

OVERSIGHT OF FEDERAL AGENCIES' POST-PANDEMIC TELEWORK POLICIES

HEARING

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
AND THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
AND ACCOUNTABILITY

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

SEPTEMBER 14, 2023

Serial No. 118-62

Printed for the use of the Committee on Oversight and Accountability



Available on: *govinfo.gov*
oversight.house.gov or
docs.house.gov

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

53-380 PDF

WASHINGTON : 2024

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

JAMES COMER, Kentucky, Chairman

JIM JORDAN, Ohio	JAMIE RASKIN, Maryland, <i>Ranking Minority Member</i>
MIKE TURNER, Ohio	ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, District of Columbia
PAUL GOSAR, Arizona	STEPHEN F. LYNCH, Massachusetts
VIRGINIA FOXX, North Carolina	GERALD E. CONNOLLY, Virginia
GLENN GROTHMAN, Wisconsin	RAJA KRISHNAMOORTHY, Illinois
GARY PALMER, Alabama	RO KHANNA, California
CLAY HIGGINS, Louisiana	KWEISI MFUME, Maryland
PETE SESSIONS, Texas	ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ, New York
ANDY BIGGS, Arizona	KATIE PORTER, California
NANCY MACE, South Carolina	CORI BUSH, Missouri
JAKE LATURNER, Kansas	SHONTEL BROWN, Ohio
PAT FALLON, Texas	JIMMY GOMEZ, California
BYRON DONALDS, Florida	MELANIE STANSBURY, New Mexico
KELLY ARMSTRONG, North Dakota	ROBERT GARCIA, California
SCOTT PERRY, Pennsylvania	MAXWELL FROST, Florida
WILLIAM TIMMONS, South Carolina	SUMMER LEE, Pennsylvania
TIM BURCHETT, Tennessee	GREG CASAR, Texas
MARJORIE TAYLOR GREENE, Georgia	JASMINE CROCKETT, Texas
LISA McCLAIN, Michigan	DAN GOLDMAN, New York
LAUREN BOEBERT, Colorado	JARED MOSKOWITZ, Florida
RUSSELL FRY, South Carolina	<i>Vacancy</i>
ANNA PAULINA LUNA, Florida	
CHUCK EDWARDS, North Carolina	
NICK LANGWORTHY, New York	
ERIC BURLISON, Missouri	

MARK MARIN, Staff Director

JESSICA DONLON, Deputy Staff Director and General Counsel

BILL WOMACK, Senior Advisor

ALEX RANKIN, Professional Staff Member

MALLORY COGAR, Deputy Director of Operations and Chief Clerk

CONTACT NUMBER: 202-225-5074

JULIE TAGEN, Minority Staff Director

CONTACT NUMBER: 202-225-5051

SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE

PETE SESSIONS, Texas, Chairman

GARY PALMER, Alabama	KWEISI MFUME, Maryland <i>Ranking Minority Member</i>
CLAY HIGGINS, Louisiana	ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, District of Columbia
ANDY BIGGS, Arizona	MAXWELL FROST, Florida
BYRON DONALDS, Florida	GREG CASAR, Texas
WILLIAM TIMMONS, South Carolina	GERALD E. CONNOLLY, Virginia
TIM BURCHETT, Tennessee	MELANIE STANSBURY, New Mexico
MARJORIE TAYLOR GREENE, Georgia	ROBERT GARCIA, California
LAUREN BOEBERT, Colorado	SUMMER LEE, Pennsylvania
RUSSELL FRY, South Carolina	JASMINE CROCKETT, Texas
CHUCK EDWARDS, North Carolina	<i>Vacancy</i>
ERIC BURLISON, Missouri	

C O N T E N T S

Hearing held on September 14, 2023	Page 1
--	-----------

WITNESSES

Mr. Randolph “Tex” Alles, Deputy Under Secretary for Management & Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary for Management, Department of Homeland Security Oral Statement	6
Dr. Karen Marrongelle, Chief Operating Officer, National Science Foundation Oral Statement	8
Mr. Robert Gibbs, Associate Administrator for the Mission Support Direc- torate, National Aeronautics and Space Administration Oral Statement	9
Mr. Dan Dorman, Executive Director for Operation, Nuclear Regulatory Com- mission Oral Statement	11

*Written opening statements and statements for the witnesses are available
on the U.S. House of Representatives Document Repository at:
docs.house.gov.*

INDEX OF DOCUMENTS

- * Statement for the Record; submitted by Rep. Connolly.
 - * Report, OPM, December 2022, “Status of Telework in the Federal Gov-
ernment”; submitted by Rep. Mfume.
 - * Statement for the Record, from the Parallel Professionals, EFM, MOH,
and the U.S. Department of State employee organizations; submitted by
Rep. Crockett.
 - * Statement for the Record, from military spouses; submitted by Rep.
Mfume.
 - * Article, Space Magazine, “Elon Musk Tells SpaceX, Tesla Workers They
Must Be in the Office at Least 40 Hours a Week: Report”; submitted
by Rep. Biggs.
 - * Report, GAO, “Federal Real Property: Preliminary Results Show Federal
Buildings Remain Underutilized Due to Longstanding Challenges and In-
creased Telework”; submitted by Rep. Biggs.
 - * Questions for the Record: to Mr. Alles; submitted by Rep. Palmer.
 - * Questions for the Record: to Mr. Alles; submitted by Rep. Biggs.
 - * Questions for the Record: to Mr. Alles; submitted by Rep. Burchett.
 - * Questions for the Record: to Mr. Dorman; submitted by Rep. Donalds.
 - * Questions for the Record: to Mr. Dorman; submitted by Rep. Sessions.
 - * Questions for the Record: to Mr. Dorman; submitted by Rep. Palmer.
 - * Questions for the Record: to Mr. Dorman; submitted by Rep. Boebert.
 - * Questions for the Record: to Mr. Gibbs; submitted by Rep. Palmer.
 - * Questions for the Record: to Dr. Marrongelle; submitted by Rep. Palmer.
 - * Questions for the Record: to Dr. Marrongelle; submitted by Rep. Biggs.
- Documents are available at: docs.house.gov.*

OVERSIGHT OF FEDERAL AGENCIES' POST-PANDEMIC TELEWORK POLICIES

Thursday, September 14, 2023

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND THE FEDERAL
WORKFORCE

Washington, D.C.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:08 a.m., in room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Pete Sessions [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Sessions, Palmer, Higgins, Biggs, Burchett, Boebert, Edwards, Mfume, Norton, Frost, Connolly, Lee of Pennsylvania, and Crockett.

Mr. SESSIONS. Good morning.

This is a hearing of the Subcommittee on Government Operations and the Federal Workforce, and we will come to order.

We want to welcome each and every one of you who are taking time to be here today on what we believe is an important issue for the American people and for Congress, to learn a highlight about what we are doing with conversation with the Federal Government.

Without objection, the Chair may declare a recess at any time. And I would recognize myself for the purpose of an opening statement.

I want to welcome everybody today and thank you for taking time.

Today, we are reviewing telework policies to select Federal agencies.

In May, this Committee sent letters to 25 agencies asking for information around their telework policies. It took a while, but ultimately we received at least some of the responses. Some of the responses did show up. But we moved forward.

The witnesses here today were invited because their responses reflected a good faith effort to answer our questions. And we believe that where you offer a good faith of trying to respond, you also become a part of their plight and problems. And so, we are allowing those people to be in our first round.

Mr. Mfume knows we are going to try and come after a second round, and that might be those who chose not to respond or responded in what we felt like a less than adequate way.

It does not mean that in their responses there were no gaps or information that we should not have understood, and it does not

mean that it did not conjure up questions that we would have for you.

But I do appreciate their responses and want to highlight the agencies that are here today did respond. And I hope today will be a positive discussion and conversation about their needs, how they are doing, and what we need to do as Members of Congress to help out.

The north star for any policy impacting Federal agencies should be to put the needs of the American people first. And while you and I recognize that means, to you, your agency putting your employees first to make sure the American people can be helped, it is our view that we hear from people that are called the American public, and they have vast needs also. And we may hear from them perhaps before you do.

When Federal agencies pivoted to maximum telework when they did, at the onset of COVID, it was really a matter of necessity, and I think the American people understood that, because they too were living that in their lives. And telework did and can play a vital role in continuing operations like those that you have.

In this Subcommittee's June hearing, we heard about the problems experienced by those agencies who have continued to stay ill-prepared during this period of time. But what we are talking about today is a different matter. It is the day-to-day operations of Federal agencies that are not in an emergency circumstance.

As this Nation emerges from COVID—and it did a long time ago—it appeared to me and to many of my colleagues that the Biden Administration was attempting to portray the experience during COVID as those that would still be necessary and could be undertaken today.

And I think it has caused unmitigated stress on the American people, a misunderstanding about the role of working for the Federal Government, and the role of Congress as we hear back from people.

But there was never really any evidence, other than references to a survey of Federal employees about what the impact was and about how the American public felt like they were doing business with agencies across the government. And that is why we undertook what we did in June. That is why we are here in September and why we will be back.

We believe and I believe that telework can be helpful to agencies to help them carry out their mission. It does not mean every single agency would necessarily have that same success. And that is why, when I see a Federal Government across-the-board answer, it seems simplistic. It seems like it is OK for us just to do this because we can.

Private industry does not have that same latitude, necessarily. And yet they have found ways to adapt themselves to the issues to meet public needs and demands. They, not unlike the government, have day-to-day demands, whether you are in telecommunications, whether you are in the hospital, whether you are in an airline industry.

So, the White House Chief of Staff sent an email expressing some of the points that I have talked about. But we, on this side, the Committee, want to vet and understand the effectiveness of what

you are doing and, to the maximum possible extent, the reliability of data that you may present today, which will be important to us. In the absence of that that we had, we have asked for you to be here.

So, when the House passed the SHOW UP Act in January, this was portrayed as an effort to end all teleworking. It is not. We recognize the difference between necessarily staying at home, 5-day workweek, absence, whatever you might want to call it, with going to work and doing telework. And we want to recognize the difference, and we think it is up to you to come and tell that story today.

You may find that there are some Members of Congress that are here present today that need to know more about your story, but I hope you will take the time to listen to us and hear from us, because we think we have a story to tell also today.

So, I want to thank you for being here.

And at this time I would like to yield to the distinguished Ranking Member, the gentleman, Mr. Mfume. The gentleman is recognized for the purpose of an opening statement.

Mr. MFUME. Thank you very, very much, Mr. Chair. I want to thank you also for the personal courtesy you extended earlier prior to this hearing today.

I want to thank the witnesses, obviously, for being here with us to be a part of this discussion.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Was the Ranking Member caught in traffic?

Mr. MFUME. The Ranking Member was caught in traffic.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Telework can help.

[Laughter.]

Mr. SESSIONS. Good luck.

Mr. MFUME. Members of this Subcommittee, we feel, perform a very important oversight role on behalf of not only Federal workers, but the American public in general. And with this coveted role in many respects comes immense responsibility as we are all positioned in a way that impacts our constituents in the most relevant of ways.

As Members of Congress, we have all heard our own fair share of complaints, as well as appraisals, surrounding casework by different agencies. In the time that is mine, I want to take this moment to focus on a real story from a real person that my office interacted with during the height of the pandemic. And, for the sake of anonymity, I will simply refer to her as Jane.

Jane contacted our office during the pandemic regarding FEMA's COVID-19 Funeral Assistance Program when she filed for her brother. Unfortunately, he passed away from COVID and COVID-related symptoms in December 2021.

Shortly after my office connected with FEMA regarding Jane's application, it only took FEMA a few days to approve the family's reimbursement, exceeding \$3,000.

Now, keep in mind, our office obtained this favorable outcome for Jane in a matter of days during a time when more than half of FEMA's workforce was telework eligible.

So, as I have said time and time again—and I would just like to be deliberately redundant here—the last four letters in the word telework are w-o-r-k. People who are teleworking work.

I consider constituent services to be some of my most important and rewarding work in this Congress, and I am sure many of the Members of this Committee feel the same way. We are all proud to serve as a resource and an advocate for our respective communities.

But I also expect each agency to ensure its employees possess the ability to deliver timely responses to Americans, whether they are working remotely, teleworking, or in person.

Over the summer, some of you will recall that this Subcommittee hosted a hearing on addressing post-pandemic backlogs at the agency level. And I asked a significant witness from the Social Security Administration, Deputy Commissioner Chad Poist, whether or not telework contributed to the agency's backlog.

Mr. Poist stated on the record, quote, "I do not believe that there are any contributions to that backlog due to telework," end of quote. He went on to say that, "Telework has allowed us to continue our agency's mission."

The Office of Personnel Management surveyed over 40 agencies that have achieved cost savings resulting from the increase in telework. And as more workers transitioned to at-home work outside of the District, some agencies also outside of the District found savings by reducing office space leases and transitioning into smaller offices.

As less workers were obligated to commute, some agencies found savings due to the decrease in workers' utilization of the transit subsidy program and a decrease also in cost savings for travel that so many Federal workers in positions from headquarters are required to do. That ranged from thousands to millions of dollars.

Mr. Chair, I would ask unanimous consent to submit for the record the OPM's December 2022 "Status of Telework in the Federal Government" report which further details the agency's cost savings resulting from telework during that period.

I, like the Chairman, believe that telework is important. It is also important to guard, as best we can, the assumptions, the accusations, and to guard against many of the things that are not right that get thrown into that basket as people develop, as we all have the right to, our own opinions. And while there are obviously advantages to telework, I believe that agencies must prioritize in-depth examinations and reviews periodically of their work postures on telework and their remote work policies.

Prioritizing data collection on performance is absolutely critical to ensure that their policies lead to mission achievements. I know how valuable face-to-face interactions are in order to strengthen interpersonal relationships, and I also recognize that flexible work environments are one of the many tools to help fill a government-wide skills shortage.

As we are all aware, just last month President Biden mandated a return to work for most Federal employees. To that extent, I encourage certain agencies who can increase in-person work as necessary that they do so for the successful delivery of the agencies' mission and in support of the President's mandate.

And so, I would like to, again, thank all of the witnesses who represent different agencies today for testifying and being here be-

fore us to provide invaluable insight on the outcomes and implications of their current policies for work flexibility.

The workforce is the lifeblood of our Federal Government, without a doubt, and we must provide an environment that attracts and retains the best and the brightest in Federal service.

So, I look forward to hearing directly from all of you today as we discuss this. These are unique circumstances which require unique approaches.

And, again, I want to thank Chairman Sessions for calling this hearing so that we might continue to followup with examination, review, and support where necessary, the efforts that so many of you have undertaken.

So, Mr. Chair, with that, I would yield back the balance of my time. And I thank you again for being a part of this effort to hear from these witnesses about this very important topic.

Mr. SESSIONS. The gentleman yields back his time. I thank you very much.

So that the panel understands, and I have spoken to several of you to let you know that Mr. Mfume and I, along with his colleagues and my colleagues, intend to make sure that we work closely together, ask the questions that are necessary, and then see what answers result from that.

And I have always agreed to work with him and believe that today is another example that I hope will be a successful viewpoint that people who are engaged in this, as well as the Members, receive the benefits of that.

I am now pleased to introduce the witnesses.

A gentleman that I spoke to yesterday on the phone, I learned why he goes by Randolph "Tex" Alles. And that is because he is from San Antonio, Texas, went to a competing high school—not fellow high school, but competing high school in San Antonio, where I went. And we had a delightful discussion about how important education is.

Mr. Tex Alles serves as Deputy Under Secretary for Management at the Department of Homeland Security. In his role, Mr. Alles oversees Department-wide management and oversight of all support functions, such as information technology, budget, financial management, procurement, human capital, security, and asset management.

He previously spent time serving this Nation at the Secret Service, and I believe has spent time as a United States Marine for our Nation.

Thank you. We are delighted to have you, sir.

Our next witness will be Dr. Karen Marrongelle, who serves as Chief Operating Officer at the National Science Foundation, known as NSF, where, among other duties, she oversees the Foundation's human capital policies. Prior to this role, she served as assistant director of the NSF Education and Human Resources Directorate, and, before that, worked for decades in academia.

Welcome, Doctor.

Mr. Robert Gibbs is an Associate Administrator for the Mission Support Directorate for NASA headquarters in Washington, DC. Throughout his time at NASA, Mr. Gibbs has served in senior

human capital management roles where he has had stewardship responsibilities for the agency's workforce.

Prior to joining NASA, Mr. Gibbs held senior human capital management and administrative roles at the Department of Energy while serving in the United States Navy.

Sir, welcome very much, and thank you for your service.

Mr. Dan Dorman, who I also spoke with yesterday, serves as Executive Director for Operations of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the highest-ranking career position in the agency, with responsibility for overseeing NRC's administrative functions. In this capacity, Mr. Dorman also serves as the chief operating officer.

So, I want to welcome each of you and ask that you all stand and raise your right hand for the oath that is always given to our witnesses that we have before Congress.

Pursuant to Committee Rule 9(g), the witnesses will stand, as they are doing, and raise their hand and answer.

Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Let the record reflect that each of the witnesses answered in the affirmative, and I would now ask that they would take their seat.

And we do appreciate you being here and look forward to your testimony. I spoke to several of you yesterday and have encouraged you, by giving you an idea about what we were looking for, the story about the success, how you use telework, the output of that, and the necessary response to how Congress should look at your agency.

Please know that I am asking that you be around 5 minutes. And, as a reminder, please press the button on your microphone in front of you so that Members can hear you. And, when you begin to speak, the light in front of you will turn green. After 4 minutes, the light will turn yellow. When the red light comes on, I ask that you begin to wind up that question—opportunity that you have.

So, I now want to represent Mr. Tex Alles for his opening statement.

The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Thank you very much, sir.

**STATEMENT OF RANDOLPH "TEX" ALLES
DEPUTY UNDER-SECRETARY FOR MANAGEMENT
SENIOR OFFICIAL PERFORMING THE DUTIES OF
THE UNDER-SECRETARY FOR MANAGEMENT
DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

Mr. ALLES. Thank you, Chairman Sessions, Ranking Member Mfume, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. It is a privilege to appear before you this morning.

My name is Tex Alles, as already mentioned, and I represent the Department of Homeland Security and Management Directorate.

Throughout my 35 years, in my prior career as a U.S. Marine, I learned that, no matter the work, we must take care of the people who are called upon to execute the mission and also execute the mission itself.

At DHS, each of our 260,000 employees is called upon to execute this mission in different ways. Many work on the front lines. Some

serve from a customer-facing counter. Others operate in a hybrid environment.

From the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately 64 percent of the workforce, myself included, continued to work in-person every day.

Since 2021, we have seen a steady increase of onsite work across DHS. As of July 2023, our payroll data indicates 73 percent of our employees nationwide report in person every day. Approximately 85 percent of the nationwide workforce and 61 percent in the national capital region report onsite more than 50 percent of the time, and often actually more than that.

In a workforce as large as ours, you measure performance on an enterprise level. My written testimony provides examples of how we are meeting the mission.

But just to name a few, CBP was processing a significant volume of imported goods even before the pandemic ended. In Fiscal Year 2022 alone, they processed 39 million entries, valued at over \$3.5 trillion, a 19.5 increase over Fiscal Year 2021.

Air travel has rebounded. Of the ten busiest travel days on record, TSA has experienced six this fiscal year.

In DHS headquarters, by prepopulating forms and building mobile-friendly experiences, we reduced the time the public spends accessing our services by 20 million hours a year.

Offering workplace flexibilities allows DHS to remain competitive in a labor market where applicants overwhelmingly apply to remote or telework jobs. It enhances both our recruitment and retention efforts, which strengthens our mission effectiveness.

DHS also uses a range of quantitative data to monitor organizational health and performance. By leveraging data, we can determine if workplace flexibilities are having the intended effect on employee recruitment and the DHS mission.

We see positive impact through an 11 percent increase in mission-critical operation staffing when we compare data from just prior to the pandemic to data from early 2023.

The Department has historically been unable to fully staff occupations such as human capital, procurement, and IT specialists. These types of positions are vital to ensuring those on the front lines can execute their mission. The recent increase represents 950 additional staff supporting them.

Workplace flexibilities also increase DHS mission resilience in the face of severe weather or emergencies. The concept of a snow day does not apply to teleworkers. They continue to get the job done safely from alternate locations. Likewise, having a partially dispersed workforce enhances the Department's continuity of operations posture in unforeseen emergencies.

Lessons learned from elevated telework during the pandemic accelerated plans we already had on consolidating and creating more collaborative space. Considerable progress has been made on capturing enterprise-level data that supports resource decisionmaking focused on cost, utilization, and workforce location metrics.

We recognized our buildings were not fully utilized, so we acted. In Fiscal Year 2023 alone, we reduced our NCR footprint by 450,000 rentable square feet, achieving a cost avoidance of almost \$16 million annually.

Since 2018, we have consolidated the NCR footprint by 1.6 million rentable square feet. The 30-year cost avoidance to the Department for these reductions is roughly \$1.4 billion.

While this strategy started with the NCR, we are implementing nationwide. Our goal of “fewer buildings/better buildings” is good for our workforce, good for the DHS mission, and good for the taxpayer.

We will continuously assess the impacts of workplace flexibilities on our effectiveness to serve and protect the American people, our priority. The Department is committed to executing our mission and taking care of our people. We can and must do both.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I look forward to your questions.

Mr. SESSIONS. Thank you very much.
Doctor.

**STATEMENT OF KAREN MARRONGELLE
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION**

Ms. MARRONGELLE. Thank you, Chairman Sessions, Ranking Member Mfume, and Members of the Subcommittee. It is a privilege to appear before you today.

My name is Dr. Karen Marrongelle, and I am the Chief Operating Officer at the National Science Foundation.

NSF is an independent Federal agency that invests in exploratory, discovery-driven research and use-inspired innovations across all fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, and at all levels of STEM education.

These investments contribute significantly to the economic and national security interests of the Nation and development of a future-focused science and engineering workforce that draws on the talents of all Americans.

We are currently witnessing intense global competition for leadership in technologies, such as artificial intelligence and quantum information science. NSF is committed to ensuring that the United States remains the global leader in innovation into the future.

Our ability to do so is rooted in sustained support from Congress, the ingenuity and perseverance of the research enterprise, and the dedicated employees who serve throughout NSF.

Almost the entire NSF workforce of approximately 1,600 employees is located in Alexandria, Virginia. Of this number, more than 1,300 are in telework-eligible positions, and more than a thousand are utilizing telework flexibilities.

NSF has shown that we can embrace telework and flexibility while continuing to excel at meeting our mission. NSF has had a strong telework policy and practice in place since 2004, with over 90 percent of staff utilizing telework prior to the pandemic.

It was NSF’s investments in telework over time, both in technology that underpins it and the training of staff and supervisors to ensure its productivity, that allowed the agency to pivot quickly to a virtual environment during the pandemic. We were able to do so without seeing a reduction in productivity.

NSF reviews nearly 40,000 proposals each year, of which approximately 11,000 are funded. Those funding decisions are rooted in NSF's world-renowned merit review process.

The total number of proposals evaluated peaked during the pandemic while we were at maximum telework posture. The NSF workforce did not buckle under that pressure. We did not see backlogs or delays. The NSF workforce met the demand.

In addition, during this time NSF stood up the new Directorate for Technology, Innovation, and Partnership, we unveiled the first-ever image of the black hole at the center of the Milky Way Galaxy, and launched new artificial intelligence research institutes across the country.

As COVID restrictions eased, NSF began returning to the office. Last year, we updated our telework policy and added remote work options for a small number of positions. In addition, the agency extended a temporary full-time telework option in 90-day increments to help transition to a hybrid environment.

With the declared end of the public health emergency in May 2023, NSF has continued to reimagine a collaborative work posture in a hybrid environment. Over the past year, our dedicated professionals across our human resources, information technology, and legal teams have put in tremendous effort to shape our future work approach while carefully listening to our staff.

Recently, NSF announced that, effective October 23, 2023, all NSF employees in telework-eligible positions are expected to report onsite for a minimum of 4 days per pay period. Doing so allows the agency to meet the expectations of our stakeholders, preserve our culture of collaboration, and meet our business needs, while maintaining flexibility.

We will continue to assess our organizational health and performance metrics to guide and help our policies into the future.

The entire NSF leadership team is incredibly proud of the agency's workforce and the dedication they show to the NSF mission. We are honored that, for the past 2 years, NSF has ranked second in midsize agencies in the Best Places to Work in Government.

At NSF, we take great pride in being innovators, both in how we drive the frontiers of science and engineering and how we get our work done to meet the needs of the Nation. I am confident we will remain a leader in both.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today.

Mr. SESSIONS. Thank you very much, Doctor.

Mr. Gibbs, you are recognized.

**STATEMENT OF ROBERT GIBBS
ASSOCIATE ADMINISTRATOR
FOR THE MISSION SUPPORT DIRECTORATE
NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION**

Mr. GIBBS. Chairman Sessions, Ranking Member Mfume, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today about NASA's telework practices and policies and how they enable mission success.

My name is Bob Gibbs. I am the Associate Administrator for Mission Support at NASA. My office provides the tools, infrastruc-

ture, people, and capabilities to ensure NASA's leadership in aerospace, science, and exploration.

Today, I am pleased to discuss NASA's longstanding telework and remote work policies and practices and how they enable mission success at NASA.

Since 2014, NASA has supported various types of telework for agency civil service employees based on telework agreements that every employee has to establish with their supervisor and then subject to senior-level review.

Before the pandemic, it was not unusual for employees to telework 1 or 2 days a week or for employees to have their laptops at home in case of a weather emergency to continue working from home.

With only minor changes, our policies are today as they were in 2014. In March 2020, NASA was able to quickly move its workforce to mandatory telework status by utilizing longstanding practices and by capitalizing previous investments in information technology infrastructure.

NASA was never closed.

Our employees, our civil servants and contractors, continued to execute the diverse and challenging missions from onsite and remote locations.

We launched spacecraft and landed another rover on Mars.

We launched the next-generation space telescope and observatory.

We continued to develop the next-generation human space flight system.

We advanced new technologies in science and aeronautics.

We interacted virtually with students around the globe.

We continued in job fairs and small business events.

We continued to hire and onboard employees.

We also created special remote opportunities for interns across the country.

Most importantly, NASA has continued to inspire the American public with our missions, our spirit of ingenuity, and perseverance.

Within our telework practices and policy, NASA leadership has empowered agency organizations and supervisors to determine the appropriate workforce flexibilities to accomplish individual missions efficiently and effectively. Within the boundaries of Federal law, regulation, OPM guidance, NASA policy, currently, 98 percent of NASA civil servants are telework ready.

We believe that workforce flexibilities, such as telework and remote work, when managed appropriately, provide a tremendous opportunity for NASA to remain competitive in the modern job market.

Our highly skilled, sought-after technical workforce is increasingly asking for benefits from these collaborative tools and other opportunities to work more seamlessly to accomplish the mission regardless of location.

A hybrid work environment increases talent sharing among our nine geographically dispersed centers and maximizes cross-center opportunities without employees having to relocate. Having a telework-ready workforce also will help us maintain continuity of operations during emergencies.

To help our supervisors and employees support telework and remote work, NASA has developed a variety of resources, expanded the available training, and hosted virtual sessions.

Supervisors are also advised to consider the agency's core values—safety, integrity, teamwork, excellence, and inclusion—when making decisions about how the telework program can impact their teams.

If employee performance issues exist with any employee, no matter where they work, managers are expected to utilize performance tools and counseling to address those issues as they arise.

In conclusion, let me assure you that NASA's future work environment plans are not written in stone. We recognize we will need to make periodic adjustments as we work within this new hybrid environment. NASA's senior leaders remain committed to developing new ways to measure and evaluate agency performance in concert with the new hybrid environment.

I look forward to discussing this important matter with you and your Committee and other stakeholders in Congress. I am pleased to answer any questions you might have.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Gibbs, thank you very much.

Gentleman yields back.

At this time, the gentleman, Mr. Dorman, you are recognized.

**STATEMENT OF DAN DORMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR OPERATIONS
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION**

Mr. DORMAN. Thank you, Chairman Sessions, Ranking Member Mfume, distinguished Members of the Subcommittee.

As the Chair indicated, I am Dan Dorman, Executive Director of the NRC, and in that role, I serve as the agency's Chief Operating Officer.

The NRC is an independent Federal agency with a mission to license and regulate the civilian use of radioactive materials, to provide adequate protection of public health and safety, to promote the common defense and security, and to protect the environment.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss the telework policies and practices of our agency and their potential impact on our mission accomplishment and operations.

Following the declaration of the public health emergency on March 17, 2020, the Office of Management and Budget issued specific guidance for agencies to immediately adjust operations and services to minimize face-to-face interactions and possibly postpone or significantly curtail non-mission-critical functions that required onsite or in-person interactions.

In response to this guidance, on March 19 the NRC swiftly implemented mandatory telework for all non-mission-critical functions effective immediately, with the NRC's headquarters office, our four regional offices, and our Technical Training Center remaining open and operational, enabling critical functions performed in an NRC facility to continue.

More than a year later, on November 7, 2021, the NRC reentered the workplace and transitioned from a maximum telework status to a hybrid work environment.

After the NRC's reentry, first-line supervisors were delegated authority to approve up to 6 days telework per pay period, requiring 4 in-person days per pay period.

Due to changes with the COVID environment, in December 2021 we had additional flexibilities extended for approximately 3 months of the first omicron variant.

Following reentry, I tasked staff and senior leadership to study various telework options through what we called our Hybrid Environment Assessment and Review Team and a Telework Policy and Implementation Working Group. These two groups issued reports that contained in-depth assessments and benchmarking into the practical and effective use of telework.

These reports have helped us assess how we achieve our mission in a hybrid work environment, including the impacts of telework on our organizational health. We have metrics to monitor our mission effectiveness, our organizational health, and stakeholder confidence. We also evaluated and continue to evaluate the impact that our hybrid work environment has on space planning and allocation.

These insights are playing a large role as we pursue new office space arrangements, what we call hoteling, working with our employees' union. Regardless, the NRC's strategic space plans consistently seek to reduce our footprint as appropriate.

Since Fiscal Year 2019, which includes efforts undertaken prior to the public health emergency, the NRC has reduced its Washington, DC, area headquarters office footprint by approximately 28 percent. This reduction is a result of following Federal Government-wide directives to reduce office space and to reflect the reduced size of our agency over that period.

In addition, the footprint in three of our four regional offices is expected to decrease by approximately 50 percent by the end of Fiscal Year 2025. This decrease is also the result of staff size reductions, as well as changing workspace design to use efficiencies supported by telework.

Furthermore, the NRC has implemented various network and communication enhancements to enable its staff to productively engage as a hybrid workforce effectively and securely.

NRC teleworking employees have been provided a standard image agency laptop with multiple security tools, including full-disk encryption, multifactor authentication for secure authenticated access, a full-time virtual private network tool which activates at initial access and encrypts network traffic.

These solutions enable secure network access for our staff-to-agency technology and information assets and Federal record systems and repositories.

The NRC has provided its staff with other information technology tools and resources, such as Microsoft 365, to facilitate close collaboration and communication, whether an individual is working in the office or in another location.

The NRC has met its safety and security objectives, even as the agency expanded telework and remote work during the public health emergency. The agency continues to meet its mission in the current hybrid work environment, focusing in-office time on those activities that benefit from an in-person presence.

As we continue to adapt to our hybrid work environment, the NRC continues to focus on our important safety and security mission and demonstrate our principles of good regulation through effective, responsive, and timely regulatory actions, consistent with our organizational values and our open, collaborative work environment.

I appreciate the Subcommittee's interest in the NRC's mission and the work of our dedicated staff, who have continued to show resilience, agility, and dedication over the last few years as we navigated the changes to our workplace and how we accomplish our work.

I look forward to your questions.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Dorman, thank you very much.

And, to the panel, thank you very much.

I am going to yield what would be my time and place myself at the back side and yield to the distinguished gentleman, the Chairman of the Republican Policy Committee, the gentleman from Alabama, Mr. Palmer.

The gentleman is recognized.

Mr. PALMER. Thank the Chairman. Thank the Chairman for holding the hearing and for the witnesses being willing to appear today.

There was a recent survey from the Office of Personnel Management that said that only one in three Federal employees are fully back in the office. And I am just wondering, in your agencies, what—Mr. Dorman, you just said that you have reduced office space by 28 percent, and then you said it will be reduced by 50 percent by what date?

Mr. DORMAN. Sir, for our regional offices, 2025. That is based on the lease turnover, so the opportunity to make those reductions.

Mr. PALMER. So, this is nationwide, not just here in D.C.?

Mr. DORMAN. Yes, sir.

Mr. PALMER. What are your space reductions in D.C.?

Mr. DORMAN. Twenty-eight percent, sir.

Mr. PALMER. Twenty-eight percent in D.C.? Are those employees still living in the D.C. area or are they allowed to relocate to other cities?

Mr. DORMAN. Those employees are still in the D.C. area, sir.

Mr. PALMER. OK.

I would like to know from each of you, just a very quick answer. It is a percentage. What percentage of the D.C.-based Federal employees in your agency relocated out of state during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Mr. ALLES? If you do not know the answer, just say you do not know the answer, sir.

Mr. ALLES. I would have to get the answer back to you.

Mr. PALMER. I would appreciate if you would respond to the Committee.

Mr. ALLES. Yes, sir.

Mr. PALMER. Dr. Marrongelle?

Ms. MARRONGELLE. We currently have 175 employees located outside of the DMV, but I would have to get back to you on the amount of who relocated from who was here prior to the pandemic.

Mr. PALMER. Please do so.

Mr. Gibbs?

Mr. GIBBS. A similar answer. I would have to get back to you with the statistics. But I will tell you that we have restructured, and so, while some of our employees are not in D.C., they are working at other NASA centers.

Mr. PALMER. OK.

And Mr. Dorman?

Mr. DORMAN. Similarly, we will have to get back to you with specific details, but we did have—we, like NASA, we have employees who worked in—

Mr. PALMER. I need to move on.

And what I want to know is—and this is a yes or no—have any of your employees relocated outside of D.C. during the pandemic or after the pandemic? Have any of your employees relocated outside of D.C.?

Mr. ALLES. Yes, sir. For DHS, they have. And they were required to—

Mr. PALMER. That is good. Just—

Mr. ALLES. OK.

Mr. PALMER. Dr. Marrongelle?

Ms. MARRONGELLE. Yes, sir.

Mr. PALMER. Mr. Gibbs?

Mr. GIBBS. Yes.

Mr. PALMER. Mr. Dorman?

Mr. DORMAN. Yes, sir.

Mr. PALMER. OK.

What I would like to know is, D.C. employees get locality pay. Has their pay been adjusted to reflect the change in locality?

Mr. ALLES. It has for DHS.

Ms. MARRONGELLE. Yes, sir, for NSF.

Mr. GIBBS. Yes, it has for NASA.

Mr. DORMAN. Yes, sir.

Mr. PALMER. Mr. Dorman?

One of the things that concerns me, Mr. Chairman, about where we are on this issue is President Biden issued a declaration saying that the Federal workforce would return to office. And shortly after that, though, there were—the locations of Federal—of 281,656 Federal employees were redacted.

In addition to that, the names of 350,861 employees were also redacted, which I think causes a serious problem in terms of oversight. That is about \$36 billion in salaries and bonuses that are not subject to oversight. It will be very difficult for us to exercise oversight.

And in the last year of the Obama Administration, the names of only 2,300 Federal employees were redacted. And there are some Federal employees whose names need to be redacted, because they serve in sensitive positions.

But I am concerned about where we are heading in terms of the Federal workforce actually showing up for work. And not in regard to your agencies, this is a statement about a couple of other agencies. One, in particular, is the EPA, where a recent survey found that 80 percent of the EPA employees said that they would experience personal hardship if the agency changes its work policies and requires them to show up for work. That is unconscionable.

In addition—apparently somebody thought that was funny. But, in addition, the EPA is now trying to hire another 2,000 people. And I just—I know the EPA is not here. Hopefully they will show up later, Mr. Chairman—

Mr. SESSIONS. Yes, sir.

Mr. PALMER [continuing]. To answer some questions about this.

This is a problem. We have heard reports of VA employees who are doing their work from a bubble bath, or people going out and playing golf and playing pool and going to happy hour.

I do not think we can have the productivity that we need to have if you do not show up for work. And if we do not need you here, then we do not need all these Federal buildings.

And, Mr. Mfume, I think, if you have got several hundred thousand Federal employees who are not showing up for work, we should not have the traffic problems.

And so, I do think this should be a bipartisan issue, by the way, of what we expect of the Federal workforce in terms of showing up for work.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Would my friend yield, real quickly?

Mr. PALMER. I yield to my friend.

Mr. CONNOLLY. The fact that we have congestion means Federal workers are going to work. That is the largest source of employment in this area. And I can tell you, as someone who commutes every day, the difference between now and the depth of the pandemic is night and day. It takes me now an hour and a half to get to work. In the depth of the pandemic, it took me 25 minutes.

So, I mean, the congestion Mr. Mfume faced is a reflection of the fact that Federal workers, in fact, are showing up to work.

Thank you for yielding.

Mr. PALMER. Well, with all due respect to my friend—and you are my friend—that is not necessarily a reflection of the Federal workforce showing up. It may be a reflection of the infrastructure issues that the city has and has had for many years. And not necessarily everybody in those cars are Federal workers. They are people working for—in other businesses. But I do respect your opinion on that.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I am happy to yield back.

Mr. SESSIONS. The gentleman yields back his time. Thank you very much.

The distinguished gentleman from Maryland is recognized.

Mr. MFUME. Thank you again, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank Mr. Palmer for his observation and the observation of my friend from Virginia, Mr. Connolly. I think the reason it takes me now an hour, 45 minutes to drive down from Baltimore is that I obey the speed limit. So, we will leave it there.

[Laughter.]

Mr. SESSIONS. Do we need to put you under oath?

Mr. MFUME. No.

Mr. SESSIONS. We will leave that one alone, then.

Mr. CONNOLLY. He is law abiding.

Mr. MFUME. Right.

Mr. SESSIONS. Yes.

Mr. PALMER. If the gentleman would yield?

Mr. MFUME. Yes, I would yield.

Mr. PALMER. If you were a member of the Alabama Legislature, that would not be a problem.

Mr. MFUME. I am going to leave that one alone.

OK. Mr. Alles, let me start with you.

Department of Homeland Security's workforce is made up of more than 260,000 employees, I think, and spanning 22 different agencies. And I referenced FEMA earlier. My district does more DHS casework than any other type from any other agency represented here today.

So, could you take a moment to describe to the Committee what factors lead to a determination of whether certain DHS jobs are more conducive for in-person work or telework or other remote options? I am just trying to figure out the calculus that goes into that.

Mr. ALLES. Thank you for your question, sir.

First off, it would be the position description of the job itself.

So, as you can imagine, your law enforcement positions, which is a large part of the Department, are not going to be eligible for remote work or telework. They have to be in person to do their jobs.

And then, beyond that, most of your—and that would apply across TSA, CBP, ICE, Secret Service, a large part of our jobs, and even FEMA in some cases, that they cannot telework just because of the nature of the work that they have. So, a lot of it is involved in the position description itself.

And then beyond that is whether that position is actually telework eligible based on, again, the type of work that they are going to do.

But I think an important part here is, whether they telework or do not telework, I want to know that they are working. And so, we apply metrics across our different lines of business to measure the performance of our employees. And, clearly, if they are not performing, then we are going to hold them accountable.

We do that either via suspensions, disciplinary action basically. And, in some cases, we have to move to removals if we have employees who, in fact, are not performing or have other various discipline issues.

I think a prime concern of everybody on the Committee is—and I agree with—is, do we get the dollar we paid for out of that employee or not? And, certainly, as a taxpayer, I want to make sure that I am getting that out of that employee.

Mr. MFUME. Thank you.

And coming to the other witnesses, can you take a second quickly to talk about utilization of different tools to track absenteeism and productivity, which get to the heart also of this question? What tools are you using, briefly?

Ms. MARRONGELLE. I can start. Thank you, sir.

We, similar to DHS, we have a pay—attendance monitoring system. So, every pay period employees are required to attest to their time worked, where it was worked, and their supervisors need to verify and validate that.

Prior to partaking in any telework, our employees have to undergo training. So, telework is considered a privilege, not a right. And that training is for both employees and supervisors. So, we are able to track that.

Similar to my colleague at DHS, we have metrics on that. And if there are problems with time and attendance—and, in particular, attendance—we are able to take disciplinary action.

Mr. MFUME. And do you do that often, take disciplinary action, or does that mean that there are not problems with it?

Ms. MARRONGELLE. It occurs occasionally. It is not a systemic problem.

Mr. MFUME. Is it harder to track at the headquarters or at the district offices? I would imagine, if you are not here physically in Washington, it might be a bit tough to do.

Ms. MARRONGELLE. I will defer to my colleagues, because we have only one building, in Alexandria.

Mr. MFUME. Anyone else, district versus the District of Columbia in terms of being able to employ the metrics used to track productivity and absenteeism?

Mr. GIBBS. No. I do not think there is any difference at NASA between headquarters and our centers.

Mr. MFUME. So, it is a central sort of reporting.

Mr. GIBBS. We do it a little bit different at NASA. I think it is probably important that we establish this distinction. We do not look at a position and say: This position is telework eligible. We look at the individuals and look at the work necessary to accomplish the mission.

That employee then has to have a conversation with their supervisor saying: This is how I could do telework. Here is how I am going to do the work. Here is what we are going to do to accomplish the mission.

Their supervisor then has to agree with that, and then that has to go to another level of review prior to granting the telework.

Mr. MFUME. Thank you.

Mr. GIBBS. So, it is structured differently.

Mr. MFUME. Thank you.

Mr. Dorman?

Mr. DORMAN. Sir, there is three different things we can look at.

Badging into the buildings, which applies in all of our locations.

We can look at where employees are logging in from. Are they logging in from our facility on our network or are they coming in through a virtual network?

And then, third, as was indicated by others, our employees report their time biweekly indicating what portion of that time was done at their alternate work location. So that is tracking where people are working.

In terms of performance, we have the assignment—work is assigned by the supervisors. The expectations on delivery of the product is managed by the supervisors, and that is what we measure, is the outputs from the employees.

Mr. MFUME. OK. Thank you.

My time has expired, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SESSIONS. The gentleman yields back his time. Thank you very much.

The distinguished gentleman from Louisiana is recognized.

Mr. HIGGINS. I thank the Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, most of us just spent about a month in our district working. We call it recess. The fake news media calls it recess. But, trust me, it is not like recess in the fifth grade.

So had countless meetings and townhalls and scores of very important conversations with our constituents. And one of the very alarming and consistent complaints that we have from our constituents is the difficulty to navigate through the Federal bureaucracy in whatever way that they are challenged to do so.

For businesses, including agriculture, it is a big problem. EPA, DOL, for our constituency across the board, IRS, Social Security, disability claims. Legitimate interactions between the citizens that we are sworn to serve and the Federal Government that allegedly performs in that manner.

Now, Congress, through Article I, we establish law and appropriate moneys, and the executive branch executes law and policy and spends money. That is a basic description of the division of powers. So, it is the executive branch and the departments and agencies thereof that our citizenry are loudly complaining about regarding availability to work their case files.

And we are told at the district level—there is 435 congressional districts in this country. You know, maybe some of my colleagues are hearing something different. I would be interested to know that.

But, from what I understand, across the country every congressional district is the same story. We are getting told: Oh, the backlog. Well, it is going to take 18 months to process. It is going to take 6 months to process this.

You have to constantly update your own websites to advise the citizenry, that we are sworn to serve, how early they need to log in, get their application turned in, because there is a backlog. Taking a long time. This is how long it takes. And that amount of time is getting longer and longer and longer.

Passports, it is insane. We have had 9 million illegal crossings, the floodgates opened on the southern border. I have got husbands that cannot marry their wives, cannot get a visa, trying to follow the law.

I have got businesses that cannot get their senior engineers in here because they are installing a piece of equipment that requires an international team. We cannot get the engineer a visa.

I have got daughters that cannot come to America to care for their dying mother because we cannot get her a visa legally.

We might as well send them through Mexico. They can roll right in and handle their business.

And the Federal Government, with all due respect to you all—I mean, God bless you, one and all—but you are going to sit here today and tell us everything is cool with teleworking? It is not cool. We go into buildings in this bizarre realm called Washington, DC, and just look at the doors. There is nobody there.

There is old signs on a lot of these doors, says the office is closed, we are working from home because of COVID. Little mask symbol on the door. You have got old, like, Chinese restaurant menus stuck in the door.

It is not working. We need our executive branch to perform in person, in your office, end of story. If I ran things—many are glad

that I do not—everybody would be back at work and performing in the manner in which we were sworn to do.

Mr. Dorman, I appreciate your service, and because of my rant I am going to give you an opportunity in my closing half a minute to respond, good sir.

Mr. DORMAN. Thank you, Congressman.

The NRC remained open, as I said, throughout the pandemic. We do not have those transactional services with constituents. We work with licensees and applicants. And we also serve the American public, as you noted.

Any member of the public can go to our website, and we have a hotline. And that hotline was manned 24/7 throughout the pandemic and is today. So, we are accessible—

Mr. HIGGINS. I appreciate your response, but, generally speaking, your website operations, they do not work for a regular American. It takes hours and hours. It says, if you have a problem, make a phone call. You get on a phone call, you are on hold for 4 hours, then you are disconnected.

I am telling you, it does not work.

So, Mr. Chairman, my time has expired. Thank you for this hearing today. Hopefully we can have another.

I yield.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Chairman, an inquiry?

Mr. SESSIONS. The gentleman yields back his time.

Does the gentleman seek time?

Mr. CONNOLLY. Just to inquire.

Mr. SESSIONS. The gentleman is recognized.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I thank the Chair.

Is it not true that, in fact, with respect to passport operations, passport employees are not allowed to telework?

Mr. SESSIONS. Well, I, quite honestly—

Mr. CONNOLLY. Is that not the case?

Mr. SESSIONS [continuing]. I do not have that direct answer. But what I would say to you is the gentleman remembers where we did have a hearing with, specifically, the young Ambassador who handles that methodology, and she did recognize they have problems.

Mr. CONNOLLY. A problem. I agree.

Mr. SESSIONS. And she did. And that was what I think could be said by Mr. Higgins, perhaps others, that there are places where problems are apparent to people.

And I would remind the gentleman, that he would remind me if I did not, that we are working together on that issue and that she, the young Ambassador, gave us notice she would fix that problem by the end of September.

Mr. CONNOLLY. The Chair is correct that—

Mr. SESSIONS. That day comes very near, and we will then reopen that issue. And I encourage the gentleman to be a part of that. And I respectfully thank him for his feedback.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you. And my only point was if there is a problem, we agree, but it is not about telework.

I thank the Chair.

Mr. SESSIONS. Well, and I agree with the gentleman. It is their problem to fix the problem. It is our issue that we have people that

abound who provide us feedback, too. And the gentleman knows that. And I do respect and appreciate his engagement.

The distinguished gentlewoman from Washington, DC, the gentlewoman, Ms. Norton, is recognized.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate this hearing.

And I would like to use my time to highlight the critical work performed by Federal employees every single day and to thank the Federal employees who are testifying today.

I have introduced a resolution that highlights their important work. As I note in that resolution, Federal employees should be applauded for their tireless work and extensive efforts on behalf of the American people. Many of them live in the Nation's Capital and the national capital region.

Thousands of civil Federal employees have given their lives in the line of duty for their country. Federal employees have supported, defended, and been indispensable to the progress the United States has achieved through times of war and peace, recession and prosperity, and global instability and uncertainty.

From scientific advancements, to medical research, to protecting the health and safety of the public, Federal employees have been indispensable. They bring benefits to the public welfare, to the progress of democracy, and to the United States as a whole.

Instead of celebrating Federal employees, some of my friends on the other side attack and talk derisively about them and want to shut down the Federal Government on October the 1st, all for purely partisan political reasons.

A shutdown would harm critical programs and delay the paychecks of Federal employees causing great harm to these public servants and the public. Republicans want to dramatically cut Federal spending, which would harm critical programs and Federal workers. Some Republicans have indicated they want to gut the civil service system, which ensures a nonpartisan, merit-based, professional Federal workforce, and to turn it into a patronage system.

It is time we recognize the hard work of Federal employees. For example, I have introduced a bill aimed at combating Federal pay compression. It will allow Federal employees who reach the pay cap in their pay system to receive the base locality pay adjustments they would otherwise be entitled to. This is something they deserve.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back my time.

Mr. SESSIONS. The distinguished gentlewoman yields back her time. Thank you very much.

The gentleman, Mr. Edwards, is recognized.

Mr. EDWARDS. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Dr. Marrongelle, you testified that employees are asked to come back to work 4 days per pay period. What—how many days are in a pay period?

Ms. MARRONGELLE. There are 10 days in a pay period.

Mr. EDWARDS. Ten days. So why are they asked to come back 4 days?

Ms. MARRONGELLE. Thank you for the question. As I mentioned, we had a strong telework policy in place since 2004, so prior to the pandemic. And we were already in 2018, 2019, looking at ways to

expand that for our workforce and enhance that. The pandemic certainly accelerated that against a timeline that we had—

Mr. EDWARDS. Excuse me, because I am on a clock. I have got to get to the point. What are the—what are employees expected to do in those 4 days that they could not do from their sofa or comfort of wherever they are at?

Ms. MARRONGELLE. Thank you for clarifying. So, during those days our employees are expected to collaborate, work together, do the types of mentoring, network building within the agency. That is more difficult to do when they are not onsite.

Mr. EDWARDS. And so why is 4 days the correct number in order to be able to collaborate with one another?

Ms. MARRONGELLE. Well, unfortunately, there is no exact science that points to a correct number. We know that it needs to be more than what we—or we feel like it needs to be more than what we have now, which is 2 days per pay period, and so, we are moving to 4 as a next point.

Mr. EDWARDS. All right. Thank you.

So, for all of you, I would just like to ask, as quickly as you could answer, from my perspective, in going through the pandemic, because to a large degree, I did some telework as well, and like many of you, I have participated in hundreds of Zoom meetings. And I found it interesting to watch what was going on, on the other side of these Zoom meetings, and it causes me to question the productivity of the person on the other side of that Zoom meeting.

I would see folks dealing with their pets, washing their dishes, I would see laundry stacked up on the couch, and I cannot help but think that we are not getting the maximum productivity from folks when they are working from home. I know what my own tendencies are. I get lost in walking the dog, or the television is on and I get caught up in that. And so, what measures of productivity have you put into place to ensure that when folks are working at home, we get the same output as if they were in the office for these 4 days? Mr. Alles?

Mr. ALLES. Thank you for your question, sir. I think—a couple of things. I will talk about measurements here in a second. To me, time present is not work. I mean, they can be at their desk in the office not accomplishing their work, they can be at home not accomplishing their work, so I want to measure what they are doing output-wise. And we do that across our lines of business and also across our different components.

So, a couple of examples. Our obligation rates for the money that Congress generously provides us stay high, in the high 99 percent rate. In terms of our contract spending, it has actually risen across the pandemic from \$18 billion in Fiscal Year 1918 to \$22 billion in Fiscal Year 1923. FOIA is always a particular concern for folks, have risen from \$392,000 in 1920 to \$535,000 in Fiscal Year 1923.

So, I am using different metrics. I want to see their performance that they are actually producing. If they are in the office or not—there are reasons to be in the office. I talked with the Chairman earlier about engineering that is done on our ships. It needs to be done in person, that kind of ready access to the person. But otherwise, I want to see what their performance output is.

Mr. EDWARDS. And so, I am clearly going to run out of time here, so I will stick with you, Mr. Alles. When they are at work, there is the possibility that someone is looking over their shoulder, and they know if that employee is on their Facebook, or they are watching funny cat videos or if they are dealing with their email or if they are working on a spreadsheet, what assurances do you have that folks are totally engaged in their work when they are at home and not distracted by so many other extraneous activities?

Mr. ALLES. So, I think briefly, as you say, they can be distracted. So, I want my supervisors to be engaged in the work they are performing and evaluating their output very candidly. That is the best thing I can do. But that applies in the office too, sir.

Mr. EDWARDS. Yes. Do you have the ability to monitor equipment when somebody is at home to know how many hours they spent on programs that are not authorized or used in the normal course of their business?

Mr. ALLES. We can monitor what they are doing on the internet, that is correct, sir. And we also have what is called an insider threat program that monitors employees' use of their classified and unclassified networks as a counterintelligence method.

Mr. EDWARDS. All right. Thank you.

Mr. Chair, I see I am out of time, so I will yield.

Mr. SESSIONS. The gentleman yields back his time. Thank you very much.

The distinguished gentleman from Florida is recognized.

Mr. FROST. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Federal agencies carry out critical missions of all kinds. In Florida alone, civil servants have roles like nuclear inspectors, emergency management professionals, and certain rocket scientists that are vital and probably cannot be done remotely. However, there are many vital roles that can be done remotely.

It is no secret that hurricane season hits Florida harder than most each year. By the projections from most scientists, Florida is facing rising sea levels and increasingly violent hurricanes. This summer, ocean temperatures off the coast reached record levels, climbing to over 100 degrees, hot tub levels.

In Florida, we know all too well that crisis can happen at any moment, from a global pandemic to extreme weather events, which are becoming all too common. The Federal Government has to remain operational during these times, and the beautiful thing about that, including telework as part of the solution, is what the data shows. It is actually better for productivity. That is right, telework is actually better for productivity, which is borne out of the fact that more than 70 percent of Federal employees reported that telework had improved productivity at their agency a great deal.

No. 2, it is actually better economically. The General Services Administration, the Federal agency that provides real estate, discovered that in a single year, the Federal Government saved more than \$1 billion in cost from the reduced office space. So, I think there can be some bipartisanship around that, because I hear a lot from my colleagues on the other side of the aisle about saving money. They want to talk about SNAPs and food stamps; I think office space makes a lot of sense too.

The Office of Personnel Management, the Federal agency that manages the Federal workforce, also found that agencies experience significant savings related to transit commuting costs as well as reduced employee absences because of increased telework. And it is actually better for recruitment and retention.

Take NASA, for instance, which I—during my district work period, I got to visit the mobile launcher for Artemis II. I am really excited about that. Hopefully, the government does not shut down, because I hear that can push back our launch date quite a bit. In the agency's written response to the Committee, NASA indicated that having a geographically dispersed telework-ready force has helped them maintain the continuity of operations in case of an emergency, including regional weather events.

Mr. Gibbs, the mission support directorate includes the Office of Human Capital Management, correct?

Mr. GIBBS. It does.

Mr. FROST. And what is the mission of this office?

Mr. GIBBS. So human capital, their—if you ask what does human capital do, their first mission, take care of the people of NASA. That is their ultimate responsibility for the agency.

Mr. FROST. And it is to ensure that NASA has top talent, right?

Mr. GIBBS. Absolutely, 100 percent, to make sure we have the right minds to compete, and to make sure we can complete a very technologically challenging mission and one that is rather unforgiving.

Mr. FROST. What other organizations or companies does NASA have to compete with for top talent?

Mr. GIBBS. Pretty much everyone fundamentally. We are recognized as a leader in the aerospace, engineering, science exploration world. We see everyone from venture capitalists to other engineering organizations, to you name it, looking at our talent as an opportunity to bring in a new way of thinking to their business process.

Mr. FROST. Virgin Galactic, SpaceX, right?

Mr. GIBBS. 100 percent.

Mr. FROST. For 5 straight years, NASA has been selected as the best place to work in the Federal—

Mr. GIBBS. Correction, it is 11, just so we are clear.

Mr. FROST. Oh, 11, OK, I am sorry. Eleven straight years, NASA has been selected as the best place to work in the Federal Government, so I think you know a thing or two about what it takes to attract top talent. Do these other employers have telework policies, like SpaceX, for instance?

Mr. GIBBS. It is all over the board, honestly. We looked at the top 100 companies across the United States, and honestly, their telework and workplace flexibilities are all over the board.

Mr. FROST. All over the board. SpaceX and Virgin Galactic, for instance, are hiring roles that permit telework every single week. So, the private sector has caught on to this. And I can tell you, we know what pushes the private sector is productivity and the bottom line, right?

Mr. GIBBS. Correct.

Mr. FROST. And so, they have noticed this, and they have taken advantage of it. I do not want us to fall behind. I do not want NASA to fall behind. I do not want the Federal Government to fall

behind in looking at the future of how work is going to look like, so we can both save money, recruit the best talent, and have the retention that we need to complete the difficult missions ahead of us.

Many talented minds have committed themselves to working in public service. I also want to say, I find it pretty offensive that one of my colleagues would insinuate that Federal employees, just because they are taking advantage and using telework policies, are somehow not working. We are talking about working-class Americans who have dedicated their life to public service.

In fact, all of our constituent service teams cannot do jack without the Federal employees on the other side of the phone line that we are helping our constituents get connected to. And so, I want to thank all of our Federal employees for all their work. Telework is one tool in the toolbox to maintain continuity and attract cutting-edge talent. Thank you. And I yield back.

Mr. SESSIONS. The gentleman yields back his time.

The distinguished gentleman, Mr. Burchett, is recognized.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate those adjectives.

Mr. Alles, is that how you pronounce your name, correct, sir?

Mr. ALLES. Yes, sir.

Mr. BURCHETT. You go by Tex? It says in my notes you go by Tex. Is that correct?

Mr. ALLES. That is correct, sir.

Mr. BURCHETT. All right. Well, Tex, let me ask you a question. Which agencies within the Department—in your department are still working remotely?

Mr. ALLES. All the agencies have teleworkers. Some—and I want to be careful here, I think most of them have remote workers. All of them have some form of telework.

Mr. BURCHETT. OK. My staff, and that includes me, we continue to have issues getting timely responses from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. What are you all doing to improve those response times for this agency?

Mr. ALLES. So, Citizenship and Immigration Services, sir, is on track this year to have a 15 percent higher completion rate on their employment authorization documents, so they are making progress there. They have also—

Mr. BURCHETT. I mean, that is their goal, or that is what they are actually doing?

Mr. ALLES. That is what they are actually doing.

Mr. BURCHETT. OK.

Mr. ALLES. So, that is what they are actually doing. And also, they are improving their processes on naturalization. This will be our highest year of naturalizations, over 1 million is what is on track for them so far. And let me just verify my numbers there, sir.

[Pause.]

Mr. BURCHETT. Do you want to get back to me on that?

Mr. ALLES. No, that is correct. 1,076,000 is what they are looking at this year.

Mr. BURCHETT. How has the Department of Homeland Security implemented new measures during the switch to telework to en-

sure the same level of border security as we had in pre-COVID? That is the kind of the thing you cannot do from your couch.

Mr. ALLES. So, I think, as we described before, depending on the job description, the job they are performing, it could not perform remotely. So, when we talk about border security, those are all in-person employees every day of the week. That applies in other areas, such as the Secret Service, across my HSI investigators at ICE. These are going to be employees that have to be onsite every day, as you would expect in the law enforcement realm. But they are—

Mr. BURCHETT. Sure.

Mr. ALLES [continuing]. Supported in the back office by some employees that are, in fact, teleworking.

Mr. BURCHETT. Well, has that—going along the same lines, I think you have more or less answered it, but has the Homeland Security's COVID era telework policies, have they impacted our ground surveillance at the southern border? There is not much at the southern border, but—that I feel like you all are doing, but is it—has it impacted it any?

Mr. ALLES. I would have to get back to you and ask CBP on that one, sir. I do not think it has, but I would actually need to verify with them.

Mr. BURCHETT. OK. Mr. Dorman, were nuclear regulatory commission inspections impacted by the COVID-era telework policies?

Mr. DORMAN. Congressman, not by the telework policies. During the height of the pandemic, we worked carefully to manage the risk to our inspectors as well as to the control room operators and other plant staff who ensure the safety of the plant every day to make sure we were not putting them at risk during peaks of COVID in the community. But our telework policy did not impact our inspection.

Mr. BURCHETT. OK. Obviously, they would not be doing that from the comfort of their homes. They would have to be there, correct? Or, I mean, you know, because they are reading monitors, and could they read the monitors in their house and—

Mr. DORMAN. So, we have worked with licensees to get the technology so that our inspectors are able to monitor plant status remotely, and also access the licensee's records systems remotely. But for our resident inspectors, whose duty station is at the nuclear power plant, they are expected to be at the nuclear power plant. And so, their presence is a component, their availability to plant staff who may have a concern about operations are key considerations. So, yes, our resident inspectors are expected to be at the plant.

Mr. BURCHETT. I think that is a wise decision, less distractions, less things going on, and they can keep focused on it.

What are your all's telework policies?

Mr. DORMAN. So, our telework policies—

Mr. BURCHETT. Briefly. Briefly, if you would.

Mr. DORMAN. Yes, sir. So, we have the full suite of the telework tools, so somebody can be full-time in office. There are options for remote work. We have about six percent of our workforce is remote. In between—if your proposal does not involve a change to your duty station, basically the work model that we are planning to put

in place would allow you to work that out with your first-line supervisor based on the nature of your work.

And then we focus on, in the implementation, presence with purpose. What are the reasons that we need to come together to optimize our work and work out the details day by day, week by week, on bringing people together to do that—do our work the best.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you. I have gone over.

Mr. Chairman, I would just state for the record, I do not like the telework situation, even the mayor of Washington, DC, pleaded with the President of the United States about sending folks back to work. The economic impact it is having on Washington, DC, in this area, is pretty resounding. I think you just walk down and see the restaurants that are no longer there, the mom-and-pop shops that are gone, so I think at some point we need to address this. But I do realize, like electric vehicles, as much as I do not like them, I think it is going to be—we better embrace it at some point, because it is part of the future. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SESSIONS. The distinguished gentleman yields back his time. And the Chairman did hear your comments, and that is part of the discussion and why you have been so important to this conversation. I appreciate the gentleman.

The distinguished gentlewoman from Dallas is recognized, Ms. Crockett.

Ms. CROCKETT. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

I am going to go at this a little bit differently. First of all, let me thank each and every one of you for your service to our country. And I think that, as Members of Congress, we should do everything that we can to support you, and we should listen to you, because this is the work that you do every day, and it is why we bring you in to testify. Seemingly, everyone has different ideas of what you do instead of wanting to listen to you.

But nevertheless, I think we could save a lot of time if Congress worked remotely, because I know—time and money, because I know that it takes me almost 3 hours to get here from Dallas. I have got another freshman colleague that is from Hawaii, and we all know what happened in Hawaii here recently. And she travels and leaves her husband and her two boys to get here.

Yet, seemingly showing up to work does not necessarily mean that you are going to get anything done, because the last time I checked, we are currently facing a government shutdown. It is pending. And people have shown up, but they have not shown up to actually do the work. So, we are concerned about telework, but what we really need to be concerned about is whether or not we are going to do our work when we are in the building, because we are the ones that are supposed to make sure that we pass appropriations bills so that we can fund what you are doing as we talk about backlogs.

So, let me talk about some of the reasons for some of the backlogs that have been brought up. By a show of hands, I am curious to know, any of your agencies, are they at 100 percent capacity as it relates to having the workforce that you need?

No one? Ain't none of you all got 100—oh, OK. OK. So, maybe you need some money so that you can hire some people. Let me also ask you, and I know that it was brought up a little bit earlier,

I believe it was you, Mr. Dorman, that talked about the fact that you are looking at what private industry is doing and competing.

Is it not true—and anyone who feels like I am stating a falsehood, please say something. Is it not true, that the majority of private industry is offering flexibility and better pay than the Federal Government right now?

OK. All right. So, it is hard to compete, because, No. 1, we are not giving you all no money; No. 2, we are showing up every day, but we are not doing our jobs because we seemingly are about to shut down, because I do not know how you—I am just a freshman. But from what I have been told, I do not know how we are going to get through 12 appropriations bills in all this time, especially when we keep cutting votes back because they do not have the votes.

So, we may need to focus on how we can do better at our jobs and support you so that you all can take care of our constituents. So, with that, there are options on the table. Republicans and Democrats, we need to come together and find common ground, and we did this a little earlier this year.

I was working on a retention option, because in June, I led a letter to the Secretaries of Defense and State and the OPM director about concerns regarding the retention of federally employed military spouses. This letter was co-led by a Republican actually on my Oversight Committee.

I also introduced an amendment to the NDAA directing the Secretary of Defense to provide employment flexibility to military spouses deployed by the Department. This amendment was cosponsored by several Republicans, including, again, one on Oversight.

The military is currently facing a recruitment crisis. This is why it is important—more important than ever that we retain current military families. Over one-third of Active-Duty military families cite difficulties securing spousal employment as a reason for leaving the service. In fact, in the past decade, military spouses have experienced persistently high unemployment rates hovering around 21 percent, nearly seven times the national average.

Consider Jessica, a military spouse of 19 years, currently stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas, with her Active-Duty spouse. Jessica is a senior passport specialist with the State Department. Her husband recently submitted his Army retirement packet because his transfer order meant Jessica would not be able to work at State because it does not offer remote or telework flexibilities.

How is this protecting our country? And I am sure the majority of you never heard about this bipartisan amendment. You heard about all the other trash that they wanted to put on the Floor that had nothing to do with keeping our country safe. What we need to do is focus in on the priorities, and the priorities are not culture wars. That is not the priorities.

The priorities are making sure that people are working and people are safe. And regardless of what the President said—and I love the President. I support him, let me say that right now—COVID is still around. We have Members that are out right now because they are sick with COVID. So, for those that missed the memo, COVID does still exist, and these flexibilities allow people to not

only be safe, but they also make sure that we are keeping our country safe.

So, thank you for what you do every day. Thank you for putting up with these questions. Thank you for fighting for a country that somehow does not seem like it is fighting half as hard for you and your employees.

And with that, I would just ask for unanimous consent to enter into the record a statement from the Parallel Professionals, EFM, MOH, and the U.S. Department of State employee organizations for the spouses, partners of Foreign Service professionals, who are civil servants, government contractors, and who work at U.S. missions abroad, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SESSIONS. Without objection, that will be entered into the record. Thank you very much.

Ms. CROCKETT. And I will yield.

Mr. SESSIONS. The gentlewoman yields back her time.

The distinguished gentleman from Arizona, Mr. Biggs, is recognized.

Mr. BIGGS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I am sure that nobody who offered some of those other amendments thought they were trash. I think they probably thought they were pretty good.

But let us just talk about just a couple things I need to get into the record, Mr. Chairman. First of all, from Space Magazine, from June 2, 2022, "Elon Musk tells SpaceX, Tesla workers they must be in the office at least 40 hours a week." And also, a report from the GAO entitled, "Federal Real Property: Preliminary Results Show Federal Buildings Remain Underutilized Due to Long-standing Challenges and Increased Telework." So—

Mr. SESSIONS. Without objection, that will be entered in the record.

Mr. BIGGS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And just to respond to my colleagues talking about congestion, there are more people who come in every day because D.C. is open, so you have got a lot of tourists coming in as well, and the buses really provide the congestion. And I do not know what happened last Tuesday, but that was ridiculous on 395.

But anyway, let us just talk about the buildings for a second and the impact on telework. For me, the biggest question is productivity and constituent satisfaction in their interaction with the Federal agency. That is—those are the two areas that really drive my thoughts on this matter.

But I want to give it some context, because this is testimony from earlier this year: The Federal Government spends about \$2 billion a year to operate and maintain Federal office buildings regardless of the building's utilization, \$2 billion regardless of how much they are used, and we lease another \$5 billion worth of buildings.

Now, why is that important? We are leasing 511 million square feet of office space. That is what we get to. But of that amount, in 1,500 federally owned buildings, what we get to is this: 17 of the 24 Federal agencies use, on average, 25 percent or less of the capacity of their headquarter building, 25 percent or less, and the highest range is still below 50 percent.

So, what that means is, we are spending a bucket load of money that we either do not need to, should not need to, and we need to lessen our footprint. The other thing is, the productivity and the constituent interface that we have, everybody up here probably gets calls every week like I do, we are having trouble with passports, we are having trouble with, you name it, OSHA, whatever it may be. And you guys were talking about—all of you were talking about different measures of productivity.

And, Mr. Alles, you talked about somebody could even be removed. So, I am wondering, how many people have been removed for failing to perform under teleworking conditions?

Mr. ALLES. I cannot address specifically teleworking themselves, sir. I can tell you that in fiscal year—

Mr. BIGGS. Well, this is—Mr. Alles, I do not mean to interrupt. Well, I do mean to interrupt. I do not want to be rude about it. But we are talking about teleworking, so that would be—I would be interested in that, because all of you said you have measures of productivity, you have measures—

Mr. Alles. Right.

Mr. BIGGS [continuing]. If somebody is watching the cat videos or whatever, you have ways to track and measure it. Some of you have said, well, we want the supervisor to just make sure that the work is getting done.

Look, Congress itself, remember, we are sitting in a hearing. I would always come. I never missed a day. We are in—we are doing a Zoom meeting one time. I am sitting in the building in this room, and there is a guy, and we are watching on the screen, and he is sitting there in his pajamas in a bed, right. There—you know, other people are showing up on the boats. That is—that doesn't deliver good constituent services.

So, I want to know what really is a real metric for determining whether constituents are satisfied. How are you measuring whether constituents are—that you deal with, who you interface with, are receiving proper and adequate service? How do we do it? Let us start with Mr. Dorman and then go down, please.

Mr. DORMAN. Yes, sir. I think probably the best analog there is our licensing caseload. And when we get an application from a licensee or applicant, we establish a schedule for review and a level of effort associated with it because we are a fee recovery agency, and we communicate that to the licensees. And so, we measure at the individual level what their contribution is to the actions, and we roll it up at the program level and look at are we meeting our metrics on that. So that is the productivity piece of it.

Mr. BIGGS. So just real quick, how has that changed pre-COVID to now, I mean, when you went to teleworking?

Mr. DORMAN. We have sustained, and, I would say, even slightly improved, our performance in that area.

Mr. BIGGS. Mr. Chairman, can the rest answer the question?

Mr. SESSIONS. Absolutely. The gentleman will be extended that time to receive the answers that he has asked—is seeking.

Mr. BIGGS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GIBBS. At NASA, we are not a constituent-facing serving organization or agency. That is not necessarily what our mission is. So, those metrics are a little bit different. But I will tell you that

we look at telework and remote work and onsite work the same. The same rules apply. The same expectations of professionalism apply. The same rules of making sure you get your job done and service the mission apply.

NASA is a very matrixed organization heavily leveraged on a contracted workforce. At every level of our organization there are checkpoints, and there are sort of measures to ensure that we are performing according to plan, so the individual reports through an organization and through a mission directorate and to the agency. And at the agency level, we have six independent measures looking at health, and we have six measures looking at overall agency performance.

I will tell you, throughout the pandemic, there were costs of getting our work done, as there were in all of our lives. But the cost of getting the work done and things that had to be overcome, as we all had to do, were overcome, and we were able to accomplish amazing things for the American public.

Mr. BIGGS. Thank you. Doctor?

Ms. MARRONGELLE. At NSF, similar to NASA, we are not a constituent-facing agency. One of our measures of productivity is number of proposals processed. That number peaked in 2021 when we were at maximum telework throughout the agency. That is not the same, of course, as measuring the effectiveness of the agency. We have new metrics in place to understand how we are reaching out and attracting in institutions who have not had track records with NSF to NSF, and in states like EPSCoR states and others, and we are embarking on a new customer service experience program to understand how our work with our customers, our principal investigators, is effective.

Mr. BIGGS. Look forward to seeing a copy of those guidelines, please.

Mr. ALLES. For DHS, sir, for TSA, they have now reached, in the Fiscal Year 1923, they have reached and exceeded Fiscal Year 1919 pre-pandemic levels. Six of our 10 record throughput days at airports have occurred this year, and the service continues uninterrupted.

I would point out for FEMA, they have had 487 deployments this year involving 44,184 FEMA personnel to serve the American people. TSA precheck, typically 600 enrollment locations, you get your service in less than 2 weeks. You can get an appointment and you get your known traveler number no more than 3 to 5 days after that. My chief of staff recently just experienced that herself. So, I think there are metrics we use to measure performance, sir.

Mr. BIGGS. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SESSIONS. Before the gentleman yields, would the gentleman like to cover those things with this panel that he is interested in receiving information back for, or would you like for me to attempt to give that dialog at the end?

Mr. BIGGS. I think that would be better if you gave it at the end. And, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate you extending that courtesy. I think what I am intending to do is write maybe a followup letter with regard to some of the information that I have heard here today. And I appreciate that, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SESSIONS. The gentleman yields back his time. Thank you very much.

The gentlewoman from Pennsylvania is recognized.

Ms. LEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The lifeblood of our Federal Government is its people, and to attract and retain those workers, the Federal Government has to use every tool and innovation available to build a Federal workforce that reflects the people they serve. This country's workforce changed during COVID-19 pandemic, and we should acknowledge and accommodate that rather than pushing to move backward and holding hearings against it.

Evidence shows that Federal agencies offering telework and remote work opportunities have expanded their pool of talented job applicants when compared to those who have not offered telework. During a March hearing before this Committee, OPM Director Karen Aruja said that remote jobs posted on the USAJobs website between June and October 22d of last year had, quote, 17 times more applications than non-remote jobs, significantly more applications from military spouse eligible applicants as compared to non-remote jobs, that is on average 25.2 applications as opposed to 1.4 applications, a higher percentage of female and minoritized candidates as compared to non-remote postings, and a greater geographic diversity with applications from candidates in 37 different states as compared to just seven states for non-remote postings.

Telework and remote work availability has also opened doors to people with disabilities. Even before the pandemic, the Office of Personnel Management recommended agencies publicize workplace flexibilities, including telework, to make their organizations more attractive to candidates with disabilities, and to better retain those employees. And the Federal Government can do even more to recruit and retain employees from underrepresented groups.

Dr. Marrongelle, what role did telework play at the National Science Foundation during the pandemic?

Ms. MARRONGELLE. Because our staff were already familiar with telework and had used telework prior to the pandemic, we were easily able to transition into full telework mode. We did not miss a beat as an agency. As I mentioned, we processed a record number of proposals in 2021 when our staff were operating at full telework mode.

Ms. LEE. Why is the recruitment and retention of diverse employees important to the National Science Foundation?

Ms. MARRONGELLE. It is incredibly important. It is important for national and economic security of our country. Because we fund science at the cutting edge, keeping us a global leader, we have to maintain our ability to attract and retain the best and brightest at the National Science Foundation. Telework flexibilities are a part of that type of recruitment and retention.

Ms. LEE. And one last question very quickly. Has the National Science Foundation's telework policies allowed the agency to have broader outreach to stakeholders? More specifically, did it find that telework helped expand the agency's hubs?

Ms. MARRONGELLE. Yes, absolutely. Because we have one central location in Alexandria, we—prior to the pandemic, we had done a lot of travel to states which was somewhat limited. Because of the

new technologies and flexibilities, we have been able to, over tenfold, increase our outreach to constituents, especially those that have not had a track record with NSF.

Ms. LEE. Thank you.

Mr. Gibbs, in documents provided to the Committee, NASA said that telework has provided, quote, “a tremendous opportunity for NASA to remain competitive in the modern job market, especially when attempting to attract highly skilled employees.” How has telework helped NASA stay competitive with the private sector?

Mr. GIBBS. I would like to answer that in a little bit different order—

Ms. LEE. Please.

Mr. GIBBS [continuing]. If you do not mind, ma’am. I would like to talk about internships and the impact. One of our missions at NASA is inspiring the next generation of engineers, scientists, explorers that support our Nation’s interests. Working through the tools we developed or really perfected or got better at, honestly, during the pandemic, we were able to increase our internship opportunity from the 10 geographically located areas to every state in the union. We were able to increase the diversity of those populations. We were able to increase and get participation from across the country.

So, when you are looking at it from a competitive perspective, starting with interns at NASA, you have changed the pool from that one local geographic area to the entire Nation. Our success, our ability to do the great things that this Nation asks us to do, to put the first woman and next man, first man of color on the moon, rely on sort of building this incredibly diverse workforce that can accomplish amazing things.

So, I will tell you, from our perspective, there was—there is opportunity there, and we saw it in our interns.

Ms. LEE. Thank you so much for lifting up that particular angle on perspective.

Workforce diversity fosters innovative solutions and better problem-solving capabilities. As Representatives, we should be working to help foster a workforce that most effectively serves our constituents and this Nation, rather than hindering it, like this hearing is attempting to do.

Telework attracts individuals regardless of race, location, religion, and it can offer opportunities to those who have disabilities or lives overseas or military spouses, or simply need to be near their families. Why would we hamstring our Federal agencies by eliminating a powerful tool to recruit a talented workforce that serves our Nation?

I thank the panel, and I yield back.

Mr. SESSIONS. The gentlewoman yields back her time.

The distinguished gentlewoman from Colorado is recognized.

Mrs. BOEBERT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

Mr. Dorman, on August 4, 2023, White House Chief of Staff, Jeff Zients, sent an email stressing the importance of increased in-person work, stating increasing in-person work is a priority for President Biden to, quote, “deliver better results for the American peo-

ple,” end quote, by improving teamwork and productivity within the Federal workforce, which contradicts the previous statements.

Folks have argued that the email was only sent as a result of a fairly aggressive letter that was sent from this Committee, from the Oversight and Accountability Committee, by myself, Chairman Comer, and Subcommittee Chairman Sessions. Was there any confusion within your agency after this change of tone?

Mr. DORMAN. I think we did reach out to OMB to seek clarification, Congresswoman, because in response to OMB M-2315, which calls for significant increase in meaningful in-person presence, the NRC had significantly increased our in-person presence in November 2021. And the plan that we provided to OMB in May, in response to that memo, and got OMB's feedback, we were wondering if this email was suggesting a change in expectation. And so, we circled back with OMB and confirmed that their expectation was that we move forward with the plan that we had provided to them, and they were really looking for, OK, now implement.

Mrs. BOEBERT. OK. And did the White House email result in more employees in your agency actually getting back to work in person, working full-time? And if it did, then what is that percentage of your workforce that is back to work, working in person 5 days a week?

Mr. DORMAN. Congresswoman, I do not have that specific percentage, but in the first half of this calendar year, approximately 60 percent of NRC's work was in-person work. And the—that memo did not—as I indicated, that did not change anything because we had already had our plan, gotten feedback from OMB, and were working toward implementation of it.

Mrs. BOEBERT. And are you still bringing more employees back to work in person?

Mr. DORMAN. So, our model at this point is focusing on the purpose of the in-person presence. So, we are really looking at how we are bringing people back and making sure that it has actually got the meaningful engagement so that we are optimizing the way we are working in a hybrid environment.

Mrs. BOEBERT. OK. And, Tex, could you please tell me what the agency's telework policies were prior to COVID?

Mr. ALLES. So, telework, again, was—well, like now, and thank you for the question, was handled still on a case-by-case basis. There was not as much telework prior to the pandemic. That has increased during the pandemic. We fortunately equipped our employees with equipment before the pandemic to enable them to work remotely, so it was somewhat seamless from that standpoint. But it was a very low rate of telework before the pandemic.

And then post-pandemic, it stayed at a higher rate. Currently, as indicated in the statement, we are 85 percent spend the majority of their time in the office, and then 15 percent are in a telework status, which is typically 2 days per pay period.

Mrs. BOEBERT. So, what was the agency's telework policy when they were at their maximum with telework?

Mr. ALLES. I would have to get the exact number to you. That would have been during Fiscal Year 2020 when everybody went out for the pandemic.

Mrs. BOEBERT. And were you monitoring what employees were actually logging on and producing work products?

Mr. ALLES. So, I was—I think the way that is done is via the office performance metrics.

Mrs. BOEBERT. And there was policies in place to track that, to ensure that employees were working during the time that they were home tele—

Mr. ALLES. The supervisors are responsible for the employees work whether they are in the office or remote, absolutely.

Mrs. BOEBERT. Sorry, my time is running out. In April 2023, OMB issued guidance that called for increased meaningful in-person work. Did this guidance result in any changes to the agency's telework policies?

Mr. ALLES. That was for me, ma'am?

Mrs. BOEBERT. Yes.

Mr. ALLES. Yes. We have seen a decrease of about 20,000 employees from the height of the pandemic until now that are no longer working in a telework status. So, the actual memo though is the direction we were already moving prior to the memo, meaningful in-person work. And it is increasing, our percentage is increasing.

Mrs. BOEBERT. OK. And just quickly, Mr. Gibbs, what is your current reported occupancy rate in the NASA building for employees working full-time and in person? Because I am just showing, since my time is short, I would like you to answer, but I am showing that some agency headquarters reported occupancy rates as low as nine percent.

Mr. GIBBS. So, across the agency, onsite work is 66 percent right now for NASA.

Mrs. BOEBERT. OK. My time is expired. Mr. Chairman, I yield.

Mr. SESSIONS. The gentlewoman yields back her time.

I see no other Members that are expressing time, and so I would yield myself the time at this point.

We have had a chance to hear from each of you, and as you could see, there is widespread difference in, perhaps, what today's hearing was about. I hope it was not a gotcha. Mr. Mfume and I both believe that this is of value to not only ourselves, but we hope to you. We think that we have asked fair questions, but you can see that there is some bit of difference of opinion.

Before I get to ask Mr. Dorman his question, and before I ask Mr. Gibbs a question that I prepared, I want you to know that part of the subject matter behind this is not only information that we believe we receive, but also the experiment that we went through for essentially 3 or 4 years. We could argue whether it is 3 or 4 years, but where we in Congress did that.

And I notice the gentleman from Virginia has shown up, and I will be pleased to give him time.

But what I would say is, it was a difficult transition for Members of Congress even to the last hearing. It was complicated. It was time-consuming. It was a waste of time. It produced, sparingly, opportunities when we were doing—when what was a waste of time many times were the 3 hours that we would wait before Committee hearings where we tried to get people on or off, or move them back and forth. It was delayed many times by any number of very tech-

nical issues that we were working through. So, I—we were simply trying to make sure that we were receiving those benefits of your chances as you worked on that.

So, I am now going to, because the gentleman, Mr. Connolly, has arrived, I am going to suspend my questions, as I said, Mr. Dorman, and Mr. Gibbs, and yield time to the distinguished gentleman, my friend, Mr. Connolly.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You are always gracious. And I have got another hearing at exactly the same time—

Mr. SESSIONS. Yes, sir.

Mr. CONNOLLY [continuing]. And it is in the Visitor Center, so I am running back and forth, so thank you so much for accommodating that schedule.

And I also want to thank the Chair, in his opening remarks, I thought you made a really thoughtful distinction that I want to re-emphasize between universal remote working in a pandemic, and a structured telework program. Those are two very different things, and I really appreciate the Chairman making that distinction.

Mr. SESSIONS. Yes, sir.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Not all of our colleagues do. And, by the way, it is bipartisan. I mean, I heard the Mayor of Washington conflate the two, you know, bemoaning empty offices and empty, you know, shops and restaurants.

Mr. SESSIONS. Well, she looks at the results.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Yes. But that is not caused by telework. We had robust telework before the pandemic, and those offices were not empty, and those shops were doing bustling business, and so, we have got to separate the two. And I think our four witnesses today certainly did that in their opening remarks.

And I just want to really emphasize what the Chairman said in his opening remarks and add my own two cents to it. We need telework. We need telework for lots of reasons.

For example, Doctor, would you say at NSF, as we look at the next generation of employees, is telework an expectation in the work offering when we go to make a job offer?

Ms. MARRONGELLE. Yes, it is.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Why?

Ms. MARRONGELLE. Because we are in a different time now, today. We have learned so many lessons over the past few years, and we are able to offer flexibilities to attract the best and brightest workforce, and they do expect those flexibilities.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Right. And so, if we want to recruit and retain the next generation—and by the way, what is your estimate of—at NSF, for example, what percentage of your current workforce is eligible for retirement over the next several years?

Ms. MARRONGELLE. I would have to get back to you on an exact percentage, but it is—it is a high percentage.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Yes. Well, overall, Federal Government is somewhere between 30 and 40 percent. So, we have got a huge wave of retirements coming, and how are we going to replace them, and we have got to be competitive. And, you know, somebody made some comment about the private sector. I spent 20 years in the private sector. Telework is a very vibrant tool in the private sector. They are way ahead of us in the public sector, you know, Accenture,

AT&T, just to name a couple. I mean, there are plenty of companies that actively use telework and make it work for them in terms of productivity, morale, recruitment, and retention.

There was also a comment, I think, from my friend from Alabama, Gary Palmer, that, you know, there are reports that people using telework time for happy hour and pickle ball and watching soap operas and washing the dog. Answer that.

Ms. MARRONGELLE. Well, I think—

Mr. CONNOLLY. I mean, my gosh, what are you doing?

Ms. MARRONGELLE. I do not—I—we do not have evidence that that is the case. I think—

Mr. CONNOLLY. Oh, you do not have evidence. That would imply you have got a methodology for monitoring how people use telework. Is that true?

Ms. MARRONGELLE. Well, we can see from our productivity. We can see from our productivity, from the amount of vacation and other leave times that people are taking, those numbers have not plummeted and our productivity has risen. And I do not—it does not square to me how you would get results like that—

Mr. CONNOLLY. And I am trying to get at something a little different. Telework is a structured program, right?

Ms. MARRONGELLE. It is.

Mr. CONNOLLY. It is not an informal, well, if you feel like not coming in today, no problem. We will call that telework. That is not telework. Is that correct?

Ms. MARRONGELLE. That is correct.

Mr. CONNOLLY. So, in a structured program, I thought I heard Mr. Gibbs say earlier, you have got to be qualified, it has got to be reviewed, it has got to be approved. But presumably, you are also evaluated on productivity, on checking in, on being available, right? We monitor that to know you are doing your job. Otherwise, we are going to rescind that privilege. Is that correct, Mr. Gibbs?

Mr. GIBBS. One-hundred percent. And the way we look at it is accomplishing the mission, making sure the work is sufficient to accomplish that much.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Right.

Mr. GIBBS. And the employees have to be trained. The supervisors have to be trained. There has to be an agreement in place that clearly lays out the roles and responsibilities of the individuals, and it has got to go to senior level to be approved.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Right.

Mr. GIBBS. And—

Mr. CONNOLLY. Yes, otherwise rockets would be falling from the skies or never get up into the skies at all. So far, NASA seems to have a pretty good track record, as does NSF, as do the other agencies.

I just want to end by saying, it is really important, and again, I appreciate the Chairman's distinction because it reflects a respect. A million Federal employees continued working in person during the pandemic. I lost a number of wonderful people who succumbed to the COVID virus because they went to work without protection. There were no protocols, but they went to work.

And I want to make sure we honor those people. And I want to make sure that as we pursue this subject and other subjects about

Federal performance, that we give due respect to the brave men and women who serve this country every day in person or remotely, and we should take care in our language, as the Chairman did in his opening remarks, not to disparage, even by implication, the overwhelming majority of public servants who care about their mission.

I yield back, and I thank the Chair.

Mr. SESSIONS. Yes, sir. The distinguished gentleman yields back his time. Thank you very much.

I am now going to resume my questions and would like to in the same spirit that the gentleman accused me of trying to be thoughtful about this, as Mr. Mfume and I have tried to work together on this for all of our Members, giving them the opportunity to express their own opinions as both sides have done.

Mr. Dorman, the other day, perhaps yesterday, you and I spoke, and it was significantly directed to new employees, and new employees, and how we mature their not only growth, but work in an environment that is about the mission statement that you have. One of the concerns with telework is the impact on new hires as we have noted today. And you and I began a discussion. Do you mind continuing that discussion about how you mature new employees, how you bring them in, how you properly analyze them and build their confidence as, in essence, Federal employees?

Mr. DORMAN. Yes. Thank you, Chairman. So, at the NRC, one out of every six employees is new to the agency in the last 2 years, so this is a very important area for us as we deal with the retirement wave that the Member from Virginia referred to. And so, in this environment, you know, I think we do see a new generation that is interested in telework, but I also see a new generation coming into my offices that are saying, I need to connect with the people who are here, and I need to learn from them.

And so, as part of our presence with purpose, one of the areas is the on-boarding and training and qualification of our new staff. And so, a number of our offices have specific core days that are dedicated to staff training and development, so that we make sure that the inspectors, the license reviewers, the engineers and scientists that come into the agency, learn the regulatory craft and are ready to carry forward our mission into the future.

Mr. SESSIONS. Thank you.

Mr. Gibbs, I do not want to turn this like we have got problems, but I will tell you, as part of the viewpoint that we had, there was a discussion about the JPL at CalTech and a particular project called Psyche or Psyche? And—

Mr. GIBBS. Psyche, that is correct.

Mr. SESSIONS. And evidently, as part of the feedback from that, there was an independent review board that was regarding this that pointed to remote and hybrid work policies as contributing factors for the lack of success that it may have accomplished. And it called for more in-person work.

Now, I am not trying to say on your side of the ball or their side of the ball, but the way I view NASA is they have a mission statement, once again, as we have spoken about for the success, whether it is your rocket or someone else's rocket, a collaborative effort to make America look good when we put something up, because

when it does not happen that way, whether we go to the Challenger or the United States Air Force with Titan rockets for a number of years, failure is an indication of a problem. Could you please discuss with me your take on that independent review board report?

Mr. GIBBS. Yes, sir. So, Psyche, one of the contributing factors to poor performance on Psyche was telework, amongst many other contributing factors. I think the important message, at least within the NASA walls, is that we are owning up, having a critical evaluation, independent review board, and we are committed to corrective actions, not only on Psyche, but on other future missions interacting with JPL and across the NASA portfolio completely.

We have a lot of complex partnerships. We have over 650 new partnerships on an annual basis across our country and 65 internationally. We have to ensure that our communication, our ability to lead, all of these things, you know, doing our science and doing the rest of the mission work is accomplished efficiently and effectively. I think for me, though, the takeaway was we are willing to take a look, have a hard conversation, and commit to corrective actions.

Mr. SESSIONS. Yes, sir. Well, we are—and thank you for that answer.

The importance of our oversight responsibilities is especially enumerated in the Constitution of the United States, which rests in this Committee and Subcommittee, is to ensure that we are hearing from you, that you are hearing from us, and it is my hope that, as I stated in the beginning, we are trying to recognize those who responded to what I would say in a positive, favorable way.

We were attempting to also gain, from the Committee's perspective, that I believe Mr. Mfume recognizes and supports, as Mr. Connolly, is your feedback to us. Several of our Members today have indicated, and you, likewise, have boiled down to, we are interested in your analysis that I would expect that each of you would provide to this Committee, in writing, your evaluation of what those metrics are when someone is working from home. That would include your rules, regulations, ongoing experiences of who that includes.

We had, in my prior life, what we called craft employees. I worked for AT&T for 16 years. You have management employees, and you have what I will just call workers who contribute to the critical role that you play across the government.

If you could distinguish for me, do your supervisors, are they exempted? Do they come to work? What is their role with the management structure? How is that working? And the reason why I say this is because, perhaps there is some disagreement in Congress about how effective our procedures were. It was very attractive to young people who were freshmen. They wished they had that same opportunity now to work remotely, and really not come to Washington but to be somewhere else.

Our experiences that we had in Congress of dealing with remote working, Zooms, having Committee hearings, the effectiveness of hearing each other, talking with each other, in my opinion, was a less-than-favorable experience. You have, today, tried to provide

this Subcommittee with the viewpoints that you believe you have a favorable experience.

You believe you have been able to craft your workforce up to and including your ability to hire people, to manage people, the productivity that would be involved, and perhaps, the end result of providing us at least four agencies, once again, that we selected because we viewed that what you provided us was information where you were forthright about it. We would like to make sure we get it right also.

And so, your time that you spent today was valuable to the distinguished gentleman and myself and this Committee. We want to followup a little bit more. We are going to be holding hearings in a couple weeks of those who did not offer us the favorability of giving us insight into their operations. We applaud you as not only Federal employees, but your service, whether it was at the Marine Corps, whether it was at the United States Navy, or whether it is vast experience of working for the Federal Government.

But with that said, we are also trying to determine the same things that are very apparent that would be available to us, and that is that we saw, in education, where people, children, young people, students, did not get outside their home; did not have human interaction; did not, so to speak, work with other people and sharpen their skill set; did not build themselves; did not, perhaps, become lethargic in other areas.

We saw in education and across workplaces, in what I would call the free enterprise system, where there were remarks across the board where real valuable development of employees lagged, real opportunity to move an employee perhaps more quickly up to an experienced level lagged, where they were having a difficult time in the free enterprise system in private industry getting people to come back to work because it is not meeting the expectation, not because they do not have a public at them.

Mr. SESSIONS. We have seen adaptivity on behalf of what I would say American Airlines, who I deal with on a regular basis. And at 2, 3, 4 in the morning, they would get calls. Weather patterns have meant that they did have to have employees perhaps work overtime, that had not come into work.

All I am suggesting to you is, is that industry leaders are now seeking—and I hear this on a regular basis—I am from Waco, Texas, what might be called deep in the heart of Texas. Employers are coming to Texas because they need people who come to work.

And I believe I hear from industry leaders every day who do not harbor resentment against COVID, but harbor some sense of a change in workplace procedures, professionalism, guidance, developing their people, people developing themselves, and a sense of a wilderness by many employees who do not have the same thing that perhaps I grew up with, that perhaps you grew up with.

And I would simply suggest to you that workplace performance, education, and what we see happening provides us with insight about who is going to come to work, and why is that work at home, and wasn't there a valuable experience that was gained, from professionally being developed by someone, like Mr. Mfume and myself?

I think we help new Members of Congress, occasionally.

Mr. MFUME. Oh.

Mr. SESSIONS. OK. Well, perhaps not as much by Mr. Mfume, but I believe that I have Members and staff who seek out my 25 years' experience, especially now, instead of going to fear, we go to work and process.

So, I would simply say to you, I appreciate and respect you coming here today. I think, from the two calls that I made yesterday, I wanted to set an expectation that this Committee finds your insight as professional managers of the business insightful and that you are evidently trying to make it work, but would tell you that, across industry, in many of the same organizations, whether it be sheriffs' departments, whether it be other areas that deal with deep need, dark—not dark, but deep subjects that require notice and working together and actually getting it right and putting it on the board and experience-yielding opportunities and managers who build and develop the next generation, industry is telling us they are not getting it, and that is why they want people back at work. And I saw you do the opposite today.

And so, without a challenge to you, I would say, as an open conversation with you and my colleagues, that we would hope to glean information about what you are doing that is making it successful, that many others are finding of a future where we just do not know each other. We do not glean the experience of having to come in and be in a room where there is a problem and you have got to work together.

It is not just one or two people on a Zoom call, or 10. I would suggest to you that diminishes the ability to get where you want to go, because it is either, A, the loudest person in the room, or the boss in the room who simply gave you the answer without working through things.

So, thank you for this experiment. Thank you for lending us your time.

I would like to see you go back, and without challenging me, present to us what you believe were proper viewpoints of how you looked at what you did. You very clearly spoke about—well, your level of efficiency was well up, and yet, industry struggles.

And I think that your ability as a supporting role to that should correspondingly offer perhaps a little bit more guidance of a team rather than a Zoom call.

Mr. Mfume, I want to allow you an opportunity to offer any closing remarks. You and I try and mirror each other.

But the distinguished gentleman is recognized.

Mr. MFUME. Well, I want to thank you again, Mr. Chairman. And in their absence, I want to thank Members of both sides of the aisle in this Committee for their participation today, albeit limited. There are a lot of things going on this week, so they have been in and out. But I thank them.

I thank the witnesses again, as I did previously, for their testimony.

And, you know, someone once said, if you live long enough, you will see everything twice. So, I recall being here in this body in 1987 as a young Member. Ronald Reagan was President. Jim Wright was my Speaker of the House. And there were enormous sets of hearings around something called telework. I cannot even

begin to tell you how difficult it was defining it in those days, not by the advocates, but against—but by those who did not want to enter anything new into the concept of work.

So, looking back through that telescope of time, I have got a little bit of perspective on this. It is amazing, for me at least, that I can be as old as a dinosaur, and here we are still talking about telework. It was great that this was divided, as Mr. Connolly said in referencing your remarks, that what was going on in the pandemic and what is going on now are really two different things. Telework has always been with us. When I say always, I will go back to 1987. I cannot go beyond that.

But it has developed over time, and I asked the question about matrix and measurement because, as Mr. Biggs said, at the end of the day, it is really about productivity. Are we producing, and is the Federal workforce producing? And the answer is yes, we are.

It is our responsibility, I think, to get out of our own minds, no matter whether we are on the left or the right of this, the idea that what was happening during the pandemic in real time, policies being developed almost overnight to make sure that we were getting work done, is not the same thing that is going on now.

What is going on now is the basic telework that has always gone on with measurements—real measurements to look at productivity and to look at the bottom line, and then to be able to course-correct where necessary.

So, it was interesting to hear all of you talk about how you identify where there are lapses in that and how you move quickly to straighten that out so that, again, productivity is not severely hampered.

I am hoping, quite frankly—I guess I am still an optimist—that, 25 years from now, 40 years from now, we still will not be on this ledge of telework. And I do not want—I really do not want for us to do the sort of post-mortem on COVID as if that is something that we are trying to figure out.

We figured it out. We did it in real time. Did we make some mistakes? Yes. Did we get it right? Yes. Is it over with? Hopefully it is.

But the question becomes: How do we improve on the concept of telework, which we have been improving on as a government for many, many, many years.

I represent Baltimore, and so, I am just 40 miles up the road. There are Federal workers all over the small state of Maryland. So, I hear and I see and I understand differently, in many respects, the position of those who are teleworking, who are doing their work. And I understood, also, what we went through during the pandemic.

So, for the sake of the future and the sake of productivity and the sake of telework, to the extent that we can continue to refine it, and define it, and make it even more efficient year after year after year, we would have served our country in a way that, for me at least, would be quite satisfying.

We are not going backward. And, since we all agree that we are going forward, how do we define that future?

Mr. Connolly talked about the wave—and I think, Mr. Dorman, you also did—about this wave of retirements that we are getting

ready to get hit with. And how do we go about, Doctor, finding, as you said, ways to attract younger people and what the real job requirements and what the job market looks like when we juxtapose ourselves against the private sector that understands this and who realizes that their bottom line is profit; our bottom line is productivity. And they have moved exceedingly fast to create a model that it might be good for us to emulate.

So, I want to, again, thank Chairman Sessions for the time this morning.

He and I came into this Committee at the beginning of this Congress based on new ratios and a new Majority. But we decided together that, to the extent that we could find a way, in a bipartisan manner, to bring issues and to solve problems, we would do that.

We both reserve our rights to disagree on things where we may be philosophically opposed, but we realize that finding consensus in government is the fastest and the most effective way to get something done.

And so, that is what this hearing represents.

I thank him again for his leadership with the Committee.

And I yield back my time.

And, again, I thank all of you for being with us.

Mr. SESSIONS. The distinguished gentleman yields back his time.

One last point. I do not want to rebut anything Mr. Mfume said, but in 1987, my father served as Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and I recall, quite candidly, the discussions that took place about that agency, and they felt like they were under the same demand of replacing what would be new FBI agents with agents that retired.

I think we are always at this point, or have been since at least 1987, when I started to grow a brain, of recognizing that this country does need its workers. We need the experienced people. We need the new people.

I would simply say to you my side of that balanced equation was—I think it is in everybody's best interests that we pay attention about what we are doing to ourselves, because, when somebody stays at home all day, telework, they may not be as prepared for the future that is tomorrow.

I want to thank each of you.

Mr. Mfume and I are going to walk down—he is going to walk down his side. I am going to walk down my side. We are going to stick our hand out, and we are going to say to you, thank you very much.

Please know this, that I would expect that you will respond back to us, in your own way, of the metrics and the ways that you look at it with us as an opportunity to glean what you think is success.

Thank you very much.

Mr. MFUME. Would the gentleman yield—

Mr. SESSIONS. Yes, sir.

Mr. MFUME [continuing]. For just a second? And I apologize.

Mr. SESSIONS. Yes.

Mr. MFUME. And I have a statement for the record that was submitted earlier by military spouses.

Mr. SESSIONS. Without objection.

Mr. MFUME. These spouses belong to employee organizations at Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

These are spouses who want it on the record to talk about and to find a way to encourage the Committee to embrace a flexible, adaptable workplace policy which allows military spouses to retain their jobs.

So, with unanimous consent, I would like to have it entered into the record, and I thank the Chair for that.

Mr. SESSIONS. Without objection, we will do that.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Mfume and I will come down and extend our hand of thanks to you on behalf of your agency and on behalf of the U.S. Congress, this Committee.

We have now finished this hearing.

Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 12:24 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

