

Out of Balance Workforce Could Impact Future Readiness

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ROSSLYN, Va. — The current civilian workforce is not meeting Air Force needs, which could lead to future readiness problems, said Air Force officials at a civilian workshop held here in June.

During the three-day workshop top civilian managers discussed force-shaping strategies and other issues facing the Air Force civilian workforce.

“Our civilian workforce is out of balance,” said David Mulgrew, Chief of the Air Force Civilian Force Management Division. “Our acquisition, scientific, and technical workforce is not being sustained with an adequate influx of new employees with current, state-of-the-art skills. The Air Force needs force-shaping legislation, allowing the use of voluntary early retirement authority and voluntary separation incentive pay without position abolishment or reduction in force.”

According to Mulgrew, in the past 10 years there has been a 62 percent drop in the number of civilian employees with less than eight years of service, and 11 percent of all career employees are currently eligible for retirement.

“In five years, more than 45 percent of all civilian employees will be eligible for either optional or early retirement,” he said.



The Air Force is seeking better incentive tools in the form of expanded voluntary early retirement authority and voluntary separation incentive pay to help balance the civilian workforce.

Photo by Sue Sapp

Past reductions, made through a combination of loss programs such as early retirement authorities, separation incentive pay, and limited hiring practices were not balanced across the civilian workforce.

“We used voluntary early retirement authority and voluntary separation incentives to trim the senior year groups and to minimize involuntary actions such as reductions in force, which are so devastating organizationally and individually,” Mulgrew said.

Reductions due to changes in hiring and retention negatively affected the profile of an increasingly senior civilian workforce. The drawdown was accomplished, in part, through limiting the number of new hires and offering incentives to junior and senior employees to separate, thus leaving a

high percentage of employees who are rapidly approaching retirement eligibility.

The Air Force has developed a three-pronged strategy — which includes accession planning, force development, and separation management — to address the need for force shaping and sustaining a quality civilian workforce; however, help from Congress in the form of legislation is also desired.

“Better tools in the form of expanded VERA and VSIP are needed to stimulate and manage sepa-