

Statement of Daniel I. Gordon
Nominee to Serve as Administrator for Federal Procurement Policy
Before the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
November 10, 2009

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Collins, and Members of the Committee:

I am honored to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to serve as the Administrator for Federal Procurement Policy at the Office of Management and Budget.

I am very grateful to have my family with me this morning, supporting me today as they always have. I would like to introduce my beloved mother, Mae Mace, and step-father, Col. Herman Mace; my partner of 23 years, Paul Cadario; and my brother and sister-in-law, Mike and Donna Gordon. I would not be here today without the loving support and guidance from my entire family.

Because I am a career federal civil servant and someone who teaches about public procurement, it is especially humbling to be considered for a position that plays such an important role in helping our government achieve better results for the American people. With 22 years of experience in federal acquisition issues, 17 of these with the Government Accountability Office, I have gained a keen appreciation for the critical impact acquisition has in supporting the accomplishment of agency missions. I also have developed a deep respect for the many women and men in our workforce who have dedicated their careers to ensuring that our acquisition system delivers the best possible results for our taxpayers. I welcome the opportunity, if my nomination is confirmed, to serve as Administrator, and to work closely with them, and with you, in improving the federal acquisition system.

The challenges facing us in the acquisition system require dedicated management attention to achieve the type of sustainable improvement that I believe the President envisioned in his March 4, 2009, Memorandum on Government Contracting. Accordingly, if confirmed as Administrator, I would work with Congress and the agencies to immediately address the following priorities:

Increasing the size and improving the training of the acquisition workforce. Our procurement budget has increased dramatically in the past decade, yet the growth in the workforce has not kept pace. We need to focus our attention on developing an acquisition workforce – including contracting officers' technical representatives and program managers, as well as contracting officers and contract specialists -- that allows us to meet our mission goals and deliver value to the public. If confirmed, I will strengthen our commitment to their development and training and ensure they have the knowledge and tools necessary to excel.

Finding ways to save money and reduce risk in our acquisitions. We find ourselves operating in a period of record deficits that compel us to save resources, even as the government faces unprecedented challenges, both at home and overseas. Savings can be achieved not only through more effective acquisition practices, but also by reducing high-

risk contracting. We must be vigilant to guard against improper use of sole-source, cost-reimbursement, and time-and-materials contracts. I believe that technology gives us the tools to make our procurement system much more transparent, and the visibility that transparency brings contributes to discouraging the improper use of high-risk contracting practices.

Improving acquisition planning. Too often, pressure to move forward quickly comes at the expense of good acquisition planning. We must work to ensure that our program and contracting staff work together and that they have the capacity and tools to effectively plan acquisitions, for example we must ensure that we're buying something that is appropriately provided by contractors and that we've adequately defined what we want to buy.

Strengthening contract management. As stewards of the taxpayers, we must make sure those who contract with the government are delivering what they promised, in terms of price, schedule, and performance. By promoting sound contract management practices and sharing best practices, we can work to rebuild the American people's confidence in the government's ability to produce results. I am honored that, if confirmed, I would be part of an Administration committed to helping agencies improve their performance and achieve the results that the American people expect.

Unfortunately, there are no silver bullets or quick solutions for these challenges. Each will require hard work and focused attention. These challenges will also require coordinated actions. Acquisition offices must work closely with their human capital offices to develop and execute hiring plans to close identified skills gaps. Contracting and program offices must work together more closely, each applying its respective skills to improve requirements definition and contract management. Our Chief Acquisition Officers and Senior Procurement Executives must work closely with OFPP, the Federal Acquisition Institute, and the Defense Acquisition University to improve the delivery of needed training to our workforce. If these steps are taken, I am confident significant improvements will be realized. I welcome the opportunity to help the acquisition community meet these challenges. I look forward to joining the knowledgeable, experienced, and enthusiastic team led by Director Peter Orszag, Deputy Director Robert Nabors, and Deputy Director for Management Jeff Zients.

Thank you again for allowing me to appear before you today. I have enjoyed talking with, and hearing the ideas of, your staff – some of whom I have had the privilege to work with over the years at GAO. If I am confirmed, I look forward to working with this Committee and other members of Congress in increasing the public's trust in our acquisition system and ensuring it serves our taxpayers' needs.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.