



# COALITION OF FEDERAL OMBUDSMAN

## MEETING MINUTES

**Meeting Date/Time:** November 9, 2016 1:30pm – 3:00pm

**Location:** In-person and Dial-in

### **Agenda:**

1. Review of ACUS (Administrative Conference of the United States) Study Update
2. Review of the Annual Conference
3. Discussion of the use of Official Time to work with Ombudsman

### **Highlights:**

1) ACUS Report:

Paul gave an update on the ACUS report; current version sent to the community.

Page 4 –

- a. ACUS seeking to adopt three core standards and common characteristics. ACUS enumerated the common characteristics
- b. Discussion about Ombuds neutral position in an agency/organization. COFO's positions were well represented at the last ACUS meeting.
- c. Inability to remove or retaliate against an Ombuds under certain circumstances

Page 5 –

- d. Confidentiality is now noted a requirement and not a discretionary choice.

Page 8 –

- e. Existing offices that don't meet the prescribed standards, ACUS recommends programmatic review.

Page 12 –

- f. Ombuds access to independent legal counsel, modified to Ombuds access to legal counsel.

\* Request was made by a member to submit feedback to ACUS on behalf of COFO's position on such contentious topics.

## 2) COFO Conference:

- Executive committee is planning on an October 2017 conference; looking at the middle part of October and coordinating with PTO.

## 3) Discussion Topics:

- Question raised about official time; does your agency have any guidelines/thoughts/experiences on allowing employee's official time to talk with the OMB.
- COMMENT - Should be managed by the individual but discussions with OMB is considered part of their official time. Again, notwithstanding abuse parameters, if that's suspected. Examples given include interviews, EEO proceedings/meetings, EAP.
- Some folks shared best practices in ways to loop in or engage the supervisor who has the concern.
- VLTP question, can/do OMB donate leave to folks outside of their immediate staff? Follow-up question about COFO creating a process for Ombuds to donate leave within the community.
  - COMMENT - If donations have been made, their agency protects the identity of the donor.
  - COMMENT – Have made a personal decision to not donate out of respect for the neutrality clause of the OMB role.
  - COMMENT – In the internal OMB role, it has blurred the lines. An ethical question worth exploring.
  - Executive Committee – offered to put together a program for the committee that would match requests with donors and the mechanics would be handled between the parties.

## Executive Committee Chair:

- Responsibilities will be shared between Paul and Bill. Paul will assume the role of Chair until June at which time Bill will assume the role of Chair for the duration of their tenure.

**Attendees:**

In-Person

Drefchinski, Megan – Federal Reserve Board  
Hart, Erich – Department of State  
Janson, Michael – Federal Communication Commission  
Little, Tim – Department of State  
Maurer, William – Department of Energy  
Sotoudeh, Paul - Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

Call-In

Barrar, Riley – Department of State  
Campbell, Sally – Supreme Court of VA  
Dean, Karen – Department of Commerce  
Gartlan, Jennifer – Federal Maritime Commission  
Gordon, Laurel – Department of Justice  
Haase, Robert – Department of Justice  
Kamenshine, Wendy - Consumer Financial Protection Bureau  
Larkins, Marcia – Department of Health and Human Services  
Michael, David - Department of Health and Human Services  
Mills, Laurel –Department of Justice  
Roberts, Sara - Department of Homeland Security  
Rowe, Mary – Chi Associates  
Teixeira, Rachel – Department of State  
Thomas, Raya – Department of Justice  
Weber, Guy – Department of Defense