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## Senate confirms John Berry as federal personnel chief

By Alyssa Rosenberg | [arosenberg@govexec.com](mailto:arosenberg@govexec.com) | April 3, 2009

The Senate early Friday morning confirmed Clinton administration veteran and former National Zoo head John Berry to be the next Office of Personnel Management director.

"I look forward to getting to work with the great men and women at OPM and to advancing the president's goal of ensuring that our country's best and brightest continue to be drawn into the service of our country," Berry said in a statement.

Sen. Daniel Akaka, D-Hawaii, chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs subcommittee with oversight of the federal workforce, said he was pleased by the Senate's unanimous consent vote, and looked forward to working with Berry on "the many human capital challenges facing the federal workforce."

During his Senate confirmation hearing last week, lawmakers questioned him on his views regarding pay-for-performance systems. Berry said he was amenable to any effective compensation system, but that the federal government has an obligation to ensure employees with comparable job performances receive similar pay and treatment.

Berry has a long history in federal workforce and management issues. At the zoo, he drew up a strategic plan, reorganized its management structure and completed a 20-year capital plan for its finances. During the Clinton administration, Berry served as assistant secretary for policy, management and budget at the Interior Department, where he oversaw a number of programs to improve employees' work-life balance. And he also worked as legislative director to House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., for a decade. Hoyer's district includes many federal employees.

Representatives from employee and good government groups also applauded the nomination.

Max Stier, president of the nonprofit Partnership for Public Service, said it was fabulous to have an OPM director in place. Stier and Berry met for the first time at a Partnership book release party on Thursday, and he said Berry made a good impression.

"We talked a little bit about his vision, and I think he has a really aggressive notion about the opportunities that exist to improve the workforce and to grow it," Stier said. "I was very pleased by his energy and his openness."

Darryl Perkinson, national president of the Federal Managers Association, and Bill Bransford, general counsel for the Senior Executives Association, said they looked forward to meeting with Berry to discuss a range of management issues, including reconciling competing pay systems and creating incentives for high-achieving employees to join the senior executive ranks.



Bransford said that while Berry had been a political appointee rather than a career senior executive, he thought the new OPM director understood the challenges facing the SES.

"We believe that John Berry will become a partner with us to make career leadership respected and something that is more in sight than its been in the past," Bransford said.

Both presidents of the two largest federal employee unions -- the American Federation of Government Employees and the National Treasury Employees Union -- also praised Berry.

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