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STATEMENT OF
RANDALL G. DRAKE
CHAIRPERSON, CAREER LEVEL COUNCIL
GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON POST OFFICE AND CIVIL SERVICE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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ON
[Views on H.R. 3339, 96th CONGRESS]

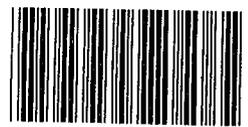
JULY 20, 1979

Office of the Comptroller General Career Level Council

Personnel management
Government employees
Compensation
GS grade classification

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Civil Rights Act of 1984
H R. 3339 96th Cong.



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Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Committee:

I am Randall Drake, Chairperson of the Career Level Council of the General Accounting Office. With me today are Benjamin Nelson, Vice-Chairperson, Christopher Crissman, Secretary, and John Hansen who has led the Council's efforts on this issue.

We appreciate the opportunity to appear here today to discuss our views on H.R. 3339, a bill to provide for the employment and compensation of employees of the General Accounting Office (GAO). Our views reflect the consensus of the Council, however they should not be construed as the views of all GAO employees.

The Career Level Council was established as an advisory group by the Comptroller General in 1969, and currently represents about 2,000 professionals in grades GS-12 and below. This is approximately half of GAO's professional staff. The Council consists of 29 professional staff members representing each of the 15 regional offices and the 14 headquarters auditing divisions and offices. Our objectives are to provide a means for the 2,000 professionals to express, through their elected representatives, their ideas and opinions on topics of interest, and to make recommendations to top management for improving the policies, procedures, and work environment of the General Accounting Office. The Council also reviews and discusses matters presented by the Comptroller General or other management officials.

We support the broad objectives of this legislation to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of GAO and to reinforce the credibility of GAO work. We also believe that minimizing the perception of conflict of interest by making GAO more independent of the executive branch is a worthwhile goal that merits our support. Furthermore, we support the bill because it will resolve any questions concerning GAO's coverage under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, will permit more flexibility in hiring, and will allow GAO employee organizations and employees to work with GAO management in developing the regulations which will implement the legislation when enacted.

The Council has closely reviewed this bill since April, and has met with GAO management officials on several occasions to discuss our views and attempt to resolve our concerns. These concerns were that the proposed legislation lacked sufficient guarantees that:

- An independent appeals authority would be established to adjudicate employee appeals, complaints, and grievances.
- Employees would be protected against grade or salary reductions resulting from the adoption of new compensation and classification systems for GAO.
- GAO management would continue to involve and consult with employee organizations in developing and reviewing all implementing regulations.

As a result of our productive meetings, the Comptroller General has offered several amendments to the legislation which would resolve our first two concerns. Also, Mr. Staats' statement to this Committee on July 10, 1979 that GAO management is committed to continuing a consultative process with employee organizations and employees in drafting implementing regulations alleviates our third concern.

In his testimony before the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee on the Civil Service Reform legislation last year, the Comptroller General stated that:

"A fundamental issue is how can we give management the flexibility to improve Government operations and productivity, while at the same time protect employees from unfair or unwarranted practices? The greater the degree of management flexibility the greater the potential for abuse. The greater the controls against abuse, the greater the restrictions on innovative management."

We strongly support this balanced approach, and do not question the Comptroller General's strong personal commitment to preventing abuse of the flexibility granted by this legislation. However, Mr. Staats' term will expire in a few years leaving the future direction of GAO in unknown hands. We sincerely hope that future GAO management will follow Mr. Staats' example of consulting with employee organizations and employees in developing regulations which provide management flexibility and protect GAO employees and applicants from unfair and unwarranted practices.

Some of our constituents are concerned because this legislation removes executive branch oversight of GAO's personnel system. This concern can be mitigated by addressing in detail the organization and function of the appeals board, and GAO's equal employment opportunity responsibilities in the bill. Congressional oversight of these areas will also be necessary.

This concludes our prepared statement. We look forward to working with GAO management to resolve these difficult questions. We thank the Committee for this opportunity to testify, and shall be pleased to take any questions the Committee may have at this time.