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National Academy of Public Administration Releases *No Time to Wait Part 2: Building a Public Service for the 21st Century*

WASHINGTON, DC – A Panel of the National Academy of Public Administration today released a new white paper on the future of public service, called [*No Time to Wait Part 2: Building a Public Service for the 21st Century*](#). The report was sponsored by the Volcker Alliance and the Samuel L. Freeman Charitable Trust.

“The Academy is pleased to present this very important follow-up to the original *No Time to Wait* report,” said Teresa W. Gerton, President and CEO of the National Academy of Public Administration. “As this new report underscores, we cannot wait any longer to adapt to the changing nature of work. Our government functions and capabilities are getting further and further behind as technology rapidly evolves all around us. Now is the time to launch a comprehensive and strategic effort to rebuild the federal workforce for the 21st century, in order to more effectively serve our citizens.”

The new report is a follow-up to the original [*No Time to Wait*](#) white paper released by the Academy in 2017 – which emphasized the need for a federated human capital system focused on mission first, principles always, and accountability for both. The highly anticipated new report picks up where the initial one left off, with a diagnosis of the root cause of the problem, more detailed recommendations for ways to solve it, and with a greater sense of urgency for action.

“This new report makes a compelling case for action,” said Panel Chairman Donald F. Kettl, Academy Fellow and Professor at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin. “The federal workforce is the bedrock of the government’s ability to function, so there is even less time to wait than ever before. The Panel recommends specific steps that will help to bring the federal workforce into sync with the modern-day challenges we face, and we urge our leaders to take these recommendations seriously.”

No Time to Wait Part 2 concludes that because the last major changes to the federal government’s civil service system occurred in 1978, each passing year means that the system falls further out of sync with what it takes to manage programs well. In addition, it has become overwhelmed by regulations that have created a culture of compliance, where meeting the requirements of the rules has become more important than delivering value to taxpayers.

The new report recommends that the best solution to this core problem is to change the culture of compliance to a promise of performance. The report makes five principal recommendations for immediate action:

- **Build flexibility into the pursuit of the mission** - Federal leaders know best what they need to do their jobs, and they should have the flexibility to build the systems to meet those needs. Evidence should drive the system to what works best, through a four-part strategy: experiment, test, learn, then authorize.
- **Replace current detailed job specifications with a competency-based talent-management model** - Competencies should be vested in *individuals* and *individuals* should be matched to missions, instead of having static occupations define both. Rules have encrusted the federal personnel system to the point that compliance has become the driving rule. The federal government needs a system that recognizes that it doesn't matter where government employees sit—what matters is what they know and how they contribute to the mission.
- **Reinforce the pursuit of merit-system principles.** These principles have become even more encrusted in rules than job classification. Nonetheless, the core values of the system remain: hiring and promoting federal employees based on what they know, not who they know; and ensuring that they can do their jobs without political interference. The system must be recast to advance these principles while freeing them from the rules that too often bind them.
- **Lead from the center** - The federal government needs a strong enterprise-level entity to lead the transformation of its human capital system. It needs to focus on encouraging flexibility and innovation in federal agencies, on promoting government-wide merit-system principles, and on developing a learning system so that government can move forward at the speed of innovation.
- **Transform the federal government's human capital backbone** - Title 5 of the U.S. Code is the system's core, but it hasn't had a thorough housecleaning in decades. Some of these changes require legislation, but more than half of the necessary changes can be accomplished through administrative action. A task force of federal chief human capital officers should be given 90 days to draft a plan of reforms that can be implemented administratively.

At today's release of *No Time to Wait Part 2* at the National Press Club in Washington, the Panel's recommendations were discussed by a blue-ribbon panel of experts in the field of public administration, including Panel Chairman **Donald Kettl**; Academy President and CEO **Teresa Gerton**; Academy Fellow **Anita Blair**; and **Angela Bailey**, the Chief Human Capital Officer at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. In addition, **Bryan Hancock**, a Partner with McKinsey and Company, delivered remarks on the Future of Work. The event was sponsored by Management Concepts, Inc., and Managing Director **Debbie Eshelman** moderated the panel discussion.

About the National Academy of Public Administration

Chartered by Congress to provide non-partisan expert advice, the Academy is an independent, non-profit, and non-partisan organization established in 1967 to assist government leaders in building more effective, efficient, accountable, and transparent organizations. Learn more at www.napawash.org

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