

**Opening Statement of Chairman James Lankford
Hearing before the Regulatory Affairs and Federal Management Subcommittee
Tuesday, July 28th at 2:30 PM**

**“Modernizing Telework: Review of Private Sector Telework Policies during the COVID-19
Pandemic.”**

Good afternoon and welcome to today’s Subcommittee hearing to examine the lesson’s private sector companies have learned during the COVID-19 pandemic regarding remote work practice and policies.

In 1990, Congress passed its first piece of legislation directly related to an employee’s ability to work outside of the assigned duty station. The most recent significant legislation impacting the federal workforce, The Telework Enhancement Act of 2010, set the current standard for federal telework requirements.

With so many changes in the world over the last 10 years, or in the case of 2020, the past 4 months, it makes sense to take a close look at current telework policies and strategies within the federal workforce. We have a responsibility to ensure federal workforce strategies are relevant, cost effective, and well thought out.

Even before this pandemic many private sector companies were giving remote work flexibility to their employees. The Society for Human Resource Management reported a threefold increase in the number of companies offering remote work options between 1996 and 2016.

OPM reported that in 2018, only 22 percent of the federal workforce was eligible to telework. With the March transition to maximum telework impacting many of those positions not traditionally considered telework eligible, do we need to re-evaluate how this “eligibility” is determined?

Since early March of this year both the federal workforce, and many in private industry, have been forced into a new remote work centric reality.

Almost overnight, federal agencies and private companies were forced to deal with complex problems like cyber security, remote performance management, and employee engagement, on a grand scale.

The pandemic has been a great disrupter, but it may also serve to shine a light on broken processes and opportunity for improvement.

There are some very important telework questions that I believe we need clarity on in order to chart a clear path forward for the federal workforce.

For example, how do we best prepare employees, so that during a future disaster or pandemic, they can seamlessly transition into a federal telework posture?

How do we effectively train managers to stay engaged and monitor performance of remote workers?

I want to make sure that cyber security threats are seriously considered in telework policy conversations.

Being good stewards of American tax dollars is something I talk about often. I believe future cost savings from a reduction in needed office space, could be a key component to improving remote work opportunities for federal employees.

We don't want to reinvent the wheel, so today we want to start a series of federal workforce related telework hearings by first reaching out to our friends in private industry. Those outside federal service understand very clearly that creating efficient cost saving workforce strategies, are less luxury, and more necessity.

I want to thank this panel for taking time away from their businesses and very busy schedules. We really appreciate the opportunity to be able to hear about your views on telework and what lessons you have learned.

With that, I would like to recognize Ranking Member Sinema for her opening remarks.