

NATIONAL REVIEW

Trump Should Make Bureaucrats Removable Again

As president, he must demand accountability among federal workers.

Deroy Murdock

October 7, 2016

‘You’re fired!’

Donald J. Trump’s signature line should become the title of a major speech promising a clean break from Washington, D.C.’s stagnant status quo. Trump should demand accountability in America’s consequence-free capital.

Federal employees routinely do whatever they like. Through either rank incompetence or unbridled hubris, they fail to do their jobs and squander the hard-earned funds of America’s overworked taxpayers. And for this, they either keep their jobs or — even worse — enjoy promotions and bonuses.

Trump should propose a swift halt to the federal workforce’s outrages, such as these:

- “Here’s my question,” Hillary Clinton asked voters in Toledo, Ohio, on Monday. “What kind of genius loses \$1 billion in a single year?” Clinton referred to Trump’s \$916 million private-sector loss in 1995.

Here’s my question: What kind of genius loses \$6 billion as secretary of state?

Thanks to “a lack of internal control over the Department’s contract actions,” \$6 billion evaporated between 2008 and 2014, mainly on Clinton’s watch, according to the State Department inspector general. This mismanagement “creates conditions conducive to fraud, as corrupt individuals may attempt to conceal evidence of illicit behavior by omitting key documents from the contract file.” Among 115 contracts related to the Iraq War, for instance, 33 (29 percent) vanished. These missing files alone were worth \$2.1 billion.

Did Obama fire Clinton for her role in squandering \$6 billion while in his cabinet?

Of course not! Instead, he’s campaigning to make her president of the United States.

- One Environmental Protection Agency employee’s idea of hard work was to download some 20,000 pornographic files onto EPA computers. Rather than focus relentlessly on his legitimate duties in the Office of Air and Radiation, this man “admitted that — for approximately 2 to 6 hours during his assigned work hours daily, over a period of ‘several years’ — he had viewed and downloaded pornographic images on EPA computer equipment,” EPA assistant inspector general Patrick Sullivan told the House Government Oversight Committee in April 2015.

“The employee stated that much of his workday was devoted to organizing the downloaded pornography into saved folders,” Sullivan added. “It was his belief that he was not doing anything wrong by accessing pornographic websites, since he was completing his required work and that other colleagues spend much of their assigned duty hours doing ‘personal’ things rather than official EPA business.”

So was this porn addict sacked? Nope. After getting caught in September 2013, he was placed on paid leave in May 2014 with his full \$120,000 salary. In April 2015 he retired, without incident.

Another EPA employee named Peter Jutro received multiple promotions even though 16 women accused him of sexual harassment.

“When Mr. Jutro was finally put on paid leave,” House Government Oversight Committee chairman Jason Chaffetz (R., Utah) explained, “he quickly retired with full pension benefits to avoid being interviewed by the IG about these allegations.”

- Things were further out of control at the Drug Enforcement Agency. Seven DEA officers in Colombia enjoyed “‘sex parties’ with prostitutes funded by the local drug cartels for these DEA agents at their government-leased quarters, over a period of several years,” according to a March 2015 report by DEA’s inspector general. “A foreign officer also alleged providing protection for the DEA agents’ weapons and property during the parties.”

DEA’s IG added that “most of the ‘sex parties’ occurred in government-leased quarters where agents’ laptops, BlackBerry devices, and other government-issued equipment were present [and] created potential security risks for the DEA and for the agents who participated in the parties, potentially exposing them to extortion, blackmail, or coercion.”

Such high-risk indiscretion surely meant curtains for these DEA agents.

Wrong!

As the IG stated, “The DEA imposed penalties ranging from a 2-day suspension to a 10-day suspension.” Indeed, the officers who exposed their electronic gear to drug-cartel-financed hookers kept their jobs and security clearances.

- At the Department of Veterans Affairs, federal misconduct has devolved from *Animal House* to funeral house. Some 300 vets dropped dead in recent years at the VA’s notorious Phoenix facility.

Long delays for VA psychological treatment help explain the 22 suicides that veterans suffer every day. The Los Angeles VA center boasted in August 2015 that it saw mental-health patients within four days, on average. But CNN cited internal documents that showed new mental patients actually waited 43 days for therapy. (That’s more than six weeks.) Such VA book cooking is rampant.

Since massive public and congressional rage at the VA exploded in 2014, things have deteriorated.

“The VA’s own data show that — as of May 15, 2016 — 505,880 veterans are waiting more than a month for care, 150,000 more veterans than were waiting that long in October 2014,”

Concerned Veterans for America reports. “In Phoenix, it took two years for the VA to propose the firing of officials who oversaw the wait list scandal, and it may take another two years for them to be removed, if at all. The VA handed out \$142 million in bonuses in 2014.” Some of those who faked wait lists and otherwise abused veterans received such emoluments.

And yet these people stay employed.

In fact, unemployment for government workers was 2.5 percent in September, compared to 5.0 percent overall, per Table A-14 of this morning’s Labor Department [jobs report](#).

“Federal workers are almost never fired,” Cato Institute scholar Chris Edwards wrote last month. “Just 0.5 percent of federal civilian workers a year get fired for any reason, including poor performance and misconduct. That rate is just one-sixth of the private-sector firing rate.”

This phenomenon is more pronounced at the pinnacle of the federal bureaucracy.

“For the senior executive service in the government, the firing rate is just 0.1 percent,” Edwards notes. “By contrast, about two percent of corporate CEOs are fired each year, which is a rate 20 times higher than in the senior executive service.”

While many federal workers are serious, dedicated professionals, too many are slackers, thieves, and purveyors of negligent homicide.

Hillary Clinton will not challenge inept, crooked, or even deadly government workers. This is her base. These are her people.

Trump should make these points and pledge to change Washington’s corrupt culture by overhauling the union and civil-service protections that let federal bureaucrats thrive while [doing things](#) that would get them canned in corporate America.

Donald J. Trump should make voters a simple promise: Just as in the private sector, failed federal employees should hear two words that will be new to their ears:

“You’re fired!”