

VOLCKER ALLIANCE PRESIDENT TO SENATE: GOVERNMENT MISMANAGEMENT PRESENTS “REAL AND URGENT CRISIS”

Testifying on Capitol Hill, Dr. Shelley Metzenbaum urges greater efforts to tackle federal management & performance problems; pledges Volcker Alliance’s support

WASHINGTON, DC (March 31, 2014) –Dr. Shelley Metzenbaum, President of The Volcker Alliance and former White House Office of Management and Budget Associate Director for Performance and Personnel Management, said today that while federal performance improvement initiatives are moving full-speed ahead in many areas, government leaders cannot let up on the throttle, as the impact of management mistakes on the eroding public confidence in government is a “real and urgent crisis” that can prevent the U.S. from achieving its full potential.

In testimony prepared for delivery before the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee, Metzenbaum urged greater attention to several specific problems, including recruitment and hiring, contracting, grants, benchmarking, and delivering greater impact across organizations with similar objectives. Metzenbaum, who managed the government-wide implementation of the 2010 Government Performance and Results Act while at OMB, urged redoubled Congressional and executive branch attention to “the four M’s”: *mission, measurement, money, and management.*

“Progress is being made,” Metzenbaum said, but “we need to keep the pressure on government to pay attention not just to preventing problems and keeping their costs as low as possible, but also to mission-focused improvements – finding and spreading what works better. Government agencies must become more adept at setting goals and pushing continuous improvement.”

Metzenbaum pledged The Volcker Alliance’s readiness to help the federal government find ways to manage smarter with increased accountability, and emphasized its intention to “lead the charge to catalyze new thinking and convene the partnerships needed to leverage change” on selected problems. She indicated that The Volcker Alliance is looking at structural reform of the federal financial regulatory agencies as one of its first projects because of the risk to mission from structural problems, evident in the past, and continuing in the present.

Metzenbaum joined The Volcker Alliance (<https://volckeralliance.org/>) in 2013 following its founding by former Federal Reserve Board Chairman Paul A. Volcker. The New York-based nonprofit organization aims to rekindle intellectual, practical, political, and academic interest in the implementation of policy and seeks to be a catalyst for change – encouraging public, private, and educational institutions to give sustained attention to excellence in the execution of federal, state, and local policies in the U.S. and abroad.

In her testimony, Metzenbaum also called for reform of Federal recruitment and hiring, which she called “seriously limping”, and fixing Federal internship programs, which are “just plain broken.”

“If we truly want 21st century government,” she said, “We need young people with fresh minds, intuitive understanding of the new economy and new technologies, and education about the best and emerging knowledge in government. Sadly, right now, when energetic, educated recent graduates and interns want to work in the federal government, they have a ridiculously hard time getting hired.”

Metzenbaum urged Congress to make it easier for one agency to recruit on behalf of others. “If one agency successfully recruits more highly qualified candidates than it needs, say, in cybersecurity,” she suggested making it possible for other agencies to hire from its roster. “Cross-agency hiring authority,” she noted, “would also allow recruitment specialization to develop in different agencies, which undoubtedly makes more sense than expecting every agency to build strong recruitment capacity in all the skill areas it needs.”

In addition, Metzenbaum called for expansion of the use of borrowed executives and innovators through programs such as the Innovation Fellows programs. She said this should take place not just in the information technology area, where the Administration has expressed its intent to expand, but in other areas as well, such as performance analysis.

Metzenbaum expressed concern that the contracting process is insufficiently agile and not adept at using past performance in contract-award decisions. She praised the Smart IT Delivery goal, but encouraged increased agility and heightened attention to government’s use of past performance in award decisions in all areas, not just IT.

Federal grants also need to be more agile and performance-focused, says Metzenbaum. She called for federal agencies that work with state and local governments to accomplish their objectives to play a strong knowledge management and diffusion role. Federal agencies should “support problem-solving and learning networks that figure out the right data to collect; produce analyses useful at all levels of government; ... and find effective methods for collecting and delivering data to inform front-line decisions by caseworkers, teachers, local inspectors, and others who often, ultimately, can have the biggest performance impact.”

One area where Metzenbaum sees enormous potential is increased benchmarking, comparing performance when appropriate and also business process and measurement methods. She applauded the Administration’s intent to take a much more aggressive approach to cost and quality benchmarking for federal shared services, and urged business process benchmarking in other areas, as well, such as for benefits processing programs.

Metzenbaum suggested that if Congress wants to reduce duplication, overlap, and fragmentation, it should seriously explore better ways to resource and authorize cross-agency coordination in the executive branch. Not all overlap and fragmentation problems may be solvable by executive action, which is why the Alliance is looking at structural reform as one of its first focus areas.

Working in partnership with educational institutions, governmental organizations, business, and public interest enterprises, The Volcker Alliance will sponsor research on government performance, make actionable recommendations for policy and implementation, and provide a forum for discussion of new ideas and tools to strengthen policy execution at all levels of government. Beyond that, the Alliance is committed to taking actions that contribute to a high degree of confidence in both the decision-making processes of government and in its administrative management.

###

For media inquiries or to receive a full copy of Dr. Metzenbaum's testimony, please contact:

Marc Smrikarov

BLJ Worldwide

MarcS@BLJWorldwide.com

+1-212-486-7070 (o)

About The Volcker Alliance

The Volcker Alliance was launched in 2013 to address the challenge of effective execution of public policies and to rebuild public trust in government. As a non-partisan organization based in New York City, The Volcker Alliance aims to catalyze new thinking and action with respect to federal, state, and local government in the U.S. and abroad.

Working in partnership with educational institutions, governmental organizations, business, and public interest enterprises, The Volcker Alliance will sponsor research on government performance, make actionable recommendations for policy and implementation, and provide a forum for discussion of new ideas and tools to strengthen policy execution at all levels of government. Beyond that, the Alliance is committed to taking actions that contribute to a high degree of confidence in both the decision-making processes of government and in its administrative management.

The Volcker Alliance seeks to rekindle intellectual, practical, and academic interest in the implementation of policy – the “nuts and bolts” of governance – and serve as a catalyst for sustained government improvement.

For more information, please visit www.volckeralliance.org.