

**National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration**  
**Deans and Directors Summit Conference**  
**October 14, 2009**

**Issue Brief: Federal Hiring Reform ([S. 736](#), Sen. Akaka/Voinovich [D-HI/ R-OH])**

Current Status: considered in the Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs, recommended for full Senate consideration. There is no House equivalent for the bill yet, but your efforts will help with the issue's initial impression.

The Federal Government needs to fill 270,000 mission-critical jobs within the next 3 years. The need to hire professionally trained candidates has never been greater, and interest in public service among graduate students has never been higher. The supply and demand for graduate students exists, but the pipeline is broken.

The current hiring process is a confusing, poorly advertised, drawn-out process that fails to match or proactively recruit future talent. Additionally, MPP/MPA graduate students are disproportionately unsuccessful in obtaining federal employment. The usajobs.gov automated process places a premium on qualifications such as professional work experience (especially internal candidates) and veteran's preference, neither of which many students possess.

NASPAA supports "The Federal Hiring Process Improvement Act of 2009" because the bill presents several elements that lay the groundwork for establishing a hiring pipeline. The bill requires agencies to develop plans to identify hiring needs and recruitment strategies, shorten the hiring process and make it more applicant-friendly, maintain an inventory of federal job applicants, and measure the effectiveness of hiring reforms and efforts.

CBO estimates that the bill would cost agencies about \$40 million over the next five years through increased data collection requirements. However, the benefits of data collection were not included in these figures, and so the benefits of spending could likely outweigh or offset the costs. The bulk of funding will go towards IT improvements, which are a major prerequisite for other hiring reforms.

**Key Points**

- 1) *Tell a (short) story about your students' difficulty in gaining Federal employment.*
- 2) *The Federal Government's lack of strategic workforce planning and centralized applicant databases translates into lost potential for a talent pipeline. Thousands of graduate students will be needed each year to meet Federal hiring needs, and public policy/administration graduate schools offer a highly qualified applicant pool eager to become the next generation of public servants. This bill helps repair the broken pipeline by creating an applicant inventory that connects interested candidates to job openings while adding IT capabilities needed for agencies to meet future hiring challenges. (See Sec. 6)*
- 3) *The current process is too burdensome on applicants to the detriment of the Federal government. Long essay requirements, confusing announcement language, and long hiring lag times are some of the major reasons why graduates interested in the public service are driven away to the private sector. This bill corrects many of these shortcomings (See Sec. 4, 5, 8).*
- 4) *Federal hiring needs greater transparency, as there is a data vacuum regarding the background and effectiveness of hires. We have good reason to believe that graduates- especially minority applicants- are disproportionately unsuccessful through USAJOBS, but agencies do not currently collect the data that would firmly demonstrate this. This bill fills the vacuum by mandating measures of hiring effectiveness that can be used as constant feedback for improvement (See Sec. 9).*

**ASK:** *Ask Senators to cosponsor the legislation and Representatives to author companion legislation. The issue is about essential reforms yet is relatively uncontroversial.*

**Background Reading:**

- [Leaving Talent on the Table, Partnership for Public Service, 4/09](#)
- ["Where the Jobs Are," Partnership for Public Service, 2009](#)
- Graduate Student Pathways to Federal Service, NASPAA, 8/09
- ["Federal Government Needs Massive Hiring Binge, Study Finds," Washington Post, 9/3/09](#)
- ["A Hiring Process in Need of Major Repair," Washington Post, 3/5/09](#)