A Properly Funded FLRA = An Efficient Federal Government
Overview
The Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) is an independent agency charged with resolving labor relations disputes involving Executive Branch agencies. Over 1 million federal employees are eligible for collective bargaining rights pursuant to the law the FLRA administers, with about sixty percent of those employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement. The FLRA is made up of three principle dispute resolution components, the Office of General Counsel (OGC), the Federal Service Impasses Panel (FSIP), and the three member Authority board itself – all headed by presidential appointees.

Recent History
The FLRA was voted the worst place to work among smaller agencies in the federal government three years in a row, most recently in 2009. This is no surprise given the steep budget cuts they endured, when the Authority’s funding was slashed from $29.6 million in Fiscal Year 2004 (FY04) to $22.6 million in FY09. Those cuts led to a staff reduction of 184 to 114 Full Time Equivalents (FTEs), and a backlog of cases that looked insurmountable. The Authority even operated without a General Counsel for an astonishing 17 months. In 2009 the backlog of Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) cases was over 340, along with over 800 appeals cases pending. In other words, the FLRA was decimated during that time period.

With a new administration also came a slight increase to the FLRA budget. It was just enough to allow the Authority, particularly Office of General Counsel, to accomplish the impossible – eliminate the backlog of pending ULP and appeals cases. In addition, the FLRA is no longer the worst place to work in the federal government. According to the latest Best Places to Work in the Federal Government survey, the FLRA had the most dramatic increase in ranking, going from 34th in 2009 to 20th in 2010, while increasing their overall score 2.5 times.

FLRA Performance is Critical to Effective and Efficient Government
In his State of the Union speech, President Obama announced that government reorganization would be a major policy initiative moving forward (see Federal Times article on reverse side of this paper). With reorganizations also come representational complaints, in addition to the strain on the workforce caused by impending budget cuts. Labor disputes and representational complaints will surely increase dramatically as a result, making it even more important for the timely performance of the FLRA mission. There is little doubt that a failure of the FLRA to perform its dispute resolution functions in a timely manner will not only impede the collective bargaining process, but will also significantly slow the pace of government change.

Considering today’s reality of government reorganizations and budget cuts, the President’s FY12 FLRA budget submission is lacking. For example, the last time that the FLRA came close to being properly funded was eight years ago (FY04) when it received $29.6 million. Contrarily, the Administration’s FY12 proposal of $26.4 million does not come close to matching that. IFPTE appreciates the minimal increase over FY10 levels, but it still falls short.

IFPTE 2011 Legislative Request: IFPTE calls appropriators to fund FLRA at $30 million in FY12, representing a slight, but critical, $3.5 million increase over the President’s budget recommendation. IFPTE also calls on appropriators to restore the $273,000 cut to the FLRA budget that was called for in HR 1, the House passed end of FY11 continuing resolution.

OMB's Zients to oversee government reorg effort

By SEAN REILLY | Last Updated: January 31, 2011

Jeffrey Zients, federal chief performance officer, will lead the Obama administration's government reorganization effort, the White House announced over the weekend.

"Having been a CEO, management consultant, and entrepreneur, Jeff has a deep understanding of business strategy, process re-engineering and operational management," Dan Pfeiffer, the administration's communications director, said in a post Sunday on the White House's official blog. Aiding Zients will be Lisa Brown, who was co-chair of the Agency Review Working Group for the Obama-Biden transition team and now serves as assistant to the president and staff secretary.

The two will be seeking advice from a wide variety of stakeholders, Pfeiffer said, adding that they will first tackle trade and export functions.

Zients, who is also deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget for management, has been overseeing the administration's Accountable Government Initiative and will continue in that role alongside his new responsibilities, OMB spokeswoman Moira Mack said Monday.

Obama announced the planned reorganization in the State of the Union speech last Tuesday, saying that Americans deserve a government "that's more competent and efficient."

"I think you're going to see a very concerted effort by the president," his chief of staff, William Daley, said in a Sunday appearance on the CBS news show, "Face the Nation." "No doubt about it — it's a major task and we want to work with Congress to make sure that we get this right, whatever changes we propose."

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