

MEMORANDUM FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

FROM: KAY COLES JAMES
Director

SUBJECT: Labor-Management Relations

I sent you a memorandum earlier this week in which I emphasized the shared obligation of labor and management to ensure that official time is authorized and used appropriately. Today I am issuing this memorandum to underscore the equally important responsibility of labor and management to work together to deliver the best possible service to the American people.

As you know, President Bush has identified a bold strategy for improving the performance of Government and delivering better results for the American people. I believe that management and the unions that represent Federal workers have a mutual stake in achieving the President's agenda. That is why I am encouraging agencies and their unions to work cooperatively on the critical challenges ahead.

I believe that cooperation between labor and management can enhance effectiveness and efficiency, cut down the number of employment-related disputes, and improve working conditions, all of which contribute to the kind of performance and results sought by the President. This will demand management and union leaders who trust each other, who are open and honest with each other, who respect the different interests that each party brings to the table and build on the interests they share.

When the President signed Executive Order 13203, there was speculation that it meant the end of labor-management cooperation and communication in the Federal Government. I think that is wrong. The President was motivated by his conviction that partnership is not something that should be mandated for every agency in every situation. But while agencies are no longer required to form partnerships with their unions, they are strongly encouraged to establish cooperative labor-management relations.

Much is being asked of Government today, and it has never been more important for labor and management to find common ground. I will be counting on that cooperative

spirit to bolster efforts to establish world-class human resources systems at the new Department of Homeland Security. We plan to work with unions, employee associations, and other stakeholder groups and seek their advice about how to design the best systems possible to support the men and women entrusted by the President to safeguard our nation. I am convinced that great things can be achieved for the Government and the citizens we serve when management and union leaders work together on issues that unite them rather than spend their time and energy on what divides them. That is a principle I will continue to support as OPM Director.

OPM is ready to assist you to ensure that your labor-management relations policies and practices help your agency achieve its mission. Please do not hesitate to contact me or OPM's Office of Labor and Employee Relations if we can help in any way.