

# Renewing America's Civil Service

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## The Initiative

Renewing America's Civil Service is a joint initiative of the Partnership for Public Service and the Volcker Alliance to press for an overhaul of the outdated federal civil service system. Backed by a bipartisan group of leaders from across sectors, we are focused on identifying tangible legislative and executive branch solutions to the most severe problems in the government personnel system. We believe that America needs a civil service that:

- Can deliver effective and efficient government to meet the most critical challenges facing the American people
- Is independent, free from undue political influence, and preserves the Merit System Principles
- Reflects the increasing need for knowledge-based skills in the rapidly changing, complex, globalized environment in which government operates
- Upholds a culture of excellence in service that will inspire trust from the American people and attract the best and brightest to serve

## The Need

It has been 40 years since the last meaningful civil service reform. Even as the challenges facing the nation have changed dramatically, the system governing more than two million federal civilian employees has remained stuck in the past, serving as an impediment rather than an aid in attracting, hiring, retaining and managing a highly skilled workforce. There is no better time than the present to secure the workforce of the future.

## The Response

Working together, and guided by our advisory panel, the Partnership and the Volcker Alliance have developed a set of recommendations to renew America's civil service. We are partnering with agency and elected leaders, as well as experts and good-government groups, to promote and inspire needed change.



**PARTNERSHIP  
FOR PUBLIC SERVICE**

The Partnership for Public Service is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that strives for a more effective government for the American people. For more information see <https://ourpublicservice.org> or contact Troy Cribb at [TCribb@ourpublicservice.org](mailto:TCribb@ourpublicservice.org) or (202) 775-9111.



**THE VOLCKER ALLIANCE**

The Volcker Alliance advances effective management of government to achieve results that matter to citizens. For more information see [www.volckeralliance.org](http://www.volckeralliance.org) or contact Maggie Mello at [MMello@volckeralliance.org](mailto:MMello@volckeralliance.org) or (646) 343-0155.

# Our Proposals

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Recommendations for modernizing the civil service include:

**Recruitment and Hiring:** Workers under 30 make up only 6 percent of the federal workforce while constituting 24 percent of the total labor force, and that already low number is dropping. Furthermore, in 2017, agencies took an average of 106 days to hire employees. The entire hiring process should be overhauled, beginning with passage of legislation pending in the Senate to enable faster hiring of students and recent graduates. The federal government can become a more competitive employer by streamlining hiring and getting better at identifying the best candidates for open jobs.

**Leadership development:** Our government should provide employees with increased opportunities for continuous learning. The civil service needs mandatory training for managers and supervisors, growth paths for future leaders in both management and technical roles, and meaningful performance management that provides incentives to recognize and reward good performers and do a better job of handling poor performers. We also need to ensure that the Senior Executive Service is a world-class cadre of managers working across government, who are empowered to tackle our nation's most pressing problems.

**Workforce agility:** Our nation benefits when skilled professionals choose to spend their careers in public service. At the same time, our nation is missing out on the chance to tap the talents of those willing to serve for shorter tenures. Legislation pending in the Senate would take sensible steps to provide that opportunity. We can bring public service more in line with the nimble model common in the private sector, including through public-private talent exchanges and options for federal employees to rotate into different positions.

**Pay and Classification:** The federal compensation system is almost 70 years old, designed for clerical workers and not for professionals with the highly specialized skills needed for today's knowledge-based economy. An occupation-specific, market-sensitive compensation system will attract and retain people with the skills needed to better serve the public.

**Engagement from both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue:** The last major revision of civil service laws, the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, was successful because the president and both political parties worked toward a civil service system that would serve the American people more effectively, regardless of which party controlled the White House or the Congress. Making lasting changes today will require the same type of collaboration on the planning, implementation, resource investment and oversight of modernization.

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## Advisory Panel

- Paul A. Volcker, chair of the advisory panel; chairman, The Volcker Alliance; former chairman, Federal Reserve Board of Governors
- Mitch Daniels, president of Purdue University; former governor of Indiana and former director of the Office of Management and Budget
- Tom Davis, director, federal government affairs, Deloitte; former congressman from Virginia and former chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
- Ted Kaufman, former senator from Delaware
- Lester Lyles, chairman of the board, USAA; former Air Force vice chief of staff and former commander of Air Force Materiel Command
- Hank Paulson, chairman, Paulson Institute; former secretary of the Treasury and former chairman and CEO of Goldman Sachs
- Penny Pritzker, co-founder and chairman, PSP Capital Partners and Pritzker Realty Group; former secretary of Commerce