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Briefing Report to the Chairman,
Subcommittee on the Civil Service,
Committee on Post Office and Civil
Service, House of Representatives

November 1991

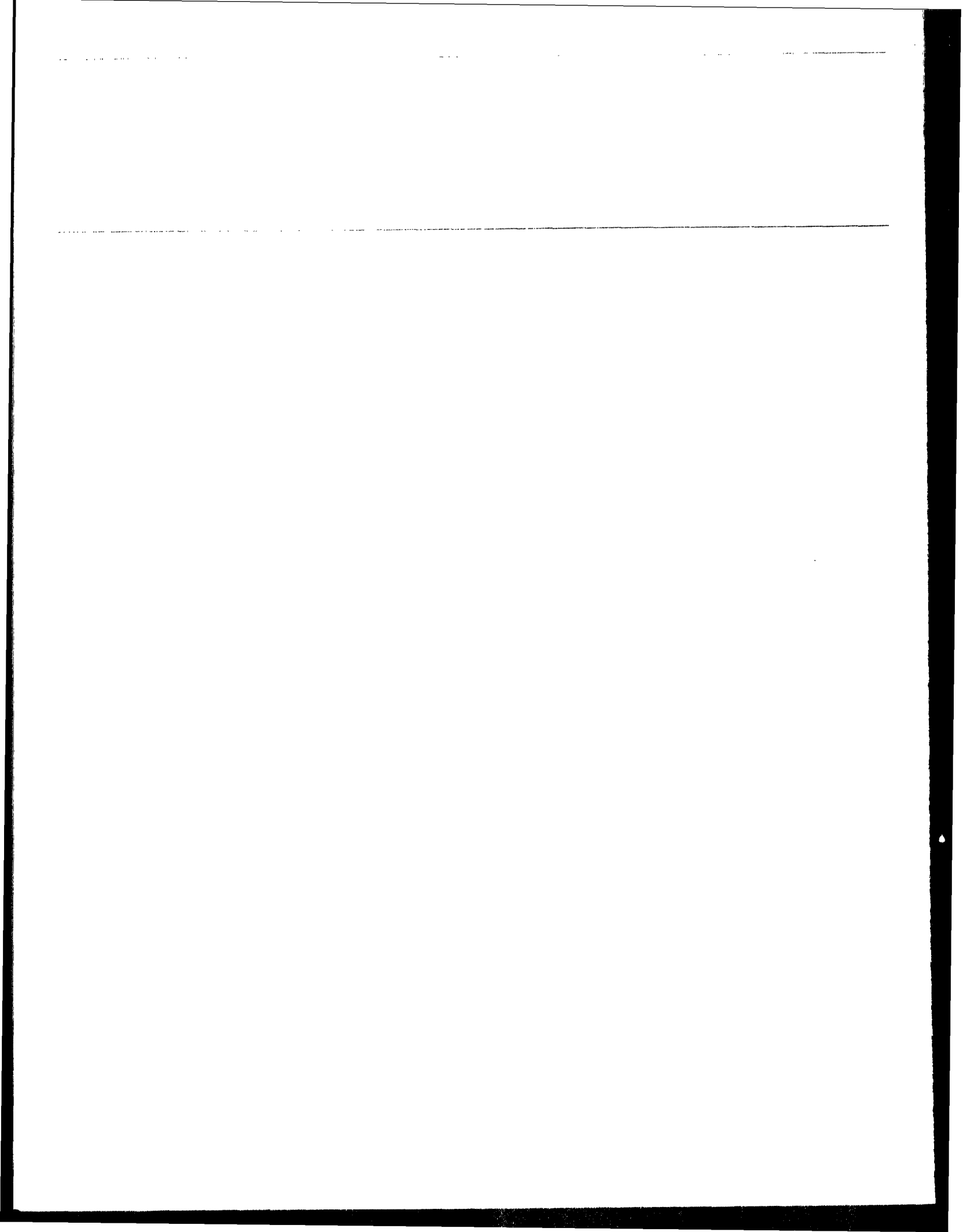
FEDERAL WORKFORCE

Continuing Need for Federal Affirmative Employment



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General Government Division

B-243473

November 27, 1991

The Honorable Gerry Sikorski
Chairman, Subcommittee on the
Civil Service
Committee on Post Office and Civil
Service
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This briefing report responds to your November 25, 1991, request for information on the federal government's affirmative employment program. On November 26, 1991, we briefed the Subcommittee on the results of our previous work. As you requested, this report summarizes the information provided at the briefing.

BACKGROUND

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended by the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972, requires federal agencies to develop and implement affirmative employment programs to eliminate the historic underrepresentation of women and minorities in the workforce. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is responsible for providing agencies with guidance on their affirmative employment programs and approving agency plans for those programs.

The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 clearly provided for the first time in law that federal personnel management be implemented to provide a competent, honest, and productive federal workforce that is reflective of the Nation's diverse population. In addition, the 1978 act created the Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program and requires agencies to conduct affirmative recruitment for those occupations and grades in which women and minorities are underrepresented. The act assigned the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) responsibility for assisting agencies in their affirmative recruitment efforts and for overseeing the Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program.

EEOC and OPM require agencies to prepare affirmative employment and/or recruitment plans. As part of plan development, each agency is required to analyze its workforce, comparing the representation of women and minority groups in its workforce with the representation of the same groups in the appropriate civilian labor force. The identification and removal of barriers to the entry and progression of women and minorities in the federal workforce are also part of affirmative employment efforts.

APPROACH

Our objective was to respond to your request that we provide information on the extent to which the federal government has achieved a representative workforce and the effectiveness of the government's management of affirmative employment efforts relating to federal employees. Because of your interest in receiving information quickly, we agreed to summarize information contained in previous GAO products and comment on whether this information indicated a need for continued federal affirmative employment efforts.

Appendix I lists several products we have issued over the last several years relating to the federal affirmative employment program. The information in this report is based largely on the first three products listed, which were all issued in 1991 at the request of the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs.

STATUS OF WOMEN AND MINORITY
REPRESENTATION IN THE
FEDERAL WORKFORCE

While improvements have occurred, the federal civilian workforce did not reflect the Nation's diverse population as of September 1990. Representation of white women, Hispanic men, and Hispanic women in the federal workforce lagged behind their representation in the Nation's civilian labor force. Using an index where less than 100 indicated underrepresentation, white women had an index of 81; Hispanic women, 67; and Hispanic men, 62.¹

Most federal employees hold white-collar occupations and are under a white-collar pay schedule that includes pay grades 1 to 15. Grades 13 to 15 employees are often considered the government's middle managers. The government's top career managers are in the Senior Executive Service (SES).

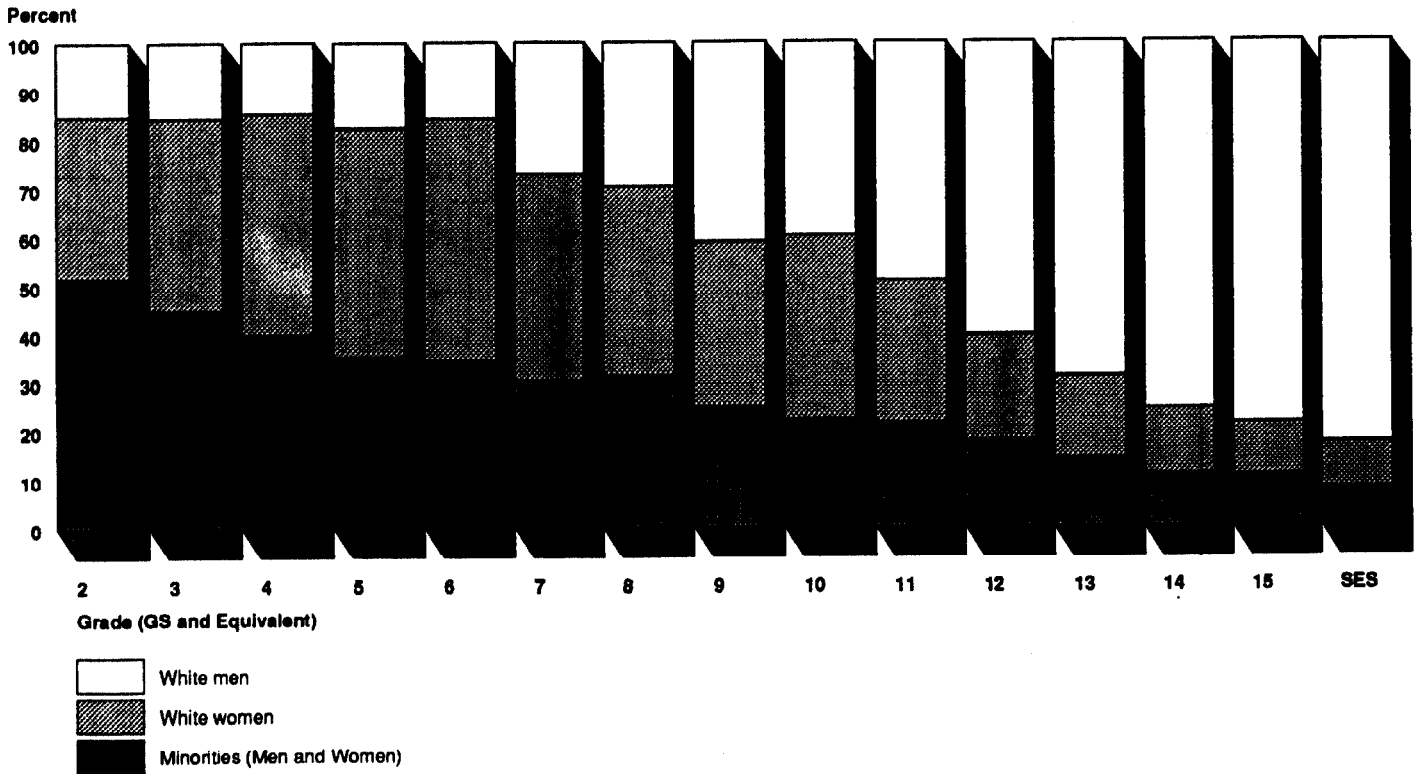
Women and minorities have increased their presence in the government's middle and upper management levels. Nevertheless, even with these increases, a substantial disparity existed in September 1990. As figure 1 shows, their presence went down as the grade levels went up. Women and minorities comprised the majority of the federal workforce at grades 2 through 11. However, their presence decreased to about 30 percent for grade 13 positions and continued downward to about 17 percent for the SES.

¹To make our comparison, we used federal workforce data from OPM's Civilian Personnel Data File and civilian labor force data from OPM that were derived from annual averages published in the Bureau of Labor Statistics Publication Current Population Survey. The data we used were as of September 1990.

We recognize that a number of factors, such as job requirements, educational levels of employees, employees' time in grade, and the number of job vacancies all influence the progression employees make in the government's hierarchy. However, we are suggesting in figure 1 that (1) the base of the government's hierarchy is very different from its middle and upper levels and (2) the representation of women and minorities in those middle and upper levels is low enough on its face to warrant continued use of affirmative programs.

We are not alone in our opinion. The Director of OPM in her October 23, 1991, testimony before the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs said that "... the percentages of women and minorities in the SES and the pipeline to the SES are unacceptable."

Figure 1: Distribution of Workforce in Executive Agencies by Grade as of September 30, 1990



Source: OPM's Central Personnel Data File.

A fundamental means of enabling women and minorities to be appropriately represented in the pipeline to the SES is to ensure that they are appropriately present in agencies' key jobs--jobs that can lead to middle and upper management positions. We analyzed 261 key jobs in 25 agencies and found that women and minorities were often underrepresented in key jobs in comparison to their representation in the Nation's civilian labor force in similar occupations.² For example, black women were underrepresented in 24 percent of the key jobs and white women were underrepresented in 60 percent of the key jobs. We also found that some agencies were more successful than others in achieving representation for the same key jobs. (See tables 1 and 2 below.)

Table 1: Number of Key Jobs in Which White Women and Minorities Were Underrepresented

Total key jobs	Number with full representation	Number with under representation	Number of jobs in which group underrepresented									
			White Women	Black		Hispanic		Asian		American Indian		
				Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	
261	8	253	151	68	61	118	125	135	102	101	89	
	3%	97%	60%	27%	24%	47%	49%	53%	40%	40%	35%	

Table 2: Examples of Different Representation Levels Achieved by Selected Agencies for Key Jobs

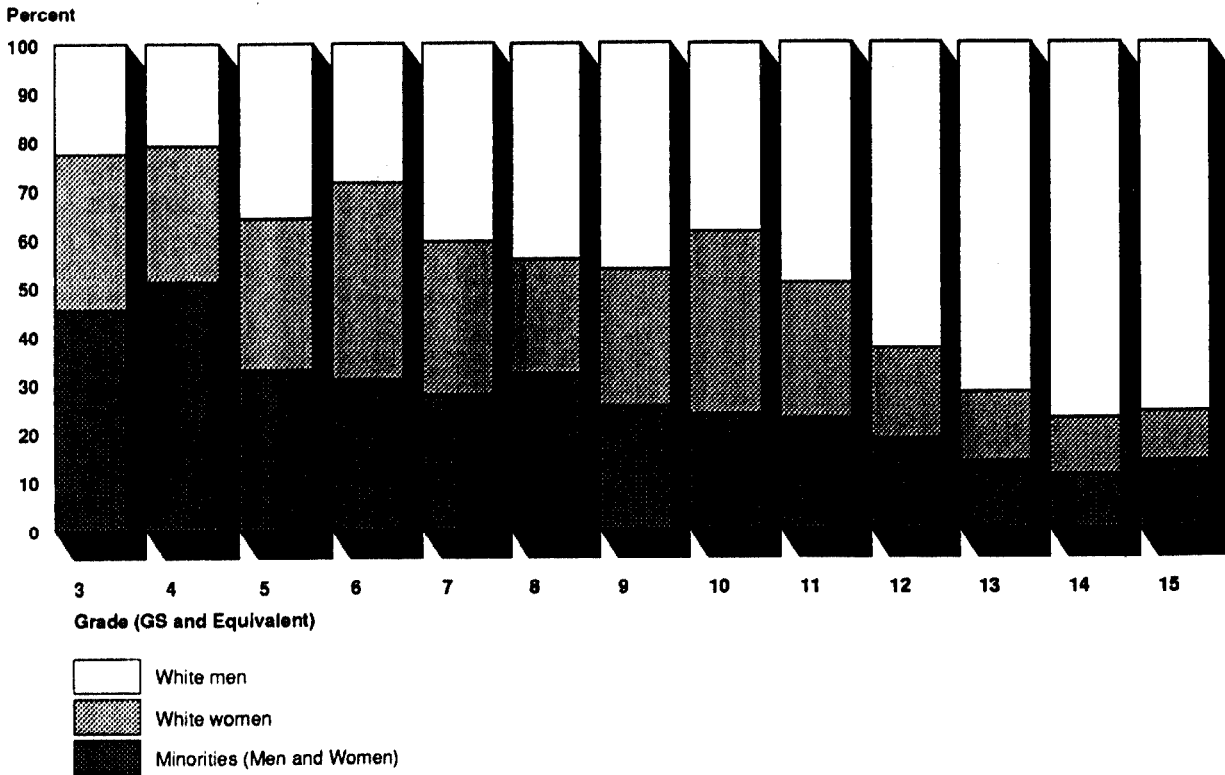
Job Series	Agency	Representation Index									
		White Women	Black		Hispanic		Asian		American Indian		
			Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	
Computer Specialist	HHS	152	193	488	44	83	37	133	550	400	
	OPM	149	407	718	28	0	41	178	0	500	
	Treasury	140	237	624	78	200	93	222	100	100	
Accountant	GSA	93	291	263	22	154	21	53	400	0	
	HUD	38	700	703	156	92	147	353	600	150	
	Treasury	59	622	933	50	39	79	120	0	0	

Note: Less than 100 indicates underrepresentation. Less than 50 indicates severe underrepresentation.

²To measure representation, we used September 1990 data from OPM's Civilian Personnel Data File and occupation-specific data from the 1980 census. More current benchmarking data were not readily available. We could not use 1990 civilian labor force data derived from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Population Survey because that survey does not cover enough households to provide statistically sound projections of the number of Asians and American Indians by occupation.

We also analyzed the promotion and career appointments of women and minorities into the 261 key jobs, and we found that they were generally entering grades 13 through 15 at rates better than their proportion of the key job workforce at those grades. However, as figure 2 shows, as of September 1990, the workforce in key jobs at grades 13 to 15 was still dominated by white men.

Figure 2: Distribution of Workforce in Key Jobs for 25 Executive Agencies by Grade as of September 30, 1990



Source: OPM's Central Personnel Data File.

WAYS TO IMPROVE AFFIRMATIVE
EMPLOYMENT PLANNING

We identified several problems and made recommendations to the EEOC and OPM to improve affirmative employment planning, including the following.

- We found that (1) EEOC has approved plans even though agencies have not included all the required data or analyses, (2) EEOC's approval process has been lengthy and lacks timeliness standards, and (3) agencies have not submitted timely affirmative employment plans. We recommended that EEOC analyze the time agencies took to prepare and EEOC to approve affirmative employment plans, develop standards for completing these processes, and hold agencies and EEOC officials accountable for meeting the standards. EEOC agreed. We also recommended that EEOC better define the term key job, and EEOC said it would do so for the next round of affirmative employment plans due in 1992.
- Agencies were generally using a benchmark of the civilian labor force that at times was outdated and did not adequately reflect specific occupational and/or educational requirements. We recommended that EEOC and OPM develop an inventory of benchmarks that agencies may apply in appropriate circumstances.
- The identification and removal of barriers to the entry and progression of women and minorities in the federal workforce are also part of affirmative employment efforts. Identifying and addressing barriers may be done by examining such personnel events as recruitment, hiring, training and development, promotion, and separation. We made recommendations to EEOC and OPM on further analyses of personnel event data.

NEED TO CONTINUE AND
MONITOR FEDERAL AFFIRMATIVE
EMPLOYMENT

The 1978 Civil Service Reform Act provided that federal personnel management should be implemented to provide a competent, honest, and productive federal workforce that is reflective of the Nation's diverse population. Even though the federal government has made progress towards that goal, some distance remains to be covered. White women and Hispanic men and women are underrepresented in the overall federal workforce. The status of women and minorities by grade level indicates the need for continued attention. This is true as well for women and

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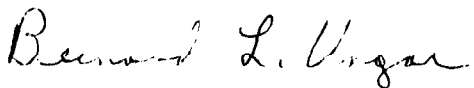
minorities in agencies' key jobs and in the upper levels of those jobs. The affirmative employment planning process has lacked priority. Agencies vary in their success in achieving representation. The discrimination complaint processing system is often reported in need of repair.

All of these areas where further improvement is necessary point to the need for continued application of a strong federal affirmative employment program. To keep that program functioning in a healthy and progressive manner requires the commitment of managers at all levels of government and continued monitoring of the government's affirmative employment efforts. In this regard, we will be continuing our work in the affirmative employment area for both you and Chairman Glenn of the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs.

As arranged with your office, we plan no further distribution of this report until 30 days after the date of issuance, unless you publicly announce its contents earlier. At that time, we will send copies to the Chairman of EEOC, the Director of OPM, and other interested parties. We will make copies available to others upon request.

The major contributors to this briefing report are listed in appendix II. Please call me on (202) 275-5074 if you have any questions about the report.

Sincerely yours,



Bernard L. Ungar
Director, Federal Human Resource
Management Issues

RELATED GAO WORK

Federal Affirmative Employment: Status of Women and Minority Representation in the Federal Workforce (GAO/T-GGD-92-2, Oct. 23, 1991).

Federal Affirmative Action: Better EEOC Guidance and Agency Analysis of Underrepresentation Needed (GAO/T-GGD-91-32, May 16, 1991).

Federal Affirmative Action: Better EEOC Guidance and Agency Analysis of Underrepresentation Needed (GAO/GGD-91-86, May 10, 1991).

Equal Employment: Minority Representation at USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (GAO/GGD-91-31BR, March 18, 1991).

Health and Human Services: Hispanic Representation and Equal Employment Practices in Region VIII (GAO/HRD-91-6, Nov. 20, 1990).

EEO at Justice: Progress Made But Underrepresentation Remains Widespread (GAO/GGD-91-8, Oct. 2, 1990).

EDA: Treatment of Blacks at the Economic Development Administration in the 1980s (GAO/HRD-90-148, Sept. 26, 1990).

Performance Management: Appraisal and Promotion Results at the U.S. Customs Service (GAO/GGD-90-40, May 18, 1990).

Peace Corps: Meeting the Challenges of the 1990s (GAO/NSIAD-90-122, May 18, 1990).

Postal Service: Employee-Management Relations at the Indianapolis Post Office Are Strained (GAO/GGD-90-63, April 16, 1990).

Equal Employment Opportunity: Representation of Minorities and White Women at Fort Lee Army Post, Virginia (GAO/GGD-90-27, Jan. 17, 1990).

Postal Service: Improved Labor/Management Relations at the Oklahoma City Post Office (GAO/GGD-90-02, Oct. 27, 1989).

Voice of America: Selected Personnel Practices Warrant Management Attention (GAO/NSIAD-89-160, July 12, 1989).

State Department: Minorities and Women Are Underrepresented in the Foreign Service (GAO/NSIAD-89-146, June 26, 1989).

Disabled Veterans' Employment: Performance Standards Needed to Assess Program Results (GAO/GGD-89-45, Feb. 28, 1989).

Social Security Administration: Employment of and Service to Hispanics (GAO/HRD-89-35, Jan. 30, 1989).

Administrative Law Judges: Appointment of Women and Social Security Administration Staff Attorneys (GAO/GGD-89-5, Oct. 19, 1988).

Minority Representation: Efforts of the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration (GAO/HRD-88-49, May 13, 1988).

Equal Employment Opportunity: Some Racial Imbalance in SSA Region X, Better Data and Remedies Needed (GAO/HRD-88-6, Oct. 13, 1987).

Equal Employment Opportunity: Hispanics' Advancement Opportunities in SSA Region IX (GAO/HRD-87-82, July 30, 1987).

Affirmative Action: Social Security Can Do More to Improve Blacks' Representation in Its Work Force (GAO/HRD-87-2, Jan. 2, 1987).

Affirmative Action: National Institutes of Health Does Not Meet Federal Requirements (GAO/HRD-86-37, Mar. 5, 1986).

Equal Opportunity: Information on the Atlanta and Seattle EEOC District Offices (GAO/HRD-86-63FS, Feb. 21, 1986).

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