

PROCUREMENT ROUND TABLE

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March 6, 2009

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Re: Acquisition Leadership

Dear Mr. President,

The Procurement Round Table (PRT) shares the concern you expressed with ensuring the Government spends taxpayer money wisely and obtains good value for the \$500 billion, plus any additional “Stimulus” funds, the Government will spend this year purchasing services, hardware, and construction. In order to increase the likelihood that you can achieve your worthy goals, we write to urge you to focus promptly on the nomination of well-qualified acquisition leadership.

The PRT is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization chartered in 1984 by former Federal acquisition officials concerned about the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of the Federal acquisition system. Our 50 Directors are private citizens who serve *pro bono* with the objective of advising and assisting the Government in making improvements in Federal acquisition. Our directors include six former Administrators of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) (having served under four Presidents), three former Associate Administrators of OFPP, individuals who have held all of the most senior acquisition positions at the Government’s largest acquisition agencies, former Congressional acquisition experts, and leading academics.

Your March 4 Presidential Memorandum on Government Contracting sets an aggressive schedule for developing acquisition reform policy, however, you have not identified a leadership team to formulate or implement the reforms. Your memorandum directed Peter Orzag, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, to lead the policy development and implementation, but Mr. Orzag will likely be more focused on the weighty budget matters he must also address. Thus, we request your attention to filling the following positions with acquisition experts: the Administrator for Federal Procurement Policy, the Deputy Director for Management of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Administrator of the General Services Administration, and the Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics. These critical jobs are now either vacant or staffed temporarily by career civil servants.

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Leadership is especially critical in achieving the most important aspiration of your memorandum – the restoration of the badly depleted acquisition workforce. The Government faces an acquisition workforce crisis of epic proportions. The Government needs 10,000 additional business professionals to manage its contracting effectively. In this decade, a stable acquisition workforce has had its workload increased by more than 140 percent (the annual procurement budget grew from under \$220 billion in Fiscal Year 2000, to more than \$530 billion in FY 2008). The work is increasingly complex and often performed in dangerous areas, such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Though the workforce is hard-working, dedicated, and upholds the highest ethical standards, it is routinely undervalued and unappreciated. Some of this is due to inordinately heavy workloads and some results from inaccurate political rhetoric that persistently berates and demoralizes these loyal Executive Branch Federal employees.

A reinvigorated acquisition workforce will not only increase accountability and public trust, but will also facilitate the development of contract strategies appropriate to the circumstances of each acquisition. Government needs experienced professionals who understand agency requirements, plan creative contracting solutions, conduct market research, draft and negotiate contracts, and manage contract performance. Properly staffing the acquisition workforce will contribute more directly to responsible fiscal stewardship than more studies, legislation, or policy.

Now is the time to find dynamic experts to lead the acquisition workforce and empower them rebuild a cadre of acquisition professionals devoted to maximizing value for taxpayer money.

If our expertise can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to let us know. You may contact me directly at (703) 764-3881 or btuttle3@cox.net. We thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

William G.T. Tuttle, Jr.
Chairman

Cc: Peter Orzag, OMB
Robert Nabors, OMB
Leslie Field, OFPP