using the Lieberman index. Table 4

**Table 3a: Federal Civilian Employment by Race and Pay Plan and Grade as of September 30, 2004**

All AGENCIES								
Grade	Total Employees	White	% White	% Minority	% Black	% Hispanic	% Asian or Pacific Islander	% American Indian or Alaskan Native
	1,435,090	989,074	68.9%	31.1%	17.1%	7.2%	4.8%	2.0%
<b>01</b>	2,661	1,430	53.7%	46.3%	26.3%	9.7%	9.1%	1.1%
<b>02</b>	4,568	2,519	55.1%	44.9%	25.7%	11.4%	4.5%	3.3%
<b>03</b>	21,151	11,798	55.8%	44.2%	22.0%	10.2%	8.2%	3.9%
<b>04</b>	57,712	33,051	57.3%	42.7%	24.7%	8.7%	4.8%	4.5%
<b>Sum 01-04</b>	86,092	48,798	56.7%	43.3%	24.2%	9.3%	5.7%	4.2%
<b>05</b>	106,746	60,218	56.4%	43.6%	26.0%	8.8%	4.8%	4.0%
<b>06</b>	83,958	49,768	59.3%	40.7%	25.6%	7.6%	4.4%	3.1%
<b>07</b>	142,266	88,749	62.4%	37.6%	22.2%	9.1%	4.2%	2.2%
<b>08</b>	56,574	33,030	58.4%	41.6%	26.7%	10.0%	3.1%	1.9%
<b>09</b>	132,466	88,373	66.7%	33.3%	18.5%	8.2%	4.4%	2.2%
<b>10</b>	17,865	12,608	70.6%	29.4%	17.8%	5.6%	3.8%	2.1%
<b>11</b>	197,404	137,750	69.8%	30.2%	14.4%	9.4%	4.7%	1.7%
<b>12</b>	227,943	167,094	73.3%	26.7%	14.3%	5.9%	5.1%	1.3%
<b>Sum 05-12</b>	965,222	637,590	66.1%	33.9%	19.1%	8.1%	4.5%	2.2%
<b>13</b>	204,162	156,734	76.8%	23.2%	12.2%	4.9%	5.1%	1.0%
<b>14</b>	99,294	78,945	79.5%	20.5%	10.4%	4.1%	5.0%	1.0%
<b>15</b>	61,329	50,670	82.6%	17.4%	6.6%	3.6%	6.3%	0.8%
<b>Sum 13-15</b>	364,785	286,349	78.5%	21.5%	10.8%	4.5%	5.3%	1.0%
<b>Senior Pay Levels</b>	18,991	16,337	86.0%	14.0%	6.5%	3.5%	3.2%	0.8%

presents Lieberman index scores for federal agencies with the greatest numbers of employees. The scores were calculated using the formula <sup>5</sup>

$$\text{Lieberman Diversity Score} = 1 - (x_1^2 + x_2^2 + \dots + x_n^2)$$

In which 1 represents a complete match between the percentage of a minority groups' members in the general population and the percentage of a minority groups' members in the agency, and x1-xn represents the actual percentages of each minority

**Table 3b: Federal Civilian Employment by Race and Pay Plan and Grade as of September 30, 2004**

<b>CABINET DEPARTMENTS</b>				
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Total Employees</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>% White</b>	<b>% Minority</b>
	1,275,533	890,114	69.8%	30.2%
<b>01</b>	2,546	1,406	55.2%	44.8%
<b>02</b>	4,277	2,395	56.0%	44.0%
<b>03</b>	20,159	11,369	56.4%	43.6%
<b>04</b>	54,361	31,273	57.5%	42.5%
<b>Sum 01-04</b>	81,343	46,443	57.1%	42.9%
<b>05</b>	100,398	57,792	57.6%	42.4%
<b>06</b>	79,489	47,984	60.4%	39.6%
<b>07</b>	132,641	84,572	63.8%	36.2%
<b>08</b>	44,911	27,816	61.9%	38.1%
<b>09</b>	121,520	83,231	68.5%	31.5%
<b>10</b>	16,843	12,133	72.0%	28.0%
<b>11</b>	174,709	124,374	71.2%	28.8%
<b>12</b>	201,480	150,151	74.5%	25.5%
<b>Sum 05-12</b>	871,991	588,053	67.4%	32.6%
<b>13</b>	176,854	137,282	77.6%	22.4%
<b>14</b>	81,700	65,377	80.0%	20.0%
<b>15</b>	49,492	40,806	82.4%	17.6%
<b>Sum 13-15</b>	308,046	243,465	79.0%	21.0%
<b>Senior Pay Levels</b>	14,153	12,153	85.9%	14.1%

Note. From *Race/National origin by pay plan, grade, and selected agency as of September 30, 2004*, by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, n.d., <http://www.opm.gov/feddata/demograp/Table2mw.pdf>

group's members' employment with the agency. The actual percentages are squared and added before being subtracted from 1.

During 2003, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Small Business Administration (SBA) had the highest diversity scores. At the EEOC, 54.06% of senior pay level positions were held by minorities. The respective rates for HUD and the SBA were 40.38% and 32.69%. Each of these agencies also had comparable Lieberman index

**Table 4: Lieberson Index Diversity Score for U.S. Federal Agencies With the Greatest Number of Employees in Fiscal Year 2003**

	Total employees	Total	Grades GS-14 and GS-15	Senior pay levels
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	2,608	0.6328	0.5683	0.6384
Department of Housing & Urban Development	10,435	0.5955	0.5268	0.5438
Small Business Administration	3,784	0.5544	0.4328	0.4933
Army & Air Force Exchange Service	37,973	0.6901	0.3862	0.3904
Defense Logistics Agency	21,262	0.4689	0.2435	0.3671
Department of the Interior	79,482	0.4161	0.2960	0.3443
Department of Education	4,702	0.5659	0.4352	0.3300
Department of Transportation	58,842	0.3640	0.3201	0.3241
Office of the Secretary of Defense	5,401	0.4321	0.2396	0.3216
Department of Health & Human Services	60,014	0.6307	0.3774	0.3081
Office of Personnel Management	3,618	0.5034	0.3737	0.3059
Department of Agriculture	112,843	0.3597	0.3006	0.2968
Department of Homeland Services	141,275	0.5552	0.3379	0.2829
National Aeronautics & Space Administration	19,313	0.3837	0.2926	0.2790
Department of Labor	16,154	0.5195	0.3692	0.2789
Department of Treasury	131,069	0.5242	0.3555	0.2598
Environmental Protection Agency	19,082	0.4710	0.3241	0.2597
Department of Commerce	44,687	0.4526	0.3686	0.2547
Department of Justice	102,503	0.4675	0.3428	0.2528
Defense Information Systems Agency	5,178	0.4353	0.3241	0.2498
Department of Veterans Affairs	230,709	0.5407	0.4427	0.2454
Defense Contract Audit Agency	4,079	0.3965	0.2156	0.2401
Department of State	17,638	0.4306	0.2639	0.2384
Social Security Administration	66,607	0.5918	0.4178	0.2299
Defense Finance and Accounting Service	14,193	0.4799	0.3156	0.2257
Department of Energy	15,722	0.3846	0.3096	0.2191
Nuclear Regulatory Commission	3,047	0.4193	0.3295	0.2112
Defense Contract Management Agency	10,620	0.3848	0.2737	0.1975
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	5,496	0.4074	0.2725	0.1925
Government Printing Office	2,847	0.5081	0.4132	0.1884
General Services Administration	12,800	0.5239	0.3720	0.1749
Department of the Army	220,863	0.4362	0.2446	0.1726
Department of the Navy	196,089	0.4516	0.2007	0.1627
Smithsonian Institution	6,290	0.5645	0.2573	0.1547

**Table 4: Lieberson Index Diversity Score for U.S. Federal Agencies With the Greatest Number of Employees in Fiscal Year 2003 cont.**

	Total employees	Total	Grades GS-14 and GS-15	Senior pay levels
Tennessee Valley Authority	13,353	0.2077		0.1461
Department of the Air Force	170,434	0.3600	0.1608	0.1391
National Archives & Records Administration	3,086	0.4753	0.2196	0.1245
Securities and Exchange Commission	3,293	0.4904		0.1157
Defense Commissary Agency	15,590	0.6704	0.2658	0.0000
Defense Education Activity	17,300	0.3540	0.2811	0.0000

Note. From Total employee count, in *Annual report on the federal work force, Fiscal Year 2003*, by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Office of Federal Operations, Retrieved January 25, 2009, from <http://www.eeoc.gov/federal/fsp2003/index.html>

scores for high level positions and for their total workforce. In comparison, the Department of Veteran’s Affairs, to take one example of wide divergence, has an overall score of .5407, but this falls to .2454 for senior positions.

The bottom of Table 4 shows the agencies with the least diversity among senior leaders. The Defense Commissary Agency (DCA) and Defense Education Activity (DEA) had no minorities in any senior level positions. Yet, the DCA’s total workforce was 52.60% minority (Lieberson index score = .6704) and the latter’s is 20.73% minority (Lieberson index score = .3540). Similarly, the Security Exchange Commission’s total workforce was 32.19% minority (Lieberson index score = .4904), but only 6.10% of its most senior employees were minorities (Lieberson index score = .1157).

Although the overall rate of minority representation at higher levels was small, the situation had improved some since 1994. As shown in Table 5, each minority group had experienced at least modest gains in representation at the senior pay level. Blacks’ representation had increased from 5.68% in 1994 to 7.09% in 2003, Hispanics’ from 2.18% to 3.43%, Asian and Pacific Islanders’ from 1.35% to 2.51%, and American Indians and Alaskan Natives’ from 0.60% to 0.78%. Whites’ representation had decreased from 90.19% to 86.19%, which was still greater than the percentage of Whites in the general population. Many agencies still had a long way to go to improve their representative percentages.

Historically, women have faced the same struggles as racial minorities in achieving high positions in federal service. However, data show women have made substantial gains in representation. In 2003, women made up 49.72% of all employees in federal agencies with at least 500 employees. They also made up 33.22% of employees at the GS-14 and GS-15 levels.<sup>6</sup> As shown in Table 5, in 1994, women held 16.35% of senior pay level positions. By 2003, that percentage had risen to 25.52%.



**Table 5a: Ten-Year Trend for Senior Pay Level Positions:  
Governmentwide Employment of Workers**

Year	Total	Men		Women		White		Black	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1994	13,385	11,197	83.65	2,188	16.35	12,072	90.19	760	5.68
1995	13,636	11,119	81.54	2,517	18.46	12,176	89.29	834	6.12
1996	13,656	10,934	80.07	2,722	19.93	12,137	88.88	865	6.33
1997	13,956	11,040	79.11	2,916	20.89	12,334	88.38	906	6.49
1998	14,124	11,051	78.24	3,073	21.76	12,409	87.86	925	6.55
1999	14,296	10,994	76.9	3,302	23.10	12,503	87.46	969	6.78
2000	14,618	11,082	75.81	3,536	24.19	12,690	86.81	1,039	7.11
2001	14,552	11,020	75.73	3,532	24.27	12,648	86.92	1,017	6.99
2002	15,224	11,409	74.94	3,815	25.06	13,175	86.54	1,069	7.02
2003	15,308	11,402	74.48	3,906	25.52	13,194	86.19	1,085	7.09

**Table 5b: Ten-Year Trend for Senior Pay Level Positions:  
Governmentwide Employment of Workers**

Year	Total	Hispanic		Asian and Pacific Islander		Native American or Alaskan Native	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1994	13,385	292	2.18	181	1.35	80	0.6
1995	13,636	335	2.46	212	1.55	79	0.58
1996	13,656	330	2.42	230	1.68	94	0.69
1997	13,956	367	2.63	258	1.85	91	0.65
1998	14,124	399	2.82	289	2.05	102	0.72
1999	14,296	421	2.94	294	2.06	109	0.76
2000	14,618	459	3.14	313	2.14	117	0.8
2001	14,552	441	3.03	326	2.24	120	0.82
2002	15,224	504	3.31	352	2.31	124	0.81
2003	15,308	525	3.43	384	2.51	120	0.78

Note. From *Annual report on the federal work force, fiscal year 2003*, by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Office of Federal Operations, <http://www.eeoc.gov/federal/fsp2003/index.html>

## Initiatives to Improve Representation

Perceived racial discrimination continues to be the primary reason employees file grievances in the federal government, constituting 35.5% of all claims during 2005. Sex discrimination (30.6%), retaliation (29.5%), age (22%), disability (19.7%), national origin (10.7%), religion (3.10%), and equal pay (1.30%) were the other primary or related equal employment complaints. For race claims alone, monetary benefits of

\$76,500 million dollars were paid, excluding benefits paid as a result of litigations.<sup>7</sup> These figures and the dollar amount of settlements provide strong evidence that federal agencies need to make increasing diversity among their workforces an integral part of their missions.

Section 2501 of Title 5 of the *U. S. Code* stipulates that, for federal government positions, "recruitment should be from individuals qualified from appropriate sources in an endeavor to achieve a workforce from all segments of society; and selection and advancement should be determined solely on the basis of relative ability, knowledge and skills, after fair and open competition which assures that all receive equal opportunity." These principle should be applied to filling all vacancies and to rotating employees, filling positions laterally, and assigning tasks. Also, supervisors should be evaluated and given rewards based on their adherence to and exercise of merit principles, as well as their demonstrated commitment to establishing and maintaining a qualified diverse workforce.

The following paragraphs outline initiatives all agencies should put in place to ensure increased representation of minorities in high level positions. It is recognized that some agencies are already implementing one or more of these programs. However, some agencies are operating the programs on a very limited basis. For example, some agencies only utilize mentor programs as part of executive leadership training. Other agencies have not institutionalized the programs, allowing each of their divisions or field offices to decide if they will implement them, and are not making a formal push to have the programs operating across the entire agency.

Agencies should establish formal mentoring programs in which mid-level and senior managers provide professional guidance to employees at lower levels. While some agencies have already established successful mentor programs, many others have either not yet developed any program or have not institutionalized mentoring. While these programs should be open to employees of all races, minority managers should be required to adopt minority and nonminority employees from lower levels as mentees. Some agencies improperly develop mentoring programs in which managers select employees to participate. When this is the case, selections can be based on competitive evaluations, with diversity being one of several primary considerations. The U.S. Coast Guard, for example, developed a mentoring program after a leadership study found mentoring to be a major factor in retaining employees. The Coast Guard has subsequently developed a Web site, <http://www.uscg.mil/leadership/mentoring>, that military, civilian, reserve, auxiliary, and retired personnel can use to sign up as mentors or mentees. The site also provides training materials, including a mentoring guide, mentoring skills training, and information on a mentor boot camp company.<sup>8</sup>

Agencies should also develop formal rotation and training programs to provide employees opportunities for professional development. Just as with mentoring programs, some agencies either do not operate these programs or have not institutionalized them. However, in the agencies that have successfully developed rotation programs, employees receive exposure to and get hands-on training in a variety of career fields, both of which prepare the employees to assume management positions where they will supervise employees with various skills and responsibilities.

Training programs may include formal classes at local universities, workshops offered by companies specializing in leadership development, and exchange programs with strategic partners. Diversity and fairness should be major tenets of these programs. For example, some agencies within the Department of Defense allow employees to rotate to into new positions within the agency, in other agencies, or with suppliers. The U.S. Army Tank-Automotive and Armaments Command has a job rotation program for interns, those in career positions, team leaders, managers, and leaders in the agency.<sup>17</sup>

Programs should be established to actively recruit minorities. For instance, agencies should actively recruit top graduates from historically black colleges and universities and universities with predominantly Hispanic students. Agencies should also make greater use of programs as the Outstanding Scholar Program (<http://federaljobs.net/scholar.htm>). Such programs make it easy for agencies to identify highly qualified, diverse applicants for federal employment. Some agencies are actively using such programs. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) provides education and employment opportunities by conducting workshops for NASA Scholars Internship participants, who are 67% Hispanic. The Federal Communication Commission has hired employees following recruiting visits to universities in Puerto Rico. The U.S. Air Force has hired Hispanics through internship programs, and several bases have established mentoring programs and partnerships with local schools.<sup>18</sup>

The Office of Personnel Management, the EEOC, and agency employment offices should maintain stricter oversight over recruiting and hiring. Most agencies require personnel decision makers to justify selections from underrepresented groups, including selecting minorities when nonminorities are underrepresented. These justifications should be thoroughly documented and scrutinized. Agencies should also be subjected to annual diversity audits by oversight agencies. Auditors should do more than just collect data and generate summary statistics. Rather, the auditors should actively engage with agency managers on HR practices.

Agencies must institute programs to evaluate their own progress toward creating and maintaining a diverse workforce. Their mid-level and senior managers should be required to, at a minimum, participate in annual diversity training. Such training should highlight the advantages of embracing diversity, discuss how diversity and fairness go hand in hand, outline strategies to improve diversity, and allow for open discussions. Agencies should also sponsor independently administered employee surveys to measure employees' perceptions of the agency's diversity programs, commitment to merit principles, fairness in and HR decisions and actions related to recruiting, hiring, promoting and awarding employees, and handling grievances.

## **Conclusion**

The data evaluated show that federal agencies lack minority representation in top-level positions. Legislation, executive oversight, and some levels of commitment have obviously produced increased diversity in lower level positions, but much more attention is required to ensure all agencies make at least somewhat similar progress at

all levels. This requires concentrated and continuous efforts in employing merit principles, applying principles of fairness, and making commitments to diversity—particularly at the highest levels of management where critical decisions are made that determine who gets chosen for what positions. Only a handful of programs that can be employed to ensure diversity is embraced were described in this article. It is the duty of agencies to ensure such programs are implemented and managers are held responsible for operating them by agency leaders and independent auditors.

## Notes

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